The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and The Prague Spring of 1968

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After the end of the Second World War both the Soviets and Americans sought to spread their sphere of influence. The U.S. did so through the Marshall Plan. The Soviets, who lost nearly 24 million people, were in no shape to supply European nations with huge sums of money to rebuild their countries and economies. The Soviets were already occupying the eastern half of the continent. Stalin used this to his advantage and remained in the eastern states. He forced them to abide by his system. This was the beginning of a nearly a half century of oppression for states like Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Stalin was one of the most ruthless dictators of the 20th century. He ruled the Soviet Union with an iron fist and brought it down on all of its citizens. He placed brutal rulers in the satellite states that he knew would abide by his philosophy, one of unquestioned devotion to Stalin and his version of communism. He endorsed authoritarian rule at any cost. He also built statues of himself throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and changed many of the satellite states’ flags. He changed the Hungarian flag, adding a red star along with an image of a hammer and piece of wheat. The Hungarians disdained the new flag and yearned for the flag that had waved over their land in the past.

Stalin’s foreign policy between 1944 and 47 had two main goals. The first was to enlarge his political and territorial influence on his western borders. The second was to continue collaboration with his former Western allies.1 He hoped that by in doing so he could diminish the capitalist influence in Europe and promote Soviet-style socialism.

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However, the United States and Britain did not succumb to the Soviet pressure. In 1947 Stalin adopted a new more offensive policy; it was at this time that Stalin backed communist seizures of power throughout Eastern Europe occurred. In 1944 Stalin had told Hungarian communist leaders in Moscow that it could take up to fifteen years for him to make Hungary socialist. The two states examined in this study were originally “friendly” governments to the Soviet Union and in Czechoslovakia there was a genuinely mass party in favor of the USSR.²

Matyas Rakosi came to power in 1949 as the General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party.³ Rakosi had served the Austro-Hungarian Empire in World War I. Following World War I he participated in Bela Kun’s failed communist government in Hungary in 1919. After it failed he fled to Russia. During this time he was indoctrinated into the Soviet ideology and became more of a Soviet than a Hungarian.⁴ This was the case with many of the leaders the Soviets put in place after the war. They may have been born in the nation where they ruled, but they had spent the last half of their lives in the USSR before they returned to rule their nations, because they had no resent ties to the communist or nationalist movements in their home countries. They became dependant on the Soviets and therefore were more Soviet than Hungarian or Polish. For example, Rakosi returned to Hungary shortly after the conclusion of World War II. The delay was

² Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
due, according to Rakosi, to the fact that “Stalin was concerned about his personal security.”

However the reason was most likely that Stalin did not want the new communist leaders to return too soon because he feared that the Allies might think that they were placed there by the Soviets.

Rakosi oppressed the peoples of Hungary from the beginning of his reign. He killed around 2,000 people and imprisoned approximately 150,000 falsely accused political dissidents (1.5% of total population). Throughout his reign he targeted both real and imaginary foes. He considered himself to be “Stalin’s best pupil.” Kenez even refers to him as “the Hungarian Stalin.” Much like Stalin, he was responsible for numerous waves of political purges. The AVH or State Protection Authority was the group that carried out the purges and all other acts of brutality that Rakosi ordered. For obvious reasons the Hungarian people both feared and hated the AVH. The purges lasted until Stalin’s death in 1953.

After the war Hungary was only producing a third of what they had prior to the war. In an effort to combat this Rakosi employed an economic policy very similar to the Soviet Union. He collectivized agriculture and established wage controls. He used the money from the country’s farms to fund the rapid expansion of its heavy industry. Hungary built mainly what they had before the war: railroad cars and engines. Although he had many opportunities to specialize in other forms of productions, derived from

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5 Ibid, 22.
7 Kenez, *Hungary From the Nazis to the Soviets*, 20.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid, 270.
Stalin’s ideas he build new heavy industry instead to try to expand domestic growth and produce exports to pay for more raw materials. However, in the early 50’s the economy was still suffering from the war so Rakosi tripled consumer costs and cut wages. This did not work. The economy was still suffering from material shortages, exporting difficulties and an ever-increasing foreign debt.

