



# HISTORICAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

## STUDY GUIDE

Topic A: The Vietnam War: The Aftermath of the Tet Offensive (August 19th, 1968)

Topic B: The Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia (August 21st, 1968)





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table Of Contents	2
Chairs Letters:	3
Introduction to the Committee	4
Topic A: The Vietnam War: The Aftermath of the Tet Offensive (August 19, 1968)	5
Background to the Issue:	5
definitions	5
Tet Offensive's Initial Impact	5
Shifting U.S. Public Opinion and Policy	6
Military and Strategic Reevaluation	7
Current Situation:	7
Political Turbulence and Anti-War Movement	7
Impact on U.S. Troops and South Vietnamese Society	8
Efforts Towards De-Escalation and Peace Negotiations	9
Questions to Consider	11
Suggested Reading	12
Topic B: The Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia (August 20)	13
Background to the Issue	13
Chapter A: Prague Spring	13
Democracy in Czechoslovakia During the Prague Spring	14
The Current Situation	15
Soviet and Warsaw Pact concerns	15
Czech concerns	15
Questions to Consider	17



# AtidMUN X 2024



## CHAIRS LETTERS

Hey, Welcome to ATIDMUN 2024!

I am Ofri and am honored to be your for this year's Historical Security Council committee. I'm 17 years old and from Hadassim Even Yehuda. This marks my fifth year in MUN and, sadly, my final year in this incredible community. Let's make this one count!

Our committee will be traveling back to 1968, during the Vietnam War. You guys have the power to change the course of history. Let's see how you work together to shape a better future.

A little about myself: I am the Co-Sec Gen of Hadassimun 2025. I major in computer programming and biology and enjoy running and playing the guitar in my free time.

Welcome to the HSC committee—or should I say welcome to 1968? Come along with me as we go back to the past. I look forward to meeting you all and can't wait to have a fantastic conference together! Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Ofri - 054-884-4572



Dear delegates,

I'm Sam from Al Galil High School. MUN has been a fantastic journey for me. It has significantly impacted my personality, my goals, and my limits. One could learn a lot from MUN, but I love highlighting one aspect: challenging yourself. Through these challenges, we learn, grow, and get inspired.

A little about me: I'm 17. I'm passionate about art, music, and psychology and am usually eager to learn more. I'm also an artist and a flutist and I enjoy deep conversations. I'm delighted to be your chair in the Historical Security Council committee of AtidMUN2024. I can't wait to meet you all! Do your best, strive for excellence, and make your time count at this conference! If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me on WhatsApp :)

Sam - 058-607-7741





## INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to August 19th, 1986, to the United Nations Historical Security Council committee.

The Security Council is a UN committee whose primary focus is keeping international peace and security, and it is one of the most unique committees in MUN. This is due to the committee having its own set of rules and being the only committee with the ability to take immediate action. The Security Council consists of fifteen members, only five of whom are permanent. The other ten rotate, giving relatively equal power to each continent. The five permanent members are China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These countries are the founders of the United Nations Security Council, and only these five have veto power. This means the committee can shoot down any resolution they disapprove of.

The Security Council is tasked with investigating disputes that might lead to international friction, determining the existence of threats and recommending what actions should be taken, taking military action against aggressors, and maintaining international peace and security overall.

As a Historical Security Council Committee, we will be going “back in time” to August 19th, 1986, and discussing the Vietnam War: The Aftermath of the Tet Offensive and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia. Since we are going back in time, everything that happened after August 19th, 1986, did not happen, and therefore, it is not information that may be used in our committee.

It will be up to you, dear delegates, to make decisions that will alter the course of history.

Good luck!



## TOPIC A: THE VIETNAM WAR: THE AFTERMATH OF THE TET OFFENSIVE (AUGUST 19, 1968)

### *BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUE:*

#### DEFINITIONS

Tết<sup>1</sup>, also known as the Vietnamese Lunar New Year celebration, is the most significant holiday in Vietnam. Based on the Vietnamese calendar, it celebrates the arrival of spring and is usually celebrated in late January or early February. Tết involves various traditions such as family reunions, ancestral worship, and more.

