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Czechoslovak-Polish relations 1918-1968: The prospects for mutual support in the case of revolt

Stephen Edward Medvec

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CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH RELATIONS, 1918-1968:

THE PROSPECTS FOR MUTUAL SUPPORT IN THE CASE OF REVOLT

By

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This study traces Czechoslovak-Polish political and economic relations from the foundations of the two Eastern European states in 1918 through the 1968 Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, in which Poland acted as a leading participant. The study relies heavily upon Czech, Polish, French and English sources, and the majority of the research material was gathered in Eastern Europe from 1973 to 1975.

The study surveys the lengthy history of mutual Czech-Polish cultural prejudice, animosity, and indifference. Because of these factors, the Czechs and the Poles, two of Eastern Europe's most powerful and influential nations, have never been able to form a common bloc to prevent Soviet domination of their respective states. One conclusion of the study reveals that the Soviet Union has been able to maintain her hegemony in Czechoslovakia and in Poland not only because of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, but also because of the aforementioned mutual Czech-Polish cultural prejudice, animosity, and indifference.

The purpose of the study is to examine the propensity for revolt in Eastern Europe since 1953. Because the conservative Eastern European Communist regimes have consistently proven to be unwilling to honor popular demands for increased freedom of expression and an improved standard of living, revolt appears to be the only means available to the Eastern European peoples to democratize the Communist system of government. Since the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, dissidents demanding that the Eastern European regimes honor their human rights commitments have appeared throughout Eastern Europe. The political and economic situation in Poland is especially critical, and a potential Polish insurrection could erupt at any time. If a Polish insurrection were to occur, however improbable given the widespread fear throughout Eastern Europe of Soviet military intervention to suppress any revolts, the prospects that the politically discontented Czechs would rise up in revolt in mutual support of the Poles appear to be negligible. This conclusion is based upon an analysis of negative factors in the Czech-Polish past.
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Traditionally American study of Eastern Europe focuses primarily upon the unwillingness of several Eastern European states to obey unswervingly the Soviet Union's dictates. These studies tend to examine the antagonism which exists throughout Eastern Europe vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

However, few American scholars of Eastern European affairs have examined the conflicts and mutual negative attitudes of the Eastern European peoples. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the mutual negative attitudes of the Czechs and the Poles, two of Eastern Europe's most powerful and influential nations.

From October, 1973, to June, 1975, I researched Czechoslovak-Polish relations as a Fulbright-Hays scholar at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, under the guidance of Professor Antoni Czubiński. The majority of the research sources utilized in this thesis was gathered in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. Other European as well as American sources constitute the remainder of the research material.

Prior to my departure for Poland in September, 1973, I was vaguely aware of the negative attitudes which exist between the Czechs and the Poles. Two years of study in Eastern Europe contributed to an understanding of the intensity of the antagonisms between the two Slavic nations. Valuable insights into Czech and Polish attitudes were obtained not only through research, but also through numerous conversations with many Polish citizens. The Polish disdain for the
Czechs was very strong. Furthermore, a month's stay in Czecho-
lovakia in January, 1975, revealed that many Czechs have not yet
forgiven the Poles for their armed takeover of the Teschen coal
region in 1938! Likewise, the 1968 Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion
of Czechoslovakia, in which Poland acted as a leading participant,
has remained a bitter topic of Czech discussion.

The intensity of the mutual negative attitudes and distaste
of the Czechs and the Poles appalled me. This thesis is the result
of that reaction.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Case for Mutual Support of Revolt in Eastern Europe

Since the Soviet Union's imposition of Communism in Eastern Europe after the end of the Second World War, the Eastern European peoples have periodically risen in revolt against the Communist regimes which have usurped national freedoms and wish to remain in power at any cost. The Eastern European Communist regimes have maintained their power base through the use of a strong police system as well as through the extensive influence of the Communist party in all levels of Eastern European society.

However, despite the strong Communist police network as well as the extensive influence of the Communist party in the Eastern European states, periodic popular revolts have occurred in Eastern Europe to demand from the Communist elites in power greater political or economic freedom. On three occasions (Poland in 1956, Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968), Communists themselves instituted reforms of the system in support of popular demands for increased freedom and national self-determination to conduct internal political and economic affairs without the outside interference of the Soviet Union.

The other revolts, provoked by either political or economic catalysts, include the following: the 1953 uprising in East Berlin, and the 1953 workers' riots in Plzeň, Czechoslovakia; the 1968 Polish student riots; the 1970 and 1976 Polish workers' riots; and the most
recent East German demands for personal liberties guaranteed in the 1975 Helsinki Declaration. As long as freedom remains suppressed throughout Eastern Europe, the probability of further revolt to demand increased personal liberty and greater national self-determination will also remain.

Therefore, one can assume that initial revolt in one state in Eastern Europe could act as a catalyst to provoke the people of another Eastern European state to revolt. Mutual support in the case of revolt would cause tremendous consternation not only for the ruling Communist elites in the two states involved in the revolt, but also for the Soviet Union which would have to contend with two recalcitrant satellites. Mutual support in the case of revolt could possibly lead to greater success in achieving the revolts' objectives, e.g., the granting of greater freedom or the overthrow of the Communists elites in power, who may be perceived as agents of the Soviet Union.

However, such a revolt would most likely not be opposed to the idea of socialism. This assumption is based on a July, 1976, Radio Free Europe survey, The Best Government, which was conducted among Czechoslovak, Hungarian, and Polish tourists in the West. The RFE survey indicated that the current Communist regimes in power in Czechoslovakia (Husák), Hungary (Kádár), and Poland (Gierek) were popular among only 3 to 7 percent of those interviewed. Classical democracy was popular among 24 to 33 percent of those interviewed, while democratic socialism as practiced in Austria and in Sweden received a plurality of 40 to 44 percent. According to RFE, the
attraction of democratic socialism will continue to increase among the youth in the three states, while the attraction of classical democracy will correspondingly continue to decrease because those who favored it were older persons who had actually experienced it. It appears as if the Eastern Europeans would prefer to retain some of the more positive social benefits of Communism such as free university education, extensive maternity benefits, and a comprehensive national health care program, but would discard the extensive Communist police network as well as one-party rule.

Consequently, what is the probability of a revolt of mutual support in Eastern Europe, in particular between the peoples of Czechoslovakia and Poland, two of the most important states among the Soviet Union's satellites in Eastern Europe? Is it reasonable to assume that the peoples of these two states would give their mutual support in the case of an initial revolt against the Communist regime in one of the states to demand greater internal freedom and increased national sovereignty? Could the Czechs and the Poles stand together for their mutual benefit to demand the end of Communist oppression in their respective countries and to request the Soviet Union to grant them greater national self-determination in the running of their internal political and economic affairs?

The Question of Czech Support for a Potential Polish Insurrection

In this section, the current events of Poland and Czechoslovakia are discussed, and the possibility of potential insurrection in Poland is revealed. Can one assume that a revolt in Poland could
act as a catalyst among the politically discontented Czechs to revolt against their own Communist regime in support of the Poles?

In June, 1976, Polish workers rioted near Warsaw and Radom, Poland, to protest the Gierek government's decision to raise food prices which the government had previously held stable since 1970. Those June riots could possibly indicate that the popular Edward Gierek, First Secretary of the United Polish Workers' (Communist) Party since his coming to power in December, 1970, as a result of food riots in four Polish cities (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Szczecin, and Ebląg), may be losing his popularity among the Polish people. The critical meat shortage and the most recent sugar shortage in Poland are national scandals and the subjects of much popular complaint and criticism. The current Polish situation appears to be especially critical.

According to a Polish friend of Jean-François Revel, a French political writer for the journal L'Express, the Gierek regime does not have either a viable economic or political solution for Poland's economic problems. The Pole felt that the Polish population could erupt at any time in the foreseeable future into nationwide strikes and demonstrations which could lead to open insurrection. Furthermore, the Pole believed that the Polish army could and would vigorously defend Poland against Soviet military intervention. "We are not Czechs," he concluded.²

The above statement, "We are not Czechs," has two possible meanings: (1) the Czechoslovak army has never been permitted to mobilize to defend Czechoslovakia against an aggressor, either
against the Germans in 1939 or against the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, or (2) the Poles consider the Czechs to be a cowardly nation because the Czechs have consistently resorted to passive rather than active resistance when confronted with a superior military force. Therefore, the Poles believe that they could never count on the Czechs to join an initial insurrection.

Unlike the Czech army, which has not supported the people of Czechoslovakia against aggressors, the Polish army would support a national insurrection. According to 1969 statistics, the Polish army was composed of about 275,000 men in time of peace. A reserve organization and citizen's militia also exists.

In his book *Poland 1944-1962: The Sovietization of a Captive People*, Richard Staar states that Poles in general make excellent troops and their morale is rated outstanding when they are convinced that they are fighting for their homeland. The emotional factor of patriotism plays a considerable part in their attitude toward war. This was especially evident during the Second World War when many Poles fought on several fronts to liberate not only their homeland, but also many parts of Europe from Nazi rule.

The current political situation in Czechoslovakia is also critical. In April, 1969, First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and President of the Republic (since May, 1975) Gustáv Husák came to power in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet Union forced the Czechoslovak Communist Party elite to remove
Alexander Dubček from the position of First Secretary. Dubček had attempted to eliminate the harshness of the neo-Stalinist period in Czechoslovakia under Antonín Novotný by granting freedoms unprecedented in a Communist-ruled country to the Czechs and the Slovaks during the first eight months of 1968. The result of the so-called "Prague Spring" was the brutal Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968.

Since his usurpation of power in 1969, Gustáv Husák has imposed his own version of Stalinism in Czechoslovakia. The people of Czechoslovakia are very dissatisfied politically despite the fact that the Husák regime has bribed them with the second highest standard of living in the entire socialist bloc, behind that of the German Democratic Republic.

On January 1, 1977, 282 Czech intellectuals, many of whom were associated with Alexander Dubček and the 1968 "Prague Spring", signed a manifesto, the Charter 77, which is an appeal to the Husák regime to honor its commitments to respect fundamental human rights in Czechoslovakia, guaranteed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and in the 1975 Helsinki Declaration. The full text of Charter 77 is in Appendix A.

According to Hella Pick, a correspondent for the The Guardian, the Charter 77 signatories denied that they were trying to establish a political opposition group, but the regime has strongly condemned the manifesto. Six of the signatories were detained by the police, but were later released.5

Charter 77 could mark the beginning of a national protest
movement, the first in Czechoslovakia since the 1968 invasion, which could lead to difficult times for the unpopular Husák regime. Therefore, is it reasonable to assume that the current volatile economic situation in Poland could provoke a widespread insurrection within the Polish population which could then trigger a revolt of mutual support among the politically discontented Czechs?

Statement of Thesis, Justification, Scope, and Focus

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the prospects for Czech support of a potential Polish insurrection appear to be negligible. Why?

The answer to this intriguing question lies in underlying historical Czech-Polish animosities, border disputes, misunderstandings, and mutual cultural prejudices. One of these prejudices has already been stated—the Poles regard the Czechs as a cowardly nation. In turn, the Czechs consider the Poles to be reckless romantics.

These antagonisms and mutual cultural prejudices between the Czechs and the Poles, which have led to widespread mutual indifference, have contemporary political relevance and are, therefore, important to the political study of post-war Eastern Europe. Because of these historical Czech-Polish hostilities and cultural prejudices, Soviet hegemony in Czechoslovakia and in Poland has been made easier to maintain. Soviet military occupation of Czechoslovakia and Poland as well as Soviet economic controls have also played significant roles in the maintenance of Soviet hegemony in the two
satellite states. However, the assumption of this thesis is that historical animosities and mutual cultural prejudices between the Czechs and the Poles have also played a very crucial role.

Therefore, the focus of the thesis is to demonstrate that Czech-Polish conflicts, misunderstandings, mutual petty jealousies, and mutual cultural prejudices, which have resulted from a diverse historical development in Bohemia and in Poland, have kept the two neighboring Slavic nations hostile to each other. Because of these factors, the probability of Czech support for a potential Polish revolt appears to be negligible.

However, certain factors play a role in overcoming the probability of revolt in either Czechoslovakia or in Poland, be it mutual support or otherwise. These factors are important but play a secondary role in the thesis. The factors are: (1) the very high standard of living in Czechoslovakia compared to that of Poland (The food shortage found in Poland has no counterpart in Czechoslovakia, and one can assume that the Czechs would not sympathize with the critical Polish situation.), and (2) the intense fear in Czechoslovakia and in Poland of Soviet armed intervention to suppress any revolts as were the cases in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. (Given the geopolitical realities of post-war Europe, the Soviet Union would never permit any of her Eastern European satellites to leave the socialist bloc.)

The scope of the thesis, covering the years 1918 to 1968, is broad in order to demonstrate that Czech-Polish antagonisms have an extensive existence. These antagonisms began considerably prior to
1918, but the thesis begins with the foundation of the two states, Czechoslovakia and Poland, after the end of the First World War and closes with the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The scope of the thesis reveals that the Czechs and the Poles suffered from two major points of disagreement between 1918 and 1968: (1) Czech friendship toward Russia as opposed to Polish antagonism toward Russia, and (2) the dispute over Teschen, a rich coal area on the Czech-Polish border in southern Silesia. The Teschen issue was finally resolved in 1947.

The Czech friendship toward Russia has a long history, as does the corresponding Polish antagonism toward Russia. As a result of this very crucial factor, conflicts and misunderstandings between the Czechs and the Poles ensued from 1918 to 1968. However, in 1968, the Soviet Union brutally crushed the "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia and simultaneously destroyed the Czech amity for Russia.

Therefore, a major point of contention between the Czechs and the Poles could have been overcome. However, because Polish soldiers also participated in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, a potential Czech-Polish rapprochement perished in the smoke over Prague. Unfortunately, Polish participation in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia only reinforced Czech hostility toward the entire Polish nation.
Theoretical Framework and Analytical Tools

Within the theoretical framework of this thesis, the principal subject of inquiry is the role of Czech-Polish attitude formations resulting from Czech-Polish transactions across the Czechoslovak-Polish border. In the study of Communist-controlled states, however, it is extremely difficult to assess attitudes because of the scarcity of reliable data. Fortunately, the majority of the research sources employed in this thesis was gathered in Eastern Europe.

This study also employs one political theory and one political hypothesis to analyze Czech-Polish relations: (1) the "spillover" theory, and (2) a Marshall R. Singer hypothesis which deals with the relationship of two small Communist states vis-à-vis a larger Communist state, the Soviet Union.