In order to try to give the regime legitimacy as a government representing the Hungarian people the Soviets tried to position the regime as one that supported Hungarian nationalism and history, while still maintaining strong communist morals, values, and principles. The Soviets did this in a few ways. For example, Soviets sought to turn existing national heroes into communist heroes. In doing so, however, they often helped to strengthen nationalism in that particular nation. In the Hungarian case the Soviets helped the Hungarians remember their national heroes from 1848 because they attempted to redefine them as communist heroes: “If anything, the survival of the memory of these traditions was assured by the exaggerated efforts of the Communists to identify themselves with the revolutionary glory and myth surrounding 1848.”

However, the Hungarian peoples did not identify with this and it took an national crisis such as the events of 1956 to truly bring these heroes back to life for the Hungarians, but they were not revived as communist heroes but as heroes who stood against outside oppressors; in the case of 1956, the Soviets.

The people of Hungary had a history of strong nationalism. Hungarian resistance to Soviet domination was driven by a sense of nationalism and resentment of foreign

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10 Ibid, 271.
domination going back to the era of the Habsburg monarchy. The revolutionaries in 1956 drew on the popular memory of the revolution of 1848 as they sought to build a popular movement to overthrow the Soviet-imposed Rakosi regime and his state security police.

By 1956 Hungarians were tired of living in constant fear. In July Rakosi was forced to resign by Khrushchev during the era of destalinization.\textsuperscript{12} Writers and journalists began to be more critical of the political system. Around the same time journalists and students began participating in what they called Petofi circles. The circles were intellectual forums where they would discuss the problems facing Hungary.\textsuperscript{13} The circles were named after Petofi Sandor, a poet and national figure of the 1848 revolution who wrote the national song in 1848 and helped to spark the revolt. He is still seen today as one of Hungary’s national heroes. This is clear when one looks at how he was used as an icon in the ‘56 revolt, both with the circles and the \textit{Nemzeti dal} (the national song). The significance of calling the circle the Petofi circle shows how connected Hungarians were to their past and how strong their sense of nationalism.

On October 6 the first unofficial political demonstration since the beginning of the communist regime took place. About 500 students marched to the Batthany monument in Buda.\textsuperscript{14} Batthany was the first constitutional prime Minister of Hungary. The Austrians had executed him in 1849. The police broke up the demonstration peacefully.\textsuperscript{15} Protesting at a monument that represents the Hungarians resistance to foreign oppression

\textsuperscript{13} Vali, \textit{Rift and Revolt in Hungary}. 220.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
illustrates how they viewed the Soviets in 1956.

On October 23 Budapest papers published a list of ten demands compiled by the last Petofi circle. The demands included the expulsion of Matyas Rakosi, the retrial of famous political prisoners, who had been purged in the last decade, and open government discussions. These demands were reasonable and did not call for changes outside the pre-existing political framework. Many other critics demanded that the political practices of the regime be totally redrawn and requested that the government start back at the basics of Marxist-Leninist principles.

The same day 25,000 students gathered at the statue of Josef Bem. Bem was a Polish general who assisted the Hungarians in the 1848 revolution against the Habsburgs. Students would often place flowers at the base of this statue to annoy the Soviets. The students were chanting the Nemzeti Dal written by Petofi in 1848. The song calls for Hungarians to rise up and take back the “homeland.” The song includes the lyrics,

On your feet, Magyar, the homeland calls! The time is here, now or never!
Shall we be slaves or free? This is the question you choose the answer…We were slaves till now…We vow that we will be slaves no longer…Who now, if need be, doesn’t dare to die, who values his pathetic life greater than the honor of his homeland?…The Magyar name will be great again, worthy of its old great

17 Ibid, 61.
honor…We vow that we will be slaves no longer.\textsuperscript{20}

The use of the \textit{Nemzeti Dal} illustrates the link Hungarians felt in 1956 to 1848 and what the heroes of that time represented; resistance of foreign oppressors, something that the revolutionaries in 1956 related to and drew upon. Hungarians in 1956 saw the revolution in the same way their ancestors saw the 1848 revolution; as an independence movement against foreign domination. The incited group crossed the Danube to join a group that was gathering in front of Parliament.