The Viet Cong<sup>2</sup> (VC) was a communist guerrilla force operating in South Vietnam. They were supported by the North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and aimed to overthrow the South Vietnamese government and reunify Vietnam under communist rule. The VC engaged in guerrilla warfare, employing tactics such as ambushes, sabotage, raids, and hit-and-run attacks against South Vietnamese and U.S. forces. They were known for their ability to blend in with the civilian population and their extensive use of underground tunnels and hidden bases.

The Vietnam War (before January 1968) was characterized by a series of escalating conflicts, primarily between the communist forces of North Vietnam (including the Viet Cong) and the anti-communist forces of South Vietnam, supported by the United States. The U.S. entered the war to prevent the spread of communism, employing superior military technology and significant troop deployments.

#### TET OFFENSIVE'S INITIAL IMPACT

During the first few years of the Vietnam War, fighting decreased around holidays, so the US and South Vietnamese troops and their allies thought that this would continue during Tet. However, the North Vietnamese government saw an opportunity. The North was disadvantaged; the US had better-trained troops, more firepower, and a more vital air force. So, the leader of the North, Ho Chi Minh, needed a solid plan to win. With the element of surprise and travelers for the holiday (providing cover for the Viet Cong), Minh sent 70,000 of his troops and members of the

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<sup>1</sup> [What is Tết? - All about Vietnamese Lunar New Year - Wiki](#)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viet\\_Cong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viet_Cong)



Viet Cong to attack. They began overrunning military bases, towns, and cities in South Vietnam, including the capital - Saigon. And this was the beginning of the Tet Offensive<sup>3</sup>.

Minh's goal in this attack was to cause the collapse of South Vietnamese troops, inspire communities to turn against Saigon's leader, and create division between U.S. and South Vietnamese forces.

While American and South Vietnamese troops were caught off-guard by the attacks, they were able to regain control over most of the territories quickly the North took over. US military leaders reported their win back home. However, reporters given access to military engagements, painted a different picture.

## SHIFTING U.S. PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

The Tet Offensive ended in early April 1968, but it came at an excellent cost for the US. Before the offensive, U.S. military leaders had assured the American public of steady progress and an impending victory. However, the widespread and coordinated attacks during the Tet Offensive painted a different picture, revealing the formidable strength and resilience of the enemy. The surprise attacks on major cities, towns, and military bases across South Vietnam demonstrated that the conflict was far from over and that the enemy was capable of launching significant offensives despite heavy losses.

The role of the media during this period cannot be overstated. For the first time, television brought the brutal realities of the war directly into American living rooms. Graphic images and footage of fierce battles destroyed cities, and casualties were broadcast nationwide, profoundly impacting viewers. Journalists reported the stark contrast between official statements and the actual conditions in Vietnam. Walter Cronkite, a highly respected news anchor, famously declared that the war was unwinnable after visiting Vietnam in February 1968<sup>4</sup>. His declaration resonated deeply with the American public, contributing to growing skepticism about the war effort.

The political consequences of the Tet Offensive were swift and significant. The most notable was President Lyndon B. Johnson's announcement on March 31, 1968, that he would not seek re-election. This decision was influenced by the escalating anti-war sentiment and the sharp

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<sup>3</sup> <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/tet-offensive/>

<sup>4</sup> [Vietnam War |](#)



decline in his approval ratings. Johnson's speech, broadcast to the nation, reflected his recognition of the need for a change in strategy and leadership.

## MILITARY AND STRATEGIC REEVALUATION

In the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, both the U.S. military and South Vietnamese forces undertook a comprehensive strategic reassessment to address the challenges exposed by the widespread attacks.

In response to this unexpected display of enemy strength, U.S. military leaders recognized the necessity of reinforcing their forces to regain control and prevent further attacks. As a result, President Lyndon B. Johnson approved a temporary increase in U.S. troop levels. This surge aimed to reinforce American and South Vietnamese positions, counter the psychological impact of the Tet Offensive, and stabilize the situation on the ground. The additional troops provided much-needed support and allowed more aggressive operations to reclaim lost territories.