According to Inis L. Claude, the separability of economic problems from political problems is only temporary. Claude employs the functional "spillover" theory which states that excellent relations between two states in the economic sphere may "spillover" into the political sphere and lead to political integration. Economic relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland have been excellent since 1947, but the Czechs and the Poles have remained politically distant. Therefore, it appears as if the "spillover" theory has no validity in the case of Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Finally, the following Marshall R. Singer hypothesis is employed to analyze the relationships among the Communist elites in
Prague, Warsaw, and Moscow in the years 1956, 1968, and 1971:

In terms of measurable indices of behavior such as economic, communications, military, or formal political ties, two weak states (A and B) may be equally dependent upon a strong third state (X). But if, for some reasons, there is a higher degree of similarity of political perception between the elites of A and X than there is between the elites of B and X, the likelihood is that the international political behavior of A will more closely approximate and support the political behavior of X than it will of the political behavior of B.

This hypothesis has a great deal of validity in the case of Czechoslovakia and Poland and is important to the premise that Czech-Polish animosities have made it easier for the Soviet Union to maintain hegemony in those two satellite states.
NOTES:


CHAPTER II

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL BASES OF CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH RELATIONS, 1918-1945

This chapter examines the diverse historical development in Bohemia and in Poland. This diverse historical development has led to mutual Czech-Polish antagonisms, cultural prejudices, and petty jealousies which continue to plague proper relations between the Czechs and the Poles. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of the conflict over Teschen as well as the Czech-Polish disagreement about the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern European affairs. These two events played crucial roles in undermining Czech-Polish rapprochement during the inter-war and war periods and contributed to Soviet hegemony in Czechoslovakia and in Poland after the end of the Second World War.

The Inter-war Years, 1918-1945

The Creation of Czechoslovakia and Poland at Versailles

In the late autumn of 1918, after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the treaty of Versailles created the Republic of Czechoslovakia composed of the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia), Slovakia, and Ruthenia. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk became the republic's first president and served in that capacity until his death in 1937.

Also, in November, 1918, the Polish government issued a decree which declared that Poland was a republic upon the first convocation of the Sejm (parliament). Józef Piłsudski was
temporarily declared Chief of State.

Simultaneously with the creation of the new Polish Republic, the young Polish state entered into quarrels over its borders which had not yet been established despite the fact that Poland suffered from not only a ruined economy after the war, but also from overwhelming poverty. In February, 1919, Piłsudski decided to launch an offensive into the territories of the Ukraine, White Russia, and Lithuania. Furthermore, the western borders of the young Polish state were not peaceful. In December, 1918, Poles living in the Grand Duchy of Poznań rose up in revolt against the Germans. The Duchy officially joined the Polish Republic in June, 1919. Finally, disagreement over the Czech-Polish border led to armed conflict and fruitless diplomatic discussions between Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The Czech-Polish Conflict over Teschen, 1918-1938

On November 5, 1918, the Polish Rada Narodowa Księstwa Cieszyńskiego (National Council for the Duchy of Teschen) and the Czech Zemský Narodní Výbor pro Slezsko (National Land Council for Silesia) signed an interim agreement which created a line of demarcation in Teschen (Czech—Český Těšín; Polish—Cieszyn) to limit conflicts. Under the agreement, the Polish Rada Narodowa controlled the ethnically Polish region around Teschen (80 percent Polish population versus 20 percent Czech) plus the rich coal mines at Karwińskie Zagłębie. However, the Czechoslovak government did not accept this agreement because heavily industrialized Czechoslovakia required the rich Polish coal mines for her industrial
production. Therefore, by the end of 1918, the Czechs were prepared for the military takeover of the entire Silesian area around Teschen.

Taking advantage of the Polish conflict in the Ukraine and White Russia, as well as declaring that the Poles had rejected the Teschen agreement of November 5, 1918, because Teschen was to be included in the approaching Polish parliamentary elections, the Czech army crossed the line of demarcation on January 23, 1919. Approximately sixteen thousand well-armed Czech soldiers encountered little resistance in overwhelming fifteen hundred Polish soldiers, some coal miners, iron workers, railway employees, and peasants.

On January 30, 1919, Polish reinforcements halted the Czech offensive at Skoczów. On February 3, 1919, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš and Polish Minister Roman Dmowski signed a new agreement in Paris which dealt with the disputed area. The old line of demarcation was not restored because the Czechs occupied the coal mines at Karwińskie Zagłębie which proved to be of great importance for Czech industry.

On August 10, 1920, at Sèvres, France, the Council of Ambassadors of the Great Powers divided the disputed Silesian area around Teschen between Czechoslovakia and Poland. Poland received an area of 1,012 sq. km. plus 141,000 persons. This area included the district of Bielsko, sections of the Duchy of Teschen, the district of Frysztat, the city of Teschen, except for the railway station and tracks, plus sections of Spiš and Orava, both located in northern Slovakia. Czechoslovakia received the remainder—
1,270 sq. km. and 293,000 persons plus the rich coal mines at Karwin'skie Zagłębie, the primary goal of the 1919 Czech military intervention. See the map on the following page.

The Western powers hoped that this division would solve the Teschen issue between the Czechs and the Poles. Unfortunately, the issue continued to be a source of constant border conflicts which culminated in the Polish armed intervention of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Despite the border conflicts between Czechoslovakia and Poland during the first years of the new states' existence, political relations between the two states to 1926 were cool but proper.

In May, 1926, the Józef Piłsudski coup d'état in Poland brought into question the modest improvement in Czech-Polish relations. Piłsudski possessed strong anti-Czech sentiments. He refused to forgive the Czechs for their 1919 Teschen intervention as well as for their 1920 refusal to permit the transit of French arms to Poland during the Polish war with Soviet Russia.

The nomination of Colonel Józef Beck in December, 1932, to be the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs was unfortunate for Poland and for Czechoslovakia. Because of his intense personal aversion for Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš and for the Czechs, Beck conducted a foreign policy designed to lead to rapprochement with Nazi Germany against Czechoslovakia. Therefore, the Polish minority issue in the Silesian area around Teschen resurfaced as an important point of contention. Beck intended to employ the Polish minority issue in Czechoslovakia to realize his long-range
CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH BORDER
1918-1921

Free city of Gdańsk (Danzig)

Poland

Warsaw

Poznań

Płock

Czechoslovakia

Bratislava

Teschen (Czech--Český Těšín; Polish--Cieszyn)

--- Olza River

--- Orava

--- Spiš
objective, the destruction of Czechoslovakia.

Under pressure from the Polish government and the Polish consulate in Czechoslovakia (the Czechs and the Poles did not have full diplomatic relations during the inter-war period), the leaders of the Polish political groups active in Czech Silesia began to oppose the Czech government. In commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Teschen conflict, the Polish groups organized demonstrations, ignited nationalistic sentiments among the Poles, and encouraged the breakdown of peaceful Czech-Polish coexistence. After the 1935 Czechoslovak parliamentary elections, relations between the two nationalities became tenser, and constant demonstrations and manifestations of hatred on both sides were a normal phenomenon.

In the Polish government and in the private press, anti-Czech articles began to appear more frequently. Piłsudski, driven by his old pretenses and hatreds for Czechoslovakia, refused to hold audiences with the Czech envoy in Warsaw, Girsa. Piłsudski considered Czechoslovakia to be an artificial creation which could not possibly continue to exist because of her three million Germans plus active Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish separatist movements. Because of his negative attitude, Piłsudski preferred not to conclude any agreements with Czechoslovakia.

In 1934, the Piłsudski-Beck regime was prepared to reannex the entire Silesian area around Teschen to the Olza River, e.g., Zaolzie. The Polish General Staff was summoned under a conspiratorial organization entitled the "Committee of Seven," whose
purpose was to organize the political and sabotage activities in Teschen. The principal task of the "Committee of Seven" was to prepare an armed revolt in the entire Silesian area around Teschen which would act as a pretext for the Polish army's intervention into the region.  

During one of Beck's conversations with French Minister Barthou, the subject of Czech-Polish relations emerged. Beck stated that the basis for the poor relations was neither general policy nor motives for prestige, but rather the Czech government's poor treatment of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia. (Józef Beck possessed a seemingly pathological hatred for the Czechs which interfered with clear and objective evaluations of the critical geographical position of Czechoslovakia and Poland vis-à-vis Nazi Germany.) Therefore, when Barthou spoke about the Slavic kinship of the Czechs and the Poles, Beck reminded him of Poland's historical sympathy for the "heroic and chivalrous" Hungarians. (A Hungarian prince, Stefan Batory, was King of Poland from 1575 to 1586. Furthermore, a lengthy cultural affinity between the Polish and the Hungarian aristocracies has also existed.) Beck continued by stating that despite the common ethnic bond, the Poles feel little sympathy for the Czechs. He stated that the Poles hold a stronger affinity for the Slovaks who, like the Poles, are very devout Catholics and whose language resembles Polish more than it does Czech. The importance of Beck's statement is explained in the following section of the chapter.
Finally, the issue of the Czech treatment of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia came to a dramatic climax, the Polish military annexation of the entire Zaolzie area.

In September, 1938, the Polish government demanded categorically from Prague that it apply the same rights to the Polish minority which it had granted to the Sudeten German minority. Warsaw simultaneously terminated the 1925 agreements with Czechoslovakia, among them the arbitration treaty which had the nature of a pact of non-aggression. The Polish army began to assemble on the Czechoslovak-Polish border near Teschen. For the time being, the Polish General Staff did not order an attack on Czechoslovakia. Beck waited until the conclusion of the fatal Munich Conference.

In order to reduce the Polish threat, Kamil Krofta, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister under President Beneš (Beneš became Czechoslovakia's second president after Thomas Masaryk's death in 1937), asked the Soviet envoy in Prague to request Soviet army maneuvers on the Polish border. (The Czechs had concluded a pact of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union in 1935.) Moscow agreed to this demand and also informed France that if Poland attacked Czechoslovakia, the Soviet army would attack Poland. However, Warsaw did not take the Soviet threat seriously because it overestimated its own military strength and also counted on German military assistance.

Because he considered Poland to be a major European power, Beck was infuriated that he had not been invited to Munich to
participate in the destruction of Czechoslovakia. Therefore, he reacted with brutality on Czechoslovakia. The Polish army's intervention into the entire Silesian area around Teschen at the same time of the German annexation of the Sudetenland created the impression that Germany had agreed with the Polish action. By annexing the area, Beck also wished to reveal Poland's alleged military capabilities.  

As a result of Beck's intense hatred for the Czechs, he was blind to the fact that Czechoslovakia was necessary for Poland's security. Czechoslovakia's border with Poland measured about 850 kilometres in length and prevented a German attack on Poland from the south.  

After Hitler had occupied Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, Germany surrounded Poland on three sides. Therefore, Poland should have stood firm in the defense of Czechoslovakia rather than participate with Hitler in her destruction.

If Poland had supported Czechoslovakia during the 1938 Sudeten crisis, it is possible that the war of 1939 could have been avoided. If war had broken out in 1938, Germany would have suffered a catastrophic defeat as was foreseen by the German General Staff because she was not totally prepared for war. Germany in 1938 did not yet possess Czechoslovakia's vast economic, industrial, and military wealth which she did acquire in March, 1939. It is truly unfortunate that a man driven by ambition bordering on megalomania and obsessed with hatred for his southern neighbor held the reigns of power in Warsaw during this critical period in European history.
The importance of the conflict over Teschen was that it contributed a new phase to a long history of mutual Czech-Polish distaste. It corrupted not only the possibility of a Czech-Polish rapprochement during the inter-war period, but also stood as a major factor in the failure of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation in 1943, to be discussed later in this chapter. The Teschen issue was not officially resolved until 1947. Unfortunately, many Czechs still regard the 1938 Polish intervention into the area as an issue of contention with the Poles.

The Cultural Differences between the Czechs and the Poles

A diverse historical development in Bohemia and Poland has led to numerous contradictory elements in the national character traits of the Czechs and the Poles. According to Karl Bader, a Polish envoy to Prague during the inter-war period, the ill will between the Czechs and the Poles is explained by a difference in culture, history, and foreign influences. These cultural and historical differences, which have created a diversity of temperament and contributed to a deepening conflict between the Czechs and the Poles, are very difficult to overcome. The Poles, whom the Czechs consider to be proud and reckless romantics, regard the Czechs as slightly-polished peasants despite the fact that their languages are quite similar. This ethnic relationship, Bader continues, has also allowed corresponding weaknesses to develop, e.g., a strong obstinacy in negotiations as well as excessive national sensitivity.
"Bourgeois" Czechoslovakia versus "Aristocratic" Poland

William Rose, in his 1951 study of Czech and Polish national characteristics, writes that the Czech perception of the Poles as proud, as well as the Polish perception of the Czechs as slightly-polished peasants, is derived from the fact that the Czechs lost their aristocracy as a result of the Austrian victory over the Czechs at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. The Czech aristocracy was simply annihilated. Thereafter, the Czechs became virtually a one-class bourgeois society.

On the contrary, the Polish aristocracy, excessively influenced by the French aristocracy, dominated Polish affairs up to the Communist takeover of Poland in 1944. Therefore, the Czechs and the Poles suffered from the lack of a culturally unifying force because Czech society was predominantly bourgeois, while Polish society was divided between a dominating aristocracy and an overwhelming peasant population.

"Bourgeois" Czechoslovakia and "aristocratic" Poland were eliminated after the Communist takeovers of both states in 1948 and 1944, respectively. However, those character traits can still be found among many Czechs and Poles today despite the imposition of Communism.

Religious Differences between the Czechs and the Poles

Religious differences also represent a factor in explaining the antagonism between the Czechs and the Poles.

The Roman Catholic Church has always played a very important role in Polish and in Slovak society. Despite the imposition of
Communism in Czechoslovakia and in Poland, Poles and Slovaks remain intensely religious and willingly participate in large numbers at Mass and Catholic religious festivities. Anti-clericalism in Poland and in Slovakia appears to be virtually negligible. Furthermore, the Poles and the Slovaks maintain a strong mutual cultural and ethnic amity. (Colonel Beck referred to this Polish-Slovak cultural amity in his discussion with French minister Barthou.)

On the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church has played a less important role in Bohemia, where the Hussite Revolt of the fifteenth century remains a high point in Czech national history. The majority of Czechs practice Catholicism, but, because of the strong Hussite influence on Czech thought, the Czechs tend to be very anti-clerical and are not as devoutly religious as are the Poles and the Slovaks. A strong Protestant element, which does not exist in either Poland or in Slovakia, can also be found in Bohemia.

Czech Passivity versus Polish Romanticism

The Polish perception of the Czechs as a cowardly nation and the Czech perception of the Poles as reckless romantics are very crucial elements in the study of Czech-Polish ill will.

