

THE SOVIET UNION AND CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISM, 1968

by

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A THESIS

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THE SOVIET UNION AND CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALISM, 1968

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ABSTRACT

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During the brief period in Czechoslovakian history from January until August of 1968, First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Alexander Dubcek, attempted to bring about socialism with a "human face." Dubcek initiated numerous liberal reforms in economics, foreign relations, and the control of the mass media. He also continued reforms previously begun before his rise to power. The new attitude on the part of the Czechoslovak government became a source of concern for the Soviet Union and eventually generated a sharp Russian response.

Freed from censorship by the reform government, the Czechoslovak mass media uncovered and reported material which proved to be embarrassing to the Soviet Union. Eventually, the Communist Party's political control in Czechoslovakia was endangered when the unrestrained press, headed by liberals, campaigned against hard - line Communists at the various political levels in Czechoslovakia. Many top - ranking Communist officials lost their positions to liberals because of the pressure exerted on them by the press. In addition, the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic encouraged all citizens to express their opinions and offer suggestions to the government, so that the liberal regime could formulate policies that expressed the

interests of all the people. Soviet confidence in the Czechoslovak Communist Party's ability to remain the leading force in Czechoslovakia was weakened by the unhampered activities of the mass media.

Czechoslovakia's pattern of socialism also challenged the Soviet Union's socialist system in economic matters. Under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek, the central planning system in the economy lost its monopoly of power as the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party laid plans for the sharing of responsibilities in economic planning with interest groups and individuals. The Dubcek government also made use of a market regulated economy, rather than a government regulating system, and a wage system based on incentive instead of wage levelling. Czechoslovakia's greatest threat to the Soviet Union lay in the development of broader economic and diplomatic relations with the German Federal Republic.

Czechoslovakia's liberalizing trend in the mass media and the economy led that nation to a rapprochement with West Germany. The Soviet Union felt that its security was in danger because of the cordial relations between Czechoslovakia and the German Federal Republic. The liberal Dubcek government resisted any attempts by the Soviet Union to permanently station divisions of Warsaw Pact troops within Czechoslovakia. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, 1968, provided a means of achieving

the military objective of placing what the Soviets felt were reliable troops on the East - West border in Czechoslovakia. The invasion also provided a means of ending the liberalization of the Czechoslovakian mass media and gave the Soviet Union a more advantageous position in dealing with West Germany's advances toward Eastern Europe.

Not all of the invasion results were positive gains for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies failed to establish legitimate reasons for intervention. After the invasion, no Czechoslovakian authority would admit to having extended an invitation to invade. Resistance by the Czechoslovak people toward the invading troops, even though passive, was obvious to the watching world. Consequently, the majority of the world's Communist parties condemned the invasion as an act of imperialism. As a result of the Soviet intervention into Czechoslovakia's affairs the Soviet Union seems to have created more problems than they have solved. By its decision to invade, the Soviet Union increased the disunity and distrust within the Soviet socialist bloc nations.

Approved:

William T. Haynes, Chairman

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Introduction

The move toward liberalization in Czechoslovakia did not suddenly begin with the election of Slovak Communist Party leader Alexander Dubcek to the post of First Secretary of the Communist Party in January of 1968. A desire for reform was noticeable in the early sixties among intellectuals. Even in those early years scientists and government officials had exchanged views in an effort to arrive at some basis for long-term national planning. The Czechoslovaks were concerned about the impact of current science and technology on society and were attempting to modernize their bureaucracy.¹

Prior to 1968 two very important studies were begun. At the Czechoslovak Academy of Science's Institute of Economics, Professor Ota Sik developed a guideline, eventually published in 1967, under the title Plan and Market Under Socialism. The book contained his ideas about socialist economic planning, especially emphasizing his contention that the country's industrial decadence was due to theoretical and bureaucratic errors. Also published in 1967 was Civilization at the Crossroads by Radovan Richta and Ota Klein of the Institute of Philosophy.

¹Nigel Calder, "The Czechocrat's Key Role," New Statesman, XIV (August 30, 1968), p. 249.

Both the authors were concerned with the effects of advanced technology on society.²

The Czechoslovakian leadership was aware of this interest in societal reform among economists and scientists. Antonin Novotny, an ardent follower of orthodox Communist views, was President of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1967, as well as First Secretary of the Communist Party, a post he had held since 1953. As leader of the Communist Party he maintained a policy of cautiously granting limited concessions to the liberal elements in his country. An example of such a concession could be seen in the New Economic Model. Novotny had sanctioned the development of the model after it was proposed by Doctor Ota Sik and other economic reformers. After agreeing to put the model into practice, however, Novotny failed to cooperate with the economists, thereby limiting reform.

The greatest challenge for reform came from the intellectual community. At the beginning of 1967 Novotny had relaxed the press laws. The new law prevented only the publication of books and articles detrimental to the interests of the state, but this limited concession did not appease the writers. In June, at the Fourth Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, outspoken authors called for guarantees of basic human freedoms and

²Calder, p. 249.

far - reaching reforms in every area of society. This was not the first time the writers had voiced criticism against the existing political and social order, but even so, these revisionists created enough unrest to warrant severe punishment by the Communist Party. Novelist Ludvik Vaculik's speech at the meeting was probably the most shocking to Communist leaders. Vaculik said that

. . . it is necessary to understand that in the course of twenty years no human problem has been solved in our country - starting with elementary needs such as housing, schools and economic prosperity and ending with the finer requirements of life which cannot be provided by the undemocratic systems of the world, for instance the full value in the society, the subordination of political decisions to ethical criteria, belief in the value of even less important work, the need for confidence for men, development of the education of the entire people. . . .³

His words voiced the sentiment of numerous citizens. Many writers were expelled or suspended from the Party for similar statements. The Writer's Union itself lost its press organ, Literarni Noviny, which was put under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Information.⁴

By the autumn of 1967, Novotny had managed to antagonize a majority of the country's population. The writers had been

³ Harry Schwartz, Prague's 200 Days (New York, 1969), pp. 47-48.

⁴ Schwartz, p. 44.

suppressed, yet they continued to publish articles, mostly through the Western press, critical of the country's condition. Unrest eventually spread to students of Prague's Charles University who were quite dissatisfied with repeated utility failures.

The New Economic Model begun in January had made very little headway in solving the country's economic problems. As a result, the economists had also become further disillusioned. The advocates of economic reform placed the blame upon Novotny and his followers and accused them of failing to aid the new model by refusing to replace incompetent directors and managers in industry with experienced planning personnel. It was obvious to the economists that Novotny would not dismiss men he considered politically reliable from critical positions in the political and economic bureaucracy. Novotny felt these men essential if Czechoslovakia was to remain under conservative control.⁵

Through his practice of granting limited reform with one hand while muzzling it with the other, Novotny had succeeded in bringing together on all levels, groups who opposed him. This united opposition reflected the dissatisfaction of economists, scientists, industrial managers and the noncommunist population.⁶

⁵Zdenek Suda, The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Baltimore, 1969), p. 114.

⁶Suda, p. 115; as quoted from an interview with Major General Egyd Pepich in Obrana Lidu (Prague), February 24, 1968; also in the declaration by the Minister of Defense, Martin Dzur, in Rolnicke Noviny (Bratislava), April 4, 1968.

The growing counterforce, eager for reform, finally achieved definite results in January, 1968. Unable to cope with such massive opposition, Novotny was replaced as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party on January 5 by Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak member of the Party Presidium who had led the Slovak demands for more concessions from Novotny.

Antonin Novotny did not step down gracefully. Before he relinquished the post of First Secretary, he attempted to obtain help from the Soviet Union, but Leonid Brezhnev, head of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, failed at the time to offer any substantial support. In a last desperate attempt to maintain power Novotny had failed. His followers among the military prepared to march on Prague on January 4, but the show of force never developed due to the reluctance of the army staff to become involved in internal party struggles.⁷ Although Novotny relinquished the position of First Secretary, he remained the President of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

Dubcek, as First Secretary of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia from January until August, 1968, initiated numerous liberal reforms in economics, foreign relations, and the control of mass media. He also continued reforms begun before his rise to power, all in an attempt to bring about socialism with a "human

⁷Paul Ello (ed.), Czechoslovakia's Blueprint for "Freedom," (Washington, 1968), p. 81.

face." The reforms began almost immediately upon his accession, but it was not until April that the Communist Party made public its goals for the development of a new political, social, and economic order. These aims, defined under the title of The Action Programme of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, based the new order on the economic principles of Marxism. What was new was the suggested belief in the capacity of the system to change and create an environment which would reflect the needs of a progressive society. This concept had been the hope of scientists and economists before Dubcek.⁸

Under Dubcek the Communist Party and the population joined together to bring about desired reforms. Revisions made in the socialist system were initiated by the Party itself and received widespread national support. The Action Programme pointed out that in the past the Party had erred by failing to encourage national unity.

Already after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., which was an impulse for revival of the development of socialist democracy, the Party adopted several measures intended to overcome bureaucratic - centralist sectarian methods of management or its remnants, to prevent the means of class struggle being reversed against the working people. . . . However, they met with a lack of understanding, inhibitions, and in some cases, even with direct suppression. The survival of methods from the time of class struggle evoked an artificial tension among social groups, nations and nationalities, different generations, com-

⁸Ello, p. 101.

munists and non - Party people in this society. Dogmatic approaches impeded a full and timely re - evaluation of conceptions of the character of socialist construction.⁹

The Czechoslovak revisionist's attitude toward the former bureaucratic structures revealed that the reformers felt the ruling bureaucracies incapable of solving the problems of a modern, changing society. They believed Novotny and previous communist rulers had prevented the full development of human potential.¹⁰ The Party, as the leading force in society, was not ready to correct the shortcomings of the past in an effort to relieve the country of its social and economic problems with a new model of socialist democracy. The new political model would make it possible for all social groups in Czechoslovak society to express their interests in their organizations and to publicly voice their views.¹¹

The Action Programme, adopted at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on April 5, 1968, outlined the future for Czechoslovak society, political policies, foreign relations, and economics along innovative lines. It also absorbed the liberal reforms granted in

⁹Ello, p. 97.

¹⁰Peter Ludz, "Philosophy In Search of Reality," Problems of Communism, XVIII (July, 1969), p. 37.

¹¹Ello, p. 107.

January, February, and March of 1968, as well as the New Economic Model of 1967. This new attitude on the part of the Czechoslovak government became a source of concern for the Soviet Union and eventually generated a sharp Russian reaction.

This paper will examine the affect of the Action Programme upon various areas of Czechoslovak society. Many of the reforms within the realm of the mass media, the economy, and the security arrangements of the East European socialist bloc were considered anti - socialist by the Soviet Union. Significant Czechoslovak reforms and consequent Soviet attitudes will be assessed in an effort to show what effect both had in finally determing the Soviet decision to intervене in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

CHAPTER I

The Mass Media As A Transmitter of Revisionism

Prior to 1966, Czechoslovakia was considered by the Soviet Union as a reliable and loyal defender of socialism. The Czechoslovaks had never been a great source of trouble for the Soviet leaders. The country's citizens had never staged a significant revolution of the magnitude of the Hungarian revolt, and the unrest of students had always been controlled. Novotny and his followers had even managed to maintain an effective censorship by suppressing publications considered revisionist and purging editorial boards. As 1966 approached, however, it became increasingly more difficult for the government to cope with economic problems and the rise of demands by students and intellectuals. Novotny fell from office and was replaced by Dubcek who, as it developed, was willing and able to supply the demands of the restless Czechoslovak population.