The Tet Offensive caused a significant shift in U.S. military strategy towards "Vietnamization." This concept initially involved increasing the responsibilities and capabilities of South Vietnamese forces. The aim was to gradually transfer the burden of combat operations from U.S. troops to the South Vietnamese, allowing American forces to reduce their direct involvement in the conflict while building a more self-sufficient South Vietnamese military capable of defending its own country with less reliance on American support.

Broader strategic changes were also implemented to align with the new objectives. One of the key elements was a renewed focus on peaceful programs aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of the South Vietnamese people. Recognizing that military victories alone were insufficient, American and South Vietnamese efforts were redirected toward improving local governance, economic development, and social stability. These initiatives sought to undermine the influence of the Viet Cong in rural areas by providing security and better living conditions for civilians, thereby reducing the enemy's ability to recruit and sustain support.

## *CURRENT SITUATION*

### POLITICAL TURBULENCE AND ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

The anti-war movement<sup>5</sup> gained considerable momentum during the first half of 1968. Student-led protests became increasingly common on college campuses, with organizations such

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<sup>5</sup> [https://depts.washington.edu/antivar/pnwhistory\\_vietnam.shtml](https://depts.washington.edu/antivar/pnwhistory_vietnam.shtml)





as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) playing a pivotal role in organizing demonstrations. These protests often highlighted the human cost of the war, emphasizing the loss of American and Vietnamese lives. The movement attracted diverse supporters, including civil rights activists, intellectuals, and religious leaders, all united in opposing the war.

The upcoming presidential election further intensified the political turbulence of 1968. President Lyndon B. Johnson's announcement in March that he would not seek re-election underscored the deep divisions within the country. The anti-war faction, led by figures such as Senator Eugene McCarthy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, gained considerable support from those disappointed with the Johnson administration's handling of the war.

In addition, there was the My Lai Massacre<sup>6</sup> that added to the American society's frustration. The My Lai Massacre occurred on March 16, 1968, when U.S. Army soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians, including women, children, and elders. The military initially covered up the incident, but it came to public attention through investigative journalism. The revelation of the massacre had a devastating impact on American public opinion and highlighted the brutal and dehumanizing aspects of the conflict, contributing to the growing anti-war movement. The incident also raised severe ethical and legal questions about the conduct of U.S. troops in Vietnam, leading to greater scrutiny of military operations and a push for accountability.

## IMPACT ON U.S. TROOPS AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

For U.S. troops, the Tet Offensive brought about a stark realization of the war's brutal realities. The intensity and scale of the coordinated attacks shattered any lingering illusions of a swift victory. Soldiers who had been promised that the end of the conflict was near found themselves facing fierce and determined enemy forces. This abrupt shift led to a rise in psychological trauma among the troops. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)<sup>7</sup> began to emerge as a significant issue, though it was not yet fully recognized or understood. Soldiers experienced symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, and depression. The constant threat of ambushes, the sight of comrades being wounded or killed, and the relentless stress of combat left indelible marks on their mental health.

Meanwhile, the impact of the Tet Offensive on South Vietnamese society was profound and multifaceted. Civilians faced the full impact of the war as battles raged through urban centers and

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<sup>6</sup> [My Lai Massacre: Vietnam War & Colin Powell - HISTORY](#)

<sup>7</sup> [PTSD and Vietnam Veterans: A Lasting Issue 40 Years Later - Public Health](#)





rural areas. Many families were displaced and forced to flee their homes to escape the fighting. The sight of towns and cities engulfed in war was a harrowing experience, causing widespread fear and uncertainty. In addition to the immediate threat to their lives, civilians faced severe hardships as the war disrupted their daily lives. Access to necessities such as food, clean water, and medical care became increasingly difficult, compounding the physical and emotional toll on the population.

The offensive also had significant economic repercussions.<sup>8</sup> The destruction of infrastructure—bridges, roads, schools, and hospitals—hampered economic activity and hindered recovery efforts. Markets were disrupted, and agricultural production declined as farmers could not tend to their fields safely. The resulting economic instability further strained the social fabric, as families struggled to make ends meet and communities grappled with losing livelihoods. The South Vietnamese government's ability to provide for its citizens was severely tested, undermining public confidence and contributing to a growing sense of despair.

