

THE PRAGUE SPRING (1968) AND THE VELVET REVOLUTION (1989):
THE UNFOLDING OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S REFORM MOVEMENTS AND
THEIR UNDERLYING CONNECTION; THE TRANSFORMATION FROM
SOCIALISM TO DEMOCRACY

THESIS

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By

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2000

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to two of the most important people in my life, my parents Len and Pat Patak.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My decision to research the ideological reform movements in Czechoslovakia is a direct result of my Czech heritage. My entire family, on both sides, is of Czechoslovakian ancestry. Obviously this created my interest in the study of Czechoslovakian history and issues their people have dealt with in the 20th century. The Czechoslovakian people have an incredible heritage and culture, which is still prevalent within the Czech communities of Texas.

In addition, Dr. Ted Hindson, Political Science Professor at Southwest Texas State University, initiated my further interest in the subject because of an undergraduate class that he taught, Government and Politics of Central and Eastern Europe. It was in this class that I began to develop an interest in Czechoslovakian politics. He inspired me to understand the region of Central and Eastern Europe and explore their fascinating and rich history. After Dr. Hindson's class, I continued to study this region and develop an interest in the many different countries that were under the rule of the Soviet Union.

I have always been interested in 20th century European history, but I grew a fascination with Czechoslovakia's own history during the 20th century. I wanted to learn more on how a young country could be created within democratic traditions and then be pushed into a Socialist and Communist society for the majority of its life. This element alone was the most important to me. Therefore, throughout my Graduate studies, I have always tried to do research on topics relating to Czechoslovakia. I had a brief knowledge of the Prague Spring, the Munich Agreement, and the Velvet Revolution. However, I was driven to know how or if the Prague Spring was a catalyst to the events of the Velvet Revolution and how the history of the republic affected the reform movements.

This past year has been an extremely important time in my life. I always thought that my parents were invincible human beings that would be strong no matter what came their way. A couple of months ago, I quickly discovered this to be untrue when my Mom, who is my best friend, had to undergo major surgery. It is ironic what is brought in front of you to defeat. I have quickly learned the amount of strength within her and can only hope that I can be like her. In addition, my Dad and brother have been the strongest individuals that anyone could be. They have made this difficult time a more bearable experience. However, I knew my Mom would not be happy if I was unable to finish my research and thesis because of her situation. My Dad and my brother have been great supporters in helping me get through this time and finish my research. My Dad has always been someone to look up to and I appreciate all of his help, even if I did not want to hear what he had to say. My Dad's love of history was an incredible influence on my education. Therefore, I would like to thank my family, who are the most important people in the world to me, for their support and encouragement on helping me succeed

my dream. I can not have asked for better parents to encourage my goals. I love all of you and I appreciate all of your moral support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Czech Republic went through quite an extraordinary event to evolve to its current political structure. That event is often referred to as the Velvet Revolution, which occurred in November of 1989. However, this bloodless revolution's catalyst began twenty years before that in the time of Alexander Dubcek's "Socialism with a Human Face" and his own political revolution which was referred to as the Prague Spring. The Prague Spring was a tremendous threat to the Communist world. In August of 1968, Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia to prevent the spread of democratic reforms. Dubcek's vision was reform within the socialist system; the reformers of 1968 still wanted a socialist system. "For the first time in history a ruling communist party was challenged from within by reformers who questioned the very basis of its power."¹ The purpose and scope of this paper is thus to examine the roles of Prague Spring in 1968 and the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and determine how these events sculpted the future of the Czech Republic.

Vaclav Havel, who is the Czech Republic's current President, was the prominent figure in the eruption of the democratic revolution in Czechoslovakia during the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Alexander Dubcek was the first secretary of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia in 1968. These two men were major driving forces in the

¹ Vojtech Mastney, *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism* (New York: Fact on File,

democratization of the country. This thesis will also demonstrate how the significance of what Dubcek started in his reform of the socialist system was to be a major factor in the unleashing of the underground political career of Vaclav Havel.

I will first examine the political history of Czechoslovakia since its existence as an independent nation and try to evaluate the significance of the Communist Party in the country. Secondly, the political life of Alexander Dubcek and his background will be explained as well as that of the early days and beginning of Vaclav Havel's political career. Finally, the events of Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution will be explained in great detail and the significance of the effect Prague Spring had on the development and conclusion of the final democratic Revolution in Czechoslovakia and why one revolution succeeded and the other ended in failure.

Analysis of the Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution will be used to support the underlying connection between the two reform movements. In addition, autobiographic information pertaining to the lives of Alexander Dubcek and Vaclav Havel will be evaluated within their respective reform movements to help illustrate the two leading figures connection in the democratization of the Czechoslovakia, which is now known as the Czech Republic.

CHAPTER II

FROM HAPSBURG RULE TO ANTONIN NOVOTNY

To comprehend the significance of these two revolutions in Czechoslovakia's political history one needs to understand both the history of Czechoslovakia as a state and as an entity within the Hapsburg Empire. The Czech people have always had a strong sense of nationalism even while under the rule of the Hapsburgs. The Czechs of Bohemia lost their independence after the Thirty Years War, which lasted from 1618-1648. During this time the Czechs were left in a period of stagnation and peasantry.² However, in the nineteenth century, the Czechs developed a strong sense of nationalism. Bohemia became a nucleus for industrialization under the Austrian part of the empire. The Austrian Empire was becoming very industrialized and economically stable as a result of the thriving industry in Bohemia.³ This promoted the resurgence of Czech nationalism. "The Czechs achieved by 1914 a level of social, economic, and cultural development second only to that of the Germans in the empire."⁴ The only downside to the rise and development of the Czech people was that they had been unable to form an independent entity separate from the empire that ruled them. Although their goal was not

² Victor S. Mamatey and Luza Radomír, *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 3.

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Ibid., 3. Before the start of World War I, 70-80% of industry within the Hapsburg Empire was directly located in the kingdom of Bohemia.

to be completely independent from the empire, they wanted to be independent within it. Tomas Masaryk, who was the representative of the Czech realist party said, “ We want a federal Austria. We cannot be independent outside of Austria, next to a powerful Germany, having Germans on our territory.”⁵ Masaryk realized the consequences of being an independent nation-state with their borders to Germany. There would be no way that their country could survive next to a country with numerous hostilities towards them. The Sudetenland of Bohemia was comprised of a German majority among a region of Czechs and Slovaks. The Germans feared that if this region became independent, then the Czech majority would isolate them.⁶ This fear of German enemies living amongst them dampened their aspirations for independence.⁷ The Sudeten Germans also felt inferior amongst the Czech people because if the Czechs had become independent, they would have become a minority. Thus in the early 20th century, Bohemia and Moravia were in a very ambiguous state and their future remained fairly uncertain. Although Bohemia was the center of industry among the empire, they did not know their own strength. That strength was their ability to persevere under the empire and become an autonomous nation state made up of Czechs and Slovaks.

Tomas Masaryk was the prominent nationalist leader who led Czechoslovakia into statehood. His ideas were very different from most of his colleagues. He was comfortable in many different civilizations and cultures. Masaryk adapted to many different worlds by the way of understanding different cultures. However, the biggest difference that differentiated Masaryk was that he was a democrat. He was realistic in

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

thinking that imperial Russia may not be the liberator and savior for the Czech people and that it was not wise for the Czechs and the Slovaks to depend on Russia alone for help in liberating their people.⁸ In addition, the outbreak of World War I convinced Masaryk that an alliance solely with Russia might not be in their best interest. The war convinced Masaryk that there might be a defeat of the Hapsburg Empire, thus leading the way for a Czechoslovak liberation. He assumed that after the war, Russia might be left with less in terms of power and economics.

During this time, Masaryk came to the conclusion that in order for the Czech and Slovak peoples to have an independent nation-state, they must look to the West for support and help. Masaryk began to make trips to western and neutral countries to form support for the Czechoslovak people. Masaryk worked abroad for this cause because he was under suspicion by the Austrian authorities and feared that he would be arrested if he returned to Prague. He traveled to Switzerland, Rome, Paris and London. However, in Paris in 1915 Eduard Benes, who was a professor of sociology, admired the work of Masaryk and joined him. Over time, Masaryk had arranged meetings with Prime ministers and journalists from varying Western countries. On November 14, 1915, a Czechoslovak movement for independence was officially formed with the support of the Czech Foreign Committee. This movement called for a declaration of an independent Czechoslovak state. The work paid off for Masaryk and Benes and on January 10, 1917, the allied governments issued the following statement, “the liberation of Italians, of Slavs, of Romanians and Czechoslovaks from foreign domination was one of their war aims.”⁹

⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

During World War I, the nationalist leaders Masaryk and Benes formed a provisional government for a Czecho-Slovak republic. Czechoslovakia was then established in Prague on October 18, 1918. Even through all of the suffering of one of the worst wars Europe had ever seen, Czechoslovakia was able to prevail.

The Czechoslovaks had gained the Sudetenland upon independence from the Hapsburg Empire after World War I in 1918. The new republic was made up of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Carpatho-Ukraine. Bohemia also consisted of a very important region to the Germans, which was referred to as the Sudetenland. Masaryk became the first President. During the 1920's and 1930's Czechoslovakia evolved into a thriving democracy with an economy balanced between agriculture and industry. Prague was a very cosmopolitan city, where intellectualism was thriving.¹⁰ Its relations with many of its neighbors were strained because of territorial and economic disputes, but it nonetheless managed to carry on. The depression hit Czechoslovakia hard, as it did all of East Europe. Czechoslovakian democracy was being introduced as a great power during its earliest years of establishment. It became a rich and an industrialized nation in Eastern Europe.

Adolf Hitler wanted to expand into Czechoslovakia in the year of 1938 because they were a part of his plan to conquer Eastern and Central Europe and expand the Third Reich thus, causing Czechoslovakia's fate to take a turn for the worse. Germany was trying to expand in the world. Initially Hitler's claim was for all German speaking people to be under his rule but after he invaded Prague, his agenda was known to be much different. Germany forced Austria to join with the Third Reich in March of 1938. Later

¹⁰ Michael Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel* (London: Methuen, 1991), 17.

in 1938, Germany started demanding part of Czechoslovakia. After the occupation of Austria, Hitler was ready to demand the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, a region that was inhabited by German-speaking people. The Czechoslovaks had a great military and had excellent weapons and planned to defend their country, but their will to fight was lost with the Munich Agreement on September 29, 1938. The Czechs were dealt a fatal blow when the British and French governments decided to appease Hitler's appetite for territory at their expense. In September 1938, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain, Premier Eduard Daladier of France, Benito Mussolini of Italy and Hitler met at the Fuherhaus in Munich to redraw and carve out the map of Czechoslovakia. The result of this conference gave Hitler and Germany a great amount of power. The Munich Agreement gave Germany the power to annex the Sudetenland territory of Czechoslovakia. Losing the Sudetenland was a crushing blow for Czechoslovakia.¹¹ The lands that the Munich Agreement gave to Germany were vitally important to the Czechs because they were a solid defense perimeter and the Czechs had spent so many years and labor on these lands.¹² The Czech government had felt as though it was betrayed by the Western democracies, meaning Britain and France. In March of 1939, Hitler's troops began the process of taking over the remainder of Czechoslovakia. After the Munich Agreement, President Benes resigned on October 5, 1938 because Hitler greatly opposed Benes. On November 30, 1938, the Czechoslovakian government elected a new President, Emil Hacha. President Hacha was a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme

¹¹ George Kennan, *From Prague After Munich: Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), xvi.

¹² Ibid.

Administrative Court.¹³ On March 14, 1939, Slovakia was then set up as a German satellite state and was left under the leadership of Prime Minister Tiso. Slovakia had to be created because of Hitler's threats. Hitler said that Slovakia would be left to their own fate if they did not separate from Prague.¹⁴ In March of 1939, Czechoslovakia fell completely under the Third Reich. Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky went to Berlin on March 14 to meet with Hitler.¹⁵

Czech citizens first heard the news of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia from Radio Prague on March 15, 1939 at 4:30 AM in the morning. Radio Prague's broadcasts, "repeatedly warned the population to abstain from any resistance to the German army, which would start advancing at 6:00 AM."¹⁶ In general during the occupation, the Czechs cooperated with the Nazis. The fact that the Czechs cooperated with the Nazis has puzzled historians for over fifty years. The reasons for the accommodations of the Czechs are hard to point out and a full account of their motivations may never be known.

Hitler's downfall and the end of the World War II led to a reunification of most of Czechoslovakia. Czech citizens greeted the Soviet tanks with hopes of liberation from Germany, but little did they know that the Iron Curtain would be draped upon them.¹⁷ The Communist Party in Czechoslovakia had a significant increase in its membership

¹³ Mastny, *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism*, 23.

¹⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹⁵ Dr. Eduard Benes, *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Benes: From Munich to New War and New Victory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), 58.

¹⁶ Mastny, *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism*, 45.

¹⁷ Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel*, 37. Before the war there were 80,000 card-carrying members of the Communist Party, but within a year after the Czechs were liberated that number skyrocketed to 1.2 million.

during this time. “The Communists gained support with promises to dismantle the State apparatus of the occupation period, to reform land ownership and to take over some of the country’s biggest industrial operations.”¹⁸ The Communists had taken over and hopes for a return to capitalism and a laissez-faire economy were faint.¹⁹ People thought that Communism might offer a better way of life after all that the country had been through.

After World War II, the democratization of Czechoslovakia became very difficult because the country was governed by an alliance of Communists, Socialists, and Liberals. The environment that had been created was one in which stunted the growth of nationalism.²⁰

In 1946 the Communist Party won the election with thirty-eight percent of the votes and in 1948 the Party finally gained control of the country with the support of Soviet troops. Communism began to take a turn for the worse when Czechoslovakia tried to take aid from the Marshall Plan, which was money from the United States to help the development of the economy in Europe. However, Stalin denounced this plan of action. There was no way that Czechoslovakia was going to take aid from the West according to the Soviet Union. This incident led to a dramatic drop off in party membership and support. This was the point where citizens saw that they had given up their independence and they were under the control of the Soviet Union.²¹ No one even predicted, except Stalin, what the future would have in place for the country.

¹⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁹ Ibid., 38.

²⁰ Mastny, *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism*, 3.

²¹ Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel*, 40-41.

Antonin Novotny became the first secretary of the Czech Communist Party in 1953. He then later became the President of Czechoslovakia in 1957 when Antonin Zapotocky died. Thus, Novotny held two titles and dual roles in Czechoslovakia.²² Many onlookers of the situation were very surprised when Novotny gained the title of President of Czechoslovakia. However, the loyalty he practiced to the Kremlin was a great warrant against reform or the chance of an uprising as what had occurred in Poland and Hungary.²³ But as Novotny combined his two positions of power, his role in the Czechoslovakian government moderately changed his subservience to the Kremlin.²⁴ Novotny had a better relationship and understanding with Khrushchev then with Brezhnev.

