Forum: Historical Security Council 1
Issue: 1968 Prague Spring
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Introduction

The Prague Spring occurred at a time of great tension between the Union of the Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America. At the time, the United States was fighting a war in Vietnam, a widely unpopular war across the world. Therefore, when the USSR invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the United States and the West did not have the moral high ground to intervene. Moreover, the United States was preoccupied with the war in Vietnam, and could not afford to fight another war in Europe; therefore, the USSR did not receive substantial criticism from the international community. The events that took place in 1968 are all subject for debate and discussion, but bear in mind that the Historical Security Council (HSC) meeting will hold prior to Dubcek’s release from Moscow. Alexander Dubcek is the current First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and is the main promoted of reform in his country. That is, during the conference, he will still be held in Moscow, under the custody of the USSR.

Definition of Key Terms

Eastern Bloc

The Eastern Bloc refers to the socialist nations of Eastern Europe, especially those of the Warsaw Pact. It may sometimes include Romania and Yugoslavia, although the two are not pro-soviet socialist states after the 60s.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO is an intergovernmental military organization that consists mainly of the victors of the Second World War, such as France, the United Kingdom, Norway, and various other Western European nations. It later incorporated Western Germany, Turkey, and various other South European nations as part of its grand strategy against the USSR and the Warsaw Pact.

“Communism with a human face”

What Alexander Dubcek referred to his liberal policies as during the Prague Spring, when he promoted free speech and honest elections within the socialist state of Czechoslovakia.
Background

The events, which unfolded earlier this year, owed its origin to the USSR’s unwillingness for change. Since the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, the Soviet leadership feared political change in any of its Eastern Bloc nations. The USSR used the Warsaw Pact as a platform for its military, and in turn political, dominance over the socialist states of Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact was established in May 14th 1955, and it was an immediate reaction toward the integration of West Germany into NATO. The West views the Warsaw Pact allies as an extension of USSR military defense strategy against the Western nations of NATO. Members of the international community also believes that the USSR views the members of the Warsaw Pact as its puppets rather than sovereign nations, thus repeatedly violated the national sovereignty of these Eastern Bloc nations through military pressure and coercion, such as the Hungarian Uprising, Polish Uprising, and the East German Uprising.

After Leonid Brezhnev came to power in the USSR as the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the USSR, the political atmosphere of the Eastern Bloc were entirely dictated by the leadership in Moscow, and nations were discouraged from reforming or “experimenting with new policies”, as Brezhnev puts it. At the same time, the voice of dissent among the people of the Warsaw Pact nations became ever greater, which prompted the events that took place earlier this year.

Prague spring

The events, which took place from the January to August this year, are now known as the Prague Spring. They were an effort by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to reform the political and military organization of the country. Under its pro-Stalin leader, Antonin Novotny, Czechoslovakia’s economic situations were dire, and faced economic depression, and contraction. The insistence on the centrally planned economy caused massive waste and inefficiency within the Czechoslovak economy, and in turn caused the economic downturn of the nation. Novotny remained in power until he was forced to resign in 1967 under both pressures within the party, and the national discontent voiced by the trade unions and the intelligentsia, groups of intellectuals and prominent thinkers within the Czechoslovak society. Regional First Secretary of the Communist Party of Slovakia, Alexander Dubcek succeeded Novotny, and became the First Secretary of the nation. Under the leadership of Dubcek, the Czechoslovak government began a series of actions to liberalize the political institution within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. It encouraged party members challenge government policies, and party policies openly. Censorship was also lifted from the media, and prominent newspaper agencies and other institutions, allowing them to voice their discontent and anger towards the Soviet control of the nation’s political and military institutions, as well as question Czechoslovakia’s Warsaw Pact membership. Many high-ranking military officers, and staff at the prestigious Klement Gottwald Military Academy began discussing the establishment of a national defense strategy independent from USSR influence. Members of the Communist Party, and military officials began to question the role of the Warsaw Pact, and some even suggested that Czechoslovakia should exit from the alliance. These ideas then quickly spread to other Eastern Bloc nations, including Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Dubcek and his government were eager to resolve the economic stagnation caused by the Stalinist model of Novotny. Although he kept the major industries in the hands of the state, small private enterprises, and shops were once again allowed in
the nation. The people of Czechoslovakia hailed this as the dawn of a new age, and the intelligentsias were quick to demand for more reforms. Through Dubcek’s reforms, the trade unions across the nation were granted more bargaining power and media were free to criticize the government, while at the same time Czechoslovakia seemed to be exiting the Warsaw Pact in the eyes of the Moscow leadership.