In the months following the Tet Offensive, the challenges faced by both U.S. troops and South Vietnamese civilians continued to mount. For American soldiers, the lack of adequate mental health support exacerbated their struggles with PTSD. Many turned to coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug use, further complicating their reintegration into military and civilian life. The stigma surrounding mental health issues prevented many from seeking help, leaving them to grapple with their trauma in isolation.

For South Vietnamese civilians, the ongoing conflict perpetuated a cycle of suffering and displacement. Efforts to rebuild communities and restore infrastructure were often disrupted by continued fighting. The local economy remained fragile, with long-term recovery seeming increasingly out of reach. The psychological impact on the civilian population, particularly children who grew up amidst the violence, left lasting scars that would affect future generations.

## EFFORTS TOWARDS DE-ESCALATION AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

The Paris Peace Talks began in May 1968 and represented a crucial step toward de-escalation. These talks brought together representatives from the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong to discuss potential pathways to peace. The initial stages of the negotiations were fraught with challenges. One of the primary obstacles was the deeply entrenched mistrust between the parties. Years of conflict had created significant hostility,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thecollector.com/vietnam-war-economic-effects/>



making it difficult to find common ground and agree on basic terms. Additionally, both sides had to navigate complex political landscapes, balancing domestic pressures and strategic interests.

Despite these challenges, the Paris talks marked an important beginning. Sitting down at the negotiating table signaled a shift in approach and opened the door for future progress. Heated debates and disagreements over procedural issues, such as the shape of the negotiating table and the recognition of the various parties involved, characterized the early months of the talks. These seemingly minor details underscored the deep-seated tensions and difficulty moving forward.

The political and public support for a negotiated settlement grew steadily during this period. The American public began to advocate more vocally for peace. Anti-war protests and demonstrations became more frequent and widespread, reflecting the growing sentiment that a military solution was neither feasible nor desirable. This public pressure played a crucial role in shaping the political discourse and pushing leaders to prioritize diplomatic efforts.

Within the U.S. government, there was a growing recognition of the need for a sustainable and politically acceptable resolution to the conflict. Influential figures, both within and outside the administration, began to advocate for a shift in strategy. This included members of Congress, who voiced concerns and called for an end to the war—the presidential election season further amplified these voices as candidates sought to align themselves with the increasingly popular anti-war sentiment.

The political landscape in South Vietnam was equally complex. President Nguyen Van Thieu's government faced internal challenges and external pressures to demonstrate its commitment to peace. The South Vietnamese leadership had to carefully navigate the demands of its American allies while maintaining its political stability and legitimacy. The early stages of the peace talks highlighted the difficulties in achieving a unified approach as differing priorities and perspectives were heard.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Which bloc does your country align with regarding the Vietnam War—Eastern (Soviet Union and allies) or Western (United States and allies)? How does this alignment influence your country's stance on the conflict?
- What is your country's stance on Western intervention in Vietnam? Does it view the involvement of countries like the United States as beneficial or detrimental to the region's stability?
- How does your country view the spread of communism in Southeast Asia? Does it see it as a threat or an opportunity?
- What are your country's proposals for achieving peace in Vietnam? Do they include negotiations, ceasefires, or international mediation?
- Is your country willing to contribute to Vietnam's post-war reconstruction and humanitarian aid? If so, in what capacity?

## SUGGESTED READING

- [Highlighting History: How "Tet" Began the End of Vietnam > U.S. Department of Defense > Story](#)
- [Tet Offensive](#)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968\\_in\\_the\\_Vietnam\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968_in_the_Vietnam_War)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tet\\_Offensive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tet_Offensive)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris\\_Peace\\_Accords#Early\\_deadlocks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_Peace_Accords#Early_deadlocks)

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Accessed 25 Sept. 2024.



## TOPIC B: THE WARSAW PACT INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

(AUGUST 20 )

### TERMS

The UN Charter: The founding document of the United Nations. Here are several relevant Articles:

**Article 1**: The purpose of the UN includes maintaining international peace and security, promoting friendly relations among nations, and developing cooperation to solve global problems.

