

THE 1968 CZECHOSLOVAK EXPERIMENT TO DEMOCRATIZE SOCIALISM

by

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B.A., Wake Forest University, 1962

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

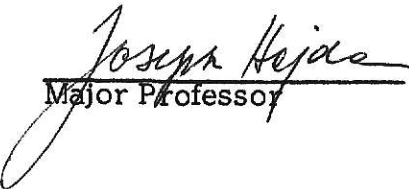
MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Political Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1973

Approved by:


Major Professor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Joseph Hajda for inspiration, patience, and guidance: to my wife Beverly for love, encouragement, and typing; to my children, Robbie and Sheri, for understanding, cooperation, and tranquility; and to the U.S. Army for the opportunity to expand my horizon through the pursuit of this degree.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Central Committee
CCP	Czechoslovak Communist Party; also CPCS, KSC
CEMA	Council for Mutual Economic Aid
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPCS	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSR	Ceskoslovenska socialisticka republika (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic)
CSSR	" " "
CTK	Czechoslovak News Agency
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic -- East Germany)
KSC	Komunisticka strana Cekoslovenska (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia)
KSS	Komunisticka strana Slovenska (Communist Party of Slovakia)
MFR	Mutual Force Reduction
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USSR	Soyuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
WPO	Warsaw Pact Organization

INTRODUCTION

During the period 1948-1956, Czechoslovakia generally functioned in a homeostatic manner in its dealings with the Soviet Union. When Moscow directed that the satellite nations accept the Soviet economic system, Czechoslovakia transformed her economy into a "controlled" economy. When purges were demanded, the Czechoslovak Communist party followed suit by initiating the most severe purges in East Europe. The party assumed almost total control of the Czechoslovak society in line with the pattern that had been established in the Soviet Union by its ruling Communist party. Czechoslovakia performed according to the Soviet political model and created few problems for the Soviet political system, the dominating force in East Europe.

The Czechoslovak Communist party became the largest per capita Communist party in the world. Almost one out of every six persons in Czechoslovakia was affiliated with the party, while in the USSR only one in every thirty-five persons was a party affiliate.¹

Again following the Soviet example, by the early 1950's some 170,000 members were purged from the party. Among the purged were ranking party functionaries, members of the intelligentsia, as well as ordinary workers. A person could be removed from the party for deviating from the official ideology; by violating the party discipline; by violating civil laws or through public scandal. The greatest sin was to espouse nationalistic tendencies. These tendencies threatened the party in two ways. One was a general Czechoslovak nationalism which was directed against the centralization of Moscow. The other was a more specific Slovak form of nationalism which opposed the centralizing tendencies of Prague.²

Other political sins included the espousal of the right or "bourgeois ideology". Thus, the party was able to pear itself down by some 8.4% by

March of 1952.³

Unfortunately for the Czechoslovaks, Stalin was convinced that the socio-economic principles and command strategy he employed in the USSR would work equally well in all socialist societies. He failed to differentiate among social conditions which were brought about by different stages of economic development. He failed to realize that the Soviet socio-economic plans could paralyze and grind to a halt the advanced industrial complex economies of the more developed nations. This is precisely what happened in Czechoslovakia.⁴ Prior to World War II, she was a relatively modern advanced industrial state with a high standard of living, functioning in a market economy, with a healthy 8.6 percent economic growth pattern. Yet by 1964 the Czechoslovak economic rate of growth had diminished to a mere 2.1 percent per annum.⁵

The stagnating antagonism between the superimposed centrally planned methods of managing the economy for the sake of the alliance system, on the one hand, and the demands of a complex modern industrialized society, on the other, could not be reconciled over time even by the most determined Stalinist leadership in Czechoslovakia; neglected and undercapitalized agriculture, costly but moribund plants employing excessive manpower, a price system with no rational relation to economic reality, and the growing menace of severe inflation could not be argued away.⁶

The country limped on under the Soviet model by implementing one unrealistic economic plan after another. These plans were often not achieved due to a distorted industrial structure, an adverse trade situation, low labor productivity, an aging or obsolete production base, and a wasteful utilization of production resources. By the mid 1960's the party elite finally recognized that something had to be done to save the economy.⁷ By 1966 an outline of a "New Economic Model" was accepted by the 13th Party Congress. This program of goals and action professed the need to free the economy from the exaggerated centralization, the inflexibility of artificial price-fixing and administrative rigidity. The principal target of the

plan was the human motivation to work more and better because of higher real wages and an improved standard of living. The party elites reluctantly admitted that the harsh Soviet-system production demands were far beyond the nation's capacities. The "New Economic Model", implemented on January 1, 1967, was unfortunately only a half-hearted compromise, which resembled little of the initial proposed reforms. The conservative party elite, under the leadership of Antonin Novotny, continued to view the economic reform with great suspicion. Novotny, at the March 1967 party Central Committee plenum, stated: "As long as economic measures are not in harmony with our political aims and our political program, these measures cannot be accepted by us, no matter how effective they may be."⁸ But the fact the party had recognized that the economy was in trouble and that the Soviet model had failed helped open the door for possible reform.

Another aspect of the Czechoslovak situation that led to the demand for reforms was that of de-Stalinization. Novotny refused to de-Stalinize the party after Khrushchev's secret speech during the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU. He resisted all pressures to relax his grip on the people, and it was not until the 1963 admission that the economy needed revision that he even indicated any reform was possible. His popularity among the people was despicable; he was considered to be less than capable, a poor speaker and not very intelligent.

He was always the embodiment of mediocrity, half-educated and without imagination, but through unlimited devotion and obedience he gained support from Big Brother in Moscow...The enormous personal power concentrated in his hands was applied in a manner that made enemies of his bosom friends. The atmosphere among those in the top posts of government and party grew heavier until, to his great surprise, Novotny learned that his closest collaborators had conspired against him, and he lived to see a palace revolution sweep him from power.⁹

Novotny further aroused public displeasure by strongly supporting the Soviet pro-Arab position in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. He encouraged publication of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic material in party publications which infuriated the Czechoslovak intellectuals. Additionally, Novotny stirred up the population by personally inflaming the Slovak nationalism issue. For many years Slovakia had attempted to be recognized as a separate entity with at least federation status. A sense of Slovak nationalism was even present inside the Communist party and Slovak leaders often found themselves in conflict with the centralist regime in Prague. Novotny, by his coarseness, exacerbated the situation during his visits to Slovakia in 1967. One such event occurred when he was questioned by his hosts concerning why certain funds that had been sent to support the "Matica Slovenska Institute" by Slovaks in the USA had never been received. He replied that the money had been sent from the CIA for support of anti-Communist activities. He then stormed out of a reception leaving all in a state of bewilderment. News of this incident soon spread through Slovakia causing further disenchantment with the bureaucrats from Prague.¹⁰

By late 1967 the stage was set for a fundamental change in the political system of Czechoslovakia. After twenty years of relying on the Soviet political model, the country was ready for a new course. During the first eight months of 1968 the Communist party attempted to restructure Czechoslovakia's political system from a state of political vassalage to one of clientage in which the party leaders would continue to determine the political objectives and goals of their country in a more democratic manner. The August invasion and the subsequent forced "normalization" curbed the experiment and reverted the Czechoslovak political system back to its former state of subjugation by the Soviet Union. The report attempts to explain the changes in

Czechoslovakia and their perception in the USSR, by means of a political model of socialism portrayed by Gustav Husak, the present First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist party. The report refers to this model as "the Soviet political model". Husak asserts that socialism develops according to four common laws:

1. The Communist party plays the leading role in all areas of social life.
2. The socialist state is the vehicle of the power of the working class and people.
3. Socialist economic development is based on planned guidance.
4. All around cooperation with the USSR and other countries of the socialist system is required.¹¹

This report attempts to demonstrate that the experiment to democratize socialism in Czechoslovakia was an attempt to update socialism by changing the four common laws. The Soviet invasion and forced "normalization" of Czechoslovakia were used to deny unauthorized changes and to insure the maintenance of internal stability and conformity to the Soviet political model.

Chapter 1 outlines the changes in the political system of Czechoslovakia, attempting to transform it into "socialism with a human face."

Chapter 2 discusses the importance of the Czechoslovak experiment to the Soviet political system including the fears of the Soviet political elite that it could result in a strategic weakness, a loss of control over East Europe, and a blow to Soviet prestige as the center of world socialism.

Chapter 3 evaluates the impact of the Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the 'normalization' of the Czechoslovak political system.

This paper concludes with some observations of the importance of the Czechoslovak experiment.

CHAPTER 1. THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF SOCIALISM

The political difficulties facing the Novotny regime in Czechoslovakia became so serious in 1967 that they forced him to step down as the leader of the Czechoslovak Communist party. The subsequent leadership developed an Action Program which became the official blueprint for the democratization of socialism. The experiment was carefully developed by the party elites, the intelligentsia, the students, and eventually became a mass movement. This transformation was not designed to turn away from the Marxian principles, or to revert to the undesirable capitalistic methods. It was hoped that the new political system would improve the economy, raise the standard of living and improve the political process with the support and participation of the masses. Independent contacts with West Germany were envisioned to help close the economic and technological gaps with the West. The Czechoslovak leaders emphasized that they would continue to remain loyal to the wishes of the Soviet Union in international affairs, be good members of the Warsaw Pact and CEMA, and continue to participate in the common fight against Western imperialism. They had no intention of alienating themselves from the Soviet trust and support.

The Intellectuals

The intellectuals were among the first to advocate substantial change in the Czechoslovak political system. They demanded the removal of restrictions imposed on them by the Novotny regime.