The Dubcek regime chose to loosen its ideological hold upon the population. The new government established on January 5, 1968, not only proposed that every element of society should help develop the country's future, but it also abolished censorship so that all views might be examined in the hope of formulating a better and more humanistic socialism. Within the first

month of Dubcek's regime the Soviet Union began to fear Czechoslovakia's democratic socialism as a possible enemy of the vast Soviet socialist commonwealth in East Europe.

Communism makes many demands, one of which is uniformity of thought, word and action. This rules out any type of personalism or freedom.¹ In the view of one observer of the Soviet Union, liberalization of expression, communication, and discussion was Czechoslovakia's greatest sin against the Soviet Union, a state in which the practice of censorship is widely used to discourage the independent thinking of citizens, especially the intellectuals who are rarely happy with the regime's policies. Conformism to the government's ideological position is the basic strength of the whole Soviet bureaucratic system.²

Dubcek and his fellow reformers reversed the traditional stand toward public thought and the mass media.

. . . Socialism cannot mean only liberation of the working people from the domination of exploiting class relations, but must make more provisions for a fuller life of the personality than any bourgeois democracy. The working people, who are no longer ordered about by any class of exploiters, can no longer be prescribed by any arbitrary interpretation from a position of power, what information they may or may not be given, which of their

¹"The Czechoslovak Crisis" (editorial), Bulletin, XV (Sept., 1968), p. 7; hereafter referred to as "The Czechoslovak Crisis."

²Alexander Werth, Russia Hopes and Fears (New York, 1969), p. 10.

opinions may play a role and where not. Public opinion polls must be systematically used in preparing important decisions and the main results of the research are to be published. Any restriction may be imposed only on the basis of a law stipulating what is antisocial - which in our country is mainly the criminal law. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia considers it necessary to define more exactly than hitherto in the shortest possible time by a press law, when a state body can forbid the propagation of certain information/ in the press, radio, television, etc. and exclude the possibility of preliminary factual censorship. It is necessary to overcome the holding up, distortion, and incompleteness of information, to remove any unwarranted secrecy of political and economic facts, to publish the annual balance sheets of enterprises, to publish even alternatives to various suggestions and measures, to extend the import and sale of foreign press. Leading representatives of state, social and cultural organizations are obliged to organize regular press conferences and give their views on topical issues on television, radio, and in the press. In the press, it is necessary to make a distinction between official standpoints of state, Party and journalist bodies; the Party press especially must express the Party's own life, development and criticisms of various opinions among the communists, etc., and cannot be made fully identical with the official viewpoints of the state. . . .³

The reforms Dubcek advocated challenged the position of the Soviet Union as the sole dictator of socialist policy in the Eastern bloc. Liberalization of the written word and the freedom to publish individual criticisms would lead to excessive demands and the printing of harsh truths, which could only be harmful to the type of socialism developed by Moscow. Of more im-

³Paul Ello, (ed.), Czechoslovakia's Blueprint for "Freedom" (Washington, 1968), pp. 120-121.

portance, the new attitude could possibly spread to the Soviet Union and other nations in the Communist bloc.

In any Communist country passive opposition to the Soviet Union can usually be found among the workers, students, and intellectuals. Opposition, often in a different form, can also be found among the top echelons of the Communist Party. The Czechoslovakia of 1968, however, offered to the Soviet Union a united opposition composed of persons in the higher political ranks as well as among the private citizens. Gradually this body of opposition sought to modify the Soviet Union's right to establish the boundaries of socialism within their nation.⁴

Although Dubcek remained silent throughout the month of January, and the Action Programme was not published until the beginning of April, liberalization began soon after Novotny's fall. Suspension of preventive censorship was announced by the Party Presidium on February 6, 1968. While the press enjoyed its new freedom, liberal groups within and outside the Party expanded their demands.⁵

Gradually liberals began to appear throughout the Czechoslovakian bureaucracy. Edward Goldstuecker became a popular

⁴Barbara Jancar, "The Case For A Loyal Opposition Under Communism: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia," Orbis, XII (Summer, 1968), p. 418.

⁵Zdenek Suda, The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Baltimore, 1969), p. 116.

advocate of the new humanistic socialism. Goldstuecker, a Jew who had been imprisoned in the 1950's as a "Zionist spy," but later rehabilitated, was elected Chairman of the Writer's Union on January 24, 1968. Vice Chairmen were two authors who had earlier shown a sympathy for greater literary freedom.⁶

Also at the end of January the announcement was made that a new weekly publication had been authorized for the Writer's Union. Literarni Listy replaced the Literarni Noviny, and was placed under the control of the editors of the old publication. It was becoming obvious that Dubcek had no intention of dealing with the press in the same manner as Novotny.⁷

The liberalization of the press, radio and television continued. In late February the 380 members of the Union of Czechoslovak Journalists forced their secretary-general to resign because of his denunciation of the Writer's Union. Other members dropped out, leaving the Union of Journalists in liberal hands.⁸

The National Assembly passed a bill June 26, 1968, formally abolishing the requirement that all material be censored before publication and making the chief editors of publications responsible for any disclosures of state secrets. The law abolishing

⁶Harry Schwartz, Prague's 200 Days (New York, 1969), p. 84.

⁷Schwartz, p. 84.

⁸Kenneth Ames, "Reform and Reaction," Problems of Communism, XVII (Nov., 1968), p. 42.

ensorship created a new wave of liberal gains, as many dogmatic Communist editors were removed from their positions in June. The first significant removal was Oldrich Svestka, the hard-line editor of the party's principal publication, Rude Pravo. Other editors in provincial towns began to step down to make way for liberals.⁹

Also reflective of the change in the nation's attitude were the governmental commissions established to examine the claims for compensation by former political prisoners. The Action Programme had already considered the plight of political victims, and declared that the rehabilitation of past victims of miscarried justice, communists and non - communists alike, had been too slow in coming. The Party would take measures to ensure that the wrongs of the past were rescinded.¹⁰

The press also had earlier expressed concern over the rehabilitation of political victims from Stalinist times. In the process of searching out what they felt were long-hidden facts that had condemned many, some reporters came across shocking information which they had no qualms about printing. The historian, Karel Kaplan, published an article in June in which he stated that small groups within the party leadership, including

⁹Ames, p. 43.

¹⁰Ello, p. 34.

Klement Gottwald, Antonin Zapotocky, and Antonin Novotny, all former Presidents of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and Karol Bacilek, former Minister for National Security, had controlled the literally life-and-death decisions of the purges, approving indictments beforehand and deciding upon panalties. Such reporting could not have been received with favor by the Soviet Union.¹¹

Other scandalous material appearing in the press helped to continue the undermining of the Novotnyites' position. The various news media announced on March 1, 1968, that Major-General Jan Sejna and his son had defected to the West. Digging deeper into the life of Sejna, Prague's reporters implicated the General in many counts of blackmail, embezzlement, and the theft of government property during Novotny's regime. Another sidelight to the situation was the report that Antonin Novotny, Jr. had been Sejna's partner in crime. The press also implied that General Sejna was involved in the military coup planned to save Novotny at the end of 1967.¹²

¹¹Otto Ulc, "The Vagaries of Law," Problems of Communism, XVIII (July, 1969), p. 21; first published in Nova Mysl (Prague), June, 1968.

¹²Jonathan Randal, "Czech General Who Fled to U. S. Is Linked to Plot to Aid Novotny," The New York Times, March 7, 1968, Sec. 1, pp. 1-5.

A month later the free press again reached into the past and this time came out with material aimed at the Soviet Union. After an article by Ivan Svitak demanding an investigation into Jan Masaryk's death, Rude Pravo printed evidence to support the theory that Masaryk had been murdered and suggested that Beria's gorillas had been involved.¹³

The disclosure of much of this material, especially the Sejna affair, strengthened the revisionist leadership, as the mass media carried on an anti - Novotny campaign. The press led the way in calling for Novotny's resignation from the Presidency of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, as well as the resignation of the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior and other high officials.¹⁴ Novotny finally resigned on March 22, 1968, after several other key ministers had stepped down. The ally the Soviet Union had counted on for many years now had no position of influence within Czechoslovakia.

Eventually the new policy of press liberalization created yet another Soviet fear - the loss of control of Czechoslovakian affairs by the Communist Party in that nation. Novotny and other top - level officials were forced out of the political hierarchy in March. Further action was taken in the April session of the

¹³Schwartz, p. 138

¹⁴Jonathan Randal, "Czech Television Tries to Slow Campaign Against Novotny," The New York Times, March 9, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 4.

Central committee when Novotny and Jiri Hendrych were also dropped as Presidium members. Furthermore, Hendrych was dismissed as head of the ideological department because of his attacks on rebellious writers and students in the last months of Novotny rule.¹⁵ On April 9 additional revisionists were placed in positions of authority. Oldrich Cernik became Premier, and three liberal deputies were installed, one of which was Professor Ota Sik. Gradually the Novotny followers were being forced out of every responsible position. At the same time the campaign to secure Dubcek's control continued.

The reforms introduced in 1968, were to aid First Secretary Dubcek as he humanized Czechoslovakia's socialism, and also to help alleviate the nation's domestic difficulties. There was hope that governmental reforms would encourage the indifferent managers and workers of the Novotny era to help improve the economic situation and gain the support of the masses behind Dubcek.¹⁶ This willingness of the Communist Party to reform led to ideological confusion about the Party's authority and role in society. A basic concept of the Czechoslovak - Soviet socialism is the role of the Party as the leading force in the nation.¹⁷

¹⁵Randal, "Czech Television," p. 4.

¹⁶Vladimir R. de Dubnic, "The Czechoslovak Communist Party: The Limits of Reform," Orbis, XIV (Spring, 1970), p. 180.

¹⁷Galia Golan, "The Short - Lived Liberal Experiment in Czechoslovak Socialism," Orbis, XIII (Winter, 1970), p. 1114.

Another basic Leninist concept, democratic centralism, which held all major decisions in the Party's councils as binding upon the minority, was challenged by Dubcek's reforms. His challenges were far from subtle.

. . . When we emphasize the political - organizational work of the Party, we have in mind especially the forming of close ties between Communists and non - Communists in order that the whole Party, all Communists, workers, farmers, the intelligentsia, in brief, the absolute majority of the working people may participate in shaping the policy of the Party and in its being put into practice. Our policy will be successful only if it expresses the interests of the people as far as possible, if it is intelligible to them, in brief, if it is their policy. . . .¹⁸

Concerning the authority of the Party, the First Secretary was quoted by Rude Pravo as stating:

We know very well that authority was not given to us once and for all . . . By their initiative and honest work in solving problems, the Communists want to persuade all citizens that they are capable and entitled to lead society. . . .¹⁹

By encouraging the population to express their opinions through the press and free debate and in an effort to find solutions to the country's ills, the Dubcek leadership admitted that

¹⁸Ello, p. 207.