The crowd was now over 200,000 strong.\textsuperscript{21} They waved the tri-color Hungarian flag, without the hated Soviet emblem that had been added to the flag in 1949. The mob remained peaceful until about 9:30 PM when Stalin’s statue was pulled down. Around this same time there was a crowd gathered at the Budapest radio station.\textsuperscript{22} The radio station was controlled by the AVH (state security police), who opened fire on the peaceful group. The demonstrations turned from peaceful protests into chaos.\textsuperscript{23} The mob that was fired upon reacted by stealing guns from military depots and rioting. The Hungarian soldiers were called in, but they sided with the people.\textsuperscript{24} The AVH knew they were in serious trouble and requested Soviet assistance to put down the resistance. On October 24 Soviet troops arrived in full force with tanks.\textsuperscript{25} Street fights persisted until the 28th when a cease-fire was agreed upon and the Soviets left Hungary. The new

\textsuperscript{20} http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Gallery/4602/Petofi.htm
\textsuperscript{21} Vali, \textit{Rift and Revolt in Hungary}, 321.
\textsuperscript{22} Sebestyen. \textit{Twelve Days}, 115.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 122.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 123.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 126.
Hungarian government, led by Imre Nagy, withdrew from the Warsaw Pact and declared neutrality.\textsuperscript{26}

The peace did not last long. On November 3 Soviet tanks encircled Budapest. In the early morning of the 4\textsuperscript{th} the tanks entered from the Pest side and cut the city in half by the way the entered.\textsuperscript{27} The Hungarian resistance was sporadic and unorganized, mainly because Nagy refused to wage war against the Soviets because he knew defeat was imminent. He was quoted as saying, “No, no, calm down… You must not open fire.”\textsuperscript{28} The Soviets reacted to the resistance with artillery and air strikes. The last pocket of resistance was quelled on November 14\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{29}

This was not the first time the Russians had quelled a revolt in Hungary. In 1848 the Russians assisted the Austrians in putting down the Hungarian revolt when they sent in 150,000 troops to assist the Austrians.\textsuperscript{30} Although the Austrians had some successes early in the revolt and even took Budapest in January of 1949, the effective and cohesive Hungarians under Kossuth retook Budapest from the Austrians and declared Hungary an Independent state. The Hungarians would have been successful had the Russians not intervened. In the end the Russians and Austrians were victorious. As a result of the Russian intervention and victory of the Austrians thirteen Hungarian generals were executed and thousands more had to flee to the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{31}

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\textsuperscript{26} Zinner \textit{Revolution in Hungary}, 268.  \\
\textsuperscript{27} Sebestyen, \textit{Twelve Days}, 264.  \\
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{29} Vali, \textit{Rift and Revolt in Hungary}, 377.  \\
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 64.
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demonstrations in ‘56 many people rallied around the statue of Kossuth, who symbolized Hungarian independence. The symbolism of Hungarians rallying around the statue of Kossuth is that it shows how Hungarians felt a deep sense of nationalism and connection to their heritage and history. They were proud of how their ancestors had resisted outside oppressors no matter the size. This is one of the reasons they felt so empowered and motivated to resist against the mighty Soviet Union. They saw the struggle as a bid for freedom like in 1848, from which they drew inspiration.

The revolt left 2,600 Hungarian and 722 Soviet troops dead. There were thousands of Hungarians arrested and 13,000 imprisoned and approximately 200,000 fled the country. The Soviets reinstated the former essentially soviet government, but few Hungarians joined.

Twelve years later, a new outbreak of anti-Soviet resistance broke out, this time in Czechoslovakia. The Hungarians in 1956 were inspired by the events of 1848, but Czechs in 1968 looked to the Nazi occupation to understand their oppression under the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovakian people were motivated by the continued oppression since World War II and tried to improve their lives by creating a government that centered on themselves rather than the Soviets. They wanted a government and economy that would assist and serve Czechoslovakia. Instead of seeing their oppression in the implicit terms Hungarians saw it in, Czechoslovakians view of Soviet control was influenced by the experience of Nazi occupation in World War II.

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32 Sebestyen. Twelve Days, 277.
Much like in Hungary, the people of Czechoslovakia had a deep distrust for their State Secret Security Forces (STB). This is mainly due to their actions during Stalinism. In Czechoslovakia, like nearly all other Communist nations under Stalin, there were numerous purges in which thousands of citizens were arrested and some killed for political crimes.

The situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was different than Hungary in 1956, in part due to the shock the Hungarian revolution produced in Moscow. Unlike Hungary, where Rakosi had been in place throughout the Stalinist era, Antonin Novotny came to power in Czechoslovakia in 1957 during the destalinization period with the task of mending relations with the peoples of Czechoslovakia. One way in which he did so was by agreeing to slowly draw back from the “rigid” method they had been using to rule society.\(^{33}\) Meaning the end of purges, wrongful convictions and show trials. Novotny also planned to allow more person freedom. One of his most significant decisions was to re-appraise the political trials of the early 1950s. In 1963 the Ministry of Justice acknowledged that it had “unjustly persecuted” more than 400 former communist officials.\(^{34}\) However, a special report that reviewed prosecutions and imprisonments of tens of thousands of innocent non-communists for political crimes was never published.\(^{35}\)

Countless families had been affected by these wrongful convictions. One individual who we know of first hand is Heda Kovaly, author of \textit{Under a Cruel Star}. In her memoir of life in Prague from 1941 to 1968, she tells us of her husband Rudolf, who

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
was accused of party disloyalty. He was tried, convicted, and eventually killed although it was well-known by both the community and government that he was innocent.

Describing a meeting during the 1967 push for reform, one man asked what really happened to the family members of so many Czechoslovakians. He avowed at a lecture on crime in Czechoslovakia,

I want to hear what really happened to all those people who were hanged in the fifties. For eleven years all the papers called them names and said they were the worst kind of criminals. Now we’re told, just by the way, that they were innocent. And that’s all. You should explain to us here what kind of laws and courts we have when innocent people get hanged. And why aren’t we told what really happened so that we don’t have to feel like idiots or scoundrels for having agreed with it? When they send a convicted spy to prison somewhere in the West, we organize protest rallies. Here at home we let our own people get hanged and even pass resolutions to approve it! How do you think we feel now?36

Kovaly went on to say that the rest of the crowd began to ask similar questions and shout at the men on stage meant to give a simple presentation. Eventually the pressure of an entire nation coming down on him forced the president Antonin Novotny to resign on January 1, 1968. From the winter of 1968 to the summer of ’68 Czechoslovakia managed to briefly secede from the Soviets and manage their own government nearly free from Soviet involvement. This time period was known as the Prague Spring.

In 1967 the STB still had a massive presence, including 20,000 full time employees and 147,000 part time agents. Unlike the events twelve years earlier in Budapest, where the people attacked the police during the revolt, in Czechoslovakia the government quietly fired the more “compromised” members of the STB in 1967. This is one of the several reasons why, unlike in Hungary, the Prague Spring was allowed to last for so long. Many of the changes were done quietly and peacefully. Another reason why the Prague Spring was able to last so much longer than the revolt in Budapest is because there was political stability throughout the entire time. This is mainly due to the fact that at the time it was not a threat. Largely the conservative nature of the Action Program and other actions taken by the new reformist government are to thank for this.

As a result of the new government in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland adopted a new critical attitude towards Czechoslovakia. They felt that the current situation in Eastern Europe was extremely tense and feared that they could experience similar reformist pressures against their regimes. These feelings were expressed to Brezhnev when he visited the two states in mid-January of ’68. As a result Brezhnev asked first secretary Alexander Dubcek to immediately visit Moscow. While meeting with Brezhnev Dubcek assured the Soviet high command that he would “do everything in my utmost to assist the efforts by our party’s Central Committee to seek the further consideration of our fraternal friendship and stronger all-round cooperation.” He also declared that he had no intention of leaving the Warsaw pact. This gave him and

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37 Navratil, The Prague Spring 68. 28.
38 Ibid.
Czechoslovakia more leeway with the USSR to pursue internal reform than Hungary had had in 1956.

In early ‘68 Dubcek was a “little-known leader of the Slovak party organization.” Dubcek was chosen because he was someone who everyone in the central committee agreed on. His elevation to such a high position surprised everyone, especially since he was not well known in the Czech lands. As Ekiert states, “the outsider Dubcek had been ‘pushed’ into that position, not because of his aura of a reformist, not because he was someone with a clear perception of how to help Czechoslovakia, but because at that moment in time he was the most obvious compromise figure.”

