

TOWARDS A PORTABLE PUBLIC SPHERE: HOW TECHNOLOGY CREATED A
DISCURSIVE SPACE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1968

by

Misha Mazzini Griffith
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
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of
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in Partial Fulfillment of
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of
Doctor of Philosophy
History and Art History

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DEDICATION

There are two men in my life who have made this study possible. They have sacrificed much, have critiqued the work when necessary, and have encouraged me at every turn. I wish to dedicate this work to my husband, Jerry Griffith and my son Alexander.

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A dissertation may be the work of a single researcher, but this work cannot be done alone. Three exceptional scholars formed my committee and have supported me throughout this process; I find it difficult to adequately express my gratitude for their patience and assistance. Dina Copelman, and Marion Deshmukh are scholars from whom I have learned so much. My advisor, T. Mills Kelly, has been my Polaris—my pole star—patiently guiding me in the right direction. I received institutional help with a travel grant from George Mason University's Provost Office, which made travel to archives in Europe possible.

The Open Society Archives in the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary and the National Museum of Technology in Prague, the Czech Republic, provided me with ample archival and exhibition information that was critical to the research. Both of these facilities deserve greater support from the scholarly community. My gratitude also goes out to Gary Francis Powers, Jr. and the volunteers at the Cold War Museum on Vint Hill in Virginia for their demonstration of the teleprinter and other intelligence gathering systems. One reason why historians love to live in this area is the proximity to the two best facilities for archival research in the United States: the National Archives and the Library of Congress; and I want to specifically thank Helen Fedor at the European Reading Room for her support. The National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Library Director David Muhlena provided their treasure trove of Oral Histories from Czech and Slovak emigrants, and I thank Rosamund Johnson who led the collection effort. Fenwick Library at George Mason University's Fairfax campus helped to gather materials from far-flung libraries, and I wish to thank the Dean of Libraries John Zenelis, Digital Collections Archivist Robert Vay, History Librarian George Oberle, Development Officer Jamie Coniglio, UDTS Coordinator Sally Evans, and the rest of the library staff for their assistance and comfortable facilities. Eminent historians in various fields have been generous to me with their time, recommendations, and the use of unpublished works, and so I would like to acknowledge the scholarly assistance of Cate Giustino, Paulina Bren, Kiernan Williams, Hugh Agnew, Owen V. Johnson, Peter Hruby, Zdeněk David, Madeleine Albright, and A. Ross Johnson. Finally, I wish to thank those colleagues and fellow grad students who gave me moral support throughout the process, and especially John and Elizabeth Orens for bottomless cups of tea, suggestions and sympathy. *Opravdu moc vám děkuji.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Czechoslovak Television	ČST
Czechoslovak Radio.....	ČSR
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.....	KSČ
Czechoslovak News Agency.....	ČTK
Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior Secret Police	StB
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Central Committee	UV KSČ
Communist Party of the Soviet Union	CPSU

ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A PORTABLE PUBLIC SPHERE: HOW TECHNOLOGY CREATED A DISCURSIVE SPACE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1968

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This study examines the efforts to use communication technology to create a public sphere in two very different circumstances. The first instance was in socialist Czechoslovakia in January of 1968, when a group of reformers were given the leadership of an authoritarian government in an economic crisis. They instituted such reforms as freedom of expression to re-engage the population and revitalize the economy. The second instance was in August of that same year when a foreign military intervention stopped the government's reform agenda. In both situations, broadcast and consumer technology played crucial roles by engaging citizen participation in politics and the public space.

Using a constructivist methodology, this study examines the technology, the users, the ideological aspirations, the political movements, and the institutional management of the broadcast media to better understand the context of the technology. This extended study demonstrates that the personalized communication devices available

in Czechoslovakia during the 1968 reform movement and the subsequent Soviet-led invasion played an important and understudied role in the creation of the successful but short-lived public sphere during the period commonly known as the “Prague Spring.”

The compact and personalized nature of these new technologies allowed users to repurpose the original intended functions of their equipment to develop a range of sophisticated, interwoven dialogues between the elites, content production personnel, and the general public. The result was the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership’s ability to use communications technology to gain popular support for their pluralistic reforms in the first eight months of 1968. Following the Soviet-led invasion devised to put an end to those reforms, the same broadcast technologies and workers became the organizing arm of the captive government and were used to coordinate the non-violent resistance against the invasion. The situation came full circle because the government and the media return to their pre-1968 configurations.

Set in a brief time period that contained an established inventory of equipment, this study concludes that, through the process of democratic rationalization, the choices made were formed through social pressures and the individuals’ knowledge, aspirations, and skill. In both situations, the broadcast media facilitated a lively public space which was only abandoned under extreme duress.

CHAPTER ONE

The study of the democratization of technology generally focuses on the grass-roots employment of cell phones, personal computers, and the Internet to form the public spheres necessary to create or sustain democracies in the 21st century.¹ However, this focus on more recent technological innovation ignores the importance of earlier personalized devices like those available in 1968, specifically transistor radios and tape recorders, to foment popular political mobilization. While the pre-Digital Age technology appears capable only of top down communication, the personalized communication devices available in Czechoslovakia during the 1968 reform movement and the subsequent Soviet-led invasion played an important and understudied role in the creation of the successful but short-lived public sphere during the period commonly known as the “Prague Spring.”² The compact and personalized nature of the technologies allowed users

1. For more information on the field of the democratization of technology and the wider field of the social construction of technology, please see: Maria Bakardjieva and Andrew Feenberg, “Community Technology and Democratic Rationalization,” *The Information Society*, no. 18 (2002): 181-192; Wiebe E. Bijker, “How is Technology Made? –That is the Question,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, no. 34 (2010): 63-76; Darrin Durant, “Models of Democracy in Social Studies of Science,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 41, no. 5 (October 2011): 691-714; Andrew Feenberg, *Critical Theory of Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Andrew Feenberg, “Democratizing Technology: Interests, Codes, Rights,” *The Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (2001): 117-195; Brian Martin, “Social Defense Strategy: The Role of Technology,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, no. 5 (September 1999): 535-552.

2. The term “Prague Spring” of course refers partly to the “springtime of the people” movements of 1848. The Prague Spring is also a famous international music festival which is held every year in Prague during the first two weeks of May. A handful of scholars, such as Madeleine Albright in her 1976 doctoral dissertation, tried to popularize the more inclusive “Czechoslovak Spring” to acknowledge that the reform movement touched the entire country. However, this term has fallen out of usage.

to repurpose the original intended functions of their equipment to develop a range of sophisticated, interwoven dialogues between the elites, content production personnel, and consumers of that content. The result was the Communist Party leadership's ability to use communications technology to gain popular support for their pluralistic reforms in the first eight months of 1968. Following the Soviet-led invasion devised to put an end to those reforms, the same broadcast technologies became the organizing arm of the captive government and were used to coordinate the non-violent resistance against the invasion. The technologies alone did not accomplish these feats; it was the skilled, experienced people using their knowledge that made this happen.

Introduction

At twelve noon on August 21, 1968, in Czechoslovakia, nothing happened.

For two minutes, Czechs and Slovaks stopped work and vacated the streets of their cities in a silent mass demonstration. Just twelve hours before the demonstration, several hundred thousand troops and thousands of tanks from five Warsaw Pact states invaded Czechoslovakia. Five hours before the demonstration, the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia were abducted by Soviet paratroopers. Four hours before the demonstration, Soviet tanks rammed the barricades in front of the Czechoslovak Radio offices, killing five unarmed civilians. Troops then raided the studios and destroyed the equipment they found there. Two hours before the demonstration, the Union of Creative Artists put out a call over an improvised radio and television network for a statewide, two minute mass demonstration at noon to honor those

who had already perished.³ The people showed their solidarity with their leaders and with their fellow citizens. Like so many important moments of 1968, those two minutes of solidarity were made possible by the broadcast media. No other entity had the ability to communicate instantly with the entire population.

In the extraordinary year of 1968, protestors worldwide took to the streets to oppose political and corporate abuses and to support a variety of causes. Most of the unrest came from groundswells of student, minority, and labor organizations in opposition to perceived government overreach. These movements were distinctively bottom-up protests. There was one notable exception, communist Czechoslovakia. A new cadre of party elites tasked with fixing an economic crisis instigated this unique movement from the top-down. Their strategy was to reform their government into a more democratic, more open state.⁴ In order to move their agenda forward, the reformers called upon the stalwart transmission belt of propaganda, the party-controlled broadcast and print media, and removed the fetters of censorship. Once freed, the press and the broadcast media quickly embraced their new roles as watchdogs, investigators, and facilitators of the nascent public sphere. It is tempting to call them too successful, because the other authoritarian rulers in the Warsaw Pact saw this new openness as a

3. "10:15, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material of the Czechoslovak Radio Stations* Radio Free Europe papers, Open Society Archives 300_30_14, Box 14, Book 1, 69.

4. "Akční program, komunistické strany Československa," *Práce*, 10. dubna 1968, 4. In this action program, the reformers promised: "Wide space for a fellow-initiative, open, exchange, insight, and democratization of the whole fellow community and political system becomes a literal precondition for the dynamism of a socialist society - a condition for us to compete in the world and honestly fulfill our obligations towards the international workers of the movement."

contagion they feared was spreading to their own people.⁵ The subsequent Soviet-led invasion neutralized the party and state apparatus, but the broadcast media stepped into the power vacuum to mobilize the public into a non-violent resistance movement.

This dissertation examines the role of communications technology and more succinctly the role of the broadcast media in forming a public sphere in Czechoslovakia during the reform period of 1968. It is a case study of the technology available in 1968, the interconnected networks of information distribution, consumers' involvement as active participants, and broadcast workers' agency in making their content accessible. The discipline of the history of technology contains a subset known as the democratization of technology, in which historians use constructivist methodologies to consider the interaction of humans and technologies to create democratic societies.⁶ This approach is frequently used by historians in the research field of Science, Technology, and Society [STS], most notably through the critical theories on the philosophy of technology advanced by Andrew Feenberg of Simon Fraser University.⁷ Feenberg insists that the study of technology is more of a study of those things around the technology:

The success of a technology is not fully explained by its technical achievements. There are always alternative paths of development in the beginning and social forces determine which are pursued and which fall by the wayside. Behind each

5. "Document No. 36: 'On the Current Situation (Some Urgent Points Regarding the USSR's International Position),' The CPSU Politburo's Dissemination of Briefing Materials on the Crisis to CPSU Members. May 27, 1968," in *The Prague Spring '68*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil (New York: Central European Press, 2006), 150-1. This top secret memorandum declared that imperialists had infiltrated Czechoslovakia, and blamed the Action Program for recent unrest in Poland by "...bourgeois and Zionist circles in the intelligentsia..."

6. Wiebe Bijker, "The Need for Public Intellectuals: A Space for STS: Pre-Presidential Address, Annual Meeting 2001, Cambridge, MA," *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 443.

7. "About Andrew Feenberg," Simon Fraser University Faculty, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/>

of the technical devices that surround us there lies a halo of alternatives that were eliminated at some stage and that we have forgotten or notice only in the quaint illustrations of old books. What is called the principle of “underdetermination” teaches that technical considerations alone cannot explain why we are living with this particular survivor of the process of elimination rather than that one. History, not technical superiority in some absolute sense, explains why, for example, we use electric rather than gas-powered refrigerators, or gas-powered rather than electric cars.⁸

The equipment in this study was not cutting-edge technology; much of the broadcast equipment in Czechoslovakia in 1968 was already several years old. Consequently, the innovation in this study was in how the equipment was repurposed, or how the elite used it, not a factor of the innovation of a new technology.

Addressing the democratization of technology, we can see it both as the process of disseminating the equipment as widely as possible, or how the equipment is used as part of the democratic process. These two avenues of inquiry are not mutually exclusive. I show how some equipment such as tape recorders and transistor radios became cultural imperatives because they were portable and because they allowed the users to craft their own listening experience.

The second examination of the process of democratization is to identify the public sphere and how technology was part of that development. With the post-monarchial rise of the representative state, Jürgen Habermas devised the concept of the public sphere to contrast it with the private sphere. The salons, coffee houses, and public houses of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the places where citizens, mainly bourgeois, gathered to discuss the issues of the day, exemplified Habermas’ idea. He saw the public sphere as

8. Andrew Feenberg, “Critical Theory of Communication Technology: Introduction of the Special Section,” *The Information Society*, Vol. 25 (2009): 79.

the place where citizens learned from media such as newspapers, then argued from positions of self-interest to sway policy-makers.⁹ While the ballot box is the easiest method to quantify the outcomes to these arguments, I use Ian O’Flynn and Nicole Curato’s analytical framework of understanding transitions to democracy in terms of free and open deliberation between equals as the basis for legitimacy, rather than focusing on elections. Their work builds upon Habermas’, but they see universal access to the discursive space as the qualitative standard of success.¹⁰ The Prague Spring of 1968, with its attempted transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic socialist federation, makes an excellent case to consider using their methods. That the reformers themselves were highly cognizant of the multiple uses for broadcast media, and that the end of press censorship was one of their earliest reforms, demonstrates the integral role they understood technology played in their reform plans.¹¹ Additionally, certain reformers saw technology as the antidote for economic difficulties.¹² The situation changed so drastically during the Soviet-led invasion that for a brief period broadcast technology and the communication workers became the organizing and mobilizing facilitator in the absence of the government.

This case study adds to the discussion of how emerging democracies can use broadcast technology to their advantage. The historical approach I use differs from recent

9. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 20.

10. Ian O’Flynn and Nicole Curato, “Deliberative Democratization: a framework for systemic analysis,” *Policy Studies*, Vol. 36, no. 3 (2015): 299.

11. Zdeněk Mlynář, “Naše politická soustava a dělba moci,” *Rudé právo*, (Prague), 13. únor, 1968.

12. Ota Šik, “A Contribution to the Analysis of Economic Development,” *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1966): 35.

studies in the democratization of technology subfield because I look at a case in the past, as opposed to research into the very recent distribution of Digital Age equipment. The democratization of technology, when examined during the rise of social media, smart phones, and the Internet, is a phenomenon that demands scrutiny because of the near-universal adoption of the new equipment and their potential. Our mobile phones offer more than just phone-to-phone communication; the majority of the applications available on smart phones would not have been available prior to the year 2000, and those that had precedents in existing equipment like cameras, audio and video recorders, calculators, and even flashlights, would have each needed a separate apparatus to accomplish these functions. Cell phone technology has enabled many developing-world users to entirely by-pass the previously essential infrastructural advances such as rural electrification and wired telephone.¹³ One mobile phone data aggregation service estimates that there are now more mobile phones than people on earth.¹⁴ Considering the ubiquity of this technology, one can reasonably ask, does every person with a cell phone or an Internet connection have the potential to be part of the public sphere? Technically yes, but experientially no, and this dissertation examines why democratization does not necessarily depend on the numbers of high-tech gadgets.

The 2009 Iranian “Twitter” Revolution and the 2010 Arab Spring captured the world’s attention with the hope that long-time authoritarian regimes would finally

13. Cecilia S. Uy-Tioco, “Texting Capital: Mobile Phones, Social Transformation, and the Reproduction of Power in the Philippines,” (Ph.D. dissertation, George Mason University, 2013), 56, <https://search-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/docview/1435629961?accountid=14541>.

14. *GSMA Intelligence Website*, accessed February 24, 2017, <https://www.gsmainelligence.com>.

crumble under the weight of popular protests.¹⁵ Highly motivated activists took to the streets and brought the rest of the world with them via hand-held devices. “By associating these revolts with new technologies,” media critic Gholam Khiabany contended:

phrases such as Twitter revolution, Wikileaks revolution, Facebook revolution—not only pointed out the potential of new technologies but more significantly seemed to claim that such tools were the main engine and agents of social change in the region. This is certainly not an entirely false explanation. Imaginative use of new technologies to disseminate information, to focus the collective minds of populations, to break down the barriers of censorship and to pave the way for the emergence of a “public,” was real, and not simply a figment of western journalists’ imagination. Many activists in Iran and the Arab world also articulated and forwarded such interpretations of events in the region.¹⁶

Not everyone shares this enthusiasm for the new technology, and the fact that the Iranian and the Egyptian rebellions failed to establish working democracies supports the skepticism of critics like Evgeny Morozov, who pointed out a certain drawback to Twitter:

[a] Twitter revolution is only possible in a regime where the state apparatus is completely ignorant of the Internet and has no virtual presence of its own. However, most authoritarian states are now moving in the opposite direction, eagerly exploiting cyberspace for their own strategic purposes...as it happens, both Twitter and Facebook give Iran’s secret service superb platforms for gathering open source intelligence about the future revolutionaries, revealing how they are connected to each other. These details are now being shared voluntarily,

15. Thomas L. Friedman, “The Virtual Mosque,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2009, A27.

16. Gholam Khiabany, “Arab Revolutions and the Iranian Uprising: Similarities and Differences,” *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 5 (2012): 60. For more on the Iranian so-called Twitter Revolution, see: Ali Reza Dehghan, “Media and the Public Sphere in Iran,” *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 37, no. 2 (2009): 256-273; David M. Faris and Babak Rahimi, eds., *Social Media in Iran: Politics and Society after 2009* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015); Magdalena Wojcieszak and Briar Smith, “Will Politics be Tweeted? New Media Use by Iranian Youth in 2011,” *New Media and Society*, Vol. 16, no. 1 (2014): 91-109. Additional information can be found here: Maximillian Hänska Ahly, “Networked communication and the Arab Spring: Linking broadcast and social media,” *New Media & Society*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (2016): 99-116; Nezar AlSayyad and Muna Guvenc, “Virtual Uprisings: On the Interaction of New Social Media, Traditional Media Coverage and Urban Space during the ‘Arab Spring,’” *Urban Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 11 (August 2015): 2018-2034; Tim Markham, “Social Media, Protest Cultures and Political Subjectivities of the Arab Spring,” *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (2014): 89-104.

without external pressure. Once regimes used torture to get this kind of data; now it's freely available on Facebook.¹⁷

Mobile phones, laptops, and any device connected to the Internet or cellular systems leaves distinctive fingerprints that can be traced unless all parties use encrypted software. Easy identification is only one drawback of the digital systems. Another issue is the cost of the hardware, which limits access to those with a certain amount of income. A third problem is that most cellular service runs through centralized antenna systems generally under corporate control that can be shut down, rendering mobile phones useless. Additionally, shutting down all but a few cell antennae forces the users to gather near the working ones, simplifying the task of finding users.

This case study demonstrates how a much less advanced technology overcame problems similar to those of centralized antennas and high equipment costs and offered a degree of anonymity to those receiving the signal. My work describes the steps Czech and Slovak reformers took to create a space for public deliberation, and how 1968 broadcast technology and consumer technology facilitated those deliberations. As we shall see, the methods of hardware use were more important than the extensive feature set we might hope for in newer technology. Additionally, my work examines past uses of the broadcast media for propaganda purposes during war and peace, and the informal strategies developed to counteract the occupiers' propaganda efforts, all of which came into play during the invasion.

17. Evgeny Morozov, "Iran: the Downside to the 'Twitter Revolution,'" *Dissent* (Fall 2009): 12.

This study has five distinct parts and a brief epilogue. The first chapter is the introduction which covers my argument and the literature. The second chapter explains the historical antecedents of 1968 and demonstrates that the particular Czechoslovak path to socialism starts in ideological contests within the Social Democratic Party that predates World War I and will connect to the Prague Spring's so-called "socialism with a human face." In addition to the political reforms started in 1968, the second chapter places Czechoslovakia in the European context as an industrially-advanced, technologically savvy state that enhanced the state's self-identity as the unique laboratory for the application of Marxist theory. A further section of this chapter examines the works of four individuals crucial to the Prague Spring, each approaching the crisis in Czechoslovakia from the different disciplines of sociology, economics, management and law. Each author, even though they were committed communists, came to the conclusion that democratic reforms would be necessary to end the economic crisis, and that technology would hold a prominent role in these plans.¹⁸

The third chapter focuses on the role of consumer and professional communications technology¹⁹ throughout the history of Czechoslovakia, and how the

18. Czechoslovakia the state was a creation of the Treaty of Versailles; however the region was a crossroads and consequently contains people of several different ethnic, religious, and language groups. The Czech Lands in the western part of the country were historically inhabited by Moravians, Czechs, Germans, Austrians, and Silesians, while the Slovak lands contained Slovaks, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Hungarians, and Galacians. The Roma people also travelled between both areas. In this study I refer to the state as Czechoslovakia, but the people as "Czechs" and "Slovaks," keeping in mind the strong religious and linguistic differences between the two parts as well as the separate language groups within each portion.

19. Consumer communications technology is generally equipment which receives signals, like radio and television sets. Professional communications technology is used to make programs and then broadcast them to the consumers. The production equipment tends to be of better quality, more rugged, and far more expensive than consumer equipment. The professional broadcast equipment feeds signals

young state came of age at the same time as technologies such as radio, telephones, teleprinters, and eventually television. Domestic electronic industries provided many consumer and professional electronic products for domestic and foreign sale, demonstrating an advanced technological prowess for a young, small state. This chapter also exposes the development of electronics, especially those used in World War II that were based on radio technology, and how both sides in this conflict weaponized radio broadcasts. Because of its position in Central Europe, Czechoslovakia was a target of much of this activity, and those involved learned crucial lessons, which they would put into practice in the wake of the Soviet-led invasion of August, 1968. In addition, this chapter takes note of the development of broadcast organizations within Czechoslovakia, which had their beginnings as independent, market-based corporations, but quickly converted to the European standard model of state control of the access to the airwaves, facilitating the eventual total Communist Party control of the broadcast media after World War II. The chapter ends with the state of broadcast media in 1968, and describes the organization of Czechoslovak Radio and Czechoslovak Television as well as detailed explanations of the technology available at that moment, including professional production equipment and consumer receiving and recording equipment.

Chapter four covers the first eight months of 1968, when a group of reformers was installed as the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [KSČ].²⁰ They quickly initiated a movement toward democratic pluralism within a socialist country or

to high power antennae and must be monitored by engineers. Much of that equipment is not available to the public.

20. "Soudruh Alexander Dubček první tajemník UV KSČ," *Rudé právo*, 6. ledna 1968, 1.

“socialism with a human face,” as they would call it. One of the prominent reformers and the chair of the Legislature, Josef Smrkovský, laid out the reform ideals in a newspaper article written shortly after the new party leadership was elevated:

The last session of the party's central committee was nothing like the former. First and foremost, the members of the party UV [the Central Committee of the KSČ] are fully-- and perhaps spontaneously--aware of their responsibility and authority and they expressed the will of the members of the Party, the will of the Party. It was emphatically stated why and how to democratize the parties and how to work to restore the trust of people in the party and in the state. In the economic sphere, to continue to consistently develop the economic reform in its entirety and "push" its principles to every workplace. In the social sphere, to revive democracy, an atmosphere of exchange and reconciliation of ideas so that the most valuable and the most progressive ideas can win against the conservative and the outdated ideas, and also the methods of work, political, economic, and manufacturing. In the spirit of our national democratic traditions, workers' movements, Leninist norms and socialist goals. And so to create unity both in the country and in the state, unity of action, unity of action, unity of workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia; the unity of both nations. We have embarked on a journey leading to the true national unity of all those who want socialism, socialism without deformations that are alien to our people.²¹

The reformers' early adjustments included ending the direct party control of the media and removing the censorship duties of the Ministry of the Interior. Some of the reformers, especially party secretary Alexander Dubček, viewed the newly liberated press and broadcast stations as the means to discredit the former party leadership.²² However,

21. Josef Smrkovský, “Oč dnes jde?” *Práce*, 21. ledna 1968, 1.

22. Alexander Dubček, *Hope Dies Last* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), 91. Dubček had used this strategy successfully to weaken his opponents when he was the secretary of the Slovak Communist Party. Dubček (1921-1992) was born in Urhovec, Slovakia while it was still part of Czechoslovakia. His father was a committed socialist, and Dubček was too. During World War II he fought as a partisan against the fascist Slovak regime. Trained as a locksmith, he also became a minor party official and moved into the ranks of the apparat, getting special leadership training at the Moscow Political High School in the mid-1950s. Dubček served in both government and party leadership positions, finally becoming the First Secretary of the Slovak Communist Party in 1963. His opposition to the KSČ Secretary Antonín Novotný, secretly using the press to criticize Novotný, became open rebellion in October of 1967, and this led to Dubček's elevation to General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in January of 1968. He was the leader of the Prague Spring reform movement.

others explored the use of broadcast media to create new venues for public discussion on the social and political problems of the day. Historian Kieran Williams points out that while Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s was very close to an equitable society in terms of wages and benefits, political power was concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite, leaving the rank-and-file party members apathetic and the non-party aligned public entirely without a political role.²³ Encouraging the public to involve itself in the political process was a major goal of the reformers. Broadcast media became a facilitator, creating the space for the public to learn about the issues, to question authorities, and to suggest solutions. The journalists used their freedom and equipment to bring new voices into the mix and to hold public discussions about pressing political and social problems. Also in the works were proposals to market Czechoslovak-manufactured electronics—especially broadcast equipment—globally. However, the chapter also demonstrates how the five other Warsaw Pact states focused on the television and radio broadcasts, which they could not keep from reaching their own citizens—as justification for forcibly ending the reform movement.²⁴

Chapter five begins with the surprise invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in the early hours of August 21, 1968. The leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party [KSČ] was detained and eventually taken to Moscow, while the National Assembly was surrounded and pinned down in its own meeting hall by a ring of

23. Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14.

24. Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 43. Dawisha showed that the Soviet press, as early as mid-March, 1968, was publishing articles accusing the radio, television and press of Czechoslovakia of being in the hands of antisocialist elements.

tanks. This chapter details how, despite having their main headquarters and studios wrecked by troops, Czechoslovak broadcast workers created covert radio and television studios within hours, and tapped into transmission equipment to continue sending signals throughout Czechoslovakia and to the outside world via Austrian Television connections. For a brief but pivotal period they formed a *de facto* government, helping delegates attend an extraordinary congress and organizing a statewide non-violent resistance movement complete with daily mass demonstrations and general strikes.

In the epilogue to this chapter, I discuss the return of the Czechoslovak leadership from Moscow with pledges to end the reforms. The official term for the post-invasion period was “normalization,” and Pauline Bren noted that “...Dubček and some of his Prague Spring government colleagues... [believed] they could hold on to power as long as they met Moscow halfway, with the halfway mark, of course, being drawn and repeatedly redrawn by the Soviets.”²⁵ By the one-year anniversary of the Soviet-led invasion, the reformers were entirely out of office or exiled, and all of their reforms save one were rescinded.²⁶ The state-controlled broadcast media returned dutifully to their pre-1968, heavily censored existence while numerous people associated with the resistance broadcasts were fired, imprisoned, or exiled.²⁷ A brief conclusion follows the epilogue.

Reformers like Dubček saw the small state of Czechoslovakia, having a precocious attachment to technology as the type of state Karl Marx had in mind when he

25. Paulina Bren, *The Green Grocer and his TV* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 30.

26. František Emmert, *Rok 1968 v Československu* (Prague: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 2007), 57.

27. Václav Kolář a Ladislav Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968* (Prague: Česká Televize, 2001), 35-6.

formulated his ideal socialist state.²⁸ The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia [KSČ] was one of the earliest members of the Comintern, and unlike many other states in Europe, the First Republic of Czechoslovakia [1918-1938] allowed the KSČ to be a legal political party.²⁹ During World War II, members of the KSČ resisted the Nazi occupation, sometimes violently, or went into exile in Moscow.³⁰ The exiles returned to form a single-party Stalinist-dominated socialist state in 1948, temporarily ending the hopes of forming a modified social democracy with pluralist voting. The media were placed under complete party control. During the 1950s, the media focused on advancing the party message including broadcasts of the Slanský show trials.³¹ The controlled economy shifted emphasis away from the established light manufacturing and toward heavy industry that failed to support a stable economy. Nonetheless, Czech and Slovak citizens occasionally still made important cultural contributions worldwide at such venues as International exhibitions and the Academy Awards.³²

Broadcast media was the “transmission belt” for information in the Eastern Bloc, and was under complete control of the government. As the handmaiden of the communist party, Czechoslovak Radio developed a lively, multi-channel enterprise, while Czechoslovak Television, because of the enormous cost to operate, only provided minimal programming on a single channel. I contend that during the turn of events with

28. Alexander Dubček, *Hope Dies Last* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), 70.

29. Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma, et al, *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague: Charles University Press, 2009), 406.

30. Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 130-1, 214-5.

31. Karel Kaplan, *Kronika komunistického Československa: Klement Gottwald a Rudolf Slánský* (Brno, CZ: Společnost pro odbornou literaturu-Barrister & Principal, 2009).

32. *Bruselský sen: Československá účast na Světové výstavě Expo 58 v Bruselu* (Prague: Arbor vitae, 2008); Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 2nd ed. (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 1.

the Prague Spring, the Soviet-led invasion, and the subsequent “normalization,” the two broadcast services remained entirely faithful to the party’s principle wishes. The broadcasters, however, made drastic changes in how they carried out those imperatives during the reform movement, such as substituting round table discussions for official pronouncements, and developing investigative journalism in place of merely parroting the news from *Pravda* and *Izvestia* the day after those Moscow-based newspapers printed their stories. During the occupation, the “Free and Legal” Czechoslovak Radio and Television broadcasters fulfilled and exceeded their basic obligations to the party, and performed the party’s executive functions while the leadership had been abducted by the Soviet forces. On the return of the Czechoslovak leaders from confinement, the broadcasters ended their resistance and became, once again, the malleable and chastened mouthpieces for the party line. The equipment remained the same throughout the year of ups and downs; it was the control functions of the state and the choices made by the broadcast journalists, administrators, and technicians that changed what the audience saw and heard.

My argument essentially can be divided into three parts: first, that a unique set of circumstances—including a technological component--encouraged Czechs and Slovaks to imagine their own unique destinies; second, that the broadcast technology available in 1968 was sufficiently robust and flexible to work even in moments of crisis, and that the technicians and journalists of the broadcast media behaved as consummate professionals and were capable of adapting rapidly to new situations and repurposing their equipment to meet their needs even while dodging armed invaders; and third, that the creation of a

public sphere through the use of communications technology, even where a public sphere had been absent in recent years, is feasible given certain criteria. These criteria include a methodology for the discernment of authenticity, anonymity, plausible deniability, motivated technicians, and access to portable equipment.

The definition of the constructivist critique of technology by philosopher Andrew Feenberg demonstrates why the technology does not determine usage, but that the social forces surrounding the equipment can massively change its content:

In determinist and instrumentalist accounts of technology, efficiency serves as the unique principle of selection between successful and failed technical initiatives... Constructivists show that many possible configurations of resources can yield a working device capable of fulfilling its function. The different interests of the various actors involved in design are reflected in the subtle differences in function and preferences for one or another design of what is nominally the same device. Social choices intervene in the selection of the problem definition as well as its solution.³³

Examining the network of technologies, the producers, the users, and the way the equipment was used paints a more complete picture of the technology in the time as opposed to looking at the highlights of innovation.

Telling the story of the use of technology before and during the Prague Spring leaves out one very important way the reformers thought about technology. I add to the understanding of the reform movement with an examination of the reformers' plans for the future use of technology. The economic crisis of the early 1960s in Czechoslovakia was directly related to the controlled-economy and its management of manufacturing. Czechoslovakia's light manufacturing system had been replaced with a Soviet-planned

33. Andrew Feenberg, "Critical Theory of Technology: an Overview," *Tailoring Biotechnologies*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (Winter 2005): 51.

heavy manufacturing which led to a 2 per cent drop in GNP.³⁴ Economists such as Ota Šik and sociologists such as Radovan Richta hypothesized in the early 1960s about ways to save the Czechoslovak state through the proper application of technology.

Technocratic aspirations, not just technology for technology's sake, but technology as the antidote to Czechoslovakia's woes was a part of the story that demands unpacking.

The second part of the argument, dealing with the quality of the equipment, seems to be in direct conflict with the first point. However, the design, choice, and implementation of the communication systems in Czechoslovakia in 1968 reflected both the needs of the users and the historical patterns of use during times of stress such as war. Military necessity during World War II forced people to make changes to the existing infrastructure to protect it. Physicists, engineers and technicians working with the government created many new technological systems through the manipulation of existing radio technology. Radio communications aimed at civilians became “weaponized” with propaganda and psychological techniques, forcing the audience to find ways to discern truth from fiction to protect themselves. Once the war was over, the technological changes stayed in place or were improved upon based on the cascade effect— incremental advancements based on efficiency or quantitative gains. The technicians retained their knowledge as well, and applied the lessons learned to their future work.

34. Ota Šik, “A Contribution to the Analysis of Economic Development,” *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1966): 24-5. Šik was the economist who was tasked to fix the crisis, however, his plans were not fully implemented, and consequently failed. Also see: *Hospodářské Noviny*, 8. a 15. listopadu, 1963; George Bailey, “Kafka’s Nightmare Comes True,” *The Reporter*, May 7, 1964, 17; Mary Heiman, *Czechoslovakia: the State that Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 220

The last portion of my argument examines the role of broadcast media in the formation of a public sphere. Habermas amended his initial concept of the public sphere in light of broadcast media, claiming that the new technology did not lead to discursion, but to the formation of public opinion. Publicists, hired by the media-owning elite became susceptible to capitalist interests:

[i]n comparison with the press of the liberal era, the mass media have on the one hand attained an incomparably greater range and effectiveness-the sphere of the public realm itself has expanded correspondingly. On the other hand they have been moved ever further out of this sphere and reentered the once private sphere of commodity exchange. The more their effectiveness in terms of publicity increased, the more they became accessible to the pressure of certain private interests, whether individual or collective. Whereas formerly the press was able to limit itself to the transmission and amplification of the rational-critical debate of private people assembled into a public, now conversely this debate gets shaped by the mass media to begin with.³⁵

Given these parameters, defining a public sphere in the modern age of radio, television and the Internet seems impossible. However, Habermas was specifically targeting mass media in capitalist states; my study examines emerging democracies in an established socialist state. Even though the profit motive is not involved, the concept of forming public opinion based on party ideology was the one of the most important tasks of mass media in socialist states.³⁶ When the reformers took power in Czechoslovakia in January of 1968, they released the media from tight party control; although the media were still obliged to deliver the party line, they could be publically critical of certain aspects of society. Ideally this was to include citizens into the deliberative process—a place they

35. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 188.

36. 81/1966 Sb. ZÁKON ze dne 25. října 1966 o periodickém tisku a o ostatních hromadných informačních prostředcích. This is the 1966 Czechoslovak state law regarding the responsibilities of the press.

had not participated in since the start of the socialist state in 1948.³⁷ As we examine the opening of the democratic state, we can look to the work of O’Flynn and Curato on how to analyze the process of this transition. They suggest dividing up the population into two groups: the public space where the citizens deliberate; and the empowered space where the authoritative decisions are made.³⁸ The public space must be open to all participants where deliberations may take place amongst equals. Ideally, the public space must be able to transmit their concerns to the empowered space, while those in the empowered space must be accountable to those in the public space.³⁹ The effectiveness of the transition into a democratic system is the measure of the strength of the movement of concerns up, and of responsibility down. Broadcast media in Czechoslovakia, because it had been the tool of the elite to deliver policy to the population, could be assumed to be the wrong set of tools to make this transition work. However, the media did have methods to reach out to the population and give them a voice.

Literature

The literature on the democratization of technology covers Digital Age equipment for the most part. Andrew Feenberg has written many articles and books concerning technology and how it affects society. I found his work particularly helpful because he was a student of Herbert Marcuse, who was an influence on some of the 1968 reformers and refers to Karl Marx’s theories on the influence of machines on labor.

37. “Document 5: ‘Dubček Speech at Agricultural Congress, February 1, 1968,’ (excerpts)” in *Winter in Prague*, ed. Robin Alison Remington (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 40-1.

38. O’Flynn and Curato, “Deliberative Democratization,” 303. The authors use the term space instead of sphere.

39. *Ibid.*, 304.

The information of the technology itself comes from a wide variety of sources. Both Czech Radio and Czech Television, which came from the institutions at work in 1968, have created hours of programming based on their archives of the 1968 period, as well as high quality interactive websites that deal with their roles in 1968. Some of the technicians and journalists have written memoirs—most notably the radio journalist Jiří Dienstbier, the director of Czechoslovak Television Jiří Pelikán, and Czechoslovak Television engineers Václav Kolář and Ladislav Kejha, who created a detailed guide to the television system. Slovak Television, formed from Czechoslovak Television after the Velvet Divorce of 1993, put together a series entitled *Noc v archív* [Night in the Archive] with segments of television programs, so that the observer can see how all of the elements of production were accomplished, rather than have period shots edited into a modern documentary. The modern media institutions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have sponsored business histories; Eva Ješutová has compiled a compendium for Czech Radio entitled *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům: z osmi desetiletí českého rozhlasu* [From the Microphone to the Listeners: from Eight Decades of Czech Radio] and Martin Štoll has written *1. 5. 1953 Zahájení televizního vysílání: Zrození televizního národa* [May 1, 1953, the Launch of Broadcast Television: the Birth of a Television Nation] both of which are invaluable guides to these institutions and help those of us who are used to American commercial broadcasting understand the intricacies of the Czechoslovak systems.

Museums such as the National Technological Museum in Prague and the Cold War Museum at Vint Hill, Virginia, were helpful for direct observation of equipment,

however collectors and equipment repairmen have put the specifics details and schematics of the electronic equipment on line. Because collectors are interested in the correct classification of the equipment and the repair people have to be exact in their identification of the instruments, consequently they are careful to provide complete details. Other sources of primary research include the weekly radio and television schedules. These tabloid papers provide minute-by-minute descriptions of what was broadcast. Because they were meant to be in the homes all week, they also included information on live broadcasts, instructive diagrams on technology, special program listings, interest articles on the celebrities and journalists, and the sheet music for popular songs.

Thanks to the Central Intelligence Agency, the broadcasts of radio and television shows did not entirely disappear into the ether. Broadcast signals from behind the Iron Curtain were intercepted, translated into English, and published as part of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Due to atmospheric conditions, the listening posts were not entirely successful at getting every signal, and the original recordings are not available to the public, even if they still exist. The Czechoslovak Radio and Television archives have some original recordings, but much of the programming was lost because the tape on which to record them was expensive and was frequently used multiple times. Radio Free Europe, even though it was a broadcast station, kept some transcripts of broadcasts from the Eastern bloc, and these were at the Open Society Archive at the Central European University in Budapest. However, the current political climate in Hungary has endangered the public access to these documents.

There is considerable overlap between the examinations of the reform portion of the Prague Spring—January to August 1968, and the subsequent Soviet-led invasion on August 21, 1968. Consequently I will have to discuss works under the umbrella of reform, then later about the invasion. Because the reform was political in nature, much of the literature reflects the ongoing discussions about why the reformers made the choices they did; alternatively many of the participants wrote memoirs concerning why they made those decisions. There are also the re-examinations of the reforms in light of the new archival materials that became available after 1989. Sadly, many of the historians and analysts who wrote the earlier studies were not around to revise their work. However, the new documents including court records, top-secret memoranda, transcripts of meetings and phone calls, etc. have not entirely overturned the older works, but instead bring greater clarity to aspects such as the reactions of the security services and behind the scenes discussions of the leaders. It is almost as if we can now hear both sides of someone else's telephone conversation where before we only heard on side.

H. Gordon Skilling's *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, published in 1976, is still the gold standard for English-language studies of modern Czechoslovakia.⁴⁰ This thick tome covers the Prague Spring and the invasion, focusing on the political actors in Czechoslovakia. Skilling attempts to make sense of the ideas of the reform movement. Skilling has some interesting insights into Czechoslovak broadcast media because he

40. Mark Kramer, "Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion," in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, eds. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Manham, MD: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2010), 38. Kramer admits that even the post-1989 and declassified information do not change the general thrust of Skilling's work.

worked as a BBC correspondent in that country in the late 1930s. Contemporary Czech historian Jitka Vondrová retraced the political movements of the entire year 1968 in his 2013 book *Reforma? Revoluce? Pražské jaro 1968 a Praha* [*Reform? Revolution? The Prague Spring in Prague*]. Using the older materials and the more recent city archives, he demonstrates the wide variety of viewpoints about the reforms framed through the work of the more radical leadership of the city of Prague. These two authors demonstrate that the reform movement was hardly a monolithic movement, and that there were serious differences in opinion. More political infighting can be found in Alexander Dubček's 1992 memoir *Hope Dies Last*, and Zdeněk Mlynař's *Nightfrost in Prague*.

The literature on the Soviet-led invasion covers two distinct types of inquiries: the first group was interested in the politics behind the decision of the Soviet Union and their Warsaw pact allies to invade. The second group sought to secure the documentation of the invasion itself. The literature on the decision-making aspects was born out of the need to gain information about military and political processes behind the Iron Curtain. Even these Kremlin-watchers can be divided into two camps: pre-1989 and post-1989, depending on when the analyses were written and what sources were available. Political historians publishing before 1989, such as Jiří Valenta and Karen Dawisha devoted their academic lives to better understanding the situations in the Soviet sphere, but had to depend on information that was publically available in the west during the Cold War, various personal and professional contacts, as well as their own travels and experiences in Eastern Europe. Despite their limited source base, their works were remarkable in terms of completeness and sensitivity to the subject matter. Valenta and Dawisha cover the

issues from outside Czechoslovakia, principally writing on how the leadership of the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact states reacted to the Prague Spring and came to their decision to invade. Additionally, pre-1989 author Robin Alison Remington began a tradition of gathering the essential documents surrounding the Prague Spring and publishing quality translations so that historians and especially government analysts could have access to the primary sources.⁴¹ Even though the need to understand the nuances of the Soviet political process seems quaint today, many of the structural military choices made during the Cold War depended on these types of analytical studies.⁴² The post-1989 works, such as Günter Bischof's multi-national compendium on the Prague Spring, were created to celebrate the important anniversaries of the events.⁴³ These books have given a new generation of historians a chance to revisit the decision-making process in light of newly available archival sources, as well as gather reactions from other European states. This approach fits Czechoslovakia's unique experience into the larger context of the notable year of 1968. Jaromír Navrátil's *The Prague Spring '68* collects many of these recently-released documents, especially transcripts of phone calls and secret meetings that shed light on processes that were closed to the earlier writers. For example, recently released memoranda from the Soviet Politburo show that the military invasion was a foregone conclusion by mid-July, but a military solution to ending the Prague Spring had been in the works since April of 1968. Additionally, other meeting

41. William E. Griffith, "Preface," in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, xi.

42. William E. Burrows, "Ballistic Missile Defense: The Illusion of Security," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 62, no. 4 (Spring 1984) 843.

43. Peter Kolář, "Foreword," in Bischof et al., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, xi.

notes show that Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev vacillated and tried to hold out as long as possible for a political solution, but that the East German leader Walter Ulbricht was the earliest and most vocal proponent of a military intervention. Ulbricht was disappointed when the Czech and Slovak collaborators requested that the DDR's military role in the invasion be minimized because of ongoing post-World War II animosities.⁴⁴

The military invasion of Czechoslovakia spawned hastily written purple prose such as Colin Chapman's overwrought *August 21st The Rape of Czechoslovakia*. Collected from dispatches of foreign correspondents, Chapman's book contains dubious stories including the claim that television equipment was wired with self-destruct mechanisms. Many authors tried to get books out as soon as possible after the invasion, which is not surprising given the confusing nature of the massive movements of troops, the cloak and dagger intrigue of conspiracy and *coup d'état*, and the excitement of the resistance movement. Consequently, gathering all of the events into a comprehensive and comprehensible narrative is far beyond the nature of this study. Several sources have already recounted the story of the invasion in a chronological manner. Especially noteworthy is the *Czech Black Book*, written by members of the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in response to the Soviet-created white book on the invasion, which they considered a whitewash.⁴⁵ The *Black Book* contains printed materials created and distributed clandestinely during the occupation that academics specifically gathered at the time to substantiate the resistance. A more subjective

44. "Introduction," in Bischof et al., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 22-4.

45. The Institute of History of the Academy of Science, *The Czech Black Book*, ed. Robert Little (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), ix.

perspective can be found in the work of Joseph Wechsberg, a Czechoslovak immigrant who visited Prague during the reform period, and happened to be staying in Vienna during the invasion. From Austria, he monitored the radio and television broadcasts, transcribing them as best he could. His narrative *The Voices* also contains conversations he had while visiting Czechoslovakia, as well as his impressions of Czech and Slovak escapees he encountered in Vienna following the invasion. Much of his information was hearsay, and some of his eyewitness testimonies contradict other sources such as the *Black Book* and newspaper accounts from foreign correspondents. However, Wechsberg does give insights into some of the coded language the radio announcers used to inform motorcycle couriers where to pick up clandestine newspapers for distribution.

Czechs and Slovaks writing after 1989 have produced some elegant works about the invasion, made very moving with photography and other inserts. Jiří Všečetka's book *Pražský chodec proti tankům* [Prague Pedestrians Against Tanks] is filled with his photographs and interviews of participants. However, the highest quality book of photographs, *Invasion Prague 68*, is a work that almost was not created. The professional photographer Josef Koudelka shot dozens of rolls of film during the invasion, and knowing he had to get them out of Czechoslovakia as fast as possible, he had the unexposed rolls smuggled out by several volunteers. His work was published in magazines anonymously for 16 years before he identified himself and tried to gather back all of his images. These he has published in book form and has created a traveling

museum exhibition too.⁴⁶ Two other Czech and Slovak works of note are Ludmila Sýkorová's *1968 v brně nebyli lvi* [*1968 in Brno There Were Not Lions*] and František Emmert's *Rok 1968 v Československu* [*The Year 1968 in Czechoslovakia*]. The story of the invasion in the city of Brno is the subject of Sýkorová's book, the real strength of which is her collection of ephemera like cartoons and notices. Emmert goes a step further in his polished book because he includes facsimiles of the newspapers and a CD of the radio sounds in a package aimed for older students. These books came out in 2008 and 2007 respectively.

A more complete source of the broadcast signals aired during the invasion was produced by Radio Free Europe [RFE]. Having the facilities to monitor several frequencies at once and a Czech and Slovak-speaking staff available, RFE recorded and transcribed the round-the-clock radio and television broadcasts coming from the covert broadcasters in Czechoslovakia, and these transcripts are available at the Open Society Archives at the Central European University in Budapest. Czech Radio has some archived recordings of the broadcasts, and created an impressive website in honor of the forty-fifth anniversary of the invasion. Listening to the recordings while reading the transcripts verifies that the RFE transcriptions are accurate, although the printed record lacks the drama of actually hearing the gunshots rather than merely reading the parenthetical [*střelba*]. However, the RFE transcripts of the broadcast give a highly subjective view that lacks context, especially given that many of the on-air remarks were

46. Irená Šorfová, "Afterword," in Josef Koudelka, *Invasion Prague 68* (Paris: Aperture Foundation, 2008), 295.

in code and many of the presenters remained anonymous. In addition to archival recordings, the Czech Radio website also relies on oral histories and written memoirs of some of the participants. The director of Czechoslovak Television in 1968, Jíří Pelikán, wrote one of the most important memoirs of the Prague Spring and the invasion while in exile in France. *S'ils me tuent* [*If They Kill Me*] reflects Pelikán's singular understanding as a high Communist Party official, head of state television, and a member of the Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress; these roles earned him the dubious honor of Brezhnev's vocal disapproval.⁴⁷ Czech Television issued a report in August of 2001, featuring oral histories and memoirs of the construction of the clandestine television studios from the engineers' and technicians' perspective. It clearly shows the complicated nature of the task, as well as corrects significant errors in the earliest news reports filed by foreign correspondents from that August that claimed the technicians had booby-trapped the transmitting equipment.⁴⁸ Additionally, Czechoslovak Radio announcer Sláva Volný wrote an in-depth article for the RFE journal *East Europe* in December 1968, detailing his work in the "Free and Legal Czechoslovak Radio" broadcasts.⁴⁹ Barbara Wolfe Janar wrote in the same journal about her experiences as a foreign student in

47. "Document No. 136: Minutes of the Soviet-Czechoslovak negotiations in Kiev, 7-8 December 1968," in Navrátil, *The Prague Spring '68*, 557.