The Poles regard the Czechs as cowards because the Czechs have consistently resorted to realistic passive resistance when confronting a superior force. On the other hand, the Poles have shown a willingness to die for a cause. In this regard, the Czechs perceive their northern Slavic neighbors to be reckless romantics.
Edward Taborsky, Beneš' secretary who fled to the United States after the 1948 Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia, writes the following about the Czech national character: "... down-to-earth realism, an overdose of caution, a dislike for risks, a lack of romantic heroism. When confronted with a superior force, the average Czech resorts to devious maneuvering, covered by a pretense of submission rather than overt opposition. He is ready to fight only if the chance for success appears to be imminent."¹⁴

This Czech national preference for "caution, lack of romantic heroism, and devious maneuvering, covered by a pretense of submission ..." was immortalized in The Good Soldier Schweik, Jaroslav Hašek's classic novel about Czech passive resistance within the Austrian army during the First World War. The Czech national characteristic of passive resistance is now called "Schweikism".

During the Second World War, the diverse national character traits of the Czechs and the Poles revealed themselves in striking statistics. Six million Poles, or 22 percent of the Polish population, perished, while only 1.5 percent of the Czech population was killed. Within the realm of national wealth, Poland lost 38 percent, while Czech losses were negligible.¹⁵ The Polish capital of Warsaw was completely destroyed during the war, while Prague, the Czechoslovak capital, remained virtually unscathed despite the war.

The above statistics have led the Poles to believe that the Czechs collaborated with the Nazis in Czechoslovakia during the war.
to save their lives and their lovely capital. The Polish perception of the Czechs to be "Germanized" Slavs is extremely important for comprehending the general Polish reaction to the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in which Poland played an important role. The invasion is discussed in the fourth chapter.

Diverse Czech and Polish Perceptions vis-à-vis Russia

The diverse historical development in Bohemia and in Poland also led to the sharpest and most crucial difference between the Czechs and the Poles, the disagreement over the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern European affairs. The Czechs possessed a positive attitude toward the Soviet Union, while the Poles held a correspondingly negative one. The diversity of attitude between the Czechs and the Poles concerning the Soviet Union was vital for the Soviet Union's post-war intentions in Czechoslovakia and in Poland.

After the Habsburg victory over the Czechs at White Mountain in 1620, the Czech lands fell under Austrian control for almost three hundred years. Because of Austria's intensive Germanization program, Czech culture and language were almost liquidated. The trend toward Germanization was finally checked, if not definitely halted, during the final quarter of the eighteenth century, when a small group of patriotic Czech scholars, writers, and teachers began to work for the cause of Czech liberty and national awareness. At the same time, many Czechs looked to Russia as the most important Slavic nation and the potential liberator of the Czechs from Austrian
hegemony. 16

This favorable Czech attitude toward Russia explains the Czech refusal to permit the transit of French arms to Poland during Poland's 1920 war with the Soviet Union, the 1935 Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance, and the failure of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation in 1943. Unfortunately, this positive Czech attitude toward Russia endured until 1968, when it was finally crushed under the weight of Soviet tanks.

On the contrary, the Poles could not share or comprehend the Czech viewpoint that Russia would liberate the Slavs from the Germans. After the Partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795, the Poles rose up in revolt against the Russians in 1794, 1830-31, and again in 1863. Each time the Russian armies brutally suppressed the revolts. Therefore, the Poles developed a firmly negative attitude toward anything Russian. Furthermore, because the Czechs were pro-Russian, the Poles considered them to be pro-Communist during the inter-war period. (The Czechs believed that because the Poles were anti-Russian, they were consequently not true Slavs.) 17

The importance of the diverse Czech-Polish attitude toward the Soviet Union becomes clearer in the third part of this chapter as well as in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.
The War Years

The Failure of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation

In November, 1940, Dr. Edvard Beneš, the head of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile in London, formally initiated negotiations with the Polish Government-in-Exile, led by General Władysław Sikorski, to form a post-war Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. Sikorski, whose pro-Czechoslovak sympathies were an unusual quality for a Pole, overwhelmingly supported the idea. On November 11, 1940, the two governments signed a joint declaration favoring closer political and economic cooperation. The plan offered Czechoslovakia and Poland the possibility of becoming a joint confederated power in Central Europe after the end of the war.

Beneš attempted to create the confederation with Poland to defend Czechoslovakia's exposed geographical position in Central Europe in the post-war era. Beneš was afraid of a revitalized Germany. Having been betrayed by France and Great Britain in 1938 and 1939, Beneš felt that his best option was to form an alliance with his eastern neighbor. 18

However, in 1943, less than three years after its initiation, the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation failed miserably. The confederation failed for two reasons, both of which are discussed in this chapter: (1) the Czech-Polish conflict over Teschen, and (2) the disagreement over the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern European affairs. The failure of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation ensured the Soviet Union's post-war domination of Czechoslovakia.
and Poland.

In his book Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, Piotr Wandycz writes that the declaration to form the confederation did not solve the existing differences between Beneš and Sikorski. The declaration's primary importance was to commit the two governments to close cooperation. However, the two statesmen possessed diverse opinions concerning the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern European affairs. Beneš believed that the Czechs and the Poles should cooperate with the Soviet Union, while Sikorski feared the Russians. Sikorski pushed for greater political, economic, and military cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Poland and pleaded with Beneš to exclude the Russians from any Czech-Polish negotiations. Given the favorable Czech attitude toward the Russians as well as the corresponding Polish antagonism, Beneš' and Sikorski's actions are not difficult to comprehend.

Wandycz feels that Beneš proposed the creation of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation not out of a desire to ameliorate Czech-Polish relations, but rather out of selfish opportunism. Because Czechoslovakia was in a vacuum without her chief ally, the Soviet Union, which had not yet entered the war, Beneš turned to the Poles with his proposal to form a confederation. However, Beneš' proposal to form a confederation with Poland was purposely made vague so as not to jeopardize Czechoslovak relations with the Soviet Union.

The following statement by Beneš on July 12, 1941, verifies Wandycz's observation that Beneš was waiting for the Soviet Union to enter the war. The statement also reveals Beneš' insight into the
The whole future depends on the victory or the defeat of Russia, on the condition in which she leaves the war. For us (Czechoslovakia), that is the deciding factor. After the war as well as for the next twenty years, France will not yet possess the strength to play a leading role in European politics. For the next five years, England will be weak and go with America on another path. Only Russia and Germany will remain in Europe, so, I hope that Russia will play the deciding role.

For us, this foundation is exceptionally important; the whole future of the republic depends on it. I am only concerned that the Russians perform their politics well.

After the Soviet Union entered the war, Stalin easily manipulated Beneš to force him to halt his negotiations with Sikorski. With Stalin's support, Beneš renewed his demands for the return of Teschen to Czechoslovakia. (The subject of Teschen had been discreetly and intentionally placed aside during the initial Czech-Polish negotiations to form the confederation.) Sikorski himself believed that Poland's possession of Teschen was justifiable.

In regard to Stalin, Sikorski pleaded with Beneš not to believe in Stalin for he was convinced that Stalin possessed post-war territorial ambitions in Czechoslovakia and in Poland. However, Beneš continued to believe in Stalin until just prior to his death in June, 1948, after the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in February of that same year. Beneš finally realized that he had been Stalin's dupe, as he confirmed on his death bed: "My greatest mistake was that I refused to believe to the very last that even Stalin lied to me cynically both in 1935 [the year that Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union signed the Pact of Mutual Assistance] and later,
and that his assurances to me and to Masaryk, Jan, the first president's amiable son who served as Czechoslovak Foreign Minister until his death by defenestration in 1948 were an intentional deceit.  

Thus, the argument over Teschen as well as the disagreement over the role of the Soviet Union in Eastern European affairs destroyed the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation in 1943. After the confederation had failed, Beneš went to Moscow in December, 1943, and concluded a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union in which each state pledged to act after the war "in accordance with the principles of mutual respect for the independence and sovereignty, as well as of non-interference in the internal affairs, of the other state." It was also agreed that as Russian troops entered Czechoslovakia, they would be accompanied by Czech forces, and the liberated areas would be progressively handed over to the Czechoslovak civil administration. However, none of Stalin's promises was honored.

The confederation represented the first and only endeavor by the two hostile Slavic nations to attempt to settle their long history of antagonism and mistrust. The London negotiations represented an ideal situation for the resolution of disputes between the two states of Czechoslovakia and Poland because London was a neutral site. Once the Soviet Union began to interfere, the ideal situation perished, and the mutual Czech-Polish inability to comprehend each other's historical perceptions renewed the old antagonisms.
The long history of Czech amity toward Russia and the corresponding Polish distrust for Russia proved to be the decisive factors. Therefore, Dr. Beneš undermined his own enlightened 1940 proposal to create the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation because his positive Czech attitude toward Russia superseded any superficial intention of ameliorating Czech relations with the Poles. The Poles themselves could never comprehend the Czech amity toward Russia.

The failure of the confederation ensured Soviet hegemony in Czechoslovakia and in Poland after the end of the Second World War.
NOTES:


7Koźński, Czechosłowacja w polskiej polityce zagranicznej, p. 121; Edvard Beneš, Paměti: Od Mnichova k nové válečné k novému vítězství (Praha: Nakladatelství Akademie Věd, 1947), p. 69.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 171.


20. Ibid., p. 83.


23 Beneš, *Paměti: Od Mnichova k nové válce a k novému vítěství*, pp. 180-188.
CHAPTER III

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EVOLUTION OF CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH RELATIONS, 1945-1967

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. The first purpose is to discuss the Polish government's 1956 liberalization program which resulted from widespread popular demands for "democratic" changes within Stalinist Poland. Reactions of the Czech people and government to the liberalization program in Poland are also examined.

The second purpose of this chapter is to examine the excellent economic relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland despite the correspondingly poor political relations which continue to exist between the two states. The section on economic relations attempts to show that even though Czechoslovakia and Poland enjoy excellent economic relations, the political relations between the two states remain distant despite the imposition of Communism in both states after the end of the Second World War.

The Impact of the Stalinist Period in Poland

In 1944, the Red Army entered Poland from the east and established a pro-Soviet Polish Communist government in Lublin.

By the time of the Potsdam Conference in July, 1945, the United States and Great Britain had recognized the new Communist-dominated Polish government in Lublin, though stressing its obligation to "hold free and unfettered elections as soon as possible" in accordance with the agreement at Yalta. Both
Churchill and Truman pressed Stalin for public assurances that the Polish elections should also be freely observed by the world press. Stalin, after some argument, agreed to include in the Potsdam communique' some words about the observation of free elections in Poland. Although the Soviet premier had told Roosevelt at Yalta that elections could take place in Poland one month after the country's liberation from the Nazis, it was actually two years later, in January, 1947, that elections were held—after the non-Communist parties in Poland, especially the popular Stanisław Mikołajczyk's Peasant Party, had been thoroughly terrorized, their news censored, their meetings often banned, and some of their leaders jailed.

Poland's boundaries had been redrawn at the 1945 Potsdam Conference. During the war, Stalin had occupied the Polish lands east of the so-called Curzon line. In order to compensate Poland for her territorial losses in the east, Poland expanded west to the Oder-Neisse line at the expense of Germany. The Oder-Neisse issue became the unpopular Communist government's most important means of support from the Polish population.

The border issue is of vital importance to the Poles who do support the government on the issue no matter what their political affiliation. Because the horror of the Second World War remains among the Poles, the fear of the German Federal Republic and of German reunification is oftentimes stronger among the Polish people than the Western press indicates. The perceived military strength of the Federal Republic is also stronger than is the Republic's
actual military strength.

The Polish Communists constantly remind the Polish nation of the Oder-Neisse border issue. Poland is not necessarily following Moscow's dictates in opposing reunification of the two Germanies or transferal of the borders, but rather the Poles are acting out of personal conviction no matter what their political point of view.²

After the 1947 elections, the Communists were firmly in power in Poland. Terrorism in the name of Stalin became commonplace throughout the country. The state forced the Polish peasants to collectivize their lands according to the Soviet model, although resistance to the policy of collectivization remained strong throughout the Stalinist period. Polish industry was nationalized, the Roman Catholic Church was persecuted, intensive Russification became the norm, and those who opposed the regime were imprisoned, maltreated, or both. The Communists also suppressed all of the former Polish soldiers who had fought against the Nazis in Poland or in the West with the Allies because they considered them to be "enemies of the state." The Silesian industrial city of Katowice was also renamed "Stalinogród" in honor of Stalin.

The importance of Russification is glaring in the case of Poland. The previous chapter has already discussed the long historical Polish animosity toward Russia as well as toward anything Russian. However, because the Poles are Slavs, they were required to identify with the concepts of pan-Slavism, the "great" Russian
people, their history, and their contemporary world-wide contributions. Russian language became, and still is, a mandatory subject in Polish schools.

In 1949, in order to rewrite the dismal record of Polish-Russian history, the pro-Soviet Bierut regime inaugurated "Friendship with the U. S. S. R. Month" in Poland. During this drive, no phase of propaganda was overlooked. The drive included mass meetings throughout the country, performances of Russian plays and films, exhibitions, lectures, concerts, and the sale of 500,000 Russian books. During "friendship month", all theatres in Poland showed Russian modern and classical plays, and most cinemas were restricted to Russian films. The world-publicized Chopin Centennial also had to compete for a place with Russian music on Polish radio.²

Historically, Poland has usually been considered along with Ireland as the stronghold and bastion of Roman Catholicism. Ninety-five percent of the Poles practice Catholicism, and the faith is associated with Polish patriotism and nationalism. Therefore, because of Marxist atheism and also because the Church represented competition to Marxist ideology, the complete eradication of Catholicism in Poland became the objective of the Bierut regime. However, the Communists have still not succeeded in their goal to eradicate Catholicism from Polish society.

With the arrest of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in September, 1953, Communist persecution of the Roman Catholic Church reached its climax. The period that followed was marked by a cessation of
attacks against Church dignitaries and a decrease in regime assaults on religious festivities.

However, within the bounds of a more cautious policy, the Bierut regime continued indirect steps to tighten its control over the Church. On August 2, 1954, the regime announced the liquidation of the theological faculties at the Universities of Cracow and of Warsaw. In December, 1954, the regime announced the abolition of religious instruction in the Polish school system. The decree applied to all public schools. Religious instruction was restricted to special and private religious schools as well as to the Catholic University in Lublin. However, religious instruction at the Catholic University was also curtailed.