The Czechoslovak reform was gradual; it was not the result of an explosion and its manifestation did not have the form of sudden spasmodic eruptions. It was theoretically prepared by the Czechoslovak intelligentsia on the basis of its own experience and way of thought. It corresponded to the disposition of the union. It included both the democratic and the national element in the Czech and the Slovak sense. It reflected a desire for Europeanism both in the traditional and modern sense, in the humanities, in science and in technology. Even though it was born amidst the infrastructure and non-insti-

tutionalized thinking, it found supporters inside the existing power structure. The fusion of reformist thought inside and outside the political structure produced a feeling of national unity as an aggregative political force. The objective of the reform was a new model of socialism, not a non-socialist system.¹²

The idiocy of censorship and the intellectual poverty of most of the official pronouncements continually irritated the cultural community.¹³

The writers were most dissatisfied with availability of information from foreign press sources. It was extremely difficult to obtain factual information from official government sources, in spite of the 1966 Press Laws approved by the Novotny regime to appease the writers. Many book manuscripts were not published and censorship of contemporary movies provided further irritation. An area of major significance was the regime's anti-Semitism strongly opposed by most intellectuals.¹⁴

These issues came to a head during the Fourth Writers Congress which met for two days in June 1967. The Congress approved a resolution which characterized the role of socialist culture as a stimulus in the process of democratization and the acquisition of greater human freedom. The resolution stated that as a body the Congress of Czechoslovak Writers did not agree with the existing practice of press suppression and it urged a reform of the law which would limit such censorship to only matters of national defense. Further, the resolution demanded that individual writers be granted the right to defend themselves when accused of violating the law.¹⁵ Ludvik Vaculik, also a prominent Czech novelist, presented an outspoken speech denouncing the monopoly of power in the hands of the Communist party. He went so far as to ask the Writer's Union to take action to seek a new constitution which would eliminate the monopoly of power granted to the party. He attacked power as being negative, self-perpetuating feature of totalitarianism and called upon the artists to resist this power. He pleaded

for the Writer's Union to seize the initiative. He stated:

If we all agree that none of us was born to be easily controlled, I propose that the Union of Writers... take the initiative of requesting that the Czechoslovak Academy of Science make a study of the Constitution and, if necessary, suggest changes... Do the ruling circles themselves, the government and its individual members, enjoy any guarantee of their civil liberties? Without that, no creative work is thinkable, not even the creation of government policies.... It must be admitted that not one human problem has been solved in the last twenty years--from such elementary needs as housing, schools, and economic prosperity to more subtle needs which undemocratic systems of the world cannot provide: a feeling of one's full worth in society, a feeling that politics is subordinate to ethics, a belief in the meaning of humble work, the need for confidence among people, the advancement of education for the people. And I'm afraid we have not taken our proper place in the world arena. I have the feeling that our republic has lost its good name.¹⁶

This pronouncement brought immediate criticism from Jiri Hendrych, the regime's spokesman, who denounced Vaculik by name and prompted expulsion from the party for Vaculik and two others. The Writer's Union weekly paper "Literarni Noviny" was taken over by the Minister of Culture and Information, the editorial board of the paper was dismissed, and the Union's publishing house "Ceskoslovensky Spisovatel" was forbidden from publishing works of domestic authors.

The repressive moves by the Novotny regime, designed to weaken the Union, demonstrated its fear of the threat posed by the Writer's Union.¹⁷ The result of the repression was a general boycott by creative artists, writers, journalists, and social scientists in support of the reform movement.¹⁸

The Rise of Dubcek

In late December 1967, the Central Committee of the Communist party decided to remove Novotny as First Party Secretary, but, by the time the Committee adjourned for the Christmas holiday it did not decide on his

successor. A commission was appointed to submit candidates for approval in early 1968. According to reports the two main candidates were: Oldrich Cernik -- at the time the Deputy Premier in charge of economic affairs, and Jozef Lenart -- Novotny's Prime Minister. The liberals supported the former and the Novotnyites the latter. The commission proposed Alexander Dubcek as a compromise candidate. The liberals eventually accepted Dubcek because of his record, while the Slovaks favored him since he was one of them. The conservatives, on the other hand, believed that as a relative newcomer without a faction, Dubcek appeared to represent no major threat to them and thus seemed manageable. What to the power seekers was his weakness, in fact, turned out to be his strength.¹⁹

Novotny had managed to weather many storms during his political career including 1956 and Barak's threat to his leadership. But once he agreed to begin de-Stalinization activities he was almost fated to fail. Reforms have a tendency to sweep away the old leaders along with the old institutions particularly if these leaders do not believe in or grasp the necessity for the reforms.²⁰

The change in political leadership was announced to the citizens of Czechoslovakia on January 5, 1968 by Radio Prague which stated that Novotny had resigned as First Secretary of the party and had been replaced by Alexander Dubcek. This pronouncement surprised the nation. Few Czechoslovaks had realized the extent of Novotny's weakness or had ever heard of his successor. Even in Slovakia Dubcek was hardly a public figure since most of his manipulations had been behind the scenes.²¹

In spite of his lack of visibility as a national political figure, Dubcek had all of the qualifications to make him acceptable to almost the entire cross section of the society. He was a Slovak who had spent his political

life as a dedicated "apparatchik", rising up the political ladder rung by rung. He was educated in the Soviet Union, became head of the Slovak Communist organization, and was a member of the Presidium of Czechoslovak Communist party. In 1955 he was sent to the Soviet Communist party's prestigious college in Moscow for further political training.²² As a result of this background, he was considered by the Kremlin as a leader possessing an almost perfect pedigree.

Dubcek became to the party and the people everything that Novotny was not. He realized the need for an improvement in the economic situation. But he also had the insight to determine that little could be done economically until a political change was also initiated.

On February 1, 1968 Dubcek made his first public comment to party and social reforms as the new First Secretary. In this speech he set forth a platform of political participation involving all strata of society:

We are proceeding from our historical experience and from everything which has proven its worth in past practice. We are not changing the general line of internal and foreign policy. But we must give serious thought to ways of contributing to faster socialist development in our country.... The importance of this political and social change today stems from the principle that the bearer of socialism and its further development does and must include the widest possible strata of working people, and that the leading political force -- the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, its organs and representatives -- wishes to do all it can to promote social development as the vanguard -- the organizational forces -- of the growth of the public's commitment to social progress.... We are preparing an action program to implement the great wealth of ideas which have emerged recently and were discussed at the latest plenums of the party Central Committee.²³

At the 20th anniversary of the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, Dubcek stated in the presence of Leonid Brezhnev: "Everything must be really and thoroughly changed."²⁴ He expanded his views concerning the leading role of the party in a radio speech on March 2, 1968:

The party's leading role can only stem from, originate, and be maintained to the extent to which it (the party) is regarded by our people as their political leader. It is impossible for us to achieve this by a resolution. This position of our party is not established or maintained on the basis of power but on the basis of correct policy. The policy which creates the party's leading role must not lead to the citizens standing outside the party -- and of these there is a majority in our society -- getting the feeling that they are restricted in their rights and freedoms by the party's leading role; on the contrary, they must see the role of the party as the guarantee of their rights, freedoms, and interests.²⁵

Dubcek stood committed to a democratization of the political system which included the right of increased public participation in party activities. In order to maintain the critical support of the intelligentsia, he had to prove that he would tolerate responsible criticisms, an act Novotny could never permit. He also had to demonstrate his commitment to economic reforms and convince the experts that his concessions to Slovakia would not adversely affect the new economic model. He further had to reassure those who feared that Slovak rule was about to replace Czech rule by demonstrating that he was an all-national leader.²⁶ He hoped to lead a reform movement that would give socialism a human face.

Other prominent political figures soon followed Dubcek's lead and took up the call for reform. For example, on February 13, 1968 Zdenek Mlynar, Secretary of the Legal Commission of the Central Committee, published an article in "Rude Pravo" entitled "Our Political System and the Division of Power," in which he said:

The basic problem of our present political system lies in the fact that it was established as an instrument for the solution of other problems than these which our society is facing today...for many years the political system in this country was deliberately adjusted to conform to the demand that a single interest, embodied in the form of directives to be carried out rather than on demand for decisions to be made in a democratic manner. For many years, the slogan 'participation of the people in governing' merely meant participation in the execution of directives (instead of democratic participation in the process of decision-making), and

therefore control chiefly meant a control which was to ensure that directives were executed in every detail (and not a control designed to examine whether the directives themselves were correct).²⁷

He went on to advocate for rights of individuals and groups to struggle against the existing centralization of power. He proposed a system that would be oriented toward making decisions which expressed the objective requirements of the entire socialist society not just executing the directives that are, a priori, regarded as correct. He hoped for a political process in which groups acted as a guarantee against the harmful concentration of power in the land of a few party elites.²⁸

On March 14, 1968 the Czechoslovak News Agency reported the extraordinary event in which the censors called for the end of censorship. During a reappraisal of the practical activities of censorship in Czechoslovakia the censors concluded that preventative political censorship should be abolished. They blamed Jiri Hendrych, Secretary of the Communist party Central Committee for the existence of censorship in Czechoslovakia. They stated that the Central Publication Board and the office which preceeded it had instigated censorship in 1953 by a mere governmental decree and without any legal basis. They concluded that his revelation created an atmosphere that was unbreathable even to censors.²⁹

Of all of the important discussions of late 1967 and early 1968 none were as important to the future of the country as the demands for initiating political reforms. The major political issues raised by the reformers included: the role of the party's inner party life, the separation of the party from the state, the possibility of an organized opposition, the requirements for improving the legal and security system, the future status of Slovakia, and future role to be played by Czechoslovakia in the international arena.³⁰