It should be remembered that Novotny's style of rule had changed considerable after the ouster of Khrushchev in October 1964. Hitherto a stalwart ally of Moscow, Novotny was outraged by the Brezhnev takeover and he made his displeasure known by befriending Yugoslavia and Romania, ceasing polemics with China, and sending out feelers to West Germany.²⁵

Needless to say, Novotny was not supported by Brezhnev the way that Khrushchev supported the political climate of Czechoslovakia. Novotny's reforms and change in Czechoslovakia were acceptable as long as they continued to have the backing of Moscow. Once that support was gone his authority was diminished and it was extremely hard for him to hold on to control of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the country at the same time.

²² Josef Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978), 261.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovakian Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 54.

A reason for the distinctly different relationship that Novotny practiced with each Soviet leader could possibly be because of the differing political climate that each leader ruled in. During the end of Khrushchev's reign, the Sino-Soviet conflict and the Cuban Missile Crisis were huge contributing factors to the moderate control that the Soviet Union was practicing among the eastern bloc. The Soviet Union was more concerned at that time in the domestic and internal affairs within their country because of Far East situation.

Developments in Eastern Europe under Khrushchev in the early 1960's called in the journalistic jargon de-Stalinization, when the pawns of the Soviet Union became participants in the bloc's decision-making process- gave Novotny and excellent opportunity to embark on a more independent course of action.²⁶

The political environment at the time forced Khrushchev to rethink the foreign policy priorities of the country. Thus a more relaxed relationship existed between Czechoslovakia with Khrushchev than with Brezhnev.²⁷

After the Hungarian revolution in 1956, relations with some of the countries within the Soviet bloc had greatly improved. During this time, Khrushchev made visits to Hungary, Bulgaria, and the German Democratic Republic.²⁸ Khrushchev went to Czechoslovakia in 1957, where he issued a statement to Novotny, "Asserting the struggle against dogmatism was as equally necessary as the struggle against revisionism."²⁹ Khrushchev tried to get the support of Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries to help "curb the strong anti-revisionism line", which the Soviet higher authority had begun

²⁶ Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy*, 261.

²⁷ Ibid., 262.

²⁸ Roy Medvedev, *Khrushchev* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 141.

²⁹ Carl A. Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1966), 55.

after the Hungarian Revolution. He also tried to gather the support of Tito in Yugoslavia and began to develop the ideology that it was acceptable for ruling parties to lead different roads to socialism. This was the idea that Khrushchev had expressed to Novotny during his trip. Khrushchev met with Tito the following month and his stance in Czechoslovakia was purely for Yugoslavia. He wanted to restore a relationship between Moscow and Tito.³⁰ Thus, Khrushchev could have possibly initiated reformist movements that eventually developed under the rule of Novotny. Even though, Khrushchev was only trying to get back in the graces of Tito, he opened a new door for many eastern bloc countries, including that of Czechoslovakia. In the summer of 1958, Novotny went to Moscow to visit with Khrushchev. This visit was the result of Khrushchev's efforts of establishing better relationships with his Soviet satellites.³¹

During Novotny's visit to Moscow, he informed Khrushchev of his ideas on economic reform for his country. These reforms called for the development of a market economy and trade relations, mainly focusing on surpassing the bureaucratic system and increasing the significance of a free enterprise system. Khrushchev was not surprised by his ideas because he said, "we too are thinking of enhancing the role of enterprises, especially in the regions... We have set up sovnarkhozes and are thinking of handing over a part of the enterprises to public organizations and giving trade unions a great role. So this is very useful."³² But in reality Khrushchev was unable to comprehend the reforms that Novotny wanted to instill in Czechoslovakia. Khrushchev had never felt comfortable discussing matters regarding market economy or trade relations and hence did not show

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 141.

³² Fedor Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 202.

any reaction to Novotny's ideas. At this time, Khrushchev was not focused on the internal problems within Czechoslovakia because of problems the Soviet Union was having with countries outside of the realm.

It is important to point out, that the Czechs did not view Novotny as a reformer. Many scholars have tended to disagree with this. Novotny moderately tried to alter issues and policies, in ways that escaped general public notice. Therefore, the public viewed the period that Novotny was President and First Secretary of the Communist Party as an extremely dark period. In an interview with two former citizens of Czechoslovakia, they compared the Novotny period with that of the time right after the Communist Party came into power after World War II. Scholars have been able to see the official government documents of Czechoslovakia during Novotny's rule. This has made their analysis slightly more accurate, but the public's attitude was that their situation had worsened with Novotny as a leader.³³

In 1964, the Soviet Communist Party and a state delegation attended the Prague Summit. Again during this event Novotny had the chance to discuss with Khrushchev his intentions for reform in Czechoslovakia. Khrushchev still showed no reaction or hesitation about Novotny's ideas. Czechoslovakia was not his main priority at the moment.³⁴ This was the time that Novotny relaxed his firm grip over the Communist Party and society. He was more open to reformers within the government and was even willing to try out their ideas on the private enterprise and economic development.³⁵

³³ František Stanek and Vera Stanek, Former Czechoslovakian Citizens. Interview by author, 10 February 2000, Austin, Texas.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy*, 260.

Khrushchev was not alarmed by this situation but many other Soviet diplomats were studying the situation in Czechoslovakia a lot harder than he was.

Novotny realized that he had tight control over the Communist Party because of his dual roles. At the same time, Czechoslovakia was still known as one of the most reliable Soviet satellites. They were the first country in the Soviet bloc, besides the Soviet Union, to adopt a socialist constitution in 1961. Czechoslovakia was open to the western influences during this time. Small independent enterprises were tolerated, the police enforcement was relaxed, and political trials were greatly reduced.³⁶

Before the events of Prague Spring, Moscow had begun to develop a significantly different relationship between its satellites. Soviet policy was allowing for their Communist regimes to become more independent and more involved in national interests. This was not directly done, the relationship just evolved. According to a special report by the Central Intelligence Agency on "Nationalism in Eastern Europe",

A new and less rigid relationship is developing between Eastern Europe and Moscow. This has resulted partly from changes in Soviet policy but more importantly from recognition by the lesser communist regimes themselves that they now are in position to insist on greater consideration for individual national interests.³⁷

In the fall of 1967, growing support occurred among party reformers for the ousting of Novotny as the First Secretary of the Communist Party. He became the main target for reformers in Czechoslovakia. At first the beginnings of reform caused little debate within the Soviet Union. This probably was because the reforms began in the

³⁶ Ibid., 262-262.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1964-1968* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968).

early sixties. But under Brezhnev, more and more Soviet diplomats began to take notice of the critical situation in Czechoslovakia.³⁸

In contrast to the previous years, socialism was being reinvented in the sixties under the leadership of the chief statesman, Alexander Dubcek. His liberal reforms were threatening the repressive policies of Communism. This is the point where the political situation of the country began to drastically change. This change did not occur immediately and actually it did not fully develop until 1989, but it was the beginning of a new kind of ideology. That ideology was “Socialism with a human face”, which brought along with it a change for many democratic reforms. Thus these convictions led the way to Prague Spring in 1968, which were further cultivated by the Velvet Revolution, and demonstrated the inevitable future of Czechoslovakia’s political structure.

³⁸ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 250.

CHAPTER III

ALEXANDER DUBCEK AND THE EVENTS OF THE PRAGUE SPRING

During the 1960's in Eastern Europe, which was under Soviet Union control, change was beginning to erupt within the Communist Party. The late sixties gave way to many liberal reforms that threatened the repressive policies of Communism. The Soviet Union was under the control of Nikita Khrushchev, who was later replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, and its grip was beginning to give way to a more independent Soviet Bloc. One example of the reformist policies that were beginning to develop is that of the political situation of Czechoslovakia during the late sixties. That particular political situation is known as Prague Spring, where the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact troops invaded Prague and stopped the reform movement. In essence the end result left the country stagnant with no future for political growth. Prague Spring was a massive threat to the Communist world. The purpose of this chapter will be to explain life and influences behind Alexander Dubcek and how and why the situation in Czechoslovakia became so critical to the Soviet Union by describing the events leading up to the August invasion of Prague.

The formative years of Alexander Dubcek were of a great significance to the future of Czechoslovakia. He grew up at a time when a relatively young country was in the most crucial time of its political history, while experiencing its first taste of democracy, and forming as a country. Dubcek was born in Czechoslovakia three years

after the end of the First World War. He was born in the region of Slovakia that had been formed with Czechoslovakia in 1918. He lived there for three years and then his Slovak parents took him to Soviet Kirghizia on the Chinese border until he was twelve. Both of his parents came from Slovakia when it had been a part of the Hungarian Crown lands. His father was trained as a carpenter while growing up in the village of Uhrovec in Slovakia. His family came from poverty, which was a big influence in the driving force behind its involvement in politics and the socialist party.³⁹ Dubcek always said from as early as he can remember politics was intertwined within his family. He writes,

As a nation without statehood, clearly drawn borders, or even autonomy, the Slovaks were neutrally restive. They resisted the policy of forced Hungarization imposed by Budapest and fought for their identity, their culture, and even the preservation of their language.⁴⁰

They were concerned about Slovakian nationalism and social injustice. His father was already a member of the Slovak Social Democracy where as Dubcek explains; “Socialism and industrial Democracy” were in the air.

The family moved to America before he was born because of the numerous opportunities that were available for hard working men. They arrived in America in 1912 and moved to Chicago, where they joined a Slovak community. During this time, his father took an active role in the American Socialist Party. In 1916, his father became an American citizen, but with America’s entry in World War I in 1917 the idea that his father could actually be shooting Slovaks if he were drafted made him opposed to America’s involvement. Dubcek’s father dodged the U.S. draft by waiting the war out in Mexico but when trying to cross the border he was arrested and put on trial and sentenced

³⁹ Alexander Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*. Edited and translated by Jiri Hochman. (London: Kodansha International, 1993), 1-4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

to eighteen months of jail. Dubcek's brother Julius was born in December 1919 in Chicago. During this time both of his parents returned to Slovakia after the Pittsburgh Agreement was signed which formed a joint republic of Czechoslovakia. Dubcek missed being an American citizen by a couple of months when he was born on November 27, in Unhrovec.⁴¹

At the time he was born, Tomas Masaryk was President of Czechoslovakia. Masaryk was a democrat with socialist leanings. When Dubcek was three his family moved to Kirghizia and lived in placed called Pishpek. At the age of twelve, he moved to Gorky, in central Russia on the Volga River. When he was seventeen his family returned to Slovakia in 1938, a year of vital importance of the future of Czechoslovakia because of the Munich Agreement. A year after this, Dubcek became a member of the Czechoslovakia Communist Party.⁴² The Nazis formed a protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939. The same year in Dubcek's life, a follower of future ideology, Vaclav Havel was born in Prague. Both of these leaders were born at very defining moments and turbulent times in their nation's history.

Slovakia's political autonomy after Munich was symbolized by the remaining of the overall state as Czecho-Slovakia. An autonomous Slovak Government-now only nominally part of a broader entity and in practice untied from Prague assumed power in Slovakia with a Catholic Priest, Dr. Jozef Tiso, as is head. This new 'state' launched it predictable agenda without delay. Political opposition was gradually suppressed or silenced.⁴³

Slovakia became a puppet state for the Nazi regime and Dubcek began training as a latheman in a factory in Dubnica. All Slovakian factories were left with only German

⁴¹ Ibid., 4-10.

⁴² Mastny, *Czechoslovakia: Crisis in World Communism*, 11.

⁴³ Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*, 11.

orders to fill. He was only able to see his father twice during this period because the elder Dubcek had to go into hiding as a result of his political beliefs. At the same time he met his future wife Anna who also worked in the Skoda Works factory in Dubnica. Their relationship blossomed very quickly and soon they were married.

After World War II, Dubcek's political beliefs and views began to take shape.

The war had affected his destiny for certain. Dubcek wrote,

Thus, the war strengthened in me the socialist convictions of freedom and social justice instilled by my parents. Like them, I never sought power or material rewards, only the modest goal of a decent life- a safe job and a small house where my wife and I could raise our children. But that, I think, was almost everybody's little dream, and for most people it still is.⁴⁴

He carried these common place learning's with him on his path to the leadership of Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was prepared to give socialism his heart and soul and bring about a better world. After Anna and he married in 1945, they moved to Trencin and he was able to find a job in the local drozchiarna, which was a yeast factory, where he worked as a maintenance man and operator of the distilling system.⁴⁵ He joined a group of Slovak partisans, who were part of the Slovak national uprising, and during this time he was wounded twice because of different confrontations with the Germans. This group was involved in issues relating to the Nazi occupation of Germany. In 1945, his brother was killed in a similar conflict.⁴⁶ Dubcek's first son died of pneumonia when he was only a couple of weeks old 1947. Pavol was then born in 1948, then Peter in 1950 and finally Milan in 1953. In 1949, he thought that life was improving under the new government but he began to see signs of future government control because of land

⁴⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40-49.

⁴⁶ Mastny, *Czechoslovakia Crisis in World Communism*, 11.

reform, nationalization and general health insurance. He had never before thought of becoming a politician, but that all began to change. One day in June of 1949, he was offered a full time party job with the district secretariat of the Communist Party in Trencin. He was going to manage the internal affairs of the Slovak Communist Party. After many debates with Anna he accepted the offer. He was reluctant to take the job because he was about to become the deputy director of the yeast factory and the other job would pay half his usual salary.⁴⁷ However, it was an opportunity that he was unable to pass up because of his political beliefs. This was the turning point in his life where politics would become his career. Vaclav Havel had a similar defining moment in his life that made politics his career but their relationship will be examined later in the paper.

Soon after taking the position he was appointed first secretary of the district party organization in Trencin. In October 1951, Dubcek was moved to Bratislava as an official in the organizational department of the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party and then in 1952 was assigned to stand in for the chairman of the Slovak National Front, who was sick. Dubcek and his family enjoyed being in Bratislava, but once they got comfortable, he was transferred again. This time he was made regional secretary in Banska Bystrica, which was located in central Slovakia. This was also the time of Stalin's death. Dubcek explains that things started to look optimistic immediately after the dictator's passing. In 1954, Dubcek was sent to Moscow to study at the Higher Political School of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, which would last for three years. At this school he was educated in history, political economy, philosophy (Marxism-Leninist), international relations, agricultural science, journalism, and history of the Soviet Communist Party. Marxism-Leninism influenced everything and nothing

⁴⁷ Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*, 49-55.

was presented objectively. While studying at the Political school he really enjoyed the works of Karl Marx because he found his arguments the most convincing.⁴⁸ For a man that never intended to follow the path of a political life, his destiny was beginning to form.