48. Václav Kolář a Ladislav Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968* (Praha: Česká Televize, 2001). The stories of self-destructive equipment came from Murray Sayles' reporting recorded in the book *The Rape of Czechoslovakia*, but is not included in the dispatches published in *The Sunday Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The New York Times*. Colin Chapman, *August 21st. The Rape of Czechoslovakia* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1968), 57.

49. Sláva Volný, "The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no.12 (December 1968).

Bratislava, watching television coverage and listening to radio reports as tanks surrounded her dormitory.⁵⁰

Foreign correspondents, who saw their roles switch overnight from commentators on the cultural and political intricacies of liberalization to war correspondents, brought a breathless excitement to the narrative. Already mentioned was *Sunday Times* foreign news editor Colin Chapman. He collected dispatches from European correspondent Murray Sayle, among others, in the rush to publish *August 21st, the Rape of Czechoslovakia*, the first English language book on the invasion. While the author repeated some of the exaggerated myths of the invasion, he also was interested enough in the communications technology to fill in some details such as announcers' names and locations.⁵¹ Tad Szulc, foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, covered the Prague Spring and the invasion in a straightforward manner in both special reports for the *Times* and in book form, adding helpful historical and political context for western readers. His work lacks much of the Cold War animosity that is frequently found in other reporters' writings; however, his reports on the military hardware are detailed in the extreme.⁵² *The Economist* in London had multiple correspondents in Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as regular columns on the Soviet Bloc. These reports are invaluable for their information on economics of the time.

50. Barbara Wolfe Jancar, "When the Soviets Invaded Bratislava," in *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no. 10 (October 1968): 2-9.

51. Colin Chapman, *August 21st The Rape of Czechoslovakia* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1968), 51-63.

52. Tad Szulc, "Soviet Army in Action Impresses West," *New York Times*, Sep 10, 1968, Page 1.

The post-1989 observers of the invasion bring better clarity to the narrative with the currently available documents from the Czech Ministry of the Interior and from Soviet sources. Two scholars have tackled the entire year of 1968, then have expounded on the era just after it, when Czechoslovakia returned to an authoritarian state. This period of “normalization” has not been researched much until the 21st century. Kieran Williams’ *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath* digs deeply in the Czech and Slovak legal archives for court records; the trial records are especially helpful for finding out what happened to many of the technicians who helped to set up the clandestine facilities.⁵³ In *The Green Grocer and his TV*, Paulina Bren examines how many Czechs and Slovaks, having watched the failure of the reform movement and the eradication of the public sphere, chose to retreat into their own very private lives.⁵⁴ She demonstrates that, while no longer free to express themselves or criticize the government, Czechoslovak Television becomes the more popular form of entertainment and that the equipment and programming actually improve after 1968. My analysis elaborates these works by concentrating on the use of the communications networks in Czechoslovakia, and how the ignorance of the collaborators was capitalized upon by the more technologically savvy resistance fighters.

53. Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

54. Paulina Bren, *The Green Grocer and his TV* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

The Czechoslovak road to socialism had a unique lineage; the so-called “socialism with a human face,” as promulgated by the reformers of 1968, came from an older idea of socialism separate from the Soviet model. The state that would be known as Czechoslovakia after 1918, was a technologically advanced, export-oriented manufacturing region even before their independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was in a unique position to experiment with state building after their independence in 1918.⁵⁵ In many ways, Czechoslovakia was just the type of advanced bourgeois capitalist state Marx insisted would give birth to class-consciousness and the inevitable socialist revolution. The conditions that forced Russian revolutionaries V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky to impose the “dictatorship of the proletariat” through the intervention of a professional revolutionary vanguard were lacking in Czechoslovakia. The founders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party [KSČ], however, had theorized the rise of socialism through democratic methods, and this put them in direct conflict with Lenin’s plans for a violent international workers’ revolution with the Bolsheviks providing the central leading role.

55. Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague: Karolinum, 2009), 361.

Socialism did not, as Bradley Abrams correctly asserted, arrive in Czechoslovakia after World War II “... on the backs of Soviet tanks.”⁵⁶ In his book *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, Abrams contended that the societies, economies and culture of the Czechoslovak nation had been thoroughly disturbed by events before 1938 and had been completely ripped apart and reconfigured under Nazi occupation, making socialism a popular choice for the voters and easing the path for Stalinist hard-liners.⁵⁷ While Abrams’ book is an invaluable study of the larger political and intellectual conditions which led up to the *Unor* [February] 1948 *coup d’état*, he focused the main part of his analysis on the post-World War II communists. If we look back to the founding of the KSČ and the role they played before World War II, then a different picture arises of a radical party torn into competing factions: one portion was home-grown, democratically-inclined Marxists, another was a working-class party formed in the mines of Kladno, and a third was schooled and led in the Soviet fashion by the Comintern.

The KSČ was an outgrowth of the Social Democratic movement, a party that was split by differing visions of the methods of achieving the utopian promises of socialism. The beginnings of the party were under the direction of Bohumír Šmeral, a long-time labor advocate in the Czech Lands, a very radical leader of the Social Democratic movement and the eventual founder of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.⁵⁸ Šmeral was an enthusiastic supporter of the Second International, which, as historian Gerhart

56. Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 10.

57. Abrams, *Struggle for the Soul*, 10.

58. Bernard Wheaton, *Radical Socialism in Czechoslovakia* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1986), 9.

Neimeyer described, "...had one leg planted firmly in political reality and the other, equally firmly, in a dreamland belonging to a millenarian myth."⁵⁹ The Social Democrats were committed to reforming governments through democratic means; however they were also committed to Karl Marx and his "laws of history," which called for the overthrow of the bourgeois capitalist system, at the same time they were trying to achieve power and positions in that very system. The contradictory duality of purpose did not prevent the Social Democrats from becoming the most successful leftist political parties in the industrial parts of Europe. However, this duality would lead to extended conflict in terms of tactics, and leave the party divided into factions which would eventually split multiple times. The Social Democrats also suffered from factional problems before the *fin-de-siecle* because of their internationalist stance. A section of workers who supported the socialist aims save for the idea that the socialist movement was an international party; out of these workers' support for the Czech Lands, they formed the left-leaning National Socialist Party.⁶⁰

As was the case with many of the intellectuals and political theoreticians of the late 1800s, Šmeral saw questions of equality, legitimacy, and mass participation surrounding the multiple nationalities in the Habsburg Empire as a simmering issue with the potential to flare into violence. He advocated for a federal system to insure equal representation for all the minorities. His federalist approach, one that would give equal

59. Gerhart Neimeyer, "The Second International: 1889-1914," in *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943*, ed. Milorad Drachkovitch (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), 108.

60. T. Mills Kelly, *Without Remorse: Czech National Socialism in Late-Habsburg Austria* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2006), 52.

representation to each separate minority, was turned down by the Social Democrats out of the fear that it might hinder the move towards independence.⁶¹ Between the World Wars, the Slovaks were a minority partner in Czechoslovakia, not an equal one. Eventually and ironically, federalism would be Alexander Dubček's answer to the minority problems that lingered on through 1968, and federalism would be the one and only lasting reform to come out of the 1968 Prague Spring.⁶²

The elections of 1920, the first after Czechoslovakia became an independent state, gave the Social Democrats seventy-four seats in the new Chamber of Deputies, but gave the National Socialists, the direct competition on the left, a healthy twenty-four seats. The leadership of the Social Democrats realized that the laborers of Czechoslovakia, instead of embracing an international brotherhood of the working class, were far more enthusiastic about their new independent national identity. They would be Czechs and Slovaks first, and workers second. This pushed the Social Democratic Party away from the internationalist workers goals; they tried to distance themselves from the more radical, labor-oriented stance of Šmeral by painting him as a devotee of the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik Revolution, insisted the Social Democrats, was the new model for socialist revolution, and they wanted no part of it.⁶³

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, viewed Šmeral's insistence on mass participation and democratic, non-violent tactics as an affront to the established Soviet

61. H. Gordon Skilling, "The Formation of a Communist Party in Czechoslovakia," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 14, no. 3 (October 1955), 348.

62. J. M. Kirschbaum, "Slovakia in the de-Stalinization and Federalization Process of Czechoslovakia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, Vol. 10, no. 4 (Winter 1968): 556.

63. Wheaton, *Radical Socialism*, 150.

model of revolution and as a supplication to the bourgeois-nationalists. Lenin had already broken with the Social Democratic leadership in Germany and in Russia; his “Theses on bourgeois democracy and proletarian dictatorship adopted by the First Comintern Congress” spelled out his disgust with what he called “traitors to socialism.”⁶⁴

Lenin could claim that, so far in history, the Soviet Union was the first and most successful socialist state, and he used this to justify his rejection of the Second International and to show his methodology was correct. In his comparison of the early years of Russian and European socialism, historian Albert Lindemann noted that Lenin’s insistence on the correctness of his revolutionary strategy and the instigation of the dictatorship of the proletariat was not as justified as it might be on the face of it:

Lenin maintained a semblance of Marxian orthodoxy by reasoning that socialism could come to Russia as soon as the industrial proletariat of the West had joined its great numbers and powerful resources to those of the Russian proletariat. The party of the proletariat could come to power first in Russia, not because Russia itself was ready for socialism but because Russia constituted the ‘weakest link’ in world imperialism.⁶⁵

Finding little support for his ideas inside the Social Democratic Party, Šmeral would break with them in 1920, and set up the Czechoslovak Communist Party [KSČ] in May 1920. From the very outset, the KSČ suffered from internal unrest. The majority of the founding members of the new KSČ voted to adopt the Bolshevik Party’s Twenty-one

64. V.I. Lenin, “Theses on bourgeois democracy and proletarian dictatorship adopted by the First Comintern Congress”, 4 March 1919, Protokoll, I, p 115 in *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, Volume 1, ed. Jane Degras (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1971), 8.

65. Albert S. Lindemann, *The “Red Years” European Socialism versus Bolshevism, 1919-1921* (Bekeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 31.

Commitments in opposition to Šmeral's attempts to push through his own ideas on how to achieve a socialist state.⁶⁶

The Soviet Union's answer for restive parties like the ones in Czechoslovakia and Germany was to adopt the platform of strict Bolshevism at the Fifth World Congress in 1924, and thus the Comintern was born.⁶⁷ Reeling from Lenin's death in 1924, the lack of successful revolutionary activity in the industrialized world, and poor economic results in the Soviet Union, the Comintern's tactic was not to correct the practices that were not working, but to double-down on their efforts; to make all of the communist parties world-wide more centralized, radical, and to "...take over for themselves everything in Russian Bolshevism that has international significance."⁶⁸ Centralization meant parties were less open to deviations from the party line as dictated by the Comintern and the eventual winner of the power struggle in the Soviet Union: Josef Stalin. The Comintern became his vehicle for extending his reach beyond the borders of the Soviet Union through careful manipulation of regional communist parties. Stalin's penchants for placing working-class, committed Bolsheviks in positions of leadership while practicing *otsechenie*, the "chopping off" of troublesome comrades, would change the leadership

66. H. Gordon Skilling, "The Formation of a Communist Party in Czechoslovakia," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 14, no. 3 (October 1955):353-4.

67. "Bolshevizing the Parties and Forming a Unified World Communist Party," July, 1924, in *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, Volume 2, ed. Jane Degras (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1971), 153-4.

68. *Ibid.*, 154.

and the very nature of the KSČ in 1929.⁶⁹ Šmeral would be forced out of the KSČ leadership, but still retain an executive position in the Comintern.

Klement Gottwald, who was originally trained as a cabinet-maker, joined the KSČ in its first year and became the editor for the Slovak Communist Party's newspaper. He was firmly to the left of most of the other Czechoslovak communists, an up-and-coming member of the Comintern Executive Committee, and was totally dedicated to Stalin and his methods. Because he was a young man when he became a communist, he did not carry the taint of social democratic loyalties—another plus in his favor. He was just the sort of person Stalin wanted in charge of a party. In 1929, Gottwald became both the leader of the KSČ and an elected representative to the Czechoslovak National Assembly. He skipped the opening ceremonies of the National Assembly to attend a Comintern Executive Committee meeting, and when asked why he went to Moscow, he replied that “[w]e go to Moscow to learn from the Russian Bolsheviks how to wring your necks.”⁷⁰ Under this new leadership, the KSČ became thoroughly Bolshevized and subjugated to the will of Stalin, and this came at a very high price. “The acceptance of this line led to the elimination of many outstanding leaders from the party,” according to former KSČ official Jiří Pelikan, “which lost about 70 per cent of its membership during

69. Kevin McDermott, “The History of the Comintern in Light of New Documents,” in *International Communism and the Communist International 1919-1943*, eds. Tim Reese and Andrew Thorpe (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), 33.

70. H. Gordon Skilling, “Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1929-1939),” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 20, no. 4 (December 1961): 643.

this period. Later on it won many of them back through its fight against fascism, starting in 1934–5 with the new line of the Comintern—the Popular Front.”⁷¹

The Popular Front failed to attract many of the German speakers who might have been left leaning as they fled to the Sudeten German Party [SdP], formed in 1933 by Konrad Henlein. The NSDAP in Germany used propaganda, especially radio, to turn a population of Czechoslovak citizens into a solid Germanic voting bloc based on nothing more than language and culture. While not officially a fascist party until 1938, the SdP appealed to the minority German speakers who lived close to the borders with Germany and Austria, fomenting resentment at the majority Czechoslovak government. The party had a meteoric rise, gaining 15.2% of the votes cast in the 1935 election and holding on to the largest plurality of any other party.⁷² Consequently, when representatives of Great Britain, France, and Germany negotiated the Munich Pact in September of 1938, they could do so with the knowledge that they were aiding a minority to gain autonomy.

Positioned nominally as the leader of the anti-fascist Popular Front, Gottwald pressed the Czechoslovak government to fight against German encroachment during the fall of 1938. Even Josef Korbel, a stridently anti-communist refugee, grudgingly observed:

The Munich Crisis and the position of France and Great Britain also presented the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia with a golden opportunity. For years, it had agitated against the independence and democracy of Czechoslovakia, nay, against its existence. Now, in 1938, with the blessing, indeed the orders, of the Soviet Union, it joined the ranks of the defenders of democracy and of the territorial

71. Q. H. and R.B., “The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia: an interview with Jiří Pelikan,” *New Left Review*, Issue 71 (January/February 1972), 5.

72. Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler* (Oxford, UK: The Oxford University Press, 1996), 51.

integrity of Czechoslovakia, It would be difficult to assess to what extent the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia gained new adherents for its stand on Munich, but people were undoubtedly impressed.⁷³

These new adherents would continue a strong commitment to opposing the fascists; however, Gottwald, along with a group of leaders of the KSČ, were forced to go into exile in Moscow when the new pro-German government in Czechoslovakia made their party illegal in December of 1938.⁷⁴

The exile of the Gottwald and others created a clear demarcation between the Moscow-based leadership, and those who stayed in occupied Czechoslovakia. Whereas those leaders in Moscow were now even more tightly controlled by Stalin, those who stayed in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia faced drastic consequences if caught. The exiled Czechoslovak democratic leadership, under former President Edvard Beneš, set up a government-in-exile in London, and this group had their own underground partisans in the Protectorate. This set up the odd circumstance of separate resistance movements that had competing strategies and goals. Both kept in touch with the outside world via secret radio receivers and transmitters. Until August of 1939, the orders from Moscow included stepped up anti-fascist agitation in terms of marches and strikes, and the continuation of the united People's Front. Given that the organization of the KSČ had not changed to conform to the new reality, these overt actions severely imperiled party members and so were rarely carried out. After August of 1939, more specifically with the

73. Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia, 1938-48* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 33.

74. Radomir Luza, "The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Resistance, 1939-1945," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (December 1969), 564.

signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, all of the orders had to change because the Soviet Union could no longer be seen as anti-fascist. Writing about the KSČ's part in the resistance, Radomir Luza noted that:

Thus, it became evident from the start that the native Communists were being forced to execute orders formulated abroad. The rigid line was further developed in the new themes cabled to Prague by Gottwald in March 1940. The KSČ in exile and the Comintern decided to write off the Czechoslovak state. Gottwald indicated that the party, 'together with the German proletariat,' denounced 'Western imperialism as the aggressor.'⁷⁵

More specifically, the communists were told to treat the soldiers of the Wehrmacht as oppressed workers being exploited by their bourgeois officer corps who were in cahoots with the imperialist governments of Great Britain and France. Besides, according to Bolshevik dogma, the government of the First Republic was now entirely destroyed, making the formation of a socialist government easier after the war.⁷⁶ Once Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, these political orders had to change yet again, because now the British were the allies of the Soviet Union, and they were fighting the fascists together.

Most KSČ members were not aware of these orders, given the illegal nature of the party and the ruthless efficiency of the Nazi reprisals. The domestic KSČ leadership, still occasionally in touch with Moscow, had a difficult time organizing rank and file party members into any actions. In February of 1941, SS troops using radio detection equipment found the KSČ Central Committee. The committee and their radios were

75. Radomir Luza, "The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Resistance, 1939-1945," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (December 1969):568.

76. "Bolshevizing the Parties and Forming a Unified World Communist Party," July, 1924, in Degas, *The Communist International 1919-1943*, Volume II, 153.

eliminated. Lacking a transmitter meant that the partisans could sometimes hear the orders from Moscow, but were unable to send messages in return. Broadcasting unscheduled messages into occupied territory, especially when the local authorities made listening to foreign radio broadcasts illegal, was a terribly unreliable process that lacked any mechanism to determine if the messages were heard. Sometime in March of 1943, the KSČ in exile was forced to parachute party officials, along with a new radio transmitter and an operator, into Poland to sneak into Prague and contact the KSČ.⁷⁷ The orders directly from the Comintern ceased with its demise on May 22, 1943, and historian Radomir Luza contended that the effort to send direct orders to the KSČ ceased at that time as well.⁷⁸

The KSČ sought to form two more central committees after the first had been executed, and the German authorities found both of those and eliminated them. A fourth KSČ Central Committee would be formed in December of 1944, but the formation was done strictly by the local party members without guidance from Moscow. In fact, Gottwald would refuse to recognize this Central Committee, and there were no Moscow-trained members.⁷⁹ It would be this group who would become part of the resistance movement, fighting alongside non-communist underground cells and gaining the respect of the partisans in Czechoslovakia.

World War II would divide the KSČ into three factions: the Stalinist-trained cadre surrounding Gottwald, who escaped to Moscow and would eventually form most of the

77. Luza, "Communist Party of Czechoslovakia," 571.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid., 57.

leadership after the 1948 coup; the domestic communists who fought in the resistance with non-aligned groups; and a last group combined of elements from both of the previous groups who were arrested by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps. This last category of prisoners was not a distinct political entity, but their imprisonment gave them a certain distinction, which would give them special benefits outlined in post-war decrees and assist their elevation in party politics.⁸⁰

Agreements between Edvard Beneš, President of the Czechoslovakia government in exile and Stalin in 1943, outlined the way forward after the war was over. These talks provided for an agreement of cooperation between the Czechoslovak Government in exile and the Soviet Union, and that the Soviet Union pledged to protect the smaller state after the war.⁸¹ A later program, drawn up by Beneš and Gottwald in Košice in April of 1945, created the framework for the new government or National Front, with Beneš as the head and Gottwald and his fellow Communists dominating the top posts. This National Front would run the country until elections could be held in 1946. Any party that participated with the fascists was not part of this program, which meant most of the political groups in Slovakia. The Košice Program laid out plans to nationalize major industries, banks, and utilities; control prices on basic goods; create a system of national committees charged with enforcing decrees and policies. It stopped just short of expelling all Germans and Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia, but promised to confiscate farmland to be distributed to partisans, victims and soldiers.⁸² Away from Moscow, it did

80. Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 246.

81. *Ibid.*, 214.

82. *Ibid.*, 231-2.

seem as if the Czechoslovaks were determining their own future, however, they were still dependent on the Red Army to complete the liberation of their country. Gottwald, for his part, was acting very conciliatory, but the National Front was composed of a majority of Communists, Social Democrats, and an independent general, who all had one thing in common: they were Moscow-trained and supported.⁸³ Essentially, the Home communists, who had almost no connection to Moscow but who did the main fighting in the resistance, won the respect of their fellow Czechs and Slovaks, but had no representation in the leadership of the National Front.

Before February of 1948, the National Front, which politically reorganized the state after 1945, was formed by a leftist coalition made up of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), the Social Democrats, and several other parties who had not collaborated with the fascist regimes in the Protectorate or Slovakia. All of these parties were legal before the war, but had to go underground or into exile during the Nazi occupation. The National Front gained a majority of the seats in parliament in the 1946 elections and secured many of the cabinet positions.⁸⁴ From this powerful position, according to Abrams, the National Front devised a policy of the “Czechoslovak road to socialism.” Earlier Western observers including Paul Zinner insisted that the KSČ was leading the Front as a ruse to disguise their Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist intentions, and that a violent overthrow of the government was inevitable.⁸⁵ Abrams countered this with

83. Karel Kaplan, *The Short March* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), xi.

84. Abrams, *Struggle for the Soul*, 180-5.

85. Paul E. Zinner, “The Seizure of Power in Czechoslovakia,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (July 1950): 650.

evidence that the KSČ was committed to “a national and democratic revolution” that would bring a unique form of socialism to Czechoslovakia by way of free elections. Instead of nefarious machinations, the KSČ took a wait and see position, while the democratically-elected Beneš government extended the nationalization of industry and expelled Germans. The overall impression was that the Czechoslovaks seemed free to form their own form of socialism based on their own unique national identity, without interference from the Soviet Union and most importantly, without a violent revolution. This would change in January and February of 1948. The elections of 1946 were open only to the parties that participated in the National Front, and the Communist party representatives won in a landslide in the Czech lands (41%) and a little less in Slovakia. Beneš remained as President, but Gottwald became Prime Minister. Stalinist-trained communists held many of the cabinet positions. The 1948 coup, called a “revolution” by Gottwald, may not have been the “Czechoslovak road to socialism,” but the future was Gottwald’s, or more accurately Stalin’s, to control.⁸⁶

Socialist Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s and 1950s slowly developed along the lines Stalin had determined. Heavy industry replaced light industry, farms were collectivized, and all businesses were slowly either closed or nationalized. The German speaking population was forced out of Czechoslovakia and their lands and assets seized by the government. Gottwald died just months after Stalin, but not before setting up a group of show trials that were meant to rid the government of “wreckers” and counterrevolutionaries. The group of 13 individuals arrested were fairly high government

86. Abrams, *Struggle for the Soul*, 198.

officials and almost all Jewish. It was not difficult to see Stalin's personal directives in who was removed. The trials, known as the Slanský trials, were carried over live radio and filmed for newsreels so the entire country could listen to the coerced confessions. Many of the defendants were hung. Other communists and non-aligned people, many of them partisan fighters during the war, found themselves imprisoned for a variety of imaginary offences. All of Czech society was affected by the socialist state, where workers received better pay and improved opportunities for education and advancement, while families who had been business and land owners before the war were labeled "bourgeois" and their families denied access to universities, good jobs, and better housing.⁸⁷

The stagnation of Czechoslovakia's economy and industry was evident by 1963. Economic statistics for 1961-63 demonstrated a slowed economy and a drop in gross national product of over two percentage points. A comparison of figures for consumption between 1958 and 1962 showed an increase in food consumption, which required greater imports, along with increased demands for durable goods, which current manufacturing capabilities could not satisfy. The conversion of farm workers into factory workers, and the elevation of factory workers into white-collar occupations gave many people more money, yet they had fewer products to buy. Savings, which in Czechoslovakia were historically high, rose slightly. However, withdrawals grew as well; signifying people

87. Jaromír Mrnka, "Mládež nova, mládež Gottwaldova?" *Předjaří Českoslovenso 1963-1967*, eds. Jiří Petráš, Libor Svoboda (Prague: Unipress, 2016)154.

were spending more money on non-durable items such as food, prepared meals, and vacations.⁸⁸

The third five-year plan, with its overly optimistic growth targets, was implemented in 1960, and had to be scrapped in the summer of 1962, because of the massive failures to meet the plan's goals. The government planning divisions began creating provisional goals on a year-to-year basis.⁸⁹ Because of centralized planning, the economy almost exclusively was based on the actions of the government, and it lacked any self-correcting mechanisms, market forces or competition that would dampen the effects of planning mistakes. Some of the sources of the problems were not entirely the fault of the government planners; raw materials were difficult to obtain and, as one of Eastern Europe's major industrial manufacturers and exporters, Czechoslovakia suffered the loss of a major trading partner with the withdrawal of China from the Soviet sphere of influence. However many centralized policies, such as the emphasis placed on heavy industry and the lack of investment in newer technologies, was directly the fault of the government.⁹⁰

Party Secretary and President Antonín Novotný, who many critics of the socialist system would characterize as a hard line Stalinist and an autocrat, also blamed the problems on the scientists and intelligentsia.⁹¹ To a Stalinist, the intelligentsia was always

88. Miloslav Kohoutek, "Standard of Living and Personal Consumption," *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (Spring 1963): 50.

89. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 57.

90. Ota Šik, "A Contribution to the Analysis of Economic Development," *Eastern European Economics*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1966): 24-5.

91. "No Defenestration Today," *The Economist* (London), November 28, 1964, 953; Peter Hruby, *Fools and Heroes* (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1980), 82; Vilém Prečan, "Dimensions of the

suspect, because the Party and its functionaries could not be wrong, and the workers formed the natural support base of the leadership.⁹² Novotný was a member of the older generation of Czechoslovak Communists, but held a particular place of honor: his parents were workers, he had joined the Party in 1921, and he spent much of World War II in Mauthausen concentration camp simply for the crime of being a communist. As one of Stalin's earliest and direct followers, he knew of no other way to run a socialist country, given his dogmatic, rudimentary understanding of Marxism-Leninism.⁹³ Those who knew Novotný personally described him as an effective bureaucrat with only a high school education, and a predilection to consult only with a retinue of very close party officials with whom he played cards at his Orlik villa.⁹⁴ Khrushchev himself would criticize Novotný for failing to de-Stalinize Czechoslovakia fast enough. This, combined with the direness of the economic situation, forced Novotný to call together committees to repair the damage. Historian Galia Golan characterized Novotný's efforts as an attempt to assuage calls for collective decision-making.⁹⁵

Czechoslovak Crisis of 1967-1970," *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, no.10 (December 2008): 1664; Vladimir Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 33,82.

92. Galia Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 51.

93. "Mr. Novotny's Past," *The Economist* (London), May 11, 1963, 533-4.

94. Alexander Dubček, *Hope Dies Last* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), 81-2. Given that the two men were rivals, the fantastic details of the card games played in a giant beer barrel at the villa might be suspect. However, Dubček had been an invited guest there, and other sources also mentioned the barrel. See Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague* (New York: Karz Publishers, 1980), 67. Additionally, Dubček's father had been in the Mauthausen concentration camp with Novotný, and told the story that Novotný became a trustee in order to have more food and better conditions, but this story is uncorroborated.

95. Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 47.

The Central Committee called upon Otá Šík and his fellow economists to research and reach some answers. They found workers hampered by out of date equipment, inadequate investment, poor management choices, and a lack of raw materials. The economists devised a market-based, decentralized system they called the New Economic Mechanisms [NEM]. The Central Committee accepted the NEM in 1964, with implementation to begin in 1965, and total implementation in January of 1966. The mechanisms took much of the production planning out of the hands of the central authorities and placed the responsibilities on the plant managers.⁹⁶ Consequently, the party *apparatus* opposed the reforms, fearing that the reforms may reduce their power and influence, and that the ideas of profits and incentives smelled like capitalism. They were able to slow down the implementation timeline, reduce the number of industries participating in the new system, and generally water-down the proposals.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the partial implementation was launched January 1, 1967, along with reforms to the monetary system and the imposition of taxes. The results were to-be-expected failures; consumer demands were not met and wholesale prices climbed without a subsequent adjustment of retail prices, producing a real fear of inflation down the road and angering the entire population.⁹⁸

The Novotný regime instigated economic reforms out of dire, existential necessity. In areas such as culture and the law, the reform movement justified their desire for change based more on the effort to de-Stalinize than on necessity; in other words,

96. Ota Šík, "Nový systém řízení plánování," *Otázky miru a socialismu*, 1965, 3.

97. "World Industry: New Ways, Old Woes," *The Economist* (London), December 31, 1966, 1418.

98. "No New World for Dvorak," *The Economist* (London), February 11, 1967, 514.

ideological reform as opposed to functional needs. Reform movements in the arts, education, and mass communications came from the same class as the economic reforms—the intelligentsia—but were fought for from the bottom up, rather than imposed from the top down. These efforts grew out of the move to de-Stalinize the states in the Warsaw Pact after Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech denouncing the "cult of the personality." The movement gained some success in Czechoslovakia due to the government's desire to stay in Khrushchev's good graces, however domestically the regime was again hesitant to relinquish its total control over these fields.

Novotný could characterize himself as a post-Stalinist leader because he had taken over the presidency in 1957.⁹⁹ However, he had been party secretary since 1953, a position in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc that was far more powerful than any government office.¹⁰⁰ As the single individual who held the two highest offices in the state, Novotný was in danger of being accused of having his own "cult of personality." In truth, Czechoslovakia was the most repressive, most Stalinist, state in the Pact well after the Khrushchev thaw was underway everywhere else.¹⁰¹ Šík's economic reforms were only part of the collective-decision making process that was forced on Novotný as a way to spread the power out to other leaders. Many educators, students, artists, writers,

99. Kusin, *Intellectual Origins*, 26. Even though the Kolder Commission Report of 1963 did not find Novotný complicit in the most egregious abuses of power during the 1950s, namely the Slanský show trials, H. Gordon Skilling contended that this should be expected, given Novotný's involvement in the Commission's process and his total control over secret files. See Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 401. Dubček, who was a top-level member of the Commission, claimed he saw files that showed Novotný led the prosecution of the show trials and materially benefited from executions of Slanský, Clementis, and others. See Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 84-5.

100. "Mr. Novotny's Past," *The Economist* (London), May 11, 1963, 533.

101. Vilém Prečan, "Dimensions of the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1967-1970," *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, no.10 (December 2008), 1663.

electronic media content providers, and journalists attempted to stretch the Stalinist boundaries that had confined them for so long. The nature of the reforms reflected a broad interest in the human condition, not just in a narrow section of artistic expression. This was a set of reforms that philosopher Ivan Sviták characterized as coming from the intelligentsia, the exact group that was despised and distrusted by the Novotný regime and “...increasingly expressing the opinion of the nation...they functioned—rightly—as the spokesmen of the nation as a whole, on behalf of national interests and goals.”¹⁰²

Because socialist governments held the means of production as well as distribution channels, they could easily control who could say what the government demanded. The Khrushchev thaw would expose conflict within this structure—the fight between the old guard who wanted to retain the Stalinist status-quo and the younger generation who wanted to free themselves from the governmental dictates. With de-Stalinization, however, many artists could claim that socialist realism itself was not only out of vogue, but in fact producing art in that style would automatically put the artist in danger of formalism in service to the cult of personality. While the artists attempted to stretch the boundaries of what was allowed, Novotný’s cadre pushed back, if only to remind the artists that there were still limits. Some of these party members were not just writers, but editors of magazines, journals, and newspapers. It would be these editors who would have to choose between remaining true to the status quo and facing criticism for creating a dull product, or publishing more lively material and risk running afoul of the *appart* and lose their positions. Some of these editors found favor with the newer

102. Ivan Sviták, *The Czechoslovak Experiment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 4-5.

generation of Central Committee members, who would work behind the scenes to support reforms. Čestomír Cisar, before he was removed from his post as the Minister of Education and Culture and sent to Romania as ambassador, aided several editors in this manner; Alexander Dubček was close friends with the editors of several Slovak newspapers and journals, and as Slovak Party Secretary, he refused to fire writers and editors who became critical of the Novotný regime.¹⁰³ Both men would go on to play crucial roles in 1968, but showed that they valued freedom of expression years before that—at some risk to their own careers.

Critics such as Karel Kaplan point to 1963 as the year in which the cultural paradigm in Czechoslovakia moved away from socialist realism, and it started with a renewed embrace of the Prague-born writer and master of alienation, Franz Kafka.¹⁰⁴ Popular throughout Europe but condemned as “bourgeois” in his own country, Kafka was described by Czechoslovak literary professor Eduard Goldstücker as a victim of the cult of personality. Goldstücker arranged an international conference on Kafka in the small town of Liblice to try to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the author’s birth. Literary experts gathered to encourage the rehabilitation of the author in a fashion reminiscent of the rehabilitation of political prisoners during de-Stalinization.¹⁰⁵ Soon rehabilitation would come to others like Karel Čapek, the creator of R.U.R (Rossum’s Universal Robots), and Jaroslav Hašek, the author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*.

103. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 90-92.

104. Karel Kaplan, *Rada vzájemné hospodářské pomoci a Československo 1957-1967* (Prague: Karolinum, 2002),

105. Kusin, *Intellectual Origins*, 63-68.

Ideological Considerations

The Czechoslovak economy in the early 1960s was in critical shape, and this was impossible to hide from academics and the *nomenklatura* involved in economics and production. In this moment of crisis, the party leadership turned to the intellectual for help. These scholars came at the problem from the disciplines of sociology, economics, law, and political science. Even though their solutions came from their own fields of expertise, the authors knew of each other and were willing to share ideas.

For a brief period in 1968, there was a chance to put their aspirations into practice. However, their proposals were too far-reaching, too unlike the current political system, and too complicated to apply within a few short months. Émigré Josef Skvorecky, who was forced out of Czechoslovakia when the Soviet troops moved in, derided these "...intellectual playboys of revolution..." in their "...attempt at a noble counter-revolution."¹⁰⁶ The reformers' ideas went beyond simple adjustments to the five-year production plan; these programs were revolutionary in scope and might well have turned Czechoslovakia into something approaching a market-based, democratic, pluralistic, fully realized communist utopia. It is, of course, impossible to say if these reforms would have actually worked, or if they were just the pipe dreams of intellectual playboys. However, for the purpose of this study, the reformers were especially interesting when it comes to technology.

106. Josef Skvorecký, "20 Years Ago, Native Czechs did Themselves in," *New York Times*, August 20, 1988, 27.

Sociologist and philosopher Radovan Richta (1924-1983) was one of the earliest theoreticians to study the effects and promises of the rise of technology after World War II. Richta's 1963 book *Člověk a technika v revoluci našich dnů* (Man and Technology in the Revolution of Our Day) outlined his ideas on the Science and Technology Revolution. Contending that the effects on society should always be considered when writing about technology, Richta framed his work in Marxist analysis, which emphasized the effects of technology on labor as well as discussions on technology's role in class conflict and controlled economies. Critics of Richta such as Vladimir Kusin insisted that the weakest point of the study was the sociologist's declaration that bringing about the Scientific and Technological Revolution was the Communist Party's "supreme and ultimate historic mission."¹⁰⁷ Richta's support of technological determinism did not prevent him from approaching the Science and Technology Revolution from a humanistic perspective, insisting that this revolution was "a social process based on universal and permanent transformation of the structure and dynamics of the productive forces."¹⁰⁸

That Richta was teaching and writing about sociology in Czechoslovakia reflected the small steps toward reform in the early 1960s. The discipline of sociology had been banned from the universities since 1950, and had only been brought back in 1964.¹⁰⁹ Richta was asked by the government to lead a multidisciplinary team of 60 academicians and researchers from the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, to report on the current

107. Kusin, *Intellectual Origins*, 92. Kusin noted that Richta's emphasis on science as the solution signaled the hope that science "must not be overruled by the subjective will of a single man or several people, even if politically their will is sacrosanct." Ibid.

108. Radovan Richta, *Civilizations at the Crossroads* (Prague: Svoboda Publishing, 1968), 28.

109. Kusin, *Intellectual Origins*, 93-4.

concerns of the state of the economy and what to expect in the future. The book *Civilizace na rozcestí - společenské a lidské souvislosti vědecko-technické revoluce* (Civilization at the Crossroads: the social and human influence of the scientific and technological revolution) was the result of their work. The initial report was released to government officials in 1964; a book drawn from the report was published for the general Czechoslovak population in 1966 and went to three editions. Copies of the book, translated into multiple languages, were released in 1968.

Richta's analysis of the Scientific and Technological Revolution contended that industrialization was responsible for the structures of society in the advanced economic states and was slowly playing itself out. Emerging from the structures and innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the Scientific and Technological Revolution was more than a logical expansion of industry; it was a real and entirely new means of production consisting of semi-autonomous machinery that would completely change labor from being in service to the machine to being in charge of the entire production process. Soon, according to the report, automation would take over production so thoroughly that, starting from loading raw materials into the process to packaging up the finished product for distribution, no human hands would touch the product.¹¹⁰ The report also described how cybernetics, chemistry, biology, and computers would all find their way into the

110. Richta, *Civilizations at the Crossroads*, 33. The Swatch Sistem51 watch is currently manufactured in just this manner. See: Alexander Linz, "EXCLUSIVE: An Inside View of the ETA High-tech Swatch Sistem51 Production in Boncourt in the Swiss Jura," *Watch Insider* (December 3, 2014), accessed June 19, 2016, <http://www.watch-insider.com/reportages/exclusive-an-inside-view-of-the-eta-high-tech-swatch-sistem51-production-in-boncourt-in-the-swiss-jura/>

manufacturing process, radically changing how we understand machines and the production process.¹¹¹

Richta's multi-disciplinary team considered how the new production process would affect humans, as well as machines. In terms of labor, they concluded the Science and Technology Revolution would reverse the need for greater and greater numbers of workers in factories. Marxist theory asserted that mechanization was responsible for deskilling the craftsperson and divided the production process into smaller tasks, which could be done with less skilled and cheaper labor. This new worker became an easy-to-replace servant of the machine. Richta and his team imagined that new automated and computerized factories would need a smaller group of designers, technicians, maintenance people and laboratory assistants—all highly skilled workers—to manufacture products efficiently. The Science and Technology Revolution would need human creativity, or as they called it, human capital, to master the machines instead of remaining slaves of the assembly line.¹¹² The changeover, they admitted, would hurt those low-skilled and semi-skilled workers who could not be retrained or moved into service jobs. Their answer was to invest in education. Because the modern human would experience several large changes due to “the shrinking of space and the dilation of time...” brought on by innovations in technology and science during their lives, Richta's action plan called for life-long learning through didactic technology.¹¹³ He envisioned television as the most effective immediate adult educational tool, while younger students

111. *Ibid.*, 26.

112. *Ibid.*, 43.

113. *Ibid.*, 148.

would each practice individual programmed learning with monitors on their desks which would be linked up to external libraries.¹¹⁴

In many ways, the future that was presented in *Civilization at the Crossroads* was not that different from the Western visions of the technocratic future as presented by visionaries such as Arthur C. Clarke on the *BBC Horizons* program from the New York World's Fair in 1964.¹¹⁵ However, there are two significant differences in the visions of the technological utopia envisioned in Czechoslovakia than the one envisioned by Clarke 1964. The first difference was that the Richta report resulted from a serious, academic effort of a multi-disciplinary collective, and as such, the argument was carefully constructed from empirical data. The second significant difference was that the bibliography for the Richta report included an international collection of academics and intellectuals writing just before the 1965 publication of the report; this list included Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Khun, John Kenneth Galbraith, B.F. Skinner, Johnathan Diebold, and Herbert Marcuse. This list shows that the report was not produced inside the presumed stultified atmosphere behind the Iron Curtain, but instead engaged the leading thinkers of the time. This broad reach of research shows that the report authors had a larger audience in mind for their work than just the Czechoslovak decision-makers.

These new approaches, according to Richta, depended on communication and the exchange of knowledge, which had to be universal and horizontally oriented, rather than

114. Ibid., 149.

115. "The Knowledge Explosion, with Arthur C. Clarke" *BBC Horizons*, Episode 6, YouTube video, 9:56, broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation on September 21, 1964, posted by SPL, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT_8-pjuctM.

top down. He naturally saw this exchange through the dialectic—creating a synthesis through the comparison of ideas to reach a “factually satisfactory solution.”¹¹⁶ With long-term open discussion and the ability for the public to assess and “chose and adopt on this basis the most mature and progressive alternatives at the appropriate decision levels,”¹¹⁷ Richta’s vision of the future contended that enthusiastic participation in the public sphere and democratic voting would be the end product and indeed the most reasonable form of communism, all thanks to the movement towards human self-actualization made possible by the Scientific and Technological Revolution.

Ota Šik (1919-2004) was the architect of Czechoslovakia’s New Economic Mechanism that was attempted then quickly abandoned in 1967. The goal of the new policy was to put the state on a modified market economy. In one way, the attempt was evidence of how desperate the economic crisis was. Šik was able to convince party secretary Antonín Novotný to try the policy, not necessarily on the strength of his argument, but through his personal relationship with the secretary. Both men spent much of World War II in the Mauthausen concentration camp because of their activities in the Czechoslovak Communist Party’s resistance movement. Even though the leadership had ordered the instigation of the policy, the *apparatchiks* tasked with carrying out the reforms did so half-heartedly, and the experiment was dropped. Šik would later accuse them of sabotaging the plan.¹¹⁸

116. Richta, *Civilizations*, 259.

117. *Ibid.*, 272.

118. Ota Šik interview, Radio Prague, February 16, 1968.

In his 1967 book, *Plan and Market under Socialism*, Šik examined the state of the Czechoslovak economy and concluded that the continued use of the government's monopolistic control over industry meant the temporary imposition of this type of control during emergencies made sense, according to Šik, but applied in the long term it led to chronic weakness of production and labor.¹¹⁹ He reconsidered Marx's ideas on the market as a symptom of capitalism, and put forward the hypothesis that the market was a separate mechanism in itself, and that capitalists merely exploited it. His solution to the crisis was to rekindle a modified market economy, putting emphasis on making profits over meeting goals as a mechanism for creating more efficient production processes.¹²⁰ One way to encourage profit-making in Šik's plan was to move away from heavy industry, which was forced on Czechoslovakia under the Stalinist system, and concentrate on the manufacture of high technology for export to bring the state's prices and money supply into parity with foreign markets.¹²¹

The recommendations of concentration on high technology and light industries, both historic bulwarks of the Czechoslovak economy before World War II, dovetailed well with Radovan Richta's recommendations for the future of the state's production capacity. Šik concurred with Richta about the need for democracy in a May 1968 speech to a student rally:

I believe that our peoples who have strong democratic traditions and who hate so much any political constriction and oppression can put in practice the kind of socialist democracy that we have not seen anywhere else. We can create a model of socialist society that will become really attractive for the working peoples of all

119. Šik, *Plan and Market under Socialism*, 324.

120. *Ibid.*, 336.

121. *Ibid.*, 326.

capitalist countries, and that will have a tremendous impact on the development of the left-wing movement in Western countries.¹²²

Again, we see reformers looking to Czechoslovakia's past for answers to her present and future.

The two politicians covered in this section, Alexander Dubček and Zdeněk Mlynář, have been chronicled extensively by other authors and in their own words. Each man had a somewhat similar important era in his intellectual development, as well as the time they spent progressing as *nomenklatura* in the Czechoslovak government and Communist Party structure before the spring of 1968. Their experiences convinced them that Czechoslovakia needed a public sphere in order to make the radical changes they envisioned, and that the mass media was essential in its creation.

While Dubček worked in a factory and as a minor party official through the decade after the war, Mlynář took up the study of law and was accepted into the University of Moscow in 1950. Shortly after Mlynář finished his studies and returned to Prague, Dubček was given one of the dozen invitations Czechoslovakia was allotted at the Higher Political School of the Central Committee of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] in 1955. This meant Mlynář and Dubček lived in Russia for several years during formative moments in the history of the Soviet Union. In his memoirs, Mlynář wrote of the profound unease of "Our world...was beginning to fall apart," at the

122. Quoted in Jan Richter, "Prague Spring of 1968: A Time for Expectations," *Czech Radio*, August 20, 2007, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/prague-spring-of-1968-a-time-of-expectations>

death of Josef Stalin in 1953.¹²³ In his memoirs, Dubček described his terror at hearing of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress and of the stories of the thousands of political prisoners returning from the gulags.¹²⁴ Each man returned to Czechoslovakia with a more sophisticated understanding of Marxism, as well as insights into the darker side of totalitarian rule. Mlynář was particularly bothered by the grinding poverty of so much of the "workers' paradise": "We had gone to Moscow hoping to see our own future. But we failed to see that that was precisely what we had seen: yet our communist faith still refused to yield to our experience."¹²⁵

These were momentous occasions in the history of the Soviet Union, but some of the most profound moments in the intellectual lives of these two reformers came in the quiet study of information that had been hidden from the majority of Russians. As elite scholars, Mlynář and Dubček had access to the papers of persons deemed "revisionist" and "hostile" by Stalin. While researching for class projects, they became familiar with the writings of Leon Trotsky, Karl Kautsky, and Rosa Luxembourg, as well as reports from the forerunners of Communist Party such as the German Social Democratic Party. Mlynář and Dubček both reported that these polemics opened their minds to the possibilities of multiple interpretations of the works of Marx outside of the doctrinal teachings of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist formulations they had received in the classrooms. With the ability to compare the restricted writings with their more mundane coursework,

123. Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 21.

124. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 72.

125 Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 21.

they could see flaws in what they had been taught under the Stalinist regime. Both reported feeling disenchanted with the simplistic inculcations of the Stalinist doctrine that “...reduced Marxism to a set of infantry regulations.”¹²⁶ In particular, both men reported reading and deconstructing Lenin’s *State and Revolution* and found his attack on democracy to be less attractive than the ideas of Social Democrats like Rosa Luxembourg or of Marx himself.¹²⁷ Instead of giving up on Marx, Mlynář and Dubček slowly reoriented their intellectual relationship with socialism, seeing it not as an end, but as a process and a methodology that encouraged experimentation. They also began to see the possibilities of creating a more democratic system that invited more people to participate in the process. With Stalin in power, these sorts of ideas were heretical. They would find Stalin’s successor, N.S. Khrushchev (1894-1971) to be more open to experimentation.

Once back in Czechoslovakia, Mlynář and Dubček would become parts of the KSC’s apparatus, and in the course of their work find some real and ugly truths about the government’s role in the Slanský trials.¹²⁸ Mlynář worked for Prague’s Chief Prosecutor’s office in 1955, and had direct contact with members of the show trial’s prosecutorial staff. “And from my conversations with those people,” Mlynář recounted,

I suddenly realized that they had known what they were doing: they had studied and learned by heart their roles as prosecutors and judges, according to a scenario given to them by the state security agencies with the authorization of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. And they knew that the defendants had learned their parts in the same way. That all of it was a staged theatrical production for political purposes, not a genuine investigation and judicial processes.¹²⁹

126. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 70.

127. Ibid., 70; Gorbachev and Mlynář, *Conversations*, 23.

128. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*, 26.

129. Gorbachev and Mlynář, *Conversations*, 26.

Dubček found a great amount of information about the same show trials when he served on the Kolder Commission in 1963. Charged to investigate the events of the trials, the commission released an eight-hundred-page report, of which only eighty pages were ever released to the Central Committee of the KSČ. As a lead investigator, Dubček was privy to all of the details of the report, and described himself as being horrified with learning about the torture and judicial malfeasance of the trials. Not only were the two men shocked at the depravity of the totalitarian system, but they also felt guilty that they saw the trials, as they were happening, as the proper way to defend the socialist state from the capitalist infiltrators and supported the outcomes. Additionally, the evidence incriminated the president and party leader Antonín Novotný as being responsible for much of what happened in the trials and profiting from the deaths of Slanský and Clementis. Disgusted by what he found in the Chief Prosecutor's office, Mlynář took another position in the Czechoslovak Academy of Science and Art. There he became familiar with the work of Ota Šik and Radovan Richta, and their ideas about reform.¹³⁰ Dubček became a Secretary of the Central Committee of the KSČ in charge of industrial production, so he saw firsthand what was wrong with the production facilities and the economy.¹³¹

130. Gorbachev and Mlynář, *Conversations*, 29.

131. William Shawcross, *Dubček* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 70.

CHAPTER THREE

You little box, held to me escaping
So that your valves should not break
Carried from house to house to ship from sail to train,
So that my enemies might go on talking to me,
Near my bed, to my pain
The last thing at night, the first thing in the morning,
Of their victories and of my cares,
Promise me not to go silent all of a sudden.