The Action Program

These issues were spelled out in the Action Program approved at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist party on April 5, 1968. This 24,000 word document defined the right of the minority to maintain its views while at the same time sustaining the leading role of the party. It attempted to institutionalize a division of power within a Communist system. An economic reform was projected but without specifically defining the painful economic reallocations that were necessary for change. In foreign affairs it recognized the existence of two German states, but stressed assurances to the Soviet Union that fraternal alliance within the Warsaw Pact was a fundamental part of the Czechoslovak road to socialism. As a political document it epitomized the art of the possible.³¹

The document began with a description of the historical development of the socialist system in Czechoslovakia and stipulated that the ills of the society were directly attributable to the misuse of political power during the era of the cult of the individual. It contended that much good work had been accomplished since 1948, but the political system needed to be changed in order to improve the economy and ready the nation to become a part of the world scientific and technological revolution. Thus, a new and more democratic system was deemed necessary in order for Czechoslovakia to compete in international markets. The program called for unity among the people, with the injustices that had gone on between the Czech and Slovak sections of the country to be resolved. It stressed a need for social unification, since "all social classes, strata, groups, both people and all nationalities of the society agree with the fundamental interests and aim of socialism."³²

It advocated a new model of socialist democracy, which would link the democratic principles of the socialist system with expert and scientific management for decision-making. The program hoped to replace the ills of equalitarianism, which had often led to careless, idle, and irresponsible managers leading the workers, with a principle of appraising actual achievement. It argued that the change would not form a new privilege strata, instead it would improve the qualifications of managers at all levels and still allow the needy worker to achieve his just reward based on achievement.

One of the most important aspects of the document was the section dealing with the leading role of the party in the proposed new political system. It stated that the party had proven itself and had shown its ability to lead the society. In fact it was the party that had determined the need for the reform. However, in the past the party was often conceived to be a mere monopolistic concentration of power in the hands of a few party bodies. It had become the sole representative of the entire scale of social interest of the society, a role which should have rightfully been reserved for the National Front. The program stated that the "proper role of the party is to seek a way of satisfying the various interests which does not jeopardize the interests of the society as a whole, but promotes them and creates new progressive ones."³³ The program asserted that the impact of the party must be made by persuasion and that discussions within the party must be free and no repressive measures should be taken against dissenting minorities. These minorities were expected nevertheless to comply with the majority decisions.³⁴

The party was directed to compete with other social organizations for the support of the people. It was required to mobilize the working class and fight for their demands and rights. It was instructed to allow

members more access to the vital information in order to strengthen the decision-making process. Also, the life of party members was to change. For the first time, members were given the right to resign from the party or any of its organizations without penalty. Further, persons accused of wrongdoing were to be afforded the right to be present at all proceedings that concerned their case. Additionally, members were afforded the right not only to criticize the party's views, but were further permitted to express their views on a given subject.

Together with the rights of dissent and criticism, the Action Program provided limitations on the party organs and its officials. Party decisions at all levels were to be based on scientific analysis, under the guidance of competent experts who were to be consulted prior to completion of the decision-making process. All party organs were to be elected by secret ballot, insuring uniform voting procedures for all. Leaders for these organizations were to be chosen based on their political, professional, and moral qualifications. Also, experience in the party and public service were to be considered. They were required to receive the personal authority and confidence of the workers. The party's top leaders were to be selected on the basis of quality. The practice of combining important party positions in one man was forbidden, and the terms of office were to be limited.³⁵ The program stated that the practices and effects of personality cult were still around. The new political system was to contain a basic structure that would provide firm guarantees against returning to the old methods of subjectivism and high handedness from a position of power. All organizations belonging to the National Front would be permitted to take part in the creation of state policy. Freedom of assembly was to be guaranteed by law. Prelimi-

nary censorship by the state was to be terminated, freedom of expression was to be safeguarded, and the individual rights and properties of the citizens were to be protected. The parliamentary responsibility of the government was legally defined, and the police were to be reorganized. Legal decisions, including conflicts in the administrative sector, were to become the prerogative of the courts of law. Planning at all levels was to be turned into a process of mutual confrontation and reconciliation of conflicting interests.³⁶

A major portion of the program was devoted toward improving the economy. It stated that the Czechoslovak economy needed to be strengthened in order for it to compete with the advanced foreign firms, which would stimulate improved production and reduce costs. It stipulated that the democratization program placed special emphasis on ensuring independence from state bodies along with the right of the consumer to determine his consumption and style of life. It further promised the right of a free choice of working activity. It pledged to provide an opportunity for various groups of the working people to actively participate in the formulation of their economic interests and in the shaping of the national economic policy.³⁷

It would become the responsibility of the entire society to decide on the spreading of the social wealth. The national economic plan and policy would be subject to the democratic controls of the people through the National Assembly. In the field of international economics the program stressed that the critical ties with the Soviet Union and the other members of the CEMA must continue and support should be given to "the development of economic relations with all other countries in the world which show interest in such relations on the basis of equality, mutual advantages and without discrimination."³⁸ The overall objective of the new economic policy was to improve the standard of living through steady growth of the economy.

The program advocated material assistance to scientific and research efforts, and the elimination of artistic censorship. It encouraged free and unhampered cultural and educational development and the extension of the scope of radio and television transmissions to all areas of the country. The program provided a significant statement regarding the international status and foreign policy of the Czechoslovak Republic. It pledged that Czechoslovakia would stand resolutely on the side of progress, democracy and socialism in the socialist struggle against the aggressive attempts of world imperialism.³⁹ The program stated that the basis of the Czechoslovak foreign policy would remain one of alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist nations. Also that friendly relations among the socialist allies would be guided by mutual respect, in order to intensify sovereignty, equality, and international solidarity. But it deviated from the established policy when it stipulated that Czechoslovakia intended to carry out a more active European policy due to her geographical position and her needs and capacities as an industrial country. The policy further stated that Czechoslovakia would promote mutually advantageous relations with all states and international organizations as well as safeguarding the collective security of the European continent. It proposed that Czechoslovakia proceed from the realization of the existence of two German states and from the fact that the German Democratic Republic, as the first socialist state in German territory was a key element in the maintenance of peace in Europe. However, it recognized the necessity of giving support to the realistic forces in the Federal Republic, while resisting the "neo-Nazi" and "revanchist" tendencies in that country.⁴⁰

In addition to the emphasis on party reform, the Action Program also proposed: freedom of speech, assembly and organization, freedom of

movement -- both within and without the nation, freedom of press, religion, protection of each citizen's personal and property rights, rehabilitation of victims of Stalinization and a federalization of the Czech and Slovak lands and a guarantee of a national life and identity for all of Czechoslovakia's Hungarians, Poles, and Ukrainians, and Germans.⁴¹ The document concluded:

We are not taking the outlined measures to make any concessions to our ideals -- let alone to our opponents.... We are convinced that they will help us to get rid of the burden which for years provided many advantages for the opponent by restricting, reducing, and paralyzing the efficiency of the socialist idea, the attractiveness of the socialist example. We want to set new penetrating forces of socialist life in motion in this country.... We want to create conditions so that every honest citizen who concerns himself with the cause of socialism, the cause of our nations, should feel that he is the very designer of the fate of this country, his homeland, that he is needed, that he is reckoned with. Therefore, let the Action Program become a program of the revival of socialist efforts in this country. There is no force which can resist people who know what they want and how to pursue their aim.⁴²

The Action Program was bitterly opposed by the conservative faction of the party. Yet, many of the proposals outlined in it were enacted by the National Assembly. To say the least, it was a remarkable program that in all aspects attempted to transform the existing socialist political system through democratic methods. It was a bold and ambitious policy, and it formed the official Communist party position in April 1968.

The National Assembly Program Declaration

Following the lead established by the Action Program, the Government presented its Program Declaration to the National Assembly on April 24, 1968. Although the Action Program implied that economic reorganization would help raise the standard of living, the declaration was blunt in describing the Czechoslovak economic plight. It boldly stated that even justified demands would have to wait. According to the declaration the

state of the Czechoslovak economy did not correspond to the situation of an industrially advanced country some twenty years after the war. With that observation in mind the government would proceed to create the necessary public, social and economic conditions to put an end to the underestimation of qualifications, to dilettantism, and to the placing of average abilities above the creative forces and abilities. Even though many justifiable economic demands existed it stipulated that the government could not attempt to immediately satisfy them. It called upon all citizens to understand the economic situation in Czechoslovakia and not make fresh requests until new resources were found. The declaration pledged to work in harmony with the party's Action Program for improving the life of all citizens.⁴³

In the area of foreign policy, the government declaration went further than the Action Program in discussing the desirability of opening independent contacts with the West as it stated:

As far as capitalist states are concerned, we will strive for peaceful coexistence. In view of our position in Europe and our economic and cultural links with all parts of the continent, we are in a good position to effect an active European policy....We are convinced that the time has come for taking measures toward a lessening of tension in Europe....We see great possibilities for expanding our bilateral contacts with France, Italy, Great Britain, and the Benlux countries....The fundamental problem of Czechoslovak policy has been and remains the German question, one of the key aspects of European security....It is with the greatest interest that we are following developments in the neighboring German Federal Republic....we note with satisfaction that in the public and among some political representatives realistic and democratic views and currents are beginning to appear. Today we have certain contacts in the economic, cultural, and scientific spheres with West Germany. The prerequisite for normalizing political relations, which would correspond to good neighbor principles, is a recognition of existing realities and the settlement of certain questions which are of fundamental importance to us.⁴⁴

This document coupled with the Action Program provided the Soviet Union with an appreciation of the scope and intent of the reform movement

in Czechoslovakia. It gave them serious cause for concern.