After Dubcek graduated he joined a group of foreign students to study Soviet methods of industrial management in the Urals. He was then able to rejoin his family in Trencin but soon had to leave because he was made the regional Party secretary for Western Slovakia and had to return to his homeland. In 1963 Dubcek assumed the office of Slovak Communist Party Central Committee first secretary, which was followed by his full membership in the Czechoslovak Communist Party Presidium where he made it his goal to fight for reform in the Czechoslovakian government.⁴⁹ He wanted to reform the system very slowly so they would not be accused of a complete transformation to capitalism. The Soviet Union and the hard-liners of the Czech Communist Party thought that capitalism was Dubcek's goal. They were incorrect; he wanted a reformed version of socialism.

During the mid 1960's there were constant clashes between the reformers and the opposition. Dubcek writes,

By 1967 a direct clash between the proponents and opponents of reform was inevitable. And this time the struggle would center on the basic and long-standing malaise of our society, the oppressive political system carried over from the early 1950s.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid., 62-63.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 110-112.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 112.

Everything was in the air for extreme change and that change was coming to climax where the result would either be extreme change or the future of Czechoslovakia would look dim. Dubcek believed that the only way a socialist system would work in Czechoslovakia was change because it had to be effective and because of Czechoslovakia's current situation was needed to make it work. But Dubcek had an extremely difficult task at hand because Czechoslovakia was in the Soviet realm and proposing any reforms in its Socialist governments was considered drastic. Dubcek had three very important commitments to his country. His goals were to restructure the economy, earn the public's confidence by systematically initializing these reforms into the government and break up the relationship between the party leaders and the government, and make sure these reforms were achieved in concert with the Soviet Union.⁵¹ This would prove to be a difficult balancing act for Dubcek.

In October of 1967, at a Central Committee meeting in Prague, Alexander Dubcek rallied the support of the party and economic reformers and Slovak nationalists against the leadership of Novotny.⁵² During this time Dubcek was the Slovak Communist Party leader and he openly criticized Novotny during a speech to the Central Committee in October. He accused Novotny of not following through on his economic reforms and not leading Czechoslovakia on the road to modernization. Czechoslovakia was on the move to a more democratic society and Novotny was trying to halt these ideas. There was a constant struggle between the Central Committee and followers of Novotny.⁵³ The

⁵¹ Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East and Central Europe Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 169.

⁵² Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*, 112.

⁵³ "Speeches by Alexander Dubcek and Antonín Novotny at the CPCz CC Plenum", (Sb. KU, D IV- USD, AUV KSC, F. 01); quoted in Jaromír Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European press, 1998), 13.

Central Committee felt that Novotny was not improving on these ideals and not leading the future of Czechoslovakia towards a "Socialism with a human face". It was at this time, that the Soviet Union started to worry about the lack of unity in the Czech Communist Party.

Brezhnev attended a meeting between party officials in Prague on December 9, 1967. Novotny had hoped to gain significant support from the Soviet Union. In Brezhnev's speech to party officials he made it clear that it was necessary to deal with internal problems locally and there was not much that he could do. On the other hand, he made it clear that whatever changes were in store for the country, needed to continue to be in the Leninist spirit. Brezhnev said,

...The Soviet comrades are aware that concern for the defense of the USSR and the entire socialist camp must at all times have pride of place. The only thing ordinary people want is that there should not be another war, since distress caused by the last war has not yet been fully alleviated. That is why we are continuously working to consolidate the Warsaw Treaty Organization and to ensure that unity on this question will prevail among all its members. No one can offer guarantees regarding the future course of events. Experience from the time of the civil war and the world war teaches us that we must have a powerful army. The reasons that the imperialists do not dare attack Czechoslovakia, Poland, or the other Socialist countries, is that they are aware of the immense military strength of the Soviet Union. The Americans leave in peace those countries with whom the Soviet Union has concluded a treaty because they know only too well that we are superior.⁵⁴

At this time there was no doubt in Brezhnev's mind that Czechoslovakia would not stray from their bloc. He was not concerned about the factions that had developed throughout the party and felt that they would be resolved. Brezhnev also believed that if Dubcek was to become the Party leader, it would be in their own ideals because, Dubcek was almost a

⁵⁴ "Remarks by Leonid Brezhnev at a Meeting of Top CPCz Officials, in Prague, December 9, 1967" (Sb. KV, D VII- USD, AUV KCC, File for A. Novotny; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 1, pp. 30-31); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 18.

Soviet himself. Brezhnev had a better relationship with Dubcek than Novotny because Dubcek understood the politics and government of Russia better, since he studied and lived there for a significant time in his life.⁵⁵ Brezhnev assumed that Dubcek had a great amount of respect and devotion for the Kremlin. He thought since he had such devotion, Dubcek would not push any reforms that were not within the ideological framework of the Kremlin.⁵⁶ Without Soviet support, Novotny had no choice, but to give way to the reformers.⁵⁷ Brezhnev however, had no way of knowing what the opponents of Novotny had in mind for Czechoslovakia. The Russian statesman blamed Novotny for the immense problems in the party and said that he should be solely responsible because he did not know what collective leadership was and did not know how to handle the people. The Russian leaders response to Novotny helped in part determine the fate of his future validity because Brezhnev did not show the support that he needed to save his position in Czechoslovakia.

The month of January 1968 was a critical time in the political realm of the country. This was the month that launched the ultimate reform movement by Novotny's opponents. There was a growing conflict between two different groups of power in the party. The progressive group was led by Dubcek, which wanted to introduce reform and democracy in the party. There was a growing sense of revolution in the air and other Eastern European socialist countries began to take notice. They were afraid that Czechoslovakia would join the ranks of Yugoslavia and Romania and hence become rebel countries. On January 5, 1968 Dubcek replaced Novotny as the first secretary of

⁵⁵ William Shawcross, *Dubcek* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1990), 116-119.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁷ Andrew, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, 250.

the Communist Party. This day also marked a major change within the government. Before this day the first secretary of the Communist Party was also the President of the Republic, but when Dubcek took the post the decision was made to separate this position from the Presidency. Novotny stayed as the President of the Republic but his other role went to Dubcek. This was part of the democratization of the government that was in Dubcek's reform movements.⁵⁸

Many scholars believed the Novotny was not afraid of losing his post as First Secretary of the Communist Party because he thought Dubcek would not take his place. He thought that Dubcek would refuse the position because he never had that much responsibility and would not want the authority. Novotny also believed that if Dubcek refused the position, no one would be willing to accept the position. There was not a clear-cut candidate besides that of Dubcek. Novotny also thought that if Dubcek were to accept the position, there would be no way that the Central Committee would cooperate with him since he was a Slovak. Thus undermined any sort of authority that Dubcek would have. Novotny also thought that Dubcek would be easily manipulated if he did take the post. Novotny saw Dubcek as an inadequate and ineffective leader. However, Novotny soon saw that his original inclinations about Dubcek were quite wrong and that his authority and leadership were in a dangerous position.⁵⁹

The Soviet Union began to be afraid that these reform movements in Czechoslovakia would affect the other countries in Eastern Europe, which were members of the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact was a counterpart to the western world's North

⁵⁸ "Resolution of the CPCz CC Plenum, January 5, 1968, Electing Alexander Dubcek as First Secretary" (Sb. KV, D IV- AÚV KSC, F. 01); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 34.

⁵⁹ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 113.

Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Warsaw Pact was established in 1955 and was a military and economic alliance between all Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. Due to this alliance, the Soviet Union occupied all of these countries. In 1956, Hungary wanted out of the alliance but the Soviet regime ultimately crushed them in the Hungarian Revolution. At the same time Czechoslovakia had also wanted out but was unable to attain this. Albania was the only successful country to break away. Thus, the Warsaw Pact countries were of extreme importance to the Soviet Union and they used the alliance to their advantage in their sphere of control. If further reform or change occurred in the country, the Warsaw Pact troops would have no choice but to intervene. The Czechoslovak leadership was fully aware of the threat that the Soviet Union was holding over their heads.

In our nations, as well as the others in this region, Moscow asserted its hegemony not only through political influence but also through the presence of Soviet troops. Throughout what would become the Eastern bloc Stalin implanted a Soviet-model socioeconomic and political system based on what Lenin called the dictatorship of the proletariat- in reality a dictatorship of the communist parties, or rather the top party leaders who swore allegiance to the Kremlin.⁶⁰

Drastic change was going to occur as a direct result of the reformist policies of the chief statesman of Czechoslovakia.

Dubcek's position of replacing Novotny threatened the whole Stalinist foundations; therefore the Kremlin was starting to get extremely paranoid that Czechoslovakia was going to defect from their defense front.⁶¹ The process of democratization in Czechoslovakia had gone largely unnoticed for several years by most

⁶⁰ Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 1.

⁶¹ Isaac Don Levine, *Intervention* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1969), 3.

analysts and policymakers in the West and the East, including the Soviet leaders.⁶² But with the internal conflicts in the government, it was hard for the Soviet government to remain oblivious of the reforms.

On January 29, 1968, Dubcek traveled to Moscow to meet with the Brezhnev. The meeting essentially reaffirmed Czechoslovakia's goals and its relationship with the Soviet Union. Dubcek made it very clear that he would uphold the foundations of a Socialist System. Brezhnev wanted to relay to him that under all circumstances he was fully confident that he would be able to solve the country's internal problems. In their meeting Brezhnev said,

You certainly have a number of domestic and internal party problems today that you will have to solve step by step. Yours is a party with great traditions and a wealth of experience, and that is why we do not doubt that you will find the right solutions. I would also like to assure Comrade Dubcek that he can always count on our total and absolute support for his work.⁶³

After this meeting, Dubcek thought that he would be able to continue the democratization of the government. He was fully surprised in the upcoming months.

Dubcek had to speak in front of the Warsaw Pact countries and the Soviet Union at an event that marked the 20th Anniversary of Czechoslovakia's February Revolution. These countries were celebrating the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek had to give the final draft of his speech to Brezhnev before he was able to proceed. Many revisions had to be made because he was extremely angry at the first draft and it gave the wrong idea to the leaders from the surrounding countries. Dubcek's

⁶² Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia: 1968 Anatomy of a Decision* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University, 1979), 11.

⁶³ Navratil, *Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, 44.

speech offered an overview of the two decades of Communist rule and stated what the Czechoslovak people want in their socialist system. He said,

They have been saying that it is no longer good enough to fix something here and there in the party and in society as a whole. They believe, instead, that things must be thoroughly changed in the spirit of the old and tested Leninist methods and traditions of the labor movement-not by words, but by decisive actions.⁶⁴

Dubcek said that the political sphere was the most pertinent problem and that they had to go head-on and collide with current problems and not turn the other way. He confirmed that their reforms were only to make the socialist system stronger and still have a system that is based on sound economic foundations and within the democratic traditions of Czechoslovakia. The Soviet government was still paranoid about this particular situation.

Censorship was abolished by the government in late March and was formally put into law in June.⁶⁵ Although, censorship of the press was solidly controlled in Czechoslovakia since 1948, censorship within Slovakia had not been the same. Bratislava was not under as much scrutiny as that of Prague. The theory that has been examined on why this was the case was because Dubcek was a Slovak. Censorship was heavily enforced but many journalists knew their limits and exercised them with very little enforcement needed. Journalists in Czechoslovakia were very careful about the material they published and if they had any questions, they would submit it to the authorities to make sure it feels within the limits.⁶⁶

The Soviet Union decided to call a meeting in Dresden, East Germany on March 23, 1968. This was the beginning of the crisis in Czechoslovakia. Mr. Dubcek was invited to attend this meeting with other Eastern European countries to discuss economic

⁶⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁵ Rothschild, *Return To Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*, 170.

cooperation. He realized that Brezhnev had lied to him because not all of the other Warsaw Pact countries were in attendance. Also, economic cooperation was not the issue that was discussed during this meeting. The real agenda was to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was shocked, "I go so angry at the knavish way Brezhnev had fooled me that I was tempted to walk out, but I forced myself to calm down and wait."⁶⁷ He believed that the importance of this meeting was minimal and constantly doubted himself because he thought he should have just walked out. It was during this meeting that the other Warsaw Pact countries decided to hold maneuvers around the borders of Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the Soviet Union decided they would not intervene any further in the internal affairs of the country on the conditional status that Dubcek and the other party members do not make democratic reforms. Dresden did not matter to Dubcek, who continued his reforms and kept on believing that, "as long as we met out external obligations, we could to insist on our right to make our own domestic decisions."⁶⁸ He wanted a rehabilitation of victims of past social injustices and free media.

On March 30, 1968, the National Assembly for the office of President elected Army General Ludvik Svoboda. He had commanded a Czech army in Russia during World War II. Dubcek considered him the best candidate for President. It was thought that he would be a President that would go along with the continued reforms because he had also been the victim of social injustice.⁶⁹ On April 9, 1968, Dubcek established a

⁶⁶ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 122.

⁶⁷ Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*, 141.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

reform program called “Czechoslovakia’s Road to Socialism”, which would have put in place economic reforms and a democratization of the politics in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek wanted to put the national assembly in control of the government instead of the Communist Party. The Communist Party would then have been forced to compete in power for elections. All offices were going to be decided by elections. Dubcek wrote,

We were seriously engaged in correcting the injustices of the past, and we had a good program to revive our economy. Public confidence in the Party’s goodwill and good intentions was rising, as May Day testified. But the clouds of Dresden continued to throw their shadows on these sunny spring days.⁷⁰

The reforms, which occurred, became the heartbeat of the Prague Spring according to Dubcek. No other Warsaw Pact countries created a policy that was as far away from the ideals of Lenin and Stalin. He had a plan for an idea of democratic socialism, or “Socialism with a human face”. Dubcek had hoped that he reforms would show the rest of the eastern bloc that reforms were possible and that they were not threatening to a socialist system. But he had an immense challenge ahead because the Soviet Union had a firm grip over all of the countries in their orbit.

In April, the Kremlin decided that the situation was out of control and they needed to finally interfere in Czechoslovakia’s internal affairs. The Soviets stepped up security and the KGB was encouraged to increase intelligence gathering in Czechoslovakia. But the KGB agents who were against the reform movements slanted the documents and information to the Soviet Government, so they would conclude that Revolution was on the brink in Czechoslovakia. The Soviets did not respond kindly to Dubcek’s new reform movements. It was believed that these particular topics hit a sore

⁷⁰ Ibid., 146.

point with the Soviet ideology and they thought that something further had to be done to establish their authority in this conflict.

There are many reasons that the USSR felt threatened by the sweeping change in Czechoslovakia. It has been said the country performed two vital functions for the Soviets. One of these functions was ideological and the other was military.

As a member of the Communist world network, Prague was subject to certain fraternal disciplines exercised over all adherents by the order, which the Kremlin held the traditional rank of primacy. As a member of the Warsaw Pact organization, Prague had duties and commitments prescribed in the charter of the vaunted rival to NATO.⁷¹

The Soviets were scared that the change in Czechoslovakia would result in a domino effect with regard to other Eastern European countries, thus undermining the authority. The Kremlin also had the support of Poland and East Germany. Also the Soviets realized at this time that they had underestimated Czechoslovakia when it first became a communist nation and should have put troops in the country at that first moment. The Soviets grew concerned that troops were not put into Czechoslovakia. They wanted their bloc to be secured militarily. It is reported that the Soviets on three different occasions asked three different Presidents of Czechoslovakia, including Novotny, to have a Soviet division permanently established in Czechoslovakia. All three presidents rejected this idea. The Soviets wanted a permanent military presence there in order to use Czechoslovakia as a base for launching any attacks against Western Europe, if a war was ever to erupt. Novotny feared that this would cause the western powers to invade Czechoslovakia. The Soviets had very different motives for a military presence.⁷²

⁷¹ Levine, *Intervention*, 7.