**Article 2(4)** states that member states must refrain from using force to threaten the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

**Article 2(7)** states that the UN cannot intervene in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.

**Article 39**: The UNSC has the authority to determine threats to peace and acts of aggression.

**Article 41**: The UNSC may impose sanctions or take measures that do not involve the armed forces to maintain or restore international peace and security.

**Article 51**: Member states have the right to self-defense if an armed attack occurs.

The Soviet Bloc: Composed of Eastern European countries aligned with the USSR, The Soviet Bloc countries are characterized by communist governments, economic dependency, and military cooperation through the Warsaw Pact, reflecting Soviet influence and control during the Cold War.

The Warsaw Pact: a military alliance established in 1955 among the Soviet Union and seven Eastern European countries. It was created as a response to NATO and aimed to ensure mutual defense and military cooperation among member states during the Cold War. The pact emphasized collective security and allowed the Soviet Union to influence its Eastern European allies significantly.

The Politburo: the executive committee and leading decision-making body of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union,



## *BACKGROUND TO THE ISSUE*

### CHAPTER A: THE PRAGUE SPRING

The Prague Spring was a period of political liberalization and mass protest in Czechoslovakia from January until the present (August 20th, 1968).

Czechoslovakia had been part of the communist bloc since a coup in 1948, establishing a one-party state aligned with Soviet policies. The regime enforced strict censorship, oppressed political dissent, and controlled the economy. Antonín Novotný, the hard-line communist leader, became increasingly unpopular due to his repressive policies and failure to address economic issues.

By the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia faced significant economic problems, including a halt in industrial production and ineffective collectivized agriculture. These issues were exacerbated by high costs and worker absenteeism, leading to a decline in economic output. The centralized economic policies imposed by the Soviet Union were seen as benefiting the USSR more than Czechoslovakia itself, contributing to public dissatisfaction. Then, in the 1960s, there was a cultural shift in Czechoslovakia, with increased demands for personal freedoms and a more open society. In September 1964, a group of reformers within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia forced Novotný to accept a new set of economic principles. Novotný implemented only a few of them, and Czechoslovakia's financial troubles continued.

Novotny's downfall and, therefore, the rise of the Prague Spring was mainly promoted by the young generations of students and writers, who were raised under the communist regime and were educated according to the Soviet model. These young adults were frustrated by their country's low living standards and restrictions on personal freedom. So, on the traditional student festival, the Majáles, in 1966, they started a riot against Novotný's regime. Then, in 1967, dissatisfied with the living conditions, the students gathered in the streets demanding "more light." The Communist Party felt challenged and sent in the police, who brutalized the students. In 1967, at a writers' congress, many writers decided to raise their voices and reject the standards demanded by the Communist Party; Novotný answered these acts with sanctions against writers. However, to Novotný's dismay, this act of repression meant to silence the opposition, causing even more opposition.



Novotny eventually resigned as first secretary<sup>9</sup>, and in January 1968, he recommended his Slovak opponent Alexander Dubček, who was known for his reformist stance, as his successor. Dubček was later elected unanimously. Meanwhile, the people of Czechoslovakia were turning more against the status quo: a rigid and oppressive communist regime that had been in place since the 1948 coup.

### *The Prague Spring Reforms*

Led by Alexander Dubček, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia initiated a series of changes aimed at democratizing the country and granting greater freedoms to its citizens. The crowning achievement of the new reformist government under Dubček was the Action Program - "socialism with a human face," which envisioned a gradual transition to a more democratic socialist society and was adopted by the party's Central Committee in April 1968. Critical parts of the program included:

- **Economic Decentralization:** Reduced central control over the economy, giving more autonomy to individual enterprises. This aimed to stimulate economic growth and efficiency.
- **Freedom of Speech and Press:** Relaxed censorship allowed more significant criticism of the government and the Soviet Union. This led to a flourishing of independent media and intellectual discourse.
- **Democratization:** The government introduced elements of democracy, such as free elections and a more independent judiciary. This aimed to limit the power of the Communist Party and increase political participation.
- **Cultural Liberalization:** Encouraged greater artistic expression and creativity, allowing for a revival of arts, literature, and music. This challenged the Soviet-imposed cultural conformity.