Bertolt Brecht “The Radio Poem” 1940

From its position in Central Europe, Czechoslovakia was immersed in the advances of the 20th Century. While at times the state was buffeted by the forces of the larger states around it, locally developed technology and innovation were always central components of society. This small state was a leader in communications technology, and radio in particular became a defining factor of the cultural, economic and political landscape. Even technology developed and used outside of Czechoslovakia would, because of the nature of wireless communication, have agency within the country.

The practical application of wireless communication dates to 1901, when Guglielmo Marconi demonstrated trans-Atlantic wireless radiotelegraph as an extension of the telegraph.¹³² During World War I, wireless radiotelegraph systems were crucial for

132. Richard Bartlett, *The World of Ham Radio: 1901-1950* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2007), 8.

military and espionage purposes, so the governments regulated it heavily.¹³³ Streams of dots and dashes sent between trained operators worked well for simple communication on Marconi's spark-gap equipment, but it would take the invention of workable vacuum tube amplifiers to send music and the human voice successfully. The new technologies opened up enormous possibilities in many different fields. For the first two or three years, the airwaves had a "wild west" atmosphere, a chaotic jumble of broadcasters, manufacturers, tinkerers, and enthusiasts. On the first anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia on October 28, 1919, the first radio broadcast of words and music in Czechoslovakia was made from Prague's iconic Petřín tower.¹³⁴ By 1920, experimental radio broadcasts were being aired in Great Britain and the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] began daily broadcasts in 1922. In May of 1923, Czechoslovak broadcasting pioneers journalist Miloš Čtrnáctý, businessman Edvard Svoboda, and lawyer/entrepreneur Dr. Ladislav Šourek, began Europe's second earliest daily broadcasts with their station *Radiojournal*.¹³⁵ Šourek, an early wireless enthusiast, had visited the BBC and modeled *Radiojournal* along the lines of British programming. He was particularly eager to see broadcasting become popular because two years earlier he had created *Radioslavia*, Ltd, which produced vacuum tubes and early radio receivers.¹³⁶ *Radiojournal* would eventually become the state broadcast entity *Československo Rozhlas* [Czechoslovak Radio] in 1925,

133. Suzanne Lommers, *Europe – On Air: Interwar Projects for Radio Broadcasting* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 45.

134. Miroslav Kupicka, "Historie radia Praha" Radio Praha, accessed June 24, 2017, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/static/historie-radia-praha/pocatky-rozhlasoveho-vysilani-v-ceskoslovensku>

135. Miroslav Kupicka, "Czech Radio history," *Czech Radio*, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://www.radio.cz/en/static/history-of-radio-prague/czech-radio-history>; Eva Ješutová, *Od mikrofonu k posluchačům: z osmi desetiletí českého rozhlasu* (Prague: Český rozhlas, 2003), 17.

136. Ješutová, *Od mikrofonu*, 20; Lommers, *Europe – On Air*, 48.

while the manufacturing firm *Radioslavia* was nationalized in 1948 and became part of the electronics organization TESLA Electronics.¹³⁷

In 1929, the city of Prague hosted one of the first international conferences to establish standards for broadcasting and help allocate frequencies for broadcasting. These standards were crucial in preventing broadcasting stations from interfering with one another or for using too powerful of a signal and thereby trespassing on other signals. Radio pioneers Svoboda and Šourek served in leadership positions in several of these organizations. Czechoslovakia was in the vanguard of radio broadcasting, thanks to the work of Čtrnáctý, Svoboda, and Šourek.

Early in the history of radio, one of the most hotly contested issues in the broadcasting community was the control of access to the long, medium, and short wavelengths.¹³⁸ The engineers were mainly interested in delivering the best signal to cover populated areas. Consequently, long and medium wavelengths were assigned to commercial and licensed radio broadcasters based on state affiliations, while short

137. Kupicka, "Czech Radio history,"; Ješutová, *Od mikrofonu*, 20.

138. Electromagnetic energy in the form of radio waves behave much like a wave in the ocean, with crests and troughs following each other in succession. A wavelength is the distance from the crest of one wave to the crest of the next wave. Radio wavelengths can be from 0.187 meters to 600 meters. To insure that one radio signal is not imposing on another, very strict wavelength parameters, known as carrier waves were devised and assigned to broadcasters. Those broadcasters then modulate their audio signal onto the carrier waves. In AM radio, the signal is identified by the height of the sound wave that has been modulated onto the carrier wave. Radio signals are also differentiated by frequency, meaning how many wavelengths pass a certain point in a second. FM radio is defined by the frequency of the signal modulated onto the carrier waves. On the electromagnetic spectrum, the range designated to FM broadcasts reside between 5.55 – 0.187 meters of wavelengths and at frequencies between 54 and 1600 megahertz. Shortwave radio signals measure between 187 and 5.55 meters at 1.605 to 54 megahertz. AM radio waves are the largest waves at 600 to 200 meters and oscillate the slowest at 500 to 1500 kilohertz. Carl R. Nave, "The Electromagnetic Spectrum," *Hyperphysics*, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Georgia State University, accessed June 24, 2017, <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/ems1.html#c1>.

wavelengths were reserved for military purposes.¹³⁹ Broadcasters were licensed and assigned a singular frequency over which they agreed to broadcast at a defined power. These were the radio stations that informed and entertained the public. Radio listening at this level was a passive activity; the consumer purchased a receiver and sat back to enjoy the content. The remaining short wavelengths, because their reach by day can be limited, did not interest commercial broadcasters initially, however, they showed great promise for amateurs. These early radio enthusiasts enjoyed the challenge of building and operating radio equipment, however they faced major obstacles because many countries reserved all of the broadcasting rights on all wavelengths to the state, making any other types of broadcasts illegal. This was a clear holdover from the World War I days, when radio was a military tool.¹⁴⁰ Eventually, many European states treated radio signals as public utilities and charged licensing fees.¹⁴¹ Czechoslovak radio historian Jan Litomisky, OK1XU, described the problems early short wave operator Pravoslav Motycka, OK1AB, faced as he set up his (at the time) illegal system:

He was very well known at this time in interested circles. He was secretary of the Czechoslovak Radio Club, came out and was active in public and published in magazines. He discarded his incognito and any attempts at concealment on his part would have been useless anyway. His first radio contact on 8th November 1924 is the first publicized Czech contact. Motycka did not even avoid publicity for the

139. A majority of the shortwave spectrum is still reserved for government and military use, but it is also the range used by police and fire radios. The term "shortwave" is a historic term because they are not the shortest radio waves, however the range and the name was established before the much shorter FM radio waves were put into use. FM radio signals deliver the best quality signal in a small region, and hence are the most popular in urban areas. Carl R. Nave, "Shortwave," Hyperphysics, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Georgia State University, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/ems2.html#c2>.

140. President Woodrow Wilson had all personal radios seized as the United States entered World War I out of military necessity. "Wilson Orders All Radios Seized; Amateur Stations will be Closed," Washington Post, April 7, 1917, 4.

141. Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 153.

first contact abroad (November 31, 1924 with OCA from Rotterdam) and overseas (June 11, 1925 with U1CMX in Massachusetts). It is most probable that Motycka really was the first Czechoslovak radio amateur. It is impossible to dismiss the possibility with any absolute certainty that other experiments took place before this and we will probably never know for sure.¹⁴²

Motycka and his organization would eventually win legal rights for amateur shortwave operators to broadcast in 1930. Even if they were barred from transmitting for the early years of radio operation, Czechoslovak short wave operators could still listen to others broadcasting. In the early experimental days of short wave radio, listening for signals and reporting to the transmitter by mail about signal strength and quality was an important part of the practice. Decades later, during the Cold War, these skills would provide direct communication with Radio Free Europe and BBC, both important sources of uncensored information.

One of the specific traits of short wave signals is their ability to bounce off the upper atmosphere, and be received at distant locations through a phenomenon known as “skip.” Owing to specific conditions of the ionosphere, this illusive effect is difficult to predict and works best at night.¹⁴³ Short wave operators, using this phenomenon, can send and receive signals around the globe. For amateurs, speaking to someone halfway around the world is the challenging but rewarding part of their hobby. Using higher-powered transmitters, state-run broadcasters and other non-governmental groups turned

142. OK1XU [Jan Litomisky], “Objevitelé a zakladatelé radia a radioamatérství,” *Český Radioklub*, 2000, accessed March 27, 2016, <http://www.crk.cz/CZ/CJHRC>. One of the important ironies of this situation was that Motycka’s antenna was set up on the roof of the Lucerna Palace, which was owned by the Havel Brothers, whose son, Vaclav, another well-known dissident who defied an authoritarian system publicly. The use of the operators’ license numbers with their names, very much like an honorific title, is a tradition which goes back to the earliest days of ham radio operation.

143. Robert C. Wilson, “Medium Wave Skywave Beams,” *IEEE Transactions on Broadcasting*, Vol. 35, no. 2 (June 1989): 223.

their attention in the 1930s to broadcasting on short wave radio to far-off regions. For the BBC, this meant communicating news and information to their widespread colonies, while Vatican Radio could broadcast homilies to the entire Roman Catholic Church. To cover the 1936 Olympic Games the Nazi Government utilized multiple short wave systems throughout the world.¹⁴⁴ Because the frequencies were less crowded, organizations could use much of the same equipment to broadcast programming in multiple languages at the same time, or at different times during the day. Czechoslovak Radio hosted programming on their short wave services in five different languages.¹⁴⁵

Motion picture production in Czechoslovakia was, and continues to be, far more developed than in most countries of its size. Before the development of television, these films represented an important means of communications both domestically and internationally. Businessman Miloš Havel toured Hollywood in 1923-4. He returned to his home in Prague determined to build a state-of-the-art film studio. Miloš Havel and his brother Václav broke ground on top of a cliff south of Prague's city center and built a restaurant, based on the Cliff House restaurant in San Francisco, which Miloš enjoyed on his trip to California.¹⁴⁶ While the restaurant enticed the elite of Czechoslovakia for dinner, cocktails, and dancing, the Havel brothers started building their dream movie studio out back in 1931.¹⁴⁷ Because they started after the advent of sound pictures, the

144. Nelson Ribeiro, "Objectivity versus 'Toxic Propaganda,'" *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture*, Vol. 3, no. 3 (2012), 277.

145. Miroslav Krupička, "Na plný plyn," *Historie radia Praha*, Radio Praha, accessed June 25, 2017, <http://www.radio.cz/cz/static/historie-radia-praha/na-plny-plyn>. Radio Prague started shortwave broadcasts in 1937 in German, English, French, and Spanish, but later added Italian and Russian.

146. Václav Maria Havel (1897-1979) was the father of the more famous playwright and Czech President Václav Havel (1936-2012).

147. Peter Demetz, *Prague in Danger* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2008), 192.

brothers built the studios with sound production in mind, making the facilities among the most technologically advanced in all of Europe at the time. Production for the first film started in 1933, and the Barrandov Studios have been making films consistently since. Not even World War II and the Nazi occupation slowed production down; fearing that their motion picture facilities in Germany could get bombed, the Nazis moved their film production to Prague and even added three giant sound stages to the ones already there.¹⁴⁸

In 1949, Barrandov studios started audio dubbing services for motion pictures. This exacting process, used to translate a film's dialogue into a different language, calls for the removal of the original dialogue, then having the dialogue recorded by professional actors and edited back into the film. The script had to be translated, then rewritten to keep the original context, but with words chosen that would closely match the mouth movements on screen. Barrandov Studios employed hundreds of professional actors, as well as top editors and audio technicians who could put the spoken words, sound effects, and music back into the film with near perfect synchronization.¹⁴⁹

The Czechoslovak audience had access to many films from outside of their country, and according to the television logs of the 1960s, foreign films and television shows made up close to 5% of the viewing day.¹⁵⁰ Because the Czechoslovak population was small in comparison to other language groups—only around 13 million Czech and Slovak speakers—major studios in America, Great Britain, and other European countries

148. "Historie filmové tvorby na Barrandově," *Barrandov Studios: O nás Historie*, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://www.barrandov.cz/clanek/historie/>.

149. "Služby dabingového studia," *Barrandov Studios: dabing*, accessed March 30, 2016, <http://www.barrandov.cz/clanek/dabing/>.

150. "na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 5, 5-11 unora, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 14.

could not justify the cost of dubbing. However, it did make sense for the Czechs and Slovaks to develop this skill for themselves. These skills in translating and audio editing would benefit film, television, theater, and radio production; often times the same technicians worked in many media. The Czechoslovak government aided in the training of these technicians with university training at Filmová fakulta akademie múzických umění v praze [The Film and Television Academy of the Performing Arts in Prague] or FAMU with additional training available through the Ministry of Defense's Film Division, known colloquially as Army Film.¹⁵¹

World War II was a wireless war. Communications between headquarters and the fronts, from ship to shore, from airplane to airplane, and from individual platoons of soldiers to field commanders were available to all combatants. Prior wars had telegraphs, telephones, semaphore, and physical messaging systems, but the electronic innovations of World War II gave the commanders unprecedented, almost immediate access to their entire strategic structure.¹⁵²

The electronic innovations were not just in communications; sonar and radar provided the Allies with crucial methods of finding and tracking enemy submarines and planes. These systems depended on broadcasts of sound and electromagnetic waves that bounced off possible enemy targets and exposed them to receiving stations. As the war progressed, scientists and technicians developed electromagnetic transmitters and receivers to find bombing targets in stormy weather and to guide bombers home after

151. Alice Lovejoy, *Army Film and the Avant Guard* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 57-8.

152. Karl G. Larew, "From Pigeons to Crystals," *The Historian*, Vol. 67, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 665.

their missions. Electronically-induced echolocation meant bombing could continue in poor visibility situations; non-combatants learned to fear the night.

Strategic connections between officers and soldiers were not the only use of electronic communications. Citizens at home followed the news from correspondents on the other side of the globe as they filed live eyewitness reports.¹⁵³ Soldiers could hear the same music their loved ones were listening to through Armed Forces Radio. Propaganda, misdirection, hot licks, coded messages, morale boosting, morale busting, resistance instructions, and bond drives made World War II airwaves boogie at a swing tempo.

While radio and other electronic innovations proved useful in the war effort, the up and coming revolution known as television was relegated to the back burner for the duration of the fighting. For the public eager to find out about the most current events, the soundtrack of the war was almost immediate, but the images had to travel in the old fashioned ways. News and military camera operators used film cameras to capture the war, which had to be chemically developed. Still images could be sent over phone lines and over experimental facsimile systems, but the film had to be shipped home to be processed and edited into the weekly newsreels.¹⁵⁴

Although many aspects of warfare in World War II depended on some types of electronics, the war also revealed the fragility of the existing technologies. Broadcast signals became homing devices for bombers. Radar and sonar were sometimes fooled with chaff. Electro-mechanical encoding devices like Enigma, which seemed to produce

153. Bob Edwards, *Edward R. Murrow and the Birth of Broadcast Journalism* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2004), 52-3.

154. Larew, "From Pigeons to Crystals," 667.

unbreakable codes, could be reverse engineered by the opposition. The electronic equipment itself was far from impervious. The housings of the equipment were often made of metal, but at some point, the instruments depended on delicate glass vacuum tubes to amplify or modulate electrical signals. The components would fail if subjected to too much vibration, dust, or liquid. Tubes also created significant amounts of heat, which could melt soldered connections or even catch fire. Finally, the equipment was hardly “user-friendly”; many devices depended on skilled operators and needed to be maintained by highly trained technicians.

Electronics went to war between 1939 and 1945 in a big way. Even though the equipment could be fragile, innovations touched every element of the war in some fashion. Because of radio technology: orders could be given faster, ship movements could be better traced, bombers could find their targets in any weather, and civilians could listen to live reports from all over the world. Electronic media played such an important role strategically that fixing the shortcomings of the equipment became a priority for all of the combatants during peacetime.

Radio technology provided the basis for a range of electronic devices used in World War II. In every university that had a physics or electrical engineering department, and especially in military research facilities, scientists and technicians experimented with radio signals and the components of broadcast systems. The deadly innovations of World War I, including the airplane and the submarine, created a demand for ways to defend against them. Given that these vehicles operated in dimensions that made them difficult to find, radio signals offered some hope. If they could not be seen, perhaps they could be

heard, and radio was the ready medium with which to experiment. The magazine *Radio Age*, published in 1943 by the Radio Corporation of America [RCA], explained RCA's role in developing this new technology:

Radar, an important milestone in the evolution of radio, is no overnight development. Years of exploration of the ether—pioneering that opened up the ultra-short wave spectrum—are behind it, as well as research and engineering in radio circuits, special electron tubes, and the application of electronic techniques. Fortunately, science was ready when the frantic call went out for a device to combat the warplane. Radar came to the rescue.¹⁵⁵

Sonar and radar had little perceived consumer value at the time. Airport authorities and airlines could find some uses for radar prior to the war; however, this would have been a small market. Military necessities drove the innovations of these two systems.

Radar was a common tool in 1968 for military and civilian applications. The countermeasures against the use of radar came into play on the night of the Soviet-led invasion. That evening 250 Soviet Bloc transport planes landed at commercial airports in Czechoslovakia. Military planners sought to hide the massive air traffic from NATO observers by deploying metallic confetti known as chaff or *döpple* to disrupt the radar signal. However, the presence of the chaff indicated some sort of action was transpiring in Czechoslovakia. Radar became a necessary addition to both offensive and defensive warfare.¹⁵⁶

During World War II, broadcast radio signals were part of the ever-escalating technological warfare. Radio transmission antennas were excellent targets for bombers

155. "Radar: Wartime Miracle of Radio," in *Radio Age*, Vol 2, no. 4 (July 1943): 5.

156. G. Abbvarangelo, "Radar Imaging and its Operational Use in the Military Field," Workshop Report, *IEEE Aerospace and Electronic Systems Magazine*, Vol. 20, no. 4 (April 2005): 35.

because they provided signals on known frequencies upon which the pilots could triangulate position. Even though civilians depended on broadcast radio for information and emergency signals, German officials had to turn off the transmitters during Allied bombing runs to keep the equipment safe. The Allies took advantage of these outages to transmit propaganda from outside Germany on the same frequencies.¹⁵⁷ Another option for the broadcasters was to turn transmitters on for a few moments, then turn them off again to prevent triangulation. The Czechoslovak resistance radio broadcasters combined this technique with portable transmitters very successfully during the Soviet occupation in 1968.¹⁵⁸ Because some of the Czechoslovak technicians had learned these lessons on the battlefields of World War II, they used them again as part of the resistance in the summer of 1968.

At the beginning of World War II, radio was considered an important part of a household. Over 80% of American households had a radio, in Great Britain radio licenses numbered about 71 per every 100 families, and in 1937 Czechoslovak Radio sold its one millionth annual radio license.¹⁵⁹ The radio in the living room was the gathering place for the family. Because radio was such an intimate presence within the home structure, and because it offered fresh and immediate news from the warfront, it is not surprising that broadcast radio became the dominant propaganda platform for all of the combatants.

157. Lawrence Soley, *Radio Warfare: OSS and CIA Subversive Propaganda* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 32.

158. Jiří Dienstbier, "Srpen 1968," in Jiří Všecký, *Pražský chodec proti tankům* (Prague: Naše Vojsko, 2012), 31.

159. Mike Huber, "BBC Radio and Sport, 1922-1939," *Contemporary British History*, Vol 21, no.4 (December 2007): 491-515; "Milióntý koncesionář," *Příběh Rozhlasu*, Český Rozhlas, 2014, accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.pribehrozhlasu.cz/tenkrat-v-rozhlase/1937/1937_6.

Czechoslovakia, as a country occupied early by the Nazis, experienced the full brunt of the various radio propaganda tactics from Germany, Britain and the Soviet Union before and during World War II. This included news, political recruitment, covert broadcasts, and miss-information.

Radio propaganda was nothing new in World War II, but the airwaves became the most direct method to communicate with people in many different states. The Soviet Union started broadcasting encouragement to workers in other countries to join the Bolshevik revolution as early as 1921, including portions of Lenin's speech at the Congress of the Third *Internationale* [The First Comintern].¹⁶⁰ Lenin saw early on the promise of radio as a tool of agitation and propaganda, especially in areas where literacy was limited, and to that end, he ordered the creation of an experimental radio laboratory in 1919. Within ten years, Radio Moscow was transmitting short-wave signals in nine languages, including Portuguese and Czech.¹⁶¹ These broadcasts featured both information about the socialist workers' movement—the Comintern – and instructions for the communist parties, especially those in countries where the party was illegal. From its inception until 1943, the Comintern coordinated the communications between the Soviet Union and cells of Communist Party members in Europe and America. In all but a handful of exceptions, Czechoslovakia being one of them, governments made Communist Parties illegal. Radio waves, however, do not respect state borders.¹⁶² The Comintern

160. "Lenin says he can't give Russia liberty: because ...," *New York Times*, July 10, 1921, 3.

161. Philo C. Wasburn, *Broadcasting Propaganda: International Radio Broadcasting and the Construction of Political Reality* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 5.

162. Hazel G. Warlaumont, "Strategies in International Radio Wars: a Comparative Approach," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Vol. 32, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 32-3.

used this to their advantage. Covert transmitters capable of sending signals as well as receiving them were smuggled across borders to be used by party members. With these transmitters, party members could spread party rhetoric, give orders to sympathetic cells, and send news back to Moscow. In this way, the party faithful in multiple countries could work under the direct and immediate control of the Comintern without the use of telephones or mail, both of which could be compromised. If these transmitters were found, arrests and imprisonment were imminent. Anti-communist sentiment ran so strong that the *New York Times* readily printed stories of “Red Radios” captured in Berlin or Prague.¹⁶³

In the United States, radio grew up in a culture of private and corporate ownership, which emphasized market forces.¹⁶⁴ In Europe, radio broadcasters were often under government control and operated as a public utility or a military necessity.¹⁶⁵ Other stations, operated by cross-border interests such as political organizations or churches, were interested in spreading their ideology. In April of 1925, a conference of state representatives formed the *Union Internationale de Telephonie* [UIT] to bring order to the increasingly crowded bandwidths.¹⁶⁶ Their solution for European distribution was to allocate set numbers of frequencies to states, not to independent broadcast entities that wished to broadcast their message more widely and without government interference.

163. “Seize Berlin Radio Plant: Police Confiscate Elaborate Apparatus of a Russian Communist,” *New York Times*, March 22, 1922, 8; “Red’s Secret Radio Station is Hunted in Czechoslovakia,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1931, 11.

164. Lommers, *Europe – On Air*, 50.

165. *Ibid.*, 45.

166. *Ibid.*, 63.

Consequently broadcasting in Europe was, in terms of content, molded by the individual governments.

In Germany, the Weimar Republic kept strict control over radio broadcasts and blocked non-government voices until 1928. A 2015 analysis by European economists of the use of radio in the German parliamentary elections from 1930-32, in which the NSDAP was banned from the radio, showed that those areas with greater radio ownership and more powerful broadcast stations had less support for the Nazi party. The analytical team surmised the policy of the Nazi Party in those years to appeal to poor workers who were less likely to own radios was also responsible.¹⁶⁷ The tables were turned in the elections after Hitler had been given control of the Chancellorship in the end of January 1933, and “during the campaign for the March 1933 election, when the Nazis took control over the radio and began broadcasting pro-Nazi messages, the effect of the previous four years of the pro-Weimar radio was undone in just one month.”¹⁶⁸

Once the Nazis were in power and in complete control of the broadcast system, radio became the preferred medium to attract German speakers outside of Germany to join the cause of German hegemony. One of the targets was the German-speaking minority in so-called “Sudetenland.” When writing about the power of German-language radio propaganda on the pre-war Sudeten Germans, the Czechoslovak journalist Milena Jesenská observed:

167. Maja Adena, Ruben Enikolopov, Maria Petrova, Veronica Santarosa, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya “Radio and the Rise of the Nazis in Prewar Germany,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (July 2015): 1888.

168. *Ibid.*, 1935. One of Propaganda Minister Goebbels’ first projects was to design and distribute *Volkssenders*, which were mass produced inexpensive radio receivers.

The radio is today what print was in the age of the Reformation. In the age of the Reformation, print made it possible for people to have their own Bibles. In our age, the radio makes it possible for all people to have concerts, entertainment, sports reports and, of course, news reports, in their kitchens at home.¹⁶⁹

The German-speaking Czechoslovaks were in the same position with the radio broadcasts: they had no idea if the broadcasts were true, but relied on the familiarity of the language to discern authenticity. The intimacy of radio, coupled with the availability of programming in one's mother tongue, created the opening necessary for driving a wedge between the minority German speakers and the majority Czech and Slovak speakers. Jesenská placed part of the blame on the nationalistic aims of the government-funded Czechoslovak Radio:

For five years, all they (the German speakers) had to do was turn the dial and Nazi ideology from German stations rushed right into the flats of people in the border regions—of course, they turned to stations they understood! [Two lines censored] and as a counterbalance, we (Czechoslovak Radio) broadcast half an hour, usually dull and indigestible, of German Radio. Well, by now they are perfectly trained, persuaded and shouted down; they parrot the phrases about space for the nation and all those thing that you can read about every day in the *Zeit*.¹⁷⁰

While still subjects of the Habsburg Empire, the Czechs used their language as a way to unite the people and work toward independence. The use of the Czech language, which was overwhelmed by the German language during certain eras by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was a rallying tool.¹⁷¹ Lacking broadcast media, the nativist Czechs used live

169. Kathleen Hayes, ed., *The Journalism of Milena Jesenská: a Critical Voice in Interwar Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 165.

170. Ibid. This article was published in the Czechoslovak periodical *Přítomnost* on May 25, 1938. Consequently it was the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior that censored Jesenská's articles prior to the Munich Pact of September 29, 1938. Hays describes the process in her Introduction.

171. The Czech language was not banned, it fell out of popular usage after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, when the mainly Hussite and Protestant Czechs were beaten by the Habsburg Empire, and the Czech nobles, burghers, and intellectuals were either executed or exiled. The Renewed Land

theater, opera, and printed media to spread their nationalistic enthusiasm. In the First Czechoslovak Republic after World War I, the tables were turned. The once dominant German-speakers became a minority with the stroke of a pen at the Treaty of Versailles—the same treaty which Hitler and the NSDAP blamed for Germany’s woes in the 1920s. Radio propaganda from Germany did not have to change hearts and minds. It only had to confirm the German-speaking listeners’ biases, unite them with people they could understand, and give them groups to blame for their miseries, namely the Nazis’ favorite whipping boys: Slavs, communists, and Jews.

In his book *Nationalism Reframed*, Rogers Brubaker examined the Sudeten German situation as an example of “external national homelands.” This particular definition of modern nationalism, according to Brubaker, “... asserts states’ rights—indeed their obligation—to monitor the condition, promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, assert the rights, and protect the interests of ‘their’ ethnonational kin in other states.”¹⁷² Certainly, Nazi Germany appeared to be doing just this when advocating for and communicating with the Sudeten Germans. The problem with his assertion, and Brubaker himself admits this, was that the Sudeten Germans had never been part of Germany. They had been subjects of the Habsburg Empire since the Thirty Years War. The Sudeten Germans had been part of the dominant majority of that

Ordinances of 1627 allowed the Habsburgs to re-Catholicize the people of the Czech lands, give large areas of land to German-speaking nobles, and encourage the Jesuits to reform the university system. The Czech language was rediscovered during the Czech National movement in the 19th century. See Jaroslav Pánek and Oldřich Tůma, *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague: Karolinum, 2009), 234-5, 295.

172. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press Syndicate, 1996), 5, 61.

empire. Whatever “ethnonational” attachments to Germany they might have had was primarily in the form of a shared language.

The Nazi state was not the only broadcasting entity to use language as a unifying force. The British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], a radio monopoly licensed by the U.K. government, had strict rules from its inception about avoiding “controversial materials.” Consequently, their news department was comparatively small.¹⁷³ This would change in the 1930s with the introduction of the Empire Service, a short-wave outreach program in English to all of the colonies of the United Kingdom. In 1938, the BBC began their foreign language broadcasts, and so by the beginning of World War II, the service created programs in multiple languages and broadcast them via short and medium wave signals throughout the world. As one of the pre-eminent broadcaster in the world, the BBC took on the mission of broadcasting the most accurate news wherever its signal went.¹⁷⁴ At one point in the build-up to the invasion of Italy, Allied command requested that the BBC broadcast misinformation to throw the Germans off, but Winston Churchill himself denied this request in order to maintain the integrity of the BBC news.¹⁷⁵

When Germany went on the military offensive, sweeping into Czechoslovakia unopposed and into Poland with the *Blitzkrieg*, those in the leadership of the occupied countries who could escape made their way to London and Moscow. A new sort of warfare began which pitted words, ideas, news, and entertainment broadcast by outside entities against the occupiers. Correspondent William L. Shirer called this “the Fourth

173. Briggs and Burke, *Social History of the Media*, 199.

174. Ibid, 201.

175. Soley, *Radio Warfare*, 31.

Front—war by propaganda... On this front Hitler has won resounding victories... In six countries they did not have to fire a shot, so well was the ground prepared.”¹⁷⁶ The BBC gave over airtime to the representatives from the occupied states to broadcast messages of encouragement as well as news back to their own countries. Because many of these refugees held high office before they fled, they formed a government in exile. The announcers’ appeal to their audience was far more than their authority; it was a familiar voice in a familiar language delivering news and encouragement. The British government funded these programs to boost the morale of the occupied states. This was considered just one aspect of psychological operations [psy-ops].

Psychological operations analysts such as Lawrence Soley divide radio propaganda into three types: white, black, and gray. White propaganda is the effort to inform, to sway opinions, or to affect the thinking and emotions of the listener through a source who is clearly and overtly identified. There is no effort to hide the identity of the distributor of the information. An example of this would be the broadcasting of news from a known agency such as the British Broadcasting Corporation. Black propaganda is the “big lie,” the covert effort to deceive the listener with false identities. Black and white do not refer to the veracity of the information, just the identity of the presenter. Gray propaganda is the term for those presentations that claim to be aligned with the intended audience, but the listeners can understand from the content that the presenter is from the other side. An example of this was radio programming from the Allies, which claimed to

176. William L. Shirer, “Global Exclusives: US must Fight with Propaganda as well as Guns,” *Daily Boston Globe*, May 17, 1942, B1.

be from German sources, yet the news they would broadcast from the warfront was information the official Nazi radio stations would routinely censor.¹⁷⁷ Gray propaganda returned in 1968 when the invaders established Radio Vltava, a station transmitting from East Germany, while claiming to represent the Czechoslovak government. The existing Czechoslovak Radio staff discovered the ruse because the signal was not from a frequency used by Czechoslovak Radio, and through the accents of the announcers.¹⁷⁸

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia [the western half of Czechoslovakia under Nazi control] was a target of white propaganda from Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and Germany. The Soviets broadcast party information from the KSČ representatives in Moscow. At times this information included suggestions for sabotaging the German military units.¹⁷⁹

The German leaders of the Protectorate sought to control the news and information getting to the Czech people and made listening to foreign radio illegal in January of 1940. Later, the overlords sent gold seals to all radio license holders stating that listening to foreign broadcasts was punishable with death. Some Czechs got around this provision with spare radios, which they did not report to the authorities.¹⁸⁰ In order to enforce the listening ban, Nazi officials had an informal network of spies ready to turn in anyone who they heard listening to a foreign-language broadcast—nosey neighbors. The chance of being overheard was particularly great in apartments heated with steam.

177. Soley, *Radio Warfare*, 30-35.

178. "News Czechoslovak Radio, /0530-0535/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material of the Czechoslovak Radio Stations*, Radio Free Europe Papers. Open Society Archives 300_30_14, Box 13, Book 1, 12.

179. Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 206.

180. *Ibid.*, 94.

Radiator pipes conducted sound readily and so became an effective espionage tool. The solution was to have two radios at the ready: one tuned to officially approved stations was placed on the radiator, while another was tuned to monitor the BBC or Radio Moscow at a low volume.¹⁸¹ In an oral history recorded in 2012, Jan Slavík told about his father who was a Czechoslovak diplomat and one of the Czech-speaking officials featured on a regular BBC program from London. Having been a government official in a time before microphones and amplifiers, the elder Slavík had the loud voice that was a necessity for a public speaker. However, on the radio it was problematic. The younger Slavík told of his father being confronted after the war by listeners who complained that they had to leap for the volume knob whenever he loudly proclaimed “*Dobré večer!*” [“Good evening!”]¹⁸²

The end of World War II in Slovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was not a straightforward affair, and the fighting to rid the region of fascist domination would form divisions that affected societies in several countries for generations. With the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938, the state was divided into the Protectorate and independent Slovakia. The Germans established Slovakia as a client state with a domestic fascist government led by Catholic priest Father Jozef Tiso (1887-1947).¹⁸³ With the Soviet Union’s Red Army advancing towards Central Europe on its way to Berlin, Slovakia became one of the first military targets. However, as the

181. “Bohuslav Rychlík Oral History,” *Oral History Program*, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, IA, accessed June 15, 2017, <http://www.ncsml.org/exhibits/bohuslav-rychlik/>.

182. “Juraj Ján Slávik Oral History,” *Oral History Program*, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, IA, accessed June 15, 2017, <http://www.ncsml.org/exhibits/juraj-slavik/>.

183. James Mace Ward, *Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 161.

Red Army was in Poland preparing to fight its way through the Dukla Pass, the political strife was already in full swing. Allied fighters with radio equipment from the west were secretly parachuted into the Protectorate and Slovakia, while communist sympathizers in Slovakia were in covert radio contact with the Soviet Union; these two groups were tasked with gathering partisan fighters to destabilize the governments. However, this meant some of the resistance fighters were working toward a socialist Slovakia, others were trying for an independent, democratic Slovakia, while still another group was looking to return Slovakia back into Czechoslovakia.¹⁸⁴ The insurrection, known as the *Slovenského národného povstania* [Slovak National Uprising or SNP] started in earnest in March of 1944, when a pre-arranged code was broadcast by radio and a large portion of the Slovak Army deserted to join the Red Army or fight with partisan groups. The fighting became so fierce in August of 1944 that Tiso begged for assistance from Nazi troops.¹⁸⁵ The Red Army, supported by Czechoslovak troops parachuted in from the UK and partisan fighters, attacked the Wehrmacht on September 8, 1944, and fought through the winter, establishing control over Slovakia and Eastern Moravia by the end of April, 1945.¹⁸⁶

The Czechs living in the Protectorate learned of their imminent liberation by Soviet forces through the radio, and the results demonstrated their relationship with the medium. On the morning of May 5, 1945, as the Red Army approached from the east and

184. Pánek and Tůma, *History of the Czech Lands*, 453-4.

185. "Domáci odboj," *Odboj a SNP*, Múzeum Slovenského národného povstania, accessed June 16, 2017, <http://www.muzeumsnp.sk/historia/odboj-a-snp/>.

186. Pánek and Tůma, *History of the Czech Lands*, 455.

General Patton with the First Army was nearing Plzeň, radio listeners noticed that the radio announcers stopped speaking German. Instead, the announcers pleaded for help in Czech, because the radio station was under attack. This was the beginning of the *Pražské Povstání* [Prague Uprising]. In a scene that would be repeated in August of 1968, citizens poured out into the street to block the way to the station and defend the broadcasters.¹⁸⁷ The Czechs found themselves severely outgunned by the German troops, and realized too late that the Red Army was too far away to help. The five days of street-to-street fighting that followed was the most violence Prague saw throughout the entire war, and left approximately 3700 civilians dead.¹⁸⁸

During the war certain technologies did not fulfill military needs and so were put on the back burner. Both the Americans and the British had developed television before the war, but the conflict put any serious plans on hold. Television was a novelty at its American unveiling at the New York World's Fair of 1939, however private citizens balked at the enormous price tag of the earliest sets, and there was very little content to accommodate the media.¹⁸⁹ During the war, many of the advanced manufacturers including RCA and Bell Telephone Laboratories turned over their research and production capabilities to the US Government. Consequently, their innovation and production was not driven by consumer desires or entrepreneurship, but entirely dictated by the government and the necessity to win the war. One interesting piece of exotic

187. Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 233.

188. *Ibid.*, 235.

189. Ron Becker, "'Hear-and-See Radio' in the World of Tomorrow: RCA and the Presentation of Television at the World's Fair, 1939-1940," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 21, no. 4 (2001): 361.

technology that the Radio Corporation of America did continue to work with was the electron microscope. RCA and the US Government justified the expense and manpower because of the benefits to medicine.¹⁹⁰

War is hard on people and equipment alike. Radios were just as susceptible as soldiers to being shot, or bombed. Over the course of the war, the weaknesses of the equipment became problematic. Structurally, the vacuum tubes needed to amplify the current inside radios were fragile. Because of their limited useable life, tubes were mounted in sockets, but as the equipment vibrated, the tubes would loosen in the sockets and often fall out or lose contacts. Vacuum tubes took up a lot of room, which became a serious concern in the confined space of tanks and airplanes. Radio sets needed a consistent, strong electrical current to run, which put a drain on the vehicle's battery. Finally, dust and moisture could cause electronic connections to short out.¹⁹¹ For these reasons alone, some British and American airplanes were issued carrier pigeons, so that in case of radio failure, the birds could be sent home with requests to be rescued. At least 32 of these birds were awarded the Dickin Medal for conspicuous gallantry or devotion to duty while serving in military conflict, signifying that radio failure was a real threat.¹⁹²

Transmitting radio signals involved another set of problems. There were only so many frequencies available, and everyone had access to them, creating the potential for interference and the opportunity for enemies to listen. Engines, such as those in airplanes

190. Charles Banca, "Electron Microscope Advances," *Radio Age*, Vol 2, no. 1 (October 1942): 15.

191. D.G. Fink, "Transistors vs. Vacuum Tubes," *Proceedings of the IRE* (1956): 479.

192. "PDSA Dickin Medal," *The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals*, accessed June 1, 2017, <https://www.pdsa.org.uk/what-we-do/animal-honours/the-dickin-medal>.

and tanks produce electromagnetic fields, which interfered with both outgoing and incoming signals unless the proper electronic work-around was applied.¹⁹³ In war, taking advantage of weak points is essential, and both sides sought to capitalize on the vulnerability of units emitting radio waves. Radio transmitters could be easily traced by judging frequency strength using a regular receiver, making broadcasting antennas superb targets for aerial bombing. On February 12-13, 1941, the Gestapo located the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee by tracing their secret transmitter.¹⁹⁴ Careless radio users advertised their own positions, and the only protection was either to make the transmitters movable or to limit their operation severely.

In 1968, the Czechs and Slovaks encountered conditions very similar to those faced in the occupied Czech lands in World War II. With technological innovations, some of the mechanical problems were overcome. The problems with signal complexity, technical expertise, black, white, and gray propaganda, and of course the dangers of opposing a militarized authoritarian regime, remained the same. The lessons learned in World War II proved pivotal two decades later.

Replacing the vacuum tube demanded a truly disruptive innovation; the answer could not be simply better, or smaller, or cooler tubes. The United States Department of War, aware of the shortcomings of the tubes, retained control over the workshops of Bell Telephone Laboratories after the war, while the researchers in the labs sought a technological breakthrough. The military's investment paid off in December of 1947,

193. Larew, "From Pigeons to Crystals," 665.

194. Luza, "The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia," 570.

when scientist William Shockley and engineers John Bardeen and Walter Brattain ran a low voltage current through a “sandwich” of germanium, gold foil, and other metals and got a higher voltage out of it.¹⁹⁵ This invention, for which the three men would be awarded the 1956 Nobel Prize in physics, was the ideal replacement for fragile vacuum tubes—no glass, no filaments, no moveable parts, it stayed cool, and could be soldered directly into a circuit board. The transistor, as Shockley called it, worked two ways: first as an amplifier, and second as a switch that could be in one state or another, depending on how the current flowed into it. In this second mode, the transistor became a crucial building block for the improvement of the computer, allowing for a truly binary (on, off) element. The Soviet Union independently developed comparable technology only slightly later, and was producing its own transistor radios by 1953.¹⁹⁶

The race was on to replace as many vacuum tubes as possible—especially in radios. Cool-running transistors did not need a large space to dissipate heat; consequently, radios could be made smaller. The large floor and table model radios began to disappear. Another virtue of transistors was that they used very low voltage direct current (DC) meaning radios with transistors could run a long time on very small batteries. Transistorized radios could now be made to fit in a pocket. These little radios did not have a great sound out of the loud speaker, but they came with a small white

195. Michael Riordan and Lillian Hoddeson, *Crystal Fire: the Invention of the Transistor and the Birth of the Information Age* (New York: WW Norton Publishing, 1997), 138-144.

196. V. I. Stafeev, “Initial Stages of the Development of Semiconductor Electronics in the Soviet Union (60 years from the Invention of the Transistor),” *Semiconductors*, Vol. 44 (2010): 554.

plastic earphone for personal listening.¹⁹⁷ This combination of small size and earphones substantially changed how these tiny radios were used, and who used them.

The prices of transistors kept dropping, and consequently Japanese entrepreneurs found a way to revive their manufacturing sector; they could make electronics smaller, lighter, and cheaper than manufacturers in many other countries.¹⁹⁸ Soon the world markets were flooded with small, cheap radios that were rugged and had a long battery life.

Do you remember lying in bed
With your covers pulled up over your head?
Radio playin' so no one can see

“Do You Remember Rock and Roll Radio” The Ramones

The 1950s saw the intersection of three phenomena: the transistor radio, rock ‘n’ roll music, and solar storms. In combination, these had an unprecedented impact on society. Changing listening patterns created new markets for products like transistor radios. Falling profits driven by the audience switch to television encouraged radio stations to change their formats in search of new listeners. Unbeknownst to most, the extreme solar activity of the 1950s and early 1960s enabled radio signals to travel further than under normal conditions. Teenagers, armed with their new radios and now able to choose their own music, formed what Marshall McLuhan described as “new tribes.”¹⁹⁹ The figures around which all of this activity orbited were the late-night disc jockeys, who

197. Leonard H. Lynn, “The Commercialization of the Transistor Radio in Japan: the Functioning of an Innovation Community,” *IEEE Transactions On Engineering Management*, Vol. 45, no. 3 (August 1998): 225.

198. Lynn, “The Commercialization,” 223.

199. Marshall McLuhan, “Radio: The Tribal Drum,” *AV Communication Review*, Vol. 12, no.2 (Summer 1964): 134.

brought “black music to white people” and became tastemakers for their listeners through events such as Top 20 countdowns.

“The transistor radio,” claimed anthropologist Michael Brian Schiffer, “became the most common Christmas and birthday gift for teenagers.”²⁰⁰ The large console radio was slowly losing its pride of place as the center of family entertainment in the evenings. Television was replacing it, and the elegant wooden radios of the 1930s were hauled out to the shed or put up in the attic to make room. The family radio was now a smaller, more portable Bakelite® or plastic model that sat on a shelf in the kitchen, or garage for listening to daily soap operas or the ball game. For example, in Czechoslovakia, the tabletop model TESLA 308U Talisman became the most popular radio, selling over a million units between 1953 and 1958.²⁰¹ Teenagers, on the other hand, wanted their own style of music, which often did not sit well with the rest of the household. In order to keep peace in the house, the answer came as a gift of the tiny, battery-operated transistor radio. What was interpreted as peace—the absence of unwanted music—was really the fracturing of the generations into separate audio camps, and by extension, into separate social divisions.

Radio was a substantial vehicle for the dispersal of culture compared with other media such as the long-playing [LP] record. In her book *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold*

200. Michael Brian Schiffer, *The Portable Radio in American Life* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

201. Umberto Alunni, *La radio in soffitta* [The Radio in the Attic] (Raleigh, NC: Lulu Press, 2014), 129. “TESLA Talisman 308U,” Radio Museum, accessed June 15, 2017, <http://www.radiomuseum.org/lf/b/ceskoslovenske-prijimace-1946-1964-kottek-i-ii/>. This Bakelite radio was produced in the TESLA plant in Bratislava between the years 1946 and 1964. It was a small radio 12.6 x 7.5 x 5.9 inches but was not battery operated. It could receive 6 AM circuits as well as shortwave broadcasts.

War Politics and American Culture in Divided Germany, Uta Poiger depicts the spread of rock ‘n’ roll as a phenomenon in Europe driven by record sales and films imported from America.²⁰² While it was true that 45 and 33 rpm [LP] records were available in some areas, mitigating factors such as price, availability, and control by authorities made vinyl records a difficult medium to purchase in the Eastern bloc. Czech cultural historian Miroslav Vaněk outlined a few different ways a Czechoslovak enthusiast of *bigbít* [rock ‘n’ roll] music could secure LP records: purchase them from the limited stock of a state-licensed distributor; have a trusted friend ship them from abroad and risk having the record broken; or buy records on the black market.²⁰³ The last option carried both criminal and quality risks. Another option was to purchase *ersatz* black-market records ingeniously crafted on used x-ray film. Known as *roentgenizdat*, the soft surface of the developed and discarded x-ray sheets was grooved like a vinyl record. Each image was large enough to hold around six songs. They were cheap to buy, but were playable for only five or six times before becoming too severely damaged.²⁰⁴ While the vinyl LPs delivered the best possible audio quality at the time, their distribution was limited. Radio signals did not have this problem.

With a transistor radio and an earphone, a teenager could figuratively pluck their music out of thin air without the interference or knowledge of any authority.²⁰⁵ Radios,

202. Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

203. Miroslav Vaněk, *Byl to jenom Rock ‘n’ Roll* (Prague: Academia, 2010), 170.

204. Filip Pospíšil, “Youth Cultures and the Disciplining of Czechoslovak Youth in the 1960s,” *Social History*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (November 2012): 480.

205 A radio tuned to a frequency gives off a tiny, sympathetic frequency which can be traced using very complicated and cumbersome equipment. With so many radios in operation, it was hardly

with the ability to tune into multiple stations, also granted a measure of plausible deniability, which the possession of an LP record could not. Portable transistor radios went a step further by creating an exclusive virtual space for teens to explore new styles and ideas. It was a private space; but it was also a space shared with a larger group of like-minded young people. Marshal McLuhan described transistor radios as creating their own *lebensraum*, that sounds have “the unrivaled power to shape and pattern their own unique spaces.”²⁰⁶ However, this space, because it was entirely in the mind of the listener, created an intimate, private place that was portable. Listeners could, in full view of the public, transgress the boundaries set for them by authority figures, and do so with anonymity. The content coming from for-profit, trans-border stations like Radio Luxembourg or Radio Caroline included news, music sales reports, concert schedules, gossip, and general talk about whatever was “hip” at that moment.

The one thing listeners required was a signal from a radio station that played their kind of music. Transmitting antennae are tuned to send amplified signals at particular wavelengths set at predetermined wattage; however, topography and atmospheric conditions can dramatically alter the signal propagation. This was where the solar storms played their part. In the first few years of the seventeenth century, Galileo Galilei observed dark spots travel across the face of the sun with his primitive telescope.²⁰⁷ Later astronomers associated the appearance of the spots with increased activity of the Aurora

worth tracing each one. Consequently, a listener with earbuds or headphones can be confident they are not being monitored.

206. McLuhan, “Radio: the Tribal Drum,” 134.

207. Maurice A. Finocchiaro, “Galilei, Galileo,” *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, eds. Thomas Hockey, Virginia Trimble, Thomas R. Williams, Katherine Bracher, Richard A. Jarrell, Jordan D. Marché II, JoAnn Palmeri, Daniel W. E. Green (New York: Springer, 2014), 773.

Borealis. The same phenomena that produce this dramatic light show also effects the behavior of radio waves.²⁰⁸ More advanced telescopes and measuring instruments revealed that the spots are actually storms, which can eject huge plumes of plasma and magnetic energy, known as Coronal Mass Ejections [CMEs]. These CMEs, once they reach Earth, play havoc with electrical equipment; the most powerful CMEs have melted telegraph wires, disrupted radio and television signals, and even caused power outages in major urban areas.²⁰⁹ Because of the potential threat to worldwide communications, scientists carefully observed, measured, and tracked the frequency of these storms, and found that they have an eleven-year cycle of powerful frequent storms, followed by approximately eleven years of infrequent and milder storm activity. One of the most violent recorded cycles of solar activity was from 1953 to 1964.²¹⁰ As the magnetic force from the sun passes the Earth, it disrupts the ionosphere, but only on the sunward side. On the night side of the Earth, the ionosphere becomes stronger, propagating a phenomenon known as skywaves or skip. Short wave radio operators depend on skywaves to send the signal over the horizon of the Earth as the radio waves bounce back and forth between the ground and the ionosphere.²¹¹ During periods of heightened solar activity, this effect is multiplied and even affects medium and long radio waves—on the daylight side of the globe, radio signals can fade out entirely, but at night they travel

208. "Storms on Sun Jam Radio, Cable Circuits," *Boston Globe*, July 16, 1959, 1.