⁷² Kalvoda, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy*, 262-263."

Another important reason why the Soviets held such a vital interest in Czechoslovakia was because she had extensive industrial capabilities and therefore was an imperative part of the Soviet bloc. Thus, Czechoslovakia was important strategically, militarily, and economically.

On June 27, 1968, a document titled “Two Thousand Words Manifesto” was published. Ludvik Vaculik wrote the document and was co-written by seventy prominent individuals, which included writers, scientists, cultural figures and Olympic athletes. Ordinary citizens also signed the document in hopes for support to continue reforms. The statement called for citizens to take direct action and demonstrations to force officials who were against the reform movement to step down. It also said that if foreign forces intervened in the internal affairs of the country, then the Czechs and Slovaks should join forces together and back the government with weapons if that drastic action was necessary.⁷³ This document alarmed many of the Soviet leaders that the situation was getting out of hand. “A stinging indictment of two decades of party dictatorship and a ringing demand for accelerated reform, it juxtaposed endorsement of Dubcek with a warning against yielding to external pressure.”⁷⁴ The Soviet leaders were angered that they had not taken control of this conflict at an earlier time.

During the month of July it became very apparent to Dubcek that the Soviets were very involved in the reform movement. The USSR had been partaking in military exercises, which were headed by Soviet Marshal Yakubovskii. These exercises were scheduled to end on June 30, 1968 but were prolonged by the Marshal. The

⁷³ Navrátil, *Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, 7.

⁷⁴ Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East and Central Europe Since World War II*, 171.

Czechoslovakian Defense Ministry officials informed the Czech leader that the Kremlin was delaying these exercises on purpose so they could stay in the country. In a conversation between Dubcek and Yakubovskii, Dubcek told him that the exercises needed to be finished by July 1. The Soviet Marshal, without hesitation, said that there was no way that they could be finished by that date. He reluctantly agreed that they would be finished by July 3. Later, it was found that the sole purposes of these exercises were because of political reasons and to help the Soviet Union attain its own political goals. The military exercises were intended to scare and frighten the anti-socialist forces. In a report by Generals Olah and Szucs of the Hungarian People's Army on the Sumava Exercises, it was made apparent what the real issue at hand was. They reported,

With regard to foreign policy, this was decidedly a demonstration of the strength and unity of the Warsaw Pact and a warning of the imperialists that speculation about the events in Czechoslovakia or about similar internal political developments elsewhere, as well as all provocative attempts, would be doomed from the very start. With regard to domestic policy, the exercises were intended to influence the Czechoslovak events in the sense that a show of the strength and determination of the Warsaw Pact states would paralyze and frighten enemies at home; the exercises would also intimidate wavering elements (especially intellectuals) and bolster and safeguard true communists dedicated to the revolution and to socialism. Extensive meetings between senior military commanders and the staff participating in the exercise as well as members of units with the Czechoslovak people are to strengthen friendship and shore up the authority of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The exceptionally important strategic-operational exercises are designed to enable multinational army staffs to acquire greater experience in planning, organizing, supervising, and cooperation in military operations.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ "Report on the Sumava Exercises by Generals I. Oláh and F. Szucs of the Hungarian People's Army to the HSWP Politburo, July 5, 1968 (Excerpts)" (MHKI, 5/2/11); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 200.

This was just one of many examples why Alexander Dubcek felt like the chief statesman of an occupied country, where he was subjected to the pressure of the occupying country leaders⁷⁶.

In the beginning of the month of July, the Warsaw Pact nations wrote a series of letters to the Czechoslovakian authorities to put political pressure on the country. The letters concluded that the Soviet Union was willing to do anything to stop this conflict and the other countries were prepared to do everything necessary to help. Dubcek was invited to participate in a meeting between the Warsaw Pact powers. He was sent a letter on July 15, 1968 by the leaders of the USSR, which said his country, was on the verge of a revolution and it was their sole purpose to protect Czechoslovakia⁷⁷. The Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and East Germany met in Warsaw on July 14, 1968 to discuss the situation at hand. Janos Kadar, the leader of Hungary came to the conclusion that the situation in Czechoslovakia would never lead to a counterrevolution, but did express the feeling that the conflict was getting dangerous. Kadar, along with the other leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries, came to a conclusion that they would decide collectively what to do about the situation in the best possible solution for all the socialist countries. Another solution was that all the countries were willing to take part in any

⁷⁶ “Briefing on the Sumava Exercises for Alexander Dubcek and Oldrich Cernik by Commanders of the Czechoslovak People’s Army, July 1, 1968, with Follow-up Talks between Dubcek and Marshal Yakubovskii” (VHA, F. MNO, OS/GS, Sv. “Sumava”); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 191-193; “Letter to the CPSU CC Politburo to the CPCz CC Presidium, July 4, 1969” (USD, AUV, KSC, F. 07/15; Vondrová and Navátil, vol. 1, pp. 253-257); quoted in Jaromir Navratil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 194-198; “Report on the Sumava Exercises by Generals I. Oláh and F. Szucs of the Hungarian People’s Army to the HSWP Politburo, July 5, 1968 (Excerpts)” (MHKI, 5/2/11); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 199.

⁷⁷ Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubcek*, 201.

joint actions, thus suggesting a military intervention.⁷⁸ During this meeting it was also decided that they would demand the country to re-impose censorship, keep the intellectuals in line, and reverse its institutional reforms.⁷⁹

As a result of this meeting and letter by the five nations, Dubcek called a session of the CPCz CC Presidium to give a point by point response to the letter. Dubcek continued to defend his policies and conclude that they were not outside of the Soviet ideology. During this session, the Czechoslovak leadership called for bilateral discussions between the countries. Dubcek felt the problems between the USSR and Czechoslovakia would not be solved through correspondence by letters, rather a meeting needed to take place. The meeting needed to be between the two countries and the end goal was a peaceful solution to the conflict.⁸⁰

The Western Communist parties began to take notice of the conflict in Eastern Europe. Dubcek had been in discussions with the French Communist Party and they suggested that they would try to help the situation. The French Communist Party sent a

⁷⁸ "General Semyon Zolotov's Retrospective Account of the Sumava Military Exercises" ("Shli na pomoshch' druž' yam," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 4 (April 1994), pp. 15-18); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 202.

⁷⁹ Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East and Central Europe Since World War II*, 171.

⁸⁰ "Press Conference with Lt. General Václav Prchlík, July 15, 1998", (ÚSD, AÚV, KSC, F. 07/15); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 241-242; "Response by the CPCz CC Presidium to the Warsaw Letter, July 16-17, 1968" (ÚSD, AÚV KSC, F. 02/1: published also in *Rudé právo*, July 19, 1968, p. 1; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 1, pp. 310-316); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 243-249; "Speech by Leonid Brezhnev to the CPSU Central Committee on the Proceedings and Results of the Warsaw Meeting, July 17, 1968" (ÚSD, Sb. KV, Z/S 4; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 1, pp. 316-321); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 250-258; "Letter from Marshal Yakubovskii to Alexander Dubcek on General Prchlík's News Conference, July 18, 1968" (ÚSD, AÚV KSC, R. 07/15); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998) 259-263.

letter to Brezhnev stating that they could not endorse the Warsaw letter that was sent to Mr. Dubcek. They wrote,

Because we believe that the letter sent by the Warsaw Meeting to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia calls into question the fundamental principles, and that it constitutes blatant public interference in the internal affairs of a fraternal party, we are unable to support it. We are, therefore, fully aware that it is absolutely indispensable for the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to wage an effective struggle against all forces seeking to exploit the situation in order to do away with socialism in the country. Where we differ is on the method to be used to achieve this objective. In our opinion, direct outside intervention of any sort must be excluded and the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia must be persuaded to take action on its own, relying on the working class and on all other forces that regard Socialism, and friendship and cooperation with the socialist countries, to be in their own interest as well as I the interest of Czechoslovakia.⁸¹

They were not in support of the change that was occurring in Czechoslovakia, but they felt that the Soviet interference would be worse and that their own countrymen should solve the problems in their country.

Finally Dubcek got his wish; the Soviets decided to pursue a meeting with the leadership of Czechoslovakia. These meetings were called the Cierna and Tisou negotiations, which were named after a railroad crossing in a small Slovakian town that was on the border with Ukraine. The talks were held in the town for three and half days from July 29 to August 1. Brezhnev started off the negotiations by accusing Dubcek and the Communist Party that they destroyed the foundations of socialism. He also gave the Czech statesman a substantial amount of evidence that there were counterrevolutionary elements occurring in Czechoslovakia and he was responsible for the lack of leadership among the Communist Party. Dubcek rebutted by saying that the main political

⁸¹ "Letter from the French CP to Leonid Brezhnev, July 23, 1968" (Kremlin- PCF: Conversations secr tes (Paris: Oliver Orban, 1984), pp. 97-104; Vondrov  and Navr til, vol. 1, pp. 337-339); quoted in Jaromir Navr til, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 264.

foundations of their government had gone unchanged throughout Prague Spring. However, the specific issues that he addressed were a sore spot to the Soviet Union. These talks were unproductive and a peaceful solution was unattainable for both sides. After the talks, the Soviets were still threatening an invasion.⁸²

During these talks, it had been rumored that there was a military build up among the eastern bloc. The Soviet army had been active in military exercises in the Transcarpathian, Baltic, and Belorussian Military Districts since July 23 and the exercises began to move along the Czechoslovakian border. These were the largest exercises ever conducted by the Soviet Union, which involved, “stimulated nuclear strikes and large-scale offensive operations by armored and motorized infantry units.”⁸³ At the end of the Cierna and Tisou negotiations twenty Warsaw Pact divisions were already on the Czechoslovakian borders ready to advance at any moment they were ordered to.

On August 2, 1968 the Soviet Politburo made several decisions regarding the future of Czechoslovakia. They decided to negotiate directly with the Czechoslovakian government with hopes to agree on a formal protocol setting out the specific actions that the government would have to do on the road to normalization.⁸⁴ On August 3, 1968 Dubcek met in Bratislava with representatives of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakian Communist Parties. At the meeting, he

⁸² “Speeches by Leonid Brezhnev, Alexander Dubcek, and Aleksei Kosygin at the Cierna and Tisou Negotiations, July 29, 1968” (ÚSD, Sb. KV, Z/S-5,6; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 43-82); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 285-297.

⁸³ “Dispatches from Czechoslovak Ambassadors in Berlin, Warsaw, and Budapest on the Deployment of Forces along CSSR Borders, July 29- August 1, 1968” (ÚSD, Sb. KV, K. Archiv MZV, Received Dispatches, Nos. 7103, 7187, 7259, 7269/1968; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 35-36); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 298.

⁸⁴ Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and Prague Spring* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984), 125.

insisted that it allowed for each party to determine their own road to socialism. The meeting gave him the impression that Warsaw Pact troops would not invade Czechoslovakia and the pressure was off of the country.

After these talks, the Czech Communist Party asked the media in Czechoslovakia to contain the amount of coverage they gave on the internal situation in Czechoslovakia. In a statement by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, it indicated the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia would have complete cooperation among the countries and that Czechoslovakia would hold on to the Marxism-Leninism ideology of socialist countries.⁸⁵ The CPCz's initial reaction from the talks was that of cooperation and non-interference. Meanwhile, János Kádár, the Hungarian leader expressed the Hungarian view on the situation in Czechoslovakia. On August 7, 1968 he delivered a speech to the Communist Party of Hungary, which stated why there was no possible way that they could not get involved in the situation. Kadar suggested that if Hungary did not get involved it would have made the situation a lot more complicated because it would be implying to the Soviet Union that they were not behind them. He acknowledged that something has to be done to stop the political situation in Czechoslovakia because if it was able to further develop, then the situation would become extremely critical and spill over into the other Eastern European countries. Kadar seemed to be unhappy that the Czechs never negotiated with them, nor with Poland, Romania or Bulgaria; rather they

⁸⁵ "Statement by the CPCz CC Presidium after the Talks at Cierna and Bratislava, August 6, 1968" (Predsednictvo ÚV KSC o výsledcích Rozhovoru v Cierné a Bratislave," Rudé právo (Prague), August 8, 1968, p.1); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 330.

negotiated strictly with the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ This might have isolated Czechoslovakia among its neighbors to an unnecessary level.

Following the Bratislava conference, Alexander Dubcek and Leonid Brezhnev continued to correspond on numerous occasions via telephone. On August 9, 1968, Brezhnev expressed many concerns that he had to Dubcek regarding their previous meetings. Brezhnev explained to Dubcek that the Soviet party was concerned with the elements of bad press that had been appearing in Czechoslovakian and Western correspondence. Brezhnev says,

We understand perfectly well that it is the rightists who are doing such things, but communists and the people who do not understand and have different attitudes toward the actions of the leadership as a whole. It is becoming difficult to hold back the wave of protests and replies to all this. Besides, we are gaining the impression that the commitments we approved with you....are not being fulfilled and.... I would like to know what we can do to help.⁸⁷

Dubcek reiterated to Brezhnev that he does not need any assistance and that he was working on carrying out agreements that had been made in the previous meetings and that it will take time since it is a fairly complicated situation. Continually throughout this particular conversation, Brezhnev referred to Dubcek as Sasha. The Russian government, and specifically Brezhnev, referred to Dubcek as Sasha because they believed he was one of their own. Dubcek, for a part of his life, grew up in parts of Russia and went to school in Russia. The conversation was ended by Brezhnev saying that he wished Czechoslovakia all the best and great success.

⁸⁶ "János Kádár's Speech at a Hungarian CC Plenum, August 7, 1968, Regarding Events Since the Warsaw Meeting (Excerpts)" (PTTI, 288, F. 4/94 oe; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 161-164); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 331-332.

⁸⁷ "Summary Report and Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Leonid Brezhnev and Alexander Dubcek, August 9, 1968." (Sb. KV, Z/S 8; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 164-467); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 336.

Another issue to examine during this critical time in Czechoslovakia, was the lack of involvement from the West, more importantly that of the United States. President Lyndon Johnson decided to stay true to his theory of non-involvement of any form. The general consensus in the United States at the time was on the side of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union suffered some harsh attacks. In an interview, Mr. Warren Pelouin, who was a U.S. Green Beret stationed on the German- Czechoslovakian border, indicated that the only issue the U.S. was concerned with other than Vietnam at the time was the avoidance of Soviet Union troops moving into Germany after they entered Czechoslovakia. The U.S. Government believed that those were the internal affairs of the country and they were under no circumstances going to get involved.⁸⁸ One tends to think if the same international problem occurred today that NATO (Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation) or the United Nations would get involved since the definition of the internal affairs of a country has become quite equivocal. The interference of the international community has taken on a whole new aspect with the political situations that have developed in the 1990's.