The Bierut regime partially acknowledged its failure to diminish the Church's influence in Poland by permitting the revival of religious processions on holidays, by dealing cautiously with large numbers of church-goers, including members of the Communist Party, and by adopting a more tolerant attitude toward religious practices. In 1955, there were an estimated 2,000 convents and monasteries in Poland plus a total of 8,374 churches, not including 1,690 small chapels and 1,662 churches acquired in the formerly German territories.5

In conclusion, one astute Polish political observer, writing in 1968, describes the evils of one-party rule in the Eastern European states:
Among all of the common characteristics found among the states in the socialist camp, the most important is the principle of one-party rule. An attempt is made to legitimize one-party rule in a society which has liquidated classes and nationalized the private means of production. A society dominated by one-party rule is a society deprived of internal contradictions, a society without differences. Therefore, only one party is necessary.

That premise is false because even within a classless society, people are different. Means exist to isolate and to differentiate groups with diverse interests and demands. Even a society deprived of class differences is not a uniform society, but rather one composed of groups with changing and even conflicting needs and desires. The goal of a state as an institution is to integrate the various groups as well as to create a means of mediation among them.

A multi-party system attempts to create a legal framework for groups of diverse interests. A system of one-party rule, both in theory and in practice, negates the existence of conflicting groups and also negates the appearance of social tension within the society.

The Impact of the Stalinist Period in Czechoslovakia

On May 6, 1945, General George S. Patton's Third Army liberated the Czech city of Plzeň, located sixty miles southwest of Prague, but halted there. A Soviet-American agreement made in early April had defined Plzeň as the "line of demarcation" in Czechoslovakia. The Russian high command had already mapped "Operation Prague" and asked the Americans to allow them to liberate the Czechoslovak capital. The Plzeň agreement was neither the first nor the last time that the major powers "played spheres of influence" in Czechoslovakia.

The Prague Uprising against the Nazis began on May 4, 1945. On May 8, Prague was liberated by General Vlasov's Ukrainian Regiment
which had been fighting with the Nazis against the Soviets. (General Vlasov's Ukrainian regiment was fighting for Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union.) On May 9, 1945, the Red Army entered Prague, and that date is now observed in Czechoslovakia as "Soviet Liberation Day". The Soviets thereafter executed General Vlasov. 7

Unlike Poland which fell under Communist control during the war, Czechoslovakia remained a democracy until the Communist coup d'état in February, 1948. However, the preparations for the Communist coup began immediately after the end of the war.

After the war, the Communists, led by Klement Gottwald, exploited the situation in Czechoslovakia created by the Soviet military presence and liberation by acquiring control of key cabinet posts in the government, police, radio, and land distribution. By controlling these important positions, the Communists forced through nationalization of industry and currency reform, both designed to weaken the influence of the bourgeoisie. They also exploited their wartime prestige acquired during the Slovak Uprising of 1944.

In May, 1946, the first post-war parliamentary elections took place. The Red Army was not present within the Czechoslovak borders to exert pressure, but it was located in all of the countries surrounding Czechoslovakia.

The Communists won 38 percent of the total national vote, more in the Czech lands than in Slovakia. The Social Democrats won 12.8 percent, the Czech National Socialists (President Beneš' political party) 18.2 percent, the Catholic People's Party 15.8 percent, and the Slovak Democrats 13.8 percent. The 1946 parliamentary elections
were the last free elections to take place in Czechoslovakia.

Dana Adams Schmidt describes the situation in Prague one month prior to the Communist coup d’état of February 25, 1948, which resulted from a parliamentary crisis:

The city of Prague in that month of January, 1948, before the coup, presented a deceptively pleasant cosmopolitan picture. The big downtown newsstands were stuffed with newspapers from England, France, and Switzerland, as well as from the east European countries that had gone Communist, and from the Soviet Union. The windows of the bookshops were piled high, especially with English and American literature, but also with a fair sprinkling of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. There were plenty of American plays, although Soviet productions were not entirely neglected. Playful Americans and other Western foreigners on vacation seemed to be everywhere, in the hotels, restaurants and night clubs. There were no Communist counterparts, for Communist countries do not very often allow their citizens to play in foreign places. On the whole, after a casual glance at Prague, one might have said that "coexistence" was working well in Czechoslovakia.

Behind the scenes, however, the Communists were watching for their chance to change radically the picture presented by Prague. The chance fell into their laps, like a gift from the Communist heaven, in the form of a government crisis over Communist subversion of the police force.

After the 1948 Communist coup d’état, the Communists repeated the horrors found in Poland. Czech and Slovak peasants lost their lands to intensive collectivization based on the Soviet model; police terrorism became rampant; Communist purge trials, especially that of Slánský and Clementis in 1951, occurred throughout the land; Russification developed in Czechoslovak schools, universities, and cultural life; the Roman Catholic Church suffered from cruel persecution, and Archbishop Beran was imprisoned; forced labor camps
were built throughout the country; and the role played by the Western armies in the liberation of Czechoslovakia was ignored.

Klement Gottwald, First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and President of the Republic from 1948 until his death in 1953, ruled Czechoslovakia with an iron hand. (Gottwald caught cold at Stalin's 1953 funeral and died three weeks later of pneumonia aggravated by an earlier case of syphilis. His Stalinist counterpart in Poland, Bolesław Bierut, also suffered a violent death—he was murdered in 1956 in Moscow while attending the Twentieth Soviet Party Congress.) Antonín Zápotocký replaced Gottwald as president in 1953, while Antonín Novotný became First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Novotný also acquired the presidency after Zápotocký's death in 1957. Novotný continued Gottwald's Stalinist policies until his ouster in January, 1968.

Czechoslovak-Polish Agreements and Treaties, 1946-1955

During the Stalinist period, Czechoslovakia and Poland made concerted efforts to establish political and economic integration. Close political relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland continued until 1956, when Poland commenced her "independent road" to socialism. Since 1956, Czechoslovak-Polish relations have remained correct, although they have been strained.

The two states signed the following agreements and treaties during the period 1946-1955:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Agreement <strong>Title</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 24, 1946</td>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>Agreement concerning air communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12, 1946</td>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>Agreement on the mutual return of property removed after the outbreak of the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3, 1947</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration, and Mutual Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 4, 1947</td>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>Agreement on economic cooperation; cultural agreement (two agreements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23 and 27, 1948</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Agreement on the valorization of custom rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5, 1948</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Agreement on cooperation in social policy and social administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 21, 1949</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Treaty on mutual legal relations in civil and criminal matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26, 1951</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Trade and payments agreement for the period 1951-1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17, 1953</td>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>Trade and payments agreement for 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14, 1955</td>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (Warsaw Pact)—Albania (expelled in 1962), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, and the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Czech Reaction to the "Polish October" of 1956**

In February, 1956, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin as incompetent and a criminal at the Twentieth Soviet Party Congress in Moscow. The subsequent de-Stalinization efforts in the Soviet Union led to dramatic and violent popular demands for similar de-Stalinization measures in Poland and in Hungary.
The Poznań Riots, June, 1956

During the first six months of 1956, Poland was without an economic plan; a six-year plan had come to an end on December 31, 1955, and the new five-year plan was not yet ready by mid-summer. The Polish economy was collapsing.

From 1949 to 1955, the index of nominal wages rose from 100 to 225.7, and the official index of prices of consumer goods and services rose to 176.7. Prices of food and coal, both important components in a Polish family's budget, rose sharply. Furthermore, the increases quoted were for prices prevailing on the official market that supplied only a proportion of the population's needs.12

Nearly 20,000 workers at ZISPO, the largest factory in Poznań, were becoming discontented with the economic conditions in Poland. Poznań, Poland's fourth largest city, suffered from a severe housing shortage, but a bread shortage in the city triggered the explosion.

On Thursday, June 28, 1956, the ZISPO workers decided to stage a demonstration. Carrying placards with "We want bread" and "We want lower prices and higher wages," the demonstrators marched peacefully through the Poznań streets to the Town Hall in Old Town. Other workers and pedestrians joined the ZISPO workers. The Poznań manifestation was the first strike to take place in Poland since 1939.

The demonstration then acquired a revolutionary aspect. Demonstrators began to shout "Down with the Russians," "We want
freedom," and "Down with the Soviet occupation." A frightened security policeman then shot a woman and child, and spontaneous rioting broke out. The rioting spread throughout the city, and troops and tanks were dispersed to the city to suppress the revolt. Poznań became a battleground for two days. The world learned instantaneously about the Poznań riots because many foreign correspondents were in Poznań covering the Poznań International Trade Fair.¹³

The riots in Poznań caused a great deal of consternation in the Polish government. Edward Ochab, who became First Secretary of the United Polish Workers' (Communist) Party after Bierut's death, was totally incapable of governing. Popular demands for a "broadening of democracy" in Poland were increasing. Popular demands for the release of Cardinal Wyszyński from prison were also voiced. In August, 1956, one million Catholic Poles gathered at Częstochowa to honor the Black Madonna at the Jasna Góra monastery. This anti-government Catholic manifestation was unprecedented in a Communist-run country. Rioting also broke out in Warsaw and other Polish cities. Because of the critical situation, the Polish government summoned Władysław Gomułka who had been secretly released from prison in 1955.

The "Polish October"

In 1948, Gomułka was removed from his position as First Secretary of the United Polish Workers' Party and imprisoned for "rightest-nationalist deviation," e.g., refusal to endorse the construction of a Communist society in Poland according to the Soviet
model. GomuXka preferred to build socialism in Poland according to Polish conditions. For example, he opposed rapid collectivization of Polish agriculture. GomuXka rejected charges that he opposed close Polish relations with the Soviet Union, but he did admit that he was against Soviet interference in Poland's domestic affairs. Because of his views, GomuXka enjoyed enormous popularity among the Poles. During the 1956 crisis, the future of Communism in Poland depended solely on GomuXka's popularity.

The Polish reform movement under GomuXka's guidance, which became known as the "Polish October", resulted not only from the economic difficulties which ignited the Poznań riots, but also from the Polish desire to free Poland from tight Soviet control. The removal of Marshall Rokossovsky, the Russian head of the Polish army and the symbol of Soviet hegemony in Poland, from the Polish Politburo in October, 1956, marked a significant change in Polish-Soviet relations. However, GomuXka was cautious in his criticism of the Soviet Union in order to avoid Soviet military intervention which was threatening Poland in October and November. On October 20, 1956, GomuXka spoke to the Polish nation over national radio. Referring to Polish relations with the Soviet Union, GomuXka stated:

These relations ought to be based on mutual confidence and equality of rights, on mutual assistance, on mutual friendly criticism . . . arising out of the spirit of friendship and socialism . . . and the right of every nation to rule itself in a sovereign manner in its own independent country ought to be fully and mutually respected.

The Party and all the people, who saw the evil that existed in the past and who sincerely desire to remove all that is left of that evil in our life today in order to strengthen the foundations of our system,
should give a determined rebuff to all the whisperings and all the voices which strive to weaken our friendship with the Soviet Union. (Poor Polish-Soviet relations)—today this belongs to the irrevocable past. . . . And if there is anyone who thinks that it is possible to kindle anti-Soviet moods in Poland, then he is deeply mistaken.

The revolutionary atmosphere in Poland provoked the rebellion of mutual support among the Hungarians, traditionally linked to the Poles by firm bonds of friendship. However, Czechoslovakia remained quiet.

The Poles envied the Hungarians for their revolutionary activity because the Hungarians reminded them of their own insurrections against Russian hegemony in 1794, 1830-31, and 1863. In Warsaw, the following bitter statement was heard: "The Hungarians are behaving like Poles (willingness to fight for a cause), the Poles like Czechs (preference for passive resistance), and the Czechs like swine (self-explanatory)." Traditional Polish contempt for the Czech national preference for passive resistance is obvious in the preceding statement.

The Czech Reaction

Edward Taborsky and Ivo Duchaček believe that Czechoslovakia's high standard of living was the most important factor in preventing the outbreak of revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1956. The Czechoslovak standard of living in the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-sixties was the highest in the socialist bloc, and Czechoslovakia was the "showcase" of socialism.

Indifference to the events in Czechoslovakia's two neighboring states predominated among the Czechs. Except for the 1953 Plzeň
riots, which were ignited by currency reforms, the Czech workers did not show the explosive dissatisfaction with the Communist Party experienced in Poland and in Hungary. When Czech workers wished to manifest their dissatisfaction, they chose traditional non-violent Czech methods of protest such as passive resistance, occasional sit-down strikes, widespread absenteeism from work, and recurrent demands for the Party to fulfill its obligations.

The liberalization in Poland and the violence of the Hungarian Uprising strengthened the belief of the Zápotocký-Novotný regime that the only hope for the retention of power in Czechoslovakia was through the increased intimidation of the Czech and the Slovak peoples as well as through dependence on Soviet military assistance.

As it became clear how Moscow reacted to the events in Poland, and especially in Hungary, the official party line in Prague turned grimly critical of the new "Titoism", and a harsh neo-Stalinism became the vogue. Novotný denounced national communism, the independent road to socialism, as an ally of the imperialists. He rejected Gomuľka's policies and declared that the "Leninist example remains for us the only binding example which is being applied creatively in different historic and socio-economic conditions."¹⁸

In an effort to prevent the dissemination of liberal Polish ideas into Czechoslovakia, the regime closed the border with Poland as tightly as it was with the German Federal Republic. Polish radio was also jammed. The Czechoslovak regime remained extremely critical
of Gomužka's policies, and Novotný regarded as heresy Gomužka's decision to abandon the collectivization of agriculture in Poland. 19

Czechoslovak-Polish Economic Relations, 1947-1971

Resolution of the Teschen Dispute

On March 10, 1947, Czechoslovakia and Poland signed the Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration, and Mutual Assistance. This treaty called for close Czechoslovak-Polish cooperation, consultation on important international questions, a ban on alliances directed against a treaty partner, and a strengthening of political, economic, and cultural ties. Within the framework of this treaty, the Czechoslovak-Polish Economic Council was also created.

The Czechoslovak-Polish Economic Council called for joint Czech-Polish exploitation of the important Teschen industrial region, the source of bitter Czech-Polish conflict during the inter-war period as well as one of the factors which destroyed the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation during the war. According to the agreement, the Poles were to concentrate on coal and steel production, while the Czechs were to complement this through emphasis on engineering and industrial production. 20

By 1957, Czech-Polish cooperation in the formerly disputed Teschen region was excellent. In that year, Czechoslovakia and Poland signed a bilateral agreement in which the Czechs pledged to invest sixty-three million dollars worth of machinery into Polish coal mining in the Teschen region. The Czechs also agreed to invest twenty-five million dollars in Polish sulphur exploitation.
Furthermore, the two states agreed to the decentralization of contacts among the various Czech-Polish technical and administrative agencies. This was the forerunner of the Inter-governmental Commissions on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Collaboration which led to a Czech investment in Polish copper mining in 1961 as well as in a Polish fertilizer plant at Puławy.\textsuperscript{21}

The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance

In January, 1949, the Soviet Union forced Czechoslovakia and Poland to join the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Through Comecon, whose headquarters are located in Moscow, the Soviet Union maintains her economic hegemony throughout Eastern Europe.