209. Frances Cleveland, et al., "Solar Effects on Communication," *IEEE Transactions on Power Delivery*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (April 1992): 463-5.

210. L. H. Deng, Y. Y. Xiang, Z. N. Qu, and J. M. An, "Systematic Regularity of Hemispheric Sunspot Areas over the Past 140 Years," *The Astronomical Journal*, Vol. 151, no. 3: 4. This cycle is known as the Schwab Cycle.

211. Roscoe L. Barrow and Daniel J. Manelli, "Communications, Part 1," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 34, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 211-2.

much farther. During this solar cycle, there were reports of people tuning into radio stations from thousands of miles away.²¹² Even without the CME activity, radio signals travel longer distances at night. It was in no small part due to solar activity that teenagers, hiding beneath their covers late at night with their transistor radios, gave rise to a new phenomenon: the late night disc jockey.

With nicknames such as “Moondog” and “Wolfman Jack,” the announcers who led the shift in radio programming toward rock ‘n’ roll developed a new intimacy with their listeners. Alan “Moondog” Freed was a pioneer of playing rhythm and blues music late at night, and was credited with popularizing the term “rock ‘n’ roll.” Working out of a station in Cleveland, Ohio, Freed developed an on-air personality that bridged the gap between African-American musicians and his mostly white audience.²¹³ Freed received numerous letters and phone calls from fans far outside of the range of the daytime broadcast signal, so it was clear that the signal was reaching areas far away, and that his audience wanted to have some sort of relationship with him. His broad appeal and success sparked an estimated 4,500 on-air imitators as radio stations one-by-one changed their evening programming to appeal to a teen-age audience. The disc jockeys were more than just announcers, they were local celebrities. They cultivated relationships with their

212. Cleveland, “Solar Effects,” 464-5. For example, in a particularly large storm in March of 1989, a radio operator in Minnesota had his signal overwhelmed by radio conversations of the California Highway Patrol.

213. Alvin “Chick” Webb, “Footlights and Sidelights: ‘Moondog,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1954, 22. Chick praised Freed’s efforts to help raise funds with the NAACP to build Community Service Centers, as well as boosting the careers of young artists. Sadly, Freed would be caught up in the payola scandal (taking bribes from record companies), lost his job, and died in 1965. Ben Fong-Torres, “Biography,” *The Alan Freed Official Website*, accessed May 7, 2017, <http://www.alanfreed.com/wp/biography/>.

listeners, becoming “their friends, heroes, and confidantes.”²¹⁴ Reading letters from fans, taking phone calls on air, doing live “hops” or dance parties, re-enforced these ties.

Listening to rock ‘n’ roll was not a passive activity for these teens.

The late night disk jockey phenomenon spread from the United States to Europe in the 1950s. However, because radio in most of these countries was under state control, programming options that appealed to teens were limited, many times by government regulations. Certain broadcast entities such as the BBC codified policies against playing commercially popular rock ‘n’ roll well into the 1960s.²¹⁵ One exception was the commercial station: Radio Luxembourg. One of the earliest broadcasters in Europe, Radio Luxembourg (“Your Station of the Stars”) was a for-profit private station for most of its existence.²¹⁶ Because of its central location—in the small duchy of Luxembourg bordered by France, Germany, and Belgium, and because of the phenomenon of skywaves—Radio Luxembourg had a huge potential audience. Part of the station’s success stemmed from its multilingual programming.²¹⁷ However, its real popularity came from the music. Radio Luxembourg was free of the control of cultural, economic, and political content of the airwaves which characterized state-run radio networks.²¹⁸ The weekly *Top Twenty Hit Parade* let all of Europe know which songs were most popular.

214. Marilou Hedlund, “Disk Jockeys Teen Heroes,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1964, C9.

215. Briggs and Burke, *Social History*, 206. The BBC played limited rock ‘n’ roll programs on the weekends. BBC 1 was created in 1967 out of one of the pirate radio stations to play more rock ‘n’ roll.

216. Gerald Newton, “Radio Luxembourg in Peace and War,” *German Life and Letters*, Vol. 66, no. 1 (January 2013):56. Radio Luxembourg began broadcasting in 1932, and it was highly controversial then because of the perception of the degradation of German culture by having to listen to French advertisements.

217. Newton, “Radio Luxembourg,” 60.

218. Gene Sherman, “Political Static Caused by British Radio Ships: ‘Pirate’ Craft Anchor,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1964, 36.

American disc jockey Alan Freed had a show on Saturday nights on Radio Luxembourg. Ironically, during rock's British invasion of the early 1960s, the songs of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who, and so many others were not first played by the BBC, but by Radio Luxembourg and by pirate radio ships offshore. These pirate stations were set up to get around the BBC's iron grip on the airwaves. Entrepreneurs set up floating radio transmitters in international waters so that they could play music and charge advertisers to run commercials. The most famous of these ships were Radio Caroline and Radio London.²¹⁹ Even though these stations were meant for listeners in the United Kingdom, their signal travelled at times all over Europe, and the outlaw nature of the pirate-radio ships appealed to young people.

Czechs and Slovaks could listen to Radio Luxembourg or *Laxík* as they called it, because it was almost never jammed by the authorities. Historian Miroslav Vaněk reported that the station had,

represented for eager supporters of "western" popular music literally an entrance to another dimension that could not be experienced behind the Iron Curtain. Therefore, almost two generations of fans tried to at least approach, what in practice meant to tune their radios, then regularly monitor the broadcasts of music and eventually broadcast on medium wave in the amateur, as well as imitate professional conditions. Between the younger generations, popular *Laxík* after a certain time represented almost the only direct source that gave a regular supply of rock and beat music, along with information on new trends and especially its protagonists.²²⁰

In his book *Byl to jenom Rock 'n' Roll [Is It Only Rock 'n' Roll?]*, Vaněk gathered oral histories from musicians and other creative people in the Czech Republic. These accounts

219. Robert Chapman, "The 1960s Pirates: a Comparative Analysis of Radio London and Radio Caroline," *Popular Music*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (April 1990): 165.

220. Vaněk, *Byl to jenom Rock 'n' Roll*, 154.

chronicle the popularity of Western music and culture during the Cold War. While the interview subjects remembered *Laxík* fondly, they criticized the domestic radio as being sterile and dull.²²¹ These interviews were recorded forty to fifty-five years after the fact, and consequently may reflect latent negative feelings toward the totalitarian regime. Additionally, the interview subjects were selected for inclusion in the book because they had interests in rock music or the artistic freedoms they associated with the West. Consequently the interviews, while insightful, must be understood in this context. Radio Luxembourg was also popular in Poland; oral histories of listeners have been compiled in a 2008 documentary “Once upon a time, there was Luxembourg,” as well as an exhibit “Remembering Radio Luxembourg in the People’s Republic of Poland,” in Warsaw in 2012.²²² While many radio organizations may have a nostalgic following from their own communities, the international proliferation of websites and writings about the station reveals the broad appeal of their programming.

Radio Luxembourg and the pirate stations were not the only foreign signals heard in Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. Radio Vienna’s signal reached much of the area.²²³ However, none of these stations broadcast in the Czech or Slovak languages. All of these signals reached Czechoslovakia collaterally as opposed to the signals that were

221. Ibid., 157.

222. “Behind the Iron Curtain” *Radio Luxembourg*, accessed May 29, 2017, http://www.radioluxembourg.co.uk/?page_id=30.

223. “Listening to Western Stations in Czechoslovakia,” *Radio Free Europe Survey* (June 1966), 5. Open Society Archives, 300, 6, 2, Box 2. Radio Free Europe performed multiple surveys every year, however, their sample size is very small and highly selective. They collected information from Czechs and Slovaks who happen to be travelling in Vienna. RFE also created surveys based on correspondence received by the organization, a methodology which has serious flaws when it depends on letters mailed out of authoritarian regimes which routinely censored mail.

directed into the country from outside. Radio Moscow and other stations in the Warsaw Pact states were electronically routed through the Czechoslovak Radio system, and their programming was a regular feature of the broadcast day and announced in the printed schedule.²²⁴ “Broadcasting services everywhere [in the Soviet sphere] are planned to be complementary rather than competitive,” according to communications specialist Burton Paulu; shared programs and programs in multiple languages were important unifying aspects of the Eastern Bloc communications.²²⁵

Three western stations broadcast programming in the Czech and Slovak languages; the BBC World Service produced regular Czech and Slovak short-wave broadcasts since 1939. Forty percent of these broadcasts were dedicated to news, the rest to information and cultural programs.²²⁶ Two other stations that broadcast in the Czech and Slovak languages from West Germany were Radio Free Europe (RFE) and the Voice of America (VOA).²²⁷ These radio entities, funded by various governmental and private

224. “na straně 7 a 10,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 5, 5-11 unora, 1968, (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 4.

225. Burton Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe* (New Berlin, WI: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 13.

226. “Historie BBC v češtině,” *Čeština na vlnách BBC*, BBC World Service, accessed June 8, 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/czech/specials/934_bbc_history/page2.shtml.

227. For more information on RFE and VOA, see A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Boulder, CO: Central European University Press, 2010); Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, I-VI* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Richard H. Cummings, *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": rallying Americans behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950-1960* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. 2010). A.F. Panfilov, *Broadcasting Pirates or Abuse of the Microphone: an Outline of External Radio Propaganda by the USA, Britain and the FRG* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: the Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997). For more on the VOA: David F. Krudler, *The Voice of America and the Domestic Propaganda Battles* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000); Alan L. Heil, *Voice of America: a History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). These books are monographs on the two broadcasting agencies. There are hundreds of Congressional reports and hearings covering every aspect of the operations and some of the funding.

sources in the United States, were formed after World War II to counter the messages coming from the Soviet Union and to spread news and information that authoritarian states censored. Alan L. Heil, Jr., a former deputy director of the VOA described the difference:

When RFE and RL [Radio Liberty] were founded, it was clearly understood they would concentrate on coverage of their listeners' homelands, while VOA's role was primarily to reflect America, along with news of the US and the world. Over the years, the missions converged. RFE and RL unhesitatingly reported major US foreign policy initiatives of interest to their target audiences. VOA, for its part, increasingly concentrated on events within target countries. This occurred for good reasons: VOA was less jammed than RFE /RL and seldom jammed at all in English. Ferment for change within the Soviet Union and former Warsaw Pact countries was a matter of interest not only within Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union but to VOA's worldwide audience.²²⁸

The Soviet Union accused RFE of being under the direction of the Central Intelligence Agency and electronically jammed RFE's signals for most of the Cold War.²²⁹ While some of the funding and security for RFE was provided by the CIA, the intelligence agency had no influence on policy. Those policies came from a private organization called the Free Europe Committee.²³⁰ The Voice of America had a separate structure, policy formulation and funding source, which was the United States Department of State.²³¹ The majority of the Czechs and Slovaks tuning into RFE and VOA, according to a 1967 survey, were listening for news and information, not necessarily for music and

228. Alan L. Heil, Jr., "The Voice of America: A Brief Cold War History," in Johnson, and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 26. Radio Liberty was a service of RFE aimed specifically at the Soviet Union.

229. George W. Woodard, "Cold War Radio Jamming," in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 53

230. Paul B. Henze, "RFE's Early Years: Evolution of Broadcast Policy and Evidence of Broadcast Impact," in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 7.

231. Heil, "The Voice of America," 26.

entertainment.²³² The 1966 survey showed that of the people surveyed who affirmed they listened to western radio, 71% listened to Radio Vienna, 43% listened to RFE, 25% listened to VOA, 15% listened to the BBC, and 36% listened to Radio Luxembourg. Many listeners obviously listened to more than one station.²³³ Radio Vienna attracted all age groups because of programming aimed for the Czech and Slovak audience, but delivered in German. The music offerings at Radio Luxembourg and Radio Vienna fared well with young people. RFE also broadcast music shows in the afternoon in an effort to capture the younger crowd.²³⁴

To jam a radio signal, the jammer transmits a signal on the same frequency as the target signal, but instead of broadcasting an intelligible signal, the jammer sends interference or noise. The goal of this sort of jamming is to make the intended target signal impossible to tolerate. It uses the same types of radio transmission equipment that a regular station would use.²³⁵ However, the jamming system had to be adjusted for the different wavelengths [short, medium, and long-wave] and to compensate for the drift in the analog systems. RFE and VOA used a series of medium and shortwave transmitters throughout Europe so that the jamming station engineers had to adjust their interference signals constantly to compensate. Consequently, jamming was neither total nor foolproof and it was expensive: the BBC estimated the Soviet Union spent \$900 million annually to

232. "Listening to Western Stations in Czechoslovakia IV, February 1967," *Radio Free Europe Audience Research*, Central European University Open Society Archives, OSA 300, 6, 2, Box 2, 8.

233. "Listening to Western Stations in Czechoslovakia III, June 1966," *Radio Free Europe Audience Research*, Central European University Open Society Archives, OSA 300, 6, 2, Box 2, 5.

234. "Listening to Western Stations," 5-6, 9.

235. Tiffany McKinney, "Radio Jamming: the Disarmament of Radio Propaganda," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 13, no. 3 (2002): 130.

interfere with Western radio signals.²³⁶ An editor for Czechoslovak Radio, Jaroslav Pacovský, described how the jamming was organized in Czechoslovakia:

The authorities of the Ministry of the Interior were entrusted with the management and operation of the interference stations, with the Ministry of Communications running the transmitters. In some centers, the operation of transmitters was entrusted only to the staff of the Ministry of the Interior. The interference system was brought to perfection. 7 medium wave transmitters, 46 transmitters were disrupted in locations from the ionosphere-- long waves-- built in cooperation with the then Soviet Union of international interference jammers. The jammers in Litomyšl, Litovl and Rimavská Sobota covered their signal on the ground of the European part of the USSR and the transmitters located in the Urals disturbed the reception on the territory of our state. Later, interference became a sensitive seismograph of international relations. If the warm wave came, the interference was not so intense, if it cooled down between the super powers, the jammers were in a more alert state.²³⁷

Jamming was taken very seriously, as indicated by the fact that it was managed by the Ministry of the Interior in Czechoslovakia, which also controlled the state security apparatus and the plainclothes secret police force, *Státní bezpečnost* [StB].

Radio broadcasts in the 1950s and the 1960s depended on two pieces of equipment, the *magnetofon* and the teleprinter, to provide content. The *magnetofon*,²³⁸ [reel-to-reel tape recorder,] was used to record, edit, and playback audio of all types; the field journalists depended on battery-operated units, while all studio production was done on large, multi-channel decks. *Magnetofons* had equally versatile applications for consumers. The teleprinters, [Teletype and Telex are brand names], were instruments that much of the public never knew about, although their characteristic clacking noise was often heard in the background of news reports. Networks of these teleprinters delivered

236. Heil, "The Voice of America," in Johnson and Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting*, 27.

237. Jaroslav Pacovský, *Na vlnách rozhlasu /1923-1993/* (Prague: Český rozhlas, 1993), 99.

238. The Czech spelling is *magnetofon*, the German spelling is *magnetophon*.

news, weather, and other important information to newspapers, radio stations, television stations, airports, government offices, etc., and they played a crucial role in the events of 1968.

For almost three decades after their introduction in 1957, music lovers associated recorded music with record albums. The long-playing record discs were the medium with the best audio quality available to the consumer in the 1960s and 1970s. Additional factors in their appeal included the artistic album covers and liner notes. An album was an entire package of artistic collaboration of composers, lyricists, arrangers, performers, engineers, visual artists, record cutters, and writers. As such, the album became a cultural icon above and beyond the music itself. Albums became collectors' items and owning a new release was an eagerly anticipated experience. One of the latest cultural productions based around the Prague Spring of 1968 was Tom Stoppard's 2006 play *Rock and Roll*, in which the protagonist, a young Czech college student, was in London when the Soviet-led occupation occurred. Rather than stay in the west, he chooses to return to Prague in order to be with his album collection, and was trapped there until the Velvet Revolution in 1989.²³⁹ In reality western albums were dear, generally too dear for many Czechs and Slovaks to afford.

One technological innovation that became a work-around for the lack of records was the *magnetofon*. Developed in Germany as an alternative to wire dictation recorders, the reel-to-reel tape recorder captures audio signals and encodes them on a polyester tape embedded with iron-oxide particles. The technology of encoding analog information on a

239. Tom Stoppard, *Rock and Roll* (New York: Grove Press, 2006).

polyester tape was the beginning of a technological cascade that led to videotapes and computer storage devices.²⁴⁰ The consumer use in the United States was mostly limited to audiophiles.²⁴¹ Until the LP album debuted in 1957, reel-to-reel tape was the only format that could hold over an hour of material; 78s and 45s only held three to six minutes of music per side. The reel-to-reel tape recorder was a crucial tool for professional audio recording in film, television, radio, music, and theater production. It provided a very flexible platform for recording, editing, and playback in high quality audio.

The reel-to-reel tape recorder replaced earlier recording devices such as wax cylinders, sound scribes, and wire recorders [*blatterphony*].²⁴² The audio quality and cost of these older technologies was unacceptable for music recording, and they were relegated to work as business dictation machines.²⁴³ Magnetic tape recordings were not susceptible to the hiss, click, and pop noises that plagued records. A radio listener prior to World War II could easily tell if the voice coming out of the loudspeaker was speaking live into the microphone, or if the voice had been recorded on a record or cylinder. The German firm AEG produced the first reel-to-reel tape recorder [*Magnetophon*]²⁴⁴ in 1935, and the technology was put to work almost immediately in the *Reichs-*

240. Greg Milner, *Perfecting Sound Forever: an Aural History of Recorded Music* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009), 111. Later chromium dioxide particles were used.

241. "Tape Recorders: a Quick Guide for the Uninitiated," *Changing Times*, January, 1962, 13.

242. Steel tape recorders like *Blattnerphones* were developed in the late 1920s for use as playback units for "talking pictures." While the superior optical sound technique became the motion picture industry standard, the *Blattnerphones* were used by the BBC for shortwave broadcasting during the 1930s and early 40s. See Mark H. Clark, "Steel Tape and Wire Recorders," *Magnetic Recording: The First 100 Years*, eds. Eric D. Daniel, C. Denis Mee, Mark H. Clark (New York: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. 1999), 34.

243. Clark, "Steel Tape and Wire Recorders," 31-3.

244. *Magnetophon* was the German brand name of the earliest successful audio tape recorder. *Magnetofon* was both the Czech and the Slovak generic word for tape recorder.

Rundfunkgesellschaft [RRG] radio system.²⁴⁵ After numerous improvements to the *Magnetophon*, including AC bias recording in 1940, the recorder attained the highest fidelity audio to date in a format which could capture and playback up to an hour of music.²⁴⁶ With this capability, the Propaganda Ministry could record the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra during the day, and play the tape at midnight. However the audience, not hearing the telltale irregularities inherent in records and wire tape recordings, was none the wiser. For propaganda purposes, the tape recorder was a force-multiplier, allowing the time shifting of announcements, or the pre-packaging of shows to be sent to remote locations or played at inconvenient times. After World War II, American Signal Corps Major Jack Mullin secured two *Magnetophons* and a stack of tapes from a radio facility in Frankfurt and sent them home. He teamed up with the owner of the electronics firm Ampex in Central California and they used the models to make their own reel-to-reel tape recorders. One of the first customers and investors was the celebrity Bing Crosby, who did not like having to perform his hit radio show for an East Coast audience in the afternoon, then repeat it for the West Coast audience that evening.²⁴⁷ With the Ampex recorder, Crosby only had to perform his show once for the recorder, and was then free to spend more time on the golf course.²⁴⁸

245. Friedrich K Engel, "The Introduction of the *Magnetophon*," in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording: The First 100 Years*, 62-3. The early *Magnetophons* were only part of a mix of recording technologies which included wax cylinders, wire recorders, steel tape recorders, and optical film recorders.

246. Engel, "The Introduction of the *Magnetophon*," in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording: The First 100 Years*, 62-3.

247. Beverley R. Gooch, "Building on the *Magnetophon*," in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording: The First 100 Years*, 87.

248. Milner, *Perfecting Sound Forever*, 122.

The reel-to-reel tape recorders, especially high fidelity, precision machines such as the Kudelski Nagra, were used for the most demanding purposes such as studio recording and motion picture production.²⁴⁹ Reel-to-reel recorders were essential tools for audio production until the 1990s when their quality was surpassed by digital recording techniques.²⁵⁰ The consumer market for reel-to-reel recorders in most western countries, however, was limited mainly to audiophiles and the handful of people who made audio recordings for legal or business purposes. The reel-to-reel lost much of its U.S. consumer market to the long-playing record album after 1957 and the more user-friendly audio cassettes after 1970.

The first *magnetophon* at Czechoslovak Radio arrived in 1935 from the AEG factory and was mainly used by journalists.²⁵¹ These devices became the workhorses for Czechoslovak Radio [ČSR], and later Czechoslovak Television [ČST]. The big difference compared with the West was in the consumer market for and use of *magnetofons*, where the scarcity of LPs and the Eastern Bloc's lax attitude toward copyright enforcement encouraged the widespread use of this technology. *Magnetofons* became an alternative system of music distribution without the expense of LP duplication, printing of album covers, and shipping. ČSR often broadcast concerts live from concert halls around the

249. David Lewis Yewdall, *Practical Art of Motion Picture Sound* (Waltham, MA: Focal Press, 2012), accessed June 19, 2017, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/book/9780240812403>. Despite the fact that the rest of the book deals with the newest digital technology, Yewdall devoted an entire chapter to the Nagra recorders because of requests from readers and because the film and video production industry still uses this piece of analogue technology. Few other aspects of production have remained the same since the 1960s, and certainly not technological equipment like the Nagra.

250. Milner, *Perfecting Sound Forever*, 221.

251. Jakub Kamberský, "Produkční funkce rozhlasu veřejné služby" (Ph.D dissertation, Charles University, Prague, 2011), 33.

country, especially the international Prague Spring Music Festival.²⁵² The radio system not only allowed private recordings of these events, they encouraged it by publishing the air times and duration of the concerts for the week in a sidebar of the printed weekly schedule entitled “We broadcast for your *magnetofon*.”²⁵³ TESLA Electronics, the Czechoslovak electronics conglomerate, manufactured *magnetofons* with a special input for recording directly from a radio. This connection was next to the dedicated microphone input and the separate turntable input.²⁵⁴ For the cost of blank tapes, Czech and Slovak music lovers could amass a large library of live concerts from professional orchestras from throughout the country. Classical music was not the only fare; specialized music such as country and western, Broadway cast albums, and blues were also listed.²⁵⁵ In 1967 ČSR began *Džezová Encyklopedie* [Jazz Encyclopedia], a weekly entertainment and education program, hosted by a musicologist, which promised to play 200 of the most important jazz albums. They added this feature because of listener requests, and scheduled the shows on the Czechoslovak 2 channel, which played popular music and educational programs. ČSR cooperated with *Melodie* magazine to advertise *Džezová Encyklopedie*; because *Melodie* was printed on better quality paper, it included

252. “Pátek, 17. Května 1963: Praha, 20:00 Pražské Jaro 1963,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXX, číslo 20, 13 – 19 května, 1963, (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1963), 12.

253. “Vysíláme pro vaše magnetofony,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 25, 17– 23 června 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 8. This particular entry is for Saturday, June 23, and it highlights selections from Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and Charlie Parker.

254. *Sonet B3 návod k použití* (instruction manual), (Přelouč: TESLA, c. 1962), 12. Retrieved from Historický radioklub československý, z.s., accessed May 30, 2017, <http://www.radiojournal.cz/schemata4.htm>.

255. “Vysíláme pro vaše magnetofony,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXIV, číslo 20, 15--21 května 1967 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1967), 8. This evening’s performers included the original cast of “Fiddler on the Roof” and Ray Charles.

labels of the programs that were the same size and shape as the tape boxes for listeners to cut out of the magazine and paste onto their tape boxes.²⁵⁶

Of course, Czechoslovak radio programs were not the only source of music to be recorded on the *magnetofon*. Recording *bigbít* tunes from Radio Luxembourg became an obsession for many Czechs and Slovaks. According to his biographer, Pavel Bobek, the lead singer of the Czechoslovak rock band Olympie, listened to and recorded *Luxík* every evening and kept notebooks listing each song.²⁵⁷ *Magnetofons* could also record directly from turntables or from other *magnetofons*.²⁵⁸ Copying a friend's tape or record was a casual method to distribute music. Miroslav Vaněk recalled:

I remember myself between the ages of 15 and 17, when we were spending all weekend with a bunch of other rock fans recording from one tape recorder to the other, then a third, and a fourth, depending on how many fans gathered. Such weekends had a fairly consistent program: connect the recorders, record as much as possible, and talk about new groups not just rock events. If someone brought a vinyl record, it was a cherry on our cake because the quality of the recording was many times higher than the "xth" copy of tape recordings that circulated among us. In addition to the titles of the albums and individual songs that were shared, we exchanged experiences with the different types of tapes, dominated by the Holy Trinity: Agfa, BASF, Scotch, and later by Sony. With sympathetic smiles, we tolerated those who did not purchase the foreign tapes and brought the locally produced tape: *Emgetonky*. In its defense, it is possible to say that the *Emgetonky's* shortcomings in the quality of the tape itself were offset by a sensationally tough box.²⁵⁹

256. "VKV hlásí Džezová encyklopedie," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXIV, číslo 10, 27 února-5 března 1967 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1967), 8

257. Vaněk, *Byl to jenom*, 158.

258. *Návod k obsluze magnetofonu TESLA B 57*, [instruction manual] (Pardubice: TESLA, c. 1971), 8, Historický radioklub československý, z.s., accessed May 30, 2017 <http://www.radiojournal.cz/schemata4.htm>.

259. Vaněk, *Byl to jenom*, 167. When a copy is made of an analogue tape, the new copy is not as good as the original—it's called "losing a generation."

Vaněk contends that despite the controlled economy, these casual exchanges and recording from radio programs made good economic sense, because they encouraged purchases of *magnetofons* and tape. TESLA electronics manufactured over twenty different models of recorders in different price ranges, each with different features including stereo recording, the capability to sound-synchronize with slide projectors, and battery operation. Instead of separate manufacturers competing in the market place, TESLA offered consumers a choice by offering feature-differentiated equipment.

Audio tapes also had a number of attributes that made them valuable for sharing restricted or unauthorized material. A reel of tape could fit in a coat pocket, while an album was specifically too large to smuggle. The content of the tapes was opaque to the observer – it had to be played on the correct equipment at the correct speed to be comprehensible. Albums had labels and matrix identification numbers etched on the vinyl itself, and so could be identified without being played. Audio tapes had one other quality that was absent on albums: the magnetic recordings are easy to erase intentionally by placing them in contact with powerful magnets.

In the West, the knowledge that rock ‘n’ roll was banned on the other side of the Iron Curtain sometimes led to the assumption that the equipment was too. The musicologist Peter Schmelz, in the introduction to an edition of the *Journal of Musicology* focusing on the Cold War, assumed that both the encroaching culture and the technology of the West forced decision-makers and composers to react against it:

The constantly imported signs of Western modernity—usually illicit and therefore highly enticing—especially its interlinked new technologies and new musical techniques (radio, tape recorders, electronic music, and serialism, for example),

pressed Eastern composers to revisit and revamp the increasingly stodgy attributes of socialist realism.²⁶⁰

While the leadership balked at admitting Western music, they encouraged the use of radios and tape recorders domestically.

Musicians before 1968 had a different problem: the latest electronic musical instruments were in short supply, and professional musicians got the equipment first. One example is the case of Jiří Grosman, a teenager in the 1960s who wanted to be a musician. Once he heard rock ‘n’ roll, he desperately wanted an electric guitar. He was able to secure the instrument, but not an amplifier. Borrowing his father’s old vacuum-tube radio from the attic, Grosman successfully reconfigured it to amplify his guitar. In an oral history, he noted that after he joined an amateur band, Grosman found that lugging an old radio on stage didn’t do much for his image.²⁶¹ Styles and symbols were as important as musicianship in the world of rock, even behind the Iron Curtain.

After the 1968 Soviet-led invasion, recording and sharing certain music became an act of defiance, particularly with rise of underground rock bands such as Plastic People of the Universe, who were not granted an official license to perform. They held secret concerts and sold albums on the black market as their fans shared tapes of their music. Underground rock music became a special type of *samizdat*, or self-publishing called *magnetizdat* after the magnetic tape on which it was distributed.²⁶² Although the

260. Peter J. Schmelz, “Introduction: Music in the Cold War,” *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 26, no.1 (Winter 2009): 9.

261. “Jiří (George) Grosman Oral History,” *Oral History Program*, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, IA, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://www.ncsml.org/exhibits/george-grosman/>

262. J. Martin Daughtry, “‘Sonic *Samizdat*’: Situating Unofficial Recording in the Post-Stalinist Soviet Union,” *Poetics Today*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 34.

use of the *magnetofon* after 1968 is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to understand that the Plastic People were arrested for public disturbance and the trials and convictions of the Plastic People eventually inspired the human rights movement known as Charter 77.²⁶³ However, even before the era of normalization, the *magnetofon* was an extraordinarily useful tool for professionals, and helped consumers capture and share the sounds that mattered to them. When compared with this tool and the processes around it, the transistor radio and the television set seem quite passive. One could compare the differences between these technologies as one would compare a novel to a pad of paper and a pencil. The novel can be appreciated in one way, but the pen and paper hold the potential to capture creative thoughts in a highly personalized and idiosyncratic fashion. Recorders allowed consumers to choose and hold onto music they liked, to share it with others, or to capture the reality around them.

Before the internet, government officials, news outlets, and transportation agencies needed a way to share critical information that was too cumbersome to be sent by telephone or telegraph. Teleprinters were crucial communication devices which filled a niche for messages that had to be shared immediately between networks of institutions. Found at transportation hubs, broadcast facilities, printed-news offices, and government agencies, teleprinters could be connected via telephone lines [TTY] or by radio [RTTY]. Unlike telegraphs that worked with Morse code, the teleprinter featured a keyboard and

263. Václav Havel, "The Trial," in *Open Letters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 102-8. This source is Havel's eyewitness account of the trial in the fall of 1976, and how the older playwright came to view the trial of the young rock musicians exposed larger problems in the communist system. Havel would become one of the founders of the Charter 77 dissident movement.

worked like a typewriter, meaning a specialized operator was not needed. They were an improvement in many ways over telephones because the messages were typed in and printed out so that the receiver had a paper copy of the message. Teleprinter messages were a one-to-many medium, meaning messages could be sent at once to groups of people in separate locations. They were also a form of two-way communication, which gave them a responsive advantage over radio and TV. Because the message was written on one end and printed out at the other, it was less prone to being misunderstood. The famous “hotline” between the White House in the United States and the Kremlin in Russia was a teleprinter system, as were the wire services Associated Press and United Press International. The Soviet Union was enamored of the teleprinter, and had them installed in every party office, ships at sea, and at every military installation. Lacking a telephone network with complete coverage, teleprinters in the Soviet Union generally used high frequency radio signals to contact other teleprinters in the network. This saved them miles of copper telephone lines, but made their system vulnerable to monitoring.²⁶⁴ Teleprinters also served as a way to confirm rumors; because the networks were controlled by elite sources, they needed to maintain the integrity of such information as weather reports shared between airports.²⁶⁵ While the technology of the teleprinter was not available to the general public, it played multiple roles in the history of 1968: teleprinters were used to send messages between officials in Czechoslovakia and the

264. Donald P. Steury, “Strategic Warning,” in Bischof et al., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 242. The main monitoring station in the Eastern United States was the Vint Hills Farm station in Warrenton, Virginia.

265. Bill Murray, “Airport database goes on Web (Government Activity),” *Government Computer News*, Vol. 19, issue 12 (May 22, 2000): 45.

Soviet Union during the Prague Spring reform era; and they were the main source of information to the outside world during the Soviet-led invasion on August 21, 1968, after the international telephone connections had been severed. The teleprinter systems, because they were tightly controlled by the elite, provided a trusted system to send raw information and to authenticate rumors.

Československý Rozhlas [ČSR] or Czechoslovak Radio was the overall institution responsible for broadcasting radio in Czechoslovakia. In 1967, it was put under the control of the Committee of Culture and Information, which was made up of the general directors of ČSR, ČST, and other administrators of arts and cultural organizations. The Committee answered to the Minister of Culture and Information, who was a member of the Czechoslovak Communist party Central Committee.²⁶⁶ These individuals were responsible for the production of programs; however, the transmission of the signals, like those of many European countries, was treated as a state-run utility. Signal transmission and household licensing was directed by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Radio owners paid an annual fee for radios, or a higher fee for a television license, which included the radio license.²⁶⁷ For the year 1968, there were 3,287,000 radio licenses, 535,778 wired radio permits, and 2,220,069 television licenses.²⁶⁸

ČSR production and administrative center was located in a large office complex on *Vinohradská Ulice* [Vinohrady Street] just a few blocks west of *Václavského Naměstí* [Wenceslaus Square] in Prague. Although this was a major production center, as part of

266. Zákon o postátnění Československého rozhlasu (až do roku 1967)

267. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 318.

268. Ješutové, *Od mikrofonu*, 613.

their commitment to serve all of the state, ČSR maintained studios in all of the country's cities and major towns as well as many concert and sports venues. Signal transmission antennae were located away from the headquarters at higher elevations such as mountaintops and towers.²⁶⁹ The production facilities as well as various sport and music venues were connected by wire and by microwave relay systems to each other and to the transmitters, establishing a system of redundant networks that the engineers could quickly access.²⁷⁰

ČSR broadcast several separate signals representing different listening interests. Czech radio historian Evy Ješutové explains that the move to multiple stations playing different programs came from both technical advancements and from editorial and managerial decisions made in the late 1950s. Station *Praha*, on medium wave, broadcast classical music, news, and some drama produced for the radio. *Československo I* broadcast lighter music, programming for children and young people, and international reports on long, medium, and short wave. Jazz, drama, educational and informational programs were broadcast over shortwave on *Československo II*. At various times during the day, regional stations in Ostrava, Brno, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Ústí nad Labem, Středočeské [South Bohemia], and Bratislava would air programs produced in those areas.²⁷¹ Shortwave signals from around the Eastern Bloc were

269. Vladimír Pohorecký, *Rozhledny a ztracené hrady* (Prague: Radioservis, 2013), 43. The mountain-top antennae were frequently built into recreation areas for hikers and skiers and included restaurants and hostel facilities. Many of them are reconstructed castle towers. Towers like the one at Rozhledna na Kozíchu near Plzeň now serve as multipurpose towers, where radio, television, meteorological radar and cell phone technologies all share the same tower.

270. Ješutové, *Od mikrofonu*, 262.

271. "Neděle 4. února 1968," *Rozhlas a televize: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 4, 29. ledna - 4. února, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 15.

included into the broadcast day, including *Moskva I*, *Lublan I*, *Kossuth* (Budapest), *Rozhlas NDR*, *Rakousko I*, *Hamburk-Kolin*, *Deutschlandsender*, and *Mnichov*.²⁷² Rather than counter-programming as a method of competition as in commercial radio, the different stations worked cooperatively, and shared programming.

ČSR's channels were dense with complex programming—the weekly radio and television schedules show that while each day of radio programs needed a page and a half of the tabloid-sized periodical, all seven days of television programming fit easily on two pages with columns left over for articles. Burton Paulu compared the variety of original dramatic programs, serialization of literary classics, comedies, and music shows with American radio before the advent of television, and noted that the writers took their work very seriously, describing it as the “theater of the imagination.”²⁷³ Hours of educational programming were intended for classroom use. The ongoing weekly program *Rozhlasová universita* [Radio University] was a college level educational series featuring lessons by university professors on topics including biology and psychology.²⁷⁴ Audio equipment was another well-supported topic on ČSR; in addition to public interest broadcasts on equipment use, the weekly schedule often printed in-depth schematics and information on electronics. ČSR held amateur audio production contests for high-school students and offered the loan of *magnetofons* for the participants use.²⁷⁵

272. “Středa 14 srpna,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 35, 12-18 srpna, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 8.

273. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 17.

274. “40. Rozhlasová universita: současná psychologie,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 4, 29. ledna - 4. února, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 9.

275. “Chystá se mezinárodní soutěž fonoamatéru,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník 32, číslo 32, 5.-11. srpna, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 9.

Beginning in the late 1950s, ČSR instituted *rozhlase po drátě* [radio by wire]. Some apartment buildings and households in the larger cities were wired directly into the ČSR system. Wired radios were intended to be a failsafe in case of war, because radio transmitters were easy targets for destruction.²⁷⁶ The receivers were not tunable – only one signal was sent through the wires. However, the quality of the signal was noticeably better than broadcast radio; consequently many enthusiasts preferred the system for recording music.²⁷⁷ Paulu noted that wired radio seemed like “controlled radio” in that the programming choices were taken away, and the radio was wired directly into the system; he then noted that in 1968, many cities in the United States were investing heavily in cable television systems which were not that different from wired radio.²⁷⁸ Ješutové noted that:

[w]ired radio over time had become an unusually costly and inconvenient means of communication - it had virtually never been able to cover the entire territory of the republic (in addition to carrying just one program at a time) and in terms of the differentiation of circuits and program conception was more of a burden.²⁷⁹

The civil defense component of wired radio was put to the test on August 21, 1968, when the collaborators with the Soviet-led invasion managed to switch the transmission equipment off in the middle of the official statement from Czechoslovak leaders proclaiming the invasion illegal. Over the air listeners heard nothing more for several hours, however, those with wired radios heard the entire statement and were able

276. Zuzana Foglarová, “Rozhlas po drátě,” *O rozhlas*, Český rozhlas, 20 ledna 2015, accessed June 10, 2017, http://www.rozhlas.cz/informace/exponaty/_zprava/rozhlas-po-drate--1445825.

277. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 325.

278. *Ibid.*, 70-71.

279. Ješutové, *Od mikrofonu*, 328.

to warn their neighbors. A system that was intended to preserve communications in case of invasion worked perfectly, however planners expected the invasion to come from the west, not from the east.

Initially under the auspices of *Československý Rozhlas, Československá Televize* (ČST), broadcasts began in 1954, and had the misfortune to start under the Stalinist socialist system.²⁸⁰ When compared to the market-driven broadcast entities in the West, the state-run systems were pale imitators. In 1968, ČST operated only one channel, which broadcast in black and white. Normal hours of operation were from 9:00 am to noon, then 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm on weekdays, and from 9:00 am to 11:00 pm on weekends.²⁸¹ By comparison, in America at the same time a viewer received the three main commercial networks and a number of independent stations in larger urban areas. Many of these signals were in color by this time, even if not all of the sets could display color images.

For the purpose of this discussion, television has three separate components: production of content, transmission of content, and the reception of broadcasts in the home. ČST maintained its main studios and administration center in Prague, but the network included studios in Bratislava, Brno, Ostrava, and Košice.²⁸² In 1968, the television signals were distributed to outlying regions using stationary and portable microwave systems. The content was then broadcast from local transmitters and repeaters. Microwave transmission allowed programs to be sent throughout the country

280. "Prehistorie," *Československá televize*, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/prehistorie/>.

281. "na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televize: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 1, 1 - 7 ledna 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 7

282. "Prehistorie," *Československá televize*, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/televizni-technika/historie-technickeho-rozvoje-cst/>.

instantly, enabling live broadcasting from many locations, and creating a redundant system for use in case of power failure or weather problems. Microwave transmission also allowed ČST to participate in the Intervision and Eurovision television program exchanges. These services, the first for Eastern Europe and the second for Western Europe, provided a method of share programming across state borders. These were critical in Olympic years including 1968, and brought revenue to countries like Czechoslovakia that could offer desirable film libraries and classical music programs.²⁸³

In 1965, over two million households had purchased television licenses, and that number would increase to four million by 1970. The controlled economy did not need the feedback mechanism of ratings in order to justify commercial sales. However, viewers did send letters to ČST, and these did have an effect on programming.²⁸⁴

Until the development of portable video equipment, television news and location programs were normally shot using 16mm and 35mm film cameras. These cameras were easy to carry and were either battery operated or spring driven. News camera operators used a positive black and white film stock that was processed quickly to be aired as soon as possible. While they had a far superior image quality to the video cameras of the time, film cameras held a small load of film, often limiting shooting time to no more than three minutes before the camera needed to be reloaded.²⁸⁵ Most of these cameras did not have the capability to record sound, so a second technician with audio recording equipment had to be added to the crew. Film cameramen, given the short film time and lack of

283. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 19 and 344.

284. Jiří Pelikan, *S'ils me tuent* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975), 179.

285. "ORWO Universal Negative 54 Technical Sheet TI-UN54-XII/2010," FILMOTECH GmbH.

sound, specialized in getting highly subjective short clips of action. ČST often depended upon Barrandov Film Studios in Prague for assistance with camera operators, film processing, and technical assistance.

To the viewers, watching something lensed on location adds to the verisimilitude of the program. Producing television in a studio, while technologically complex, offered the optimum environment for the equipment and production staff. With all the equipment in place in the studio, set-up time was minimized and atmospheric elements were carefully controlled for best sound and light quality. Studio facilities enabled live broadcasts, such as daily newscasts. Shows could be recorded for later broadcast using motion picture film or on video tape recorders.²⁸⁶ The existing video recording technology consisted of two-inch wide magnetic tape recorded and played back on machines known as quadruplex or “quad” VTRs. They had been invented in 1956, but ČST was unable to purchase one until 1965 due to an embargo on American-made equipment. These machines were very large, heavy, noisy, and required both ample electricity and compressed air. Almost all studio equipment at the time needed to be constantly monitored by trained engineers, using oscilloscopes and other measuring equipment to continuously adjust signal levels or align the cathode ray tubes inside of the cameras. Consequently, they were rarely used in the field.

Mounting a remote television broadcast, whether from a sports arena or a concert hall, was a labor and equipment intensive proposition. The venue had to be thoroughly

286. Martin Glas, “Organizační uspořádání, objekty a prostory,” *Československá televize*, accessed July 12, 2015, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/vzpominky-pametniku/martin-glas/pocatky-televize-u-nas/vysilace-a-translace-zustaly-u-spoju/>.

researched ahead of time. The set-up and fine-tuning of equipment required hours of labor. The large, tripod-mounted cameras were only usable in brightly lit and dry conditions. Hundreds of meters of thick, heavy camera cables had to be snaked to a central control unit such as a van or bus, where a team of production personnel and engineers would select from the separate camera feeds and audio signals to create a single program that was beamed via wired or microwave systems to the central broadcast distribution facilities.²⁸⁷ Depending on the type of event, audio and video feeds for announcers, on-screen graphics, communications with the camera operators, specialized lighting, set pieces, sound effects, pre-recorded cut-ins, still images, and enhanced audio all had to be arranged before the broadcast and made ready on site. Trained engineers had to carefully adjust the cameras, make sure the cameras' video signals were properly attuned to each other so that the images would be stable. Other engineers were needed to constantly monitor the microwave signal to the broadcasting house. As complex as the process was, Czechoslovak TV was very good at it. They honed their skills at troubleshooting and innovation many times over in soccer stadia, ice hockey rinks, and opera houses throughout the country. Live broadcasts have an excitement and an edginess to them that set them apart from studio production. Even today, sports are unthinkable without live broadcast television.

The world of the Cold War was not just divided into control and market economies. Television standards, an electronic code used to keep the image on screen

287. "Televizní studio Brno," *Československá televize*, accessed July 12, 2015, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/studia/televizni-studio-brno/>.

stable, differed too, and the video signals were not compatible. The Western Hemisphere worked on one standard, Great Britain and much of Western Europe had another standard, and France, the USSR and the countries in the Soviet sphere used a third standard.²⁸⁸ Incompatible formats meant that television signals were rarely jammed like radio signals. However, because the audio portion of the broadcast signal was FM modulated in the same way as broadcast radio, the audio may still be understandable.²⁸⁹

Recording programs allowed for them to be time shifted and to be used multiple times and exchanged through Intervision. Given the topic, a recorded program could be stored and used at a later date. Any grievous technical errors could be fixed before airtime. Moreover, in a state with a controlled media, there was another advantage, a recorded program was intrinsically safe; it had been reviewed by the Central Publishing Authority which was the censorship arm of the government. A live broadcast lacked that safety net. There was always the concern that something could be said that violated the 1967 Press Law or displeased an elite party member. If a live program had technical problems—and given the complexity of the equipment, this was a frequent occurrence—the Secret Police [StB] would investigate for possible sabotage.²⁹⁰ Consequently, prerecorded programs made up the bulk of the viewing day in Czechoslovakia. After the Central Publishing Authority vetted the scripts, the evening newscasts were shown live.

288. Steve Runyon, "Television Technology," *The Encyclopedia of Television*, ed. Horace Newcomb, accessed July 10, 2015, http://www.museum.tv/eotv_2015.htm. The Western Hemisphere used NTSC, Great Britain and Western Europe used PAL, and the French and Soviets used SECAM.

289. Ibid.

290. Martin Glas, "Tatá Vyskočil," *Československá televize*, accessed July 12, 2015, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/vzpominky-pametniku/martin-glas/pocatky-televize-u-nas/tata-vyskocil/>.

Sports broadcasts featuring Czechoslovak teams were generally shown live and the television schedule would describe that the broadcast was coming directly from the stadium.²⁹¹ Politicians and television executives assumed sports to be politically neutral as an athletic event and an entertainment spectacle.²⁹² However the exercise of this spectacle was, by its very nature, encouraging nationalism. While football and hockey lacked Marxist-Leninist context, televised sport inculcated an “us against them” attitude. Social scientist Garry Whannel states that:

In the television-driven transformation of sport, embedded specificities of class and locality have been eroded. At the same time, television has fostered other modes of collective identity. It has brought the drama of uncertainty and spectacle of major occasion into the domestic sphere. It has been one of the cultural forms constructing, albeit in temporary and often partial forms, a sense of shared national experience.²⁹³

With only one channel, ČST viewing was bound to be a shared national experience, no matter what was on air.

Czechoslovak Television, Czechoslovak Radio and all of print media, were under the control of the Office of Culture and Information in the Ministry of the Interior. The mission of all media, according to the 1967 Press Law, was to provide “...timely, truthful, comprehensive, and as complete information as possible about events from every aspect of life in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and from abroad.”²⁹⁴ All articles and programs on any media were subject to pre-publishing review by the Central

291. “na straně 7 a 10,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 5, 1–7 ledna 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 10.

292. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 351.

293. Garry Whannel, “Television and the Transformation of Sport,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 625 (September 2009): 216.

294. Frank L. Kaplan, “Czechoslovakia’s Press Law, 1967-1968: Decontrolling the Mass Media.” *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 52, no. 3 (Fall 1975): 451

Publishing Authority. The same 1967 press law gave the Central Publishing Authority the duty to prevent the publishing of governmental, economic, and official secrets.