¹⁹J. H. Huizinga, "The End of An Illusion," Problems of Communism, XVIII (July, 1969), p. 45; first printed in Rude Pravo, May 30, 1968.

the Party's power to solve domestic problems was limited.²⁰ There was no doubt as to the response of the people to Dubcek's invitation to participate in policy - making. An unprecedented flow of attitudes and opinions appeared on the radio and in newspapers throughout the eight months of freedom. The Soviet Union and its allies were not as confident as the Czech leadership that the Party would remain the leading force in the country. When the Czechoslovaks began to democratize the Party's structure, the Soviets began to fear that decisions would begin to originate from the bottom rather than the top, from the citizens rather than from the Party. Trying to gain the support of the people and stabilize the country, the Czechoslovak Communist Party was prepared to share its once supreme power with the people. The Soviets feared that a Party cast in such a mold might soon cease to exist.²¹

The Soviets had just cause to be alarmed. It became common to organize public meetings where students, workers, and farmers met to debate the country's situation. In Brno, in the Moravian province of Czechoslovakia, student representatives from the universities all over Czechoslovakia voted to break with the

²⁰Morton Schwartz, "Czechoslovakia's New Political Model: A Design for Renewal," The Journal of Politics, Vol. 30 (Nov., 1968), p. 973.

²¹Huizinga, p. 46.

Czechoslovak Youth Association, a Communist - led organization, and establish an independent association with no formal ties to the Party.²²

A rising demand for opposition parties could be distinguished at many of the meetings. The Communist - controlled Socialist Party published a resolution stating that different political parties should be allowed to recruit support. Josef Boruvka, a new member of the Presidium, rejected the plea for unlimited freedom for other political parties, but indicated a program under consideration in the Central Committee would possibly include provisions for a wider role for other parties.²³ As an illustration of this desire for recognition of other parties, Rude Pravo reported in a poll that ninety percent of its non - Communist readers and over one-half of the Communist Party readers responding had favorably voted for the creation of opposition parties.²⁴

The first general concern expressed by the Soviet Union and its allies over the Czechoslovak communications media came on

²²Richard Eder, "Czech Students and Trade Unions Take Major Steps Toward Independence," The New York Times, March 24, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 16.

²³Harry Schwartz, "Role For Parties Urged In Prague," The New York Times, March 10, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 19.

²⁴Jonathan Randal, "Poll Favors Opposition Parties," The New York Times, June 28, 1968, Sec. 1, pp. 1-6.

March 23, 1968, the day after Novotny resigned as President, but Novotny's resignation was only one result of the activities of the press and television media. In mid - March students at Warsaw University began demonstrations against governmental policies. While they battled police, the students shouted slogans such as "Long Live Czechoslovakia" and "Down With Censorship."²⁵ Meeting with the Warsaw Pact powers at Dresden in East Germany on March 23, Dubcek was warned that the negative processes occurring in the media could easily become counterrevolutionary.²⁶ The Czechoslovak media continued to taunt the surrounding socialist nations, even after Dubcek returned and informed the press that their reporting alarmed the Soviet Union.

The same day that Rude Pravo published its report on opposition parties, the "2,000 Words" was published. Written by author Ludvik Vaculik and signed by seventy other intellectuals, the article declared that the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia had done all that was possible, and it was now up to the population to carry the reforms into every level of society. It also called for the forced resignation, through resolutions, demon-

²⁵Jonathan Randal, "Warsaw Students Battle Police 2d Day In a Row," The New York Times, March 10, 1968, Sec. 1, pp. 1-15.

²⁶Schwartz, 200 Days, p. 118.

strations and strikes, of those men who had allowed the country to fall into economic and social stagnation.²⁷

The Soviet Union's Pravda, on July 11, 1968, denounced the "2,000 Words" in an article entitled "An Attack on the Socialist Foundations." The article described the "Words" as an invitation to join an anti-Soviet campaign carried out by "anti-Communists" and "counterrevolutionary forces" who called for violent action.²⁸

In the two weeks following the publication of the "2,000 Words," delegates, the majority of whom seemed to be committed to support the reforms proposed by Dubcek's liberal regime, were elected all over Czechoslovakia for the Czechoslovakian National Assembly which was scheduled to meet in September, 1968.²⁹

On July 9, Czechoslovakia refused to attend a conference of delegates from the Warsaw Pact forces meeting to discuss the threat to Communist rule in Czechoslovakia as revealed in the "2,000 Words," Czechoslovakia suggested bilateral talks, which were refused by the Soviets who chose instead to meet with East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria in Warsaw on July 14.

²⁷Joseph G. Whelan, Aspects of Intellectual Ferment and Dissent in Czechoslovakia, Prepared for the Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, June, 1969, pp. 137-141.

²⁸"Attack on the Socialist Foundations," Pravda, July 11, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 1; reprinted in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XIX (March - July, 1968), p. 3.

²⁹Richard Lowenthal, "Sparrow In the Cage," Problems of Communism, XVII (Nov., 1968), p. 14.

While the Warsaw Pact delegates were in session the Czechoslovakian press struck again. This time the press published an interview with Lieutenant General Vaclav Prchlik, head of the State Administration Department of the Central Committee in Czechoslovakia. In the press conference, Prchlik demanded a reorganization of the Warsaw Pact. He felt the Pact's members should be treated as equals, and should be protected against attacks from other members. This was a direct reference to the conference in Warsaw where the Warsaw Pact nations were meeting to discuss Czechoslovakia. As to the joint command of the Warsaw Pact, he suggested that it be changed to include marshals, generals and officers from all member nations in place of a strictly Soviet command. Non-Soviet officers, he complained, were simply liaison men without right of decision.³⁰

Two days later the Warsaw Letter to Czechoslovakia, sometimes called the Warsaw Ultimatum, was published in the form of a joint letter from the Warsaw Pact delegates. The letter charged the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia with permitting its leading role to be taken over by non-Communist groups, and allowing the control of the mass media to fall into the hands of counter-revolutionaries. It called on the Czechoslovak Communist Party to regain control of the mass media and join ranks with elements

³⁰Schwartz, 200 Days, p. 180.

in the country which would help destroy the anti-Communist forces. Author Richard Lowenthal interpreted the Warsaw Letter as a Soviet ultimatum. Either the Czechoslovak leadership would form a new majority from Conservatives, those who would respond to Soviet tutelage and revise its policy toward the press, or the Soviet Union and its allies would crush the counterrevolutionaries.³¹

The Warsaw Letter made it clear that the Czechoslovaks had gone beyond the accepted limits of socialist principles. As a result, Czechoslovak domestic reforms threatened socialism in other East European countries, and the interests of the entire Soviet socialist bloc were in danger.³²

The Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee wasted no time in replying to the Warsaw Letter. They denied that the "2,000 Words" threatened the Party National Front or socialist state. The Czechoslovaks refused to concede that the abolition of censorship, which had made the "2,000 Words" possible, had forfeited the leading role of the Communist Party.³³ The reply also attempted to assure the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact members that the Czechoslovak Communist Party could sustain its authority in Czechoslovakia, and that the communications media supported the Party's authority.

³¹Lowenthal, p. 15.

³²"The Czechoslovak Crisis" (editorial), Bulletin, p. 6.

³³Ello, p. 292.

. . . The abolition of censorship, freedom of expression are supported by the absolute majority of the people of all classes of our society. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia is trying to prove that it is capable of a different political leadership and management than by means of the condemned bureaucratic - police methods, mainly by the strength of its Marxist - Leninist ideas, of its program, its correct policy supported by all the people.³⁴

The Czechoslovaks thus continued to reflect an attitude of optimism and stubbornness during the last two conferences with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union responded in kind to Czechoslovak stubbornness by expressing a desire to meet with Dubcek, even after the Czech leaders had assured the Soviet Union of their ability to control the situation in their nation.

In an unprecedented conference the entire Soviet Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party met with the entire Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party at Cierna on the Czechoslovak-Soviet border. The Czechoslovak representatives had agreed to meet with the Soviets from July 28, 1968, through July 31, only after the Soviets agreed to hold the conference within Czechoslovakia.

The communique issued after the Cierna meeting did not give the details of the conference. The East German press reported later that the Czechs had agreed to several conditions which would help to restore the Soviet's faith in the Czechoslovak Communist

³⁴Ello, p. 293.

Party, but in reporting to his people, Dubcek stated that the Party would continue with its stated goals without any alterations.³⁵

The Soviet leadership was obviously not impressed with Dubcek's assurances that he could maintain control in his country. In a direct affront to the Czechoslovak reforms a top Pravda commentator, Yuri Zhukov, published an article entitled "Concerning A False Slogan." He stated that the concept of democratic socialism practiced by the Czechoslovaks in no way resembled the development of socialist democracy on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. It is, rather, a completely different, anti-Marxist political system, Zhukov charged.³⁶

Alexander Dubcek and Josef Smrkovsky, Chairman of the National Assembly, met for the last time before the invasion with the leaders of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and East Germany at Bratislava on August 3, 1968. After this last meeting of the top socialist leaders, the Soviet Union discovered that it too, was faced with a dilemma. The Soviets had a choice of using armed force to persuade the Czechoslovaks to come to terms, or of admitting to the watching world that the Soviets were unable to do more than simply suggest a desirable model for socialism. The

³⁵Schwartz, 200 Days, p. 195.

³⁶Yuri Zhukov, "Concerning A False Slogan," Pravda, July 26, 1968, Sec. 1, pp. 3-4; reprinted in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XX (August, 1968 - Jan., 1969), pp. 8-9.

latter choice would allow the socialist commonwealth nations to travel their own paths to socialism.³⁷ The official communique of the conference at one point hinted at the eventual outcome of the Czechoslovak situation. It stated that ". . . they (the Fraternal Communist parties) will never allow anyone to drive a wedge between the socialist states or to undermine the foundations of the socialist social system. . . ." ³⁸

The invasion became a reality in the early hours of August 21, 1968. It was not until after the invasion that the Soviet Union finally printed what they had hinted at for several months in their own press.

. . . But the insidiousness of the 'quiet revolution' is precisely that it has tried to hypnotize people with 'freedom of the press,' while having in fact turned the mass media into a tool of antisocialist ideological brainwashing and moral corruption. . . .³⁹

To the Western world this simply meant that the freedom to express independent and nationalistic ideas had led to differing opinions

³⁷Lawrence L. Whetten, "Crisis In Prague and Moscow," Bulletin, XVI (May, 1969), p. 30.

³⁸"Bratislava Communique," Pravda, August 4, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 1; reprinted in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XX (August, 1968 - Jan., 1969), p. 4.

³⁹Victor Mayevsky, Pravda, September 4, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 4; reprinted in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XX (August, 1968 - Jan., 1969), pp. 10-11.

between a socialist bloc nation and the Soviet Union, thus revealing to the world the vulnerability of the Soviet system. Given a chance to deviate from the Soviet socialist pattern, the Czechoslovakian nation developed a socialism which proved more desirable to many East European nations than the Soviet model.