The 2000 Words Manifesto

Two months after the publication of the two official reform documents, a group of Czechoslovak scientists persuaded novelist Ludvik Vaculik to publish a public manifesto. On the 27th of June several leading Czechoslovak newspapers published the document under the title "Two Thousand Words." The manifesto pointed out that the democratization process had entered a critical stage which demanded a concerted effort by the Czechoslovak people to secure their rights. Some saw this outspoken publication as a call for "action from below", which threatened the weakening of party control over daily events. Others feared that at the very least the Soviet Union would use it to bring pressure on Prague. At an emergency meeting of the Presidium of the party the declaration was condemned. This act perhaps contributed to the attention, importance, influence and support it was given, particularly in Czechoslovakia.

The manifesto was the intellectuals' supreme effort to bring about lasting changes through democratic methods. It caused much more of a sensation and crisis than originally anticipated. It had been marked as the beginning of the final stage of an irreversible pressure on Czechoslovakia from the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ The manifesto stated:

The life of our nation was first threatened by war. Then followed another bad time with events which threatened the nation's spiritual health and character. The majority of the nation hopefully accepted the program of socialism. Its direction got into the hands of the wrong people, however, ... The Communist Party, which after the war possessed the great trust of the people, gradually exchanged this trust for offices, until it had all offices and nothing else. ... The incorrect line of leadership changed the party from a political party and an ideological alliance into a power organization which became very attractive also to egotists avid for rule, calculating cowards, and unprincipled people...⁴⁶

It criticized the corrupt State officials. It charged that elections had no meaning or significance to the people, and the laws of the land lost their validity. Further, it asserted that men lost trust in one another, and personal and collective honor declined. The nation began to lose its spiritual health and character. It contended that the causes of this decline rested with the Communist leaders in positions of importance. However, the greatest deception was the concept that the party elite were responding to the demands of the workers. In practice they all knew that the workers decided nothing. It stated that beginning in early 1968 a democratization process had begun in the Communist party. It urged action within the confines of the party, particularly in preparation for the 14th party Congress, which was to elect a new Central Committee. It asked that the people demand a better committee than the one in existence, since the future of democracy in Czechoslovakia depended on its activities. It then listed the following demands:

Let us demand the resignation of people who have acted dishonestly or brutally....Let us revise the activities of the National Front. Let us demand public meetings of the national committee....Let us change the district and local press, which had degenerated to a mouthpiece of official views, into a platform for all positive political forces....Let us establish committees for the defense of freedom of expression...Let us support the security organs when they prosecute genuine criminal activity. We do not mean to cause anarchy and a state of general insecurity. Let us avoid disputes among neighbors. Let us reveal informers...We can assure the government that we will back it, if necessary, even with weapons, as long as the government does what we gave it the mandate to do, and we can assure our allies that we will observe our alliance, friendships and trade agreements...

This spring, as after the war, a great chance has again been given us. Again we have the possibility of taking into our hands our common cause, which for all practical purposes we call socialism, and giving it a shape which will better correspond with our once good reputation and with the relatively good opinion which we once had of ourselves. This spring has just ended and⁴⁷ will never return. In the winter we will know everything.

Within hours of its publication, tables were set up in Prague and other Czechoslovakian cities where tens of thousands of citizens voluntarily signed copies of the manifesto as a sign of support.⁴⁸ The "Two Thousand Words" provided the Soviet leaders with yet another indication of the political transformation enduring in Czechoslovakia. It too gave them reason for concern over Dubcek's leadership. Their reaction was to demand that the Dubcek regime denounce the manifesto.

The Action Program, the Government Declaration, and the 2000 Words Manifesto serve only as a representative sample of the rapidly changing political atmosphere in the country. Hundreds of publications, newspaper articles, radio, and TV presentations reflected the strong desire to democratize socialism by means of the government by the people. Where the experiment would lead was not certain, but the Czechoslovak reformers hoped to show the world that a nation could function under the principles of socialism and still allow their citizens to actively participate in the function of their government, competing fairly with capitalist nations and remaining a loyal subject in the international brotherhood of socialist nations.

These reforms reflected a significant deviation from the Soviet political model. Although the party was to remain the vanguard of society, its leading role was to be maintained through persuasion and without the use of censorship and repressive measures against a dissenting minority. It was to compete with other social organizations for the support of the people. The citizens of the state were to participate in the decision-making process through their active support of the National Front. Political power would then be shared between the people and the socialist state. Economic planning was to be subject to the democratic control of the people through the National Assembly. The consumers were to codetermine what they consumed and how they chose to live. In foreign affairs Czechoslovakia

desired to cooperate with the USSR and Warsaw Pact nations while initiating independent contacts with West Germany in order to improve the Czechoslovak economy and close the technological gap with the West. These reforms were a bold deviation from the Soviet political model and, therefore, produced a serious threat to Soviet hegemony in all of East Europe.

CHAPTER 2. THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM CHALLENGED

The Czechoslovak experiment was not understood or interpreted by the Soviet leaders in the manner anticipated by the Czechoslovaks. "Socialism with a human face" was seen in the Kremlin as a threat to the physical security and the sovereignty of the USSR. Strategically, an essential buffer state was negotiating with the "revanchist" West Germans. Also, the modification of the Czechoslovak political system was a blow to the Kremlin's prestigious role of leadership in the international socialist commonwealth. Any socialist nation stating that the Soviet political and economic models would not work in their country was considered a counterrevolutionary. The proposal to modify the leading role of the party in Czechoslovakia was in violation of the laws of Marxism-Leninism and could not be tolerated. Likewise, the Czechoslovak experiment produced significant repercussions in the other Warsaw Pact nations, and could not be allowed to disrupt the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. Pressures were brought to bear on the Soviet elites by other East European leaders for positive action to curb the Czechoslovak experiment.

The "Prague Spring" represented a profound challenge to the leaders in the Kremlin. This was more profound than the Hungarian revolution in 1956 or the Yugoslav defection in 1948, which were rebellions primarily against Stalinism. The Prague experiment posed a serious threat to the USSR and the entire socialist system. The Czechoslovaks questioned the desirability of democratic centralism (whereby ideas originate at the top), the monopoly of power by the Communist party, and the ideological dogmatism with which power is exercised. From Moscow's viewpoint these challenges were heretical. It would have been odd had some Soviet leaders not suspected that the Czechoslovak experiment was the first stage of a counterrevolution.⁴⁹

In late 1967 it became obvious to the Soviet leaders that the Novotny regime had become unpopular with the people of Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, there was no inherent reason for them to oppose either the longstanding promise to rehabilitate the victims of the terror years, or the implementation of new Czechoslovak economic plans, both of which were opposed by Novotny. Their fears were aroused by the growing political pressures expressed in Czechoslovakia by the economists, writers, and scholars which hinted at better relations with Western Germany. The Soviet elites used their influence to back Novotny long enough so that when he was overthrown in January, it appeared as a setback to the USSR as well as Novotny.⁵⁰ They were not opposed to Dubcek due to his previously discussed party training. In fact, Dubcek's visit to the USSR at the end of January 1968 was observed as an assurance that no major changes in the Czechoslovak foreign policy would be forthcoming.

As the Czechoslovak reform movement took hold in early spring 1968 the Russians realized that a response was necessary. First, they were concerned by Dubcek's action at the 20th anniversary of the Communist takeover when he summed up his policies in a promise to democratize the entire socio-political system. Further, his refusal to use the acceptable police state methods in governing appeared at best as a weakness of leadership and at worst an ostentatious reflection on the Kremlin's political practices. Dubcek also caused unfavorable reaction by his pronouncement that the Soviet Economic model had failed due to the certain deformation of the political system, caused by the vested interests of the new class of party functionaries. He destroyed the myth that the various classes of society are in opposition to each other and need be constantly provoked against each other in the interest of party advantage.⁵¹

The growing Russian concern continued with the publication of Z. Mlynar's interest group theory and the unprecedented demand of the censors to terminate

censorship. East German and Polish leaders also became concerned at the possibility of Czechoslovakia legitimizing freedom of the press and an intolerable brand of inner-party democracy.⁵²

The Soviet Union decided to approach these issues by calling a meeting on March 23 of the leaders of the Communist parties and Governments of Bulgaria, Hungary, GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR at Dresden, East Germany. The Russian and more orthodox East European leaders attempted to use the meeting to establish the limits of independent action they would allow. The Communiqué published in Pravda on March 25 stated:

During the exchange of opinions on questions of European security special attention was paid to the growth of militarist and neo-Nazi activity in the Federal Republic of Germany (F.R.G.) and to the latest steps of the Kiesinger-Brandt government, which are directed against the interests of the German Democratic Republic and the other socialist countries. The representatives of the fraternal parties expressed the unanimous opinion that in the present international situation it is especially important to increase vigilance with respect to the aggressive intentions and subversive actions that the imperialist forces are attempting to carry out against the countries of the socialist commonwealth. . . Confidence was expressed that the working class and all the working people of the C.S.R., under the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist party, will ensure the further development of socialist construction in the country.⁵³

The Russians used Pravda to not only inform the Soviet citizens of the activities in Czechoslovakia but also to deny that the Dresden meeting was an act of Soviet interference with Czechoslovakian internal affairs. Instead, it was heralded as a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions on economic and political considerations.⁵⁴

The publication of the Czechoslovak Action Program in April caused renewed Russian and East German concern over the Czechoslovak attitude toward West Germany. This was particularly significant in light of Prague's marked drop in anti-West Germany propaganda. The Soviet Union and East