Additionally, they were allowed to censor content that was in “variance with other interests of society.”²⁹⁵ Professor of journalism Frank L. Kaplan noted that the 1967 law was a compromise made to lessen the capriciousness of censorship, but that the authorities failed to clearly define what they meant by “interests of society.” Kaplan contended that elite party officials could make informal—read secret—requests to have programs blocked or articles scrapped for being embarrassing to the Party or its officials, all under the error of opposing the “interests of society.”²⁹⁶ Albright noted that while the press pushed for the new law, it still did not end the bad feelings between the regime and the writers, but that it did draw the battle lines more clearly.²⁹⁷

295. Kaplan, “Czechoslovakia’s Press Law,” 451-2.

296. Kaplan, “Czechoslovakia’s Press Law,” 451-2.

297. Albright, *Role of the Press in Political Change*, 133.

CHAPTER FOUR

De-Stalinization, the movement started by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, was the single movement that united the reform-minded opponents of the Novotný regime. However, despite de-Stalinization's overwhelming appeal to the intellectual and creative interest groups, its popularity with working class people is less certain. Most members of the intelligentsia looked to freeing up their own specialties with the assumption that larger governmental structures would remain intact. The motive force behind de-Stalinization, Khrushchev, was forced out of office in October 1964. The teeth in the criticism against the cult of personality went missing, and the move to reform the culture of socialism lost its urgency. While not on the scale of the terror of 1948-53, artists were entirely dependent on the government for their livelihoods, and if they offended the wrong person or censor they could quickly find themselves without future assignments or with their work banned domestically, even as they were hailed and feted abroad.²⁹⁸ During de-Stalinization, the community of artists and intellectuals could oppose the repression created by the cult of personality. When that blanket justification was no longer available, calls for freedom of expression and more engagement with the rest of the world became an individual's act of dissent. A few brave artists continued to push

298. Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, 2nd ed. (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 177; Bliss Cua Lim, "Dolls in Fragments: Daisies as Feminist Allegory," *Camera Obscura* 47, Vol. 16, no. 2 (2001): 37.

against total party control, but suffered the consequences. It was the politicians who eventually cobbled together an opposition to Novotný in October of 1967. They managed to alter the system—something they had not planned to do only a few months earlier.²⁹⁹

The ouster of Khrushchev was the first time power passed from one Soviet leader to another without the death of the predecessor.³⁰⁰ Khrushchev used the denunciation of Stalin to cement his power in 1956. De-Stalinization gave him blanket permission to make sweeping changes. After the removal of Khrushchev, citizens of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc did not know if the new leader Leonid I. Brezhnev (1906-1982) would take the same route. Alexander Dubček and Zdeněk Mlynář both noted they thought Brezhnev, being of the older generation of Stalinist leaders, was only a transition figure, and that the Soviet Union's policy on de-Stalinization would continue.³⁰¹ Political scientists, intelligence officials, and historians would come to call Brezhnev's extended leadership period, during which the party quietly rehabilitated Stalin's legacy, either re-Stalinization or neo-Stalinization, but it was certainly the opposite of de-Stalinization.³⁰² Novotný also misjudged the new Soviet party secretary when he made a phone call directly to Brezhnev to criticize Khrushchev's demotion, thus gaining the new leader's

299. Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague* (New York: Karz Publishers, 1980), 78-9. Mlynář stated he was not expecting any change in leadership prior to the 1970 Party Congress, and was making plans for this when Novotný was removed from power.

300. Victor Zorza, "Khrushchev Forced to Retire, Events Suggest: No Effort Made to ..." *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1964, 9.

301. Alexander Dubček, *Hope Dies Last* (New York: Kodansha International, 1993), 100. Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 30.

302. Viktor Sheinis, "We and the World: AUGUST HARVEST," *The Current Digest of the Russian Press*, No. 41, Vol.41, November 08, 1989, 1-4, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13610270>. The term "neo-Stalinist" had been used as far back as 1948 (while Stalin was still alive) to demarcate Stalin's rule from Bolshevization.

displeasure.³⁰³ Ironically, the Eastern bloc's strongest supporter of Stalin weakened his own position with the neo-Stalinist by vocally supporting de-Stalinization. At the end of 1967, Novotný called upon Brezhnev for support, but it would not be forthcoming.³⁰⁴

As an ominous foretaste of the tumultuous year of 1967, Otá Šik's New Economic Mechanism went into effect on January 1, 1967, but, as noted above, was by then too watered down and minimally enacted to make any substantial difference. Political issues, foreign affairs, and cultural upheavals dominated the news for the next twelve months. Some events, like Expo 67 and the Six-Day War in June, even though they happened in Canada and Israel respectively, opened real avenues of disagreement between the Czechoslovak citizens and the Soviet Union. Montreal's Expo 67, which ran from April to October, was a huge success for the Czechoslovak exhibition. The Soviet Union's pavilion attracted the most visitors, but the multi-media presentations in the Czechoslovak pavilion received greater and more lasting critical attention and even those critics noted the rivalry between the fraternal socialist states.³⁰⁵ Before and during the Six-Day War, in which Israel soundly defeated the forces of Egypt and other Arab states, the Soviet Union's anti-Zionist stance angered many intellectuals in Czechoslovakia. Egypt had recently become a proxy state for the Soviet Union, and much of the Egyptian-

303. Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: the State that Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 222.

304. "Document No. 3: Remarks by Leonid Brezhnev at a Meeting of Top CzCP Officials, in Prague, December 9, 1967, (Excerpts)," in *The Prague Spring '68*, ed. Jaromír Navrátil, (New York: Central European Press, 2006), 18-9.

305. "1967 Montreal," *History of the International Expositions, Bureau International des Expositions*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/1967-montreal>. Expo67 was originally supposed to be held in Moscow to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, but the Soviet Union bowed out in 1962. Robert Alden, "Soviet Pavilion at Expo 67 Is Overwhelming, Czechoslovak Is Imaginative," *New York Times*, May 5, 1967, 12.

used weaponry and intelligence came from the Eastern bloc. That a smaller, scrappier state could handily defeat a state with the complete support of the Soviet Union was embarrassing. The official Communist Party of the Soviet Union line was that the rest of the Eastern Bloc states should cut ties with Israel, and Novotný's regime dutifully severed these political and economic connections. The abrupt change in relations with Israel angered many intellectuals in Czechoslovakia who supported the Jews or were ethnically Jewish themselves.³⁰⁶ Slovak writer Ladislav Mňačko defied the Czechoslovak government and traveled to Israel to protest his government's anti-Zionist stance, creating an international incident.³⁰⁷ Mňačko's novels criticizing Stalinist tendencies in the KSČ and in Novotný himself were banned in Czechoslovakia, but were some of the few pieces of Slovak literature sold abroad in translation.³⁰⁸

Domestically, many in the intelligentsia felt the pressure of Novotný's repression. The National Assembly's Press Law went into effect on January 1, 1967. In the spring the National Assembly held discussions about several of the films that had been removed from domestic presentation, and directors Vera Chytilova and Jan Nemec were found to have violated the "interests of the society" clause in the new law.³⁰⁹ The codification of censorship as a legal offense, rather than as a party matter, demonstrated that now an artist could potentially be found criminally negligent or, not just at odds with Marxist-Leninist ideology.

306. Yosef Govrin, "From Deep Freeze to Thaw: Relations between Israel and Czechoslovakia 1967–1990," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 1, no.1 (2006): 121-2.

307. Henry Raymont, "Czech Author Travels to Israel In Defiance of a Ban by Prague," *New York Times*, August 12, 1967, 8. In this article the author mischaracterized Mňačko as a Czech.

308. Josef Leikert, "Ladislav Mňačko," *Historický časopis*, Ročník 54, číslo 2 (2006): 285.

309. Cua Lim, "Dolls in Fragments," 37; Hames, *Czechoslovak New Wave*, 177.

The Union of Czechoslovak Writers held their congress in June 1967, which finally and publically established organizing guidelines under which the intelligentsia could produce content. The Slovak writers held their own Writers' Union congress three years earlier, which laid the groundwork for comingling criticism of the government's slow pace of de-Stalinization, more freedom of expression, and the desire to rehabilitate the Slovak victims of the Slanský trials. With covert assistance from Slovak Party Secretary Dubček, the Slovak press published criticisms of Novotný and his regime consistently since 1963.³¹⁰ The KSČ insisted that these criticisms were invalid because they were fostered by Slovak "bourgeois nationalism," a charge that was routinely used to silence or arrest any Slovak who criticized the KSČ.³¹¹ After a fashion, nationalist sentiments really were at play in the Slovak criticisms. Dubček reported repeated incidents of Novotný offending the Slovaks and making sure they did not share in the power structure in Prague.³¹² The Slovak criticisms laid the blame for their ills on Novotný and his close advisers. Soon the Czechs could no longer ignore or dismiss the charges.

The Czechoslovak writers' congress on June 27-29, 1967, became a forum for some of the best known writers to express their dismay with conditions in the state. Among the speeches condemning censorship, Pavel Kohout read a famous letter by

310. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 88-90.

311. H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 388. The future KSČ party secretary from 1968-1988, Slovak Gustav Husák, had been jailed in the 1950s for this exact "crime." Slovak bourgeois nationalism would come to be called "Husákism" and be put on par with "Titoism."

312. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 81-3, 86, 87, 91, 98, 99, 106, 108, 114. Many of these instances read as Novotný's personal attacks on Dubček, but others happened in public functions at which Dubček was not present.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn complaining about Soviet censorship. The letter had already been banned in the Soviet Union. Congress participants did not limit their complaints to censorship, but also took aim at some of the greater challenges affecting all of Czechoslovak society. Novelist Ludvík Vaculík summed up the problems thusly:

It must be acknowledged that over the past twenty years not a single human problem—including basic requirements such as housing, schools, and a prospering economy, as well as more subtle requirements of a kind that undemocratic systems throughout the world are incapable of solving, such as a sense of fulfillment in society, the subordination of political decisions to ethical criteria, faith in the worth of even the most menial jobs, and the need for trust among people and a better education for the masses—has yet been solved. What is more, I am afraid that we have not advanced on the world scene and that our republic has lost its good name. We have not contributed any original thoughts or good ideas to humanity...³¹³

Vaculík framed his argument in terms of the greater Czechoslovak audience and their place on the world stage, appealing to his listener's basic decency. He placed the blame for leaving decency behind directly on the "undemocratic system" that had been in charge for the past twenty years. Between the reading of a letter that had been banned and the strong condemnation of the system, the writers had gone too far for the Minister of Education and Culture, Jiří Hendrych. He stormed out of the congress and petitioned the Central Committee to strip the writers of their party membership and close down the union's popular periodical *Literární noviny*.³¹⁴ Hendrych subsequently mounted a polemical speaking and writing campaign against the authors in August.

313. Ludvík Vaculík, "Excerpts from Ludvík Vaculík's Speech" from "Proceedings of the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress, June 27-29, 1967," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 10.

314. Jiří Hendrych, "Excerpts from Jiří Hendrych's Response," from "Proceedings of the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress, June 27-29, 1967," in Navrátil *Prague Spring '68*, 11-2.

An important Central Committee meeting was held in October 1967, and it was here that Dubček chose to lay out the charges against Novotný, including the Slovak question of their minority status, the failure to properly implement the New Economic Mechanism, and the harsh treatment of the writers.³¹⁵ He pointed out that the country needed to solve multiple problems on their way to the Scientific and Technological Revolution, and then offered up the suggestion that the government could be made stronger democratically if the positions of President and Party Secretary were separated.³¹⁶ Novotný's response showed that he was caught off guard. Novotný was no doubt aware that Dubček could publically charge him with much worse offenses, based on Dubček's experience on the Kolder Commission investigating the Slanský trials. Soon the meeting spun out of Novotný's control, as one after another speaker took to the podium to blame the secretary and his cadre for poor management. To make matters more chaotic, students living in dormitories in the Strahov district of Prague took to the streets to ask for "more light," because they had experienced yet another power outage.³¹⁷ The students were just a few blocks from where the Central Committee was meeting, and so the Federal Police dispersed the marchers and chased them back to the dormitories, where they beat several dozen students and arrested six.³¹⁸

315. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 116.

316. "Document No. 2: Speeches by Alexander Dubček and Antonín Novotný at the CPCz CC Plenum, October 30-31, 1967," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 13-15.

317. "The Student Protests," *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no. 1 (January 1968): 41. On a personal note, I stayed in those dormitories for a few nights in 1998 and found the electrical system to be quite substandard even then. When I plugged in a camera battery charger it tripped a breaker, blackening out the entire floor. Fortunately I found the electrical panel for the building and was able to turn the breaker back on, but the camera charger had been destroyed.

318, Leopoldo Aragon, "When Prague Students Protested," *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (March 1968): 8-9.

Dubček claimed that he and others used the breaks in this meeting to gather in the hallways and organize what was to become the political opposition to Novotný and his inner circle.³¹⁹ Journalists from one of the official party organs wrote in August of 1968 that this was the first time an opposition had formed.³²⁰ The meeting was adjourned with matters unsettled, and Novotný and his cadre left for Moscow to participate in the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The opposition had until the next meeting in early December to devise a plan to get rid of Novotný, or suffer the consequences of what would surely be labeled a failed coup.³²¹

At the December Central Committee meeting, the opposition introduced a plan whereby Novotný would keep his title of president, but surrender his position as party secretary.³²² Although the secretary position was the more powerful of the two, this change could be effected quickly within the party structure, whereas selecting a new president would require statewide elections. Novotný had his own plan, he arranged for Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev himself to travel to Prague in an effort to bolster his position. The CPSU General Secretary spent a day at the main committee meeting, and then talked with many of the party leaders separately for several hours. Dubček contended that he had the upper hand in this interview because he was one of the few KSC Central Committee members who spoke fluent Russian, and did not require an

319. Alexander Dubček and Andras Sugar, *Dubček Speaks* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 34.

320. Vojtěch Mencl and František Ouředník, "What Happened in January," *Život strany*, Nos. 16, 17, 18 (August-September 1968) in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, 27.

321. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 120.

322. *Ibid.*, 116.

interpreter.³²³ At the end of a very long day of meetings and interviews, Brezhnev told the Central Committee “*eto vashe delo*” [it’s your business] and flew back to Moscow.³²⁴

Instead of gaining the support of the highest official in the Soviet Bloc, Novotný found himself in a worse position than ever. The infighting continued until just before Christmas—when, according to Dubček, the female members of the Central Committee complained that they would not have enough time to bake their traditional batches of cookies and the meeting was adjourned until January.³²⁵

Novotný was finally persuaded to accept the division of his power in January of 1968, and relinquished his role as party leader — a position he had held since 1953. The debate over the choice of a new party secretary took another two days, but finally selected Alexander Dubček. Not only was he a relatively young man, but he was also the first Slovak to lead Czechoslovakia.³²⁶ His elevation signaled that the more liberal elements, namely the newer generation of communists with better educations and who had come into power during the period of de-Stalinization, were now in charge. They interpreted Brezhnev’s “it’s your business” as his tacit approval, and proceeded to make the sweeping changes they believed necessary to repair the problems in Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev, in documents released after 1989, blamed Novotý for his inability to practice

323. Ibid, 122. Dubček spent many years of his childhood living in the Soviet Union

324. “Document No. 3: Remarks by Leonid Brezhnev at a Meeting of Top CPCz Officials, in Prague, December 9, 1967(Excerpts),” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ‘68*, 18. In Navrátil’s translation from the original Russian, Brezhnev claims that he “did not come to take part in the solutions of your problems. We do not do this, and you will surely manage to solve them on your own.”

325. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 123.

326. “Soudruh Alexander Dubček první tajemník UV KSČ,” *Rudé Právo*, 6 ledna 1968, 1.

collective leadership; additionally that the other members of the KSČ leadership were impulsive and needed to be reminded of

the wider repercussions...with regard to the country, the party and the international workers' movement. I think I managed to get them to think about all those matters, although I touched on them only indirectly when I spoke about the importance of our friendship, COMECON, the Warsaw Pact, and so forth.³²⁷

Russian historian Vladislav Zubok, in his overview of the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union, contended that there were actually two movements during the Khrushchev Thaw: the institutional top-down movement to end the Stalinist crimes of mass terror and permanent war mobilization, and the bottom-up desires of the intelligentsia to forge new cultural identities free from the “cult of personality.”³²⁸ Khrushchev himself, according to Zubok, had ended the bottom-up reforms in 1962, and so de-Stalinization to the party leadership in the Soviet Union was mediated by the state's need to be “realistic” about self-defense in the Cold War. “The Kremlin leadership,” Zubok contended “successfully argued that cultural liberalization and ideological deviations could only hand powerful weapons to the enemy and the loss of stability in the USSR and the loss of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe would then be inevitable.”³²⁹ Because the reform advocates in Czechoslovakia were of the intelligentsia themselves and they were not that concerned with defense, they approached the civic society by supporting de-Stalinization in both kinds, meaning ending mass terror and encouraging public participation.³³⁰ That would

327. “Document No. 4: János Kádár's Report to the HSWP Politburo of a Telephone Conversation with Leonid Brezhnev, December 13, 1967,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 22.

328. Vladislav Zubok, “Soviet Society in the 1960s,” in Bischof et al., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 76-7.

329. Ibid., 82-3.

330. Jitka Vondrová, “Stranická základna KSČ mezi politickými reformními úmysly a společenským tlakem na změnu,” in *České křižovatky evropských dějin: Pražské jaro 1968: Občanská společnost—*

prove a grave error in judgment; Brezhnev was still one of the Soviet old guard who wanted to keep a strong hand on the satellite states still under his control. Khrushchev's weakness had lost China and Albania, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968 demonstrated Brezhnev was willing to use force to keep the rest of the bloc together.

The reformers also lacked a plan for going forward. Mlynář led a committee preparing recommendations for policy planning at the 1970 Party Congress, however they had only just started their work.³³¹ Improvised policies would be difficult for a state that had been dependent on centralized planning for the past twenty years. The major obstruction, Novotný, had only lost one of his jobs—he was still the president, and he would use that position to speak against the reformers. Additionally, most of Novotný's cadre was still in power. Dubček took his time replacing them with reformers. Some would even appear to become reformers, but later clearly demonstrated rank opportunism. Because of the *ad hoc* manner in which the opposition was created, it lacked a focus other than to get rid of Novotný, and many of the reformers could not agree to what should be done. None of those involved in the process could foresee that they only had a short amount of time before the Soviet Union would forcefully end their efforts, even though several of the reformers were aware this could be a possibility.

Certain more intellectual reformers including Šik and Mlynář noted in their writings a conscious determination to repair what they saw as the deformations in

média—přenos politických a kulturních procesů, eds. Oldřich Tůma and Markéta Devátá (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2011), 61.

331. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 78.

socialism brought about through Bolshevism, Leninism, Stalinism, and de-Stalinization. They argued that many of the problems rose from the old leadership's dogmatic adherence to democratic centralism; the idea that the Communist Party was to have the leading role in all avenues of life in the socialist state.³³² The older generation of leaders had been workers who were elevated to positions of management and authority when the bourgeois elements were swept away. Collectively, their main qualification was *partinost*—faithful adherence to party spirit. In 1964, American critic George Bailey would coin the term *cacistocracy*—the rule of the worst—specifically to describe the Novotný regime.³³³ The younger reformers were generally men who, though they may have had a working class background, attended university, studied Marxist theory, and were specially trained for positions of leadership.³³⁴ The new generation of leaders considered the prior generation's understanding of Marxism to be as simplistic and ill-considered as to qualify as dogma, not as an active scientific theory. Ota Šik commented on the economic shortcomings of centralism:

One of the basic vulgarizations of the old administrative method of management consisted in the fact that there was an endeavor to administer the trends in production force *directly* from the centre, without regard to the fact that production forces can develop only by means of economic relationships and that these relationships are not only a passive determination of the forces of production, but also have themselves an active and decisive influence on the development of production forces. But, while the development of production forces throughout society cannot be directly managed in a central social organization (it cannot determine the technique and the technology of every kind of production, every concrete type of product to be manufactured etc.), the

332. First Comintern Congress

333. George Bailey, "Kafka's Nightmare Comes True," *The Reporter*, May 7, 1964, 19.

334. Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7.

centre can have knowledge of the necessity for certain general economic relationships among economic processes...³³⁵

The economic solution, according to Šik, was to end the centrally controlled planning process and instead move the administrative and decision-making process down the hierarchy to the factory management-level, where managers could use their expertise and apply more complex, scientifically derived economic tools to maximize efficiency.³³⁶

“The distaste of the dogmatists for using economic instruments,” Šik observed, “...comes, for the major part, from the fact that it is much easier and simpler to pronounce political appeals, slogans, moral entreaties, general criticisms, and so on.”³³⁷

However, in the centrally controlled system, the changes Šik recommended would have to happen at the top of the hierarchy, and until 1968, these were the very people who sabotaged his program.³³⁸

Mlynář, as a specialist in the law, saw first-hand the type of people who constructed the totalitarian system and how that system affected the people. He observed that Novotný “was undeniably a pragmatic politician who made no pretense of contributing to theory or ideology...he was still an old-fashioned Communist functionary for whom party ideology had a deep personal significance: his whole life, the formation of his personality, everything he valued personally stemmed from his subjugation to party ideology.”³³⁹ That adherence, according to Mlynář, made it possible for Novotný to

335. Ota Šik, *Plan and Market under Socialism* (White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1967), 33. Emphasis in the original.

336. Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 59.

337. Šik, *Plan and Market*, 364.

338. Golan, 64-66, 73-4.

339. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 68.

perform any acts without guilt because he had no values other than the party's values.

Criminality at the highest ranks, and their use of terrorism as a tool of control, had

understandable effects on the Czechoslovak people:

The "contentment" of the "average citizen"—who had, in fact ceased to be a citizen and had withdrawn from public, civic life into the world of his own private needs and interests—therefore, far from being essential to political reform, was, in fact, a bulwark of the totalitarian system. This "average citizen," whose needs and interests had already been diminished by the dictatorship, was, in fact, the aim of the dictatorship: someone who feels the dictatorship is inevitable and adapts to it entirely, and thus, in his deformed life, makes it possible and reinforces it. In return, the dictatorship provides him with average food, average clothing, average entertainment on state television, and average healthcare.³⁴⁰

Cowed by terror, or mainly the threat of terror, self-policing was a real measure of control.

The reformers were committed to solving the crisis in the economy, which they intended to work towards once they had greater control over the party. This was a change of personnel and of planning, not a change in overall structure. Other problems ahead of them included the Slovak desire for an equal share in the party, the completion of de-Stalinization, rehabilitation of political prisoners, leading the government through the Scientific and Technical Revolution, improving Czechoslovakia's image abroad; all without damaging the communist party's leading role.³⁴¹ These issues encompassed many different aspects of society, and could not be solved with any single solution. Many of the suggestions for reform emphasized greater involvement of intellectuals, specialists,

340. Ibid., 50.

341. "Document No. 10: Alexander Dubček's Speech Marking the 20th Anniversary of Czechoslovakia's 'February Revolution,' February 22, 1968 (Excerpts)," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 52-54.

and the general public in government, groups that had been marginalized by the Novotný regime. A handful of Czechoslovak philosophers and political scientists, including Ivan Sviták, considered the issue of enlarged participation, and their answer was to emphasize the democratic portion of democratic centralism. Theoretically, the government should listen to the workers – those who had gained proletarian consciousness — to the detriment of the interests of the other citizens. In practice, it was the government who dictated to the workers and everyone else, justifying their choices as being in the workers’ best interests. Sviták, in an open letter to miners in Ostrava, asked “[t]echnicians and workers, surely you do not need *apparatchiks* to lead you by the hand, to tell you what to think....Let every man speak for himself, then we shall easily understand one another, and the discredited apparatus will have no one to hide behind.”³⁴²

These philosophers were not seeking pluralism as an end in itself, but as a return to a more pure Marxist approach. The deformations they were discussing came from measures taken in the early years of the Soviet Union that Lenin and Stalin determined to be necessary to overthrow capitalism and overcome the backwards nature of the Russian economy and society. However, Czechoslovakia was different—in its 1960 constitution, it identified itself as a fully socialist, industrialized state with no private ownership of the means of production or class conflict.³⁴³ It was time to move from a worker’s state into

342. Ivan Sviták, *The Czechoslovak Experiment, 1968-1969* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 55.

343. “100/1960 Sb.Ústavní zákon ze dne 11. července 1960, Ústava Československé socialistické republiky” *Parlament České Republiky Poslanecká sněmovna*, accessed July 7, 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20071010101042/http://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution_1960.html.

an all-people's state. In his role on the KSČ Central Committee's legal commission secretary, Mlynář was an official interpreter of ideology and policy. He was also an academic and incorporated the philosophical currents of the reform movement into statements to party activists and functionaries:

The experience of the USSR has showed that the victory of socialist relationships in society creates a great many new problems. With the end of the class struggle—i.e., with no one left to repress as a class—and the dictatorship of the proletariat transformed into an all-people's state, the main problem becomes how to give proper expression to the needs and interests of the whole society and to ensure that the partial, particular needs and interests of people are not given precedence over their overall, general needs...What is and is not genuinely in the interests of the whole of society under socialism can only be determined if two conditions are met: all decisions must be made on the basis of qualified expertise, and the society itself must have the opportunity to say what it thinks its own interests really are. These two principles must be applied throughout the political system as a whole.³⁴⁴

After he addressed the issue of bringing more people into the decision-making process, Mlynář then had to square the circle created by the conflict between groups with divergent interests: instigate a more pluralistic system without turning the groups into competing political camps, all while keeping the Communist Party in the leadership role. He insisted that socialist relations were more than just relations of property and class, but socialism had to reflect “the very fundamental rights of citizens that would allow them to express their interests, their needs and their views beyond the framework ‘foreseen’ by the directive.”³⁴⁵ His solution was more Hegelian than Solomonic: allow for interest groups along the lines of the trade unions and working collectives, but define their relationships to each other as non-antagonistic, so that rather than one side winning and

344. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 61.

345. Zdeněk Mlynář, “Naše politická soustava a dělba moci,” *Rudé právo*, (Prague), 13. únor, 1968, 3.

the other losing, the contradictions became signals for the need to better unite the interest groups beneath the overarching predetermined aims of socialist society.³⁴⁶ From the examination of the dialectic, a solution could be synthesized.

In these theoretical gymnastics, the conclusion the Czechoslovak intellectuals seemed to be developing was Habermas' public sphere—the free public exchange of ideas within a representative government. However, Habermas defined the public sphere as growing out of the coffeehouses and salons of the Age of Enlightenment and coming to full bloom under parliamentary systems and the bourgeoisie.³⁴⁷ This in itself would make the idea unacceptable for the Marxist scholars. They would need a route to this civil society that could be defended as growing out of Marxist theory. The attempt to turn a socialist system, which had been deformed by a totalitarian regime, into a democratic socialist system appears to have been the Czechoslovak intellectuals attempting to blaze their own path. However, that path was never toward a capitalist system. The reformers scrupulously testified that they were committed communists and did not want to see the communist party removed from its place of prominence: “[H]owever, this did not preclude thinking it proper—in harmony with my understanding of socialism and communism—to dismantle the system of totalitarian dictatorship in which the [KSČ] held a monopoly on political power...” stated Mlynář. “I wanted the political power of the Communist party to be achieved not in such a dictatorial system, but in a pluralistic

346. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 84.

347. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 56. As a member of the Frankfurt School, Habermas was steeped in Marxist criticism, and he did discuss what Marx proposed as a civil society within a socialist state, but this is not the same theoretical construct that the Czechoslovak intellectuals devised. See Habermas, 122-129.

political democracy.”³⁴⁸ Their ideas for reforming the system represented a progressive movement, driven by the “scientific laws of history,” that called upon each citizen, now free of class conflict and the totalitarian regime, to move on to the next step toward a truly communist society.

There was one final element of a civil society which both Habermas and the Czechoslovak intellectuals insisted was essential, and that was freedom of expression — most importantly freedom of the press, and that will be the main focus of the remainder of this chapter. The writers, and not just the journalists, sought freedom of expression, not only because official censorship held them in a precarious position, but also because they could see the emphasis the West placed on originality and how art had become a force of social criticism.³⁴⁹ Freedom of the press was more problematic. The reformers needed the press to publicize the changes to get the population on their side. Additionally, in the past the press had been a useful tool as an attack dog against the opposition. As Slovak party secretary, Dubček had subtly used this approach against Novotný.³⁵⁰ It was a dangerous weapon; if the press was independent of the government, there was no guarantee they would not turn also against the reformers at some point. Press freedom also involved structural changes: print, radio, and television had, up to this point, only worked from the top down. Major changes had to be made in program production methods and content for citizens to be able to share their views with the leadership. Finally, there were concerns

348. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 82; Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 150.

349. Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 17. Marwick lists sixteen characteristics that made the cultural revolution of the 1960s so unique, and at the top of the list was the creation of new subcultures and counter-cultures that were critical of the establishment.

350. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 113.

about the reactions of other Warsaw Pact states—especially the Soviet Union. Both Lenin and Stalin considered party control of the press as obligatory for the success of socialism, which is not surprising considering they had both worked for newspapers.³⁵¹ In the eyes of the Soviet leadership, complete freedom of the press was not just a bad idea, it was heretical. Records of meetings and telephone calls between Brezhnev and Dubček show that the Soviet party secretary used news reports and transcripts of broadcasts as undeniable proof of counter-revolutionary activities in Czechoslovakia.³⁵² Taking the controls off the press was the most radical, controversial action taken during the Prague Spring, and it would play a critical role in its downfall.

As the new first secretary of the KSČ, Dubček was a relatively young man to take over party leadership. Surrounding him were economists, sociologists, political scientists, and intellectuals eager to find solutions to the economic crisis. They had many ideas, but their primary goal was separating the positions of President and First Secretary, and that was accomplished on January 4.³⁵³ Additionally, the cadre that formed around Novotný was still in place, working as the top management layer of the government: the *apparatchiks*. The true power in the Soviet-dominated socialist governments was in this layer.³⁵⁴ Reactions to activities during the next few weeks would demonstrate who was a true reformer, who was a conservative fighting to keep the status quo, and who was an

351. Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 41.

352. "Document No. 14: Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting, March 23, 1968 (excerpts)," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 64-6. This stenographic account is an example of the post-'89 availability of records. This meeting had been secretly recorded and transcribed by the East German *Stasi*, and even the KGB did not know that the meeting had been "bugged."

353. "Document No. 2: Speeches by Alexander Dubček and Antonín Novotný at the CPCz CC Plenum, October 30-31, 1967," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 15.

354. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 79.

opportunist just trying to stay in power.³⁵⁵ Just changing the top man was insufficient—the system needed reforming. According to the former Director of Czechoslovak

Television, Jiří Pelikán:

But there was a minority... who soon became aware that merely to replace Novotny by somebody else was not enough, and that real structural changes were necessary in order to come back to the sources, to renew socialism as a power of the people, to renew the dialogue between the party and the masses, to change the role of the Party from administrative to inspirational hegemony.³⁵⁶

This reform of socialism, or as Dubček would call it: the *obrození* [revival], would take time. Dubček's use of the word *obrození* carried with it an echo of the history of the Czech Lands and Slovakia as subject populations to the Habsburg Empire from 1620 until 1918. In the final two decades of the 18th century, Czech and Slovak intellectuals started movements to reassert the languages, culture and history of their peoples.

Referred to as *národní obrození* [national revival], historian Hugh Agnew points out that they were not the same movements:

They differed significantly, however, precisely in the strength of the state and state traditions in their national developments. The Czechs laid claim to the state traditions of the Kingdom of Bohemia, traditions that had not entirely disappeared in spite of Habsburg efforts at greater centralization over the centuries. The Slovaks, on the other hand, had been politically part of the Kingdom of Hungary for centuries, and its traditions were not as easily made part of their own national movement, since they were also claimed by the Magyars [Hungarians].³⁵⁷

355. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 95.

356. Jiří Pelikán, "The Struggle for Socialism in Czechoslovakia," *New Left Review*, Vol. 1, no. 71 (January-February 1972): 18.

357. Hugh Lecaine Agnew, "New States, Old Identities? The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Historical Understandings of Statehood," *Nationalities Papers: the Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (2000): 629.

According to his autobiography, Dubček used *obrození* on purpose to avoid words like reform or revolution, because these words implied something was wrong with the socialist system and that he intended to change it.³⁵⁸ However, by using *obrození* he hinted to the Czechs an appreciation for their history, and reminded his fellow Slovaks he was sensitive to their concerns over their minority status.

The reformers, mostly members of the *nomenklatura* and of the intelligentsia needed the support of the workers, and that would only happen when the workers learned to trust the new leadership and learned to share their ideas with the party. The average citizen needed to realize they were allowed to stop self-policing, stop being withdrawn from the political system, and to freely to criticize the government. For that to work, the reformers needed ways not just to give their message to the people, but also to allow the people's criticism to percolate up to the leadership. Communications Professor Colin Sparks contends that mass media are the central instrument of the totalitarian project, and that lines of power in this system run from apex to base, while the lines of accountability run from the base to the apex.³⁵⁹ This is just the opposite of the idea of the public space and the empowered space O'Flynn and Curata propose as the most effective discursive space necessary for an effective democracy.³⁶⁰ Part of the reformers' strategy was to minimize the vertical integration of information—the “transmission belt” of the Party's

358. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 134..

359. Colin Sparks and Anna Reading, *Communism, Capitalism, and the Mass Media* (London: Sage, 1998), 27, 33.

360. O'Flynn and Curato, “Deliberative Democratization,” 303.

monopoly on power, ideology, and information. “By reversing the previous downward flow of communication,” Madeleine Albright asserted,

the press—as the main channel of articulation of social pressures for change, as a mobilizer of diffused social interests, and as the arena which linked the activity of party reformers with their potential supporters among the party rank and file and broader publics—played a crucial role in the internal dynamics of transformation of the Czechoslovak political system from January to August 1968.³⁶¹

To this end, the reform government informally withdrew most pre-publication review in January and February. They stopped these reviews entirely on March 4, and made censorship illegal on June 26, 1968.³⁶²

In January, very few writers and editors were willing to test the boundaries of the new system, and so certain government officials made the first move. Josef Smrkovský the Minister of Agriculture who was elevated to become the Chairman of the National Assembly, published an article in the influential party organ *Práce* [Work] on January 21, explaining in detail what happened at the plenum in which Dubček was made secretary. This sort of information was rarely released in more than a brief and perfunctory announcement. Smrkovský used this opportunity to outline some of the reformers’ new ideas, but couched them in terms that both displayed an excitement about progress and signaled continuity with the over-all socialist system:

The last meeting of the Party Central Committee is unlike anything earlier. Mainly in the fact that members of the Central Committee of the Party fully - and possibly even spontaneously – became aware of the responsibility in its power and expressed the will of the member of the masses, the will of the party. It was emphatically told why and how to democratize the life of the party, to work to restore people's confidence in the party and the state. In the economic sphere [the

361, Albright, “The Role of the Press in Political Change,” 6.

362. Ješutová, *Od mikrofonu*, 322.

party] is to consistently continue to develop economic reforms as a whole and to push its principles to every workplace. In the social sphere [the party is] to revive the democratic atmosphere for exchange and confrontation of ideas, so that the most valuable and most progressive could win against the conservatives and the superannuated. And [create] working methods, political and economic and in production in the spirit of the national democratic traditions of the labor movement, Leninist norms and socialist goals. And thus creating unity between the Party and the state.³⁶³

Smrkovský was considered one of the most liberal of the reformers, using his government and party positions to encourage democracy and the open exchange of ideas.³⁶⁴ His article started a trickle of words that would become a torrent by the end of March.

Dubček spent a few days relaxing at home after his election, and then headed to Moscow to meet with Soviet Leader Leonid Brezhnev. Other than replacing Novotný as party secretary and putting a more trusted person in charge of the *Státní bezpečnost* [StB], the Czechoslovak secret police, very little was done to change the government that January.³⁶⁵ Dubček insisted in his autobiography that he was suffering from influenza for most of the month.³⁶⁶

The reaction to the new openness for the media had to wait a while longer at state television network ČST because the equipment and labor was committed to existing scheduled production and programming weeks in advance. The weekly TV and radio magazine that published the official schedule did not show any reactions to the new

363. Josef Smrkovský, "Co dnes jde?" *Práce*, 21 leden, 1968, in Jiří Hoppe, *Pražské Jaro v Médích*, (Prague: Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny av ČR, 2004), 30.

364. Sestavil Filip Rožánek, "Srpen 1968: Prvních Sedm Dnů Okupace" *Česky Rozhlas*, 2013, accessed October 24, 2016, http://media.rozhlas.cz/_binary/03004667.pdf, 8.

365. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 132.

366. *Ibid.*, 130.

media situation probably because it was printed two weeks ahead of time.³⁶⁷ February 1968 was also the month of the Tenth Winter Olympic Games from Grenoble, France.

The Czechoslovaks were fortunate to have had long-standing broadcasting relations with France through the European Broadcasting Union [EBU], and shared the same European time zone [GMT -1], which meant they could watch events live through a robust microwave network and see ice hockey and other popular events during prime time.³⁶⁸

Television coverage in Czechoslovakia for the two weeks of the games featured two to four hours of live and recorded Olympic coverage as well as the regular weekly Premier League football, tennis, and professional ice hockey games.³⁶⁹ Jiří Raska won gold and silver medals for the Czechoslovaks, while setting world records in ski jumping, but it was the ice hockey team that captured the attention of the population. The weekly TV and radio schedules prominently listed the times and opponents for scheduled games on the front cover.³⁷⁰ The 1968 Czechoslovak Olympic Ice Hockey team was exceptional and had a good shot at the gold medal. During this time, the Ice Hockey World Championships used the Olympics as their championship series every fourth year, so that

367. When the Warsaw Pact troops invaded on August 21, 1968, the magazine for that week and the next week had already been printed, and the magazine listings start on Mondays. Those two weeks of programming never ran. Then there were two weeks that no schedule was made available. At the end of September, a provisional schedule was printed. Schedulers at television stations generally create the schedule one to two weeks in advance in case of last-minute changes. So it is reasonable to conclude that the schedules for ČST were created two weeks in advance.

368. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, 350-1.

369. "na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 5, 5-11 února, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 10.

370. "Československý Rozhlas Televizní Program. na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 6, 5-11 února, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 5. The cover also had a brief history of the Olympics, and celebrating that Czechoslovak radio had been carrying live coverage of the Olympics since 1936.

the winning team went home with Olympic as well as the World Championship medals.³⁷¹ The Czechoslovak team defeated Soviet Union in early tournament play. However, because of ties and the style of tournament play, the final games came down to the Czechoslovak team playing Sweden, and the USSR playing Canada. The Czechoslovak team lost, and had to settle for the silver medal while the Soviet Union won the gold. In the spring of 1968, it was just a game with the interesting “David versus Goliath” subplot. After the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops in August, ice hockey became a more important proxy battle between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The lingering animosity over the second-place finish and the invasion came to a fever pitch in 1969, when the Czechoslovak ice hockey team beat the Soviet Union in a live broadcast from Sweden for the world championship, an event that triggered a riot in Prague.³⁷² Televised sports in 1968-69 were not simply a safe spectacle; they would instead prove to be a catalyst for nationalistic fervor and a trigger for action.

After the Olympics, a subtle change could be seen on the front cover of the weekly television and radio magazine for the third week of February. It featured an archival photograph from February of 1948 of Klement Gottwald [Czechoslovak Prime Minister and KSČ First Secretary] meeting with Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš as part of the takeover known as the *Únor* (February) Revolution (see appendix 1). Tellingly, Beneš is pictured with his back to the camera, but Gottwald dominates the

371. “The world governing body,” *The International Ice Hockey Federation*, accessed August 18, 2016, <http://www.iihf.com/iihf-home/the-iihf/>.

372 “Document 72: Gustav Husák speech to Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee April 1969 Plenum, April 17, 1969,” in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, 451.

room from the center of the image. This photograph is not the moment of triumph shown in the infamous photo of Gottwald addressing the crowds from the balcony in *Staré Město Naměstí* that Milán Kundera refers to in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* [See appendix 2].³⁷³ The cover image depicts a much more somber moment on February 27, 1948 when Beneš accepted the new cabinet upon which Gottwald insisted. Visible in the picture are the new cabinet members Zdeněk Fierlinger and Evžen Erban.³⁷⁴ Both of these men were still serving on the Central Committee of the KSČ in February of 1968, and both gave their support to the separation of powers and to moderate reform. They were also both Social Democrats before 1948, and had been part of the National Front that was formed out of several parties to set up the new Czechoslovak government between 1945 and 1948, at a time when Gottwald was supporting what was then called “the Czechoslovak Road to Socialism.” The choice of photographs could have been a

373. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, translated by Michael Henry Heim (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 3. In Kundera’s narrative, the original photograph shows Gottwald and Vladimir Clementis standing close together on the balcony. Kundera described the day as cold and snowy, but Gottwald had no hat, so Clementis gave the party secretary his fur hat. Clementis would become one of the early victims of Gottwald’s purges, and the photograph was altered after Clementis’ execution so that all that remained of Clementis was his hat. I have included in Appendix 2 the two actual photographs from the ČTK, one with Gottwald, Clementis, and a photographer, and the retouched version. Kundera did not mention the photographer and got a certain detail about Clementis incorrect—the retouch artist did not erase Clementis, put the microphone in front of his face, effectively making him difficult to recognize. Kundera’s narrative contains a mystery—if Clementis had given Gottwald his hat, then why, in both photographs, is Clementis still wearing a hat?

374. A group of photographs of this ceremony were taken by Jiří Rublič for the Czechoslovak News Agency [ČTK]. There is one man on the far left of the stock photograph who is missing from the photograph on the 1968 schedule cover. He was identified as Bohumil Laušmann. This man was a former Social Democrat who became a member of the Gottwald cabinet. Laušmann was accused of various crimes against the state in 1957 and fled to Austria. Kidnapped by the StB, he was brought back to stand trial, convicted, and eventually died in prison in 1963. See Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*, 380-1. It is unclear if he was in the original framing of the picture on the front cover, but there was a very large desk in the foreground of both shots, and much less of the desk can be seen in the cover photo. Leaving Laušmann out of the image on purpose could tell us that this particular piece of history was one they did not wish to emphasize at this time.

subtle way to tie the 1968 reforms with a moment in Czechoslovak history where pluralism and socialism seemed combined, before those efforts were crushed by Gottwald's imposition of a totalitarian system.

Under ordinary circumstances, the twentieth anniversary of the *Únor* Revolution would have been celebrated by government officials repeating Stalinist tropes about the victory of the first working-class president of Czechoslovakia, as well as public displays and celebrations. This year, however, the celebrations were sparse and looked more like tribunals than important national commemorations. There was no customary military parade.³⁷⁵

The single television channel had only one evening of programming about 1948. On February 23, the schedule listed a group of special programs: at 5:00 pm there was a dialogue on the revolution and at 7:30 pm another program on the takeover entitled "Confession." Between these two programs were the evening news, the weather report, and a program on the economic problems facing Czechoslovakia in the current day.³⁷⁶ The juxtaposition of the programs on the past and present demonstrated that the evening was not entirely given over to reflections of past victories. It implies that the old Stalinist regime was responsible for the current situation and focused on many of the negatives of the post-1948 era.

375. ZAB Zeman, *Prague Spring: A Report on Czechoslovakia 1968* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969), 106.

376. "Československý Rozhlas Televizní Program. na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televize: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 8, 19.-25. února, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 5. I am not sure if the program "Confessions" was a reference to Arthur London's 1968 book *The Confessions* in which he describes his persecution during the Slanský trials in 1951.

Czechoslovak Radio [ČSR] had five different programs on three evenings dedicated to examining the *Únor* Revolution, and the stations, times, and show titles were printed on the front cover of the schedule, along with an abstract describing the shows.³⁷⁷ The abstract began with a cautious phrase on the nature of the coverage: “We remind the audience with authentic sound files from our archives. We do not want to historicize, and we do not want to describe, only to register what happened twenty years ago.”³⁷⁸ This reminder may have served not only as a way to deflect criticism from the radio programs, but also to highlight their authenticity through the use of archival recordings. Two of the programs, *Stopy-Facta-Svědectví* [Tracks-Evidence-Testimony] and *Signály Doby* [Time Signals] were interviews with authors on their recent fiction and non-fiction books about the era. The episode of the documentary series *Spirála* [Spiral] used, as the abstract notes:

[s]ound documents from the February days with further commentary by Marie Švermová, Professor E. Goldstücker and Professor Peter Hruby. Their views on the past period open perspectives on what's going on in the state these days and in the truly historic moments that we today are experiencing after the January meeting of the KSČ Central Committee.³⁷⁹

The most provocative program, *Přemýšlejte s námi* [Think with us] featured:

broadcast footage of the discussion evening of the Club of Committed Thought (KAM) in Prague Six on the topic: Conflicts in the intellectual development in Czechoslovakia since 1948. Attending that evening will be our leading philosophers, historians, writers, researchers, journalists, celebrities, Prague intellectuals; you will hear forum posts from Dr. Milana Hůbla, Dr. Miléna Průchy, Ludvík Vaculík and other club members.³⁸⁰

377. Ibid.

378. Ibid.

379. Ibid.

380. Ibid.

The *Klubu angažovaného myšlení* [Club of Committed Thought or KAM] was a discussion program recorded in front of an audience where a large panel would gather to discuss a single issue. In their own ways, these programs were stepping around the core issue of what happened in February of 1948 *coup d'état* in order to look at the larger issues of the abuse of power, the errors of the Stalinist period, and most importantly, what was currently happening in Czechoslovakia. The programming seemed to suggest that the change from Novotný to Dubček was comparable to the change from Beneš to Gottwald. Several of the people speaking on the panels were controversial figures: Peter Hruby was a 1948 exile, Marie Švermová and Edvard Goldstücker who had been imprisoned during the purges of the 1950s, along with several people who had been stripped of party membership and careers in 1967 including writer Ludvík Vaculík. Radio and television gave victims a chance to speak to large audiences on an auspicious occasion. What is not clear is whether the media were freely expressing their independence from government control or were simply doing the reformers' bidding by attacking the old regime.

The mass media faced a new question in March of 1968: were they actually free to act as independent critics of the government? Individual reformers in the government had signaled in speeches and public writings that a new era of openness was at hand.³⁸¹ But they didn't say how much openness. Perhaps because there were so many titles of journals, magazines, and newspapers, the print media had already started to publish opinion pieces that encouraged government reform. Print media was often closely aligned with interest groups—every union had its own house organ. The reader was,

381. Jiří Hoppe, *Pražské Jaro v Médích* (Prague: Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny av ČR, 2004), 29.

consequently, closer to the journalist as a function of their workplace or trade union. In terms of numbers of readers, of focused interests of groups and of sheer volume and frequency, the print media was much closer to Madeleine Albright's ideal horizontal flow of information.

Czechoslovak Radio had news, sports, weather, shows directed at the youth, science shows, educational shows, and in 1968, discussion shows became very popular. Radio editors and producers had many more hours of programming to fill, and so were busy finding stories. There were three primary channels available to listeners, as well as several hours of regional and local news. Radio journalists had access to portable magnetic tape recorders that enabled them to go out into the field readily to capture audio and interviews. The manpower needed to produce a radio program was considerably less than was required for television. Once the Central Publishing Authority relaxed its jurisdiction over the media, journalists were free to seek sources other than the official party spokespersons. Madeleine Albright described this phenomenon as changing the information flow from a vertically oriented downward direction to a more horizontally oriented selection of sources.³⁸² Print and radio were more open to opportunities to change than television because of their more pluralistic nature, lower costs and faster turn-around time.

Radio, as opposed to print, was an immediate medium. Printed news inherently reached the reader a day or so after the event happened. Radio could be in the field, sending back a signal in real time. Live production of a radio program was often easier

382. Albright, "The Role of the Press," 367.

than a recorded production because it did not allow for retakes, reviews and the often tedious editing process. Analog audio editing could be done two ways: copying portions of pre-recorded audio onto a second tape recorder, or more often, by physically slicing the magnetic tape with a razor blade, and using an adhesive-backed tape to join selected pieces together. Unlike film editing, the audio editor cannot see what is on the tape, but had to laboriously listen to the audio and make edits in a somewhat inexact method. However, this was not an option during live broadcasts. Radio producers could also take advantage of the telephone. This production tool allowed for immediate communication from the field without the need for a remote transmitter. Telephones also gave radio producers a real-time feedback loop with the audience. Many programs throughout the broadcast day featured hotlines to the studios for listener calls. The show *Mikroforum*, a two-hour afternoon show for young people, played contemporary music, poetry readings, and offered advice to callers about their concerns. The show was so popular that in the summer of 1967 the producers took it on the road, setting up portable production facilities during a two-month tour of Czechoslovakia, and broadcasting live with local audiences.³⁸³ Another program, *Pisničky s telefonem* [Songs by the Telephone], began as an afternoon music show, but changed its character over time to include readings from literary works and discussions about art, culture, and current events. One of the original hosts, Jiří Dienstbier, was interviewed by Czech Radio in 2008, and he reminisced about the live nature of the program:

383. "Co bude dělat, Mikroforum, v létě," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXIV, číslo 24, 5.-11. června, 1967 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1967), 1.