Comecon's original objective was defensive. Just as the Warsaw Pact was essentially designed to offset NATO, Eastern Europe's economic organization was instituted with the hope of countering the growing success of the European Economic Community in Western Europe. Particularly since 1955, Comecon's activities have increasingly reflected the twofold intention of the Soviet leadership, namely to unite the Eastern European states firmly with the Soviet Union through skillful exploitation of economic resources (for example, the Soviet exploitation of Czechoslovakia's uranium and Poland's coal), and to keep the satellite economies in fair-to-prosperous shape to prevent revolutionary upsurges as in 1953-1956 and 1968.\textsuperscript{22}

As a part of the Comecon agreement, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland formed "Intermetal" in 1963 to facilitate cooperation among the three states in iron and steel production.
Czechoslovak-Polish Trade Relations

From 1948 to 1955, the development of Czechoslovak-Polish trade relations within the realm of manufactured goods grew rapidly. An even greater increase in trade of manufactured goods occurred from 1957 to 1962, when the growth level increased two and one-half times over the preceding five-year period. In 1969, Poland ranked third among Czechoslovakia's trading partners, behind the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. Czechoslovakia also ranked third among Poland's trading partners, behind the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic.23

In the thirty-year period since the end of the war, Poland has evolved from an agricultural-industrial state to an industrial-agricultural state as is Czechoslovakia. The sharp inter-war period diversity between Czechoslovakia and Poland within the realm of industrial production has diminished considerably in the post-war period. (During the inter-war period, Czechoslovakia was one of Europe's most heavily industrialized states, while Poland developed only rudimentary industrial growth.) Because of the increased emphasis on industrialization in Poland, Polish agricultural exports to Czechoslovakia have decreased significantly, a fact verified in the following statistics:

Polish commodities exported to Czechoslovakia:

1. machines and tools: 1948 (0.3%), 1969 (53.2%)
2. consumer products: 1948 (---), 1969 (13.2%)
3. agricultural products: 1948 (26.1%), 1969 (3.9%)24
Within the realm of Polish exports to Czechoslovakia, the following finished industrial products are included: ball bearings, electrical appliances, mining machinery, cranes, road building equipment, textile machinery, ships, pumps, agricultural machinery, commercial tools, electric industrial ovens, precision tools, automobiles (Polish Fiats), railway cars, and electrical parts. In 1969, Poland also built a sugar beet processing plant near Hrochův Tynec for the annual processing of 4,000 tons of sugar beets.

Poland exports the following raw materials to Czechoslovakia: bituminous coal (approximately two million tons annually), zinc, caustic and calcine soda, dyes, and cement.

Polish agricultural exports to Czechoslovakia include the following products: potatoes, fruits, vegetables, seafood, meat, and vodka.

Polish consumer goods exported to Czechoslovakia include the following items: textiles, sewing machines, furniture, zippers, sports equipment, bicycles, radios and televisions, refrigerators, and cosmetics.

Poland has also made available to Czechoslovakia port facilities in Szczecin as well as free navigation on the Oder River for 30,000 tons of cargo annually.25

Because the standard of living in Czechoslovakia is about 20 to 25 percent higher than in Poland (See footnote 22.), Czechoslovakia does not export as many goods to Poland as Poland does to Czechoslovakia. Machinery and tools comprise about two-thirds of Czechoslovakia's exports to Poland. The machinery and tool products
include the following items: ball bearings, electrical tools, mining equipment, textile machinery, machinery for shoe production, machinery for the manufacture of rubber and artificial products, automobiles (Czech Škodas), trucks, buses, medical equipment, and motorcycles (Jawas), precision tools, industrial equipment, air compressors, pumps, cranes, and office equipment.

Czechoslovakia exports the following raw materials to Poland: crude oil, porcelain clay, magnesite, chemicals, and cellulose products.

Within the realm of consumer goods, Czechoslovakia exports the following products to Poland: shoes, pharmaceuticals, artificial jewellery (in 1969, 3.3 million złotys in value), cosmetics, musical instruments, sports equipment, dry goods, and glassware.

On March 2, 1971, in Prague, the Czechs and the Poles signed a five-year plan (1971-1975) for the exchange of goods. This five-year trade agreement foresaw the increase in exchange values of up to 73 percent from the previous agreement of 1966-1970.26

The "spillover" theory—lack of validity in the case of Czechoslovakia and Poland

The "spillover" theory cited in Chapter I states that excellent relations between two states in the economic sphere may "spillover" into the political sphere and lead to political integration. As the above section indicates, Czechoslovakia and Poland have enjoyed excellent economic relations since 1947. However, the Czechs and the Poles have remained distant in the political sphere, and it appears that the political distance will continue to exist.
Czechoslovakia's and Poland's foreign policies are dictated from Moscow. Therefore, despite the fact that the diplomatic relations between the two satellite states are correct, the old mutual prejudices and jealousies have remained. One can conclude that the "spillover" theory has no validity in the case of Czechoslovak-Polish relations.

During the period of this chapter (1945-1967), the distance between the Czechoslovak and Polish governments and people during the 1956 crisis has already been examined. That distance repeated itself during the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia, to be discussed in the following chapter.

However, other data from the 1945-1967 period allow one to conclude that the Czechs and the Poles have remained politically distant. The data include the following: (1) belated Czechoslovak endorsement of the Rapacki Plan in 1957, and (2) travel restrictions between Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Belated Czechoslovak endorsement of the Rapacki Plan

On October 2, 1957, Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki proposed before the United Nations General Assembly his plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe. The purpose of the plan was to prevent the German Federal Republic from obtaining atomic weapons.

The proposed zone was to include Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and the German Federal Republic. The states included in the nuclear-free zone were to pledge not to manufacture, maintain or import for their own use, and not to permit the location on their territories of nuclear weapons of any type,
as well as any installations and equipment designed for servicing nuclear weapons, including missile-launching equipment. The nuclear powers at that time (the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) were also to pledge not to use nuclear weapons against the zone. The United States formally rejected the plan in October, 1961.

When Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki proposed his plan for an atom-free zone in Central Europe on October 2, 1957, the Czechoslovak government showed complete indifference toward the proposal. Despite the fact that it was to Czechoslovakia's advantage to support such a plan in light of Czechoslovakia's critical geographical situation, the Novotný regime refused to endorse the Rapacki Plan. However, after "months of quiet persuasion" from the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak government officially endorsed the Polish proposal on December 14, 1957.

It appears that Czechoslovakia's refusal to endorse the Rapacki Plan verifies the premise that despite the fact that Czechoslovak-Polish diplomatic relations are correct, the old Czech and Polish prejudices and jealousies have remained. Furthermore, one may conclude that Czechoslovakia's endorsement of the Rapacki Plan did not evolve from a willingness to endorse the Polish government's attempt to create a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, but rather from the Novotný regime's reluctance to jeopardize relations with its chief ally, the Soviet Union.

Novotný's obedience to the Soviet Union in the case of the Rapacki Plan stands as an indication that Czechoslovakia was one of
the Soviet Union's most faithful Eastern European satellites during the nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties. Strong Czechoslovak loyalty to the Soviet Union during that period evolved from the historical Czech amity toward Russia.

Travel restrictions between Czechoslovakia and Poland

In 1963, Czechoslovakia and Poland signed an agreement to allow Czechoslovak and Polish tourists easy access to border resorts without a passport. However, in 1965, further travel restrictions between the two states were imposed. After the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, harsher travel restrictions between the two states were added, and those restrictions have not been relaxed since that time. Travel between Czechoslovakia and Poland now requires not only a passport, but also a visa.

The travel restrictions between the two states are a means by which the Communist regimes in Prague and Warsaw maintain their power base, by preventing the dissemination of ideas across the Czechoslovak-Polish border. The lack of travel between Czechoslovakia and Poland has had the effect of not allowing greater contact between the Czechs and the Poles. Therefore, a subsequent lack of communication ensues, and the old mutual Czech-Polish prejudices, jealousies, and misunderstandings are preserved. This lack of communication explains in part the general failure of the Czechs to comprehend the 1956 events in Poland as well as the corresponding general lack of understanding in Poland concerning the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia. The 1968 events in Czechoslovakia are the subject of the following chapter.
NOTES:


4 Ibid., p. 76.


9 Ibid., p. 108.


13 Ibid., pp. 50–52.
The Soviet Union has succeeded in her intention of making the economies of the Eastern European states prosperous despite her outright exploitation of Eastern European wealth. According to 1975 Swiss Banking Society statistics, three Eastern European states, e.g., Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the German Democratic Republic, enjoy a higher standard of living than does the Soviet Union. The Hungarian standard of living closely trails that of the Soviet Union. The statistics are as follows: the German Democratic Republic ranks nineteenth among the world's richest nations with a per capita gross national product of $3430, Czechoslovakia ranks twentieth at $3220, Poland ranks twenty-sixth at $2450, the Soviet Union ranks twenty-eighth at $2300, and Hungary ranks thirtieth at $2140.

24 Ibid., p. 205.

25 Ibid., pp. 206-207, 142.

26 Ibid., pp. 208-209, 214.


CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF THE "PRAGUE SPRING" AND THE 1968 INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH RELATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is not to narrate the entire history of the "Prague Spring" and the subsequent Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Instead, the purpose of this chapter is primarily to examine the following factors: (1) the reasons for Polish participation in the invasion and the Czech reaction to that participation, (2) the destruction of the historical Czech amity toward Russia, and (3) the general lack of protest in Poland vis-à-vis the Polish government's decision to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia.

The Causes of the "Prague Spring", 1956-1967

Protest Among the Intellectuals

After Stalin's death, undercurrents of discontent began to appear in Czechoslovakia, especially among the writers and intellectuals. In 1956, the Novotný regime crushed resistance through the dismissals of dissidents from the Party and from employment.

However, by the end of the nineteen-fifties and the middle of the nineteen-sixties, the writers and the intellectuals resurfaced to demand greater literary expression in their works. The existential philosophy of Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard began to rival Marxist philosophy. Cabarets, mime shows, and Black Theatres appeared throughout the country, and the performers spiced their acts with political criticisms of the Novotný regime. Czechoslovakian...
slovak cinema during the nineteen-sixties also began to experiment with new techniques and was renowned throughout the world. Two Czechoslovak films, Jan Kádár's The Shop on Main Street and Jiří Menzel's Closely Watched Trains, won Oscars as "Best Foreign Film" in 1964 and 1966, respectively.¹

The Union of Czechoslovak Writers, the Union of Slovak Writers, and the Union of Slovak Journalists became the spokesmen of publicly expressed disdain of, and opposition to, the Czechoslovak regime. By 1966, several cultural and literary periodicals had developed as significant vehicles of party criticism. The most famous of these periodicals was Literární noviny, the forerunner of the "Prague Spring's" mouthpiece Literární listy.

The Slovak literary movement developed in the early nineteen-sixties in an attempt to acquire greater national identification within the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The Slovak writers accentuated Czech wrongs committed against the Slovaks. (During the inter-war period, the Czechs treated the Slovaks as second-class citizens and dominated the bureaucracy in Slovakia. As a result of Slovak demands for a separate Slovak state, Slovakia became a quasi-independent state allied to Nazi Germany from 1939 until the Slovak Uprising in 1944. Under the 1960 Czechoslovak constitution, the autonomous rights of the Slovak parliament were almost liquidated and the Bratislava Cabinet was abolished. Bratislava lost its status as the capital of Slovakia, and regional authorities in central Slovakia became directly subordinated to the central government in Prague.) Intellectual ferment among both Slovak and Czech writers
culminated at the June, 1967, Fourth Congress of the Writers' Union where the writers blasted the government for its anti-Israeli stance and demanded the termination of censorship in literature.²

It was at the Congress of the Writers' Union that Ludvík Vaculík denounced the Party for lack of leadership and for hypocrisy. (In June, 1968, Vaculík wrote the famous declaration "Two Thousand Words" which demanded further democratization in Czechoslovakia during the "Prague Spring".) In his speech, Vaculík unknowingly predicted the horror and apathy of post-invasion Czechoslovakia: "If the government is allowed to stand permanently, the citizens will suffer. Not all will lose their lives, but the fall of many will be followed by the relapse of perhaps the whole nation into fear, political apathy, and civic resignation. . . . "³

Czechoslovak Economic Stagnation

In 1963, the Czechoslovak national income dropped by 2.8 percent, the volume of output by 0.7 percent and productivity by 1.4 percent in relation to the previous year. Even though the third Five-Year Plan for 1961-1965 was supposed to have raised the national income by 42 percent, industrial output by 56 percent and agricultural output by 22 percent, the period revealed that the national income grew by only 10 percent and industrial output by 29 percent, while agricultural output dropped by 0.4 percent.⁴

Economic reform became obvious.

In 1964, the Party approved some principles of reform advanced by Czechoslovakia's foremost economist, Ota Šik, the head of the Economic Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Šik deplored
the blind orthodoxy which favored investment in heavy industry regardless of costs, the neglect and sacrifice of quality to quantity in industrial production, the unwillingness to experiment with profit incentives and autonomy of decision-making at the plant level, and the indifference to technological-scientific innovation and labor productivity in the labor economy.

Sik argued that Czechoslovakia had to make more extensive use of profit incentive, autonomy of decision-making at the plant level, and foreign trade. He believed that Czechoslovakia could achieve more by buying machinery and selling consumer goods abroad rather than vice versa. Trade with the West was a major orientation of Sik's economic plan.⁵

Sik favored increased trade with the German Federal Republic, but he did not advocate Czechoslovakia's withdrawal from Comecon. Sik designed his economic reforms to ameliorate the stagnated economy in Czechoslovakia through the adoption of economic principles suited specifically to Czechoslovakia's conditions.

However, Sik's advocacy of closer relations with the German Federal Republic provoked widespread consternation among the conservative Communist regimes in Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and the Soviet Union. Gomułka, Ulbricht, and Brezhnev, respectively, felt that Czechoslovak rapprochement with the Federal Republic would weaken both Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, destroy Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, and undermine the unpopular Gomułka and Ulbricht regimes. The perceived threat of the German Federal Republic was one of the factors which precipitated the invasion of Czechoslovakia.
Prague Student Demonstration

As a result of a governmental decision to employ plastics instead of copper in electrical cables in the Strahov student dormitories in Prague, students suffered from both a lack of light for study and a lack of heat. Frequent written protests accomplished nothing.

