



# International Reaction to the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia: Defense and Reorganization of the Status Quo

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## Abstract

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was largely ignored by western countries despite the fact that Czechoslovakia was, at the time, moving in a political direction that would likely have been friendlier to the west. In fact, the only powers to aggressively speak out against it were in the Communist world. In this essay, I will explain how this period was marked by a shift in the status quo and a move towards detente between the Eastern and Western blocs. This incentivized Western nations to not interfere when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia whereas communist countries like China and Romania who had something to gain from altering the established status quo had more reason to speak out against the invasion. I will start by providing background on the event itself before moving into an analysis of the historiography of the subject. Once that is done, I will explain the motivations and actions of the Western powers, the states that toed the Soviet line, and the Communist states who went against Moscow, even if they only did so through their rhetoric. Ultimately, the Soviet aligned states and the West were more interested in protecting the status quo than interest in establishing a detente while China wanted to supplant the Soviet Union as the principal communist power and Romania simply wanted to establish friendlier terms with the west.



## The Invasion

The Invasion occurred August, 1968  
It allegedly occurred due to Soviet fears of counterrevolutionary reforms in Czechoslovakia  
The invasion was brief and ended in the replacement of the CSSR's leadership.  
The Western Bloc chose to barely respond  
China and Romania spoke out far louder  
Most of the Warsaw pact was involved in the invasion



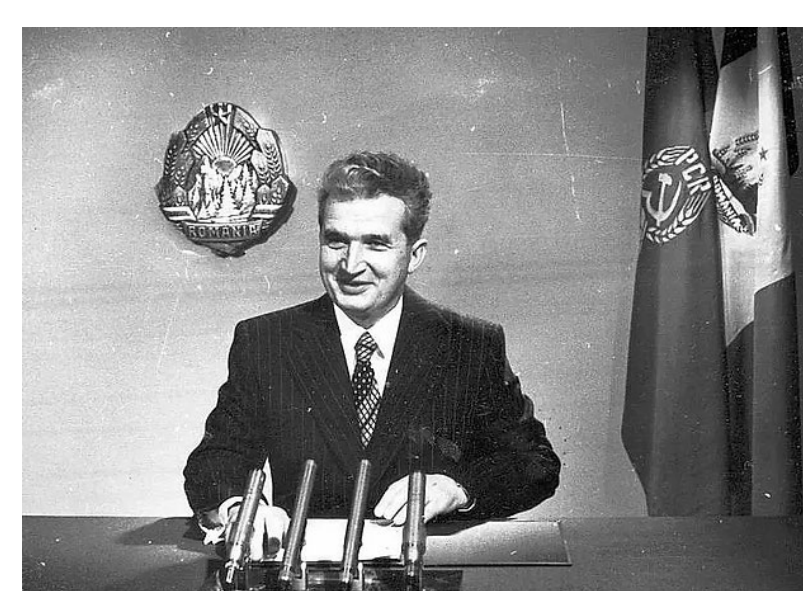
## Czechoslovakian Reform

Alexander Dubcek  
Head of the CSSR communist party and advocate of reform.  
Pushed forward "Socialism with a human face" started to decentralize economy and state in order to increase democratization.  
Seen as counterrevolutionary by the USSR

## A New Status Quo?

At the time, a détente between East and West was emerging. Both wanted to avoid more tensions and so the West chose to not meaningfully interfere.  
Other communist countries, however, were more than willing to speak out.  
China wanted to become more internationally powerful, and Romania was out for itself.

## Romania and China



Ceausescu  
Dictator of Romania who opposed the invasion.  
He allowed the Romanian media to openly criticize the invasion  
Ultimately used this as chance to increase his own power and trade with the west.



Mao Zedong  
Chairman of China  
Strongly opposed to the Soviet Union  
Under his rule, China didn't get involved, but it did try to exploit the situation.  
Had previously supported the Soviet Union on Hungary, but by now had become firmly opposed to their methods and model of communism.

China was out to establish itself as the new great communist power and potential new heart of the communist world. As a result, it decried both the Czechoslovakians and the Soviets, declaring them revisionists and reactionaries.  
The Romanians on the other hand were aggressively opposed to the invasion and spoke out about it regularly. This may have been done to pursue closer ties with the West however

## The Soviet Bloc



The Soviet Bloc was attempting to maintain its chokehold over its Eastern European client states.  
Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany all joined the invasion.  
This show of force ensured that all would know the Eastern status quo could not truly change without Soviet approval.  
They also needed to reaffirm their strength in the face of the growing rivalry with China

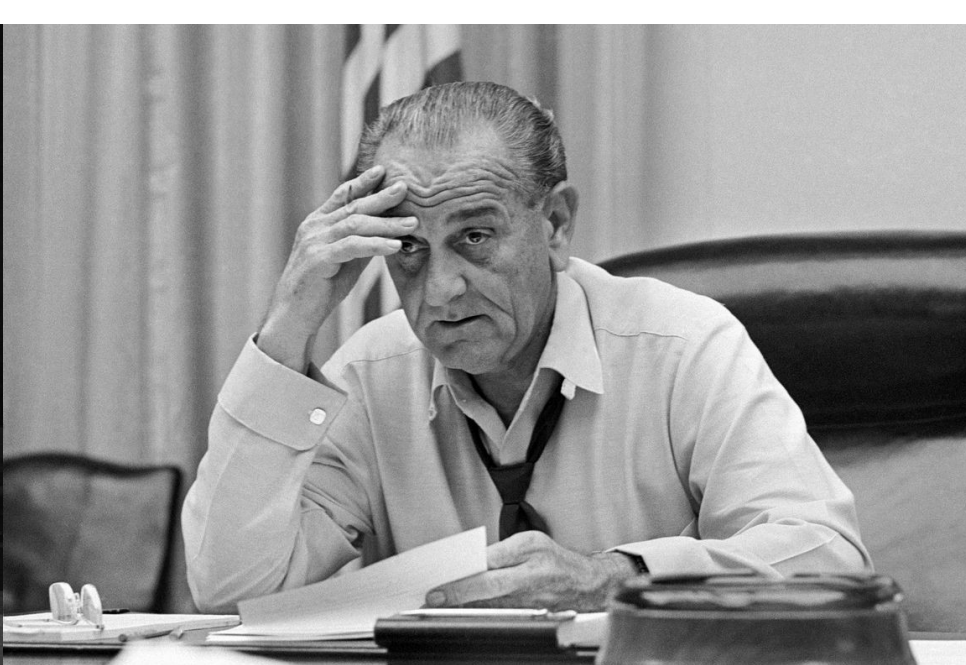


Leonid Brezhnev: Current leader of the USSR in the wake of the ousting of Khrushchev.  
Hard line communist who wanted to ensure the communism never ended wherever it came to be.  
The invasion marked the start of the Brezhnev doctrine that supported future interventions.

## The Western Bloc



NATO used a Policy of Ambiguous Response which meant they had no clear response to any given situation.  
Charged the Soviet Union with useless crimes  
Generally did not want to disrupt the status quo or threaten the emerging detente



President Johnson  
Still dealing with Vietnam disaster  
Desperately pushing for détente  
Had little desire to intervene in Czechoslovakia  
Desperately wanted to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union in SALT talks to reduce spread of nuclear weapons.

## Conclusion

The invasion reinforced Soviet authority but revealed cracks in its ability to maintain its dominance over the communist world. Newspapers from Romania and Czechoslovakia were spreading throughout Eastern Europe despite Soviet efforts to control them while Romania and China remained actively opposed to the invasion. The Soviet Union had crushed the Prague Spring, but in doing so it showed the weakness of its position.