While reforms in the Soviet Bloc were not unheard of, as evident by those implemented in the 1956 Polish October, the Prague Spring reforms were more extensive and radical. In Poland, the reforms focused on economic liberalization and included limited political and cultural changes. On the other hand, the Prague Spring reforms aimed to transform the Czechoslovak political system fundamentally, enabled significant levels of artistic freedom, and included more extreme

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<sup>9</sup> "First Secretary" was the title given to the leader of the Communist Party, who held the highest position of power in the country during the period of Communist rule, effectively acting as the head of state.





economic reforms, posing a direct challenge to Soviet control. In that sense, the Prague Spring reforms bore more similarities to the reforms of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which were swiftly crushed by a Soviet Invasion, leaving only remnants of the original reforms implemented.

## *Comparison of the Prague Spring, Polish October, and Hungarian Revolution reforms*

Feature	Prague Spring (1968)	Polish October (1956)	Hungarian Revolution (1956)
<b>Country</b>	Czechoslovakia	Poland	Hungary
<b>Economic Reforms</b>	Decentralization of economic power, increased enterprise autonomy, and introduction of market-based elements.	Decentralization of economic decision-making, greater autonomy for enterprises.	Economic liberalization, introduction of market-based elements, reduction of central planning
<b>Political Reforms</b>	Democratization, the introduction of free elections, a more independent judiciary, and relaxation of censorship.	Limited political liberalization increased autonomy for trade unions (Partially reversed)	Demands for a multi-party system, free elections, and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.
<b>Cultural Reforms</b>	Cultural liberalization, relaxation of censorship,	Increased cultural freedoms, relaxation of censorship (Partially reversed)	Cultural liberalization, promotion of national identity
<b>Foreign Policy Reforms</b>	Greater independence from Soviet control reduced reliance on the Warsaw Pact	More independent foreign policy, especially on the economic front. Reduced reliance on the Soviet Union.	Demands for a non-aligned foreign policy, withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact
<b>Outcome</b>	Warsaw Pact Invasion. Further outcomes are unclear at this point (August 21st, 1968)	Partial Success. Some reforms were reversed at the demand of the Soviet Union.	Crushed by Invasion, reforms were reversed. The West and the US, in particular, did not intervene militarily.



## CHAPTER B: FROM PRAGUE SPRING TO WARSAW PACT INVASION<sup>10</sup>

### *Czechoslovakia's Importance To The USSR's Warsaw Pact*

In a war with NATO, the Czechoslovak army would have formed the first echelon of a Warsaw Pact attack into southern Germany, intended to outflank any NATO effort to defend along the inner German border and, ultimately, to drive across Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg to the Rhein. The Czechoslovak military leadership was given command of the Front. It would have retained command of its armed forces in wartime, which put Czechoslovakia and Poland in a privileged position in the Warsaw Pact hierarchy. The reduction of Soviet ground forces in the early 1960s only increased the importance of the Czechoslovak army in Soviet/Warsaw Pact war planning.

### *Dubček and the Prague Spring: A Threat to the Warsaw Pact?*

While the reforms alarmed Moscow and the leadership of the Warsaw Pact, throughout the Prague Spring, Dubček went out of his way to demonstrate his loyalty to Moscow and Prague's intention to remain firmly within the Warsaw Pact military alliance. How sincere he was in these demonstrations is difficult to say, but Dubček and his allies clearly feared a repetition of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, which Soviet troops brutally crushed.

Although the Warsaw Pact had been created in 1955 as a "paper organization" to counter West Germany's rearming and the Western Allies' cooperative effort in NATO, by the early 1960s, the Warsaw Pact gradually acquired more form and substance as a military alliance. Under Khrushchey, the Pact had become the mechanism by which Moscow could introduce large-scale troop reductions, principally in conventional forces deployed to Europe. With substantially fewer forces in the Eastern EU, Moscow had more at stake in making the alliance work. Thus, although the non-Soviet members of the Warsaw Pact had little choice in joining the organization, Once they were members of an alliance with the Soviet Union, they found they had a relatively more incredible voice in ordering their affairs.