On August 10, 1968, East Germany's leader Walter Ulbricht held a discussion with Alexander Dubcek in the Czechoslovakian spa town of Karlovy Vary. Ulbricht already believed at this time, that Czechoslovakia had only one solution to their problems and that solution was a military invasion by Warsaw Pact troops. Ulbricht traveled to Karlovy Vary on his own decision. Dubcek and the Czechoslovakian Communist Party by no means invited him there. Ulbricht told Brezhnev in a telegram that his main focus was to make sure that Dubcek enforced the accords agreed upon at the talks in Cierna and

⁸⁸ Warren Pelouin, Former U.S. Green Beret. Interview by author, 15 February 2000, Austin, Texas.

Tisou. Ulbricht thought that Dubcek was a man who should not be in the position he is in because he is an appalling diplomat with no sense of the situation that he had been implicated upon his country.⁸⁹ After Dubcek and Ulbricht's meeting, the situation in Czechoslovakia did not change, nor did Ulbricht's threats or motives affect Dubcek.

Czechoslovakia was urged by the Soviet Union to put a stop to any press that was anti-Soviet or anti-Socialist. In numerous articles during August, there had been occasions where such issues were prevalent and the Soviet Union thought that Dubcek was clearly disobeying the accords that had been agreed upon. The agreement that was decided upon at the last talks was that all aspects of the media would be under the auspicious of the Czechoslovakia Communist Party's Central Committee and the government. The Soviet Union believed that the leadership of Czechoslovakia was clearly abandoning this agreement. The Soviet Union thought that in no way was this in the best interest of creating a better relationship between their two respective countries and Czechoslovakia was weakening its associations with the other Warsaw Pact Troop countries.

Brezhnev, again in a telephone conversation with Dubcek, on August 13 reiterated his anxiety over the problems with censorship and the mass media that Czechoslovakia had experienced. In their telephone conversation, which was recorded by the KGB, Brezhnev states,

Over the past two to three days, the newspapers I mentioned have been doggedly continuing to occupy themselves with the publication of defamatory ravings about the Soviet Union and the other fraternal countries. My comrades on the Politburo insist that we make an urgent request to you on this matter and that we send you a

⁸⁹ "Cables between Moscow and East Berlin Regarding the Approaching Czechoslovak-East German Meeting in Karlovy Vary, August 10-11, 1968" (ÚSD, Sb. KV, Z/S-MID Nos. 31-32; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, p. 167); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 341.

diplomatic note to this effect, and I'm not able to restrain the comrades from sending such as a note.⁹⁰

Brezhnev was furious at the situation and scolded Dubcek for not implementing the policy decided upon into the government. Dubcek had held a meeting with the press, telling them they were reporting incorrectly and they were not to ever again report on any anti-Soviet or anti-socialist themes. Brezhnev continued to be upset because the meeting Dubcek held did not mean anything to him and he wanted the policy of censorship to be implemented and directly controlled under the Czechoslovakian Communist Party and the government.⁹¹ Nothing concrete resulted from this conversation on the side of Dubcek, although later that day, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sent a letter of warning to Comrade Dubcek.

Soviet military exercises began to be a reality on Hungarian soil from August 11-August 15, 1968. There were two sets of exercises; one by the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Poland, and the other by the Soviet Union and Hungary. The preparation of forces was referred to by the multi-national forces as "Operation Danube" Various reports were written on these exercises by various Czech, Soviet and Polish newspapers. One Soviet newspaper, *Krasnaya zvezda*, reported,

...It is already possible to say with confidence that the aims set for the extended large-scale logistic exercises were achieved. The exercises once again confirmed that the rear services of the Armed Forces are able to perform any tasks demanded by the Communist Party and the Soviet government.⁹²

⁹⁰ "Transcript of Leonid Brezhnev's Telephone Conversation with Alexander Dubcek, August 13, 1968" (APRF, Prot. No. 38; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 172-181); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 346-347.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² "Reports on Warsaw Pact Military Communications Exercises and Marshal Grechko's Inspection Tours, August 9-16, 1968" (Various Czechoslovak, Soviet and Polish newspapers); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 363.

The Czechoslovakia nightmare was becoming more and more of an actuality.

On August 16, 1968, Brezhnev sent one last letter to Dubcek hoping to get a full response out of him. This letter continued to address the concerns that were created as a result of his actions. He informed him that he was not happy with the situation and was even more displeased because he had not seen any direct action taken to suspend the situation from Dubcek. He ended the letter urging Dubcek to please reply to all of these issues as soon as possible.⁹³ On August 17, 1968 after Dubcek's meeting with Janos Kadar, the Soviet Union created a resolution on their final decision to intervene in the situation in Czechoslovakia. This resolution adopted that the only way to stop these anti-Soviet and anti-Socialist ideologies was by military intervention. The resolution approved by the Soviet Politburo stated,

After comprehensively analyzing the situation and events in Czechoslovakia in recent days, and after reviewing the request from members of the CPCz CC Presidium and the CSSR government to the USSR, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and the GDR to offer them military assistance in the struggle against counterrevolutionary forces, the CPSU CC Politburo unanimously believes that in recent days the course of events in Czechoslovakia has become as dangerous as possible. Rightist elements, relying on both overt and covert support from imperialist reaction, have carried out preparations for a counterrevolutionary coup and pose a threat to the socialist gains of Czechoslovak laborers and to the fate of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.⁹⁴

The decision was final, the only way to curb the situation was by military means according to the Soviet Politburo and they were not turning back.

⁹³ "Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubcek, and Dubcek's notes, Regarding the CPCz's Purported Failure to Carry Out Pledges Made at Cierna and Bratislava, August 13, 1968" (USD, AÚV KSC, F. 07/15, Zahr. Kor. NO. 822; Vondrová and Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 187-189); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 367.

⁹⁴ "The Soviet Politburo's Resolution on the Final Decision to Intervene in Czechoslovakia, August 17, 1968" (APRF, Prot. No. 38); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 377.

A final letter of warning was sent to the Czech Communist Party on August 17, 1968, the same day that the decision was made to invade. This letter stated how concerned they were about the reforms and they were going to do everything possible to help the country out against the counterrevolutionary forces, which had been denouncing the Marxist-Leninist ideology.⁹⁵ Ironically, the letter was not delivered to Dubcek until August 19th because the Soviet Union was using the letter as a strategic maneuver in the pre-events of the invasion. Their reasoning was because initially, August 17th was a Sunday and no one would be there and also they did not want premature reaction to the letter, which would cause more of an uprising among the counterrevolutionary forces. They wanted to give the Czechoslovakian leadership as little time as possible to react to the letter.⁹⁶

Therefore, Operation Danube had been approved and the Soviets invaded along with the Warsaw Pact troops on August 20, 1968. A statement by the Czechoslovak Presidium aired on a central radio station the next day, indicating their view of what happened,

On Tuesday, 20 August 1968, at approximately 11:00 PM, the armies of the USSR, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic, and the Bulgarian People's Republic crossed the state borders of the CSSR. This occurred without the knowledge of the President of the Republic, the chairman of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister, the CPCz CC first secretary, and without the knowledge of these organs as a whole.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ "Draft 'Letter of Warning' from the CPSU CC Politburo to the CPCz CC Presidium, August 17, 1968" (APRF, Prot. No. 38); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 384-385.

⁹⁶ "Cable Traffic between the CPSU Politburo and Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko Amending the Text and Delivery Time of the 'Letter of Warning', August 17-18, 1968" (APRF, Prot. No. 38; quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 388.

⁹⁷ "Statement by the CPCz CC Presidium Condemning the Warsaw Pact Invasion, August 21, 1968" (ÚSD, Archiv UV KSC, F. 02/1; published in Práce, second edition, August 21, 1968, p.1); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 414.

The Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact countries put a stop to any reform within the country. Thus, the Soviet Union was still able to keep Czechoslovakia behind their Iron Curtain.

The following day many important officials from Czechoslovakia were arrested and detained, including Alexander Dubcek. Soviet authorities and the KGB entered their headquarters and seized all documents and cut off all phone lines. Eventually the officials were flown to Poland then later went to a KGB barrack in the Carpathian Mountains. This area became their temporary prison during this period.⁹⁸

The Soviet Union later implemented the policy of the Brezhnev Doctrine to justify their invasion and intervention in the internal domestic affairs of a country. The Brezhnev Doctrine stated that the Soviet Union, being the hegemony that it was, had the right to intervene in any internal affairs of any Soviet Bloc State. The Soviet Union felt that it needed a document clarifying and enforcing their control over the Eastern Bloc. The Soviet Union also felt that it was needed to solve some of the problems that Eastern European states went through during the de-stalinization period of the fifties.⁹⁹ In actuality the Prague Spring and other reform movements were elements from the Soviet Union's de-stalinization period. In 1956, the party leadership came to the conclusion and publicly announced it was up to each Communist Party within the Iron Bloc to determine its own procedures and policies among the Party. They had the right to control their own

⁹⁸ "Report by a Czechoslovak State Security (StB) Official on the Arrest of Dubcek and Other Members of the CPCz CC Presidium, August 21, 1968", (USD, Sb. KV, A, from the documents left by L. Hofman, chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the National Assembly in 1968); quoted in Jaromir Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Hungary: Central European Press, 1998), 416.

⁹⁹ Bernard Wheaton and Zdeněk Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), 14.

idea of socialism and that there was not just one way of socialism to be practiced.¹⁰⁰ This left with it very many questions and ambiguity developed among the countries.

This was one of the main problems, which focused the Soviet Union to put in writing their own policy on reform movements within the Socialist system. The only general rule of thumb that the Soviet-controlled nations had to go by was past instances of earlier developments, which were stopped by the Soviet Union because these developments did not lie within the interests of the Bloc. This left the standard as very ambiguous and hard to read.¹⁰¹ The Brezhnev Doctrine allowed for guidelines to be followed, therefore there would never be a question anymore as to what was allowed from a Socialist state under the realm of the Soviet Union. The Doctrine was the ideological justification for the invasion of Prague and other future invasions. Although it is interesting to note that the Brezhnev Doctrine never explicitly defined the ideology of Socialism and what it entailed according to the Soviet Union. Thus, in actuality the Soviets did not accomplish anything they had set out to; if Socialism was not defined than Eastern bloc nations would have the same difficulty as before in terms of conforming to the set guidelines.¹⁰²

Dubcek and colleagues were later released but the situation that was left in Czechoslovakia was inconceivable. The Soviet Union began their firm grip over the country and the de-stalinization period had completely expired and the future of Czechoslovakia was left at the hands of its Soviet comrades. In April of 1969, after months of continued conflict and debate between the government and the Kremlin,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.,15.

Dubcek was demoted from the first secretary of the party to President of the Federal Assembly. Czechoslovakia was left in control by Gustav Husak, who was a Slovak.

There were many different elements that brought along the events of Prague Spring. These events could have never happened if there was some sort of consistency within the Russian leadership. The difference of rule between that of Khrushchev and Brezhnev led to the more independent status of Czechoslovakia. Since Novotny had significantly different relationships between the two leaders, it became unclear as to what was allowed by a soviet satellite country. However, when the leadership of Russia would not stand up against the reformers within the party, they might have determined the future of Czechoslovakia. Russia, alone let the reformers be in control of the government in Czechoslovakia. They were extremely paranoid about different kinds of socialism spreading among the eastern bloc countries. The Soviet Union still felt that the only way to prevent this sweeping change was to invade Czechoslovakia in August of 1968.

The year of 1968 in Czechoslovakia finally gave the citizens of Czechoslovakia something to hope and reach for. It gave them a taste of what could be possible within their country. The reformers within the Czechoslovakia Communist Party let the public see what could happen if change was implemented and the general public and reformers liked what they saw. Even though the invasion virtually diminished many hopes for change, the whole experience left people with the idea of change as a thought. Prague Spring was the initiative people needed to see that things could be different and change. Prague Spring was crucial in the development of the underground reform movements that later was a major influence and participate in the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

In contrast to the previous years, socialism was being reinvented in the sixties under the leadership of the chief statesman, Dubcek. His liberal reforms were threatening

the repressive policies of Communism. This is the point where the political situation of the country began to drastically change. This change did not occur immediately and actually it did not fully develop until 1989, but it was the beginning of a new kind of ideology. That ideology was “Socialism with a Human Face”, which brought along with it a change for many democratic reforms. Thus these convictions led the way to Prague Spring, which were further cultivated by the Velvet Revolution, and demonstrated the inevitable future of Czechoslovakia’s political structure.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORMALIZATION PERIOD UNDER GUSTAV HUSAK

The Velvet Revolution that occurred in November of 1989 was truly Czechoslovakia's first democratic revolution as a united country. However, Czechoslovakia led a very different path on its way towards democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall. There had been literally no economic or political reforms within the government after the invasion in 1968. Czechoslovakia was still under the control of the Soviet regime and nothing substantial had transpired after the Soviet tanks invaded in 1968.¹⁰³ The Velvet Revolution was a complete shut down of the Communist system within the country. The Revolution virtually erased everything the Communist Party had implemented in Czechoslovakia. However, the road to this democratic revolution was full of nearly two decades of a shaky and turbulent ride, which was called "Normalization".

Czechoslovakia went through a normalization process after the invasion in 1968. The Czechoslovak leadership purged any reform members among the Central Committee. Fifty-four members were replaced out of one hundred-fifteen. Reformists were also purged from local and regional government. Censorship was rigorously enforced and differing social organizations were abolished. Party reformers were completely purged

¹⁰³ Ivo Banac, *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 97.

out of the Communist Party. All of these contingencies were part of the normalization period.¹⁰⁴ They were reversed back to the old harsh Soviet policies.

The reforms, which were put in place before the Brezhnev invasion, ceased to exist. Czechoslovakia was in a much worse state after the invasion. During this normalization period, citizens were scared into accepting rules and procedures. In addition, all opposition or reform was pushed out of any position of power or importance.¹⁰⁵ The normalization process of the Soviets, “had two principal aims: to remove reformism as a political force, and to legitimate a new regime resting on old pre-reformist principles.”¹⁰⁶ Czechoslovakia was left stagnant with no growth for modernization.

Gustav Husak was elected as First Secretary of the Communist Party on April 17, 1969 by 177 votes.¹⁰⁷ He had made a lot of personal political promises and very few of them were kept. After he was elected an opposition movement started to form. One of the firsts documents drafted opposing Husak was the “Ten Points Manifesto” on August 21, 1969, which was a year after the Prague invasion. It was a petition to the Federal Assembly, the Czech National Council, the Federal Government, the Czech Lands Government, and the Communist Party Central Committee signed by ten influential members of the Czechoslovakia opposition movement. Most importantly, the petition included the signature of Vaclav Havel. The document stated that it rejected any sort of Soviet military interference and purges taken place by the Communist Party as a result of

¹⁰⁴ “Czechoslovakia: Normalization”, The Library of Congress. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin>.