CHAPTER II

The New Economic Model and the Drift

Toward the West

The fundamental reforms of the Dubcek era (January through August, 1968), included far-reaching changes in the economic sphere. The question of economic reforms played a definite role in the ousting of Antonin Novotny from the political scene in Czechoslovakia. As a product of Stalinist times, Novotny was just as reluctant to initiate economic change as he was to bring about political revision. Since 1948, Czechoslovakia, as a socialist bloc country, operated through a central economic plan controlled by the Communist Party and limited use of the market as a source of information for economic planning purposes. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's monolithic, political structure, based on the command of the Communist elite, expanded into economic areas. The Communist Party combined its political monopoly with complete economic control, making all economic development subject to political objectives and dogma.¹

Czechoslovakia found herself in an economic slump in the late 1950's due to the process of centralized economic planning. By

¹Michael Gamarnikow, "Political Patterns and Economic Reforms," Problems of Communism, XVIII (March, 1969), p. 12.

then most East European nations had acquired a sufficient degree of versatile industrialization, for the countries gradually emerged from a condition where there were acute scarcities, into a condition where prospective buyers could find most of the goods they sought. It was at this point that the centralizing command system began to break down.²

As the growth of effective consumer demand developed, in contrast to demand determined by the central planners, the inadequacies of the centralized planning system appeared. In the production of both consumer and industrial goods it became obvious that the output of such goods did not reflect the actual demand. Production eventually lost touch with market requirements, and the number of products undesired by Czechoslovak consumers began to increase. One Polish economic reporter observed that the overproduction of unwanted goods in the midst of still prevailing scarcities was only the most obvious indication of inefficiency and wastefulness of the system.³

The centralized planning system resulted in a reduction of the quality of production and also produced a technological lag. Consequently, the Soviet Union was afraid to rely on Czechoslovakia

²Garnarnikow, p. 13.

³Garnarnikow, p. 13; quoted from W. Brus, "On Certain Stipulations of Economic Progress," Zycie Gospodarcze (Warsaw), November 11, 1962.

for Russia's crucial needs. Czechoslovakia, however, remained dependent on the Soviet Union for many primary products. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic became an exploited colony of the Soviet Union, processing Soviet raw material, while she declined as a significant producer of quality goods.⁴ There were numerous other dissatisfactions arising from the outmoded economic system, such as artificial exchange rates for the currency and the disparity between prices and costs. These problems arose due to the Party's policy of basing its actions on ideological grounds rather than economic reasoning. As a result, Novotny was faced with continuous demands for change from students and intellectuals.

Economist Ota Sik, who eventually became a Deputy Premier under the new regime, made use of newspapers and television in his effort to depict Czechoslovakia's economic plight. According to his long lists of published statistics, Czechoslovakia exported heavy industrial products at less than one-half the production costs. He also charged that only one-third of the nation's manufactured goods met world market quality standards, whereas almost two-thirds of the nation's machinery was obsolete, and finally, that Czechoslovakia had one of the lowest ratings in Europe in housing construction.⁵

⁴Vaclav Holesovsky, "Planning Reforms in Czechoslovakia," Soviet Studies, XIX (April, 1968), p. 556.

⁵Harry Schwartz, Prague's 200 Days (New York, 1969), p. 170.

Novotny, eventually, had no choice but to attempt a solution to some of these pressing problems. The development of the New Economic Model was one of Novotny's half-hearted measures to appease his critics. The model, developed from the efforts of Doctor Ota Sik, went into effect in January, 1967. Since the model was granted only after considerable dilution, it had produced no helpful results a year later. The national standard of living had not risen. The desire of the Party to preserve its monopoly of power had limited the changes which might have occurred under the New Economic Model.⁶

Whereas the dogmatists, headed by Novotny, restricted all reforms to principles approved by the Soviets, the progressives, led by Dubcek in 1968, advocated a pragmatic program of economic reform for social progress which did not always meet ideological standards expected by the Soviet Union. Dubcek did not hesitate to place the blame for Czechoslovakia's economic ills on past Communist leaders and policies.

. . . over the years, difficulties piled up until they closed in a vicious circle . . . This led to a precipitated expansion of heavy industry, to a disproportionate demand on labour power, raw materials and to costly investments. Such an economic policy, enforced through directive administrative methods, no longer corresponded

⁶Kenneth Ames, "Reform and Reaction," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 39.

to the economic requirements and possibilities of the country and led to exhaustion of its material and human resources. . . . A more profound reason for keeping up the outlined methods of economic management were the deformation in the political system. Socialist democracy was not expanded in time, methods of revolutionary dictatorship deteriorated into bureaucracy and became an impediment to progress in all spheres of life in Czechoslovakia. And so, political mistakes were added to economic difficulties.⁷

The reformist government hoped to alleviate the discontent caused by former regimes by allowing the nation's people to share economic responsibilities. Economic reforms outlined in the Action Programme encouraged major societal groups to defend their economic interests.

. . . The programme of democratization of the economy includes particularly the provision of ensuring the independence of enterprises and enterprise groupings and their relative independence from state bodies, a full and real implementation of the right of the consumer to determine his consumption and his style of life, the right of a free choice of working activity, the right and real possibility of different groups of working people and different social groups to formulate and defend their economic interests in shaping the economic policy. . . .⁸

The New Economic Model made use of many features of a market economy that are familiar to the Western capitalist world. However, many parts of the model continued to be subjected to important

⁷Paul Ello (ed.), Czechoslovakia's Blueprint for "Freedom" (Washington, 1968), pp. 97-98.

⁸Ello, pp. 137-138.

restrictions, as the central planning authorities remained an influential factor in the economy.⁹

The fundamental reforms adopted into the New Economic Model were first developed by Sik from theories in his book, Plan and Market Under Socialism. He placed great emphasis on reestablishing relatively free market relations within the economy.

We can flatly state that no move toward more scientific planning methods would help - or would actually be scientific - if market relations are not used to solve conflicts of interest and to create genuine interest in optimum development of production.¹⁰

Sik's model advocated a socialist market which would resist any move toward monopolistic control of the market. Long-term centralist planning was limited to the volume of investment and production in the areas of heavy industry, raw materials, and energy. All other planning was to be made by lower management bodies based on various business, consumers, workers, and social interests. Only in broad overall planning would the economy be organized by a centralized command system composed of the Communist leaders.¹¹ The growing importance of the market in the

⁹Harry Shaffer, "An Economic Model In Eclipse," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 53.

¹⁰Shaffer, p. 52; quoted from Ota Sik, Plan and Market Under Socialism (Prague, 1967), p. 364.

¹¹Zdenek Suda, The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Baltimore, 1969), p. 90.

Czechoslovak economy was contradictory to Socialist reasoning and alarmed the strict Communist ideologues.

Another new attitude in the economic system proposed by the Czechoslovaks challenged traditional, socialist concepts. The practice of issuing a single and equal wage for labor without any consideration of the quantity, complexity, and importance of the labor performed was to be altered. Dubcek wished that wages might be based on the amount and importance of the work performed, and on the demand and supply of labor, rather than an official evaluation based on social worth. Within Dubcek's humanized, democratic society, technical experts and more highly educated specialists would receive greater income than skilled workers, who in turn would receive more pay than the unskilled laborers. In such a society of class differentiation, dogmatic socialists feared that resentment would develop between working groups. They were also alarmed that unequal wages might lead to inefficiency which would result in increased unemployment when production fell off. The existence of a pyramidal class society and unemployment would tend to weaken party unity.¹² Dubcek did not visualize any difficulties as a result of his revisionism, but felt his reforms would broaden personal contribution, as stated in the Action Programme.

¹²J. H. Huizinga, "The End of an Illusion," Problems of Communism, XVIII (July, 1969), p. 49.

. . . the main criterion for evaluating the status of people in society is how the person contributes towards social progress. The Party has often criticized equalitarian views, but in practice levelling has spread to an unheard of extent and this became one of the impediments to an intensive development of the economy and to raising the living standard. . . . Application of the principle of remuneration according to the quantity, quality and social usefulness of work calls for a de-levelling of incomes. It does not however mean neglecting the interests of citizens in the lowest income group. . . .¹³

The involvement of each enterprise within economic planning and management, coupled with the new policy on wage distribution, was intended to increase competition within the units of industrial management, so that each unit of industry would attempt to improve the quality of manufactured goods. Managers were free to dismiss unproductive workers and raise the material incentive of efficient laborers. Material interests of the workers would thereby affect and hopefully increase the productivity of the individual enterprises.¹⁴

The Czechoslovakian economic model also made use of technical, economic rationality rather than political considerations as a basis for foreign trade. A wider expansion of economic relations with the West was a possible outcome of such economic reasoning. Concern for the consumer was one reason for reform, but revival of foreign trade remained a vital interest if Czechoslovakia was

¹³Ello, pp. 107-108.

¹⁴Suda, p. 91.

to remain a healthy industrial nation. An important cause of Czechoslovakia's economic decline had been the failure in foreign trade and the nation's difficulties in achieving a balance of trade payments. It has been estimated that by the middle of 1968 the Soviet Union and other bloc partners owed Prague \$1,850,000,000 for products varying from heavy machinery to uranium and repayable to Czechoslovakia mostly in grain, crude oil, and other raw products.¹⁵ As a result of centralized economic planning and ideological considerations, Czechoslovakia had become a primary processor of Soviet raw materials, and had neglected her own development. The economic policies of the Dubcek regime were supposed to reduce the import needs and restore the quality of Czechoslovak goods, thereby increasing their value on Eastern and Western markets.

Czechoslovakia has few raw materials and little arable land but possesses a highly skilled labor force, and, before her economic decline, had a highly developed manufacturing industry. For this reason, she is more dependent upon the expansion of foreign commerce than other nations which are members of the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance.¹⁶ The Czechoslovaks were ready to improve their country's position by trading with any

¹⁵Isaac Don Levine, Intervention (New York, 1969), p. 29.

¹⁶Henryk Olsienkiewicz, "Czechoslovakia's Economic Dilemmas Under Soviet Tutelage," Bulletin, XVI (March, 1969), p. 8.

nation. As stated in the Action Programme, the pragmatic Czechs had relegated political and economic dogma to a position of less importance.¹⁷

. . . It is no secret that all socialist states are experiencing economic difficulties stemming from considerable lack of economic equilibrium . . . It may be doubted whether the socialist countries can overcome this lack of equilibrium simply by mutual assistance. . . . Czechoslovakia, too, will not be able to overcome the protracted crisis of her economy without buying machines and other goods from the West, without structural changes backed up by an enlivenment of economic relations with the more advanced states of Western Europe. . . .¹⁸

Czechoslovakia is an important link in the Communist chain of nations bordering on Western Europe. It is one of the most industrially advanced countries, and also is contiguous to West Germany. The Communist alliance considers Czechoslovakia an essential link in all political and military pacts, and a major part of the economic division of labor within the socialist bloc. The Czechoslovaks knew their nation's significance and also acknowledged their dependence on the Soviet Union. In 1968 the nation did not attempt to withdraw from her responsibilities; in fact, trade with the socialist nations rose by eleven percent.¹⁹

¹⁷Ello, p. 149.

¹⁸Stefan C. Stolte, "Comecon at the Crossroads?" Bulletin, XVI (March, 1969), p. 29; quoted from Radoslov Selucky, "Can Comecon Function," Prager Volkszeitung, Prague (August 2, 1968).

¹⁹Stefan C. Stolte, "The World Communist Conference and the New Direction of Soviet Foreign Policy," Bulletin, XVI (April, 1969), p. 20.

The Czechoslovak leadership specifically declared that the nation would continue to cooperate with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations, but preferably on a basis of rational economic planning and mutual profitability.

. . . The development of international economic relations will continue to be based on economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, particularly those aligned in the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. At the same time, however, it should be seen that the success of this cooperation will increasingly depend on the competitiveness of our products. . . . In our relations with the CMEA Council of Mutual Economic Assistance countries we shall strive for the fuller application of criteria of economic calculations and mutual advantage of exchange. . . .²⁰

Such an assurance was necessary in the Action Programme, especially in the light of the growth of amiable relations between West Germany and the East European nations.