German leaders were convinced that they could ill afford to allow the Czechoslovaks to follow the Rumanian example in this area. They feared that should an industrially advanced country like Czechoslovakia be permitted to reduce its dependence on the Soviet markets and materials in order to raise its standard of living and improve its technology, it would seek economic assistance from the West. They also feared that Czechoslovakia could conceivably continue to develop her unpredictable democratic traditions and patterns of free discussion and dissent. Should these acts be permitted to continue, other bloc countries might follow suit in their relations with West Germany and their internal political practices. Such possibilities would create difficulties throughout the Warsaw Pact and within the Soviet Union itself by arousing forces of dissent who might seek to challenge Soviet political hegemony. The real threat was not that Czechoslovakia might break away from the Communist bloc following her experiment, but that in her success she might entice other bloc nations to follow suit.⁵⁵

The Russian attitude toward the Czechoslovak experiment was clarified in the April plenum resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU, published one day after the Czechoslovak Action Program. This document insisted on the solidarity of all socialist countries in the combined effort to curtail West German imperialism. It signaled a hardening of the Moscow's line across the board toward the U.S., West Germany, and Israel.⁵⁶

Tensions continued to increase in April as charges and countercharges were assailed between Czechoslovakia and the USSR concerning the death of former Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, the son of the founder of the Czechoslovak Republic who was alleged to have been assassinated by members of the Soviet secret police. The Czechoslovak government asked Moscow to reopen the investigation into this event. Such a demand was seen by the Kremlin as a direct slap in the face. They replied with a formal denial of the charge and a denunciation

of Masaryk's father as a scoundrel. Pravda stated in an article that he had been involved in an alleged plot to assassinate Lenin. This counterattack brought additional criticism from the Czechoslovak leaders and further widened the developing political rift between the two nations.⁵⁷

An Economic Response

The Soviet leaders concluded that new action to tighten the economic cord in an effort to curb the Czechoslovak bravado was necessary. On April 30, Zdenek Mlynar, a member of the Czechoslovak party Secretariat, disclosed that the Soviet Union had suddenly cancelled the latest quarterly wheat shipment to Czechoslovakia. In its place the Soviet officials had offered to provide Czechoslovakia with \$400 million in hard currency credit in exchange for manufactured goods. This precipitated a three day Moscow trip (May 3-5) by Secretary Dubcek, Premier Cernik, and National Assembly President Smrkovsky for a meeting with Secretary Brezhnev, Presidium Chairman Podgorny, and Premier Kosygin. These discussions were also centered around Russian offers in the trade field to dissuade Czechoslovakia from turning to the West to improve its economic situations.⁵⁸ Economic pressures were continued in hopes of bringing reason to the Czechoslovaks. On May 8, a one day summit was called in Moscow for Communist party leaders from Bulgaria, Poland, East Germany, and Hungary to review the Czechoslovak situation.

A Military Response

By May 10th the Soviet Union decided to shift the pressure on Czechoslovakia toward a military response after the softer economic approach had failed to achieve the desired results. Although the economic approach was believed to be supported by Kosygin and Podgorny, Brezhnev was alleged to be in favor of a tougher military solution.⁵⁹ To demonstrate this determination Radio Prague, on May 10, indicated that thousands of Soviet troops were participating in a Warsaw Pact

maneuver in the vicinity of the Polish-Czechoslovakian border. It stated that the Czechoslovak government had been notified of the exercise well in advance. There can be no doubt that, no matter when informed, the leaders received a significant message from the nearness of massed Soviet troops. On May 17, the Russians again attempted to convince the Czechoslovaks of their concerns by dispatching Premier Kosygin to Prague for a "continuation of the exchange of views with Czechoslovak leaders."⁶⁰ Concurrently, an eight man Soviet military delegation headed by Defense Minister Marshal Andree A. Grechko arrived in Prague to coordinate additional military maneuvers. As a principal figure in Moscow's economic power elite, Kosygin's presence had special impact on the Prague leadership concerning the proposed hard currency credit discussed earlier. Unfortunately, his mission failed and he returned to Moscow three days earlier than planned, leaving the military delegation to demonstrate the Soviet Union's determination. On May 24, the Czech News Agency, CTK, announced that the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty nations were going to conduct a joint command and staff maneuver in Czechoslovakia and Poland in June, under the direction of Marshal Yakubovsky, the Soviet Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Treaty forces. This was a positive indication that the Soviet leaders were attempting to bring direct pressure to dissuade the Czechoslovak leaders from continuing their irresponsible course.⁶¹

A Diplomatic Response

The publication of the "2000 Words Manifesto" in June created new alarm in the Soviet Union. Even though the document was initiated by non-party intellectuals, it was considered a major attack on the Communist one-party rule. The Soviet leadership attacked the document as an action program of the counter-revolution and demanded that the Prague leadership denounce it. The manifesto further became a threat when it received strong support from the Czechoslovak

press, public, and party rank and file. Also, as the Czechoslovak provincial party conferences met to elect delegates to the national congress, it became apparent to the Soviet leaders that little outside popular pressure would be required to achieve the substantive demands of the manifesto since the congress would have a strong majority firmly committed to both reform and a thorough housecleaning of the party cadres.⁶²

On July 11, 1968, Pravda linked the Czechoslovak experiment to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, while lashing out against the "Two Thousand Words Manifesto":

Developments in the C.S.R. since the May plenary session have demonstrated that the session's warning was entirely justified; rightist anti-socialist forces continue to mount malicious and fierce attacks against the Communist party and the Socialist system. And many of these subversive actions are conducted openly, with the use of the Czechoslovak press, radio, and television. Not so long ago, for example, four Czechoslovak newspapers...published a so-called open letter from a group of persons; it was entitled '2000 Words'...The document is a sort of platform...to discredit the Czechoslovak Communist party and its leading role, to undermine the friendship between the Czechoslovak people and the peoples of fraternal socialist states and to pave the way for counterrevolution.⁶³

The article continued that the forces undermining the foundation of socialism were not new. These same counterrevolutionary elements had operated in Hungary in 1956. The forces in Czechoslovakia, the article alleged, were even more subtle and insidious. It pledged to the Czechoslovak workers the understanding and complete support of the people of the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

On July 15, 1968 a letter from the leaders of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, USSR, and East Germany was sent to Prague from Warsaw as an ultimatum outlining the rationale for a possible invasion. It indicated that a counter-revolutionary situation existed in Czechoslovakia; Dubcek had lost control over the course of events; a threat to the frontiers of the socialist commonwealth in Europe existed; and the "healthy forces" in Czechoslovakia must be

rallied and could count on assistance of the fraternal socialist countries. It dictated a concrete program for getting the situation back in hand which included: total repression of the anti-socialist, rightist forces, the banning of the political clubs, reimposition of censorship, and the reorganization of the party along "fundamental Marxist-Leninist lines." It attacked Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, and in particular Prague's increasingly less hostile policy toward West Germany. Unnamed members of the Czechoslovak political leadership were accused of flirting with the West Germans against the best interests of socialism. The letter stated:

The developments in your country have aroused profound anxiety among us. The reactionaries' offensive, supported by imperialism, against your party and the foundations of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's social system, we are deeply convinced, threaten to push your country off the path of socialism, and, consequently, imperils the interests of the entire socialist system.... Disregard for any aspect of this principle both of democracy and of centralism inevitably leads to a weakening of the party and its guiding role and to transformation of the party into either a bureaucratic organization or a discussion club.... The '2,000 Words'... constitutes a serious threat to the party, the National Front and the socialist state and is an attempt to implant anarchy.... Thus a situation has arisen that is absolutely unacceptable for a socialist country.... The attempts at flirtation by the F.R.G. authorities and the revanchists have found a response in ruling circles of your country.⁶⁵

It continued by describing the actions that were required to defend the rule of the working class and people. It demanded:

a resolute and bold offensive against rightist and anti-socialist forces and the mobilization of all means of defense created by the socialist state; a cessation of the activities of all political organizations that oppose socialism; the party's assumption of control over the mass media -- the press, radio, and television -- and utilization of them in the interests of the working class, all the working people and socialism; solidarity in the ranks of the party itself on the fundamental basis of Marxism-Leninism, steadfast observance of the principles of democratic centralism and struggle against those who through their activities assist hostile forces.... We express the conviction that the Czechoslovak Communist party, realizing its responsibility, will take the necessary measures to block the path of reaction.⁶⁶

The Czechoslovak leaders replied to these accusations in a letter from the Presidium of the Central Committee on July 18 which pointedly recalled the pledge of the Soviet Government Declaration of October 30, 1956, which based socialist relations on: equality, respect or territorial integrity, national independence, sovereignty, and mutual noninterference in the internal affairs. Reaction to the Warsaw letter united the Czechoslovak Presidium resulting in an unanimous vote to approve Dubcek's rejection of the ultimatum. In turn, the Soviet elite responded to the Czechoslovak letter in a manner similar to Stalin's reply to Tito in 1948 -- "We regard your answer as incorrect and therefore completely unsatisfactory."⁶⁷ Following the Warsaw letter the Soviet Union initiated an unprecedented act in contemporary Soviet politics. After a Czechoslovak refusal for a meeting in the USSR, the Soviet Politburo traveled to Czechoslovakia where they met with the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist party at Cierna nad Tisou, from July 29 to August 1. The discussions at this extraordinary conference were reported to have been stormy and at times vindictive. The talks centered around such issues as the leading role of the party, censorship, personal changes, and the presence of "anti-socialist forces" in Czechoslovakia. It was reported that part way through the conference the Soviet leaders took a milder approach and avoided a serious confrontation. Although nothing conclusive was agreed to at the conference, both sides claimed it as a victory. The Czechoslovaks pledged continued support for the Warsaw Pact organization and CEMA, the Russians pledged an end to polemics and the total withdrawal of pact troops still in Czechoslovakia.⁶⁸ The session was terminated with an agreement for a subsequent meeting on August 3 at Bratislava with the other East European nations. The August conference resulted in an agreement by all parties to find ways to strengthen and promote fraternal cooperation among socialist states and prevent a single state from undermining the foundations of the socialist system.