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir V. Kusin, *From Dubcek to Charter 77: A study of Normailization in Czechoslovakia 1968-1978* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 145.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 148.

the Soviet Union's hard-line policies. It also addressed the concerns of human rights; expressed their rejection of censorship, and condoned the Communist Party for using their authority to undermine the governmental assemblies. The signatories of the document also called for democratic electoral law and the right of citizens to oppose the Communist run government. The last point emphasized the need for citizens, "to work well, improving their lot and preserving their philosophy of life."¹⁰⁸ The end of the document noted a disclaimer that became the norm for future documents. The disclaimer stated "anti-state, anti-party, anti-socialist, or anti-Soviet intentions."¹⁰⁹ The authorities interrogated many of the people who signed the document and three of them were arrested because of their involvement in other political activities that were not under the guidance of the Communist Party. Ironically, this document was not created to be a starting point for an organizational opposition movement; it was evidence of frustration. The true intention of most signatories was not for change because the signatories knew that it was impossible at that immediate moment. It was merely a way for these people to vent and release their anger at the clandestine way the Soviets and the Communist Party left the government in Czechoslovakia.

The signatories of the "Ten Points Manifesto" realized that opposition from within the party was dying day by day and the reformers who were still in the party were becoming less and less influential. These reformers were gradually withdrawn from the party and once out faced the difficulty of finding a job and supporting their family. They were out of the loop and no longer had readily accessible information that was a privilege

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 148-149.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 149.

of being a member of the Communist Party. Reformed Communists, who were allowed to exist before the invasion, no longer had any right or role in the Communist Party. They were finally experiencing the same lives as non-Communists. Initially, when the Communist party took over in 1948, non-Communists lost their jobs and any positions of authority or material things; therefore, the reform Communists found themselves in a similar situation.¹¹⁰

In 1970, the Communist Party issued many purges in Czechoslovakia. This was the moment when reform-Communists realized that no opposition force would erupt within the party. Therefore, a socialist reform movement like Prague Spring would not have the environment to develop. At that time, they did not know if and when they would ever have another opportunity for reform within the system; the system being essentially the Communist Party. Actually, this discovery was not the end of the world to reformers outside the party. It was a discovery that the party reformers were not ready to accept.

Reform Communists began to form a significant opposition movement towards the Soviet Union in 1970. They were able to join the reformers who were always opponents of the Communist Party and the ideology of Socialism.

Most members of the opposition party were not members of the Communist Party. The opposition, which was beginning to grow, consisted of a lot of young adults who just reached the age to begin in political activism. The opposition movement consisted of many different elements including that of radicals but not radical Communists. It included radical liberals, socialists, and conservatives.¹¹¹ However, the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 150.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 153.

overall problem was those workers again who felt comfortable with their life under the Communist Party did not want change or liberalization. They did not have to work that much because they got the same as everyone else. They did not want change because it would mean they would have to work to get anything and if they did not work they had nothing.

Young radical groups were the most anxious to participate in an opposition movement. The young radicals had numerous ideas and most importantly had the creative spirit needed for change. These people were not allowed into universities because of their non-Communist status. Instead, they were forced to become young workers within the system. These young radicals were able to do the legwork for older intellectuals in the opposition movement.¹¹²

Although the young radicals were an integral part of the puzzle, they did not consist of much variety. The ex-Communists within the group had the most variation. The ex-Communists had every different level of citizens within society. The Intellectual ex-Communists contributed their knowledge and were the most influential in implementing ideas into policy.¹¹³

A change began in the thought process of Czechoslovakia. It was realized that no longer was it possible for reform to go through the party or erupt internally within the party. A revelation occurred, which made it obvious that reform would have to come from outside of the party and not directly from within. The general consensus favored the establishment of "Socialism with a human face". The Prague Spring movement

¹¹² Ibid., 154.

¹¹³ Ibid.

remained an influential episode among the reformers. At this time in the early nineteen seventies they believed the type of reform that the Prague Spring incident called upon. However, one element of normalization that they criticized greatly was the violence of the Soviet Union. The reformers tried to point out that it was causing greater friction among Czechs and Slovaks against the Soviet Union.¹¹⁴

Through the nineteen seventies, Soviet oil sales allowed the Czechoslovakian economy to perform moderately well. However, workers wages and productivity were on a continuing decline. This left the citizens of Czechoslovakia on a very downward spiral, where there was no hope left. This depression forced a lot of citizens to not participate in any sort of dissident activity. However, in 1975 the disposition on opposition began to emerge among people, who had initially not been a part of it.¹¹⁵

During the early seventies Dubcek had been relatively quiet. But in 1974, Dubcek became once again outraged by the system. Dubcek's old friend Josef Smrkovsky died on January 14, 1974. Dubcek sent a letter to Smrkovsky's wife, which was dated January 18, 1974. The police got a hold of this letter before it was delivered; this made Dubcek miss his friend's funeral. Dubcek was outraged. This outrage led to a letter he wrote in October of 1974. He decided to write a letter to the Federal Assembly in Prague and the Slovak National Council in October of 1974. In the letter he listed,

...in detail the surveillance and harassment to which we was being subjected in contravention of valid laws and in spite of his abstention from all oppositional activity. In doing so he identified himself with the main cause of complaint on behalf of the million or so compatriots who felt they had been made second-class citizens because of the views they held.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 154-155.

¹¹⁵ Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East and Central Europe Since World War II*, 208-209.

¹¹⁶ Kusin, *From Dubcek to Charter 77: A study of Normalization in Czechoslovakia 1968-1978*, 197.

Also included in this letter was a denunciation of sorts of the normalization policy that had been implemented after Prague Spring. The letter caused an outrage in Prague and even Husak was upset. The Czechoslovakian government was even more outraged when the Western Press got a hold of the letter.¹¹⁷ Husak denounced Dubcek, by saying that he ruined the state of Czechoslovakia in a matter of months and warned Dubcek that if he chose to stay in Czechoslovakia he must respect the government or suffer the consequences if he is involved in an opposition movement. He stated that if Dubcek wished to leave the country, he was free to go. He warned the country that there was counter-revolutionary instability in the wings and the police should be on guard to curb any reform movements or protests.¹¹⁸

The Czechoslovakian Government alerted the Czech police during this time. The Government insisted to the police that their duty was solely for the repression of anti-socialist movements and criminal activities related directly to political opposition. During this time the secret police was being strengthened as a result of the Czechoslovakia government's prediction of the upcoming years. They also prided themselves in directing a very different police force from the western world or capitalist countries. Their main goal was repression of the opposition and not the entire society. The Czech police was not out to impose the laws on the members of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, rather they were there to keep a strict eye and jump on all anti-socialist brewings.¹¹⁹ The Government wanted to stop the opposition before they could officially

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 198.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

fully develop into an anti-revolutionary movement, which could have spread through out the country.

Anonymous sources from Prague estimated the strength of the Secret Police (STB) at 14,000 in the Czech lands alone plus another 10,000 officers strategically deployed under cover as employees in various institutions, such as the ministries of foreign affairs and foreign trade and the export-import companies.¹²⁰

Police officers were able to provide their opinion on many different matters relating to the opposition movement. They gathered information for the government and Communist Party; then interrogated many people about their involvement with varying organizations. The Police were responsible for implementing many of the restrictions that had become apparent in the mid seventies. Those restrictions included the withdraw of passports from the ex-reformers, not only included was if the citizens were traveling to countries within the Soviet Bloc. People lost their drivers licenses for very minor offenses. Citizens who were thought to be involved in the opposition were framed by fake letters, anonymous phone calls, and were followed everywhere by numerous men who were undercover. Most of the time, the people who were followed were the most prominent men involved in the opposition movement.¹²¹ The Soviet-led regime was again enforcing its iron grip over the country of Czechoslovakia. This was a dim time for the reformers, but it was also the time where the creative spirit and opposition movement flourished at the same time.

In 1976 at the 15th Congress Husak issued a pseudo pardon to many former Communist officials who had been unable to gain their position back since the Prague Spring. Husak's speech stated,

¹²⁰ Ibid., 198-199.

¹²¹ Ibid., 199.

...the central committee is of the opinion that those who were not active representatives of right-wing opportunism, who work well and prove by their deeds that they firmly and sincerely uphold the positions of socialism and our friendship with the Soviet Union, and who actively support the policy of our party, can become once again eligible for new admission to the party, while every individual case has to be considered separately....¹²²

This pardon only included important former Communist Party officials and cleared up nothing regarding the discrimination that was taking place in the country. Husak did not recognize that there was a problem within his society and merely ignored it, thus rendering the effect that it did not exist.

Many dissidents began to use their creative intellectual energy to write letters to leading officials within the Communist Party. These letters were often released to the western journalists; this was also a form of protest because the government officials did not want the citizens to have access to the West, nor did they want the western journalists to have access to Czechoslovakia. Many activists were looking to the Western world as a way of exploiting the injustices of the Communist Party. In April of 1975 Vaclav Havel began to play a major role in this movement while writing an open letter to Husak. This letter was a direct criticism of the way Husak ran the country. Havel stated that his country was ruled out of fear of the citizens and it was full of corruption, which led to a sinister moral state. Czechoslovakia could not even be called a moral state. The government was in no way moral in any sense of the word.¹²³

In 1976, former members of the Communist Party Central Committee formed a petition to release political prisoners. Those specific were the prisoners who were in jail for their belief that a relationship existed between socialism and political democracy.

¹²² Ibid., 200.

¹²³ Ibid., 284.

The relationship was one in which the prisoners greatly examined and publicly announced this view that the two could be linked together. This view was close to the views of the Communist Party in the western world.¹²⁴ Obviously this was not in the same spectrum as the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, therefore the Party would frown upon this sort of ideological stance. Czechoslovakia felt that their ideological preference was unacceptable and left the development of socialism in an extremely stagnant position.

All of the opposition movements that had occurred since Prague Spring had left an impact of some sort, but no new policies had been formulated as a direct result of the movements. The main agenda item during this period of reforms were human right violations. The Czechoslovak regime no longer guaranteed a person's own individual rights. Many members of the underground political movement at the time decided that it was time to address the government for their persecution of the public and make the West aware of the situation in their country. In 1976 a group of rock musicians, who supported a peaceful co-existence among the country, were put on trial for their own beliefs because they did not express the views of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. This rock group was called The Plastic People of the Universe and since 1971 had been banned by the regime for playing in public. Instead, they resorted to playing the underground circuit and private parties.¹²⁵ At one of the band members weddings, many different musicians were guests and they played music non-stop for twelve hours. A few weeks later more than twenty musicians were arrested and hundreds were interrogated and musical tapes

¹²⁴ Ibid., 285.

¹²⁵ Gordon H. Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 7.

were confiscated. Many of the musicians were sentenced for unreasonably lengths of time.¹²⁶ The Plastic People of the Universe were one of the characters in the underground Czech movement. Their music defined the opposition movement and they were the sound and influential force behind the creativity of the underground movement.¹²⁷ Many people sought hope in their music and compared it to magic for the time. These incidents were what many scholars call the catalyst for the creation of a document that would focus on the regimes human right violations.

The normalization period was significant to the underground political movement because, in effect, it determined the goals for a new Czechoslovakia. More specifically, those goals had shifted from reform in the socialist system to a democratization of Czechoslovakia. A reformed socialist system was no longer what was to be achieved by the growing dissident group. They had come to the realization that the socialist system could not be reformed, thus paving the way for a democratic revolution in the future of Czechoslovakia.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹²⁷ Richard Allen Greene, "It was 20 years ago today...", " *The Prague Post*, 19 November 1997.

CHAPTER V

VACLAV HAVEL AND CHARTER 77

Vaclav Havel was the man who emerged out of the fall of the Soviet Union as the leader in the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Havel's life is a very interesting story and his road to the presidency of the Czech Republic is marked by irony. He was born on October 5, 1936 during a very precarious time in the political life of Czechoslovakia. Like Dubcek, he grew up in a time when the situation in the country was constantly unstable and chaotic. Havel was born in Prague into a very wealthy upper middle class family.¹²⁸ Havel's family was known to be part of the Czech bourgeoisie and during his life that was always thrown in his face. His father was a creative businessman who took risks in the business world. His mother, Bozena Havlova, was a very intellectual and strong-minded woman. She wanted to leave for London when the Nazis invaded in 1939, but the family stayed in Czechoslovakia. She was very affluent and dreamed of living in England. Havel had a brother Ivan, who was born two years later. The boys attended a village school in Tisnov constantly surrounded by servants and a governess. Havel has acknowledged that there was a social barrier that was put in place between the servants and the less privileged playmates and him and his brother. When Havel was older, he felt a need to give to the less privileged because of his childhood.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel*, 24.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

During his teenage years, Havel began to form his differing political ideologies. He was a teenager in the early days of Communism in Czechoslovakia where his views began to change. He believed in “an intellectualized type of socialism, with equity and honesty as its cornerstones, something, which did not desert him, even after he became President.”¹³⁰ Havel followed some of the ideas of the great Nationalist leader Tomas Masaryk who promoted peace, equality, and humanity and led Czechoslovakia after World War I in a democratic government. He was the country’s de facto leader and his democratic standards greatly influenced Havel. Another key figure with the same beliefs was Dubcek, but they were both unknown to each other at this time.

At age nine, Havel went to a very unusual boarding school in Czechoslovakia. It was modeled after an English public school and the atmosphere was sympathetic to the creative spirit. This was a time in his life that he began to write poetry and his creative spirit flourished. Havel was only enrolled in this school for three years, but it left a huge mark on his thinking. He left school when he was twelve.

In 1948 in Czechoslovakia, Communism was coming into full swing because people thought that it might offer a better way of life. Free enterprise was ruled out in Czechoslovakia, which had been the standard that the Havel family lived off of. The Havels lost their business and their family estate was confiscated. This led the family to make a living in different areas.¹³¹ Havel’s mother wanted her sons to enter the medical profession, but they did not want to listen to their mother. At age fifteen, he apprenticed to train as a carpenter because of the lack of opportunities that were available to him

¹³⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹³¹ Ibid., 42.

three plays, *Guardian Angel*, a play for television, and *the Butterfly on the Aerial*. The Balustrade was beginning to gain an international reputation because of his hard work and creativity.¹³⁶

On July 9, 1964, Havel married Olga Splichalova, whose family was part of the working class and fellow theatergoer. Havel's mother disapproved of Olga because of her family background. They were married in a civil ceremony and according to Havel, the marriage, "was to prove a working partnership of opposites."¹³⁷

During the late sixties, his political activity was increasing and this was the beginning of what led him to the presidency in 1989. During the leadership of Alexander Dubcek and the events of "Prague Spring" which led to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968, Havel became concerned with a campaign for political change rather than the theater. The moment he saw Soviet tanks crush citizens to death in August of 1968 was the turning point in Havel's career.