During the evening of October 30, 1967, the students in the Strahov dormitory complex staged a demonstration to protest against the lack of electricity and heat. About 2,500 students marched through the streets of the Strahov district in Prague carrying candles and shouting "We want light." The police, who thought that the demonstration was against the Central Committee which was in extraordinary session on that particular evening, attacked the student demonstrators. Students were beaten with truncheons, tear gas was used, and several students were hospitalized. Even though the police quickly suppressed the student demonstration, it proved to be the death knoll for the antiquated Novotný regime.

Thus, Slovak nationalist grievances, demands for increased literary expression, economic stagnation, and a brief student demonstration brought an end to Novotný's lengthy rule in Czechoslovakia. On January 1, 1968, Novotný addressed the Central Committee for the last time as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. On January 6, 1968, Alexander Dubček, the former First Secretary of the Slovak Communist Party and a compromise choice, was elected First Secretary to replace Novotný. Dubček became the first Slovak to hold the position of First Secretary of the national party. On
March 22, 1968, Novotný was also forced to abdicate the presidency of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. General Ludvík Svoboda replaced Novotný as president and served in that function until May, 1975.

In the same manner that popular revolt, literary criticism of the regime, demands for increased freedom of expression, and economic stagnation in Poland resulted in Gomułka's coming to power in 1956, so Slovak demands for increased autonomy, literary criticism of the regime, demands for increased freedom of expression, and economic stagnation in Czechoslovakia brought Dubček to power in 1968. If popular dissent had not existed, one can assume that neither Gomułka nor Dubček, both Communist reformers, would have come to power at all. The conservative Communist dictators Bierut and Novotný possessed only one ambition which was to preserve their power base at any cost. Their subsequent losses of power resulted from their refusal not only to liberalize the Communist system in their respective states, but also from their wanton contempt and disregard for popular demands for increased freedom of expression and an improved standard of living. Therefore, even though Gomułka and Dubček attempted to reform the system from within the confines of the Communist Party, they secured their positions of power only as a direct result of popular revolts within their respective states. Furthermore, their reforms resulted from popular demands for increased democratization of the Communist system of government.
The "Prague Spring"

Dubček's coming to power in Czechoslovakia marked a new era in the history of both Czechoslovakia and the world Communist movement. During the eight month period from January until the invasion of Czechoslovakia on the night of August 20, 1968, Czechoslovak citizens enjoyed their greatest breath of freedom since the 1948 coup d'état. In an attempt to create "socialism with a human face" in Czechoslovakia, the Dubček forces, pushed by widespread popular demands, introduced innovations into the Communist system of government which not even Gomuľka had permitted during the brief "Polish October" of 1956.

The most important innovation was the removal of press censorship in June, 1968. Because of that decision, the Czechoslovak press became a forum for widespread political debate. Criticism of the Communist government during the Stalinist period and popular demands for an official clarification of Jan Masaryk's 1948 death appeared in the uncensored Czechoslovak press. Political discussions in the press also examined the possibilities of a multi-party system, a parliamentary opposition, and completely free elections.

The Dubček government abolished the Czechoslovak secret police apparatus early in the period. The government also revoked travel restrictions for Czechoslovak citizens, and many Czechs and Slovaks visited the West during the period of the reforms.

Political interest groups developed, the most famous of which was K231, a group of former political prisoners. KAN, the Club of Involved Non-Party Members, was also formed to demand further
democratization in Czechoslovakia from the Dubček government. However, the Czechoslovak Communist Party refused to endorse the existence of the contesting political entities.

Spontaneity and good will marked the 1968 May Day parade in Prague. An estimated 400,000 Czechs and enthusiastic foreigners, in Czechoslovakia to observe the reform movement, crowded the streets in a disorderly fashion.

For the first time since 1947, Czech residents of Plzeň raised an American flag and played The Star-Spangled Banner in the city square to honor the twenty-third anniversary of the American liberalization of their city from the Nazis on May 6, 1945.

Dubček attempted to conduct a middle-of-the-road course in his reforms of the system. However, popular demands to accelerate the reforms complicated the situation for Dubček. The most striking demand for the continuation of democratization in Czechoslovakia was Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words". On June 28, 1968, the Presidium condemned the declaration as counterrevolutionary, but later reversed its decision.

The Presidium's condemnation of the "Two Thousand Words" indicated that a cogent conservative element remained in Czechoslovakia to pressure Dubček to maintain a neutral course and not to accelerate the reforms of the "Prague Spring". Dubček's middle-of-the-road policies satisfied neither the liberals nor the conservatives.
The Official Polish Reaction to the "Prague Spring"

During the May Day celebration in Warsaw, Gomułka, the former champion of "democratic" Communism in Poland and at that time embroiled in a bitter fight with Mieczysław Moczar over the leadership of the United Polish Workers' Party, attacked the Czechoslovak reformers as "alleged champions of freedom and democracy" who are in fact "reactionaries and backward elements, preachers of anti-Communist ideology, waging a struggle against socialism not only with us, but also with other socialist countries."³

Out of fear that the Czechoslovak reform movement would prove to be contagious in Poland, the Polish government commenced on May 5, 1968, a virulent press attack on the reform movement in Czechoslovakia.

In the Polish press attacks on the Czechoslovak reforms, the government played upon the traditional Polish prejudice that the Czechs are pro-German. This prejudice has evolved from the fact that many Czechs speak German, and also because Czech culture and language were almost liquidated during the three hundred years of Austrian hegemony in Bohemia. The Poles have always resented the Czechs for the latter's national preference for passivity when confronted with a more powerful foe. The small number of Czechs who perished during the Second World War, compared to the enormous Polish loss of six million persons, rekindled the Polish prejudice that the Czechs are pro-German because the Poles felt that the Czechs had collaborated with the Nazis to remain alive.

The Polish press intentionally misinterpreted Šik's goal to
augment Czechoslovakia's trade relations with the German Federal Republic. The Polish press reported to its Polish audience that the Czechs and the Slovaks wished to withdraw from Comecon and the Warsaw Pact which would have left Poland vulnerable to a perceived West German attack from the south. (The memories of Nazi occupation and Nazi crimes in Poland still predominate among the Poles, and the perceived threat of the German Federal Republic is stronger than is the Federal Republic's actual strength.)

The following interpretation of the events in Czechoslovakia is taken from a document circulated among members of the United Polish Workers' Party. The document accentuates the alleged Czechoslovak withdrawal from the socialist bloc, Czech anti-Polish sentiments, and the perceived threat to the socialist movement:

On May 6, the Ambassador of the Polish People's Republic in Prague ... sent a note to the Czechoslovak government protesting against the anti-Polish and anti-socialist character of the Czechoslovak press, radio, and television. Enemies of the Polish People's Republic and of our Party ... are an expression of anti-socialist strength which has appeared in the last few months. The direction of the Czechoslovak Communist Party has become fragmented. ... The revisionist group wishes to liquidate the people's government, to return Czechoslovakia to a liberal-bourgeois form of government, and to remove Czechoslovakia from the socialist camp and ally her with the German Federal Republic ... It is clear that the events in Czechoslovakia are not exclusively the internal affair of a brother country. ... The course of events in Czechoslovakia is of crucial importance to the security of Poland and the other socialist countries as well as of the position of socialist strength in Europe. ... (May 7, 1968)
The Polish Student Riots of January-March, 1968

Background, 1956-1968

A few months after having taken power, Gomułka saw the Stalinists as less harmful to him than those who demanded the complete liquidation of Stalinism in Poland. In October, 1956, Gomułka did not change the entire composition of the Polish government because almost all of the Stalinists from the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties remained in power. Therefore, Stalinism in Poland was not liquidated, but rather only weakened.

During the succeeding years, many of the Stalinists removed from power in the "Polish October" of 1956 returned to their former positions and governed as they had previously. They did not call themselves Stalinists, but simply changed their methods of behavior. Therefore, Poland entered her period of "neo-Stalinism" under Gomułka, the man with whom the Polish people had had so much faith in his being a "democratic" Communist.

Economic difficulties also became prevalent in Poland about 1959. The economic uncertainties caused a great deal of animosity among the Poles toward their government. During the nineteen-sixties, the Polish economic situation worsened considerably. The costs of the most important staples (apartments, communications, meat, and bread) all rose in price. Poland's rapid post-war economic development was halted.

The strength of the Polish secret police also began to redevelop after 1956. The secret police became an integral part of
the Party and the governmental structure and appeared in all levels of Polish political, economic, and cultural life.  

The neo-Stalinists identified socialism with the total control of each individual citizen. The neo-Stalinist ideal was to create a totalitarian society, a police state. The man in control of the internal security network was Mieczysław Moczar.

Moczar began to interfere in the operation of areas not of his direct concern, e.g., decisions about Polish export quotas. Moczar's domination of and influence within the governmental structure provoked consternation and numerous protests among Polish writers, intellectuals, and students.

Party elites guided the Polish government, and the secret police and Party apparatus supported the elites. All of these groups were not concerned with the interests of the Polish working class. The elites were in total control of the Polish economic situation, while the Polish population had absolutely no influence on any decisions. The Polish working class lost all control of events in Poland and was reduced to a role of labor strength.

The elites opposed the notion of democratizing the system because it would have led to a limitation of their absolute power. Membership in the elitist structure was not guaranteed through knowledge, skill, or moral qualifications; the most crucial factor for consideration was loyalty. Therefore, it was not surprising that those persons who belonged to the elite in Poland feared the idea of democratization which was taking place in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Gomułka regarded the events in Czechoslovakia as a genuine
threat to his own power base in Poland.

The March Events

The March events of 1968 in Poland resulted directly from a power struggle between Gomułka and Moczar within the hierarchy of the United Polish Workers' Party. The personal game-playing occurred because of efforts to improve the political and economic situation in Poland. However, the Polish people's increasing distrust of the governing apparatus became evident. Numerous voices of protest began to appear within the intellectual community which demanded greater freedom of expression. The intellectuals and writers demanded widespread economic reforms and the removal of the Party from the governmental structure.

The spark came in January, 1968. In January, the government, influenced by the Moczar forces, banned further performances of Dziady (The Forefathers' Eve), Adam Mickiewicz's play about Poland's fight for independence from Tsarist Russia and a masterpiece of Polish literature. The play's production was ordered stopped because the anti-Russian tone of the play was considered to be offensive to the Soviet Embassy in Warsaw. However, this Moczar accusation was a blatant falsehood because Moczar's forces, involved in the power struggle against Gomułka, prepared the withdrawal of Dziady as a means by which to provoke demonstrations against the Gomułka government.

University students protested fiercely against the government's decision to ban the performances of Dziady; they entered the streets of Warsaw and demanded the liquidation of censorship. The
students did not demand any changes within the economic or the political spheres. Several students listed on a previously prepared list were arrested.

The Warsaw student population stood in the defense of their arrested colleagues. Three thousand one hundred forty-five Warsaw students signed a letter of protest addressed to the Sejm (parliament). The letter demanded the end of censorship and the release of the arrested students, but the Sejm did nothing.

The official Polish press attributed the student protests to "hooliganism" and to nationalistic and anti-Soviet sentiments, thereby legitimizing the students' arrests. ¹⁴

In March, 1968, two students at Warsaw University were arrested, and no reasons for the arrests were given. On March 8, 1968, Warsaw University students gathered on the main square of the university to protest against the illegal arrests. An agreement to disperse was achieved between the students and the rector, Professor Rybicki. As the students began to leave the university square, the police entered the university grounds and began to beat and arrest the students. The illegal police attack on the Warsaw University students ignited further manifestations of student solidarity in Warsaw which in turn provoked student riots at other universities throughout Poland.

The Warsaw students began to shout "Long live Czechoslovakia!," "Poland awaits her own Dubček!," and "Freedom!" These chants indicated that the Polish demonstrators were aware of the growing liberalization in Czechoslovakia despite an almost complete blackout
on news of any significance from Prague.  

However, the liberalization program in Czechoslovakia did not provoke the student riots in Warsaw and later throughout Poland. The riots were carefully planned within the higher echelons of the internal security system, specifically by Moczar. When the students demanded their "own Dubček," they were not supporting the Czechs out of any feelings of friendship for the Czechs. Czech-Polish amity simply does not exist. Instead, the Polish students wished only to possess the entity which the Czechs possessed, e.g., freedom of expression without the threat of police reprisals.

The Polish student population in March, 1968, was not prepared for the riots and protests which the Moczar forces had prepared in advance. During the initial stages of the March events, the students demanded only the removal of censorship in Poland, the right to show Dziady in Warsaw, and the liberation of their imprisoned friends. They forwarded no other demands to the government. Unfortunately, the workers and other Polish citizens did not support the students during their quickly suppressed protest.

In conclusion, there was one other result of the March events. In order to explain the March events to the Polish people, the government found a scapegoat, the Jewish population in Poland. Blaming the Jews for the outbreak of student riots throughout the country, the government began to persecute Jewish citizens in Poland in scenes reminiscent of the terror the Jews endured during the Nazi occupation of Poland. The government also forced Jews from their jobs and purged them from the Party. Because of the perse-
cution, 20,000 Polish Jews applied for emigration to Israel and other countries. The purge also affected Gomužka's own Jewish wife, who emigrated to Israel.

The Invasion of Czechoslovakia

The Termination of the Historical Czech Amity toward Russia

After threats and then promises to honor Czechoslovakia's sovereignty (the Warsaw Ultimatum, the Bratislava Conference, and the meeting at Cierna-nad-Tisou), troops from the Soviet Union, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria entered Czechoslovakia on the night of August 20, 1968. The threat of democratic socialism in Czechoslovakia and the perceived threat of West German "revanchism" in Eastern Europe precipitated the invasion. The Soviet Union later defended the invasion with the Brezhnev Doctrine, which states that the Soviet Union has the right and the obligation to intervene in the internal affairs of another socialist state when socialism is threatened in that particular state. The Brezhnev Doctrine is in Appendix B.

President Svoboda ordered the Czechoslovak army not to mobilize to defend Czechoslovakia against the aggressors. Furthermore, he requested that Czechoslovak citizens not resist the invading troops. However, resistance, both active and passive, did occur and the invading troops became rapidly demoralized. On the first day of the invasion, eighteen innocent Czechs were killed and 307 wounded in Prague alone.

During the August 20 evening meeting of the Presidium at
Hradčany Castle, Dubček was informed about the treacherous Warsaw Pact invasion of his homeland. It was then that he uttered his famous lament: "This is my own personal tragedy. I have always loved Russia. I have devoted my entire life to co-operating with the Soviet Union, and this is what they have done to me!"\(^1\)

Given the traditional Czech and Slovak admiration for Russia, Dubček's tragic statement is not difficult to understand. The Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia obliterated the traditional Czech amity toward Russia. Many Czechs watched in horror as Russian troops murdered innocent family members and friends. Russia's betrayal of Czechoslovakia was too perverse for many Czechs and Slovaks such as Dubček to comprehend.