Czechoslovakia again promised to remain a loyal member of the world Communist movement. The Bratislava declarations were acclaimed throughout the Communist world as a significant step in solving the Czechoslovak problem. Editorials in Pravda encouraged all parties to live up to the accords of the Bratislava conference.⁶⁹

Following these meetings, the Dubcek regime worked hard to consolidate support for their movement. On August 9, President Tito of Yugoslavia visited Czechoslovakia followed by General Secretary Ceausescu of Rumania on August 15. Both parties were warmly welcomed in Prague. Each leader stressed the importance of the principle of non-interference in one another's internal affairs, a concept which was pointedly missing from the Bratislava accords. East Germany's First Secretary Ulbricht also visited Karlovy Vary during this same period and concluded a vague agreement with the Czechoslovak leaders that both sides would continue to oppose the rise of Nazism in West Germany. The Soviet press presented Moscow's mood by setting the stage for possible invasion of Czechoslovakia in an August 18 article in Pravda describing the situation in Czechoslovakia as being so bad that hooligans were attacking the KSC Central Committee building.⁷⁰ It described one incident that allegedly had taken place on August 8 at the C.C.P. Central Committee building, where at about 9:00 P.M. over 300 people primarily youth, had gathered for a demonstration. According to the article they yelled "hooligan" slogans and demanded that a speaker be dispatched to Stare Mestro Square or they would smash everything in the building. The article used this incident as an example of the lack of discipline in Czechoslovakia which if left unchecked could require outside intervention in order to restore order.⁷¹

The Czechoslovak party leaders did not heed the Russian warnings clearly enough to believe an invasion was imminent. So on August 18, Pravda again

proclaimed that the Czechoslovak leadership appeared to have lost control while anti-socialist forces resumed subversive activities which threatened the stability of the country. It further asserted that the workers of Czechoslovakia could rest assured that assistance was forthcoming from their Communist neighbors to rebuff the counterrevolutionaries.⁷²

As with Hungary in 1956, the Soviet leaders decided that counterrevolutionary action had to be brought under control.

Under the Stalinist principle of 'Socialism' in one country, the interests of the Soviet state, rather than 'proletarian internationalism' became the principal concern of the Communist leadership of the USSR. Since then, the preservation of Soviet power and the promotion of its security objection have been the major aim of the leadership, even if masked behind the verbiage of revolutionary ideology. It was precisely these aims that provided the basic motivations of the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968. When it appeared to the Soviet oligarchy that its power and security were imperiled by the ideological challenge emanating from the Communist reforms in Czechoslovakia and threatening to spread to other parts of the 'socialist commonwealth' then the formal of 'multiple paths to socialism' was shoved into the background, and the old language and ideas of the Comintern founders were resurrected.⁷³

The Soviet Union's perception of the challenge by the Czechoslovak reform movement were best outlined in the Warsaw letter. The letter clearly pointed out to the Czechoslovak leadership that they had deviated from the acceptable Soviet political model and were posing a threat to the foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia and jeopardizing the common vital interests of the rest of the socialist countries. The letter stated that hostile forces had arisen in Czechoslovakia which were pushing the country off the course of socialism, and were attempting to liquidate the guiding role of the party and push the country into a state of anarchy. It described any deviation from the principles of democratic centralism as a loss of power to the working class and people.

Czechoslovakia's independent activities with West Germany were characterized as the pursuit of a course hostile to the interests of security in Czechoslovakia and the entire socialist system. The Soviet leadership clearly warned the Czechoslovaks that such counterrevolutionary activity could not be tolerated. On August 20, 1968 armed forces of five Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia to restore order and crush the experiment to humanize socialism.

CHAPTER 3 THE LIQUIDATION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EXPERIMENT

Once it was finally determined that the "Prague Experiment" could not be permitted to continue, the Soviet Union acted with dispatch, force, and ruthlessness to terminate the undesirable disturbance. The August 20 invasion was the tool finally chosen for this operation. But the physical act far from achieved its anticipated goal. An extended program of "normalization" was necessary to turn the Czechoslovak political system around and place it once again within the acceptable sphere of Soviet influence. New political leaders were needed who would reverse the democratization process. The Communist party of Czechoslovakia had to be purged of its "revisionists" and "counter-revolutionaries" in order to save the working people from the evils that had engulfed their daily lives. Initially, the leaders of the Kremlin believed that finding such leaders would not be a problem. They anticipated forming new government and party structures around the national hero, President Svoboda. They had planned to hold the Dubcek leadership responsible for the difficulties in Czechoslovakia and use them as the scapegoat to justify the reforms. These expectations were not reached for many months after the invasion. The CCP solidified by the harsh invasion was far from willing to denounce the Dubcek efforts or rally behind new leadership. President Svoboda refused to be the Kremlin's puppet and demanded the return of Dubcek and his colleagues as a price for negotiating a settlement. During the fall of 1968, the Soviet demands for "normalization" became known through the publication of the August and October Moscow Agreements, the Brezhnev Doctrine, and the treaty for "temporary" stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. Gustav Husak slowly emerged and with Russian support assumed power. By the summer of 1969 the Action Program of the CCP was a historic relic. Under Husak's

leadership the party was systematically purged and the government was returned to the control of the powerful elite. Censorship was reinstated and worker's councils were abolished. Secretary Husak returned the political system to an acceptable socialist system with: a controlled economy, a unity of party, and a subordination of the individual at the expense of the dominance of the party.

The Invasion and Its Impact

During the night of August 20, while attending a meeting of the Presidium of the party Central Committee, Dubcek was informed by Cernik that "the armies of the five parties have crossed the borders of our Republic and have begun occupying our country."⁷⁴ The Presidium was in a state of shock. Dubcek declared:

This is a tragedy, I didn't expect this to happen. . . . I declare on my honor as a Communist I had no suspicion, no indication, that anyone would want to undertake such measures against us. . . . That they should have done this to me, after I have dedicated my whole life to cooperation with the Soviet Union. . . . is the great tragedy of my life.⁷⁵

The rest of the night was spent by the Committee in preparing a proclamation to the Czechoslovak people. Shortly after 8:15 A.M. on August 21, the radio broadcasted an address by President Svoboda which described the state of emergency in the country. This broadcast was interrupted by Soviet troops who took over the radio station. The announcer described the actions in the studio declared his loyalty to Dubcek, and played the national anthem as he was forced off the air. This act marked the beginning of one of the strangest and most heroic aspects of radio and television broadcasting of our times. Prague radio and television stations broadcast from various improvised clandestine studios and borrowed transmitters around the country. Radio facilities of the army, the militia, and audio visual research and training facilities as well as

radio factories were used. These brave announcers often led the country during the critical week after the invasion, since most of the nation's leaders were in Moscow. The announcers told the population where to find food, broadcast warnings concerning who was in danger of arrest and called for a one hour general strike at noon on the 22nd and 23 of August. They were responsible for the suggestion that the citizenry change the names of the streets and remove house numbers to confuse the invaders. Further, they encouraged the populace to ignore the invading troops even to the point of denying them food and drink unless they were directly threatened. Their broadcasts were presented in eight languages over nineteen radio stations and three TV channels. This was far in excess of their normal two radio and one TV programs.⁷⁶

The first official pronouncement of the invasion presented to the Soviet people was published in Pravda and Izvestia, on August 21, 1968:

Tass is authorized to state that party and state leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have requested the Soviet Union and other allied states to give the fraternal Czechoslovakia people immediate assistance, including assistance with armed forces. The reason for this appeal is the threat posed to the socialist system existing in Czechoslovakia and to the constitutionally established state system by counterrevolutionary forces that have entered into collusion with external forces hostile to socialism. . . . The Soviet government and the governments of the allied countries . . . proceeding on principles of indissoluble friendship and cooperation and in conformity with existing treaty obligations, have decided to meet the above-mentioned request for giving the fraternal Czechoslovak people necessary aid.

This statement provided the Soviet citizen with an explanation for the need of an armed intervention into socialist state in order to save it from the dangers of democracy, and to insure its future under socialism. The Soviet leaders stated that the party had lost control of the nation and Dubcek had lost control of the party. They attempted to portray Dubcek as a weak and mindless man who had fallen into the hands of vicious agents of imperialism.

Dubcek was never charged with personally leading a counterrevolution but of vacillating and being so indecisive that a counterrevolution developed which he could not control. They concluded that the reform movement had debilitated the party's leading role in decision-making process and that policy was being made in the streets and editorial offices of the local papers in Prague rather than in the Central Committee.⁷⁸

With the help of the clandestine media and by personal contact, the party was able to call its Extraordinary Fourteenth party Congress at the CKD factory in the Vysocany section of Prague on August 22, 1968. Some 1192 of the total 1543 elected delegates attended the one day congress. They arrived at the plant by disguising themselves as workers and were protected by members of the militia. Unfortunately, only fifty of the Slovak delegates were able to attend due to various obstructions to their progress. First Secretary Husak of the Slovak party was detained en route to the congress and did not participate. Nevertheless, he attempted to attend the meeting. The Vysocany Congress: elected almost all of the known reformers to a new Central Committee, condemned the invasion, demanded the immediate withdrawal of the occupying forces, and the release of the country's leaders. The Slovak party Congress, in spite of a request for postponement by Husak, was held on August 26 and supported the pronouncements of the Fourteenth party Congress in Prague.