Within Dubcek's ideology, Havel began to see the possibility for change. Havel met with Dubcek to discuss possibilities on avoiding a Soviet invasion. Havel gained a newfound respect for Dubcek after their meeting but realized the predicament that Dubcek was in.

Some days after his earful from Havel, Dubcek realized the now famous Warsaw letter. This had been drafted by five leading members so the Soviet politburo and the anxious Communist Party leaders of Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland. Czechoslovakia, it warned could only remain independent and sovereign as a Socialist country within the Socialist community. The senders were convinced that the threat to Socialism which had arisen in Czechoslovakia jeopardized the common vital interest of other Socialist countries.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid., 58-65.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 90.

This warning did not matter and on August 20, 1968, the Soviets invaded and held Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain. Havel thought that there was still an opportune time for change but, the leadership had wasted their chance and left the country in disgrace as if they had done something wrong. As a result of this invasion, Havel threw himself into resistance movements against the Soviets. He wrote letters and declarations for pro-Dubcek members of the local Communist Party. Havel described that a feeling of helplessness began to spread because of the extreme censorship and the agreement of the leadership to placate the Soviets. All discussion groups were strictly censored. At the end of 1969, Havel had become the de facto leader of the political opposition.¹³⁹

In 1969, Havel turned down a grant that was offered to him to go and live in the United States for a year by the Ford Foundation. Many people say that if Havel had gone he would have been launched to international acclaim in the theater. After turning down the grant, he committed himself to the political cause in Czechoslovakia. Havel said, "I'm a writer, and I've always understood my mission to be to speak the truth about the world I live in, to bear witness to its terrors and its miseries-in other words, to warn rather than hand out prescriptions for change."¹⁴⁰ Dubcek was replaced by Husak, a lawyer, who said that, "Progress would not be achieved, he warned, by being popular and pleasant; the party had to be disciplined and united."¹⁴¹ Havel realized the implications of this change in leadership and his political mission went full forward. The censorship and the authority that the Soviets had over the arts and cultural life in Czechoslovakia left

¹³⁹ Ibid., 90-98.

¹⁴⁰ Karel, Hvizdala, *Vaclav Havel: Disturbing the Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 8.

¹⁴¹ Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel*, 98-99.

the Havel's very poor. Havel had to work in a brewery in the town of Trutnov for income.

On April 8, 1975 Havel wrote an open letter to Husak, which contained his thoughts on the people in Czechoslovakia. He claimed that the people were driven by fear and the number of people who supported the government was smaller than it had ever been. Havel ended his letter with,

So far, you and your government have chosen the easy way out for yourselves, and the most dangerous road for society: the path of inner decay for the sake of outward appearances; of deadening life for the sake of increasing uniformity; of depending the spiritual and moral crisis of your society, and ceaselessly degrading human dignity for the puny sake of protecting your own power.¹⁴²

The letter was published and handed to the state news agency and to select Western correspondents. His letter was a turning point because it focused international attention on the situation in Czechoslovakia. Havel decided after writing this letter that he should prepare for an arrest at any time. At this time, the police were monitoring every move that he made. He lived under a microscope of state scrutiny.

Havel and many members of the underground movement considered the situation to be a national disaster. The majority of the people that had been persecuted for their beliefs were young creative people, who wanted to implement their creative energy within the government. As a result of this dissatisfaction, a document was drafted from the collaboration of many of the great intellectuals at the time. No one person could take sole responsibility since it was truly a concurrent effort. The document came to be known as Charter 77 and was issued on January 1977. Charter 77 was a document, which stated the citizens had equal rights and those rights should not be infringed upon.

¹⁴² Ibid., 110.

Initially, 239 people signed the charter and by June of 1980, 1,065 had signed the Charter.¹⁴³

Charter 77 criticized the government for failing to implement human rights provisions of a number of documents it had signed, including the Czechoslovak Constitution, the Final Act of the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Basket III of the Helsinki Accords), and two United Nations covenants on human rights, which had been signed by UN representatives from Czechoslovakia on October 7, 1968.¹⁴⁴

The document was intended to go beyond the spectrum of the government and evolve through the cracks to the western publications. The Charter explained all human rights violations that had existed within Czechoslovakia. It was not only initiated because of the international situation but also because of the domestic problems within Czechoslovakia. Many citizens were more and more displeased with the direction the country was going in. They hated the governmental system and the regimes' complete disregard for human rights.¹⁴⁵

It is very ironic that a large amount of the population became displeased with the domestic affairs of the country. Before 1968, a lot of people did not understand the need for reform in the socialist system because everyone received the same amount of goods and money. According to an interview from two former Czechoslovakian citizens, people at the time were not hard workers and the socialist system allowed them to be and continue to be this way because they did not have to work for what they received. A lot of people did not want this changed because they would have to work harder to get ahead

¹⁴³ Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, 70.

¹⁴⁴ "Czechoslovakia: Charter 77", The Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query>.

¹⁴⁵ Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, 8.

or make ends meet.¹⁴⁶ However, after people were able to get a taste of change in 1968 and that it could have been a reality, people's attitudes changed. The events of 1968 instilled in many citizens a hope and a different perspective that they had never experienced before. Thus, when Husak instilled the period of normalization among them, they had become dissatisfied with the way things had become. Ordinary citizens discovered that they were worse off now than in 1968 because that was the year that Dubcek took control and initiated many different democratic reforms.

One of the main objectives of the Charter was to form an open association to where people could co-exist with differing opinions. More importantly people with different political ideologies. The Charter implicitly says,

Charter 77 is a loose, informal and open association of people of various shades of opinion, faiths, and professions united by the will to strive individually and collectively for the respecting of civic and human rights in our own country and throughout the world—rights accorded to all men by the two mentioned international conventions, by the Final Act of the Helsinki conference and by numerous other international documents opposing war, violence and social or spiritual oppression, and which are comprehensively laid down in the UN Universal Charter of Human Rights.¹⁴⁷

This was a Charter where people could be individuals amongst each other, where human and civil rights were respected along with individuality. Actually, the Charter was not intended for political opposition; it was just an organization that sought to achieve a general public consensus. Therefore, the Charter did not have a specific platform for change rather it is an outlet for change and freedom of expression.

The Charter's authors stated their intention to discharge their civic duty especially in five ways: they would draw attention to individual cases of human right infringements; they would document such grievances; they would suggest

¹⁴⁶ František Stanek and Vera Stanek, Former Czechoslovakian Citizens. Interview by author, 10 February 2000, Austin, Texas.

¹⁴⁷ "Manifesto of Charter 77- Czechoslovakia", The Library of Congress, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/czechoslovakia/cs_appnd.html.

remedies; they would put forward proposals of a more general nature to strengthen rights and freedoms and the mechanisms designed to protect them; and they would act as intermediary in situations of conflict.¹⁴⁸

The three main spokesmen of Charter 77 were Patocka, Havel, and Professor Jiri Hajek, a political scientist who was a former Minister of Foreign Affairs. They represented the Charter 77 whenever needed and reiterated that their goal was for every citizen to be a free person and be able to live freely and work as they choose within Czechoslovakia.

The main focus of the Charter was the condemnation of human right infringements that had existed in the normalization process. It did not introduce any new concepts or ideas; rather its goal was to make aware of what had occurred. The authors of the charter decided to only address human rights catastrophes rather than focusing on all of the problems within the country such as economic, political, and cultural problems. Thus the focus was on one substantial problem and hopefully they would have more of an effect instead of trying to change too many things really fast. Thus, a chain effect might have evolved to where economic problems and political injustices would become more prevalent.

One interesting point in the Charter is that it did not condemn socialism. Nor did it actually imply what the Charter's attitude is about socialism. Some scholars believe that since the Charter was focusing on human rights and a true socialist state recognizes the freedom of citizens within a socialist state. Thus, the document did not undermine the structure of the socialist state. However, human rights violations did exist within the

¹⁴⁸ Kusin, *From Dubcek to Charter 77: A Study of Normalization in Czechoslovakia 1968-1978*, 308.

Communist Party. The Charter also asked the people to uphold the laws set up by the government and never asked the citizens to do anything illegal.¹⁴⁹

Charter 77 signatories were very diversified when it came to political beliefs and it had been decided that the signers were not to focus on politics because persecution had existed among Communists, non-Communists and many different people of numerous religions. The main focus was on human rights. They did not set out on changing the ideological foundations of the Czechoslovakian government. However, the reformers felt that human right reforms needed to be implemented into their course of action. Charter 77 was known for its diversity throughout its supporters whether they were reformed Communists, non-communists, Communists, atheists, Catholics, Protestants or Jews.¹⁵⁰

Copies of the Charter were delivered to the state news agency, to government offices and the Federal Assembly. On the night of January 8, 1977, Havel traveled to the post office to deliver copies of the Charter. The car he was traveling in was well known to the police and before he could get there, a clutter of security service vehicles blocked him. The police interrogated Havel and other members of Charter 77. A week after Havel was questioned by the police; he was arrested and charged with “subversive action in conjunction with a foreign nation or agent.”¹⁵¹ The explanation was that by passing on the charter to hostile forces abroad, he passed material that was damaging to the interest of Czechoslovakia. Havel was put in Ruzyně prison for a period of four months before he went to trial. In early 1978, Havel was arrested again and the charges this time were that he obstructed an official and assaulted him. He was held in prison for six weeks.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 309.

¹⁵⁰ Skilling, *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*, 49.

¹⁵¹ Simmons, *The Reluctant President: A Political Life of Vaclav Havel*, 129.

After he returned from prison, he signed a petition to have the death penalty abolished and endorsed a statement honoring the hundredth anniversary of the Social Democratic Party.

The signers of Charter 77 outraged the public within Czechoslovakia. People lost their jobs as a result of their support and testament of Charter 77. Charter 77 was not an organization; rather it was the idea to formulate policy changes. The organization involved was its supporters. However, after the persecution that had been involved with the signatories of the charter, it expressed that to actually evolve the ideas into change, an organization mechanism was needed. The entity that would be formed as a result of Charter 77 would be an organization, which publicized the human right injustices that had been made against signatories of Charter 77. In April 1978, VONS was formed. VONS stood for Vybor na obranu nespravedive stihanych. This is translated to mean the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted. The group's main purpose was to issue reports on the governments complete infringements of human rights. Thus, they were hoping to indirectly influence change.¹⁵²

Between 1978 and 1984, 409 reports were issued to the Czechoslovakian government indicating individual cases of human right infringements. This was the responsibility of the VONS organization. Still, the Czechoslovakian government did nothing about this issue. The economic, political and social life of Czechoslovakia was stagnant during this time. Many people, who were supporters of VONS, were arrested and detained for numerous periods at a time. Charter 77 and VONS were the major

¹⁵² "Czechoslovakia- Dissent and Independent Activity", The Library of Congress, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/>.

implementing forces in targeting the injustices that were instrumentally performed by the Czechoslovak regime.¹⁵³

Charter 77 did not accomplish anything immediately. The formulation of its beliefs and ideologies proved to be a stimulus for later developments that would eventually evolve into the Velvet Revolution. Although, it served as a platform and forum for people to express their dislikes with the regime and allowed for underground political movements to flourish.

VONS and Charter 77 continued to perform vital functions to the opposition movement. By the end of the first decade of normalization, the economy of Czechoslovakia took a turn for the worse.¹⁵⁴ During this time, Husak virtually implemented no economic reforms of any kind by causing the already stagnant economy to worsen. Some scholars argued that the Husak regime felt undermined by the nationalistic revival of Poland in the early eighties; that he thought his leadership as being insufficient, denouncing the Solidarity movement in Poland and leaving behind the changes that needed to be done in Czechoslovakia.¹⁵⁵ Czechoslovakia had no technology advancements within the country and had no environmental or pollution reforms. The country was democratic by nature of its creation, but was left in a primitive condition. Sixty years after its creation, Czechoslovakia was one of the most politically and economically unstable of the entire Central and Eastern European countries. Czechoslovakia was the only one of its neighbors that was able to stay a democratic state

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East and Central Europe Since World War II*, 208.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

between World War I and World War II.¹⁵⁶ The West was still unable to hold on to the ideals that Czechoslovakia was a severe Communist Nation and a puppet of the Soviet Union.

Although Havel and Dubcek were from different generations, they did possess a certain internal connection. Both of these leaders were of vital importance to the Czechoslovakian community and their significance is never forgotten. Havel is the leader that was responsible for the Democratic Revolution; Dubcek was the man that started the socialist reform movement. Vaclav Havel's political career led a road very different than most politicians, but his beliefs along with "Socialism with a human face" were the catalyst for the developments in 1989.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 234.

CHAPTER VI

THE VELVET REVOLUTION

Not until the late nineteen eighties did anything change within Czechoslovakia. VONS and Charter 77 were still involved in the underground political movement, although their membership had been small during this decade. Czechoslovakia had not implemented many reforms but the Soviet Union was beginning to implement numerous radical reforms. Mikhail Gorbachev came into power in the Soviet Union in March of 1985. His leadership threatened many foundations of the Communist Party and the Eastern European nations.

Gorbachev implemented sweeping changes in the Soviet Union. His goal was to respond to the internal conditions of the Soviet Union while implementing many needed reforms. Gorbachev's best-known political reforms are referred to as "perestroika" and "glasnost". Perestroika was Gorbachev's wide range of sweeping economic and political reforms and glasnost was an open policy towards the media. These two reforms alone were two defining ideologies for all of the countries under the Soviet sphere. According to Bernard Wheaton, author of *The Velvet Revolution*, the reforms that were implemented under Gorbachev followed the path of one famous reform movement during the sixties. The reform movement that it resembled was Prague Spring. This was a great contributing factor in the failing relationship between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia during this time. These reforms questioned the very ideals in which the

normalization period of Czechoslovakia was enforced. This situation made it very difficult for the Soviet Union to legitimately claim and justify the invasion of 1968.¹⁵⁷ This was a crucial turning point for the opposition movement in Czechoslovakia, as well as for all of the Eastern European nations.

The global political situation began to increasingly change when Gorbachev became the head of the Soviet leadership. One of Gorbachev's biggest initiatives was the policy of cost reduction. He thought this policy would influence the international community because they would reduce the amount of money used on defense and international conflict in the Soviet Union. Therefore, they needed the security and help of the United States to implement this change.¹⁵⁸ The Soviet Union thus began a significantly different relationship with the United States and the rest of the world.