West German diplomacy under the leadership of Chancellors Kurt Kiesinger and Willy Brandt moved toward a rapprochement with Eastern Europe. After Brandt abolished the Hallstein Doctrine, which prevented the German Federal Republic from establishing diplomatic relations with a government recognizing the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign state, relations with the socialist bloc were much easier to conduct.²¹ Rumania was the

²⁰Ello, pp. 141-149.

²¹James H. Wolfe, "West Germany and Czechoslovakia: The Struggle for Reconciliation," *Orbis*, XIV (Spring, 1970), p. 172.

first to establish diplomatic relations with West Germany in January, 1967, but the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was slower to respond. It was through improved cultural contacts with West Germany that a climate developed which eventually led to increased trade between the German Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia. In August, 1967, the two nations agreed to a two year trade agreement. From the Czechoslovakian point of view (Novotny was in power at that time), the agreement was solely to increase trade, and was never meant to be a settlement of political differences with West Germany. The question of a divided Germany was not at stake in the agreement.²²

In the beginning the 1967 trade agreement between Czechoslovakia and the German Federal Republic did not lead to a great deal of excitement within the Soviet Union. The exchange of trade missions between the countries was, the Soviets noted, on a restrictive scale. Czechoslovakia had waited a considerable amount of time before establishing the two year agreement with West Germany.²³ As further proof of the limited nature of the agreement, Czechoslovakia was considered a reliable member of the "iron triangle." Composed of Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland, the "iron triangle" was a military pact which operated

²²Wolfe, pp. 173-174.

²³Wolfe, p. 174.

as a part of the Warsaw Treaty Organization's security arrangements in Eastern Europe. The pact had been organized five months before the trade agreement.²⁴

The new West German policy which had led to the trade agreement, was based on the conviction that only through the German Federal Republic's active search for a detente in Europe could there be any realistic hope for eventual progress toward German national reunification.²⁵ After Dubcek's takeover (January, 1968) in Czechoslovakia, promises to the contrary could not convince the suspicious Russians of Prague's professed loyalty. The Soviets had been confident of Novotny's desire and ability to maintain the strong socialist chain of nations against the political advances of West Germany. The new Prague leadership, however, demonstrated no appreciable resistance against domestic pressures for a broader detente with West Germany.

The Soviet Union may have left Czechoslovakia no choice but to turn to the West for aid. During the liberalization in Czechoslovak policies Prague had repeatedly requested a large, hard-currency loan from the Soviet Union to bolster the Czechoslovak economy. The Soviets used the promise of a loan as a means of obtaining political concessions from Dubcek. Alexander Dubcek

²⁴Levine, p. 15.

²⁵Melvin Croan, "Czechoslovakia, Ulbricht and the German Problem," Problems of Communism, XVIII (January, 1969), p. 3.

was unwilling to alter his humane socialist reform, however, and the loan never materialized. If Dubcek had been able to remain in power, the money required would probably have come from West Germany, and deeper and broader ties between the two nations could have resulted.²⁶

After January, 1968, Dubcek did not go to great lengths to ease Soviet anxiety. His westward leanings were a positive sign to the Soviet Union that Bonn's new policy toward the East European nations would succeed. The Action Programme stated that the geographical position and needs of an industrial country, such as Czechoslovakia, made it necessary for a more active European policy aimed at creating coexistence on a peaceful basis with capitalist and other nations. As expressed in the Action Programme, Czechoslovakia planned to proceed in her foreign relations with the attitude that two German nations existed. The Czechoslovaks did not deny that the German Democratic Republic was an important peace element in Europe. Czechoslovakia further recognized the necessity of aiding the forces of political realism in the German Federal Republic, and resisting German neo-Nazi and revanchist tendencies.²⁷

The Czechoslovak response to West Germany was strong enough that the Soviet Union felt its security threatened. Czechoslovak

²⁶Richard Lowenthal, "Sparrow In the Cage," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 10.

²⁷Ello, pp. 173-175.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiri Hajek reflected this attitude in an address to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly on June 11, 1968.

We are for a realistic view. While we are studying the present rise of neo-Nazism in the German Federal Republic, we are not closing our eyes either to the expressions of a realistic appreciation of realities and prospects of development, which are making their way also in the ruling circles of the German Federal Republic.²⁸

To the Soviets, the West German leader's support of Dubcek's relaxed political policies and decentralized economy, suggested that the liberalization trend in Eastern Europe was basically a form of revanchist politics.²⁹ The Russians were not alone in their insecurity, Prague's new soft line toward Bonn also frightened East Germany. The rapprochement of West Germany with Eastern Europe could create differences within the Eastern network of military and economic alliances, and lead to the possible isolation of East Germany.³⁰

The German citizens in both the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic saw the trend in Czechoslovakia as a force which could help weaken the dictatorship in East Germany.

²⁸Schwartz, p. 172.

²⁹John R. Thomas, "U.S. - East European Relations: Strategic Issues," Orbis, XII (Fall, 1968), p. 757.

³⁰Lowenthal, p. 7.

If the strong nationalistic forces within Czechoslovakia spread throughout the Eastern European area, it could create conditions favorable to an eventual reunification of the two Germanies.³¹ It was the dangerous liberal, political infection from Czechoslovakia that worried Moscow as well as East German Communist Party leader Walter Ulbricht. Infiltration by Czechoslovak liberal reforms into the socialist bloc could result in a popular demand for greater internal freedom within the various countries, and the downfall of conservative leadership. Such an alteration in the European balance of power could permit reunification and another German march to the East.³² A common distrust and fear of an aggressive West Germany helped bind the Eastern European nations together with the Soviet Union, and the Soviet and East German leaders did not wish that these ties be weakened.³³

West Germany's Eastern policy was viewed by the Soviets as an attempt to recapture the prewar German influence in the Eastern European nations and thus destroy Russian hegemony. The Eastern European area was militarily strategic and politically sensitive enough to awaken Soviet fears.³⁴ The cohesion of the Soviet

³¹Wolfe, p. 179.

³²Vernon V. Aspaturian, "Soviet Aims In East Europe," Current History, Vol. 59 (October, 1970), p. 267.

³³Lowenthal, p. 7.

³⁴Croan, p. 4.

sphere of interest in Eastern Europe was basic to Soviet foreign policy. Any West German encroachment into this area threatened vital Soviet interests. Moscow, therefore, favored a tough stand against West Germany, which jeopardized the Czechoslovak leadership's efforts to expand trade relations with the West.³⁵

The logical course of action for Moscow and East Germany was to discredit the policies of Czechoslovakia and isolate West Germany from Eastern Europe, at least until Czechoslovakia could be persuaded to change her ways. Poland favored such action after the Czechoslovak inspired student demonstrations which, if they should spread northward, threatened to undermine Polish Communist leader Wladyslaw Gomulka's position in favor of his more nationalistic rivals.³⁶

The East Germans did not hesitate in launching their attack on the liberalizing Czechs. The East German press began its broadcasts against Czechoslovakia in March, and taking the Soviet media's criticism of Alexander Dubcek as a clue, the German Democratic Republic began jamming Prague's German language broadcasts because they reported on the various reforms taking place in Czechoslovakia. East Germany also restricted the right of its citizens to travel in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and was

³⁵Croan, p. 4.

³⁶Lowenthal, p. 10.

among the first nations to condemn the relationship between Czechoslovakia and West Germany.³⁷ In an East Berlin address, ideological chief Kurt Hager complained that West German propaganda centers openly expressed their sympathy with the Czechoslovak journalist's attacks on the Central Committee and the leading role of the Party in Czechoslovakia. To the Soviets this was simply another form of revanchism.³⁸

According to a secret memorandum circulated among the top East German leaders in May, 1968, Ulbricht and his backers had decided that the situation in Czechoslovakia had gotten out of hand. The memorandum, published by Literarni Listy in Czechoslovakia on May 30, 1968, accused the Action Programme of working against the foundations of socialism. This East German memorandum contained all the arguments the Soviet press would later use to justify the invasion. The East Germans charged that when the Czech Communist Party surrendered absolute control of domestic matters the situation ceased to be an internal problem. Therefore, the socialist countries were justified in not remaining indifferent to developments in Czechoslovakia and would respond according to their best interests.³⁹

³⁷Croan, p. 3.

³⁸Ames, p. 43; quoted from Kurt Hager, Neues Deutschland, March 27, 1968.

³⁹Francois Fejto, "Moscow and Its Allies," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 36; published in Literarni Listy (Prague), May 30, 1968.

The campaign to discredit Western overtures toward the bloc countries continued until the Soviet intervention in August. The Warsaw Letter, signed by the five invading Warsaw Pact nations and dispatched to the Prague government in July, was the last major warning of the Warsaw Pact member's concern over West German infiltration into the socialist bloc nations. The letter charged that certain Czechoslovakian politicians were responsive to the revanchist advances from the German Federal Republic. The Czechoslovak reply to the letter denied the allegations and pointed out that in their relations with the West Germans, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was the last socialist nation to encourage mutual economic interests. Other socialist bloc countries had established relations with West Germany much earlier than Czechoslovakia without having caused undue fears.⁴⁰ It seemed that the Soviet Union was reprimanding the Czech nation for dealing with a country with which the Soviet Union itself was involved. The Soviet Union obviously did not consider Czechoslovakia trustworthy enough to conduct its own affairs outside the Soviet bloc.

As the nations of Eastern Europe entered into an era of consumerism they lost any interest they may have had for the jargon of socialist dogma. At the same time there developed among these states a more realistic view of the West. The Russians considered

⁴⁰Ello, p. 284.

this new realism and the necessary reforms that accompanied it, a threat to Russian security. The economic reforms planned for Czechoslovakia could not be termed counterrevolutionary, however, as the reforms did not advocate the end of socialist ownership of production, and retained basic centralized planning functions. As further evidence of Czechoslovak loyalty, the Action Programme repeatedly pledged cooperation with the Comecon members and never attempted to withdraw from the economic partnership of the East European States.⁴¹

As the New Economic Model encouraged an active participation at all levels of production, special interest groups developed. The ability of these groups to evolve into powerful contenders for domestic political power was obvious. Most Czechoslovaks realized this possibility when the New Economic Model became effective for the first time in 1967. Professor Petr Pithart of Prague University was aware of the possible results of economic reform when he stated that

. . . If today we are about to carry out very significant changes in the system of economic management, then obviously, sooner or later, these changes will have to be reflected in our own political system as well.⁴²

⁴¹Shaffer, p. 54.

⁴²Gamarnikow, p. 12; interview with Professor Petr Pithart of Prague University, Radio Bratislava, May 22, 1967.

Fundamental economic reform in Czechoslovakia caused Soviet apprehension, but the Soviets dreaded most the political repercussions of economic reform. Just as a liberated press uncovered government secrets and invited independent thinking, economic revisions, as they progressed, would affect the political system. Far-reaching changes in the economy were too closely connected with the general liberalizing trend in the entire socialist system. The Soviet Union sensed the danger in this pattern of things to her East European hegemony.