Live broadcast broke the power of censorship. Before that, [a journalist] first had to write the text and give it to the censors for approval. For a live broadcast session, preliminary censorship was not possible. Since the mid-sixties, we had almost no taboos. Other journalists envied us: ‘you bastards,’ they told us, ‘you have to broadcast it, and we have our texts in newspapers with colored papers and underscores and we still have mishaps!’ Pressures from party organs were of course on the radio, but then we had enough supporters who then contributed to the birth of the Prague Spring.³⁸⁴

In April of 1968, Dienstbier and his fellow hosts would turn *Pisničky s telefonem* into a truly potent weapon for reform, but that will be covered in detail below.

In stark contrast to the action at ČSR, and without the same investment of time and equipment, television remained a one-way distributor of information. ČST had previously produced several live broadcast exchanges between studio audiences in Prague and Vienna with the cooperation with Austrian Television, so setting up two-way communications from studio to studio, or from locations to studios was within their technical capabilities.³⁸⁵ The reformers and television producers would soon figure out how best to take advantage of this. Historian ZAB Zeman, a Czechoslovak immigrant teaching in the United Kingdom, returned to Prague in March to witness the reform movement. He summed up the early participation of the media thusly:

A dialogue between the rulers and the ruled was started, and the revolution was daily renewed. After twenty years’ silence, the conversation became a compulsive necessity...

Instead of manning the barricades, the Czechs and the Slovaks listened, watched and read. There was no need for anyone to march and occupy the centers of communications. They stood at the disposal of the people who wanted to use them. Editorial offices and broadcasting studios became the focal points of the

384. Agatha Pilátová, “Jiří Dienstbier, politik a novinář,” *Týdeník Rozhlas*, číslo 35, 2008, accessed August 21, 2016, https://www.radioservis-as.cz/archiv08/35_08/35_titul.htm. “Colored papers” referred to the official papers on which the stories were typed. There were different colors of paper depending on if the story could be broadcast or not.

385. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, “Introduction,” in Bischof et al, *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 18.

revolution. A new kind of politician emerged. The apparatus of the party was thrown into the melting pot, and the highest prizes did not go to the people who could manipulate the apparatus, but to those who could capture and hold the attention of a mass audience. The reformers themselves were astonished by the flood they had released.³⁸⁶

Zeman did not understand that with the advances in technology—with microwave systems and more compact equipment, television and radio was no longer tied strictly to the studio. Discussion shows like *Kulatý stůl* [Round Table] and *Šest na lenošec* [Six on a Couch] brought experts, specialists, and intellectuals into the studio to talk about selected topics. The studios were still carefully controlled spaces, not generally open to the public. From February on, the pool of invited guests widened to include rehabilitated political prisoners, family members of those who had been executed during the purges, and critics of the Novotný regime. These were all people who had become invisible in Czechoslovakia prior to 1968, and now had the entire country watching them.³⁸⁷ However, these discussion shows were conversations between the invited and the elites, and while informative, they still did not give the average person a chance to join. Some shows tried to remedy this through the use of telephones or even taking queries from the viewers by mail. The path to dialogue had some bumps. Osgood Caruthers of the *Los Angeles Times* reported a March incident in which students from Charles University requested airtime on TV and radio to voice their support for a student protest in Poland and had been turned away.³⁸⁸ Zeman was too generous in his consideration of the newly

386. ZAB Zeman, *Prague Spring: A Report on Czechoslovakia 1968* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969), 108.

387. "Brave New World," *The Economist* (London), March 16, 1968, 40.

388. Osgood Caruthers, "Czech Students Attempt to Back Warsaw Youth: Prague University Group ...," *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1968, 18.

freed Czechoslovak media for emphasizing the spirit of freedom, but ignoring the early realities. Journalists could still cover a news story, but the editorial staff, being freed from censorship control, had to be careful with granting legitimacy to a cause, which might go against the current government wishes. Had representatives from Czechoslovak Radio or Television covered the students' statement as a news report, it might not have faced opposition. The media still considered the studio to have at least a patina of official business about it. In March, it is fair to say the media was still attacking the old regime and encouraging the new. It would take some time before television and radio would run up against the ideals of the reformers.

One practice to broaden the sources of information was to take the media to the people. Intrepid journalists could travel singly throughout the countryside with magnetic tape recorders, silent 16mm film cameras, or sound-on-film 16mm film cameras. While not live, the footage captured real people in real places, and this *al fresco* approach at least allowed for selected members of the public to air their views. Newscasts featured man-on-the-street-interviews, and British journalist John Morgan, writing from Prague, noticed a real anomaly: "What seemed especially to delight the viewer were the *vox pops* in the streets in which citizens fired away at the government: the citizens' names and professions were—which is not the practice in Britain—invariably presented in the captions, an extra proof that no one need to be afraid to speak."³⁸⁹ Captioning a video feed, even an interview shot on 16mm film, was a process that had to take place in the studio. It was an extra step—using up manpower and facilities—so it is safe to assume

389. John Morgan, "A Revolutionary Role for Czech Television," *The Listener*, April 11, 1968, 549.

captioning served an important purpose, as well as adding a sense of authenticity to the reporting.

The press started to treat government officials with a more casual air. Instead of standing back in deference, the photographers got their film cameras in the faces of the officials. Film footage of the time shows some of the officials looking startled, and their hands instinctively go up in front of their faces, or they cover their faces with newspapers.³⁹⁰ While some officials scurried away from the glaring spotlights, the reformers were drawn toward the brightness like moths. Rather than official pronouncements from studios, reform government officials gave casual interviews to the media where they discussed their hobbies and personal lives.³⁹¹ The old Cold War canards of the dour socialist *apparatchik* were melting away with this new style of politician. One Washington Post reporter noted that Dubček smiled so much the foreign press had dubbed him “Affable Al, your friendly neighborhood communist.”³⁹²

The more radical reformers in Dubček’s government introduced a new tactic in March of 1968; using television to model behavior. One of the most outspoken of the Central Committee’s reformers, Josef Smrkovský, took the lead in January and February by publishing articles in important newspapers and organs where he insisted: “[s]cope must be given to a sincere and frank exchange of views from top to bottom, with priority

390. “Rok 68 naděje,” YouTube video, 51:47, from the Česká Televize 2 three-part documentary “Rok 68,” first aired in 2008, posted by Miroslav Miroslav, August 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39e3U9Z3HtA>.

391. Journalist M [Josef Maxa], *A Year is Eight Months* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), 145.

392. Anatole Shub, “Humor Emerges in Prague Along With New Liberties,” *Washington Post*, April 7, 1968, A21.

given to the cogency of the arguments rather than to the power of the voice or the office.”³⁹³ On March 13, Smrkovský, fellow reformers, literary figures, and former victims put those ideas into direct action. They gathered an audience at the *Slovanský Dům* in Prague, and answered hundreds of questions from an overflow crowd of two thousand people.³⁹⁴ The proceedings were recorded by film cameras and edited for a later broadcast. The reformers used the meeting to repeatedly called for freedom of expression as the guarantee against the crimes of the prior regime. Film footage of one of these meetings shows that the meeting hall was carefully arranged for a large speakers’ lectern and head table, with the audience seated at long tables in the orchestra or theater-style in the balcony areas. There were multiple spotlights pointed at the speakers and at the audience members so that all the faces could be seen clearly. Five separate microphones were arranged on the lectern. A loudspeaker was placed at the foot of the stage pointed back at the head table so that the officials and dignitaries could hear what was being said. Elevated on a small platform halfway back in the audience was a tripod-mounted camera that appears to be the main camera pointed at the lectern. Several cameramen with 16mm film cameras are visible, wandering through the audience and behind the head table. Because they were getting in each other’s shots, there was clearly no central direction of the cameras as there would be on a well-orchestrated shoot. The camera operators can be seen working for artistic shots, taking advantage of the bright lights to get dramatic, back-

393. Josef Smrkovský, “What Lies Ahead” *Rudé Právo*, February 9, 1968, in Jiří Hoppe, *Pražské Jaro v Médiích* (Prague: Ústav pro Soudobé Dějiny av ČR, 2004), 39.

394. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution*, 200; ZAB Zeman, *Prague Spring: A Report*, 109.

lit angles of the audience from behind the speaker. The atmosphere was like a huge, convivial, smoky Czechoslovak *pivnice* [beer hall].

An overflow crowd stood outside the hall, crammed into an entryway and leaning against the gated entrance. Smrkovský came out to chat with them at one point. Visible in this crowd is a film camera operator, using a West German made Arriflex 16S camera fitted with a portable light and shoulder mount, which was standard equipment for professional use.³⁹⁵ The camera had the initials “NBC” on the housing.³⁹⁶

These events were competently, if not professionally, staged. All of the elements to make a quality program are in evidence. The director or editor of this report had B-roll elements with shots of cameramen filming and audio tape recorders rolling, emphasizing the presence of the media and the veracity of the production. The edited footage also contains many close-ups of audience members. This exciting and chaotic scene contrasted immeasurably from the orderly and well-rehearsed KSČ sessions the viewers were used to seeing on TV. The members of Dubček’s administration were modeling for the country how to behave in a public sphere, and the entire country could watch it on television. “What had been almost a purely Party affair became a public cause,” according to historian Galia Golan, “and the people with increasing confidence began to

395. *Arri-S Operating manual*, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts Equipment Room, accessed August 24, 2016, https://www4.uwm.edu/psoa_er/manuals/cameras/Arri-S.pdf.

396. “Noc v archive Rok 1968”, YouTube video, 1:01:56, Season 2, episode 16 of the Slovak Televize series “Noc v archive,” posted by Dokumenty SK CZ, April 25, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaPL-messFI.

exert pressure to ensure fulfillment of the party's promises."³⁹⁷ Television critic John

Morgan agreed, observing:

There in the public, openly, members of the public, members of the party, even, were offering sentiments which hitherto they had only dared express in the secrecy of their homes. The medium was no the message, but the means of transmitting a revolutionary message. After a few nights watching the screen in fear that it could not last, that there surely must be a counter-coup, as the faces came down the line from Brno, from Karlovy Vary, from Marienbad that was, the faith grew that it was possible, and so more people came forward, and the meetings in the cities grew larger, and the questions and the speeches more critical and hilarious...The deplored medium of propaganda had for once been employed successfully in the cause of anti-propaganda.³⁹⁸

The first meeting was so popular it was followed by a second one just a week later with even more speakers. The Union of Youth helped to set it up in the largest meeting hall in Prague: the Industrial Palace Exhibition Hall in Holešovice. According to historian H. Gordon Skilling, fifteen thousand people attended, but ZAB Zeman estimated a more modest, but still impressive, six thousand squeezed into a hall with a maximum seating capacity of three thousand. Many hundred more stood outside and listened to the live broadcast on their transistor radios. The meeting ran for six hours, all of which was broadcast live on television and radio.³⁹⁹ The printed television schedule for that day mentions nothing about the meeting, as the main programs listed were a football match between Sparta Praha and Real Madrid, and a Dvořák opera recorded at the National Theater in Prague.⁴⁰⁰ It is safe to assume that the broadcast was organized after

397. Golan, *Reform Rule*, 18.

398. John Morgan, "A Revolutionary Role for Czech Television," *The Listener*, April 11, 1968, 450.

399. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 200-1.

400. "na straně 7 a 10," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXV, číslo 12, 18.-24. března, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 10.

the schedule had been printed — given an estimated two-week lag in the printing process. The success of the first meeting probably justified the interruption of the broadcast day as well as the investment of equipment and labor needed to produce a live broadcast. Skilling reported that at the second meeting, the participants drew up a manifesto of sorts, which outlined reforms and called for President Novotný to step down, but that the printed version of the manifesto published in April did not include that demand.⁴⁰¹ Zeman states that the participants wrote a document of recommendations for the Action Plan, a letter calling for Novotný's resignation, and a youth manifesto.⁴⁰² Perhaps the most significant effect of these meetings was that regular viewers at home could see people just like themselves asking questions and creating political demands.

From March until the evening of August 20, ČST news reports asked questions about past abuses by the Novotný regime. Political discussion programs on the progress of the government's changes became very popular. One observer of the media scene reported that the sale of tape recorders increased, and suggested this was because people were so hungry for the latest political excitement that they had to record radio programs for later listening so that they could watch television without interruption.⁴⁰³ While the media became popular in Czechoslovakia, the power elites in the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact states saw criticisms in the media as a sure sign that Czechoslovakia was infiltrated with capitalist, revanchist, and counter-revolutionary subversives. Over

401. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 201, 201n.

402. ZAB Zeman, *Prague Spring: a Report*, 113.

403. Maxa, *A Year is Eight Months*,

the phone and in person Brezhnev himself complained to Dubček about what was being printed and broadcast.⁴⁰⁴

As March turned into April, Dubček's administration worked on the Action Plan, their blueprint for the way forward that would ultimately lead to a new constitutional congress. This Action Plan would serve to guide the government before the reforms could be turned into law through a new constitution. The media was packed with discussion programs about what should go into the Action plan. However, there were still the "hangers-on" of the old regime managing the inner-workings of government. These were members of the aforementioned *cacitocracy* for whom their most important qualification for their position was party loyalty. The stories emerging in the media from the families of political prisoners, and from some of the prisoners themselves, made the public aware of the banality and frequency of the abuse from their government. Madeleine Albright contends that this new, uncensored information fostered a dialogue between the media, the viewers and the leadership: "Independently-secured information set in an aggressive editorial framework created and mobilized a new kind of public opinion—one which demanded further changes."⁴⁰⁵ Novotný was one target, and the middle managers were another. The crimes these officials were being accused of in the media ranged from murder to simple ineptness. Because Albright's research dealt strictly with print media, the question of how this was done was fairly straightforward. With electronic media, the journalists took advantage of the particular strengths of their media to tell the story in

404. "Document No. 21: Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubček Expressing Concerns about Events in Czechoslovakia, April 11, 1968," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring 68*, 100.

405Albright, *Role of the Press*, 367.

unique ways. Their techniques involved contrasting observed evidence, and allowing the audience to see and hear the results in a format not unlike Comedy Central's modern program, *The Daily Show*. The following are two examples of this practice.

Still photography in the Soviet Bloc was famously vulnerable to being enhanced to avoid uncomfortable realities present in the image.⁴⁰⁶ Moving pictures, at least in the era before computer-generated imagery, were much more difficult to alter. A news story from 1968 starts with a crowd of Prague citizens having to walk around a construction site between two buildings. Medieval builders in Prague built passages through the center of city blocks so that pedestrians did not have to circumnavigate entire blocks to get to the other side. Often times these passages were covered with groined and barrel vaults that provided relief from the rain and an extra place for merchants to set up stalls. They are still found in many buildings in the *Staré město* [Old Town], and were prone to collapse if not properly cared for. This particular construction site was one such broken passage, and the cameraman gives us shots of the damage, and of the materials and cement mixers. However, what should be a bustling hive of activity was devoid of workers. As the narrator spoke of the location, a doleful harmonica played a blues melody. Next, the news segment cut to an interview with the director of the Prague Construction Firm, J. Štohanzl, explaining directly to the camera that with job was hampered by the lack of material and manpower, and that it will be finished shortly. The next shots come from the construction site again, and the camera pans from an upper-

406. David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: the Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalinist Russia: photographs and graphics from the David King collection* (London, Tate Publishing, 2014). See also Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, 3.

story window over the construction site, showing the neat stacks of bricks, lumber, and cement mixers ready to be put to use. However, there were still no workers. The piece then became a collage of shots of the worksite, each with the day and time labeled: *pondělí 10.30 hod.* [Monday, 10:30 am]; *úterý 14.45 hod.* [Tuesday, 2:45 pm]; *středa 11.30 hod.* [Wednesday, 11:30 am], and so on for the rest of the week. An occasional worker would walk through the frame, but at a pace that one could assume this job would not be finished anytime in the near future.⁴⁰⁷ The news item was crafted to give the viewer a choice: whom do you believe, the official or your own eyes? Only an astute cameraman with motion picture camera could have created that visual story-telling technique. The choice of music would have been out of place in western newscasts, however, the story was a dangerous one to tell. The gist of the matter—pointing out the manager’s incompetence—could have been misconstrued to put the onus of the blame on the workers, and that would have had repercussions in a socialist state.

Radio was another venue for investigative or “gotcha” journalism. As described earlier, one of the most popular daytime radio programs was Jiří Dienstbier’s *Pisničky s telefonem* [Songs on the Telephone.] Dienstbier and his producer Milan Weiner had both served overseas in war zones like North Vietnam with the foreign press service of the Czechoslovak News Agency (ČTK) which gave both men a larger understanding of the world.⁴⁰⁸ Because the program was broadcast live, they pushed the bounds of state-run

407. “Noc v archive Rok 1968”, YouTube video, 1:01:56, Season 2, episode 16 of the Slovak Televize series “Noc v archive,” posted by Dokumenty SK CZ, April 25, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaPL-messFI.

408. “Jiří Dientsbier, A Czech’s Career: An idealistic ex-stoker mourned by the country he served,” *The Economist*, January 13, 2011, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/17911256>.

media even before 1968. With the reform government, their work became more audacious. Sounding more like modern radio “shock-jocks” than journalists, Dienstbier and his colleagues called bureaucrats unannounced at their offices and asked them questions about their work. The journalists would not tell these bureaucrats, mainly leftover from the Novotný regime, that the questions and answers were being broadcast live. This approach rattled the party *apparatchiks* who were unused to being on radio or to being asked hard and potentially embarrassing questions.⁴⁰⁹

Most of the media were aggressive in their muckraking tactics against Novotný and those of his cadre still in power. Novotný himself resigned the presidency at the end of March, and those who had previously supported him were either pushed out of office or attempted to become reformers themselves. Madeleine Albright reported she found evidence of multiple suicides of former *apparatchiks* who feared having their earlier crimes discovered.⁴¹⁰ The month of March saw the media working to undermine the old regime, and to create new connections between the citizens and the leadership to form a public sphere. Citizens were able to watch and listen to political deliberations, and the reformers were hearing recommendations from the people on how to move forward. Even though censorship had ended, the media was doing exactly what the Dubček government was hoping they would do.

Dienstbier lost his position after the Prague Spring and worked for twenty years as a stoker. He was a signatory of Charter 77 and the founder of the newspaper *Lidovy Noviny*. Weiner died in 1969.

409. Jiří Dienstbier, *Rozhlasovy zpravodaj* (Prague: Radioservis, 2013), 11.

410. Albright, *Role of the Press*, 351.

Passed on April 5, 1968, the Action Plan was published and ready for public review on Wednesday, April 10. Skilling maintains that the document was not like any other document that had come from the KSČ in twenty years. Dubček insisted it was an open document; that the discussion had not ended. It was written by a committee with obvious input from many different voices, especially from the intellectual class. The Action Plan was not established law in any way. It was a just guideline working up to the Fourteenth Constitutional Congress that was only a few months away.⁴¹¹ The intervening time was for discussion, experimentation, and improving on the ideas. The concepts put forth in the Action Plan, tested under real circumstances, and amended with even more new ideas, would be codified into law with a new constitution. It was certain that the new constitution would differ radically from all earlier ones.

The conclusion of the Action Plan sets out in no uncertain terms the reformers' basic ideals, identifies what they felt they needed to go through, and makes an eloquent argument for the necessity of the Czechoslovak road to socialism:

We now have to go through unusual situations. We shall experiment, give socialist development new forms, use creative Marxist thinking and the experience of the international workers' movement, and rely on the correct understanding of social development in Czechoslovakia. It is a country, which bears the responsibility, before the international communist movement, for the evaluation and utilization of its relatively advanced material base, uncommonly high level of education, and undeniable democratic traditions. If we did not use this opportunity, nobody could ever forgive us.⁴¹²

At the same plenum that passed the Action Plan, Novotný tendered his resignation and Ludvík Svoboda, a 73 year-old former army commander, was elected president.

411. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 217

412. "Akční Program, Komunistické Strany Československá," *Práce*, 10 dubna 1968, 4.

Throughout April and May, many reformers moved into important party positions and into openings in the government after the old National Assembly was dissolved. The Action Plan pointed the way toward the adoption of those elements that would bring about democratic elections.⁴¹³

After March, the media took on new roles which reflected a change in their alignment with the reform government. Citizens no longer needed encouragement through behavior modeling to criticize the government; however, the media still facilitated dialogue between the people and the party. This arrangement was the type of new socialist norm described in the conclusion of the Action Plan. The government still considered the media to be its conduit for official communications between the government and the people. The Action Program obligated the government to give the public official information in a transparent fashion: "...it is necessary to overcome the holding up, distortion, and incompleteness of information; to remove any unwarranted secrecy of political and economic facts..."⁴¹⁴ In this second act of the Prague Spring, the media was still completely beholden to the government for its funding. However, the media entities had large numbers of journalists on their payrolls. They had just begun to stretch their legs in terms of investigative journalism. It was not long before the politicians became exasperated with the media's newfound skills.

Now that the reforms had been reified in written form, people could hold the new government accountable for its actions. One of the important concerns of these new

413. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 262.

414. "Akční Program, Komunistické Strany Československá," *Práce*, 10 dubna 1968, 4. "Document 16: The Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia," in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, 104.

guidelines was the question of rehabilitation of political prisoners and their families. The stories of these families were being gathered and broadcast, and they were gaining public sympathy—Skilling quotes a study from the Institute for Public Opinion, which found over 90% of the population favored rehabilitation.⁴¹⁵ The legal fights over the definitions of unjust sentences and criminal acts in terms of the victims, as well as deciding what kind of penalties should be meted out to the convicted, was an overwhelming task for the committees making the recommendations. The media, wanted transparent government action on the rehabilitation process, but Dubček wanted it all to be taken care of within the KSČ to minimize embarrassment. Albright pointed to this impasse as the start of the press working in opposition to the government.⁴¹⁶ She contends that Dubček wanted to keep the process out of the media because he needed the support of the more conservative KSČ Central Committee members and neutrality from the Soviet Bloc leaders. In reality, the legal battles were only part of Dubček's worries—the concerns of the Soviet Union ran much deeper than policy arguments.

The media was soon investigating the biggest abuses of the old regime, namely the Slanský show trials in 1952, and the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk in 1948. Dubček had been a top official of the committee that had gotten the most complete look at the secret evidence of the show trials, and he knew how deeply the Soviet Union was involved in those trials; the release of this information would be devastating to the governments of both countries.⁴¹⁷ In a

415. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 394.

416. Albright, *Role of the Press*, 282.

417. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 63, 84-5.

Soviet-Czechoslovak summit meeting in Moscow on May 4-5, Brezhnev informed Dubček of his deep concern that Dubček had allowed the release of stories in the Czechoslovak press blaming the Soviet Union for the death of Masaryk. “But the first shadow was cast on us,” Brezhnev complained, “[s]uch commotion was impinging on the Soviet Union, yet no one offered any resistance to it. This left us in the position of having to act alone, despite the shadow cast on us by the press, radio, and television.”⁴¹⁸ Later in the summit, Brezhnev accused the media of being in an organized effort to overthrow the KSČ, and warned Dubček of how deeply the Soviet intelligence was placed inside of Czechoslovakia: “I don’t know whether you’re aware of it, but your television service has already put together special programs about prisons. They’re only waiting for the right moment to broadcast them. You can well imagine what they’ll feature on them. This will obviously be a new blow to the leadership.”⁴¹⁹ Brezhnev’s hint revealed that he probably knew more about what was happening in Czechoslovakia than Dubček, and that the stakes were far higher than just an uncensored press. There were too many people still alive, and still serving in the governments of Warsaw Pact states, who could be caught up in the release of this information, never mind the embarrassment it would cause these states. Albright did not have access to the transcripts of this meeting, so she could not see how critical the situation was. However, the May 25 edition of *the Economist* noted that:

[Mr. Sergei Chevronenko, the Russian Ambassador] has mustered every Czech speaker and translator on his staff, imported a few more and operates a remarkable monitoring system. In Moscow, earlier this month, the Czech leaders were startled when Mr. Brezhnev slapped a bulky file of press clippings and

418. L.I. Brezhnev statement from “Document 28: Stenographic account of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Summit meeting in Moscow, May 4-5,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 119.

419. Ibid., 122, 124.

monitoring reports before them, in order to demonstrate not only that the Czechoslovaks had ‘strayed from the path of socialism,’ but that they are being downright discourteous to some of their allies.⁴²⁰

A free press allowed for an easier job of monitoring Czechoslovakia — the journalists rushing to get stories and investigate governmental abuses were putting the evidence that Brezhnev and the other Warsaw Pact leadership needed to justify a crackdown right into their hands. From the *Economist*’s reporting, we can see that someone among the handful of Czechoslovak leaders who met in Moscow was willing to speak openly about the event to the foreign press.

Even these threats did not stop the official closing of the censor’s offices in June. Dubček tried to warn the media that “an ill-considered, although well-meant, utterance may objectively harm the revival and play into the hands of both rightist opposition elements and dogmatic forces.”⁴²¹ The conservative cohort in the National Assembly even tried to pass a law which put limits on the press, but it failed. Because they understood free expression to be bound to the democratic process, writers and journalists saw any attempt to warn against publishing or to end freedom of expression as a sign of the reform government wavering in their resolve to form a socialist democracy. To answer the warnings, Ludvík Vaculík published his essay *Dva tisíce slov* [Two Thousand Words], which placed the blame for the problems of Czechoslovakia directly on the shoulders of the Communist Party. The manifesto also encouraged workers and others to continue to support the revival process of the Prague Spring:

420. “Lining up for the big fight,” *The Economist* (London), May 25, 1968, 33.

421. Golan, *Reform Rule*, 124.

Let us watch carefully how things develop, let us try to understand them and have our answers at the ready. Let us forget the impossible demand that someone from on high should always provide us with a single explanation and a single, simple moral imperative. Everyone should draw their own conclusions. Common, agreed conclusions can only be reached in discussion that requires freedom of speech — the only democratic achievement to our credit this year.⁴²²

Signed by seventy writers, scientists, intellectuals, and public figures, this manifesto reflected much of the public sentiment. Vaculík asked for those officials at the local level who abused their power to be compelled to leave office, and threatened strikes, picketing, and public criticism to get that job done. He also advocated for civic commissions to investigate “questions that no one else will look into...”⁴²³ Most of the reformers in government positions condemned the manifesto, its calls for direct citizen action and the chance it could undermine their own authority. The Soviets viewed it as “anti-socialist call to counterrevolution,” and it would become one of the catalysts for the decision to invade.⁴²⁴

Members of the state-run media continued to be critics, supporters, and servants to the reform government through the rest of the summer. Their techniques would not change appreciably. The weekly television and radio schedules would start to look dramatically different starting in late April with the addition of *propagační* [advertising].⁴²⁵ These ads were clearly for a domestic audience and differed from any other announcements that had appeared in the schedules before.

422. Ludvík Vaculík, “The Two Thousand Word Manifesto,” June 27, 1968 in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 179.

423. Ibid., 180.

424. “Introduction: ‘The Two Thousand Word Manifesto,’ June 27, 1968” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 177.

425. *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 16, 15–21 dubna 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 15.

For those outside of Czechoslovakia, the manufacturing conglomerate TESLA Electronics started printing and distributing a quarterly magazine highlighting their equipment. Titled *TESLA Electronics: Quarterly Review of Czechoslovak Electronics and Telecommunications*, it was available in English, German, French, and Russian by subscription for \$1 (or equivalent). Part advertisement, part technical journal, *TE*'s first volume included a brief history of TESLA; articles on particular pieces of equipment; a scholarly physics paper; descriptions of manufacturing processes for thermocouples; reports on TESLA's exhibits at the Tenth International Fair in Brno along with a schedule of fairs at which TESLA will be exhibiting their equipment world-wide; and a letter from the president of TESLA explaining what the magazine was about. The letter is reproduced here:

Dear Readers,

We are presenting you with the first number of our new magazine, which is published by the TESLA industrial organization, specializing in electronics and communications equipment. Nine-tenths of the entire research, development and manufacturing activities in electronics and communications equipment in Czechoslovakia are concentrated in our organization. The magazine intends to publish first-hand information on current and future trends and on new products with which Czechoslovak industry is contributing its share to worldwide progress.

We are convinced that in spite of the present massive flow of scientific and technical information we have a good deal of substantial and serious information to offer to our customers and partners abroad as well as to international scientific opinion on the results of the intensive efforts made by more than 70,000 staff members in TESLA plants and laboratories.

We regard our magazine "TESLA electronics" as yet another Czechoslovak contribution to international scientific, technical and economic cooperation, which is essential for guaranteeing the secure future of all mankind.

(signed) Karel Vancí,

President of TESLA Electronics and Telecommunications.⁴²⁶

426. Karel Vancí, "Welcome Letter," *TESLA Electronics*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (August 1968): 4.

More than just a sales brochure, this magazine marketed Czechoslovak technological prowess. The equipment was commercial-grade, very high-tech, and very expensive. This sales tool was clearly reaching out to the wider world, a re-introduction to the West. Lists of export contracts, highlighting the type of equipment and to whom it was sold helped to show that the TESLA was a real firm with real existing clients. The magazine featured detailed information about the company and its products, and also acted as a conduit for the exchange of scientific knowledge, with abstracts and full text of scientific papers that were not published in western journals.

Other issues of the magazine offered insights into magnetic-resonance equipment for medical diagnostic use, complete professional television production and broadcast packages, radio telemetry transmitters and receivers for satellite signals, and multi-channel radio transmitters for wireless telephonic systems. These were systems that were in use in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern Bloc. The CoCom embargoes, devised by NATO countries after World War II, forced Czechoslovaks to design and manufacture the complicated infrastructures of telecommunications, scientific testing, and automation systems because they could not buy some of this equipment on the open market.⁴²⁷ The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or Comecon) states depended on the technological output of TESLA to supply their communications infrastructures with high-tech equipment—Czechoslovakia's product donation to the CMEA was three times higher than any other state save for the Soviet Union.⁴²⁸

427. James K. Libbey, "CoCom, Comecon, and the Economic Cold War," *Russian History* 37 (2010): 146.

428. "Czech Economic Strains," *The Economist* (London), October 27, 1962, 375.

TESLA designed and manufactured a variety of products in different factories each built around distinct specialties and staffed by its own highly educated work force. All of these facilities worked under the umbrella of a single manufacturing organization. The research arm of the company was a direct connection to the best scientific and engineering minds in the state through the university system.⁴²⁹

One frequent trope about technology behind the Iron Curtain was that it was poor quality. For example, Galia Golan characterized technology in Czechoslovakia as substandard, citing an article in the *Economist* on October 27, 1962 mentioning that the “....drive for ‘global fulfillment’ of the planned targets, regardless of quality...for example, caused a loss in 1962 of 1 million KčS in metallurgical rejects. Foreign and domestic customers became less willing to accept products of low quality.”⁴³⁰ She seemed to be equating finished products, like the ones TESLA manufactured, with metallurgical production or the production of raw stocks of iron, alloys, and steel which were products of the heavy industry forced onto Czechoslovakia during the Stalinist period. The original *Economist* article draws no such conclusion; the author contrasts the arrival of the delivery truck at the green grocer which spontaneously generates a “disciplined queue,” with “[b]arely five minutes’ walk away, what is proudly claimed to be the leading international engineering fair in Europe is in full swing. Visitors are admiring the impressive array of Czech machinery in the spacious halls, and in the improvised offices businessmen from around the world are daily concluding deals to the

429. “TESLA Czechoslovak Electronics,” *TESLA Electronics*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (August 1968): 5-6.

430. Golan, *Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, 13. At the time, the official exchange rate was 7 kčs to the dollar.

value of millions of pounds.”⁴³¹ This is the same engineering fair mentioned in the TESLA magazine. The author then points out that the basic problems in the Czechoslovak economy come from the agricultural, metallurgy, heavy engineering and construction sectors. The bright spot of the economy, according to the author, has a small but meaningful cloud: “Czechoslovakia, for all its limited home market, is still producing a range of engineering products that cover perhaps 70 of 80 percent of the varieties contained in the world’s engineering assortment. But about 30 percent of its miscellaneous engineering products are manufactured on the basis of blueprints ten years old.”⁴³² This sort of flaw was a part of the problems facing the Czechoslovak economy that Ota Šik identified in his analysis *Plan and Market under Socialism*, and which he tried to remedy with the 1967 New Economic Mechanism.⁴³³

Only a year after the June Czechoslovak Writer’s Congress, where Ludvík Vaculík worried “...I am afraid we have not taken our proper place in the world arena. I have a feeling that our republic has lost its good name...” this magazine was the response.⁴³⁴ It was an outreach to the world, emphasizing exactly what the historical Czechoslovak economy had always been good at producing. The magazine fit well into Ota Šik’s reforms of the economy through market mechanisms to bring in the hard currency Czechoslovakia desperately needed. Here were also the forerunners of the automation that were described in the utopian visions of Radovan Richta and the Science

431. “Czech Economic Strains,” *The Economist*, October 27, 1962, 375.

432. *Ibid.*, 376.

433. Ota Šik, *Plan and Market*, 78-80.

434. “Document 1: Speech by Ludvík Vaculík to the Fourth Congress of Czechoslovak Writers, June 1967,” in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, 7.

and Technological Revolution. All of the remedies and aspirations were portrayed in print form for the rest of the world to see. More than any other documents of the Prague Spring of 1968, in my opinion, these quarterly volumes reflect much of what the reformers were looking for to fix the problems in Czechoslovakia. *TESLA Electronics* would in fact outlast the Prague Spring, with issues released quarterly or bi-annually into the 1980s. The showcase of Czechoslovakia's and later the Czech Republic's manufacturing prowess—the Brno International Fair, is still held annually.⁴³⁵

And yet, in a third act perfectly fit for a Czech absurdist drama, the brilliance of the Prague Spring came crashing down in a single night. Under cover of darkness, half-a-million troops, supported by seven thousand tanks, rolled into Czechoslovakia on August 21. That should have been the end of it. However, through the work of a handful of technicians, radio and television workers, and a very brave population, a resistance sprung up within minutes of the first planeloads of elite Red Army troops touching down at Prague's Ruzyně Airport. The media, which up until that moment had acted as agitators and propagandists, now became the organizers of an insurrectionist movement. The public sphere created by the people, government, and media during the Prague Spring was been crushed, but in its place grew something even more remarkable.

435. "Trade Fair Dates, June 2017," *MSV Brno 2017: International Engineering Fair*, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.tradefairdates.com/MSV-M760/Brno.html>.

CHAPTER FIVE

“At three o’clock in the morning of August 21, 1968, I opened my eyes on a world entirely different from that in which only six hours before I had gone to sleep.”

Anonymous Student in Czechoslovakia, August 23, 1968 ⁴³⁶

Rarely in modern history does the entire structure of a state change overnight.

Czechs and Slovaks went to bed in their own sovereign state – a state that was rapidly moving toward democracy and its own conception of socialism. Those same citizens awoke to find their homeland occupied by foreign powers. Idealism was confronted with reality on tank treads. The sound of low-flying aircraft engines or the clack and roar of treads over cobblestones disturbed the sleep of some people. For others, their first warning was a voice on the radio pleading for listeners to keep their radios turned on for further information, or a phone call from a friend.⁴³⁷ The invasion became a contest between a half-million soldiers with seven thousand tanks pitted against an unarmed population.⁴³⁸ What made the situation even worse for the Czechoslovaks was that the invading armies were from their own allies. Eduard Goldstücker, one of the leading

436. From *Student*, undated first special edition, probably August 23, 1968, in Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences *The Czech Black Book*, ed. Robert Little (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 121.

437. Jiří Pelikan, *S’ils me tuent* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975), 218; “4:30 am, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material of the Czechoslovak Radio Stations*, Radio Free Europe. Open Society Archives 300_30_14, Box 14, Book 1, 7.

438. Mark Kramer, “Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion,” in Bischof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact*, 48.

voices in the reform movement, compared the 1968 invasion to the Nazi invasion of 1939:

Oh, that was one of the most horrible shocks in my life. You see, I went through the Hitler invasion in 1939, in Prague, and I must say that the Soviet invasion in '68 was a crueler impact than the Hitler-led one. Because Hitler was our declared enemy, we didn't expect anything from him but the worst. But here, those who for years and decades preached they're our best friends, our brothers, the guarantors of our independence, came with an army of half a million to suppress our drive for a little bit more freedom. It was the most horrible experience and I knew immediately that they came to suppress any movement towards any democratic development, because there were various voices saying that the so-called January Policy, the Dubcek Policy, will have to be continued with our means, but I knew that that was empty talk. They came to crush it, they came to murder it, to murder that attempt to democratize that so-called Socialism.⁴³⁹

Because the invasion was such a drastic change from what had gone before, it can rightly be seen as its own separate period; one that has a definite beginning and is completely out of character with the previous eight months. The activities in Czechoslovakia and of its media in particular during those eight months were, for the Warsaw Pact states, sufficient justification for the invasion. The leadership of those five Warsaw Pact states: the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and East Germany, agreed that military force was the only way to subdue the Prague Spring, and the leadership of those states unanimously approved the invasion on August 18-19.⁴⁴⁰ However, the

439. "Interview with Eduard Goldstücker" Transcript, *Cold War*, Episode 14 "Red Spring," accessed May 28, 2017, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/coldwar/interviews/episode-14/goldstucker3.html>.

440. The pre-1989 historians Dawisha and Valenta put the decision date on August 17 during a major Soviet Politburo meeting, but surmised the wording of the decision had been worked out before this. Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 298; Jiří Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 145. Russian historian Mikhail Prozumenshchikov, writing after the 1991 opening of the Soviet archives, noted that Brezhnev likely decided to invade after a problematic phone call to an evasive Dubček on August 13. The Politburo passed the resolution on the 17th, but the issue waited until the 18th so that the leadership of the other Warsaw Pact nations could convene and support the resolution. Hungarian Party Secretary Kádár insisted on amending it on the 19th. Mikhail Prozumenshchikov,

military planning, training, scouting, and equipment staging had been going on since April. In the late evening of August 19, a large retinue of KGB officers disguised as tourists arrived at the Soviet Embassy in Prague to give orders to the high-level Czechoslovak party members who had agreed to collaborate with the invading forces.⁴⁴¹ On August 20, starting at 2:00 pm, the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee Presidium met to discuss plans for the upcoming Fourteenth Congress scheduled for September. The collaborators' planned to use this meeting to force a no-confidence vote against Alexander Dubček and subsequently invite the Soviet-led military forces into Czechoslovakia under the pretense of offering the new government fraternal assistance. However, the meeting dragged on, and the collaborators failed to bring up the motion in time.⁴⁴²

At 11:00 pm that evening, Warsaw Pact troops began landing at the Prague Airport, as the ground forces crossed the Czechoslovak borders.⁴⁴³ At 1:30 am August 21, the KSČ Central Committee managed to get a message to the radio and press services denouncing the illegal invasion. Around 5:00 am, the leadership of the KSČ and the Czechoslovak government, with the exception of President Svoboda, were forcibly detained by Soviet troops and taken to Moscow.⁴⁴⁴ Despite meticulous planning of the

"Politburo Decision-Making on the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1968," in Blschof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 122-124.

441. Tad Szulc, *The Invasion of Czechoslovakia, August, 1968* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc. 1974), 2.

442. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 175-8. Dubček had stalled the collaborators, but the tank columns needed get moving sooner in the evening in order to meet the timetable.

443. Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences Institute of History, *The Czech Black Book*, ed. Robert Little (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 7-9.

444. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 183-6.

invasion, the invaders and the collaborators did not manage to shut down all of the media. With the dawn, Soviet troops advanced on the main studios of ČSR. Civilians set up a blockade in front of the radio station building at 8:00 am. Warsaw Pact tanks rammed the barricade and Soviet troops opened fire on the civilian protestors in order to take control of the radio building. Many technicians and announcers managed to escape the building with portable equipment, and they set up the “Free and Legal Czechoslovak Radio,” which began round-the-clock broadcasting from remote studios.

Czechoslovak Television set up its own covert facilities later that morning.⁴⁴⁵ These two broadcast entities put out the call for delegates to assemble in Prague in secret to convene what was now called the Fourteenth Extraordinary Party Congress, ultimately helping 1,192 delegates meet at a secret location on August 22.⁴⁴⁶ In the Soviet Union, the captured Czechoslovak leaders negotiated with Brezhnev and other Soviet Communist Party officials and signed the Moscow Protocols on August 26, agreeing to undo many of the reforms of the Prague Spring. The covert radio and television workers ended their broadcasts on August 27, as the invading troops began leaving the metropolitan areas as per the Protocols. By the end of September, all media was back under the control of the new party leadership. The process of “normalization” began, slowly demoting or driving into exile many of the leaders of the reform movement while those left behind were tasked with undoing many of the reforms. The complete turnover

445. Barbara Wolfe Jancar, “When the Soviets Invaded Bratislava,” in *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no. 10 (October 1968): 5-6.

446. Pelikan, *S’ils me tuent*, 225.

of the government was finalized in August of 1969, but not without episodes of protest and violence.⁴⁴⁷

Although the resistance lasted a very short time, it was not crushed by the invading troops, and its marginal success managed to convince the KGB and the leaders of the Soviet military that it had been planned weeks in advance and was supported by the Western powers.⁴⁴⁸ In the face of the armed onslaught, the Czechs and Slovaks had four potent defenses: a robust communications network, skilled technicians, experience with occupations, and a relatively homogeneous culture. None of these defenses could have prevented the occupation because the Warsaw Pact troops had gained the element of surprise and took advantage of their initiative to bring in an overwhelming force of men and machinery.⁴⁴⁹ However, the Czechs and Slovaks utilized a number of defenses that made maintaining the occupation difficult, and made creating a puppet government with collaborators almost impossible.

The first defense was a functional network of electronic communication technologies comprised of robust portable equipment and multiple redundancies. To improve coverage, and to ensure communications in the event of a nuclear attack or an invasion from the West, the systems described in Chapter Three proved comparably reliable when faced with an invasion from the East.

447 Jaromír Navrátil, "Chronology of Events," in Navrátil *Prague Spring '68*, xxxiii-xxxix.

448. "Document No.130, KGB Report on the 'Counterrevolutionary Underground' in Czechoslovakia, 13 October, 1968," in Navrátil *Prague Spring '68*, 518-20.

449. Cynthia M. Grabo, "Soviet deception in the Czechoslovak Crisis," CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence, (1970), 31. https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/fall00/ch5_Soviet_Deception.pdf

The second defense consisted of a large group of well-trained professional technicians and engineers. These experts had extensive experience setting up portable transmission facilities and troubleshooting problems. They knew the intricacies of the system better than their superiors and far better than secret police officers sent to shut the transmitters down.

The living memories of everyone over the age of thirty formed the third defense. These were people who had already experienced occupation by hostile military forces; people who lived through the German occupation after the Munich Agreement and had already dealt with the privations created by an armed, authoritarian invader.

The most important defense of all was a highly motivated population, bound together within a relatively homogenous culture, who became almost universally offended at having their sovereignty as a state ripped away. While it was apparent from the start that an unarmed population was no match for the firepower of the invaders, the people committed themselves to making the occupiers' stay as uncomfortable as possible. Their efforts to create a completely non-violent resistance was not universally successful, particularly in Bratislava, where civilians tried to smash out the windshields of the military vehicles with rocks, and of course the people killed in front of the radio building.⁴⁵⁰ The passive resistance that followed the invasion, while brief, could not be stopped except when the resisting population agreed to end their protests. Broadcast technology made the resistance possible and effective. In addition to letting the world know what was happening, covert twenty-four hour radio and television broadcasts tied

450. Jancar, "When the Soviets Invaded Bratislava," 8.

the population together even after the Czechoslovak leaders had been arrested, gone underground, or fled. Combined with an active telephone network and a massive number of citizens volunteering as couriers, the radio and television workers organized acts of mass resistance and Švejk-styled chaos.⁴⁵¹ These broadcasts kept the imprisoned National Assembly and the world apprised of the situation and coordinated the convening of the Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that the communications workers and the covert broadcasting networks they created took the place of the executive branch of the government during the crisis.

The leaders of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia spent July and August of 1968 in a series of face-to-face meetings.⁴⁵² Brezhnev had a host of complaints he wanted Dubček to fix, especially to end the ability of the Czechoslovak media to criticize the

451. “‘Chovejte se jako Švejk,’vzkazovali liberečtí komunisté,” *Historie, Český rozhlas*, 25. srpna 2008 v 16:07, accessed June 15, 2017, http://www.rozhlas.cz/historie/1968/_zprava/chovejte-se-jako-svejk-vzkazovali-liberecti-komuniste--487947; Jaroslav Hašek, *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* [The Good Soldier Švejk and the World War] (Prague: Ottovo nakladatelství, 2000). Czech journalist, anarchist, and provocateur Hašek created his most famous character, the dog-seller turned soldier Švejk, as a foil to the madness of World War I. Švejk’s specific style of mayhem came from his attempts to take every aspect of his surroundings and interactions with people strictly and completely literally, which leaves readers wondering if he was a total idiot or clever like a fox. A demonstration of this practice during the invasion was described by a foreign correspondent as he watched a Czech patiently help the leader of a Soviet tank column to understand a directional sign, then waved as the entire column headed down the road. What the Czech failed to mention to the soldier was that he had just switched the directional sign minutes before the tanks arrived. Sociologists are now using Švejk as a definition of a particular resistance technique. See Peter Fleming and Graham Sewell, “Looking for the Good Soldier, Švejk: Alternative Modalities of Resistance in the Contemporary Workplace,” *Sociology*, Vol. 36, no. 4 (November 2002): 857-873.

452. The political decision to invade Czechoslovakia has been the most heavily examined aspect of the entire story of the 1968 reform, so I will only touch on a few important points. For more information please see: Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); *Winter in Prague*, ed. Robin Alison Remington (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969); Jiří Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, eds. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Manham, MD: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2010); H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia’s Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

government.⁴⁵³ The leaders of the fraternal socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe met in Warsaw on July 14-15 to compare notes on the on-going experiment in Czechoslovakia. Dubček had been invited, but refused to attend. Just before the Warsaw meeting, historian Karen Dawisha [writing before 1989] saw the hand of the Soviet Politburo in an editorial published in *Pravda* on July 11 that was critical of Ludvík Vaculík's "2000 Words" essay. In this editorial, Dawisha noted "[t]his was the first time that the Politburo had specifically endorsed elements of the theory of 'quiet counterrevolution,' which was to gain prominence as an argument by hard-liners in favor of invasion."⁴⁵⁴ Manfred Wilke, using post-1989 East German sources, found that in March of 1968 Walter Ulbricht and a study group in the DDR already formulated the idea that counterrevolutionary forces, under the direction of outside imperialist aggressors, were quietly inserting themselves into Czechoslovakia and had already gained control of the press, radio, and television.⁴⁵⁵ The DDR study group was convinced that the Prague Spring reform movement was actually old social democratic revisionism in disguise.⁴⁵⁶ These two positions proposed by the Ulbricht contradict each other; if this was a return to the old Czechoslovak social democratic traditions, which included pluralistic elections, then obviously it was not a problem of imperialist infiltrators. If the counterrevolutionaries were in fact infiltrating the government and taking over the media, then those leaders who allowed the deceitful counterrevolutionaries to gain entry would

453. "Lining up for the big fight," *The Economist* (London), May 25, 1968, 34.

454. Dawisha, *Kremlin and the Prague Spring*, 193.

455. Manfred Wilke, "Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring," in Bischof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 344.

456. *Ibid.*, 345.

only be guilty of negligence and could be removed. The Soviet-influenced socialist system could stay intact and be held blameless once the infection was excised. However, the rebirth of the social democratic movement in Czechoslovakia raised serious questions about the amount of sovereignty the members of the Warsaw Pact really had, as well as the leading role the Soviet Union always claimed as the first socialist state. Ulbricht feared the social democratic threat would eventually infiltrate the DDR, leading to the reunification of Germany, but with the capitalist West in charge.⁴⁵⁷ The removal of counterrevolutionaries was by far the most direct solution to the problem of Czechoslovakia following its own path to democratic socialism. Denying the Czechoslovak people the ability to decide their own fate would demonstrate the reality of Russian hegemony.

The Czechoslovak National Assembly and the KSČ reinforced this idea when they condemned “2000 Words” as going too far.⁴⁵⁸ The pace of the liberalizers in their movement toward a pluralistic social democracy was too much for the other Warsaw Pact leaders. Dubček’s refusal to attend, or to put any of Brezhnev’s realignments in place, enabled the hardline voices to win.