Gorbachev faced a dilemma in 1986 and 1987 because he was implementing drastic reforms in his country, but was unsure as to what should be allowed of the Soviet satellite countries. He was faced with many questions, on how much reform in those countries and how much could they stray away from Socialism. However, he made an exception in the case of Czechoslovakia because if he allowed too much, then he would basically be denouncing the invasion in 1968 and the normalization period. In 1987 Gorbachev stated,

The evaluation of the events in 1968 in Czechoslovakia is above all a matter for the Czechoslovak comrades themselves. Since that time, the leadership of the CPC headed by Gustav Husák has completed a massive amount of work. Czechoslovakia had made great strides in many different ways. I personally became convinced of this during my recent visit. We have seen that the Czechoslovak comrades in accordance with their own conditions are also looking

¹⁵⁷ Wheaton, *The Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

for ways of improving socialism. They have their own problems and are solving them.¹⁵⁹

Gorbachev was not ready to denounce everything significant in policy changes from the past two decades. The leadership of Czechoslovakia was very adamant about any reform possibilities in their country and did not like the situation in Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovakian government and regime found itself in a very precarious situation with the change in leadership in the Soviet Union. In 1988 a strain began to visibly exist between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Numerous demonstrations against the ideology of the Party erupted, which led the west to report negatively on Czechoslovakia.¹⁶⁰

Despite police brutality, the number of demonstrations increased from mid-1988, indicating that the policy of repression had not proved an effective deterrent. The first major public demonstration took place in Prague on August 21, 1988, and commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the invasion of Czechoslovakia.¹⁶¹

This demonstration consisted of the younger generation of Czechoslovakia and they yelled out in support of Gorbachev and made public their hatred of the invasion of 1968. This demonstration caught the authorities off guard because the normal make-up of the opposition movement did not make an appearance at the event. This threw police for a loop because they were unsure who was responsible and they had very few people to detain, arrest, and prosecute as before. Another demonstration was planned for October. In an effort to avoid any future demonstrations, the police caught wind of the activists from the younger generation that had been heavily involved in August demonstration.

¹⁵⁹ *Soviet News*, May 27, 1987; quoted in Wheaton, *The Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia 1988-1991*, 18.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The authorities decided to put certain members of Charter 77 and some younger activists under house arrest in an effort to stop any demonstrations.¹⁶²

The regime was expecting a demonstration on October 28, 1988, because this was the anniversary of the birth of the republic. This day was a public holiday until 1968, when the regime began its normalization process. The government felt that if they were to make the day a public holiday again, it would deter any demonstrations because it was a Friday and many people would use it as a three-day weekend. Therefore, for the first time since 1968, it was re-instated as a public holiday. This effort did not stop any demonstration and 5,000 people gathered in Wenceslas Square to advocate freedom.¹⁶³ The authorities used extreme force on all the protestors. Numerous people were arrested. However, the important conclusion about this event was that it instilled back in the Czechoslovakian peoples a sense of nationalism and democratic traditions. They were there to celebrate the founding of the republic and it envisioned citizens with hope that had not insisted within Czechoslovakia for at least a decade.

In a further attempt to role with the tides, yet another demonstration was formed to celebrate the “fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” on December 10, 1988. This demonstration was to involve not only the new younger generation of the opposition movement, but to also involved important spokespeople for VONS and Charter 77, most importantly the involvement of Vaclav Havel. A petition was issued for the release of political prisoners and given out during the demonstration. During this demonstration the reformers main argument was protection of human rights,

¹⁶² Ibid., 26.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

which was a universal right for all people.¹⁶⁴ The authorities began to be even angrier about the situation and were using force more and more as a deterrent for these uprisings. However, the momentum had already begun and the dissident movement was able to flourish under this momentum.

In January of 1989 many demonstrations were planned starting January 15 to commemorate the death of Jan Palach. Palach committed suicide in 1969 as a form of protest against the Soviet invasion. Even though the police had banned all demonstrations, numerous events were held in different sections of Prague. As a result, many of the leaders and founders of Charter 77 were arrested; this also included the arrest of Vaclav Havel. He was sentenced to nine months in jail. This incident caused a great amount of embarrassment for Czechoslovakia amongst the international community.¹⁶⁵ No longer did they have the support they needed from the Soviet Union to support their regime, which greatly undermined any authority they had. The change in the political climate was constantly erupting in significant feats day after day and this continually made it impossible for the Czech leadership to enforce their rule.

The year of 1989 was of great importance to the future of the country. It had become harder and harder for the regime to formulate and enforce their policies. The general public became very upset with the economic situation and the environmental atrocities within their country. Hard line Communists within the regime began to resent Gorbachev because of his reformist policies. The Czechoslovakian regime did not want to be on the same path as the Soviet Union and as other Eastern European countries, which had been experiencing their own political revolutions. The general consensus of the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 28.

public was in favor of change and to follow suit as its neighbors. A demand for the democratization of the country began to establish among the opposition group.¹⁶⁶

On October 28, 1989, Czechoslovakian Independence Day, three hundred-fifty people were arrested for rallying against the regime. The regime no longer scared or influenced the older dissident movement and the younger generation. On November 17, 1989, a rally was organized in the center of Prague to commemorate Jan Opletal, who was killed fifty years earlier by the Nazi government. Fifty thousand people were allowed to gather with virtually no disruption by the authorities. Once the regime was informed of the situation, they instructed the authorities to react hastily before the reformers were allowed to get away with anything else.¹⁶⁷ On November 18 another organization was formed, a pseudo political party, this party was called Civic Forum. It is often referred to as Citizens Forum. This establishment brought together students, elder dissidents, and numerous opposition groups to form one national movement. The thought was that Civic Forum would be a platform for the democratization of the country because it brought together so many people and all of it was to be formed into one huge and enormous strength. The goal of the organization was, “devoted to uniting all members of society as a preliminary to an open discussion on the future of Czechoslovakia and as a prelude to dialogues with the CPC and the government.”¹⁶⁸ The two major policies that they wanted to change right away was the removal of the anti-reformers in 1968, who were responsible for the normalization period, and release of all

¹⁶⁶ Banac, *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, 97.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁶⁸ Wheaton, *The Velvet Revolution Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991*, 56.

political prisoners. Civic Forum also wanted the removal of the authorities that were responsible for putting a stop to demonstrations, which were peaceful.¹⁶⁹

Two hundred thousand people gathered in Prague to protest the atrocities committed by the police against the student. This protest evolved from just one day to three days. There was almost one-third of a million protestors by the third day. No longer could the regime of Czechoslovakia enforce their policies, which had produced economic stagnancy. The political environment of Eastern Europe had significantly changed over the past year because of the numerous democratic and ideological revolutions that had erupted. With this change in the environment, Vaclav Havel was allowed to be the most appropriate choice for the de facto leader of Civic Forum and the biggest support mechanism that the citizens had to play their cards with. On November 21st, Havel addressed the protestors and his supporters.¹⁷⁰ The speed grew for rapid developments among the government. The authorities did not enforce their policies during these demonstrations; therefore the gentle revolution was beginning to evolve.

The Civic Forum and the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly began talks at the end of November. The main target for Civic Forum was for the Federal Assembly to remove a clause from the constitution which gave the Communist Party its authority and right to be the main party and majority in Czechoslovakia. The two sides were able to agree upon this and a new government came into being with five non-communist members on December 3. Civic Forum became the major implementing force among the “Velvet Revolution.” Civic Forum had been allowed to use Czech Radio as its platform to call

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 60.

¹⁷⁰ Banac, *Eastern Europe in Revoltuion*, 98-99.

for concessions among the Communist Party.¹⁷¹ Civic Forum was still extremely unhappy with the changes that had been formulated into policy. Civic Forum had evolved into a major player among the characters within the Czechoslovak government. They used this influence to push the Communists for many dramatic reforms. Two days later the Communists succumbed to the pressures of Civic Forum and a new government was formed. This new government consisted of a Communist Prime Minister and a non-Communist majority. The democratization of Czechoslovakia was finally being implemented rather than reforms of socialism as what happened in 1968.

Two major players in the Communist Party, Milos Jakes and Miroslav Stepán were ousted from the party. However, Civic Forum still did not feel stable enough as an entity on its own and felt that at any time, the Communist Party could regain its strength. Civic Forum had come so far but multiplicity that the Communist Party had experienced over the past forty years left their minds a little skeptical. The only card that Civic Forum had to play was its ability to group thousands and thousands of people together for peaceful demonstrations against the Czechoslovak regime.¹⁷² The Communist Party was beginning to lose its authority throughout the country and its complete structure and foundations fell from the platform.¹⁷³ Civic Forum and Czechoslovakian citizens began to urge the importance of electing a non-Communist President to replace Husak. Husak resigned from his post on December 10, 1989. The Communist members of the general assembly at first saw his resignation as a way to reform Communism. They felt that the general public and citizens of Czechoslovakia, who were not in the middle of the reform

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Wheaton, *The Velvet Revolution Czechoslovakia 1988-1991*, 101.

movement in Prague, would see that the Communist Party had purged many of its members and was continuing their efforts to improve the party. Civic Forum had not won its battle yet. Their battle was not to be won until they elected a non-Communist President.

The leading contender for President among the revolutionaries was Havel. The public had lost all sympathy for the Communist Party and begun to look at Havel as their savior. The only difficulty in the presidential election was the decision on who would be allowed to vote. "According to the old Communist constitution, which all agreed to abide by until the new one was fully worked out, only the members of the National Assembly were empowered to elect the president. The same constitution provided for an election within fourteen days of the resignation of the incumbent."¹⁷⁴ Most members of Civic Forum were for the nomination of Havel but Central Committee of the National Front of the Slovak Socialist Republic believed that Dubcek was the best person. Dubcek and Havel possessed an internal connection but the major driving force behind the Velvet Revolution was the younger generation that did not know of Prague Spring, thus identified with Havel. Dubcek was known for his reform of the socialist system and it was under the guidance and creative help of Havel that an actual democratization of Czechoslovakia began to develop. Ladislav Adamec and Cestmír Císar were the other two nominees for election. The Communist Party still had many members of the National Assembly, thus providing the controversy for the election.

The National Assembly would elect the President. The Communists within the Assembly wanted a referendum because they believed that Havel's name and influence

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 108.

was not as prevalent in the countryside of Czechoslovakia or in areas outside Prague.¹⁷⁵ Differing political oppositions pushed for the public to have more of opinion and voice in the change. Although, the public were unable to comprehend why the Communist Party would want a referendum. The public was unable to believe that the Communist Party had suddenly created democratic elements within its foundations. Student organizations wanted the Parliament to vote for the election instead of the National Assembly. The Czechoslovakian Parliament was the equivalent to the House of Representatives, therefore, the students believed the Parliament would represent more of a variety among Czechoslovakia. Finally the problem was solved, “by a suggestion that Parliament alone should vote in the president, but the ballot would be open so that the public could, if they chose, call their parliamentary delegates to account. Further the period of the elections campaign in the country was extended beyond the statutory fourteen days to forty.”¹⁷⁶ Havel finally agreed to a contender in the presidential election.

Císar and Dubcek withdrew from the race. Dubcek wanted to prepare to run for the Chairman of the National Assembly. Cisar no longer was a favorite among reform communists and thus left Havel and Adamec alone as the sole contenders for the office. The public’s attitudes toward the Communist Party did not help the campaign of Adamec. The public started to realize how peaceful their revolution was compared to that of other Eastern European countries especially Romania. The inevitable choice for President was Havel because the public thought that he would implement the changes into future policy and the condition of Czechoslovakia would not reverse. On December 29, 1989 Vaclav

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 108-109.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 110.

Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁷ Alexander Dubcek was elected to the Chairmanship of the National Assembly. Havel had pushed for Dubcek to be elected to this position because his goal was to unify the Slovaks and the Czech people. Havel discussed in his inaugural speech that the Czechs and Slovaks were the ultimate determinants in the future of their country. Their situation was not decided by other governments or powerful entities but was decided upon by the public.¹⁷⁸ Thus, concluding the bloodless and peaceful revolution, known as the “Velvet Revolution.”

The Communist Party apologized to the citizens of Czechoslovakia for the injustices in the past and the stagnation of the country. Czechoslovakia was on its way to a transformation to a market economy and democratic foundations within the government. The Prague Spring had ultimately been the catalyst for later developments that predicted the future of Czechoslovakia in 1989.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Banac, *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, 100-101.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution possessed an internal connection, as did their leaders. Alexander Dubcek and Vaclav Havel may have come from different generations but were able to come together and bridge the gap between socialism and democracy. Czechoslovakia was unable to envision a future other than socialism under the reforms of Dubcek. However, Havel and Charter 77 sprung alive a dissident spirit among the public, which wanted more than just a reformed socialist system and realized that more had to be done.

Dubcek and Havel came from very different upbringings. Dubcek grew up in a time where Czechoslovakia was a democratic state but his family was firm believers in the socialist system. Havel had never seen a free Czechoslovakia. Havel was born during the time of the German occupation, thus his impressionable years were during the Communist Party takeover of Czechoslovakia after World War II. Dubcek came from a very hard working class family who had to return from a brief stay in the United States. The future might have changed considerable if Dubcek had been born in the United States when his parents were there. On the other hand, Havel had a privileged upbringing in the Bourgeois society. This allowed him to be more of a creative spirit rather than focusing on hard work and making money. His family was taken off guard when the Communist Party took over and the family business was no longer based on the ideals of

free enterprise. This forced Havel to work very hard for what he had and made him realize the injustices within the regime.

Havel and Dubcek both suffered their own heartaches, which forced them into a political life. They both had their defining moments, which decided for them their future in politics. Politics had always been very important to Dubcek and Havel, although fate determined how important it was to them. Dubcek took a full time job with the Communist Party in Trencin in 1949. He was determined to make a difference and return Communism back to the ideals of Marxist-Leninism. It was then that he began to contemplate reform within the socialist system. Havel's own point of no return was after the Prague Spring. The Prague Spring profoundly affected the views of Havel. The view of Soviet troops crushing harmless citizens in the streets of Prague was a significant memory in his mind. Havel was offered in 1969 a grant to study theater in the United States. He turned it down because of the political situation in Czechoslovakia. He never looked back and made the political cause in Czechoslovakia his mission and full time position.

The Prague Spring was a catalyst and ignition for the dissident activity and underground political movement in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek's reforms instilled in Czechoslovakia a hope and freedom that most citizens had never experienced before. The crushing of Prague Spring started an extreme hatred for the Czechoslovak regime and ignited within the citizens an eternal flame for justice and change that would last until Havel was freely elected as President of Czechoslovakia in December of 1989. Thus, Havel's presidency ended the reform movement in Czechoslovakia and concluded the bloodless development known as the Velvet Revolution.

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Kristin Ann Patak was born in Dallas, Texas, on June 11, 1976, the daughter of Len and Pat Patak. After completing her high school education at Berkner High School, Richardson, Texas, in 1994, she entered Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas to study Political Science and History. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History from Southwest Texas State University in May of 1998. In August of 1998, she entered the Graduate School of Southwest Texas State University, to further pursue her studies in international relations and comparative politics. In addition, she also was an Instructional Assistant at Southwest Texas State University for the Fall semester of 1998 in the Political Science Department. However, during the rest of her Graduate Studies, she worked as a Trade Assistant for the U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration. She is currently employed with Encore Orthopedics, Inc. as an International Account Representative.

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