The harshness of the invasion and the heroic action of the Czechoslovak citizens caused the nation to unite as never before. The solidarity and mutual considerations were such that many later chose to call it the most exhilarating but tragic week of their lives. It was this valiant stand of the people behind their political leaders that prevented the invasion from achieving its immediate political objective: the establishment of an anti-reform government.⁷⁹

Zdenek Hejzlar, a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee, was asked shortly after the invasion: "How do you evaluate the situation and the mood of the people at this moment?" His reply:

I see an almost total unity in evaluating the tragic situation in which our country has found itself as a result of the occupation. Our people are unequivocally condemning this occupation, which only a wholly incredible hypocrisy can represent as assistance by fraternal countries, and they leave no one in doubt as to their attitude. The very fact that it has not been possible to form a collaborationist party or state grouping and that therefore, the declaration of the 'allies' about somebody having invited them into our country is clearly revealed as an untruth is an irrefutable proof of this.⁸⁰

Soviet Demands

On August 23, President Svoboda went to Moscow to negotiate with the Soviet leaders. He took with him a delegation including conservatives Alois Indra and Vasil Bil'ak. Progress toward finding a pro-Soviet collaborator to replace the Dubcek regime was no greater in Moscow than it had been in Prague. It became clear to the Kremlin that Svoboda would not cooperate until Dubcek and the other arrested leaders were permitted to join the delegation. The Soviet elite completed the circle by reinstating the Czechoslovak leadership that had been arrested in Prague a few days before. The enlarged delegation then negotiated the Soviet-Czechoslovak Communiqué of August 28, which euphemistically dismissed the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a temporary entry of troops that would be withdrawn as soon as the situation was "normalized."⁸¹ The Communiqué stipulated that an understanding had been reached on measures aimed at the swiftest possible "normalization" of the situation in Czechoslovakia. It indicated that the allied countries' troops that had "temporarily" entered Czechoslovakia would not interfere in the internal affairs of the C.S.R. It stated that an agreement had been reached on the condition for the withdrawal of allied

troops once the "normalization" process began. The Communiqué also implied that the USSR and C.S.R. would continue to present a resolute rebuff to the militarist, "revanchist" and "neo-Nazi" forces who were seeking to revise the results of World War II and disturb the inviolability of the borders of Europe.⁸²

In addition to the Communiqué, the grueling three day negotiating session resulted in the secret Moscow Agreement (or Moscow Protocol). By using the threat of indefinite military occupation the Soviet leaders extracted from Svoboda and Dubcek a consensus that they had not gained by force in Prague. The protocol demanded the reimposition of censorship, banning of opposition clubs and parties, return of Soviet advisors to defense, intelligence and political police, renewed security policy apparatus, and the continued military occupation until Moscow determined that the situation has been "normalized".⁸³

It further stripped the extraordinary Fourteenth Congress of its legality and it reinstated pro-Soviet leaders such as Bil'ak and Indra to their position that had been eliminated by the Fourteenth party Congress. It contained agreements for the removal of certain political leaders that were deemed unacceptable to the Soviet leaders.⁸⁴ The Protocol stated:

The Presidium of the CC KSC announced that the so-called 14th Congress of the KSC, opened August 22, 1968 without the agreement of the CC, violated party statutes. Without the participation of the CC KSS, most of the delegates from the army and many other organizations, it is invalid... a plenum of the CC KSC would be held within the next six to ten days with the participation of the party's control and revision commission... it will discharge from their posts those individuals whose further activities would not conform to the needs of consolidating the leading role of the working class and the Communist party... The problem of the security of the Czechoslovak border with the German Federal Republic will be reviewed... A treaty concerning the conditions of the stay and complete removal of allied troops will be concluded between the government of the CSSR and the other governments.⁸⁵

Secretary Husak returned from Moscow, addressed the Slovak party and declared that the Moscow Agreement and its policy of a "new reality" represented the only acceptable basis for future Czechoslovak policy. He proposed that the Slovak party Congress refuse to recognize the validity of the 14th CPCS Congress on the grounds that an insufficient number of Slovak delegates were in attendance. He was the first Czechoslovak politician to break the party solidarity and oppose the 14th Congress and go to the aid of the Soviet Union in their attempt to justify and achieve their political objectives. His denunciation of the 14th Congress reopened the wounds between Czech and Slovak parties.⁸⁶

The Soviet justifications for the invasion were presented in an article, "Sovereignty and the Internationalist Obligation of Socialist Countries" published in Pravda on September 26, 1968. This pronouncement which became the Brezhnev Doctrine established a precedent of monumental significance. It stated:

There is no doubt that the peoples of the socialist countries and the Communist parties have and must have freedom to determine their country's path of development. However, any decision of theirs must damage neither socialism in their own country, nor the fundamental interests of the other socialist countries, nor the worldwide workers' movement, which is waging a struggle for socialism. This means that every Communist party is responsible not only to its own people but also to all the socialist countries and to the entire Communist movement. . . . The weakening of any link in the world socialist system has a direct effect on all the socialist countries, which cannot be indifferent. . . . But implementation of such 'self-determination', i.e., Czechoslovakia's separation from the socialist commonwealth, would run counter to Czechoslovakia's fundamental interests and would harm the other socialist countries.⁸⁷

It amounted to the denial in principle of the sovereignty of any socialist country that is accessible to the Soviet Union. Because of its blunt assertions of a regionwide right to intervene in the affairs of the socialist states it has

been compared to the Monroe Doctrine and the Austro-Prussian Holy Alliance. Its long term international consequences far exceed its short term purpose. Its real power rested in Moscow's assertion that it had the right to intervene in any country governed by Communists so as to control that country's foreign policy and prevent any toleration of a free public debate.⁸⁸

A second Soviet-Czechoslovakia meeting was held on October 3 and 4 which produced a treaty allowing the Soviet Union to legally station their troops in Czechoslovakia. The "October Communiqué" stated that special attention had been paid to the fulfillment of the understandings that had been worked out during the August meeting between the delegates of the USSR and C.S.R. These agreements it pointed out were also in accordance with the earlier Cierna and Bratislava declarations which formed the basis for the "normalization" of social and political life in the C.S.R. as well as the development of friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist commonwealth.⁸⁹ It also stipulated that the C.S.R. Central Committee and Government would initiate every possible measure to ensure fulfillment of the Moscow understanding. Further, that they would sign a treaty on the temporary stationing of allied troops in Czechoslovakia and both sides agreed to:

...follow steadfastly the foreign policy courses jointly collaborated in the interests of strengthening the socialist commonwealth and waging a successful struggle against the policies of the imperialist powers. The delegations consider a paramount task here to be the implementation of measures to create a reliable barrier to the intensified revanchist aspirations of the West German militarist forces...⁹⁰

On October 16, the treaty on "Conditions for Temporary Stationing of Soviet Troops in CSR Territory" was signed. This document ratified the Brezhnev Doctrine, in spite of the fact that it claimed that Soviet troops would not interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia. The treaty stated:

The government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, acting with the assent of the governments of (the other four invading powers) and the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have agreed that part of the Soviet troops in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic will remain temporarily in C.S.R. territory for the purpose of safeguarding the security of the countries of the socialist commonwealth against the mounting revanchist ambitions of West German militarist forces. The rest of the USSR's troops as well as the troops of (the other four invading powers) in accordance with the documents of the Moscow talks of August 23-26 and October 3 and 4, 1968⁹¹ will be withdrawn from Czechoslovakian territory.

The agreement was ostensibly designed to curb the rise of "revanchist" forces in West Germany and allow the Soviet leaders to contain liberalism in Prague. The treaty contained harsh terms which included the agreement by Czechoslovakia to legalize the stationing of an unspecified number of Soviet troops for an indefinite time, in return for a staged withdrawal of the bulk of the Soviet and East German troops that had occupied the country in August. The terms of the treaty were harsher than those contained in similar treaties with Poland (1956) and Hungary (1957) which at least required agreement of the host government for troop movements outside their normal garrison. The Czechoslovak treaty contained no such provisions nor did it provide for any compensation for damage inflicted during the invasion.⁹²

"Normalization" and Its Effects

In the months following the invasion, the "normalization" process began to unfold. Members of the working class were once again put forward as the core of the party. No mention of the rights of the minority was considered. Party organs were encouraged to "part without hesitation with persons unwilling to follow the party line." Uniform control was established over a regional committee and the role of national territorial bodies was to be clearly defined. Workers in the mass information media were reminded

that they must be primarily instruments for implementing party and state policy. Gustav Husak, First Secretary of the Slovak party quickly emerged as a most forceful proponent of the "new realism". He contended that there was no alternative. In fact in his address to the Slovak Central Committee in November, he blamed the difficulties with controlling the communications media on weak party leadership. He indicated that no one wished to resort to political trials; yet the arbitrary actions of certain small groups must not be allowed to lead to anarchy. His warning was clear.⁹³

The feeling of betrayal and frustration caused by the "normalization" process was demonstrated in the tragic self immolation of 21 year old history student, Jan Palach on January 16, 1969. In his last letter he demanded that censorship be abolished and the dreaded Soviet military publication Zpravy be banned. His death again ignited the Czechoslovak nation against the Soviet occupation forces. The spontaneous reaction of the public forced the Dubcek regime to give the incident sufficient attention, which included the publication of Palach's letter, and radio and television appearances by public leaders to urge for calm and prudence. Dubcek considered the crisis as the most serious since the invasion. Letters of sympathy poured in from all over the country and students led demonstrations in many cities. Fortunately, the students conducted Palach's funeral peacefully with eulogies and memorial ceremonies being permitted around the nation. The act stirred the entire country but failed to achieve sufficient support to reverse the already well entrenched process of "normalization".⁹⁴