In early February Josef Smrkovsky published an article titled “What Lies Ahead,” emphasizing the desirability of forging links between intellectuals and the workers and also the need “for greater scope of action and dissent in the party’s lower and middle ranks.” It became one of the most influential initial writings of the reform movement. In his article he alluded back to Nazi oppression to emphasize the importance of unity between the Czechs and Slovaks: “There is no greater Czech national interest than the strength of this republic, which one cannot imagine without Slovaks. The years 1938-1939 taught a lesson not only to the Slovaks but to us Czechs as well! Let us not forget

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41 Ibid, 137.
that the first free voice of Czechoslovakia rang out on domestic soil at Banska Bystrica in 1944!"43

The Action Program was not radical in the sense of what it changed, but radical in the sense that it was a break from the Soviet government. Unlike Hungary, it was nonviolent and did not break from the Soviet system and the Warsaw Pact. The Action Program was one of the first actions of the new reformist leadership. It was written in February, but was not approved until April and then was published a few days later. It advocated what was soon called “socialism with a human face.”44 It suggested the potential for small-scale private enterprises and the democratization of economic institutions. It also sought to revise the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks. The Program represented a “radical break with the political practices of the post-Stalinist regimes in the region and as such, was completely unacceptable to Brezhnev and the other communist leaders.”45 76 percent of Czechs and 76 percent of Slovaks approved the program, however it was seen as too radical for the conservative members of the CSSR.46 People were excited about the Action Program because of what it represented. It represented a move towards a liberalized economy and government where the Czechoslovakian people would have more freedoms. The Program criticized the previous government in its approach to social and economic problems and condemned

43 Ibid. 46.
44 Ekiert. The State Against Society, 140.
46 Ibid.
issues like its misuse of power. The program also pointed to the need for a new electoral law, economic reform and the democratization of economic institutions.\textsuperscript{47}

In February the USSR was still undecided about the reforms, such as the liberalization of its economy, occurring in Prague. A television reporter in Prague said on February 28, 1968 that the response in the USSR was either “highly negative,” saying that the reforms were “revisionist and dangerous” or “highly positive” saying that the were “healthy and democratic” and no threat to the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{48} However, the Soviet ambassador was not so sure. He reported back to Moscow in February, “the Czechoslovak reforms constituted a right-wing threat as well as an anti-Soviet and anti-socialist drive.”\textsuperscript{49}

In April after the Action Program passed by 80 percent, Dubcek was asked to visit Brezhnev in Moscow again. April was an extremely uncertain time in Prague. As one April issue of a press bulletin called the B-expres proclaimed, “In troubled times it is difficult to prophesy.”\textsuperscript{50} This is to say that no one in Prague knew what was going to come of the Action Program and also the Prague Spring. The Kremlin was concerned with the new program, because they feared that it was a move towards westernizing Czechoslovakia, however Dubcek calmed their nerves and called on the Soviets “to maintain that the first priority … is to pursue what is positive, the socialist factor that

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 142.
\textsuperscript{48} Navratil. \textit{The Prague Spring 68}, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 29.
endorses the Action Program."\textsuperscript{51} Although this helped to calm the Soviets they were relieved to find out that should Dubcek lose power or Czechoslovakia become too counterrevolutionary the West would not make a military counter move should the USSR use military force in Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{52}

Through the summer there was little development. This occurred for several reasons, two of which were the USSR determined that “there was no imminent threat from Czechoslovakia; therefore no need for action and Czechoslovakia was experiencing transitional problems; close monitoring was required but no action needed.”\textsuperscript{53} The Soviets felt issues like the Action Program were only occurring, because Dubcek had not gained full control of the government yet and once things settled down Czechoslovakia would be back to “normal.” In reality Czechoslovakia was functioning rather smoothly under Dubcek and was moving towards a more liberalized economy and government. However, in August there was a meeting in Bratislava of the USSR, GDR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the CSSR. At this meeting the USSR made it clear that they would use force in any Warsaw Pact nation that changed to a “westernized” government, meaning either an economic or political move towards western ideals (i.e. capitalism or democracy).

After the meeting the peoples of Czechoslovakia were fed up with the USSR and their domineering rule. They wanted to rule themselves and have an economy that benefited Czechoslovakia and not an outside oppressor. A Soviet official complained

\textsuperscript{51} Navratil. The Prague Spring 68, 131.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 87.
\textsuperscript{53} Karen Dawisha. The Kremlin and the Prague Spring (Berkeley: University of California P, 1984), 362.
that an article in the media said, “the policy of the fraternal socialist countries is compared to Hitler’s policy and the press of the fraternal socialist countries is equated with the Goebbels propaganda machine.”