The following statements are examples of Czech anti-Russian graffiti found on Prague buildings. They reveal the intensity of the Czechs' hatred for the Russians: RUSSIAN CIRCUS IN TOWN! DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.; THE GERMANS WANTED US FOR ONLY ONE THOUSAND YEARS; THE RUSSIANS FOREVER.; HOME, DOGS! OUR NATION WEEPS.; BREZHNEV! COMPARED TO YOU GENGHIS KHAN NEVER EXISTED.; EXCHANGE WANTED: SOVIET-CZECHOSLOVAK FRIENDSHIP FOR ANY OTHER PORNOGRAPHY.; CALLING DR. BARNARD! HELP!!! DR. BREZHNEV HAS JUST TRANSPLANTED THE HEART OF EUROPE INTO THE BEHIND OF RUSSIA.; EVEN HITLER INVADED CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN DAYLIGHT.; PROZ? - POCHEMU? - POURQUOI? - WHY?\(^2\)
Czech Reaction to Polish Participation in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

In light of the destruction of the traditional Czech amity toward Russia, an historical issue of contention between the Czechs and the Poles, an opportunity for Czech-Polish rapprochement existed. Cooperation among Czech and Polish intellectuals did occur briefly in 1968. Those intellectuals included writers Goldstücker, Kohout, Procházka, and Lustig among the Czechs, and novelists Andrzejewski and Mrózek among the Poles.

However, that opportunity perished because Polish troops also participated in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Two Polish military actions in Czechoslovakia within the span of thirty years (1938 and 1968) have been bitter pills for the Czechs to swallow. Polish participation in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia only reinforced traditional Czech prejudice toward Poland.

Polish tourists in Czechoslovakia reported that Czechs treated them with overt hostility. According to Radio Warsaw (August 27, 1968), Czechs stoned Polish buses and cars and insulted their passengers. Radio Warsaw declared: "Tourists speaking Polish risk being ostentatiously refused service in the shops. The extraordinary thing is that German-speaking people get fast and polite service. Instances of thefts of cars marked PL (Polska Ludowa, the international automotive insignia for Poland) are increasing."20

Demoralization and malaise developed quickly among the Polish troops in Czechoslovakia because the troops felt that they had no right to enter Czechoslovak territory within the confines of
military aggression. Several Polish soldiers even deserted and returned to Poland. In the Czech town of Jičín, two lonely, demoralized, and drunken Polish soldiers opened fire on two local couples sitting on a park bench. They killed one of the boys, wounded one of the girls, killed the other boy's mother and wounded his father when they came out to see what was happening, killed a Polish soldier who tried to quell the slaughter, and wounded another Polish soldier, a Czech soldier, and a woman in a passing car. This unprovoked, unnecessary, and tragic Polish slaughter became known as "The Jičín Massacre of 1968."^22

Polish Reaction to Polish Participation in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

The repressions in Poland which took place after the March events broke the back of the Polish opposition which had looked to the reforms in Czechoslovakia with hope and expectation. The post-March repressions eliminated the possibility of a widespread emotional response to the invasion of Czechoslovakia as was found in Poland during the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. The average Pole had mixed feelings such as bewilderment, shame, or relief that the German Federal Republic would not threaten Polish security. Traditional anti-Czech prejudices and antipathies also played a role in explaining the general passivity of the Polish population. The following comment was often heard in Poland: "At last the Czechs have had it as well!"^23 This statement refers to the fact that the Russians finally suppressed freedom in Czechoslovakia, as they had done previously in Poland and in Hungary.
Protests against Poland's participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia came mostly from the most articulate and best educated strata of Polish society, the students and the intellectuals. The protesters expressed themselves through the distribution of pro-Czechoslovak leaflets which attacked the Polish government on moral grounds, much as American students protested against United States involvement in Vietnam on moral grounds. The following leaflet accentuated Poland's disgrace in the eyes of the world because of her participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia:

On the night of August 20-21, 1968, the armies of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union commenced criminal aggression on socialist Czechoslovakia. Poland's participation in that criminal aggression is a consequence of the politics realized during the past few years in our country. The same forces which massacred the workers in Poznań and bloodily crushed the revolution in Hungary in 1956, destroyed the achievements of the "Polish October" through the practice of anti-socialist policies, the forces which in March of this year brutally suppressed the students—today wishes to silence the democratic process in Czechoslovakia.

The Polish army's occupation of Zaolzie during Hitler's partition of Czechoslovakia was shameful. The participation of the Polish army in the present aggression is also shameful. Shame on the aggressors! Czechoslovakia, you are not alone!

The occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic threatens peace in the world and is a return to Stalinism and a blow to the hopes of democracy in Poland. Shame on the Polish uniform! Boycott Poland in the entire world! Poles, demand the withdrawal of the occupation army from Czechoslovakia and the termination of interference in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs. We demand democratic socialism and freedom! The affair of the Czechs and the Slovaks is also our affair.
The invasion of Czechoslovakia reaffirmed the tragedy of Eastern Europe—the failure of the small Eastern European countries to understand their mutual dependence. In 1968, as in 1956, as in 1938, as in 1919-1920, petty quarrels, divisiveness, and territorial ambitions among the Eastern European nations contributed to their national tragedies. Any attack on one or more of the Eastern European states by an outside power such as Germany or Russia has been used by the other Eastern European nations to advance their own interests at the expense of the victim(s). In 1919, during a period of Polish weakness, Czech troops entered Poland to acquire control of the important coal mining region at Teschen. In 1920, during the Polish-Soviet war, the Czechs refused to allow the transit of French arms to Poland. In 1938, Poland and Hungary participated in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. The bloodbath in Hungary in 1956 provoked widespread sympathy in Poland, but only indifference in Czechoslovakia. Both the Hungarians and the Poles attempted to break away from the Soviet yoke in 1956, but failed. Should the Czechs and the Slovaks have succeeded in 1968 when the others had not?

The aggressive, short-sighted, and brutal actions of the Eastern European authoritarian governments have been reinforced time and time again by the negative attitudes of the Eastern European peoples for their neighbors. Mutual Czech-Polish animosities and cultural prejudices represent only one of those negative attitudes. Unfortunately, the role of Polish participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia was to reinforce the
traditional Czech enmity toward the Poles.
NOTES:


10. Ibid., p. 30.

11. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

12. Ibid., p. 92.


19. Ibid., pp. 334-337.


22. Ibid.


CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters of this study have attempted to show that the Czechs and the Poles command a lengthy history of mutual cultural prejudice, distaste, jealousy, animosity, and misunderstanding. All of these factors have existed for centuries, even prior to the foundations of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Polish Republic in 1918. Despite the imposition of Communism in both states after the end of the Second World War, the Czech and Polish peoples as well as their corresponding governments have continued to manifest their negative attitudes through either overt hostility or total indifference toward the other. Relations between the Czechs and the Poles are somewhat analogous to relations between the Americans and the Canadians, e.g., proper but distant. The lack of an open border between the two satellite states has ensured the preservation of the ancient animosities and mutual cultural prejudices. The poor relations between the Czechs and the Poles have continued to exist after the invasion of Czechoslovakia which reinforced traditional Czech enmity toward the Poles.

The Czech Reaction to Gierek's Liberalization in Poland

On December 13, 1970, the Gomułka government announced its decision to raise food prices. On December 14, workers in Gdańsk rioted to protest against the decision. Riots in the other Baltic port cities of Gdynia, Szczecin, and Eblag followed the Gdańsk riots.
On December 15, Gomużka, in an effort to preserve his power base, committed a grave error and ordered that tanks suppress the revolt. On December 18, Gomużka suffered a minor stroke during an argument within the Politburo with members opposed to his decision to employ force. On December 19, after seven hours of debate, the Politburo requested that Gomużka resign. On December 20, the VII Plenary session of the United Polish Workers' Party Central Committee formally elected Edward Gierek First Secretary. Gierek then appeared on television, publicly acknowledged the leadership's mistakes, and promised a revision of economic and other policies. As a result, strikes and disturbances died down and protests planned in other cities were cancelled.¹

The riots which brought Gierek, a Communist reformer, to power in 1970 reinforce the premise that popular dissent or revolt in Eastern Europe are the only means available to the Eastern European peoples to liberalize the Communist system of government. This has consistently proven to be the case. However, the Czechs and the Poles have opted for different means of protest to accomplish their goals. The Poles have usually chosen violence, while the Czechs have preferred passive resistance. Both nations have succeeded in overthrowing conservative Communist regimes, although the threat or actuality of Soviet military intervention has deprived the two peoples of the complete democratization of the Communist system of government.

In its first year, the new Gierek leadership rescinded the previously announced price increases and instituted a price freeze,
gave pay increases to the lowest paid workers, postponed an unpopular wage reform, and eased the farmers' obligatory sales to the state. (About 80 to 85 percent of Poland's agricultural land is in private hands.) Gierek also declared his intention to continue good governmental relations with Poland's powerful Roman Catholic hierarchy. Furthermore, he made concessions to popular sentiments, among them to rebuild the royal palace in Warsaw which had been destroyed during the war. Gomułka had refused to rebuild the palace because it represented the Polish aristocracy.

Gierek has also turned heavily to the West for trade, investments, and technology. Over three hundred Western industrial concerns have located plants in Poland under agreements that permit production to be sold in Western markets to repay Poland's enormous indebtedness to the West—now around two billion dollars.

However, Gierek has sometimes been ambivalent concerning his reforms of Poland's Communist system of government. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia stands as a constant reminder that Gierek must remain cautious for fear of Soviet intervention into his own country.  

In April, 1969, Alexander Dubček lost his position as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party because of the "human torch" January, 1969, death of Jan Palach who was protesting against Soviet interference in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs, and the anti-Soviet riots which erupted in Prague and other Czechoslovak cities in March, 1969, as a result of the Czechoslovak victory over the Soviet Union at the World Hockey Championships in Stockholm.
The Soviet leadership replaced Dubček with Gustáv Husák, a conservative Slovak lawyer who had spent six years in prison during the Stalinist period for "Slovak nationalism".

Husák then set out to destroy the reforms of the Dubček era and to return Czechoslovakia to a close alliance with the Soviet Union. He ordered increased police surveillance of all liberals involved in the "Prague Spring". Even though the December riots in Poland appear to have caused only indifference among the people in Czechoslovakia, the Gierek liberalization provoked widespread consternation within the conservative Czechoslovak regime, composed of former Novotnýites who returned to power after the invasion. On February 25, 1971, Kaška, the Minister of the Interior, told members of his ministry about the "dangerous developments" in Poland and said that if Gierek failed to master the situation, "international assistance," e. g., military intervention, would be necessary.³

Kaška's reaction to the Gierek liberalization in Poland confirms once again the Marshall R. Singer hypothesis stated in Chapter I. The hypothesis deals with the role of the elites in two weak Communist states (A and B) which are equally dependent on a strong third state (X). The hypothesis states that if the elites of weak state B hold a political perception different from that of strong state X, the likelihood is that the international political behavior of the elites in weak state A will more closely resemble and support the political behavior of X than they will of the political behavior of B.
In 1956, Gomužka (B) deviated from the conservative Marxist-Leninist norm, and Novotný (A) did not support him because he feared that the new "Titoism" in Poland would prove to be contagious in Czechoslovakia. Therefore, he closed the Czechoslovak-Polish border and jammed Polish radio broadcasts. Moreover, Novotný supported the Soviet elite's (X) threats against Gomužka's government as well as its simultaneous suppression of the Hungarian Uprising.

In 1968, Gomužka and Ulbricht (A) feared the liberalization of the Dubček government (B) in Czechoslovakia. They, along with the Hungarian and Bulgarian elites, supported the Brezhnev regime (X) through their participation in the military aggression against Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968. The elite's fear of a loss of their absolute power through democratization of the Communist system of government precipitated the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In 1971, the conservative elites in Czechoslovakia (A), then and now staunch supporters of a close Czechoslovak alliance with the Soviet Union, criticized sharply Gierek's liberalization in Poland. Out of fear that Gierek's liberal ideas might spread to Czechoslovakia, the conservative Czechoslovak elites even referred to the possibility of "international assistance" to suppress Polish liberalism.

The above facts concerning the conservative Eastern European elites vis-à-vis the Soviet Union confirm Singer's hypothesis. Because the conservative Eastern European elites are willing to support the Soviet Union to suppress any liberal tendencies within
another Eastern European state, Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe has been maintained. The conservative elites fear that any liberalization within Eastern Europe will undermine their absolute power base. The brutality of the conservative Eastern European elites, demonstrated in their suppression of liberalization in other Eastern European states, has also been consistently reinforced by the negative attitudes and indifference of the Eastern European peoples for their neighbors.

Current Developments in Czechoslovakia and in Poland

Material well-being may seduce some Czechs and Slovaks to overlook their hatred of the Soviet-imposed post-invasion Husák regime in Czechoslovakia. Likewise, the rising standard of living in Poland under the quasi-liberal Gierek regime may seduce some Poles to overlook the Polish government's imprisonment of those Poles who rioted in June, 1976. (See Chapter I.) However, the drive to democratize the system and the thirst for greater freedom of expression will not die among the peoples within the two countries under study in this work. The current Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia and the dissident movement in Poland led by Jerzy Andrzejewski, Poland's most eminent contemporary novelist, indicate this fact. However, it is the opinion of the author that the post-Helsinki dissidence throughout Eastern Europe (except Bulgaria) and the Soviet Union is not interrelated. The Helsinki Declaration has acted as a rallying point for dissidents in each individual state to press each Eastern European regime to honor its
Helsinki commitments through the granting of greater freedom of expression as well as through the respecting of fundamental human rights.

Poles enjoy increased freedom of expression under Gierek, but the shortages of meat and sugar remain national scandals and are the source of much popular dissatisfaction with the Gierek regime. On the contrary, Czechoslovakia enjoys the second highest standard of living in the entire socialist bloc, having been overtaken in recent years by the German Democratic Republic. For many years Czechoslovakia enjoyed the title of "showcase" of socialism.