By 1965, the Warsaw Pact was becoming a framework in which Eastern European nations could exercise a growing level of autonomy. General disenchantment with Marxist economics and Soviet-style politics and the ever-increasing attraction of the West were giving the state of Eastern Europe "both the incentive and the opportunity for striking out on their own," noted

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<sup>10</sup> Please note the following chapter is heavily based on "The CIA and Strategic Warning: The 1968 Soviet-Led Invasion of Czechoslovakia"



the US Office of National Estimates<sup>11</sup> (ONE), in a special memorandum in 1965. The Soviets, according to ONE, will find it difficult to arrest the process; "though crises are an ever-present danger, we believe that these countries will be able successfully to assert their national interests gradually and without provoking Soviet intervention." The Prague Spring thus seems to have been evaluated as part of a broader reform movement with the Warsaw Pact as a whole. The cautious belief was that Alexander Dubček might pull it off if he were cautious and fortunate.

## *Tensions Rise*

As winter snow melted, it became possible to hypothesize that Dubček's "socialism with a human face" would find a place in the Warsaw Pact. On 23 March, Czechoslovakia was the main topic of discussion at a Warsaw Pact summit in Dresden. The leaders of the Soviet Union appeared to have "grudgingly accepted" the Czechoslovak reforms. The only limits placed on these reforms were the continued importance of the CPCz<sup>12</sup> and the fact that Czechoslovakia honors its military and economic commitments to the USSR. The USSR had not even placed economic sanctions.

Relations between Moscow and Prague deteriorated steadily in the next few months. The Politburo remained reluctant to sanction military action but viewed the reforms in Czechoslovakia with growing unease. It seemed the only thing now preventing the Soviet Union from intervening militarily was concern over the broad impact of yet another violent repression of an Eastern European bid for autonomy.

On July 17, ONE informed CIA Director Helms that they could not predict specific events in Czechoslovakia that might provoke a robust Soviet response. However, they noted that the Soviet leadership perceived a severe threat to communist authority in the country, which could lead to intervention if Czechoslovakia moved too far toward rejecting communism or the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets were still weighing their options, indicating that some concessions from Czechoslovak leader Dubček could potentially avert military action.

At the end of July, Soviet leaders held secret talks with the Czechoslovak Politburo at Čierna nad Tisou, which CIA analysts interpreted as tense discussions without immediate action.. Notably, Dubček's family was reported leaving for Yugoslavia, raising concerns. The talks concluded on

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<sup>11</sup> The US Office of National Estimates (ONE) is responsible for producing National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) that assess national security threats and provide comprehensive insights to inform policymakers on key international issues. This office serves as a coordinating body that integrates analysis from various intelligence agencies to create unified assessments

<sup>12</sup> The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) was the ruling political party in Czechoslovakia, guiding the country's policies and governance under Marxist-Leninist principles.



August 1, followed by a Warsaw Pact summit, producing only a statement affirming alliance solidarity and Marxist-Leninist principles. The Czechoslovak leadership seemed to have appeased their Soviet and Warsaw Pact allies, temporarily resolving the crisis.

## *The Last Conversation*

In 1994, the chief archivist of the Russian Federation made available the transcript of the last telephone conversation between Dubček and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, which took place on August 13th, 1968. The following is an English translation of parts of the conversation.

*Brezhnev: "But Sasha<sup>13</sup>, the problem isn't in that fact that you met with journalists. We came to an agreement when we met. We agreed that all mass media, the press, radio, and television, will be brought under the control of the central committee of the Communist Party and the government [...] and that all anti-Soviet and anti-socialist publications will be stopped. In the Soviet Union, we are keeping our side of the deal and are not engaging in any open criticism of Czechoslovakia. But as far as the Czechoslovak organs of mass communication are concerned, they are continuing unhindered to attack the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union, and there have even been cases of attacks on leading figures in our party. They are calling us Stalinists and things like that. I ask you, what is that supposed to mean?"*

Dubček responds with silence. As the conversation goes on, Brezhnev's tone gets more aggressive. Again, he wants to know why the reformists have not yet been purged from leading positions. Dubček's justification that decisions must be taken collectively is worlds away from the simple, unbending truths of real socialism, Brezhnev-style.