Soviet invasion

Prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the USSR directed numerous military exercises under the name of Warsaw Pact, and excluded all Czechoslovak troops from participating. These exercises were for the preparation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The USSR attempted to disguise their invasion as an international effort by bringing troops from all of the Warsaw Pact nations. Although the USSR wanted to make the invasion appear like a joint international operation, it was clear that all activities were directed from Moscow. On August 20th, twenty-three Soviet Army divisions, and small contingents of troops from other Warsaw Pact nations crossed into Czechoslovakia. In contrast to the bloody suppression of the Hungarian Uprising, the Czechoslovak leadership offered little resistant, as it was clear that the Czechoslovak armed forces were not ready to face the overwhelming Soviet formation. The invasion showed Brezhnev’s willingness of using the Warsaw Pact as an instrument of the USSR to suppress any socialist state that dares to reform. It also shows the West that the nations of the Eastern Bloc are suppressed and oppressed by the USSR.

Although the invasion was relatively bloodless, the Czechoslovak people were enraged by the Soviet occupation. In August 26th, churches and alarms across the nation began ringing in protest of the invasion, while car owners joined by honking at the tanks of the Soviet army. In the subsequent days, factory workers and university students occupied the streets to protest against the Soviet invasion. Nationwide strikes, including railway workers, began immediately after the invasion, while people booed and spat at the Soviet troops on the streets.

Aftermath

After the invasion, the Soviets arrested the reformers, including Alexander Dubcek, and sent them to Moscow, many of them were sent back to Czechoslovakia and were jailed without fair trials. Currently there are still five divisions of soviet troops inside Czechoslovakia, monitoring the swift end to all of Dubcek’s reforms. Dubcek is currently in Moscow, “negotiating” with Brezhnev on subjects of the reforms and the future of Czechoslovakia.

Major Parties Involved

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The USSR, under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, considered the Prague Spring as a threat to the Soviet control of the Eastern Bloc and its grand military strategy against the NATO in the region. Although Alexander Dubcek assured the Soviet leadership that Czechoslovakia would remain in the Warsaw Pact, Brezhnev was not connived, and could not allow Czechoslovakia to divide the Soviet defenses. The actions of the USSR against its ally Czechoslovakia were out of the fear that it will withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. The USSR also feared that the
reforms will influence other socialist states in Eastern Europe, and prompt those nations to exit the USSR’s influence.

**Warsaw Pact**

The Warsaw Pact was established in order to counter the threat of NATO. In this event, the Eastern Bloc nations, although sympathetic to Czechoslovakia, had little choice but to follow the grand scheme of the USSR.

Many individuals in the Warsaw Pact nations voiced their discontent against the Soviet aggression, and its violation of Czechoslovakia’s sovereignty. In September, Albania withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in protest of the invasion.

**Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia**

The Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, established after the Second World War, is a member of the Warsaw Pact. Similar to many other Eastern Bloc nations, its military and political institutions are under the control of the Soviets. During the Prague Spring, the Alexander Dubcek, First Secretary of the Communist Part of Czechoslovakia, attempted to establish a more liberal, and independent state free from the control of the USSR. It was widely supported by the population of his nations, and both the political and military institutions welcomed these changes. Czechoslovakia was invaded in August, and all the political reforms that occurred since January are now put on hold.