This illustrates that Czech and Slovak peoples were disgusted with the Soviets, it also shows that they drew upon memories of the Nazi occupation to incite the rest of the masses. Another allusion to the Nazi occupation was a poster on one of the buildings in Prague. In a personal account of the invasion on August 21 Frantisek Janouch wrote,

On 21 August, at half past four, a friend from Dejvice called: ‘The Russian tanks are already on Lenin Avenue. I can see them from my window.’ I was unable to answer. Words stuck in my throat and tears came to my eyes. I was remembering 9 May 1945, when, also early in the morning, another friend from Dejvice had called me: ‘Soviet tanks are already here. I can see them from my window.’

Janouch goes on to discuss how twenty-three years ago the Soviet tanks brought freedom from Nazi oppression, but on August 21 they brought with them oppression. A sign on Lenin Avenue may have summed it up best by saying, “Your fathers were liberators – you are aggressors.”

The sign referred back to World War II when the Russians liberated Prague.

Both revolts show that the Soviet Union did not put up with dissident states and would bring them back under their reign if they broke away, regardless if they have the

54 Navratil. *The Prague Spring* 68, 343.
55 Ibid.
right. As Ken Jowitt states, "The Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 prove that the Soviet Union does not ideologically tolerate regime individualism and will destroy it when possible." In addition to this one of the other reasons why the Soviet Union intervened when it did was because in September there was a Party Congress scheduled if the Czechoslovakian reform movement was legitimatized then it would have been next to impossible for the USSR to intervene with military action and very difficult for them to control the developments in CSSR.

By this time the schism between the Soviet communists in the Prague regime who were still loyal to the USSR and those who wanted more independence had grown too large to be mended. During a weekend gathering just south of Prague the Soviet loyal communists drew up a plan for Soviet invasion, the loyalist Czechs promised to trigger a crisis on August 20 to give the intervention legitimacy. They handed the plan to the Soviet embassy. The Politburo deliberated for three days from August 15-17. After the three days they concluded, "all political means of assistance from the CPSU and the other fraternal parties have already been exhausted in an effort to get the CZP’s leadership to rebuff the rightist and anti-socialist forces, the CPSU CC Politburo believes the time has come to resort to active measures in defense of socialism in the CSSR, and has unanimously decided to provide help and support to the Communist Party and people of Czechoslovakia with military force." 

On August 20-21 armies of five Eastern Bloc nations invaded with 5,000 – 7,000 Soviet tanks and between 200,000 – 600,000 troops. One Czech man who was in Prague

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57 Ekiert. *The State Against Society*, 158.
at the time observed, a demonstration was approaching from the direction of Republic Square. Several hundred marching young people sang, almost inaudibly, the national anthem. Two boys and two girls who were marching in the front row carried between them a bloodied Czechoslovak flag. People with clenched fists and tears in their eyes were standing at the sides of the street.\(^{59}\)

Seventy-two Czechs were killed and hundreds wounded, while around 300,000 fled. In April of 1969 Dubček was replaced and a process of “Normalization” began.

Hungary’s revolution was driven by a deep sense of nationalism and pride and sought to remove the Soviets from their everyday lives and once again be a sovereign state. Only a small nation it must have been clear from the beginning that the Soviets would eventually crush the revolt, however the Hungarians sense of nationalism drove them to resist the oppressor regardless. Czechoslovakia’s revolt was a much less abrasive one, but a revolt nonetheless. They braved one of the world’s super powers and managed to govern themselves for seven months. Until they were crushed by a global tyrant in the Soviet Union.

This study has shown that in both cases the Soviet Union was simply too strong to break away from, however both Hungary and Czechoslovakia resisted. Although the revolts were very different they both sought the same outcome: freedom from Soviet oppression. When an outside observer looks back on what these brave individuals accomplish and dared to do it is astounding.

In both cases Soviet oppression drove the occupied nations to revolt. In Hungary they attempted to throw off the chains of Soviet oppression because of their strong history of resistance and overwhelming sense of nationalism. In Czechoslovakia they fought for independence after thirty years of outside oppression in the form of the Nazis and then Soviets. Both nations knew who they were and what they were fighting for: they were proud peoples fighting for their freedom.
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