If economic reforms finally resulted in increased democratization, consumer demand would become greater. What the government and domestic industry could not supply, the public would wish to try and obtain elsewhere. The Soviet Union and other socialist nations with their own interests to protect could not afford to permit a nation as politically, militarily, and economically important as Czechoslovakia to expand her foreign trade with West Germany. West Germany was too eager to gain a strong foothold in the Communist camp, and the people of Czechoslovakia were too responsive and willing to revise their socialist ways.

CHAPTER III

August 20, 1968: A Lesson In Military Expedience

The Soviet Union skillfully made use of an opportunity to disperse the ideals and political control of Communism during and after World War II. A string of Eastern European nations stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea gradually fell under both the political and military control of the Soviet Union as a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and western Europe. These nations, including Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, not only served as economic and ideological aids to the Soviet Union, but were also militarily important as a strategic zone offering defensive and offensive advantages. With the support of Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria in the Balkan area, the Soviet Union gained influence in the Mediterranean. Through Poland, East Germany, Rumania, and Bulgaria the Soviet Union was also able to exercise greater control of the Baltic and Black Seas. The Soviets were thus in a better position to plan naval operations and supply troops in Europe by sea because of their relations with the East European nations.¹

¹Joseph J. Baritz, "The Warsaw Pact and the Kremlin's European Strategy," Bulletin, XVII (May, 1970), p. 17.

Soviet Communist leader Joseph Stalin saw the construction of the socialist buffer zone as a basic protective measure for the Soviet Union against Western invasions. After Stalin the Soviet military and political leaders continued to concern themselves with the buildup of the military strength of socialist nations as protection against foreign intruders and as ideological strongholds for Communism. The formation of the Warsaw Pact in May, 1955, did not alter the basic significance of the buffer zone, but it did provide a basis for keeping Soviet troops in many of the East European nations. Czechoslovakia, although a member of the Warsaw Pact, did not have permanent Soviet garrisons on its soil as did East Germany, Hungary, and Poland.²

No real effort to integrate the Warsaw Pact's forces or to strengthen its armies was attempted immediately following the formation of the Pact. After 1960, however, Moscow began to show an interest in the integration of the Warsaw Pact forces. The allied armed forces of the Eastern bloc were modernized, and the East European armies were included in the strategic maneuvers of the Soviet forces. The Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Council began to convene more often as the Soviet Union tried to give greater significance to the Pact as a military - political union of Soviet - bloc countries. The change in the Soviet attitude

²Zdenek Suda, The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (Baltimore, 1969), p. 76.

toward the Warsaw Pact developed due to the doctrine advanced by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in connection with nuclear deterrent, and as a result of the Soviet desire to make the Pact a more effective instrument of foreign policy. The Soviets also saw the need to strengthen the bloc's ideological and political unity as a means of supporting its potential for war. Closer military ties with East European countries would stop the trend toward polycentrism and the shift toward a more independent position within the Communist state system.³

The disintegration of the Warsaw Pact was a Soviet concern which may have contributed to the final decision to invade Czechoslovakia. The Warsaw Pact had to be a reliable, flexible, alliance system if it was to be used as an integral part of the Soviet defense system, and a useful instrument of foreign policy. Czechoslovakia's liberalization of the press and her friendly attitude toward the West made the Soviet Union suspicious of Czechoslovak loyalty. The lack of reliability of the Pact members weakened the strength of the Warsaw Pact's effectiveness.

Czechoslovakia was a key member of the string of Soviet satellites because of her key geographic location.⁴ It divided

³Baritz, pp. 17-21.

⁴Lawrence L. Whetten, "Military Aspects of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia," World Today, Vol. 25 (February, 1969), p. 66; hereafter to be referred to as "Military Aspects."

Eastern Europe into a "northern tier" of East Germany and Poland, and a "southern tier" of Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia. The loss of Czechoslovakia as a vital link in the chain would divide Eastern Europe. She was also the only Eastern European nation that bordered on both West Germany and the Soviet Union, and was the only Warsaw Pact state that shared a border with two non-Communist states. The failure of Czechoslovakia to honor the Warsaw Pact alliance and the nation's acceptance of Western ways in her political and economic dealings would thus threaten the unity of the Soviet socialist bloc.

The need to strengthen the military preparedness and political unity of the Soviet - led Warsaw Pact worried the Soviet Union, especially when the Soviets viewed the West German overtures toward the East as "militarism, revanchism, and neo-Nazism."⁵ From the moment the relations between Eastern Europe and the German Federal Republic began to improve the assured reliability of the buffer states became urgent.

The question of military reliability was even more acute due to a flaw in the Soviet Union's chain of socialist nations. The Soviet Union was unable to station permanent troops in Czechoslovakia. A permanent base of Soviet troops on the border of Czechoslovakia and the German Federal Republic was essential

⁵Richard Lowenthal, "Sparrow In the Cage," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 6.

because the Russians were convinced of the unwillingness of the Czechoslovak troops to assume their share of the defense of the frontier. The August, 1968, invasion of Czechoslovakia was justified as an occasion for finishing the Russian defensive perimeter.⁶

At Dresden in East Germany on March 23, 1968, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was asked to indicate Czechoslovakia's loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and his nation's approval of the political stance of the United Soviet Socialist Republic by admitting Warsaw Pact troops into Czechoslovakia for large-scale, joint, field maneuvers. Dubcek resisted the request, but the Soviet military leaders did not relent.⁷ The Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, Marshal Ivan Yakubovsky, traveled to Prague on March 11 to discuss the stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia on the West German border. If he failed to obtain permission for such an action, he was to propose the holding of joint Warsaw Pact maneuvers on Czechoslovak soil. Evidently his efforts failed. Yakubovsky journeyed to Warsaw in April and then to East Germany, after which the Soviet Union stopped shipments of wheat under contract to Czechoslovakia.⁸

⁶Whetten, "Military Aspects," p. 60.

⁷Lawrence L. Whetten, "Crises In Prague and Moscow," Bulletin, XVI (May, 1969), p. 27; hereafter to be referred to as "Crises."

⁸Isaac Don Levine, Intervention (New York, 1969), pp. 23-24.

Dubcek flew to Moscow on May 4, 1968, to meet with Soviet Communist leaders. This was only one of numerous occasions when the Soviets warned Dubcek to slow his process of liberalization, and to regain the control of his nation. The Soviets felt he had surrendered to the counterrevolutionaries. Upon his return to Prague the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia failed to inform the people of his nation of the seriousness of Moscow's attitude toward events in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek also neglected to tell the people that the Soviet Union was pressing to have its troops enter Czechoslovakia for maneuvers, nor did he reveal the Soviet's demand, supported by Poland and East Germany, for permanent stationing of troops on Czechoslovak territory. From the eventual developments in Czechoslovakia it seems certain that Dubcek agreed in Moscow at the May meeting to large-scale Warsaw Pact maneuvers inside his nation.⁹

On May 8 Prague was host to a distinguished military delegation from the Soviet Union, followed by another delegation of top-ranking Soviet military leaders who arrived in Prague nine days later. Members of this military group included Defense Minister Andrei Grechko, Central Political Department Head of the Army and Navy, General A. A. Yepishev, and Marshal P. K. Koshevoy. On the day of their arrival Soviet Premier Aleksei

⁹Harry Schwartz, Prague's 200 Days (New York, 1969), p. 148.

Kosygin flew to Prague supposedly for a combination holiday and medical checkup. The Russian military visitors, according to an official announcement, were in the country to discuss the state of the Soviet and Czech armies.¹⁰

Units of Soviet, Polish, East German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian troops with tanks and airplanes arrived in Czechoslovakia on May 31 to take part in the joint, Warsaw Pact maneuvers. By sending tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks into Czechoslovakia, Moscow hoped to frighten liberal elements in the country, and perhaps influence the Czechoslovak political leaders into agreeing to some of the Soviet demands. In all probability Dubcek finally felt he had to admit the troops or they would come as invaders.¹¹

The maneuvers were completed by June 30, 1968, and the Bulgarian, Hungarian, East German and Polish troops were withdrawn from Czechoslovakia. The majority of the Soviet troops remained, however, for a variety of excuses reported by the Soviet High Command. Marshal Yakubovsky, Commander of the Warsaw Pact forces, alleged that the Czechoslovak units performed unsatisfactorily in the Pact exercises in June and thus were incapable of defending the Western frontier. He wanted more

¹⁰Levine, p. 26.

¹¹Schwartz, p. 165.

maneuvers on Czechoslovak soil for additional training of the Czechoslovak soldiers. If the Czechoslovak troops were incapable of defending their borders they jeopardized the national security of all Warsaw Pact nations. The Soviets felt this assumption entitled Yakubovsky to take measures to reinforce the Western sector, that is to permanently station troops in the area. The Czechoslovaks remained firm, however, and urged the removal of all Soviet armed units.¹²

Fearing its own strategic vulnerability, the German Democratic Republic supported Soviet demands against the Czechoslovaks. If the Czechoslovaks refused to accept competent troops, a possible revision of the territorial status quo in Eastern Europe could occur. The East Germans feared the Bonn government's amiable attitude toward Czechoslovakia.¹³

The Soviet Union continued to pressure the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Marshal Yakubovsky returned to Czechoslovakia on July 15 and rescheduled the departure of the Soviet troops from July 13 until July 21. The tactics of the Soviet High Command prompted the news conference comments of General Vaclav Prchlik that same day.¹⁴ General Prchlik, director of the State Admini-

¹²Whetten, "Crises," p. 28.

¹³James H. Wolfe, "West Germany and Czechoslovakia: The Struggle for Reconciliation," Orbis, XIV (Spring, 1970), p. 177.

¹⁴Levine, p. 36.

stration Department of the Central Committee in Czechoslovakia, criticized the Soviet Union's hegemony in the Warsaw Pact and called for equality of all member nations. He also focused attention to the fact that only Soviet officers made up the joint command of the Pact. Finally he noted that nothing in the Warsaw Pact Treaty gave any state the right to station troops on the territory of any other state without permission.¹⁵ Prchlik's opposition to Soviet military preponderance in the Warsaw Pact posed a threat that might eventually weaken the Soviet Union's ideological and political hold over the East European states and served as a dangerous example of polycentrism. With each critical charge published in Czechoslovakia, especially by high ranking military leaders, the Soviet Union felt she had stronger grounds for questioning the intentions and capabilities of Czechoslovakia as a defender of a vital section of the iron triangle.¹⁶

Czechoslovakia's reply to the Warsaw Ultimatum was formally entitled Standpoint of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the Letters of Five Communist and Worker's Parties. In this document the Czechoslovaks adamantly restated their opinion of the Warsaw Pact's activities.

¹⁵Schwartz, p. 180.

¹⁶Baritz, p. 22.