Anti-Soviet hostilities were again unleashed on the night of March 28-29 when between 100,000 and 200,000 people flooded the streets of Prague and other cities following the victory of the Czechoslovak ice-hockey team over the Soviet team in the world competition in Stockholm. The crowd demonstrated

their hatred for the Russians by burning red flags and ravaging the Soviet Aeroflot offices. Following the demonstrations newspapers were suspended and Dubcek informed the people that they were going to "pay heavily for what happened the night of March 28-29." He indicated that Czechoslovakia was reliving the terrible days following the Soviet invasion in August. For the first time he was heard to utter the words that for nine months the Russians had been unable to force him to say: "anti-socialist and anti-Soviet counter-revolutionary forces have been at work."⁹⁵

The demonstration caused destruction totaling nearly two million crown, while fifty-one policemen were injured and forty persons arrested. The Kremlin responded by sending a delegation to Prague to investigate. On April 2 the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CCP issued its first group of repressive measures which included: the reestablishment of censorship, the strengthening of police power, the "temporary suspension" of the party weekly Politika and the takeover of several progressive newspapers such as the Listy, and The Reporter.⁹⁶

At the Politburo meeting Josef Smrkovsky, the President of the National Assembly, was criticized for having lacked vigilance. The Kremlin accused him of instigating the March 28 demonstrations, and ordered him to abstain from all contact with the Soviet authorities. This criticism was plainly outlined in a letter from Secretary Brezhnev to the Czechoslovak Politburo which ordered (more ferociously than at Cierna) the complete overhaul of the party and government by Secretary Dubcek and President Svoboda and the establishment of absolute censorship and a police regime according to the Soviet model. These elements were presented as Moscow's last warning.⁹⁷

On April 18, 1969 Alexander Dubcek was forced to resign as First Secretary of the party. His successor Gustav Husak agreed to accept the

Soviet political model:

In May 1969 already our party again firmly declared that socialism develops according to common laws, including the leading role of the Communist party in all areas of social life, the socialist state as the vehicle of the power of the working class and people, planned guidance of socialist economic development, and all around cooperation with the USSR and other countries of the socialist system.⁹⁸

Husak took the necessary measures to finish the "normalization" of all aspects of the Czechoslovak political system.

The New Economic Model of decentralized management was replaced by increasingly centralized practices. By the end of July 1969 the Czechoslovak government had frozen wholesale prices. Major units of economic production had also been forced to conclude binding agreements with central authorities to fulfill stipulated production targets, particularly for goods that were scheduled for shipment to other Socialist countries. The Communist party had, in effect, once again assumed command of the economy and the "indicative" economic plan for 1969 had become a binding document. The economic plans for increased trade with the West and the hopes for imported technology were also checked by the invasion. By 1970 the workers' councils were denounced as vicious attempts to produce economic anarchy and undermine the authority of management.⁹⁹ The widespread experiment in Yugoslav-styled workers self-management was thus eliminated. The government, like the party, decided to legitimize the August 1968 intervention by the Warsaw Pact, promised unswerving allegiance to Moscow and renounced any immediate hopes for more forceful economic or political ties with the West.¹⁰⁰

Initially it was thought that Husak would not allow political trials to be reinstated but it was not long until he permitted them to begin. During 1971 several major trials for subversion (specifically for duplicating and distributing

leaflets, clandestine broad sheets, foreign literature, and journals) resulted in extremely harsh sentences for the accused. Some forty-seven persons were sentenced in nine separate trials in a little over a year. The accused came from the ranks of the Communist intellectuals, non-Communist Socialists, and former student leaders. It was apparent that Husak soon realized that the greatest dangers to the hegemony of the CPCS was from those who attacked it in its own language and by using the official ideology of the party against it. Reports from Prague indicated that the accused in these trials defended themselves vigorously, stating that they were not traitors, or counterrevolutionaries but Communists in opposition.¹⁰¹

Husak further methodically compressed the nation into a compact dutiful mass. Once the party and government had been satisfactorily purged the CPCS turned to a "purification" of its rank and file. Using the Soviet method of exchanging party membership documents, the CPCS leaders were able to screen out most persons deemed disloyal to the regime and its orthodox, pro-Soviet objections. Those found guilty of advocating liberal causes in 1968 were not considered qualified for a new membership card unless they confessed their faults publically and promised without reservation in the future to support the party.¹⁰² Over one-third of the party members were purged and hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, trade union leaders, and workers were fired or at least demoted while hundreds of students were expelled from schools. The purged were not permitted to acquire work in factories lest they "contaminate" the other employees. This fear of dismissal was a most effective deterrent, for the jobless in Czechoslovakia were entirely without means. Also, as in the fifties, the sins of the father were passed on to their children, who were barred from secondary and higher levels of education

or provided difficulties in finding work. The party initiated a smear campaign against many of the popular reformers depicting them as foreign agents or Zionists. Husak severely tightened censorship allowing the mass media to give only the barest of slanted news. Hundreds of books were withdrawn from libraries and in the arts only stark realism was permitted.¹⁰³

On August 20, 1969 the public spontaneously observed a "day of shame" by boycotting shops and public transportation and by stopping work and traffic for five minutes. Husak responded by calling out the civil and secret police to intimidate the public and impress the Kremlin with the stability and orthodoxy of his new regime. Several thousand people were arrested, hundreds injured, and five were killed. Management of the law enforcement agencies was again returned to the pre-1968 Stalinist. Emergency decrees were enforced, such as the decree "for Strengthening and Defending Public Order" which authorized the arrest of suspects without a court warrant and an investigation detention for up to three weeks. Penalties under this decree included Soviet-styled banishment from one's place of residence for up to five years. Amendments stipulating that any acts that had been considered illegal under the 1948 laws would remain standing regardless of the means used in the earlier days to obtain the conviction.¹⁰⁴

Thus the leaders of the Soviet Union and their collaborators in Czechoslovakia had reimposed on the citizens of the CSSR a regime cast in an authoritarian mold which was almost totally obedient to Moscow. The so-called "healthy forces" were found to replace those party members who were responsible for the democratization of 1968. The coalition of realists and dogmatists led by Husak assured itself of the success of the "normalization" process.¹⁰⁵ Czechoslovakia was returned to a state of political vassalage

in conformity with the Soviet political model. The Communist party reasserted its unchallenged leading role in all areas of social life. The socialist state was restructured and strict democratic centralism was reimposed. The laws of centrally planned guidance of socialist economic development were reinstated. Czechoslovakia was compelled to surrender her independent contacts with West Germany and consent to strengthen all around cooperation with the USSR and the other countries of the socialist system.

CONCLUSION

Czechoslovakia, a modern nation state for little over one-half century, has been dealt many painful blows by outside powers. She has functioned under democracy, survived Nazi occupation, and endured Soviet domination. For eight months in 1968 she attempted to experiment by combining democracy and socialism. The reform to democratize socialism was intended to improve her political system. It was not intended to change the policy of alliance and co-operation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist states in Eastern Europe. However, the Soviet leadership did not permit Czechoslovakia to drift away from their control.

This report has attempted to explain the Czechoslovak experiment to develop a viable alternative to the Soviet political model. The Czechoslovak model of "socialism with a human face" envisaged more active participation in social decision-making by the citizenry. It perceived the Communist party earning the leading role in the country without the use of censorship and repressive measures against a dissenting minority. It advocated economic planning under the democratic control of the people through the National Assembly, and significant economic reforms. In foreign affairs Czechoslovakia desired to cooperate with the USSR and Warsaw Pact nations while initiating independent contacts with West Germany in order to improve the Czechoslovak economy and close the technological gap with the West.

These goals were perceived in the USSR and other East European countries as a most serious deviation from the Soviet political model. The challenge of the Czechoslovak reform movement was met by the military invasion and forced "normalization" leading to the surrender of Czechoslovak independence and to the conformity to the Soviet political model.

FOOTNOTES

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THE 1968 CZECHOSLOVAK EXPERIMENT TO DEMOCRATIZE SOCIALISM

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Political Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1973

In August 1968 the Soviet Union and four Warsaw Pact allies launched a military invasion of Czechoslovakia to terminate a political experiment to democratize socialism. This report is an attempt to explain the Czechoslovak experiment to develop a viable alternative to the Soviet political model.

The significant factors that led the people of Czechoslovakia to demand political reform included: the decline of the economy, the ineptness of political leadership, the inflammation of the Slovak nationalism issue, and the violation of basic human rights and freedoms. The reforms were advocated primarily by the intellectuals and were initiated under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek, First Secretary of the Communist party. The political goals were defined in the Action Program of the Communist party and the National Assembly Declaration. A call for action by the people was exemplified by the 2,000 Words Manifesto. The experiment caused serious concern among the Soviet and East European political elites who perceived it as a threat to Leninism requiring a firm response. They feared that it could result in a strategic weakness, a loss of control over East Europe, and a blow to Soviet prestige as the center of world socialism. Initially they elected to force Czechoslovakia toward an acceptable political solution through economic, military, and diplomatic pressures. When these attempts failed, they collectively resorted to a military invasion. After a period of massive defiance by the people of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet leadership eventually found "healthy forces" around whom they formed a new polity and "normalized" the Czechoslovak political system. This process was accomplished through the implementation of Soviet demands contained in the August and October Moscow Agreements, the Brezhnev Doctrine, and the treaty for temporary stationing of Soviet

troops in Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovak experiment to democratize socialism was an attempt to update socialism and to use democratic means to give it a "human face". It was not intended to change the policy of alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist nations in Eastern Europe.

During the first eight months of 1968 the Communist party attempted to restructure Czechoslovakia's political system from a state of political vassalage to one of clientage in which the party leaders would continue to determine the political objectives and goals of their country in a more democratic manner. However, the August invasion and subsequent forced "normalization" curbed the experiment and reverted the Czechoslovak political system back to its former state of subjugation by the Soviet Union.