The other Warsaw Pact leaders did not see the situation as merely a small coterie of imperialists infiltrating Czechoslovakia. To them it represented a more systemic problem. Władysław Gomułka, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party pronounced that, “a dominant majority of the leadership of Czechoslovak Party have

457. Ibid., 346.

458 “Are the coming or going?” *The Economist* (London), July 20, 1968, 15.

become captives of revisionists.”⁴⁵⁹ The Hungarian Party Secretary János Kádár saw “events now developing in such a way that the political system is beginning to resemble the Yugoslav, and that the next step of events mean the restoration of the bourgeois order.”⁴⁶⁰ Walter Ulbricht, the party secretary of the German Democratic Republic, was certain that “the interference of imperialism in Czechoslovakia is being carried out within the framework of a long-time global strategy.”⁴⁶¹ Todor Zhivkov of Bulgaria stated that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria supported Gromulka’s and Ulbricht’s observations and that in Czechoslovakia “we must restore the dictatorship of the proletariat, which has been trampled underfoot.”⁴⁶² The undercurrent of the discussions of this meeting was not strictly concerned with events in Czechoslovakia, but that all five leaders were most concerned that counterrevolutionary tendencies could spread to their own countries.⁴⁶³ Students had rioted in Poland in March, asking for more freedom.⁴⁶⁴ Intellectuals in the Soviet Union were writing in favor of the reforms in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁶⁵ Brezhnev, after hearing the other leaders’ arguments, pronounced the conclusion that would become the doctrine of protective isolationism that would bear his name:

No matter how any of us might characterize the potential consequences of the continuing offensive by the anti-socialist forces, one thing is clear:

459. “Document No. 52: Transcript of the Warsaw Meeting, July 14-15, 1968” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ’68*, 214.

460. *Ibid.*, 217.

461. *Ibid.*, 218.

462. *Ibid.*, 220.

463. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 101.

464. “Warsaw Students Riot for 7 Hours,” *Washington Post*, March 12, 1968, A1.

465. Raymond H. Anderson, “Moscow Is Silent On Unrest In Bloc: Events In Warsaw, Prague And Bucharest,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1968, 3

Czechoslovakia is in a dangerous phase on the path leading out of the socialist camp. And we must take all measures and use all means to prevent that.⁴⁶⁶

The result of these discussions was the Warsaw Letter, which Valenta noted, “contained many charges against the Czechoslovak leadership, some of which could provide a rationale for future military action.”⁴⁶⁷ The Warsaw Letter accused Dubček of losing control of the party and the country, leading the social democrats to form a party opposing the communist party, allowing revisionist forces within the party to gain control of the media, and thereby endangering all of the socialist states through weakness against revanchist forces in West Germany.⁴⁶⁸ The evidence for most of these charges came from observations of the recently uncensored media in Czechoslovakia, not actual evidence of any conspiracies. However, the hard-liners saw greater systemic problems than just a handful of saboteurs. The dogmatic approach of the neo-Stalinist leadership of the Warsaw Five concerning the Communist Party’s complete control of the media meant that they could not — or did not wish to — separate the newly unfettered and critical writings of Czechoslovak journalists from the party’s general line. A single critical essay became, in the eyes of the hard-liners, a manifesto for anti-socialist forces.

Backing the charges with real existing enforcement, the armies of Bulgaria, East Germany, Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union started moving toward positions near the Czechoslovak borders in late May. The annual Warsaw Pact military exercises, code named *Šumava*, were scheduled to be held on Czechoslovak soil in September. The

466. “Transcript of the Warsaw Meeting, July 14-15, 1968,” 221.

467. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 56.

468. “Document No. 53: The Warsaw Letter, July 14-15, 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ’68*, 234-7.

Soviet military leadership, against the wishes of the Czechoslovak Defense Minister, moved up the dates for the exercises to June.⁴⁶⁹ Changing the timing gave the rest of the Warsaw Pact officers an opportunity to reconnoiter Czechoslovakia, or as Brezhnev formulated: “[t]he presence of leading staff members and a large number of officers will undoubtedly make an impression on our enemies, paralyze the counterrevolution, and be a substantial factor in the support of our friends.”⁴⁷⁰ The *Šumava* exercises were held in June, but historian Jiří Valenta noted several abnormalities from previous exercises: that the exercises had been prolonged beyond the scheduled July 1 ending date; that troops entered the country through border crossings that had not been agreed upon; that the Soviet troops brought in unusual pieces of equipment including tactical air units and mobile radio and television jamming equipment; and that the Czechoslovak officers were not invited to the post-exercises analysis.⁴⁷¹ Marshal Yakubovskii, the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact troops, kept finding excuses for keeping troops in Czechoslovakia, and only withdrew all of his forces after the conclusion of top level Czechoslovak-Soviet negotiations at the end of July.⁴⁷² Those negotiations stipulated that the troops were to leave Czechoslovak territory, but did not insist that the Warsaw Pact units move away from the border regions: “[t]he Soviet leaders perceived (these agreements) only as provisional settlements that preserved the option of intervention in

469. “Document No. 37: Report by ČSSR National Defense Minister Martin Dzúr on a Meeting with Marshal Yakubovskii Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact Joint Armed Forces, April 24-25, 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 112-3.

470. “Document No. 31: Minutes of the Secret Meetings of the ‘Five’ in Moscow, May 8, 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 136.

471. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 32.

472. “Document No. 65: Speeches by Leonid Brezhnev, Alexander Dubček, and Aleksei Kosygin at the Čierna nad Tisou Negotiations, July 29, 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 294.

the event the Czechoslovak reformers failed to implement the agreements.”⁴⁷³ As they moved towards the much-anticipated September Party Congress, the Czechoslovak leadership was clearly conscious of several thousand troops at the border.

In examining the Soviet decision to proceed with an invasion, it is evident that the military aspect of the process was well prepared and ready to proceed when ordered. Russian historian Nikita Petrov revealed that the plans were finished in April, and that the *Šumava* exercises were considered ideal cover for information gathering.⁴⁷⁴ The domestic political situation and the international diplomatic situation, however, proved to be major stumbling blocks. The unilateral option to invade another country, as happened in Hungary in 1956, was something Brezhnev worked to avoid by creating “collective assistance” through “collective action.”⁴⁷⁵ He was successful in getting the other Warsaw Pact states involved; Ulbricht and Gromulka were in fact exasperated at Brezhnev for acting too slowly.⁴⁷⁶ The East German Politburo allocated money on July 19, to install an improved radio transmitter in Dresden, which could broadcast political information into Czechoslovakia.⁴⁷⁷ This transmitter would become the source of *Radio Vltava*, the voice of the occupiers in Czechoslovakia, although it is unclear that propaganda was the primary reason for its construction.⁴⁷⁸

473. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 91.

474. Nikita Petrov, “The KGB and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 151.

475. Wilke, “Ulbricht, East Germany,” 358.

476. Dawisha, *Kremlin and the Prague Spring*, 207-8.

477. Wilke, “Ulbricht, East Germany,” 360.

478. Slava Volny, “The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting,” *East Europe*, Vol. 17, no.12 (December 1968): 10. The facility could have been used for jamming, too.

Two other factors had to be considered before allowing the troops to advance: how NATO would respond to a military invasion, and how to install a government of “healthy forces” in Czechoslovakia. The first problem, while more crucial in the view of the potential to start another world war, turned out to be the easiest to solve. By the summer of 1968, United States President Lyndon Johnson had already decided not to run for a second term, claiming that the war in Vietnam should take precedence over partisan activity.⁴⁷⁹ However, he hoped he could secure his legacy by finishing up the détente talks with the Soviet Union in October in hopes of stabilizing the threat of nuclear war. Just a few hours before hearing of the invasion, LBJ had boasted to his close advisers that the upcoming negotiations on the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty [SALT] in October would “be the greatest accomplishment of [his] administration.”⁴⁸⁰ The Johnson Administration took a strongly non-interventionist position during the Prague Spring and even after the invasion.⁴⁸¹ LBJ protested loudly, but clearly did not wish to put the nuclear arms negotiations at risk through any military action.⁴⁸²

Finding Czechoslovak reform opponents willing to work with the Soviets to secure a *coup d'état* against the Dubček regime proved to be the great disaster of the carefully planned invasion. Even with a half-a-million man army backing them up, the majority of the “healthy forces” in the Czechoslovak government lost their nerves, locked themselves in their offices, drank themselves into stupors, or went on extended stays at

479. Carroll Kilpatrick, “LBJ Tells Nation He Won't Run, Restricts Raids on North Vietnam,” *Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 1, 1968, 1.

480. Günter Bischof, “The Johnson Administration and the Warsaw Pact Invasion,” in Bischof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 218.

481. *Ibid.*, 225.

482. “Text of Plea by Johnson,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1968, 20.

cabins in the countryside. One had a nervous breakdown, and had to be hospitalized.⁴⁸³

The failure of the would-be leaders at the critical moments forced Brezhnev to improvise a new strategy; he would bring the reform leadership to Moscow, where they “would be obliged, or forced, to legitimize the intervention and ‘normalize’ the situation.”⁴⁸⁴ Short of a true military conquest, this unplanned-for consequence turned into a positive solution for the Soviet Union, as the reformers were the ones who removed the very reforms they had put in place.

Code named “Operation Danube,” the invasion plan had been in active preparation all spring. Military officers and diplomatic officials created detailed plans for the anticipated political overthrow of the Dubček regime, while the KGB was busy crafting a counter-reform disinformation campaign to use against the people of Czechoslovakia and to turn the Soviet people against the reform movement.⁴⁸⁵ The military objectives were simple: get the troops in place as quickly as possible, occupy the important government offices, communications centers, and party buildings, and hold them until a new “revolutionary worker and peasant government” was formed.⁴⁸⁶ Implementing this plan was complicated and difficult. 500,000 men, 7,000 tanks, and 250 transport planes were placed at the ready on three sides of Czechoslovakia. The tanks, armored transports, and anti-aircraft guns, all had to be driven at night to pre-arranged targets.

483. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 129.

484. Dawisha, *Kremlin and the Prague Spring*, 328.

485. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 107.

486. Tad Szulc “Soviet Army in Action Impresses West,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1968, 1.

The moon was a waning crescent the night of August 20, granting the ground and airborne troops good cover. The occupation of the city of Prague, situated in the middle of the Czech lands, was tasked to highly-trained airborne troops and paratroopers. The rest of the motorized units would travel as quickly as they could to re-determined points. Valenta points out that such a drain of manpower, trucks, and fuel during the height of the harvest season in Russia and Ukraine threatened food and industrial production for the entire state, and this may have had some impact on the timing of the invasion.⁴⁸⁷ The vast size of the force, equal to the number of American troops deployed in Vietnam at the same time, advancing as quickly as possible, over rough narrow roads, and flying hundreds of flights into a few commercial airports, was a logistical nightmare, however, it was the one part of the entire intervention that was successful.⁴⁸⁸ They were aided by good weather and the lack of resistance from the Czechoslovak Army.

The timetable for the invasion called for the Ruzyně Airport just west of Prague to be under Soviet military control before midnight. This airport allowed soldiers and armored vehicles to infiltrate the capitol faster than travelling overland. Because unscheduled flights from Moscow were somewhat common, bringing in a few operatives would not raise much suspicion.⁴⁸⁹ Hundreds of transports bringing in soldiers and tanks was a different issue. Not knowing exactly what conditions were awaiting them, the invasion force had to be completely self-contained, with communication and air traffic control facilities separate from those they might find at the airport. The historical sources

487. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 111-112.

488. Szulc "Soviet Army in Action Impresses West," 1.

489. "An Unusual Night," *Czech Black Book*, 8.

agree that two large Soviet planes landed between 8:30 pm and 11:00 pm, and that one of the planes parked on the tarmac, presumably to act as the air traffic control station.⁴⁹⁰ At this point, the accounts of the takeover of the airport begin to differ. Joseph Wechsberg related a story from an eyewitness, presumably the airport manager himself, about secret control facilities for the entire utility grid for the airport being shut down on the manager's orders, and that the Soviet military personnel were unable to find this control room or to force the manager to reveal its whereabouts. This eyewitness then reported that the Soviet paratroopers looted the duty-free shops and loaded the private automobiles of the airport staff into the empty transports to take home.⁴⁹¹ There are several problems with this story, including: having all utilities going through a single control room; the manager reported using the phone to call the police just after all of the utilities at the airport were shut down; and that no other report of the evening even hints that the power was out. The least trustworthy detail of the story was the looting and car thefts, which seem suspiciously like the "bathtubs tied to the tank" stories from the Red Army's occupation of Poland and Germany near the end of World War II.

More reliable sources, even though they disagree on exact times and numbers, generally report of men in civilian clothes disembarking from the earlier flight, then waiting in the lounge until around 11:00 pm, when a transport full of soldiers landed, and the two groups methodically took over the airport, forcing air traffic controllers to order inbound commercial aircraft to turn back. They were assisted by a few Czechoslovaks

490. "An Unusual Night," 8.

491. Joseph Wechsberg, *The Voices* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969), 20-26.

who worked in the Ministry of the Interior and the airport management.⁴⁹² Declassified reports from NATO radar monitoring stations in West Germany reported a shower of “snow” [chaffe] showing up on the radar over Prague, at 11:11 pm, masking the movements of any planes to western radar for the next few hours.⁴⁹³ Under the cover of radar interference, all of the sources agree that the Soviet military put on a display of organizational prowess as they landed approximately one plane a minute down the runway for the next several hours.⁴⁹⁴

The most relevant story of the landing at the airport involving communications technology came from the editor of *Letectvi a Kosmonautika*, a Czechoslovak magazine that focused on airplanes and aerospace. He heard the planes flying overhead and rushed to his office very early on the morning of August 21. When he turned on his teleprinter machine, which was connected to the Ruzyně Airport teleprinter, it spooled out an extensive report detailing what happened the night before. Someone at the airport had stayed at the teleprinter machine all night, reporting on the invasion, all of the different types of airplanes, etc., as well as the names of the Czechoslovak officials who aided the Soviet troop movements.⁴⁹⁵ The teletype reports got the word out of Czechoslovakia about the invasion before all phone lines routed abroad were cut.

492. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 6-7.

493. Donald P. Steury, “Strategic Warning,” in Bischof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 244. The “snow” was a cloud of light metallic scraps used as a Soviet countermeasure against NATO’s monitoring, very much like the chaff used to fool the radar in World War II.

494. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 6. This rate still did not reach the speed of one plane every 45 seconds that was achieved during the 1948 Berlin Airlift. See “The Berlin Airlift, 1948-49,” US State Department Office of the Historian, accessed November 9, 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/berlin-airlift>.

495. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 8-9. The editor’s story was told in detail in the *Czech Black Book*.

The conservative anti-reform officials, termed “healthy forces” by the Soviet leadership, were instructed to take over the party leadership, but they were not at all ready or able to accomplish this. These men had been recruited by the Soviet ambassador and the KGB, and were given assignments to topple the leadership; many received their orders only a few hours before these tasks were to be performed.⁴⁹⁶ As mentioned earlier, some of these men were in the KSČ Central Committee Presidium. They intended to force a vote during the meeting on August 20 on a separate issue so that they could then move onto a vote of no confidence and take control. Had things gone as planned, this would have happened early enough to put them in charge before the Warsaw Pact armies crossed the borders.⁴⁹⁷ Once in power, the new party officials could legitimize the entry of “fraternal socialist forces” as necessary to get rid of the counterrevolutionaries. Other conspirators, mainly those in the Ministry of the Interior in charge of the Secret Police [StB], were responsible for shutting down the media and taking over government offices.⁴⁹⁸ During the crucial KSČ Central Committee Presidium meeting on the evening of August 20, Dubček noted that two of the conspirators, Drahomír Kolder and Alois Indra, asked for and received a vote on their initial request to discuss a separate motion, which they subsequently lost and the presidium went back to other matters.⁴⁹⁹ The conspirators were stymied by parliamentary procedure until it was too late. Before the conspirators could hold their vote of no confidence, the Minister of Defense notified the

496. Zdeněk Hejzlar and Vladimír Kusin, *Czechoslovakia 1968-1969: Chronology, Bibliography, Annotation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1975), 75.

497. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 175-8.

498. Zdeněk Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 176-7.

499. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 177. Dubček added ruefully “No wonder their conspiracy ended in such a fiasco.”

presidium that the Warsaw Pact troops had crossed the border at 11:40 pm. The presidium immediately drafted a statement condemning the invasion and declaring it illegal. Zdeněk Mlynář, one of the officials tasked with writing the draft noted that the vote to release it to the public was not unanimous; in voting against the statement, the conspirators displayed their complicity.⁵⁰⁰ The text was then sent to the radio station to be read on the air. Having revealed themselves, the conspirators in the presidium went into hiding.⁵⁰¹

Simultaneously, the presidium of the Slovak Communist Party [KSS] was holding a meeting in Bratislava, and at that gathering a handful of well-placed conspirators briefly succeeded in taking over the meeting. Shortly after 11:00 pm, party official Miloslav Hruškovič announced that military units of the Warsaw Pact states had just entered Czechoslovakia to assist with finding “counterrevolutionaries.” He presented the presidium with a “letter of invitation” to welcome the troops and claimed falsely that the Central Committee presidium in Prague, as well as Dubček himself, had already approved it with only two members voting against it. The KSS presidium then voted to accept the document, only to reverse their votes an hour later when they learned of the actual situation in Prague.⁵⁰²

The key conditions counted on by military planners were dark and quiet. Late at night, radio and television programming would be off the air; communication facilities

500. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 150-1.

501. Dubček, *Hope Dies Last*, 181.

502. Sestavil Filip Rožánek, “Srpen 1968: Prvních Sedm Dnů Okupace” *Česky Rozhlas*, 2013, accessed October 24, 2016, http://media.rozhlas.cz/_binary/03004667.pdf, 22.

would be in effect dark, and consequently minimally staffed. Czechoslovak Television [ČST] ended its broadcast day with a twenty-minute newscast at 10:05 pm; followed by a pre-recorded music program.⁵⁰³ Because the next scheduled program did not air until 4:00 pm the next day, the system was shut down for the night. However, the Prague Channel on Czechoslovak Radio [ČSR] was scheduled to stay on air until 2:00 am. The conspirators knew ČSR need to be silenced, and this job fell to Karel Hoffmann, head of the Central Communications Administration. He had about 35 cooperative StB agents divided between several important media centers with orders to take charge of them at 1:15 am.⁵⁰⁴ Among the objectives were the transmission tower on Petřín Hill in Prague, the international telephone exchange, and both the television and radio facilities. He sent a former director of ČSR, Miloš Marko, to the radio headquarters at 11:00 pm with an announcement for the broadcasters to read, stating that a new workers' government had been formed and the fraternal forces had been invited into Czechoslovakia to assist them in removing counterrevolutionary infiltrators. No one was willing to read this on air immediately.⁵⁰⁵ The anticipation of the collaborators' announcement is the most likely reason the transmitters were not simply shut down; had this announcement been read, the public might have accepted that the occupation was happening for legitimate reasons.

Controlling the radio broadcasts turned out to be more difficult than the collaborators anticipated. Even though ČSR offices and the main production facilities were centrally

503. "Úterý 20 srpna," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 34, 19-25 srpna, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 14.

504. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 128. Williams' information on the numbers of StB agents involved, as well as the names of collaborators and those opposed to the invasion come from trial transcripts of various hearings in the 1970s.

505. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 22.

located in a large office building two blocks from the National Museum, ČSR maintained three interconnected facilities in Prague, a second headquarters in Bratislava, and regional broadcast facilities in Ostrava, Brno, Plzeň, České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, Ústí nad Labem, and Středočeské.⁵⁰⁶ Each of these facilities could work independently, or take a feed from another facility and play programming simultaneously. The production flow of live radio meant that having multiple interconnected studios and transmission sites worked more effectively than resetting the same studio over and over again. Many of these studios could be quickly connected and disconnected from the main transmission system, which created smooth transitions between regions and coincidentally gave the radio network multiple redundant components. Additionally, many of the studios had their own direct telephone connections, rather than going through the local switchboards, to facilitate phone calls in and out during programs.⁵⁰⁷

At ČSR headquarters in Prague, several StB agents and a technician, assigned to take control of the radio broadcasts, took over the first and second floor studios at 1:15 am on August 21. However, the agents missed a small studio on the third floor, from which the announcers asked listeners to keep their radios on throughout the night. They had been tipped off by Josef Smrkovský, chairman of the National Assembly and a member of the presidium, that an official announcement was imminent.⁵⁰⁸ At 1:40 am, the radio announcers received the notification they had been waiting for: the official

506. "Úterý 20 srpna," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 34, 19-25 srpna, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 15.

507. Slava Volny, "The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," 13.

508. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 176.

pronouncement from the KSČ Central Committee Presidium condemning the invasion and declaring it a violation of state sovereignty. Mlynář dictated the text of the pronouncement over the phone to the waiting announcers.⁵⁰⁹ *The Czech Black Book* described the transmission as follows:

After 1:30 am

In the studios of Prague Radio, the text of the proclamation of the Presidium of the Central Committee was broadcast several times before 2:00 am. However, on order from the Director of the Central Communications Administration, Karel Hoffman, the medium-wave transmitter had been turned off, so that the majority of listeners heard only a part of the first sentence of the proclamation. The broadcast was probably heard only on the wire transmissions of Prague Radio.⁵¹⁰

The Radio Free Europe transcripts of these moments show the pronouncement in full. Because the monitoring was being done outside of Czechoslovakia, they would not have been connected to the wire system.⁵¹¹ It is not clear if the monitoring station actually heard the entire announcement, or if the full text was added at a later time. The latter seems more likely because the modern Český Rozhlas [ČR] website notes transmissions happening between 2:00 am and 4:00 am that are not mentioned in the RFE transcripts, meaning RFE could not hear the signal on the wire radio. Additionally, the ČR transcripts are presumably taken from audio recordings because the transcriptionists made note of airplane noises in the background.⁵¹² KSČ Presidium member Smrkovský had managed to get a paper copy of the pronouncement to the Czechoslovak News Agency [ČTK]

509. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 23.

510. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 11.

511. "Shortly Before 2 am, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 6.

512. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 22.

which still had working teleprinter machines, enabling them to release the message to multiple sources outside of Czechoslovakia before foreign phone service was cut.⁵¹³

Reporter Jiří Dienstbier described the collaborator Hoffman's reaction to finding out that the wire radio system was still running:

The merriest story on the matter was that the former Director of Radio and former Communications Minister Karel Hoffmann ran to the sitting program deputy director at the time, Rostislav Běhal and tried to convince him to join their side, and to use his authority to arrange for an airing of the "letter of invitation." When he [Hoffmann] heard from the wire radio the statement condemning the invasion, he was so angry: "How can that be, who is responsible for the wire radio?" "You, Karl," Rostislav Běhar told him. "Wire radio is yours." And Běhar reminded him that it was he [Hoffmann] who arranged originally for the wire radio connections. So the main implementer forgot that he himself administered the installation of this communication system.⁵¹⁴

Hoffmann ordered his deputy Vomastek to turn off every radio transmitter in Czechoslovakia. Vomastek refused, insisting such an unprecedented order had to come from the National Assembly.⁵¹⁵ Turning off all of the transmitters could damage equipment and leave other state departments, which also depended on radio communication from the same transmitters, without the means to communicate. Additionally, the process would have taken quite some time, as there were multiple transmitting stations, repeaters, antennas and microwave links throughout the country,

513. Volny, "The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," 13. ČTK was officially charged with editing packages of news about Czechoslovakia to be sent abroad. Five hours before the invasion started the Director General of ČTK, Miroslav Sulek, appeared at the offices and told the editors present that no reports were to be sent abroad from that moment on without his official authorization. Inst. of History, *Czech Black Book*, 5. These orders were seemingly ignored, because the *Los Angeles Times* reported receiving reports from ČTK after the fighting in front of the ČSR offices broke out after 8:00 am. "Prague: Citizens Reportedly Throw Selves in Tanks' Path," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 21, 1968, 1

514. Jaroslav Pacovský, *Na vlnách rozhlasu /1923-1993/* (Prague: Český Rozhlas, 1993), 128.

515. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 128.

some in mountainous regions with limited access.⁵¹⁶ As Kieran Williams observed: “...one uncooperative technician [could] prevent the use of a successfully occupied institution.”⁵¹⁷

Smrkovský, using his position as Chairman of the National Assembly, ordered technicians to ignore any other orders from Hoffman and keep the broadcast systems operating.⁵¹⁸ ČSR was back on the air at its 4:30 am regular daily start time, informing listeners what had happened overnight. According to Český Rozhlas’s “Srpen 1968. Prvních sedm dnů okupace,” [August 1968, the First Seven Days of Occupation,] editors Vladimír Fišer, Věra Šťovíčková, Jeroným Janíček and Karel Jezdinský stayed the night at the radio headquarters, hiding out in the third floor studio and continuing to broadcast the presidium’s pronouncement through the wired systems.⁵¹⁹ In between announcements, they played recorded music by Beethoven and Smetana.⁵²⁰ Announcer Volna Slavy arrived at the station about 4:30 am and later noted “[i]nside was all confusion. The corridors were crowded with technicians, typists, announcers, musicians, news writers, messengers, all asking how it could have happened and what should be done now. The director of radio was away, it was thought in Slovakia...”⁵²¹ In other words, the state radio apparatus had no top management, and was presently cut off from the government agencies that normally would be in charge. The editors and reporters of the ČSR took it upon themselves to keep broadcasting.

516. Vladimír Pohorecký, *Rozhledny a ztracené hrady* (Prague: Radioservis, 2000), 75-6.

517. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 128.

518. Rožánek, “Srpen 1968,” 24.

519. Ibid., 22.

520. Pelikán, *S’ils me tuent*, 221. Smetana was a highly nationalistic choice.

521. Volny, “The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting,” 1.

The transcripts of the earliest broadcasts displayed obvious confusion, as announcers were occasionally cut off in mid-sentence, or paused to ask questions off microphone. However, they displayed real journalistic integrity in gathering news even in the crisis. Their priority was to get the message from the presidium out to as many people as possible: “Please note that in the wake we will transmit a message from the presidium. However, because some of our transmitters are decommissioned, and we do not know whether we are broadcasting to the whole country, we ask you dear listeners to spread this message in every way possible.”⁵²² Shortly after this announcer went silent a second voice, which the monitoring agency supposed was Volny, asked Czechs and Slovaks to remain calm, avoid futile gestures, and to go to work as usual. Next Věra Šťovíčková gave a news report that encapsulated the emotional moment:

Dear friends! In the hours that are the hardest test for our country and for every citizen of this republic, we have to say that we, the staff of Czechoslovak Radio are gathered here in the building at Vinohradská in Prague, that we are fully behind the President of the Republic, the legal government and the presidium of Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee led by Alexander Dubček. (Query off mike) Bureau party...? ... Not in session. Some of you might catch the statement issued. We assure you that as long as we have the technical means to fulfill our obligation, we will inform you of all that happens after the occupation of our country by Warsaw Pact troops; and convey the decision of the only legal government under the leadership of Dubček and the party in whom we have a simple trust...

The whole world tonight was awakened from a peaceful sleep. Because our telexes do not function normally, we have to rely only on listening to foreign stations. President Johnson convened in Washington a military council, which dealt with the critical situation in Czechoslovakia. British Prime Minister Wilson interrupted his vacation and returned promptly to London. The situation in Czechoslovakia was still on in the night hours when they also informed Chancellor Kiesinger. According to yet unconfirmed reports from some radio stations, the UN is scheduled to meet...

522. “4:30 am, Wednesday, August 21, 1968” *Monitoring Material*, 7.

Similarly reports remained unconfirmed on the Romanian offer of help. According to reports on Viennese Radio, the border with Austria is occupied by Soviet armored forces. At Bratislava they are transmitting programs from Radio Moscow. More information we cannot give to you in this moment. The world is waking up to an extremely sad blow, but looking at us at the moment, these will be critical moments for us to look forward. Let's behave thus bravely, with dignity and calm at all workplaces, wherever we are, where we have to defend our positions. It should also make for us maybe one event for history to tell, and could possibly use the famous words: this was our best and finest hour. Dear listeners, some of our transmitters are decommissioned. We do not know whether we are broadcasting to the whole country. We ask you to spread Czechoslovak Radio broadcasts, if you hear it, in all sorts of ways.⁵²³

Knowing the identities of the announcers became crucial for the public. Later in the week, they did not use their names on the air in order to confuse the invaders. However, they depended on their audience to recognize their voices, especially after the occupiers' radio broadcasts went on air. Considering that the monitors at the RFE could readily identify many of the speakers, it is clear the radio personalities and journalists had a measure of celebrity in their country and at the listening posts.

Around 5:00 am, on August 21, the propaganda efforts of the Warsaw invasion plan started. First came leaflets dropped from helicopters, proclaiming that the military forces had been invited, and that they were there to rid the country of forces of imperialists from America and revanchists from West Germany. "Dear friends!" the pamphlet assured the Czechs and Slovaks, "Your class brothers have come to your aid today. They did not come to meddle in your internal affairs, but to help you fight the counterrevolution, defend the cause of socialism, and remove the danger threatening your

523. "4:37 am, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 8-9. The salutations of "Dear friends" and "Dear listeners" became very common on both radio and television for the next week, as opposed to the perfunctory *soudruz* [comrade].

sovereignty, the independence, and the security of your homeland.”⁵²⁴ The RFE transcripts show that from 5:00 am on, Prague 1 was broadcasting in Russian. At 5:25 am a new station, Radio Vltava, went on the air, with announcers reading statements from the Soviet newspapers *Tass* and *Pravda* in the Czech and Slovak languages, and repeating the assurances that the Czechoslovak government had invited the troops and they were there to protect the “fraternal socialist countries.”⁵²⁵ However, within moments, someone with ČSR noticed the strange signal, and was able to route an announcement through the Brno studios:

BRNO / 0525 /

/Music/

Dear listeners, this is a broadcast from Prague on medium wave 197 meters. We will try to inform you with the only means we have left. We must repeat because Prague and Czechoslovakia are occupied by Warsaw Pact troops.

We want to warn you that the transmitter Vltava, which speaks in the Czech and Slovak language is not a transmitter of Czechoslovak Radio, but of the occupying troops.

We invite you, dear listeners, in the spirit of the presidium of the KSČ Central Committee, of the challenge which we have repeatedly aired to remain calm. That is the only possible response. Wait for a further statement from our constitutional functionaries. The presidium is still in session.

Once we learn something else, we will log in again.

/music/.⁵²⁶

Messages that followed noted that Radio Vltava was transmitting on a medium-wave signal of 210 meters [1430 kHz]. This frequency was not in use in Czechoslovakia before

524. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 20-23.

525. Ibid., 23-25. Vltava is the river which flows through Prague. Currently, the classical and jazz music station on Czech Radio is named Vltava, but that name was not used before 1974 and had no connection to the collaborators' station. "O stanici," *Český rozhlas*, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://www.rozhlas.cz/vltava/ostanici/>

526. "BRNO/0525/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 11. The transcripts follow a general format: /0525/ is the time stamp, using the 24 hour system. Noises and music are set off between back slashes: /music/. Medium-wave means an AM radio signal.

the invasion according to the radio program guide.⁵²⁷ The odd frequency was enough to raise suspicions about Radio Vltava and from where it originated; however, the ČSR announcers found a more obvious problem, the announcers' pronunciation:

NEWS Czechoslovak Radio / 0530-0535 /

This is Prague, on medium wave 197 meters [1520 kHz]. We do not know who, at this moment, is listening to all of us, but we will try to inform you with all of the resources that we still have left. . .

Friends know that we are not only being heard in the Czech lands. They say we are being heard in Slovakia. Thus, Czechs and Slovaks, the medium-wave signal at 210 meters that is called Vltava, which transmits in poor Czech and poor Slovak language, is an illegal transmission from the occupation troops. We alert listeners, this transmission has nothing in common with Czechoslovak Radio.⁵²⁸

Whoever had set up Radio Vltava failed to get native Czech and Slovak speakers. The poor language skills of the Vltava announcers became a source of humor for the listening public.

The question of legality was an issue that would loom large in the story of the occupation. As described above, there were multiple attempts to make the invasion look like a legitimate reaction to counterrevolutionary forces. Through legal procedures, the collaborators tried to force a no-confidence vote, and they were effectively thwarted by legal and parliamentary moves. Before the collaborators could shut the facilities down, the presidium got an official announcement to the radio station and news agency, condemning "...this act as not only contrary to the principles of relations between socialist states, but a denial of the basic norms of international law."⁵²⁹ ČSR journalists

527. "Úterý 20 srpna," *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 34, 19-25 srpna, 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 23.

528. "NEWS Czechoslovak Radio /0530-0535/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 12.

529. "Shortly Before /0200/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 6.

used the phrase “legal” from the very first moments to describe the reform government. With the new threat of Radio Vltava, they started calling themselves the legal broadcaster in contrast to the illegal Radio Vltava.⁵³⁰ The occupiers’ transmissions were illegal in two ways: first, that they were clearly a form of psychological operation sending propaganda disguised as the official state radio; and second that the station was transmitting a signal frequency that was not used in Czechoslovakia in violation of international agreements. The determined efforts of the presidium, the workers at ČSR, ČTK, and the airport teleprinter at getting the message to the foreign media first managed to discredit the claim that the invasion was invited or necessary. Their fast actions also insured that the Czechs and Slovaks and the citizens of the world were aware of what was happening.

The communications at ČSR were not simply one-way. The announcers reported telegraphs, phone calls and hand-delivered messages streaming into the various radio studios. Factories, regional party committees, and workers’ organizations sent their support for the state, Dubček’s party leadership and Svoboda’s government.⁵³¹ All of this support appears to have been spontaneous, and the radio announcers struggled to read the messages in between reporting the news and encouraging their fellow citizens to be calm. At 5:40 am, a strategy for forming a resistance was recommended by one of the announcers:

Dear friends! Listen for official information from the Dubček leadership! Do not listen or do not give, do not pay any attention to the transmitter called Vltava and do not take instructions from this transmitter! Do not induce any conflicts; explain to our friends from the occupying troops - our situation - explain to them that it was quiet here until this moment, do not provoke any conflict. Go to work, but to

530. “Brno /0540/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 12.

531. “/0545/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 17-25.

start a passive resistance, do not listen to anyone other than our government, [Prime Minister Oldřich] Černík's government and Dubček's leadership of the Communist Party.⁵³²

ČSR became, in a few short minutes, the center around which the government and the people coalesced. By this time all of the transmitters were working and the regional facilities were staffed. Practical information began to flow between the regional facilities: two Soviet generals attempted to take over Karlovy Vary; propaganda pamphlets were dropped from airplanes in Malašice; tanks were spotted ten kilometers west of Plzeň; the bakers of Holešovice promised sufficient supplies, so lining up at the stores was not necessary.⁵³³ From the transcripts, it is clear that the journalists were doing their jobs as information gatherers, and acting in their state-sponsored mission to encourage loyalty to the current government. Simultaneously, the announcers were ferreting out the psychological operations of the invasion forces, differentiating the real Czechoslovak radio broadcasts from the counterfeit ones, and instructing the public on how to identify the imposters. However, the announcers' efforts to encourage the opposition to violence, to avoid provocation, and most notably to promote passive resistance, represented the radio personnel's assumption of responsibilities above and beyond the roles formerly mentioned. As the only voice that could reach the entire country, the radio became an active organizer of the resistance.

Initially the passive resistance started with verbal conversations with the occupiers, "We ask you again, stay calm! Do not try to provoke or accept provoked

532. Ibid., 16.

533. Ibid., 18-22.

conflicts...” journalist Jiří Dientsbier cautioned on air, “[e]xplain to those 19 and 20-year-old boys [the soldiers] who will listen to us that in this country, in our Czechoslovak Republic, it was quiet up to this point. Explain it to them because they were ordered to come here! Do not do anything to provoke them!”⁵³⁴ For the first few hours, average Czechs and Slovaks, especially young people who took courses in the Russian language, spoke with the occupying soldiers and tried to convince them that there were no counterrevolutionaries in Czechoslovakia. Dientsbier reported that once the covert radio stations were on air, they used the facilities to broadcast in the languages of the five Warsaw Pact occupation armies the message that Czechoslovakia was not full of imperialist and revanchist elements.⁵³⁵

ČSR was the only entity capable of reaching out in real time to the entire state as an extension of the government. However, the transcripts show that on-air announcers had no idea exactly what was happening inside the government buildings.⁵³⁶ Radio announcers sent out the word for both the Central Committee of the KSČ and the National Assembly to gather, not realizing that Soviet tanks surrounded both buildings and that for most of the morning, Dubček, Mlynář, and the rest of the presidium were being held at gunpoint in their offices.⁵³⁷ Before the paratroopers arrived to arrest the leadership, Dubček successfully sent two messages, possibly by courier or by teleprinter, to the radio studios. One was a direct message to all of the citizens, asking for them to

534. “Praha 1 /0641/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 26. The identity of the announcer was from Rožánek, “Srpen 1968,” 25.

535. Jiří Všečeka, *Pražský chodec proti tankům*, (Prague: Naše Vojsko, 2012), 31.

536. “Praha 1 /0641/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 26.

537. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 177-8.

remain calm and to “bear with dignity the situation which has arisen.”⁵³⁸ The second message asked for a radical but non-violent response to the occupation, which was to immediately convene the Fourteenth Congress, originally scheduled for September 9, to construct a new constitution and create a new government. The 1,500 delegates had been selected weeks before, however they were currently scattered throughout the country. The radio announcement urged, “all delegates stand to demand the immediate convening of the Congress to support L. Svoboda, A. Dubček, Oldřich Černík, Josef Smrkovský and other leaders of legal power in Czechoslovakia. You know best where your place is now.”⁵³⁹ Both of these messages were read at 7:15 am. The very same broadcast segment ended with the observation: “According to the report which we just got in, Vinohrady Street in front of the radio building, just below the radio studios, there are six tanks and crews who are in discussions with our citizens. We do not know how long we will therefore carry on broadcasting.”⁵⁴⁰

At some radio facilities, such as those in the northern Moravian city of Ostrava, Warsaw Pact troops had already taken complete control of the studios.⁵⁴¹ The troops confiscated the keys to the buildings and locked the doors. However, several workers had extra keys, and they returned to the station by the back door. Taking the precaution of covering all of the blinking lights on the electronics with black tape, the Ostrava crew

538. “/0715/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 32.

539. *Ibid.*

540. *Ibid.*

541. “/0641/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 28.

continued broadcasting even though to a cursory glance through the windows the station looked shut down.⁵⁴²

At the headquarters of the radio and television systems in Prague, the task of control was assigned to the collaborators rather than occupying forces. As detailed above, the collaborators failed to control the radio signals, and so the invasion forces decided on a military response to the ongoing radio broadcasts. Armored vehicles had been passing in front of the ČSR headquarters very early in the morning, but did not stop.⁵⁴³ The broadcasts spurred the public to action — they surrounded the headquarters by the hundreds, creating a barrier with overturned trams and trucks.⁵⁴⁴ These actions were strikingly similar to the events of May 5, 1945, when local resistance fighters confronted German soldiers at the same location. On that occasion, the announcer on air encouraged the Czechs to rise up against the German occupiers, and this triggered four days of bloody house-to-house fighting that killed over 3,700 citizens and more than a thousand German soldiers.⁵⁴⁵ Mindful of this bloodshed, the announcers repeatedly asked for calm, and for people to move away from the building.⁵⁴⁶ Those people trying to protect the radio station refused to leave, and so began the largest, most violent battle in the entire occupation. Ten civilians were killed, either shot or crushed by tanks. The scene was narrated live by reporters inside the studios and on top of the building.⁵⁴⁷ The first rank of tanks mistook the National Museum three blocks away for the radio building, and

542. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 25.

543. /0641/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 28.

544. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 31.

545. Demetz, *Prague in Danger*, 233-5.

546. /0545/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 18-9.

547. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 49-53.

peppered its façade with bullets.⁵⁴⁸ Then they slowly made their way up Vinohrady Avenue, shooting at the windows and walls of the buildings lining the street. At 7:47 am, the announcer described the scene this way:

The upper part of Vinohrady Avenue is already full with the tanks of the occupying troops. So far, they are approaching the radio [building] slowly. [From] the roofs, radio reporters have seen at least 10 armored vehicles. People are once again trying to barricade using cars and heavy trucks. While the occupying forces have no access to radio, but we do not know how much longer to keep up this situation. At this time, there is sharp shooting on Vinohrady Avenue. People fled to our building before the shooting of machine guns, submachine guns and they shouted “Dubcek, Dubcek, Dubcek,” and we joined them. . .

Friends in these moments there is already shooting in the courtyard of the Czechoslovak Radio. I think it will soon be the last words you hear from us. Friends believe everyone... Let's hope that common sense is the true choice. It is not possible to endure this situation. Let us hope that the healthy forces succeed in our common sense of those who...

We continue to socialism and democracy...

Heard gunfire...

Dear friends through the fire and through the emotion that we all experience, stay calm. A single life would be unnecessary given the situation. We want socialism, but humane socialism.

And we believe that our Czechoslovak socialism discharges that will outlast us. We believe now we have no other choice than to believe, my friends, to be calm and not be provoked. . .

Let us hope that the truth will prevail.

/ Anthem ⁵⁴⁹

It would be natural to think that the statements and the anthem signaled the end of the broadcast, very much like the video of nationalistically-symbolic images along with the Star-Spangled Banner that played at the end of a broadcast day on American television.

548. Ibid., 25.

549. “/0746/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968,” *Monitoring Material*, 35. The music was the combined anthems of the Czech Lands “Kde domov můj?” and the Slovak Anthem “Nad Tatrou sa blýska.” The audio of this and the next announcement is located here: “Střelba, tanky a hymna ve vysílání Československého rozhlasu - ráno 21. 8. 1968,” Soundcloud audio, 7:39, from the Czech Radio website “Srpen 1968 - přímý přenos z minulosti,” released by: Archiv Českého rozhlasu, 2008, <https://soundcloud.com/srpen1968/tracks>.

The rendition of both the Czech and Slovak anthems solemnified and solidified this moment as an appeal to the nationalistic sentiments of the audience. One other detail to note about the announcer's words was the use of the phrase "*pravda zvítězí*" "truth will prevail" before the anthem. These, by tradition, were the final words uttered by the fifteenth century reform priest Jan Hus as he was being burned at the stake for heresy on July 6, 1415.⁵⁵⁰ The words would have been known to most Czechoslovak schoolchildren, even under the socialist system, because the radical followers of Hus, the Hussites, had been appropriated by the socialists as early communists.⁵⁵¹ The unmistakable symbolism of linking Hus' last words as he was consumed by flames with the final broadcast from a radio facility choking with smoke from the burning vehicles below, must have been especially poignant to the listener at home. However, the announcer used the phrase in the perfective tense—truth will prevail—not as a statement of defeat, but a hope for what will come.

Moments later, the harp cords from Smetana's *Ma Vlast [My Homeland]*, which ČSR used as their call signal, sounded. Then came ten seconds of silence. The cords sounded again, followed by the voice of a palpably nervous reporter, speaking slowly as the sound of gunfire drowned out many his words:

Dear friends! If you still hear me, I beg you once more on behalf of the radio employees. Do nothing / *Remote Shooting* / that would lead to / *shooting* / unnecessary bloodshed / *machine-gun fire* / Wait until you hear from our legal government, constitutional officials. / *Shooting increasingly frequent* / not help us at all in the current situation that we build barricades. Other / *Shooting intensifies* / do things that would lead to a crash that / *shooting* / currently has no sense / *machine-gun fire quite close* / would lead only to victims who nobody wants /

550. Pánek and Tůma, *History of the Czech Lands*, 153.

551. Josef Macek. *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí* (Prague: Československé akademie věd).

shooting nearly drowns out the announcer / to fail / machine-gun fire / unnecessarily. / Machine-gun fire /

Please... / shooting a machine gun / So again, my friends / shooting a machine gun drowns out the announcer / Calm down, move along! / Firing a machine gun / It does not at this moment in our country before any radio / shooting with rifles and machine guns / sense! Thank you / shooting machine guns and rifles escalates /

Even here, we have reports of senior staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia. It asks about the frequent repetition of messages on illegally crossing our state border / *gunfire drowned out almost every word* / against the will of the state ... s-taro ... /*displaced by gasp* / state and the party. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Czernin Palace is surrounded. We will not broadcast for much longer, because in front of us is the Soviet infantry, which will certainly soon occupy the Czechoslovak Radio building.

I ask you, on behalf of myself and all state workers of Czechoslovak Radio, to exercise maximum calm. Any resistance against the odds is absolutely unnecessary. This is not defeatism! Our only chance is that we prevent bloodshed because bloodshed has no sense at the present...⁵⁵²

Announcer Slava Volny wrote that during these moments he was preparing to be the next reporter to go on air, even though the bullets were whizzing through the building and smoke was pouring in through broken windows. His preparations were interrupted by Soviet soldiers bursting into the studio and pointing machine guns at him. He described being led to another office and put under guard, as the technicians quietly discussed plans to improvise studios in other parts of the building.⁵⁵³ With the building under guard by Soviet troops, most of the radio workers decided to break into smaller groups and head for the remote radio facilities throughout Prague.⁵⁵⁴ A small contingent of technicians and editors stayed hidden in the ČSR headquarters where they took advantage of the multiple direct audio connections, phone systems, and transmitters that the troops had yet to

552. "/0751/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 36.

553. Volny, "The Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," 13.

554. Ibid.

discover.⁵⁵⁵ Through a direct connection from the Prague Castle to the radio and television stations, they managed to broadcast a live plea for calm and dignity from President Ludvik Svoboda at 8:15 am.⁵⁵⁶ The radio technicians finally abandoned the radio headquarters at 2:00 am the next morning, after multiple remote facilities were working in a coordinated fashion.

A proliferation of radio facilities, redundant technology, and the expertise to have them running in a coordinated fashion allowed Czechoslovak Radio to survive the initial shock of the collaborators' attempts, as well as the armed occupation. The Slovak-based stations in Bratislava, Košice, Banksa Byjstra, repeated some of the Czech-based reports, but translated them into Slovak and augmented them with reporting from their own journalists. ČSR, as the liveliest and most responsive form of electronic media in Czechoslovakia even before 1968, had been carefully spread throughout the country to serve the public better. It could also respond almost immediately to disseminate news and information. In the upcoming days, it would become the main signal that could penetrate every portion of the country — even those places surrounded by troops.

Television, because of the immense cost of the equipment, did not have the same reach as radio in terms of units in the homes and remote production facilities. What it lacked in flexibility and speed, it would offset during the occupation by providing a source of spectacle and patriotic fervor by broadcasting a visual record of the resistance and building cohesion within the country.

555. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 26.

556. "Czechoslovak Radio /0808/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 44.

As the director of state television and a high-ranking government official, Jiří Pelikán's attention was often divided between his government and his broadcasting duties. According to his memoirs, a friend phoned him around 11:00 pm on the night of August 20, to tell him about the invasion. He immediately made several phone calls to alert the television staff and then went to the Presidium meeting, getting there at midnight to witness the "extraordinary animation: people from every corner of Prague arrived, journalists, comrades, activists of the Prague Committee, the delegations of factories, all already informed, despite the reality that the radio had not announced anything yet. A kind of 'Arabic phone' connected throughout the city."⁵⁵⁷ Given the lack of telephones in the country, those who would be called would naturally be in the upper echelons of the party and government or in important jobs. While there, Pelikán lobbied to convene the Fourteenth Congress immediately, because he was deeply involved in the planning and considered it the best way to emphasize the legitimacy of the reform government. Pelikán reported that the delegates from the working-class neighborhood of Vysočany offered their large factories as the best place to convene the Congress, because the crowds of workers reporting for work every morning would make an ideal cover for the 1,500 delegates.⁵⁵⁸

That decided, Pelikán went to work on the phones, rounding up the technicians, camera operators, sound engineers, and reporters necessary to get the television studios

557. Pelikan, *S'ils me tuent*, 219.

558. Ibid., 220.

running at 7:00 am.⁵⁵⁹ Not wanting to be caught at the Presidium building when the Soviet troops surrounded it, he hurried out the side door.⁵⁶⁰ When he got to the Czechoslovak Television offices on Senovážné Square, on the east side of Vaclavské (Wenceslaus) Square, he noted that the Soviet troops had already surrounded the building and would not let him in. With the help of a Czechoslovak Army general, Pelikán entered the temporary meeting offices of the National Assembly just a block away. From there he was able to remain in telephone contact with ČST studios in Prague.⁵⁶¹ The ČST offices, where Pelikán worked, were separate from the ČST studio complex, which was on Vladislavova Street on the edge of New Town. The occupiers had gone to the administrative offices of ČST in order to end broadcasting, rather than the actual technical facilities. By the time troops located the actual studios, the journalists and technicians had gained a valuable hour to broadcast the statements from the president, the party leaders, and the National Assembly condemning the invasion.⁵⁶²

At 8:00 am, another television outlet went on air: the Brno studios of ČST. Besides the studios in Prague, ČST had studio facilities in Brno, Ostrava, Bratislava, and Košice.⁵⁶³ From the transcripts, it appears the crew in Brno was acting on their own,

559. Václav Kolář and Ladislav Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968* (Prague: Česka Televize, 2001), 4. These memoirs of the television technicians support Pelikán's narrative.

560. Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 223.

561. Ibid.

562. Ibid., 224. While on the phone to one of his subordinates, Pelikán was connected to the Soviet colonel in control of the office building who threatened to blow it up if Pelikán failed to stop the broadcasts. Pelikán reported he was not impressed.

563. "Prehistorie," *Historie, Československo Televize*, accessed January 29, 2017, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/prehistorie/>.

because they discussed the fact that they had yet to have any phone contact with ČST headquarters in Prague.⁵⁶⁴ They reported how they learned of the occupation:

Normally we listen to Czechoslovak Radio when we work in our workshops. People came to work as normal. They kept a transistor receiver turned on and listened to the reports of the Czechoslovak Radio. They listened to Comrade Šťovíčková, Comrade Volny . . . they were listening to people whose voices they knew and trusted. Trust our side of our government, which in those moments they still sit, and whose information we are impatiently waiting...
The main objective in these difficult hours is a single one. Keep the peace, total peace.⁵⁶⁵

An announcer explained that because the Brno studios had no telephone or teleprinter contact with Prague, she had to send her message over the air. She then asked for the popular Prague announcer Kamila Moučková and her editor to please make contact with Brno. The announcer read a statement from the leadership of the National Assembly, one they possibly got from the ČSR broadcast earlier. She promised to start another broadcast at 9:00 am, this one with film footage of the situation around Brno.⁵⁶⁶

Confusion reigned on the airwaves for the next few minutes as the studios in Brno, Prague, and Ostrava tried to broadcast all at once. The announcers and crews most likely could not see the broadcast images from the other studios, but they did finally become aware that each was on the air and trying to get the news out. Moučková anchored the broadcasts from Prague, reading telegrams, official statements, and narrating film footage that had been shot by cameramen that morning. She was forced from her desk at gunpoint when Soviet soldiers eventually arrived to clear out the

564. "/0800/TV, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 40.

565. Ibid. Even though the first scheduled broadcast would not be until 4:00 pm, there could have been production workers in the workshops during the day performing maintenance or building sets..

566. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 26-7.

television building. She managed to escape out a back door and reunite with her crew at another studio in Prague.⁵⁶⁷

Presenting film of the occupation during the television broadcasts was a real technical achievement. In this time before video camcorders, the operators carried spring-driven 16mm film cameras which shot 30-meter rolls of film, usually the ORWO-U54 film stock, produced in East Germany.⁵⁶⁸ They would shoot “news-style,” a technique where the operator films scenes in short segments with an eye towards a narrative flow. The time constraints of the small load of film — 3 minutes of usable film per roll — and the time demands of getting the film on air forced the operator to edit the story in camera, with minimal space between shots. There would be no “do-overs” and no way to check the film for correct exposure or quality of the shots. Light meters were primitive at this time and in less stressful situations a photographer would often “bracket a shot,” meaning to shoot the clip several times at different iris settings, however this was not possible with in-camera editing. News camera operators had to trust in their experience and skill until the film came out of the processing equipment. Having footage ready for the 9:00 am broadcast meant they had one or more camera operators moving about the region with 16mm film cameras early enough to bring the footage back to the studios and process it for viewing. Sunrise in Brno was at 4:53 am that morning.⁵⁶⁹ Once the exposed film reached the studio, the developing would take 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the process

567. Ibid.

568. “ORWO Universal Negative 54 Technical Sheet TI-UN54-XII/2010,” FILMOTEC GmbH, accessed on July 31, 2017, <http://www.filmotec.de/?lang=en>.

569. “Time and date.com,” accessed June 20, 2017, <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/czech-republic/brno?month=8&year=1968>.

and equipment used.⁵⁷⁰ Reversal processing saved an entire developing step, making the film ready for projection that much sooner. Because the announcers were narrating the footage live, it is likely that the crews simplified the process by not recording sound. Footage from Brno and Prague was aired the morning of August 21, and more film would be shot throughout the week. ČST's offices and facilities in Prague for film editing and screening were located on Jindřišská Street, and that building was never touched by occupation troops in yet another demonstration of the ignorance of the collaborators. Consequently, this allowed the camera operators to keep working, but the Jindřišská Street building also became the main person-to-person meeting facility for the ČST engineers and technicians planning the clandestine studios. They avoided using telephones for planning in case they were tapped.⁵⁷¹

In addition to the film's impact on Czech and Slovak viewers, Austrian Television became the connection between ČST and the rest of the world, which was eager for footage of the invasion. Jiří Pelikán had worked with Austrian Television a few years earlier on a series of co-productions, and he hurriedly used his connections to secure the help of Austrian Television to re-broadcast the ČST signals both back into southern Bohemia and out to the rest of the world.⁵⁷² ČST technicians set up a 16mm film projector to video camera equipment at the military facilities at Český Budejovice near the Austrian border. The footage was then sent via an existing microwave link into

570. "ORWO Universal Negative 54 Technical Sheet," FILMOTECH GmbH.

571. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 13.

572. "Prague Suspends 'Forum' TV Show: Audience Criticisms of State were Program's Fare," *New York Times*, August 11, 1963, 11.

Austria. Messengers on motorcycles brought film footage to this location from all over Czechoslovakia.⁵⁷³ Soviet leaders were totally unprepared for this contingency. In the top-secret written reports of the invasion submitted by the KGB in October of 1968, the authors pushed the idea that:

[b]oth overt and covert outlets of the mass media, which had been prepared beforehand, were brought into operation. Long before the allied troops entered, the counterrevolutionary forces had created a broad network of underground radio stations and transmitters, including state and army transmitters, as stipulated in a mobilization plan, plus amateur radio operators. Foreign radio stations—from Austria, the FRG [West Germany], England, and the USA, and other countries—came to the assistance of the counterrevolutionaries. Emergency television broadcasting channels were made available, and underground printing presses were geared up...After the troops of the socialist countries entered the territory of the ČSSR on 21 August, a large quantity of active radio transmitters were in place on Czechoslovak territory. Provocative, anti-Soviet broadcasts, which clearly had been prepared in advance and been designated for special groups organizing counterrevolutionary work, were disseminated by these transmitters...by the second half of 21 August the number of radio transmitters had begun to increase rapidly, and by 22 August transmitters were operating almost everywhere on the territory of the ČSSR...By 28 August the location of some 35 powerful, illegal radio stations had been established...The majority of the underground radio stations were stationary and were operating out of administrative buildings or on the grounds of a number of establishments, institutions, and organizations. Some of the radio stations were mobile...Three illegal Czechoslovak radio transmitters...appealed to the authorities of Austria and the FRG to lend them technical assistance, that is, the opportunity to carry out broadcasts with the help of Austrian and West German radio stations and from the territory of these countries.⁵⁷⁴

The narrative of Czechs and Slovaks receiving material assistance from outside the state was the official Soviet contention from the outset of the occupation. The first news the

573. Kolář a Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 18.

574. "Document No. 130: KGB Report on the 'Counterrevolutionary Underground in Czechoslovakia, October 13, 1968 (Excerpts)," in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 518.

citizens of the Soviet Union read about the invasion came from an editorial in *Pravda* dated August 22, which insisted:

Far from being spontaneous, the counter-revolutionary, anti-socialist phenomena that occurred in Czechoslovakia was highly organized. The moments of action, the directions and targets of the attacks by anti-socialist forces, and the sequence and coordination of the actions were all carefully planned, linking together the right-wing revisionists in the CPCz [Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], the anti-socialist and overtly counterrevolutionary forces inside the country, and their external supporters.⁵⁷⁵

Establishing the idea that the resistance was planned and carried out through the assistance of entities outside of Czechoslovakia benefited the invaders by giving them justification for their violent actions. It also covered up the failure of the collaborators and the secret services to shut down the broadcasts. The authors of the KGB report and the *Pravda* editorial offered no supporting evidence for their assertions. While ČST and ČSR workers got signals out of Czechoslovakia, there is little evidence in the transcripts and the memoirs that signals were intentionally being sent into Czechoslovakia in order to coordinate the resistance. The transcripts do show that the announcers mentioned a handful of international reactions of the invasion, however these items seemed to arrive as telegrams or by monitoring foreign broadcasts.⁵⁷⁶ Václav Kolář and Ladislav Kejha affirm that they and other ČST technicians were aware of the accusations made in the Soviet press about help from outside. To counter the accusations they pointed to news stories filed during the week of the resistance by international reporters who described how the ČST workers brought them into the covert studios through the back doors

575. "Document No. 114: Pravda Editorial Justifying the Invasion, August 22, 1968 (Excerpts)," in Navrátil *Prague Spring* '68, 458.

576. "/0615/ Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 23.

because the Soviet troops had posted guards at the front doors.⁵⁷⁷ One of those foreign journalists in Prague, Alan Levy, wrote in the *New York Times* that the “free and legal” covert television broadcasts were more interesting than the one station set up by the invaders:

With “legal” TV clobbering it around the clock, Channel 1 [the occupiers’ channel] proclaimed that its very humiliation was proof positive of Western technical help and equipment. But the Czechs insisted that they were performing this miracle by skillful and daring juggling of existing parts only. To them it was proof positive of two truths: the resourcefulness of Czech workmanship and the incredible waste of state-run technology.⁵⁷⁸

The United States’ Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] kept close watch on the invasion and created a special report in September of 1968 focusing just on the Czechoslovak broadcasting situation. Because of the quick response of the radio technicians in getting networks up and running, the CIA concluded that there had to be some sort of pre-arranged emergency network that was put into play. However, the ability of the ČST technicians to get moving images of the tanks on the streets of Prague and elsewhere beamed to Austrian television the morning of the invasion perplexed even the CIA analysts: “[a]t least some TV transmissions were continued throughout the 21-29 August period, but broadcasting arrangements are not clear.”⁵⁷⁹ The technicians of ČST, at great personal risk, took the initiative to make something truly remarkable happen—spontaneously. Yet in hindsight, they admitted:

577. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 35.

578. Alan Levy, “The Short, Happy Life of Prague’s Free Press,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1968, SM34.

579. “Intelligence Memorandum: Broadcasting in the Czechoslovak Crisis,” ER IM 68-118, September 1968, CIA Directorate of Intelligence, accessed May 28, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85t00875r001600010068-6, 3>.

[t]he biggest satisfaction from the results of all the work of the participants remains unmistakably the fact that ČST did not interrupt free broadcasting through the temporary broadcasting workplaces in the critical August days of 1968.⁵⁸⁰

People who work in radio and television fear silence, or what is known as dead air. It means something has gone wrong. Having an uninterrupted broadcast under extreme conditions is a point of pride for dedicated technicians.

Continuous broadcasting required technicians who could readily connect production equipment to transmitters in different ways — through microwave feeds, through alternative transmission antennae, or even by patching through the telephone lines. The invaders originally assumed collaborators would take over broadcast systems before the military vehicles crossed the frontiers, and would force the regular announcers to read prepared statements to make the invasion legitimate. As previously noted, the announcers refused to comply.⁵⁸¹ Efforts to shut down transmitters were in vain as well because a handful of technicians refused to comply, or did so in a way they could readily reconnect the equipment.⁵⁸² Historian Kieran Williams identified three gross errors the collaborators made that created the failure of the technical part of the collaboration: first, they were insufficiently acquainted with the systems they needed to sabotage; second, they failed to bring expert technicians into the collaboration; and third, they tried to convince people of the falsehood that the presidium had already approved of their actions and once the truth was known every effort was lost.⁵⁸³ I would add a fourth error to this

580. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 36.

581. Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 221.

582. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 128-9.

583. *Ibid.*, 127-9.

list: that the invaders and collaborators assumed the broadcast systems were monolithic entities that had rigid vertical hierarchies and highly centralized facilities.

As occupation troops filled the multi-story, centrally located office buildings of Czechoslovak Radio and Czechoslovak Television, technicians were still able to work from out-of-the-way offices inside the buildings, and other crews were able to use remote facilities effectively. The administrators of the broadcast entities were also somewhat superfluous, as demonstrated by the physical absence of the general directors and the willingness of the hundreds of regular radio and television workers, who showed up early on the morning of August 21 to offer their assistance.⁵⁸⁴ Additionally, the occupiers did a very poor job of securing the facilities they had taken over. Slava Volny wrote about leaving the main radio headquarters in Prague to start broadcasting from a ČSR recording studio normally used for dramas and concerts in Prague's Karlín neighborhood. When they were warned by a city police officer that soldiers were coming, Volny and his crew grabbed their tapes and hurried to a near-by army barracks to continue broadcasting on the military's radio equipment. While at the barracks, Volny could listen to the occupiers' radio station Vltava, and was very amused to hear them accuse West Germany of coordinating and facilitating the ongoing covert radio broadcasts from beyond the Czechoslovak border. In a few hours, the soldiers were gone and Volny and the technicians moved back to Karlín.⁵⁸⁵

584. Pacovský, *Na vlnách rozhlasu /1923-1993/*, 127; Volny, "Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," 12. Journalists Volny and Dienstbier were both at Czechoslovak Radio that morning and reported the same estimate of the numbers of workers on the scene.

585. Volny, "Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting," 14.

Stopping the technicians from broadcasting would have required stationing guards in every studio and at every transmitter and every microwave installation. Clearly, the Warsaw Pact troops were not prepared to do this, they instead chose to depend on collaborators using their elite positions to manage the entire system. At best, the soldiers could move from one facility to another, trying to catch reporters and technicians who were always just one step ahead of them, or as Volny gloated "...when the Russians finally sought out our studio, they found nothing but an empty room and equipment still warm from use."⁵⁸⁶

Television was a more monolithic system than radio, given that there was only one channel, and that television was technically more complex and the equipment more costly. As former director of Czechoslovak Television Jiří Pelikán pointed out: "[a]t that time, almost all programs, even television dramas, went live because we lacked the currency needed to purchase an Ampex recording system (Incidentally, it was on the 'war materials list' and Western countries could not sell it in the socialist countries.)"⁵⁸⁷ Multiple studios and functioning connections between them were necessities for production flow. The exceptions to this situation were the mobile broadcast systems devised to broadcast live sports and music concerts from remote locations. These self-contained systems fit into buses or vans to be driven to a location shoot. They had

586. Ibid., 13.

587. Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 156. The system he most likely referred to was a 2" helical-scan reel-to-reel video recording machine manufactured by the Ampex Corporation in Redwood City, California. These were broadcast-quality recorders in use in the United States. They could record long-format productions and were compatible with electronic editing systems. Steve Schoenherr, "The History of Magnetic Recording," *Recording Technology History*, Audio Engineering Society, November 5, 2002, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.aes.org/aeshc/docs/recording.technology.history/magnetic4.html>.

multiple cameras, video and audio switching systems, and transmitted live feeds via microwave to a variety of repeaters or transponders.⁵⁸⁸ It was using some parts of these systems that ČST technicians managed to improvise several new studios once the existing television broadcast centers had been overtaken by the occupation forces. However, some of the main facilities had to be kept operational for the covert studios to maintain a signal to the transmitters. A handful of technicians managed to convince the Soviet soldiers that they needed to stay in the building to ensure electricity, gas, and other utilities would be properly distributed in the neighborhood.⁵⁸⁹ They worked throughout the day rerouting the transmission systems and even managed to process some rolls of 16mm film. The crucial telephone connections were relocated outside the main building into the guardhouse so that a single person could watch it without having to reenter the building.

590

On the evening of August 21, television technicians established a covert studio in the building of TESLA Hloubětín factory using equipment and expertise from the Research Institute for Communication Technology. In this facility, they brought in the Mark V camera configured to playback and broadcast the 16mm films of the invasion. This facility had to be abandoned after a day.⁵⁹¹ A second studio was set up in a ČST building in the Zahradním Město (Garden City) section of Prague 10. This twelve-story building had offices that ČST had only recently started to use, so few people knew they

588. Martin Glas, "Práce ve Studiu A," *Historie, Česka televize*, March 31, 2003, accessed June 20, 2017, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/vzpominky-pametniku/martin-glas/pocatky-televize-u-nas/prace-ve-studiu-a/>.

589. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 7.

590. *Ibid.*, 8.

591. *Ibid.*, 11.

were there. Setting up the studio required rewiring the PBX phone system for the building. Because it was in a suburban location, the neighbors offered their services acting as lookouts, brought the crews kolaches [cookies] and other treats to eat, and turned the lights in the building on and off on random floors so that it would appear to be a regular apartment building.⁵⁹²

A third studio was created in the penthouse of a partially finished twelve-story apartment building in the Petřín district of Prague. Located on one of the highest hills in Prague, a microwave system on the roof could easily hit any of several repeaters located outside of the city, including some that are not within the line of sight from the base of the building.⁵⁹³ As perfect as this building was for transmissions, it had three major drawbacks: first, it was on Na Petřínach Street a very busy thoroughfare, meaning the powerful studio lights needed for proper video exposure in an unfinished building could attract attention. Second, the building was on the flight path into Ruzyně Airport, so any installation on the roof would be quickly spotted. The third was that the vans needed to bring the large equipment to the facilities were on the wrong side of the Vltava and the occupation troops had blocked all of the bridges. The technicians solved the first problem with large rolls of craft paper, which they used to seal the windows.⁵⁹⁴ This meant that the studio was apt to be very hot in August. The second problem was solved because of

592. Ibid., 24-6.

593. Ibid., 28. I have yet to read an account of this studio which includes the actual address of the building. I have located two buildings higher than eleven stories on Na Petřínach: 392/72 and 31. 3D computer models of the terrain show that at the height of 120 feet above the street level, a mountain which has a repeater station at its summit is within the line of sight of the buildings, making it capable of receiving signals.

594. Murray Sayle, "A Kitchen Served Clandestine Czech TV," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, September 15, 1968, K1.

the old European tradition of “topping out” newly constructed buildings or towers with an evergreen tree.⁵⁹⁵ The evergreen tree left on the roof was sufficiently large to hide the microwave dish from observers above and on the ground. The workers at the Tatras shipyard ferried the remote van across the Vltava, while smaller components were smuggled under technicians’ coats and in their bags as they rode the tram to Na Petřínách.⁵⁹⁶ Film footage of the studio has survived, and it shows one room set up with cots and food, while the tiny studio has a desk, chairs, and a backdrop of a portrait of President Svoboda and a sign reading “Free Czechoslovak Television.” The area was so cramped that one of the cameras and the editors worked out of the bathroom.⁵⁹⁷

Once established in covert studios, ČSR and ČST divided up responsibilities playing to each other’s’ strengths. The radio journalists gathered and reported on the very recent news, while the television crews used their medium for commentary and visual reporting. Czech and Slovak celebrities, actors, writers, and sports figures were invited to speak on camera.⁵⁹⁸ In her dissertation on the Prague Spring, Madeleine Albright concluded that even though the young journalists had been schooled under Marxist-Leninist paradigms of agitation and propaganda, they still used their innate journalistic instincts to find the good story.⁵⁹⁹ While they were restrained severely under the Novotný regime, then liberated during the reform period, these journalists were now acting under their own accord in dangerous conditions. Additionally, the engineers and technicians

595. Matthew L. Wald, “The Hoary Tradition of Topping Out,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1984.

A6

596. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 28.

597. František Emmert, *Rok 1968 v Československu*, (Prague, Nakladatelství Vyšerad, 2007), 42.

598. Sayle, “A Kitchen Served Clandestine Czech TV,” K1.

599. Albright, *Role of the Press in Political Change*, 371.

were taking on complex challenges to get the systems up and working, but making equipment work in stressful situations was frequently part of their everyday jobs and carried a sense of satisfaction when it does work. Klara Sever was an editor at the Bratislava facilities of ČSR. In a 2012 oral history, she recounted going to the office early on the morning of August 21, only to find all of her reporters already there and begging to check out tape recorders and tape stock. She complied, but asked them not to tell her what they were going to do with the recorders.⁶⁰⁰ The journalists captured stories of people who had been directly affected in the crisis, such as an interview with Alexander Dubček's mother in tears asking for her son to be returned.⁶⁰¹ These recordings became part of the underground radio's continuous coverage. Journalists reported from those government agencies that were still operational. Everyday citizens provided information about troop movement, because the presence of so much military hardware was leading to rail slowdowns, blocked bridges, and traffic fatalities.⁶⁰² The announcers also repeated reports from foreign radio news sources.⁶⁰³ A large amount of airtime was devoted to reading the hundreds of notes, telephone calls, and telegrams from unions, organizations, and clubs announcing their support of the reform movement, and of the leadership of Dubček, Svoboda, Smrkovský, and Černík.⁶⁰⁴

600. "Klara Sever Oral History," Oral History Program, National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, IA, accessed July 31, 2017, <http://www.ncsml.org/exhibits/klara-sever/>. Mrs. Sever had been a young girl when the Nazis took her and her family to a concentration camp, so she was hesitant about taking risks.

601. Jancar, "When the Soviets Invaded Bratislava," 6.

602. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 27.

603. "/0615/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 23.

604. "Brno /0740/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 43.

Since they were the only means of immediately reaching a large number of people, broadcasting, and particularly radio became the organizing force of the resistance. Declaring themselves the free and legal broadcasters [*Svobodná legální vysílač*] for Czechoslovakia, the covert stations put out the call early on the morning of August 21, for the members of the National Assembly to meet at 10:00 am, and a majority of members were able to enter the building before it was surrounded by tanks. The legislators remained in session for the next week, sleeping on the floors and desks, eating the emergency food supply, and sharing the handful of razors and toiletry items in the offices. Because they had radios, televisions, and working telephone and teleprinter service, the National Assembly could still nominally function as the constitutional government. These communication tools gave even more credibility to the condemnation of the occupation. Through the radio, they issued statements capable of reaching other countries and the United Nations.⁶⁰⁵

Before Dubček, Smrkovský, Černík and others were forcibly taken to Moscow, they encouraged the Party's Presidium of the Central Committee to call the Fourteenth Party Congress into session as soon as possible.⁶⁰⁶ The Congress was originally scheduled to convene on September 9, and the delegates had already been selected. The seating of the delegates would demonstrate the will of the people of Czechoslovakia regardless of the actions of the occupiers. If the delegates at the Fourteenth Congress approved of a change in party leadership under the circumstances then it became the legal

605. "/0753/, Wednesday, August 21, 1968," *Monitoring Material*, 39.

606. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 176.

imprimatur to avoid the appearance of a *coup d'état*. If the Congress decided to keep the current leadership, their vote would show the invasion to be illegal.

The radio announcers called the representatives to assemble in Prague on the morning of the August 22. Although some delegates coming from Slovakia and Moravia were stopped on the road or stymied by rail stoppages, at least 1,300 of the 1,500 delegates made their way to the massive Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk [ČKD] Iron works in the Vysočany neighborhood in Prague, most dressed in workers' clothing.⁶⁰⁷ The factory provided a perfect cover for so many people to congregate. The fraternal socialist invaders were loath to interrupt workers in factories, especially because workers tended to be the least reactionary group and hence were not expected to foster "counterrevolutionary tendencies." Large factories, serving as the political interest groups for the workers, usually had large meeting halls, communications equipment and even small print shops; all the necessary equipment for large meetings. Print, radio and television reporters and camera operators were there too, sending out reports to their stations for broadcasting.⁶⁰⁸ The meeting became known as the Extraordinary Fourteenth Party Congress, or was shortened to the Vysočany Congress. They announced their support for the Dubček reforms—but not too loudly out of fear of attracting the attention of the occupying troops – they set to work on creating a new constitution, which, among other items, contained guarantees for a free press.

607. Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 226.

608. "Hradec /0215/, Thursday, August 22, 1968," *Monitoring Material of the Czechoslovak Radio Stations*, Radio Free Europe Open Society Archives 300_30_14, Box 13, Book 2, 16. It appears that the electronic media may not have broadcast live. Having a transmission broadcasting for long periods of time made it easier for the occupiers to track the signals back to the source.

Another set of tasks the radio workers assumed was the coordination of the active anti-occupation resistance. This coordination had two aspects: an offensive component that emphasized impeding the invaders and forming mass demonstrations; and a defensive component to track down collaborators, identify provocations, and prevent the tracking of radio and television signals. Unlike in World War II, when the Allied broadcasters suggested designs for potentially lethal booby traps, the free and legal Czechoslovak radio emphasized non-violent suggestions.⁶⁰⁹ In some cases, especially in Bratislava, the talk gave way to rock throwing and verbal taunts, and the soldiers reacted with lethal force.⁶¹⁰

The most famous of the tactics used to impede the occupiers was to switch road signs and make them point in the wrong direction, sending columns of tanks wandering into the countryside.⁶¹¹ Soon the street signs were removed or painted over with helpful suggestions such as arrows that pointed east with the words “Moscow 1500 KM,” or “Occupiers go home” in Cyrillic.⁶¹² When a citizen called to report that soldiers and secret police were trying to find certain addresses in order to arrest someone, radio announcers encouraged people to remove the numbers from their houses and businesses. Towns became full of unidentifiable homes on unidentifiable streets, or that all of the streets were suddenly renamed “Svoboda Street” and “Dubček Avenue.”⁶¹³ Items that

609. Emmert, *Rok 1968 v Československu*, 48-9.

610. Jancar, “When the Soviets Invaded Bratislava,” 8.

611. Tad Szulc and Clyde Farnsworth, “Invasion of Czechoslovakia: The First Week,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1968. 1,7.

612. Emmert, *Rok 1968 v Československu*, 49-51.

613. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 118.

might have been useful to find individuals, such as phone books in phone booths, were burned.

Some of the non-violent actions organized through the radio emphasized the unity of the population against the invaders and the ability for the radio to coordinate actions throughout the country. At 10:00 am on August 21, the artists' union suggested that everyone desert the streets for two minutes at noon. Two hours later, all of the bells and horns sounded the signal, and the entire population seemed to disappear. The photographer Josef Koudelka commemorated this moment in a photograph overlooking Wenceslaus Square from the third floor at one end of the square looking toward the National Museum. His forearm and watch are in the lower third of the frame, showing the time--12:01:22 – but the normally busy street was empty of people.⁶¹⁴ On other days, the radio announcers coordinated sit-down strikes of thousands of resisters in Wenceslaus Square, or one minute of people making as much noise as possible. General strikes were called, but this technique was used sparsely. To make up for lost productivity, workers came to work on what they called “Dubček Sunday.”⁶¹⁵ The speed with which these activities were organized, and the universality of participation could only be achieved at the time through the radio.

The Czechoslovaks and the radio and television workers were constantly aware of the dangers of provocation. People under the occupation were eager for any information, which made the atmosphere ripe for agitation and propaganda. As noted earlier, the

614. Josef Koudelka, *Invasion 68*, (Prague: TORST, 2008), 174-5.

615. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 168.

occupiers had set up their own station — Radio Vltava — to spread disinformation. Leaflets had been dropped from helicopters and the occupiers created pamphlets and newspapers; occasionally the bundles of these left out for distribution would be set on fire instead.⁶¹⁶ The radio and television workers were convinced their telephones were bugged, and so they used elaborate code names.⁶¹⁷ Radio announcers even managed to foil the occupiers' plan to encourage a march down Wenceslaus Square on August 22 that could have resulted in many arrests or in violence.⁶¹⁸

One of the great fears of the radio and television workers was, quite naturally, getting caught. They spent considerable effort in misdirection and moving their covert studios, but radio and television are broadcasting create an electronic signal which can be easily traced. Multiple people using ordinary radios can measure the signal strength to triangulate the location of a transmitter. As they had done during World War II, broadcasters stayed on the move and only broadcast from one area for short amounts of time. Multiple studios organized to transmit in ten or fifteen minute blocks. The broadcasts became enough of a nuisance for the occupiers that they ordered a special set of transmission monitors that could speed up the triangulation process and jam signals. As the equipment approached by rail, the radio announcers put out the word for workers to delay the train. One engineer reported the saga of this train's journey in a report aired on Czechoslovak Radio:

I tell you frankly, that train should have been stopped at Cierna [on the Slovak border]. But there was nothing peculiar about it—except it was so short, eight cars

616. Rožánek, "Srpen 1968," 43.

617. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 14.

618. Institute of History, *Czech Black Book*, 93.

only. At first, we wanted to throw it off the track, but that could have terrible consequences. Near Olomouc, it got ahead of a long freight train. Then it accidentally broke up into three sections, and it took four hours to fix. Exactly according to all regulations. Then I collapsed. Another maintenance man needed another four hours to fix it. Then it moved on to Trebova and, with the repair work going on all the time, as far as Chocen. From there, we wanted to steer them on to Poland, but by that time they had maps... Suddenly they were in a great hurry because they had eaten up everything they had in their two parlor cars. Before Moravany, we threw the trolley wires down, and the train got all tangled up in them. That took two maintenance squads, and still they were unable to put it together. The Russians were quite nervous. They wanted the machine to run on batteries, and they could not understand why it should not be possible when all the various pieces of equipment seemed to be functioning all right. In Pardubice, they wanted steam, but we told them that that was an electrified line. In Prelouc, a piece of the track was dismantled, then a trolley thrown off, and they decided that they would go on by way of Hradec. In Streblova, again a thrown-off trolley, it is a single-track stretch so there was nothing to be done. Not too quickly, anyway. Six Soviet helicopters picked up our dispatchers as hostages. We put fifteen freight trains in front of them, and there was no yard in Prague that could take all of that. Our own trains suffered because of it; everything was delayed. I myself got into Kolin with a completely empty passenger train. Now they are somewhere around Lysa on the Elbe. But such a *Švejk*-type operation cannot last indefinitely.⁶¹⁹

We will never know how long the resistance could have lasted, because it came to an abrupt halt on the afternoon of Tuesday, August 27. That morning the top leaders of Czechoslovakia returned from their enforced negotiations in the Kremlin with a signed protocol. The document promised some of the troops would be heading back home in exchange for some alterations—described as “normalization” – in the reform process. One of those changes was to ensure the press, radio, and television operated, “wholly at the service of socialism. . .”⁶²⁰ The Moscow Protocol gave the government extra powers

619. Ibid., 215-16.

620. “Document No. 119: The Moscow Protocol, August 26, 1968” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring '68*, 478. *Normalizace* [Normalization] in the Czech language denotes a standard set up by an authority as a rule to measure the characteristics of an item, not necessarily the English use of normal as being mundane or average.

to negate the work of the Extraordinary Fourteenth Congress, get rid of all parties and organizations not approved by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and “to combat the malevolence of certain persons or groups. The necessary measures regarding personnel will be undertaken to ensure the proper functioning of the press, radio, and television.”⁶²¹ Many of the radio and television workers, especially the management, lost their positions and some like Jiří Pelikán were encouraged to go on vacation and never come back.⁶²²

Brezhnev and the other Warsaw Pact leaders had seen the invasion as a way to secure a new government in Czechoslovakia led by “healthy forces.”⁶²³ Instead, the healthy forces lacked fortitude, the people of Czechoslovakia were solidly behind the reform leadership, the allies of the Soviet Union around the world condemned the invasion as an act of aggression, and the world was well aware that the people Brezhnev most wanted to get rid of were sitting under guard in the Kremlin.⁶²⁴ Documents unearthed after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, demonstrated the solution to the impasse came from an unlikely source: Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda, who surmised on August 22:

Ninety-five percent of the population are behind Dubček and Černík. If they are not released a great deal of blood will be shed. If they return to their posts, Comrade Dubček will step down from his post the very first day, as will Černík. Then let the government judge what mistakes he made, assess everything, and

621. Ibid.

622. Pelikán, *S'ils me tuent*, 232.

623 “Document No. 92: Leonid Brezhnev’s at a Meeting of the ‘Warsaw Five’ in Moscow, August 18, 1968 (excerpts),” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ’68*, 396.

624. Lawrence Van Gelder, “Wave of Anger Sweeps World; Some Soviet Embassies Raided,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1968, 16; “Svoboda Says Moscow Talks Are Progressing and Three Liberals Have Joined In,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1968, 36.

solve it. If we proceed in this tactical way, the people will accept it and will consider it correct, and it will be done without bloodshed.⁶²⁵

Brezhnev saw the wisdom of this tactic and brought Svoboda, and others from Prague (mainly the collaborators,) to the Kremlin along with Soviet officials to negotiate this solution. “This will not be easy. There will be attacks,” warned Brezhnev, “but let Dubček deal with the matter.” He then offered a veiled threat: “One cannot expect the troops to leave just like that. If the underground radio continues to incite resistance, they obviously will not leave and there may even be a war.”⁶²⁶ Once the bulk of the details were worked out, more officials from Prague including Mlynář were brought to Moscow and Dubček, Smrkovsky, Černík, were brought out of their seclusion for a signing ceremony that was filmed and photographed for the Soviet press. The existing Czechoslovak leadership now had the responsibility to dismantle – to “normalize” – the very reform movement they created, or face continued military occupation. Upon their return and for the next several days, the leadership issued statements on radio, television and in the press outlining their hopes that the reform movement would continue.

Very quickly, the radio and television came back under the control of the party, and new officials were put in charge. Familiar voices of the clandestine broadcasts like announcers Moučková and Volny saw that the systems were returning to their pre-Prague Spring paradigm, and preferred to either leave the country or quit broadcasting altogether

625. “Document No 115: Discussion Involving Certain Members of the CP CzCC Presidium and Secretariat at the Soviet Embassy in Prague and the ČSSR President’s Office, August 22, 1968,” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ’68*, 463.

626. “Document No. 117: Minutes of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Talks in the Kremlin, August 23 and 26, 1968 (Excerpts),” in Navrátil, *Prague Spring ’68*, 470.

and perform manual labor.⁶²⁷ When writing about the history of Czechoslovak Television, Václav Kolář and Ladislav Kejha noted that the StB [Czechoslovak Secret Police] immediately began interrogations of the communications workers, forcing some out of the field permanently. Other workers, wishing to keep their jobs, provided names of alleged counterrevolutionaries working in the system.⁶²⁸

There was considerable repair work to be done in the main radio and television facilities after the occupying forces attempted to stop the broadcasts with wire cutters and their AK-47s.⁶²⁹ For the most part, “normalization” meant treating the Prague Spring and the invasion as if it had never happened. For example, the first complete weekly radio and television schedule magazine that came out after the invasions showed a picture of the Czechoslovak Radio headquarters on Vinohrady — where the fighting had been heavy. The morning of August 21 the streets were torn up, windows shot out, and the surrounding buildings, tanks, busses and even the trees were battered and burned. In the image on the cover of the schedule the window frames contained some wrinkly reflective material, the large lighted sign across the front of the building had been replaced, and the street had been repaired.⁶³⁰ The accompanying text describes how terrific it was that the magazine was now available and that it will have plenty more interesting feature articles. The text did not discuss what was happening inside the building or on air, just the magazine.

627. Volny, “Saga of Czechoslovak Broadcasting,” 18.

628. Kolář and Kejha, *Televize v srpnu 1968*, 35-6.

629. Emmert, *Rok 1968 v Československu*, 42.

630. “Časopis Československý Rozhlas Opět Vychází,” *Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník*, ročník XXXV, číslo 39, 21—29 září 1968 (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968), 1.

As the radio and television organizations reverted back to their pre-1968 states, the reformers slowly lost their movement, their power, and eventually their positions. All of the good intentions outlined in the April Action Program were erased, as were any traces of the Extraordinary Fourteenth Congress. One by one, the reformers were demoted, asked to leave, or, in the case of Ota Šik, who was on vacation in Yugoslavia during the invasion, never returned. Zdeněk Mlynář still held out some hope to continue the reforms, but:

[i]n signing the Moscow Protocol and accepting the “normalization of conditions” as the official line, we renounced the nationwide democratic movement. In fact, since its return to Prague at the end of August, the Dubček leadership had sought to pacify and sublimate this movement so it would not provoke a new wave of indignation from Moscow and new pressures to expedite the “normalization” process. Popular support could only be tapped by the party leadership in the form of a silent contract, whereby the nation would understand that a great deal was being sacrificed, but only so that strength could be conserved for the future.⁶³¹

Ultimately, the only reform that remained from the Prague Spring was the promise of federalism, so that Slovakia gained a greater representative portion within an authoritarian regime—a pyrrhic victory to be sure.⁶³²

The broadcasters fell back into the well-worn path of being the transmission belt for the Party. Television and radio broadcasting for the rest of 1968 had many more programs on Slovak history and culture, but the roundtables and discussion programs

631. Mlynář, *Nightfrost in Prague*, 252.

632. Otto Ulč, “Some Aspects of Czechoslovak Society since 1968,” *Social Forces*, Vol. 57, no. 2 (December 1978): 421.

were minimized.⁶³³ Within a few years, ČST began broadcasting on a second channel, had secured the funding for videotape recorders, and began broadcasting in color.

The spring of 1969 brought one more televised moment, which would affect the country: the World Cup Ice Hockey Championship in which Czechoslovakia beat the perennial hockey powerhouse, the Soviet Union in the first round on March 21. The two teams met a week later in the second round of the bracket. This game was played in Sweden and broadcast live all over Europe the evening of March 28. The game was a vicious contest, and the Czechoslovak team won 4:3. The celebrations poured out into the streets, and of jubilant Czechs and Slovaks marched through the streets. Historian Kieran Williams cites reports of 500,000 people.⁶³⁴ Some of the film footage of the fans shows them gathering large handfuls of newspapers—presumably, *Zprávy*, the neo-Stalinist newspaper that was created after the invasion—which the fans tightly rolled and set aflame as torches.⁶³⁵ At one point in the evening, the front windows of the Soviet Aeroflot offices on Wenceslaus Square were broken, and a gang vandalized the offices. Several of the Soviet military garrisons in Czechoslovakia were attacked as well. The riots were quelled by Czechoslovak security forces with some Soviet military assistance. However, the riots were used as a pretense to remove Dubček from his position as party

633. Československý Rozhlas a televízia: programový týždenník, ročník 35, číslo 43, 21. - 27. října, 1968, (Bratislava: Československý Rozhlas, 1968).

634. Williams, *Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, 198.

635. "Ice Hockey Fans Demonstrate in Prague," YouTube video, 3:53, from a *British Pathé* newsreel, 1969, posted by British Pathé, April 13, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0OTtUolj-8>. In the note left behind when he burned himself to death in January of 1969, Jan Palach demanded the end of press censorship and a halt to the printing of the official newspaper of the occupiers, *Zprávy*. Although the connection cannot be directly made between the burning newspapers and the self-immolation of Palach, the symbolism of the gesture is unmistakable. Alvin Schuster, "Czech Protester Dies of his Burns," *New York Times*, January 21, 1969 1

secretary. Soon the new party secretary, Gustáv Husák, worked to expel thousands of people from the membership rolls of the Communist Party, and the Party and government of Czechoslovakia went back to being the insulated, elitist, and non-responsive ruling class it had been before January of 1968.

As normalization proceeded, the people receded into their own private spheres, and lived for their work and their leisure time, and left politics in the hands of the *cadre*. In response, the government boosted productions in the areas of consumer goods, and invested in improvements in infrastructure like television.⁶³⁶

636. This period of normalization is now a new focus of scholarship. See: Paulina Bren, *The Green Grocer and his TV*, (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

CONCLUSION

“The propaganda apparatus must drown out the roar of tank tracks.”

In November of 1968 a white paper was written for the Soviet leadership, which outlined the critical problems with the August, 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The first and most important criticism was that:

[d]uring the first week, that our troops were present in the country, no active attempts were made to organize a broad counterpropaganda campaign against the fierce, skillful, and well-prepared propaganda of the anti-socialist forces. In principle, during the conduct of the military-political actions like the one carried out on 21.8.1968, the work of the propaganda apparatus must drown out the roar of tank tracks. But during the August events, Soviet tanks moved forward amidst complete propaganda silence. A propaganda vacuum of sorts existed, thus providing maximum benefit to the counterrevolutionary forces...

The same holds true about propaganda on radio. There was ample opportunity to organize the work of all the Czech radio stations, but the necessary personnel for this task had not been prepared...Only a single radio station, “Vltava,” carried radio broadcasts in garbled Czech, and these were of very poor quality...The television center was not used for propaganda purposes. It was completely paralyzed. At the same time, the rightist forces were able to organize television broadcasts through underground television transmitters...thus, at the most critical moment of the situation, the rightist forces were the only ones fighting to win the hearts and minds of the Czechs, and they accomplished a great deal...some 75-90 percent of the population, having been terrorized and demoralized by the counterrevolutionary propaganda, began to regard the entry of Soviet troops as an act of occupation.⁶³⁷

637. “Document No. 135: The Soviet Politburo’s Assessment of the Lessons of Operation ‘Danube’ and the Tasks Ahead, November 16, 1968,” in Navrátil *Prague Spring ‘68*, 54.

While the idea that a counterpropaganda campaign should “drown out the sound of tank treads” was poetic in a morbid sense, the innate confirmation bias of the Soviet leadership allow us a glimpse into the Soviet mindset. Communications in the Soviet model were clearly meant to work only in one direction: from the party down to the people. What the Soviets understood as a propaganda vacuum was, in reality, the voices of free people speaking as loudly as they possibly could. Because hard power was brought to bear, the Czechs and Slovaks had no choice but to remove themselves from the public sphere and retreat entirely to their private spheres. “In societies under the post-totalitarian system,” wrote Václav Havel, “all political life in the traditional sense has been eliminated. People have no opportunity to express themselves politically in public, let alone to organize politically. The gap that results is filled by ideological ritual.”⁶³⁸

The Soviet whitepaper also drives home one of the key points of this study, namely that electronic communications, particularly radio, were pivotal components in the creation of the public sphere. It is this public sphere that the Soviet leadership rightly saw as a threat to their hegemony. As we have seen, these media were particularly significant during the reform era and the short lived resistance because of five factors:

Universality: The reception equipment was generally inexpensive and most Czechs and Slovaks had access to it. The concept of universality can be extended to the transmitting equipment too—that the redundant components and features like wired radio, which was meant to keep the system working in case of invasion, actually worked.

638. Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1990* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 158.

Immediacy: The impact of media is demonstrated through its ability to report events very quickly, or in many cases as they happened.

Credibility: People were actually seeing events or hearing from key players rather than merely reading about them. Live media was not subject to the editorial and censorship review that limited print communications and recorded features. Hearing and seeing also created a way for users to discern authenticity.

Portability: Particularly through the use of the transistor radio, people could at least passively participate in the public sphere wherever they were – often without detection. The *magnetofon* allowed the user to capture moments and play them back later, essentially moving information through time as well as through space.

Intimacy: Consumers of electronic media have a perceived relationship with presenters. Familiar personalities such as Slava Volny and Kamila Moučková related directly to listeners and created a perceived public sphere. Telephone connections allowed individuals to give feedback to the content producers on a person-to-person basis.

The free press sparked hope, idealism and civic involvement. But it did not spark, or ultimately sustain a revolution. With a few noted exceptions, the Czechs and Slovaks were prepared neither to die nor to kill for their new freedoms.⁶³⁹ There are several reasonable explanations for this, not the least of which was the memory of the 1945

⁶³⁹ Mark Kramer argued that the absence of violence demonstrated that Brezhnev had still not exhausted all of his possibilities before calling for the military intervention; however this information came from personal diaries that were not available until after 1989. Mark Kramer, “The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion in Historical Perspective,” in Bischof et al., *Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion*, 45.

defense of the same radio network which resulted in the tragic losses during the Prague Uprising.

It is, of course, impossible to determine if the new public sphere would have led to the formation of the pluralistic yet fully socialist state the reformers envisioned.⁶⁴⁰ The space created by the media did not collapse under the overwhelming military pressure the Warsaw Pact states imposed on the country. For several days the media continued to operate as the voice of the “free and legal” government. It was only after the (forced) capitulation of First Secretary Dubček and Prime Minister Černík that the media chose to stop their resistance.

Obviously, the capitulation of the leaders was in response to violence and threats of violence. In this situation, it is hard to imagine the resistance lasting much longer than it did. That imposition of force grew out of one state’s desire to protect its hegemony over the states of Eastern and Central Europe. By invading Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union displayed the “sheer gangster logic of the imperialists.”⁶⁴¹ The invasion, and the Brezhnev Doctrine which followed informed the rest of the world that the countries of the Warsaw Pact were not sovereign states. The myth of a society choosing to become part of the Soviet Bloc ended forever.

The Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact states rightly feared that the new openness in Czechoslovakia was a contagion that threatened their own systems. We don’t know how effective a Soviet propaganda campaign might have been, but there’s a good

640. “Akční Program, Komunistické strany Československa,” *Práce*, 10 dubna, 1968, 4.

641. Jen-min Jih-pao, “Total Bankruptcy of Soviet Modern Revisionism,” *Peking Review*, Vol. 11, no. 34 (August 23, 1968), quoted in Remington, *Winter in Prague*, 327.

chance the answer is not very. Party-issued propaganda generally cannot stand uninjured against a critical free press; even the very act of questioning the reasoning behind why the party is issuing propaganda is enough to weaken it.

After 1968, the party control of the media remained official policy until it was tested under the leadership of a new General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; Mikhail Gorbachev. In 1986, he invoked a new era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The Soviet Union tried to allow some freedom of expression and some government openness, very much in the same way as Dubček and his administration attempted in 1968. The Soviet Union crumbled; but first it lost its satellite states one-by-one as the people in those regions got rid of their own leaders. Gorbachev threatened with hard power by parking tanks along the Polish border during the round table discussions and the elections of 1989, but he never gave the order to advance. This gives us a very crude proxy for what might have happened if Brezhnev had not ordered the invasion of 1968.

Without the threat of invasion, the public sphere reappeared. People of Central Europe took matters into their own hands, or should we say that the last hardline leaders of the fraternal socialist states understood that they no longer had the support from the Soviet Union that they once enjoyed. Either way, the “contagion” of pluralism spread to Central Europe just as Ulbricht’s DDR study group predicted in March of 1968.

One difference between 1968 and 1989, was that Gorbachev chose not to foster the myth of the counterrevolutionary infiltrators to explain the upheavals. Rather than putting the blame on a few outsiders, he allowed the process to move forward through the

wishes of the people. Gorbachev's relationship with Zdeněk Mlynář, one of the Czechoslovak reformers of 1968, and Gorbachev's college roommate helped him to decide not to repeat Brezhnev's mistake.⁶⁴² To compare 1968 to 1989 is not to say that either situation would have succeeded except for x factor; "neither political successes not political failures," as Mlynář observed in 2002, "were ever the proof of the correctness of a policy."⁶⁴³ The importance of observing what happened in these eras is to understand the use of political tools like communications technology *in situ*.

Communications technologies can create a powerful public sphere. They can enlighten, inform and unify the population. In extraordinary situations, they can even function as the *de facto* government as Czechoslovak Radio and Television did when it organized the resistance and the XIVth Extraordinary Congress. But no matter how pervasive and persuasive the technology, it is no match for brute force. Ultimately, a public sphere can change society, but it will never stop a tank.

642. Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xii.

643. Gorbachev and Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, xvi.

APPENDIX

Appendix # 1:



Image #1: Edvard Beneš, Klement Gottwald, and the new Cabinet at the Swearing in Ceremony
February 25, 1948. Photographer: Jiří Rublič. © ČTK—Photo 2017.

Appendix #2

Image #2 **Gottwald and Clementis
on balcony, February 25, 1948**

© ČTK—Photo 2017



Image #3 Retouched image.

© ČTK—Photo 2017



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