. . . The staff exercises of the allied forces of the Warsaw Treaty on the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is concrete proof of our faithful fulfillment of our alliance commitments. In order to ensure its successful course we took the necessary measures on our side. Our people as well as members of the Army welcome the Soviet and other allied troops on the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The highest representative of the party and the Government documented by their participation, what importance we attach to it and the interest we have in it. Obscurities and some doubts in the minds of our public occurred only after repeated changes of the time of departure of the allied troops from the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic after the conclusion of the exercise. . . .¹⁷

The last of the Soviet troops left Czechoslovak territory on August 3, 1968. On the same day that Soviet troops were reported to have departed the country the Czechoslovakian leaders met with the Warsaw Pact members in Bratislava. It was obvious from the communique issued after the conference that the Soviet Union was not yet convinced of the security of its sphere of influence. The Bratislava document emphasized foreign policy and security considerations. The communique blamed the dangerous international situation on aggressive West German policies which threatened the security of socialist states. It emphasized the significance of the Warsaw Treaty and called for efforts to consolidate political and military cooperation within that

¹⁷Paul Ello (ed.), Czechoslovakia's Blueprint for "Freedom," (Washington, 1968), p. 285.

organization.¹⁸ Prague's refusal to fulfill the Bratislava agreement would indicate Moscow's inability to provide a common line for all Pact members and the failure of the Warsaw Pact as a unified defense of all the member's interests.¹⁹

There was another advantage for the Soviets if they could find a way to permanently station troops in Czechoslovakia. The Soviets felt the success of their military concepts depended upon coordination and cooperation of the Warsaw Pact armed forces. The Czechoslovak liberation process led that nation further away from the Soviet political stance, so that the Soviet Union and other orthodox socialist nations could not rely upon Czechoslovakia to support the Warsaw Pact activities. It became important that reliable Warsaw Pact troops be placed in each of the Warsaw Pact nations.

Prior to 1967, the Soviets had relied upon a policy of "massive retaliation," which meant the possibility of a Soviet nuclear retaliation in the event of a Western attack against the Soviet bloc. After 1967, the Soviet military moved away from "massive retaliation" to a policy of "flexible response." The Warsaw Pact's new policy of "flexible response" required troop

¹⁸"Bratislava Communique," Pravda, September 26, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 1; reprinted in the Current Digest of The Soviet Press, XIX (October 16, 1968), p. 11.

¹⁹Whetten, "Crises," p. 30.

formations on the East - West border capable of responding effectively and reliably to any attacking combination. The Soviets preferred that the retaliatory force include Russian troops.²⁰ The new strategy also made the threat of Soviet aggression more tangible because Soviet placement of troop divisions in Czechoslovakia would tilt the balance in Europe toward the Soviet Union.²¹

Czechoslovakia's refusal to accept foreign troops further weakened the effectiveness of the Warsaw Pact by creating a lack of nuclear preparedness in a vital area of the socialist bloc. If political differences between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia increased due to Czechoslovakia's liberal policies, and Russian reservations on that nation's reliability remained, then the Soviets would probably not have stationed nuclear weapons in Czechoslovakia if the need arose. The Soviet Union and its allies probably agreed that Czechoslovakia would hesitate to support a Soviet nuclear-risk confrontation. If the Soviet political and military leaders did not have enough confidence in Dubcek's government to believe that Czechoslovakia would and could defend its vital sector on the East-West front, then Prague would certainly not be included on highly sensitive security

²⁰John P. Fox, "Czechoslovakia 1968 and 1938," Contemporary Review, Vol. 214 (March, 1969), pp. 123-124.

²¹Major E. Hinterhoff, "Military Implications of the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia," Contemporary Review, Vol. 213 (November, 1968), p. 240.

matters and intelligence data. The cohesion and security of the Warsaw Pact was, therefore, further damaged.²²

Czechoslovakia also endangered the Soviet's nuclear productive capabilities. Czechoslovakia was a major source of uranium ore for the Soviet Union. A policy of neutrality, or the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, as a result of Czechoslovakia's course of liberalization could have caused the Soviets to lose this source of uranium; a loss which would have been a blow to her nuclear potential.²³

The intervention in Czechoslovakia gave the Kremlin two highly important strategic advantages. Soviet military commanders were able to station Warsaw Pact divisions permanently on Czechoslovak soil in a more favorable position in respect to the German Federal Republic. From their new vantage point on the border, the Soviet Union was in a better position to put pressure on West Germany to frustrate its policy of rapprochement with the countries of Eastern Europe.²⁴ Additionally, the success of the Soviet Union's military actions, responsive or aggressive, would be assured with the placement of reliable troops in Czechoslovakia.

²²Whetten, "Military Aspects," pp. 62-65.

²³Hinterhoff, p. 235.

²⁴Baritz, p. 24.

CHAPTER IV

Intervention

The Bratislava Conference on August 3, 1968, between Czechoslovakia and the five Warsaw Pact members, was the last formal meeting before the invasion. Concerned about the Czech model of socialism, the Bratislava meeting may have been the Soviet Union's way of providing a last chance for Czechoslovakia, and a solution short of invasion. As at Cierna, the Soviets made clear at Bratislava what they expected from the Dubcek government. It was then up to Alexander Dubcek to provide some precise evidence that he was attempting to moderate his reform program. If the Soviets failed to obtain concessions from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, they would lose stature in the eyes of the world as a nation able to control events in its own sphere of influence. The fact that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic did not attempt to compromise with the Soviet Union after Bratislava forced the Soviet leaders to a direct action course. The moderate Soviet Politburo members may have been persuaded to agree to intervention through the Leninist concept that forceful action would permit some of the Czechoslovak reform to be salvaged and reconstructed as a Soviet plan of reform.¹

¹James H. Billington, "Force and Counterforce in Eastern Europe," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 47 (October, 1968), p. 30.

Another view of the situation suggests that the opportunity given Czechoslovakia after Bratislava may have been less than a second chance. It is possible that the Soviet leaders were not expecting Dubcek and his fellow Czechoslovak officials to finally convert to the orthodox Communist line, but were looking instead for growing opposition from within the Czechoslovak Communist Party to give the Soviets an excuse for invasion. This explanation seems to be more plausible as Richard Lowenthal and Harry Schwartz, experienced Soviet observers, agree that the Soviet decision to intervene must have been made a month before Bratislava, at the end of June after the "2,000 Words."² The Bratislava Communique, issued after the conference of August 3, 1968, also suggested that a decision to intervene in Czechoslovak affairs had been made. The general text of the communique gave the impression that the Soviet Union and its allies were dissatisfied with Alexander Dubcek's refusal to control events in his nation. The most ominous statement of the text hinted at what was to come. The traditional diplomatic language of "non-interference in each other's internal affairs," was replaced with the underlined phrase, "the principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and national independence, territorial integrity, and fraternal mutual

²Richard Lowenthal, "Sparrow In the Cage," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), pp. 14, 21.

assistance and solidarity" as a basis for the cooperation of the signers of the document.³

After the publication of the "2,000 Words," on June 27, 1968, a military move against Czechoslovakia was favored by hard-line Communists in Moscow, East Berlin, and Warsaw. Of the political leaders, the main advocates of the intervention at this time were the "second line" Politburo members, such as Ukrainian leader Pyotr Shelest and Soviet Communist Party Secretary Andrei Kirilenko.⁴ On the moderate side, according to Robert Littell, editor of The Czech Black Book, were Soviet Politburo members Aleksei Kosygin, Mikhail Suslov, Nikolai Podgorny, and Gennadi Voronov.⁵ Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin was believed to have opposed intervention because it would forfeit much of his progress in working for a detente with the United States. Mikhail Suslov was also believed to be against any military action in Czechoslovakia because of the problems it would cause at a meeting of a majority of the world's Communist parties in Moscow, November 25, 1968. He had worked for years to establish such a meeting, and an

³"Bratislava Communique," Pravda, September 26, 1968, Sec. 1, p. 1; reprinted in the Current Digest of the Soviet Press, XIX (October 16, 1968), p. 11.

⁴Anatole Shub, "Lessons of Czechoslovakia," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 47 (January, 1969), p. 267.

⁵Robert Littell, editor, The Czech Black Book (New York, 1969), p. vii.

invasion might hurt the chances of reunifying a majority of the Communist parties under Soviet leadership.⁶

The Czechoslovak problem was thus a source of controversy within the Soviet Union. In the end the Soviet political leaders failed to win over Czechoslovakia either diplomatically or ideologically. Any solution to the Czechoslovak problem could only come from a quick and successful military operation.⁷ The political crisis in the eastern socialist bloc coincided with a fundamental change in the Soviet strategic thinking, as the Soviet military leadership guided the Soviet Union into a policy of "flexible response," rather than "massive retaliation." Eventually it was the Soviet political leadership which was pushed into a military invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet military leadership approved their planning.⁸

The fact that the Soviet Union finally chose to invade despite the possible negative reaction to such action, indicated that state and imperial interests were much more important than ideological ones. In the area of national security the Soviet military and political leaders were fairly unanimous.⁹ The

⁶Harry Schwartz, Prague's 200 Days, (New York, 1969), p. 179.

⁷Vernon V. Aspaturian, "The Aftermath of the Czech Invasion," Current History, Vol. 55 (November, 1968), p. 308.

⁸John P. Fox, "Czechoslovakia 1968 and 1938," Contemporary Review, Vol. 214 (March, 1969), p. 124.

⁹Joseph J. Baritz, "The Warsaw Pact and the Kremlin's European Strategy," Bulletin, XVII (May, 1970), p. 23.

Soviet Union's hegemony within the Eastern European countries was very much a part of Russian state interests. The Soviet leaders were willing to sacrifice their nation's "moral" prestige and intervene in Czechoslovakia, rather than risk the loss of power or influence over any part of the socialist nations, thereby endangering its own position in Europe.¹⁰ In the Sunday Times edition of September 1, 1968, Soviet observer John Erickson emphasized the importance of Soviet state interests and their relation to ideological concerns when he stated,

. . . the events of the intervention demonstrate once again that when Soviet security considerations are at stake, the word of the generals is weighty and usually final. It is not that they confuse security and ideological issues: they just find them conveniently conjoined.¹¹

There is at least one Soviet observer who thinks Soviet security considerations were only a pretext for invasion. His reasoning is that the leaders of the five invading countries confused their personal and partisan interests with those of their respective states. Walter Ulbricht of the German Democratic Republic, Wladyslaw Gomulka of Poland, Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union, Janos Kadar of Hungary, and Todor Zhivkov of

¹⁰Vera Pirozhkova, "The Recent Events in Czechoslovakia and the Conflict Between East and West," Bulletin, XVII (August, 1970), p. 9

¹¹Fox, p. 127.

Bulgaria were concerned with the security of their own personal regimes and felt that the spread of liberal ideas from Czechoslovakia would create an atmosphere in which they could not survive.¹²

The invasion of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic occurred in the final hours of August 20, 1968. Forcibly ending the Czechoslovak liberal government without stating a valid reason was not the Soviet way of conducting its affairs. The Soviet Union and its allies claimed to have entered Czechoslovakia at the invitation of that nation's party and government leaders.¹³ Once the invasion to subdue the counterrevolutionaries was accomplished, the Soviet Union expected the members of the Czechoslovak state and party organization who were Soviet sympathizers to form a majority against First Secretary Dubcek, forcing Czechoslovak President Ludvik Svoboda to appoint a new government, but the Soviet Union completely misjudged the situation in Prague. Czech collaborators were available to form a Quisling government, but any claims of legitimacy deserved little credence. The men who supposedly extended the Soviet invitation could not be found. President Svoboda refused to sign any document agreeing to the invasion, and the Czechoslovak people certainly did not welcome the invading soldiers with open arms.¹⁴

¹²Francois Fejto, "Moscow and Its Allies," Problems of Communism, XVII (November, 1968), p. 36.

¹³Isaac Don Levine, Intervention (New York, 1969), p. 57.

¹⁴Lowenthal, p. 14.