*Dubček: "A directive from above cannot just solve Leonid Ilyich, this issue, coming into effect everywhere. We must wait until the Slovaks and Czechs agree on a suitable solution. That's why the party leadership can only solve this question by telling the government and the minister to prepare suitable arguments for a final solution to be carried out a little later."*

*Brezhnev: "How much later?"*

*Dubček: "In October, the end of October."*

*Brezhnev: "What can I say, Sasha? This is nothing but more deception. This is more proof that you are deceiving us. I can't put it any other way. I will speak quite bluntly: if you cannot solve this question, your party leadership is no longer in control."*

*Dubček: "But this isn't deception. We are trying to fulfill the obligations to which we committed ourselves. But in a way that is possible in the current complex situation."*

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<sup>13</sup> "Sasha", refers to Alexander Dubček.



Brezhnev: [...] *"We must take issue with this and have no choice but to reassess the situation and take new, independent measures."*

Dubček: *"Comrade Brezhnev, take whatever measures your politburo considers fit."*

Brezhnev: *"If you answer me like that, then I have no choice but to tell you, Sasha, that that was an ill-considered statement."*

Dubček: [...] *"But why does everything have to be so rushed...?"*

A week after this conversation, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops began.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION

On the night of 20 to 21 August, 250,000 Warsaw Pact Soldiers from the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, and Hungary (note the absence of East Germany, Romania, and Albania) invaded Czechoslovakia. By the time of this UNSC meeting, Czechoslovakia was occupied. A coordinated military operation began as Soviet ground forces crossed the Czechoslovakian border. Simultaneously, a covert Soviet special forces unit secured Ruzyne International Airport in Prague. The operation started with a deceptive flight from Moscow, claiming engine failure, which allowed over 100 Soviet agents to land at the airport. These agents quickly took control of the airport, setting the stage for an airlift operation that saw Soviet transport planes bringing in airborne forces, including light tanks and artillery.

Meanwhile, Soviet armored columns and motorized rifle troops moved toward Prague and other key cities, facing little to no resistance as they advanced. The Czechoslovak People's Army didn't present much of a defense, as it was caught by surprise and believed resistance was inevitably futile. Moreover, it remains uncertain where key government leaders such as Alexander Dubček and Premier Oldřich Černík are located, and their current status is unknown.

The Soviet Union claimed that the Czechoslovak government had requested the invasion. Here is Radio Moscow from the morning of Wednesday, 21 August, with an official Soviet version of events:

*"State officials of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have asked the Soviet Union and other allied states to give the fraternal Czechoslovak people urgent assistance, including assistance with armed forces."*



Meanwhile, broadcasts on Czechoslovak Radio could be any more different. While they're expected to be soon forced off the air, they paint a picture of forced occupation against the will of the Czechoslovak people.

Thousands are protesting in Czechoslovakia. The protests are primarily nonviolent and are more symbolic than actual resistance. They include acts of civil disobedience, such as removing street signs to confuse invading troops, throwing eggs and tomatoes at Soviet soldiers, and organizing public demonstrations. A Czech student from one of the protests above went on the radio to describe the situation on the ground:

*"I am a Czech student, 22 years old. At this very moment, as I am recording, Russian tanks, prepared for any action, are standing in a big park just under my window. I don't know whether I will ever finish my studies or meet my friends abroad again. And I could count and count, but everything somehow loses sense at that moment. At 3 a.m., August 21, 1968, I woke up to a completely different world from the one I slept in."*

Additionally, Prague is full of tourists and international teams of journalists reporting on Dubček's reforms. Both Czech and international journalists went out into the streets to gather the views of some of the tens of thousands who were in the streets to protest against the Soviet tanks.



*Soviet tank in Prague. Photo: Prague City Museum*

The future of Czechoslovakia is at stake. We wish you luck in attempting to reach an agreement that will not be vetoed 😊.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does this invasion influence your country?
- Which bloc does your country align with? Why?



- What would your country want the future of Czechoslovakia to look like?
- How can you **pass** a resolution? Can you use this opportunity to create a broader Cold War agreement? What topics do you believe you can reach an agreement on?
- How does the potential of invasion affect future Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe?
- What short-term concerns about the situation in Czechoslovakia arise?

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