**Socialist Republic of Romania**

The Socialist Republic of Romania, under the leadership of Nicolai Ceausescu, was a staunch opponent of the USSR in the region. Although it is also a socialist state, it does not conform to the USSR, and remains independent of any foreign influence. During the crisis in August, Ceausescu organized mass rallies in Budapest in order to support the Dubcek and Czechoslovakia, and condemn the Warsaw Pact. He warned the USSR that the Romanian people would defeat any Soviet invasion of Romania.

**Timeline of Events**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 4th, 1949</td>
<td>In order to prevent the rise of Nationalism and military competition among the Western European nations, and also to stall the advance of communism and Soviet influence, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed.</td>
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<td>May 14th, 1955</td>
<td>To prevent further encirclement by the NATO, the Eastern Bloc nations, along with the USSR, formed the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance that guarantees the cooperation between the socialist states.</td>
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<td>October 14th, 1964</td>
<td>Leonid Brezhnev succeeds Nikita Khrushchev as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It signaled the start of the “Era of Stagnation” for the USSR and the Eastern Bloc nations.</td>
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<td>January 5th, 1968</td>
<td>Antonin Novotny voted out of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and regional First Secretary of Slovenia, Alexander Dubcek becomes First Secretary of the nation.</td>
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<td>July 29th, 1968</td>
<td>USSR warns the Czechoslovak leadership of its liberal reforms, and potential consequences.</td>
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<td>June, 1968</td>
<td>Warsaw Pact military maneuvers and exercises begin around the Czechoslovak border.</td>
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<td>August 21st, 1968</td>
<td>Soviet lead invasion begins, Czechoslovakian army remain in bases.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 26th, 1968</td>
<td>Nation-wide protest begins against the Soviet invasion, while Alexander Dubcek is sent to Moscow to negotiate the terms.</td>
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**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

It was an isolated event, without precedents. The United States is fighting the Vietnam War, and President Lyndon B. Johnson is reluctant to involve the United States into any other conflicts, thus turned a blind eye on the events taking place in Czechoslovakia. Although a Security Council meeting took place immediately after the invasion on the 21st, the meeting did little to ameliorate the situation. The United States and other Western powers denounced the Soviet invasion, but were seen as hypocrites, as the West was simultaneously invading Vietnam.

**Possible Solutions**

- Nations can demand for the immediate release of the Czechoslovak leaders, and that the Soviet Union must respect the internal affairs and sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Methods to achieve this can perhaps be economic sanction on the USSR, or/and the Eastern Bloc nations. Possible forming an international coalition against the Soviet aggression, and liberate the invaded Czechoslovakia militarily. Possible solutions can also include methods such as arming the population of Czechoslovakia through airdrops, and various other methods.

- Nations can also support the USSR’s decision to invade Czechoslovakia, by justifying it according to the Brezhnev Doctrine, and also referring to the “fraternal” relationships between the socialist states. This can include various methods of stating why it was necessary to invade and stop the “capitalist counterrevolutionary movement” in Czechoslovakia.

- Member states can also use the various international laws, peace accords, or other international treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions, United Nations Charter, Geneva Protocols, and The Hague Conventions to demand the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia.

- Member states can also arm the anti-Soviet regimes such as Romania, Yugoslavia, the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, and various other states in order to put pressure on the USSR. It will possibly be able to force the USSR to consent and withdraw from Czechoslovakia.
Delegates can also demand the trial of Soviet leaders for crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
Nations can also immediately cease all diplomatic relationships with the USSR in protest of the invasion, and use an overwhelming international support to force the USSR to withdraw from Czechoslovakia.
The delegate can also support the USSR by criticizing the West as hypocrites, and base the resolution around supporting the invasion, and justifying it with more actions such as to urge member states to give diplomatic support to the USSR, or send military and financial aid to the newly Soviet-backed Czechoslovakian government.

Bibliography