N. Stepan Chervonenko, the Soviet Union's ambassador to Prague, seemed to be the official who had convinced the Soviet leaders that a legitimate majority willing to form a new government could be found in Prague, and that Soviet assistance would be welcomed once the troops were present in Czechoslovakia. The dogmatic Soviet Communist leaders kept in touch with Ambassador Chervonenko throughout the Czechoslovak liberalization campaign. It was also Chervonenko who reported that a growing discontent was present in the Czechoslovak Communist Party due to Dubcek's failure to resist revisionist activities in that country. This information was probably an important factor in the Soviet decision to invade, rather than any particular action by First Secretary Dubcek. Feeling that the invasion would be accepted by the legitimate organs of state, the Politburo chose to intervene with the purpose of stifling unrest in Czechoslovakia and preventing the spread of liberalism which threatened the unity of the socialist bloc.¹⁵

Walter Ulbricht and the other top-ranking Communists in the German Democratic Republic favored some kind of action to end the activities in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, but whether or not Ulbricht influenced the Soviet Union to invade is not known. One thing is certain. The East German press campaign against Czechoslovak liberalization was extremely harsh, and in a secret memorandum circulated among the top East German leaders in the

¹⁵Lowenthal, pp. 21-22.

fifth month of the liberal Czechoslovak regime, the Czechoslovak situation was considered as catastrophic.

. . . The counterrevolution is on the verge of winning . . . A return to the prewar bourgeois regime is being proposed, in principle, by the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which is implicitly directed against the foundations of socialism . . . Things have reached the point where the situation has ceased to be an internal problem of Czechoslovakia. . . . The Czechoslovak government is thus violating its treaty obligation, and is guilty of treason against its allies. The socialist countries cannot remain indifferent in the face of this situation. The provisions of the Warsaw Pact make possible an intervention which would be in keeping with the interests of the socialist countries and accordingly could not be described as interference. However, in the event of an intervention, which might include military intervention, collective measures will have to be taken.¹⁶

The East Germans were not pleased with the Dubcek regime, and from the text of the memorandum they seemed to be willing to take any action necessary against Czechoslovakia defection.

At the time of the crisis in Czechoslovakia, the foreign policy of the United Soviet Socialist Republic was directed at preserving the unity of the Eastern European bloc as a sphere of influence. Czechoslovakia and the other socialist bloc nations were encouraged to extend their political and economic activities beyond the area of the Soviet bloc by the appeals from West Germany. To counter any friendly approaches toward the socialist nations the Soviet Union maintained a hostile attitude toward

¹⁶Fejto, p. 36; quoted from Literarni Listy, Prague, May 30, 1968.

West Germany. East Germany was in complete agreement with the Soviet response to Bonn's policies, as the German Democratic Republic was one eastern nation which had much to lose if the West Germans gained a foothold in Eastern Europe. To the extent that both nations feared the loss of their position and power if Czechoslovakia was responsive to West German overtures, the Kremlin may have been receptive to East German Communist Party leader Walter Ulbricht's counsel on a solution to the Czechoslovak situation.¹⁷

East Germany may have also contributed to the Russian decision to intervene in Czechoslovakia because the Soviet Politburo feared that the East German political leaders would not have been able to resist the pressures for reform first generated by Czechoslovakia. The desire for greater internal autonomy in East Germany and other socialist nations would result in a general crisis in Eastern Europe, as all the socialist nations would clamor for more freedom.¹⁸

Writing in Russia Hopes and Fears, Socialist historian Alexander Werth takes another position. He states that the Soviet anxiety born of West German revanchism and the so-called

¹⁷Melvin Croan, "Czechoslovakia, Ulbricht and the German Problem," Problems of Communism, XVIII (January, 1969), p. 4.

¹⁸Vernon V. Aspaturian, "Soviet Aims In East Europe," Current History, Vol. 59 (October, 1970), p. 267.

German menace to the East was not sufficient reason for the Soviets to invade. Rumania and the Soviet Union had established diplomatic relations with West Germany, and the fear of such relations between West Germany and Czechoslovakia was not a substantial reason for intervention. The Soviet and East German cries of another German march to the East was nothing but a scare tactic used to justify intervention.¹⁹

September 9, 1968, was the date announced for the meeting of a special Czechoslovakian Communist Party Congress which would have placed the official seal upon the reforms of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. After September 9, the last of the Novotnyite-Moscow element in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic would have been eliminated from all political influence. The fact that the Soviet Union had to move before the congress acknowledged the liberal reforms in Czechoslovakia probably induced Kremlin leaders to action more than Ulbricht's real or supposed panic over the spread of revisionism and West Germany's threat to East Germany's existence.²⁰ Communist leader Walter Ulbricht's admittedly important role in the decision to invade Czechoslovakia need not be overestimated. Melvin Croan wrote in Problems of Communism that

¹⁹Alexander Werth, Russia Hopes and Fears (New York, 1969), pp. 333, 10.

²⁰George Lichtheim, "Czechoslovakia 1968," Commentary, Vol. 46 (November, 1968), p. 63.

he agreed with the Soviet observer Richard Lowenthal concerning the decision to invade.

. . . (Soviet) decision to invade should be regarded less as a hasty improvisation than as the culmination of certain basic trends in the foreign and domestic policies of the Soviet collective leadership over a preceding period of almost two years. . . .²¹

²¹Croan, p. 4.

Conclusion

On January 5, 1968, Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak member of the Czechoslovak Party Presidium, became First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, with the opportunity to modernize the Czechoslovak bureaucratic structure according to the impact of science and technology upon society. First Secretary Dubcek agreed with the members of the various Czechoslovak academies that the nation needed to take notice of technology's importance in society, but Dubcek's dreams had much more in mind for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. He proposed that Czechoslovakia's brand of socialism combine the needs of the nation with the needs of the people to form a more humanistic socialism. Dubcek's reform proposals were outlined in the April publication of the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, but the actual reforms had begun immediately upon his takeover of the Communist Party.

Czechoslovakian revisionism conflicted sharply with the rigid ideology of the Soviet Union. There seemed to be no facet of socialist life that the Soviet Union would allow to be altered for fear that Soviet interests would be jeopardized. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic soon discovered what many other East European nations had learned in the past, that although the Soviet Union allegedly acknowledged the right of every nation to follow its own socialist road, no socialist doctrine might be altered if

it conflicted with Soviet patterns of socialism. If reforms that deviated from the Soviet socialist model, such as those favored by the Czechoslovak liberal regime, were found to bolster the economic and political life of a nation, as well as unite the people behind the reforms, then the Soviet model was denigrated. All approved reforms in the Soviet bloc must meet ideological and political tests. Any nation wishing to reform itself must be sure that such changes did not jeopardize either the position of the Party as the over-all power in the state or the Leninist principle of democratic socialism.

If the New Economic Model in Czechoslovakia failed to achieve results in 1967, it was because the Czechoslovak Communist Party under dogmatic Antonin Novotny, supported by the Soviet Union, did not cooperate with the planned economic reforms. As the central economic planning system began to show its inadequacies in the technical age of the 1960's, the Soviet dictated brand of socialism began to go downhill. The New Economic Model challenged the old socialist system at every turn. Under Dubcek the central planning system lost its monopoly of power as the Action Programme laid plans for the sharing of responsibilities in economic planning with interest groups and individuals. The Dubcek regime also made use of a market regulated economy rather than a government regulating system, and a wage system based on incentive instead of wage levelling. As a further effort to bolster the Czechoslovak

economy, the government tried to expand foreign trade, especially through the development of cordial relations with the German Federal Republic. The Soviet Union considered these moves a threat to Russian and East European security.

The Russians were quite agitated about the Czechoslovakian liberalization of controls over the written word and the resulting appearance of a spirit of criticism. It did not take long for the Soviet Union, as well as Poland and East Germany, to discover that freedom for Czechoslovakia's media jeopardized their own rigid Communist regimes. The uncensored Czechoslovak media daily harassed the Soviet Union. Warsaw became the scene of student riots against Poland's censorship laws, and Czechoslovakia received the blame for such unrest. East Germany was among the first to react against the Czechoslovakian press campaign, even going so far as to jam German radio broadcasts from Czechoslovakia.

The Soviet Union's greatest concern was the crisis created in the political life of Czechoslovakia by the free press. Everywhere in Czechoslovakia hard-line Communists were forced to resign to make way for the liberals. Gradually the reform movement reached the political level and the Antonin Novotny followers fell from influence. Dubcek's political reforms encouraged the participation of Communists and non-Communists alike. All citizens were invited to express their opinions and offer suggestions so that the liberal regime could better formulate policies that

expressed the interests of the people. The Soviet's confidence in the Czechoslovakian Communist Party's ability to remain the dominant factor in society weakened. Czechoslovak writers continued, undaunted by Soviet warnings, to criticize the Soviet Union in such publications as the "2,000 Words" and General Prchlik's interview until the Soviet Union, and its Warsaw Pact allies felt that some action had to be taken.

The invasion not only put an end to freedom of the press in Czechoslovakia, it also provided a means of achieving several Soviet military and diplomatic objectives that concerned the security of the socialist bloc. The invasion made it possible to secure the East-West border with reliable troops and provided the Soviet Union with a vantage point from which it could respond more effectively to any kind of attack, thereby warding off any attempts by West Germany to weaken the unity of the East European bloc.

In dealing with the Czechoslovakian crisis, the Soviet Union found it very difficult to formulate a policy that convincingly coordinated the Soviet Union's national and ideological interests. The Russians failed to persuade the majority of Communist parties throughout the world that their actions in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic were the actions of the leader of the Communist revolutionary movement, and not the policies of Russian aggrandizement and imperialism.

The greatest mistake the Soviet Union made was failing to grasp the chance to accommodate its outdated system to the reformed system of Czechoslovakia without the tragedy of armed intervention. The Soviets have been ingenious enough in the past to assimilate alien thoughts into their own ideology without any embarrassment to the Communist movement. At a very inopportune moment, with the whole world looking on, the Russians chose to use force and end the threat to her ideological leadership and her national preponderance.

The Prague government's mistake was to believe that within the Soviet socialist bloc, they could create a model society which would solve Czechoslovak problems. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak model of a humanized, socialist state appealed to the many people of the eastern nations. In an area of the world where nations and their citizens were not only deprived of necessary consumer goods, but also freedom to conduct their internal and external affairs as well, a chance to improve their way of living was not likely to be ignored.

As long as the United Soviet Socialist Republic continued to view socialism as a system for which there is only one blueprint, the East European socialist nations had no chance of being allowed to determine their individual development. However, as long as the Soviet Union maintained its status as a nuclear

nation, it intended to dictate the blueprint for socialism, if not for all Communist nations, at least for the Eastern bloc.

With all the advantages and goals that the Soviet Union achieved by an armed intervention, it appears that the Soviets have created more problems than they have solved. If Soviet ideologists had managed to assimilate Czechoslovak reforms, there would possibly have been no need for intervention. In all probability the development of an economically, politically, and ideologically healthier socialist commonwealth would have resulted. Instead, when the five Warsaw Pact armies crossed the Czechoslovak border all chance of fruitful accommodation in the near future vanished. The Soviet Union, by its decision to invade, created an aura of apprehension in the Eastern socialist bloc and in a majority of the Communist nations throughout the world. By an act of force Russian leaders had perpetrated the weaknesses they intended to destroy.

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