

# Eastern Europe in 1968

Kevin McDermott · Matthew Stibbe  
Editors

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Responses to the Prague Spring and Warsaw  
Pact Invasion

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Cover illustration: Young Czechs demonstrate their support for Dubček and the Prague Spring, Wenceslas Square (probably late August 1968).

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>aktiv/aktyv</i>	Meeting or group of party activists
<i>apparatchik</i>	Communist party-state official or bureaucrat
Balfour Declaration	Public declaration made by British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour on 2 November 1917 in favour of establishing a ‘nation home for the Jewish people’ in Palestine
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party
<i>Bezirk</i>	East German administrative district
Biafran War	War between the Nigerian military government and the would-be secessionist state of Biafra, lasting from 6 July 1967 to 15 January 1970 and involving large-scale famine among Biafran civilians
CC	Central Committee (of Communist Party)
CDSP	Current Digest of the Soviet Press
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
Comintern	Communist International
CPCC	Central Party Control Commission
CPM	Communist Party of Moldavia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ČSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (formal name and acronym adopted for the communist state in Czechoslovakia under the July 1960 constitution)
Cultural Revolution	Movement launched in China from 1966 to 1976 under Communist Party leader Mao Zedong,

	involving large-scale purges, particularly of older party members, and the ruthless reinforcement of 'Maoist' ideology
ECP	Estonian Communist Party
Euro-communism	Revisionist movement in West European Communist Parties in the 1970s and 1980s
FDJ	Free German Youth (GDR)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
<i>glasnost</i>	Gorbachev's policy of 'openness'
Gulag	Main Administration of Camps (USSR)
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
K-231	Club of Former Political Prisoners (Czechoslovakia)
KAN	Club of Committed Non-Party Members (Czechoslovakia)
KGB	Committee for State Security (USSR)
KhTS	Chronicle of Current Events (USSR)
<i>kolkhoz</i>	Collective farm (USSR)
<i>Komsomol</i>	Young Communist League (USSR)
KSČ	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
<i>kulak</i>	Better-off peasant
LCP	Latvian Communist Party
LSSR	Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, western military alliance founded in 1949
NEM	New Economic Mechanism (Hungary)
<i>Neues Deutschland</i>	'New Germany', SED daily newspaper
<i>nomenklatura</i>	List of key appointments approved by the party
'normalisation'	Term referring to hard-line system in Czechoslovakia, 1969–89
NPF	National Patriotic Front (Soviet Moldavia)
NVA	National People's Army (GDR)
'Operation Danube'	Code-name for the Warsaw Pact military invasion of Czechoslovakia
<i>Ostpolitik</i>	West German policy of détente towards Eastern Europe, mid-1960s onwards
PCC	Political Consultative Committee (of Warsaw Pact)
<i>perestroika</i>	Gorbachev's policy of 'reconstruction'
Petőfi Circle	Intellectual discussion group founded in Budapest in 1956 and often regarded as the spiritual cornerstone of the Hungarian Revolution of October–November
Politburo (or Presidium)	Highest decision-making body of communist party

PPSH	Labour Party of Albania
<i>Pravda</i>	‘Truth’, CPSU daily newspaper
PZPR	Polish United Workers’ Party
RCP	Romanian Communist Party
<i>Rudé právo</i>	‘Red Right’, KSČ daily newspaper
<i>samizdat</i>	‘Self-publishing’ in the USSR and Eastern Europe
SDP	Social Democratic Party (Czechoslovakia)
SDS	Collected <i>Samizdat</i> Documents (USSR)
<i>Securitate</i>	Romanian secret police
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (GDR)
Sejm	Lower house of the Polish parliament
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ( <i>Socijalistička federativna republika Jugoslavija</i> )
Sino-Soviet split	Ideological split between the Soviet bloc and the People’s Republic of China which began in the late 1950s and became open after 1960
Six Day War	War between Israel and its Arab neighbours (Egypt, Jordan and Syria) from 5 to 10 June 1967, ending in Israeli victory and military occupation of the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Arab East Jerusalem, the Gaza strip and the whole of the Sinai Peninsula
SKH	Croatian League of Communists
SKJ	Yugoslav League of Communists
Solidarity	Independent (non-communist) Polish trade union, founded in 1980
SPD	Social Democratic Party (West Germany)
Stasi	East German secret police
StB	State Security (Czechoslovakia)
‘Šumava’	Code-name for large-scale military exercises in Czechoslovakia, June–July 1968
TASS	Soviet news agency
UDBA	State Security (Yugoslavia)
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<i>Volkspolizei</i>	People’s Police (GDR)
Warsaw Pact	Soviet-led military organisation founded in 1955