Since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Czechs have become increasingly more materialistic through their possession of automobiles and summer cottages to which they escape frequently from the heat and political repression of the larger cities. The stores and meat shops are also well-stocked with goods. Therefore, the Czechs do not sympathize with the Poles' economic difficulties. However, contrary to the Poles who have been enjoying greater freedom since 1970, the Czechs have encountered the horror of post-invasion "normalization", e. g., the increasing loss of their personal freedom proportional to their increasing rise in materialism. The Czechs feel that they have been universally betrayed not only by their socialist allies in Eastern Europe and especially by their traditional ally, the Soviet Union, but also by the West. Widespread despondency exists in Czechoslovakia today.
The Party in Czechoslovakia has had an increasingly more difficult time in coercing younger Czechs and Slovaks to join the Party since the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The young in Poland have also been reluctant to join the Party which has become increasingly the fortress of the older and more conservative Party members. The Polish youth demanded their own Dubček in 1968 and opposed their government's decision to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the Czech youth saw Polish and Russian soldiers murder their innocent brothers, sisters, parents, and friends. Polish participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia will most likely prevent the Czech and Polish youths from forming a common front to demand the democratization of the Communist system within their respective states. Polish participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia rejuvenated traditional Czech animosity toward the entire Polish nation as the negative Czech reaction to the Polish tourists in Czechoslovakia at the time of the invasion indicates. The memory of the Polish troops' killing of Czech citizens in 1968 will die hard among Czech youth. An excellent opportunity for Czech-Polish rapprochement has apparently perished.

There is widespread fear throughout Czechoslovakia and Poland of Soviet military intervention as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to suppress any popular revolts against the Communist regimes in power. The Brezhnev Doctrine still leaves open the question as to what deviations are allowed in Eastern Europe, and as to whether the Soviet regime would be willing to
embarrass itself in world opinion again.

Given the current emphasis on détente and the Helsinki Declaration which guarantees that each sovereign signatory in Europe will honor the sovereignty of the other signatories, the likelihood is minimal that the Soviet regime would embarrass itself again and intervene militarily in the internal affairs of an Eastern European state. However, the perceived fear of Soviet intervention dampens the quest for greater democratization of the Communist system of government. Gierek treads as lightly as does the Polish opposition.

In Poland, widespread consternation exists concerning the Gierek regime's lack of either a political or an economic solution to Poland's economic difficulties. The Polish writer in the *L'Express* article cited in Chapter I states that a possible insurrection could erupt at any moment in Poland. However, it is the opinion of the author that most Poles do not desire a national insurrection for fear of Soviet intervention. This premise is substantiated in the following statement by a prominent Polish dissident: "We are always afraid of one thing. We don't want a Czechoslovakia on our soil. It would be a real war. I've seen Warsaw leveled once in my lifetime and that's enough."  

Other Polish dissidents feel that the Czechoslovak experience must not hinder their efforts to pressure the Gierek regime to continue its policies of liberalization in Poland. One of the dissidents, Jacek Kuroń, states the following:
Our country's representatives should come to an understanding directly with the Soviet government as to the limits of the reforms (in Poland). We mustn't let ourselves be haunted by Czechoslovakia's experience and believe that these limits have been drawn once and for all. If there is no force within the government capable of undertaking such a dialogue, then social movements—at present marginal—could help make the change by the influence and pressure they can bring to bear on the established hierarchy.

Perspectives

If a Polish insurrection were to occur, however improbable given the fear of Soviet military intervention, it appears reasonable to assume that the Czechs would not support it. It is simply not within the Czech national character to rise up in violent revolt against an oppressive government because the Czechs have consistently resorted to passive resistance and devious maneuvering. The Poles have always looked upon the Czech national preference for passivity with contempt.

Furthermore, the Czechs enjoy a standard of living 20 to 25 percent higher than that of the Poles. The higher standard of living in Czechoslovakia has contributed to a certain stability in that country. Economic stability in Czechoslovakia precluded a revolt in 1956, while neighboring Poland and Hungary erupted into violence. The 1970 and 1976 Polish riots, both provoked by economic catalysts, appear to have initiated no sympathy among the Czechs.

A repeat of the 1956 events when the Hungarians, linked by a long tradition of friendship with the Poles, rose up in revolt in mutual support of the Poles, seems highly unlikely in the case of the Czechs and the Poles. Czech support of a potential Polish
insurrection appears to be improbable because Czech-Polish friendship simply does not exist.

One other factor must be considered, the resolution of Czech and Slovak animosity. Czech-Slovak conflicts, which helped to destroy the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1939 and to trigger the "Prague Spring" in 1968, have been resolved. As of January 1, 1969, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is a federal state. Czechs no longer dominate the Slovak bureaucracy or control Slovak affairs from Prague as were the cases under the First Republic and the 1960 Constitution. Furthermore, the invasion of Czechoslovakia contributed to a solidarity between the two peoples which had not previously existed. Therefore, it appears unlikely that Slovak nationalism will contribute to further discord within the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

Based upon the preceding analysis of such factors as traditional Czech-Polish hostility and mutual cultural prejudice, Polish participation in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the higher standard of living in Czechoslovakia compared to that of Poland, one can assume that the Czechs would not support an initial Polish insurrection. Moreover, excellent Czech-Polish relations within the economic sphere have not led to political integration between Czechoslovakia and Poland as is evidenced in the third chapter of this study. Czech-Polish antagonisms have remained intact to this day.

The historical animosities between the Czechs and the Poles are the tragedy of Eastern Europe because the Czechs and the Poles
are two of the region's most powerful and influential nations. Their mutual cultural prejudices, hostilities, and indifference have guaranteed Soviet hegemony in Czechoslovakia and in Poland. The tragedy of the Czechs and the Poles is the tragedy of all of the peoples of Eastern Europe.
NOTES:


THE FULL TEXT OF CHARTER 77*

Law No. 120 of the Czechoslovak Collection of Laws, published on October 13, 1976, includes the text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both signed on behalf of our republic in 1968 and confirmed at the 1975 Helsinki Conference. These pacts went into effect in our country on March 23, 1976: since that date our citizens have had the right, and the state has had the duty, to abide by them.

The freedoms guaranteed to individuals by the two documents are important assets of civilisation. They have been the goals of campaigns by many progressive people in the past, and their enactment can significantly contribute to a humane development of our society. We welcome the fact that the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has agreed to enter into these covenants.

Their publication, however, is at the same time an urgent reminder of the many fundamental human rights that regrettably exist in our country only on paper. The right of free expression guaranteed by Article 19 of the first pact, for example, is quite illusory. Tens of thousands of citizens have been prevented from working in their professions for the sole reason that their views differ from the official ones. They have been the frequent targets of various forms of discrimination and chicanery on the part of the

authorities or social organisations; they have been denied any opportunity to defend themselves and are practically the victims of apartheid. Hundreds of thousands of other citizens have been denied the "freedom from fear" cited in the preamble of the first pact: they live in constant peril of losing their jobs or other benefits if they express their opinions.

Contrary to Article 13 of the second pact, guaranteeing the right to education, many young people are prevented from pursuing higher education because of their views or even because of their parents' views. Countless citizens worry that if they declare their convictions, they themselves or their children will be deprived of an education.

Exercising the right to "seek, receive and impart information regardless of frontiers and of whether it is oral, written or printed," or "imparted through art"---Point 2, Article 13 of the first pact---can result in persecution not only outside the court but also inside. Frequently this occurs under the pretext of a criminal indictment (as evidenced, among other instances, by the recent trial of young musicians).

Freedom of speech is suppressed by the government's management of all mass media, including the publishing and cultural institutions. No political, philosophical, scientific or artistic work that deviates in the slightest from the narrow framework of official ideology or aesthetics is permitted to be produced. Public criticism of social conditions is prohibited. Public defense against false and defamatory charges by official propaganda organs
is impossible despite the legal protection against attacks on one's reputation and honour unequivocally afforded by Article 17 of the first pact. False accusations cannot be refuted, and it is futile to attempt rectification or to seek legal redress. Open discussion of intellectual and cultural matters is out of the question. Many scientific and cultural workers as well as other citizens have been discriminated against simply because some years ago they legally published or openly articulated views condemned by the current political power.

Religious freedom, emphatically guaranteed by Article 18 of the first pact, is systematically curbed with a despotic arbitrariness: limits are imposed on the activities of priests who are constantly threatened with the revocation of government permission to perform their function; persons who manifest their religious faith either by word or action lose their jobs or are made to suffer other repressions; religious instruction in schools is suppressed, etc.

A whole range of civil rights is severely restricted or completely suppressed by the effective method of subordinating all institutions and organisations in the state to the political directives of the ruling party's apparatuses and the pronouncements of highly influential individuals. Neither the constitution of the USSR nor any of the country's other legal procedures regulate the contents, form or application of such pronouncements, which are frequently issued orally, unbeknown to and beyond the control of the average citizen.
Their authors are responsible only to themselves and their own hierarchy, yet they have a decisive influence on the activity of the legislative as well as executive bodies of the state administration, on the courts, trade unions, social organisations, other political parties, business, factories, schools and similar installations, and their orders take precedence over the laws.

If some organisations or citizens, in the interpretation of their rights and duties, become involved in a conflict with the directives, they cannot turn to a neutral authority for none exists. Consequently, the right of assembly and the prohibition of its restraint, stemming from Articles 21 and 22 of the first pact; the right to participate in public affairs, in Article 25; and the right to equality before the law, in Article 26—all have been seriously curtailed.

These conditions prevent working people from freely establishing labour and other organisations for the protection of their economic and social interests, and from freely using their right to strike as provided in Point 1, Article 8 of the second pact.

Other civil rights, including the virtual banning of "willful interference with private life, the family, home, and correspondence" in Article 17 of the first pact, are gravely circumscribed by the fact that the Interior Ministry employs various practices to control the daily existence of citizens—such as telephone tapping and the surveillance of private homes, watching mail, shadowing individuals, searching apartments, and recruiting
a network of informers from the ranks of the population (often by illegal intimidation, or, sometimes, promises), etc.

The ministry frequently interferes in the decisions of employers, inspires discrimination by authorities and organizations, influences the organs of justice, and even supervises the propaganda campaigns of the mass media. This activity is not regulated by laws, it is covert, so the citizen is unable to protect himself against it.

In the cases of politically motivated persecution, the organs of interrogation and justice violate the rights of the defendants and their counsel, contrary to Article 14 of the first pact as well as Czechoslovakia's own laws. People thus sentenced to jail are being treated in a manner that violates their human dignity, impairs their health, and attempts to break them morally.

Point 2, Article 12 of the first pact, guaranteeing the right to freely leave one's country, is generally violated. Under the pretext of "protecting the state security," contained in Point 3, departure is tied to various illegal conditions. Just as arbitrary are the procedures for issuing visas to foreign nationals, many of whom are prevented from visiting Czechoslovakia because they had some official or friendly contact with persons who had been discriminated against in our country.

Some citizens—privately at their places of work, or through the media abroad (the only public forum available to them)—have drawn attention to these systematic violations of human rights and democratic freedoms and have demanded a remedy in specific cases.
But they have received no response, or have themselves become the objects of investigation.

The responsibility for the preservation of civil rights naturally rests with the state power. But not on it alone. Every individual bears a share of responsibility for the general conditions in the country, and therefore also for compliance with the enacted pacts, which are as binding for the people as for the government.

The feeling of this co-responsibility, the belief in the value of civic engagement and the readiness to be engaged, together with the need to seek a new and more effective expression, gave us the idea of creating Charter 77, whose existence we publicly announce.

Charter 77 is a free and informal and open association of people of various convictions, religions and professions, linked by the desire to work individually and collectively for respect for human and civil rights in Czechoslovakia and the world—the rights provided for in the enacted international pacts, in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, and in numerous other international documents against wars, violence and social and mental oppression. It represents a general declaration of human rights.

Charter 77 is founded on the concepts of solidarity and friendship of people who share a concern for the fate of ideals to which they have linked their lives and work.

Charter 77 is not an organisation; it has no statutes, permanent organs or registered membership. Everyone who agrees with
its idea and participates in its work and supports it, belongs to it.

Charter 77 is not intended to be a basis for opposition political activity. Its desire is to serve the common interest, as have numerous similar organisations of civic initiative. East and West. It has no intention of initiating its own programmes for political or social reforms or changes, but it wants to lead in the sphere of its activity by means of a constructive dialogue with the political and state authorities—and particularly by drawing attention to various specific violations of civil and human rights, by preparing their documentation, by suggesting solutions, by submitting various more-general proposals aimed at furthering these rights and their guarantees, by acting as a mediator in the event of conflict which might result in wrong-doings, etc.

By its symbolic name, Charter 77 stresses that it has been established on the threshold of what has been declared the year of political prisoners, in the course of which a meeting in Belgrade is to review the progress—or lack of it—achieved since the Helsinki Conference.

As signatories of this declaration, we designate Dr. Jan Patočka, Dr. Václav Havel and Professor Jiří Hájek to act as spokesmen for Charter 77. These spokesmen are authorised to represent Charter 77 before the state and other organisations, as well as before the public at home and throughout the world, and they guarantee the authenticity of the documents by their signatures. In us and other citizens, who will join Charter 77, they will find
their collaborators who will participate in the necessary negotiations, who will accept partial tasks, and will share the entire responsibility.

We trust that Charter 77 will contribute to making it possible for all citizens of Czechoslovakia to live and work as free people.
APPENDIX B

THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE*

In connection with the events in Czechoslovakia, the ques­
tion of the relationship and interconnection between the socialist
countries' national interests and their internationalist obligations
has assumed particular urgency and sharpness. The measures taken
jointly by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to defend
the socialist gains of the Czechoslovak people are of enormous
significance for strengthening the socialist commonwealth, which is
the main achievement of the international working class.

At the same time it is impossible to ignore the allegations
being heard in some places that the actions of the five socialist
countries contradict the Marxist-Leninist principle of sovereignty
and the right of the nations to self-determination.

Such arguments are untenable primarily because they are
based on an abstract, non-class approach to the question of sover­
eignty and the right of nations to self-determination.

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
worldwide workers' movement which is waging a struggle for socialism.

*From "Sovereignty and International Duties of Socialist
Countries," Pravda (September 25, 1968) as cited in Duchaček, Ivo,
The sovereignty of each socialist country cannot be opposed to the world of socialism, of the world revolutionary movement. As a social system, world socialism is the common gain of the working people of all lands; it is indivisible and its defense is the common cause of all Communists. The weakening of any link in the world socialist system has a direct effect on all the socialist countries which cannot be indifferent. Thus, the antisocialist forces in Czechoslovakia were in essence using talk about the right to self-determination to cover up demands for so-called neutrality and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's withdrawal from the socialist commonwealth. But implementation of such "self-determination," e.g., Czechoslovakia's separation from the socialist commonwealth, would run counter to Czechoslovakia's fundamental interests and would harm the other socialist countries. Such "self-determination," as a result of which NATO troops might approach Soviet borders and the commonwealth of European socialist countries could be dismembered, in fact infringes on the vital interest of these countries' peoples, and fundamentally contradicts the right of these peoples to socialist self-determination.

Those who speak of the "illegality" of the allied socialist countries' actions in Czechoslovakia forget that in a class society there is and can be no such thing as non-class law. Laws and norms of law are subordinated to the laws of the class struggle and the laws of social development.
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