## ARCHIVAL ABBREVIATIONS

AAN	Archive of Modern Records (Poland)
ABS	Archive of the Security Services (Czech Republic)
AČR	Czech Radio Archive
AJ	Yugoslav Archive
AMPJ	Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Albania)
ANIC	Central Historical National Archive (Romania)
AOSPRM	Archive of Social-Political Organisations of the Republic of Moldova
AQSH	Central State Archive (Albania)
AÚSD	Archive of the Institute of Contemporary History (Czech Republic)
BStU	The Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (Stasi Records Agency)
COMDOS	Central Archive of the Bulgarian State Security and Military Intelligence Services (Bulgaria)
DA	Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bulgaria)
DALO	State Archive of the Lviv Region (Ukraine)
DAOO	State Archive of the Odessa Region (Ukraine)
DVIA	State Military History Archive (Bulgaria)
ERA	Estonian National Archive
LSA	Lithuanian Special Archive
MNL-OL	Hungarian National Archive
NA	National Archive (Czech Republic)
RGANI	Russian State Archive of Contemporary History

SAPMO-BArch	Foundation for the Archive of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the Former GDR (Germany)
TsDA	Central State Archive (Bulgaria)
TsDAHO	Central State Archive of Mass Organisations (Ukraine)

## CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS, 1968–69

### 1968

- 5 January Central Committee plenum of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) elects Alexander Dubček as First Secretary.
- 4 March KSČ Presidium starts process of abolishing censorship with almost immediate effect.
- 8 March ‘March Events’ begin in Poland with large-scale student protests in Warsaw and other cities.
- 23 March Leaders of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria meet in Dresden to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia.
- 5 April KSČ Central Committee plenum adopts the reformist Action Programme.
- 4–5 May Leaders of the USSR and Czechoslovakia meet in Moscow.
- 8 May Secret meeting in Moscow of leaders of the USSR, GDR, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria (‘the Five’).
- 2 June Major student strikes and occupations (‘June Events’) begin in Yugoslavia.
- 20 June–11 July Extended military exercises (‘Šumava’) on Czechoslovak territory involving mainly Soviet, but also Polish, Hungarian, East German and Czechoslovak forces.
- 26 June Czechoslovak National Assembly formally adopts a law abolishing censorship.

- 27 June Publication of Ludvík Vaculík's 'Two Thousand Words' manifesto.
- 14–15 July Leaders of 'the Five' meet in Warsaw and send 'Warsaw Letter' to the Czechoslovak Central Committee, the KSČ Presidium having declined to attend.
- 28 July–6 August Ninth World Youth and Student Festival held in Sofia.
- 29 July–1 August Bilateral meeting of Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders at Čierna nad Tisou.
- 3 August Meeting of leaders of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria in Bratislava issues joint proclamation. Draft 'Letter of Invitation' is handed to Petro Shelest, head of Ukrainian party.
- 17 August Soviet Politburo decides unanimously to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia.
- 18 August Leaders of Poland, GDR, Hungary and Bulgaria agree with Soviet decision.
- 20–21 August Soviet-led military invasion of Czechoslovakia ('Operation Danube'). KSČ Presidium votes seven to four to condemn the intervention.
- 21 August Dubček and other KSČ leaders are arrested by Soviet officers. Mass passive resistance to invasion begins throughout Czechoslovakia.
- 21 August Nicolae Ceauşescu, the Romanian leader, condemns the Soviet invasion in a speech in Bucharest.
- 22 August Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress of KSČ is held clandestinely in a Prague factory.
- 23–26 August Arrested Czechoslovak leaders meet their Soviet counterparts in the Kremlin and reluctantly agree the top secret 'Moscow Protocol'.
- September–November Demotion and resignation of several leading Prague Spring reformers.
- 18 October Czechoslovak National Assembly ratifies treaty on the 'Temporary Presence of Soviet Troops in the ČSSR'.
- 1969**
- 16 January Self-immolation of Jan Palach in Prague. He dies three days later.
- 28 March Large-scale demonstrations throughout the country after Czechoslovak ice hockey team defeats the USSR at the world championships in Stockholm.



- 17 April KSC Central Committee votes to remove Dubček as First Secretary and replace him with Gustáv Husák. ‘Normalisation’ of the country begins in earnest.
- 19–21 August Mass protests in thirty-one Czechoslovak towns and cities mark the first anniversary of the invasion. They are met with considerable police brutality.

# EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERS AT THE TIME OF THE PRAGUE SPRING

Albania—Enver Hoxha  
Bulgaria—Todor Zhivkov  
Czechoslovakia—Alexander Dubček  
East Germany—Walter Ulbricht  
Hungary—János Kádár  
Poland—Władysław Gomułka  
Romania—Nicolae Ceaușescu  
Soviet Union—Leonid Brezhnev  
Yugoslavia—Josip Broz Tito  
Soviet Estonia—Johannes Käbin  
Soviet Latvia—Augusts Voss  
Soviet Lithuania—Antanas Sniečkus  
Soviet Moldavia—Ivan Bodiul  
Soviet Ukraine—Petro Shelest