POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL of the journal / **URL časopisu**: https://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk

Author(s) / Autor(i): **Zdeněk Veselý**
Article / Článok: Czechoslovakia, Warsaw Pact and invasion of 1968
Publisher / Vydavateľ: **Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov** – UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2024.27.4.42-67

Recommended form for quotation of the ar**ticle / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:**

VESELÝ, Z. 2024. Czechoslovakia, Warsaw Pact and invasion of 1968. In *Politické Vedy*. Vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 42-67. ISSN 1335 – 2741. Available at: https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2024.27.4.42-67

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WARSAW PACT AND INVASION OF 1968

Zdeněk Veselý*

ABSTRACT
The intervention of the armies of the five Warsaw Pact member countries into Czechoslovakia in August 1968 represents a significant event in modern history, remembered primarily in the national memory of Czechs and Slovaks. And given the decisive role of the Soviet Union, primarily as a trauma of bilateral Czechoslovak-Soviet relations. In political journalism and professional literature, we often encounter a broader concept, when the intervention is presented as an action of the Warsaw Pact. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to examine what role and whether the Warsaw Pact and especially its highest body, the Political Advisory Committee, played in this intervention. Therefore, even though the suppression of the democratization process in Czechoslovakia - known as the Prague Spring - was carried out by brutal means in the form of a massive military invasion, the author focuses in this study primarily on the political aspect of the issue, because the use of military means was based on a political decision. The decision to intervene was not made at any meeting of the aforementioned Political Advisory Committee of the Pact. The intervention was decided by the highest representatives of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and East Germany. And moreover, without the participation of other member countries, i.e. Romania, Albania and especially Czechoslovakia, which was the victim of the intervention. The military intervention against Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was therefore not an action of the Warsaw Pact. It was a separate action of the Soviet Union and some other countries of the Pact, that pretended to act on behalf of the Pact to justify their action. Doing so, they acted contrary the proclaimed principles and rules of the Pact.

Key words: Czechoslovakia, Prague Spring, Warsaw Pact, Soviet Union, soviet bloc, intervention, Brezhnev doctrine.

Foreword

The subject of this study is the analysis of the political aspect of the intervention of the armies of the five Warsaw Pact member states into

* prof. PhDr. Zdeněk Veselý, CSc. is a Professor at the Department of International Studies and Diplomacy, Faculty of International Relations, Prague University of Economics and Business. Nám. W. Churchilla 4, 130 67 Prague 3, Czech Republic, e-mail: zdenek.vesely@vse.cz.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2024.27.4.42-67

Czechoslovakia in August 1968.[1] Given the decisive role of the Soviet Union in this act, it has been perceived as a traumatic element of bilateral Czechoslovak-Soviet relations ever since. In general awareness of the Czech and Slovak people, this event is narrowly identified with the Russians, or Russian soldiers, or with the then Soviet leader **Leonid I. Brezhnev**. The recent decision of the Czech Parliament to declare 21 August as *Memorial Day for the victims of the invasion and subsequent occupation by Warsaw Pact troops* reflects the persistence of this trauma, notwithstanding the fact that several decades have passed since the intervention itself. Unsurprisingly, this decision sparked opposition from Russia. It looks as if for Russia the whole matter has been concluded by the adoption of the 1993 Czech-Russian Treaty of Friendship, which in the preamble states: '... to put an end to the totalitarian past associated with the unacceptable use of force against Czechoslovakia in 1968 and with the further unjustifiable stay of Soviet troops on Czechoslovak territory' (Veselý, 2003, p. 94). Russia's reluctance to address this issue is manifested, among other things, by the fact that relevant archival materials still remain unavailable. This, of course, limits the possibilities of scientific research in this area; this study is no exception in this regard.[2]

In political journalism and literature, we often encounter a broader concept of this intervention interpreted as an action of the Warsaw Pact.[3] The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that this is inaccurate and misleading understanding and that the intervention was not the action of the Pact as a whole, but only of some of the countries of the Pact. They did so in contravention of the proclaimed nature and principles of the Pact, while shielding themselves under the Pact and referring to it.

First, a few remarks on terminological issues. Different terms have been

[1] Namely the armies of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and East Germany.

[2] The opportunity to study, even though for a short period of time, some of the documents of the top Soviet leadership, available due to a certain degree of anarchy prevailing in the archives of the Russian Federation (as the successor state of the Soviet Union), represented a significant and valuable exception in this respect (Vondrová, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2011).

[3] See, e.g. Pauer 1995; Bischof - Karner – Ruggenthaler, 2010; Stolarik, 2010; Povolný 2018; Carradice, 2019. The aforementioned Memorial Day for the victims of the invasion and subsequent occupation by Warsaw Pact troops is also generally associated with the Warsaw Pact. It is also important to note that, in the context of the Warsaw Pact, the professional literature predominantly focuses on the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Research addressing the development and activities of the Warsaw Pact during other periods, particularly in the Czech environment, is extensively covered in the publications of M. Bílý. However, his work is primarily focused on the post-1968 period (Bílý, 2016, 2021). The author examined the earlier development of the Warsaw Pact in an unpublished rigorous thesis at Charles University (*Varšavská smlouva v 50. a 60. letech*, 2011).

applied to communicate the act. In ideological and political context, the term "fraternal aid" was used. This term was interpreted by the actors not only in power-military sense, but also referred to ideological and political efforts to suppress the democratization process in Czechoslovakia, known as the *Prague Spring*. In a narrower, military sense, the term *troop entry,* later adopted by the communist propaganda of normalized Czechoslovakia, was applied. In the official material interpreting the events of 1968, adopted on the initiative of pro-Soviet exponents in the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (hereinafter referred to as KSČ) in December 1970 and published under the title *Lessons Drawn from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, the aforementioned fraternal aid is reflected in the term *international solidarity*: "The entry of the allied armies of the five socialist countries into Czechoslovakia was an act of international solidarity..." (Veselý, 2005, p. 631). In a way, it is a paradox that the term "troop entry" resembles the term used by Nazi Germany to refer to the military occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 (*Einmarsch*). The quoted passage says nothing at all about whether these are allied armies by virtue of their affiliation to Warsaw Pact states or by virtue of bilateral allied treaties. In the democratic world (and nowadays also in the Czech Republic), notions *intervention* or *invasion* have been used to refer to the military-political dimension of this event. The subsequent state caused by the military incursion has been referred to as *occupation*.[4] This is in accordance with the general concept of occupation as "the seizure and control of a country or area by military forces" of a foreign power (https://www.yourdictionary.com/occupation).[5]

[4] In official Czechoslovak statements, this term (both a noun and an adjective) was applied, both in the context of the act itself and as the characteristics of the intervening military units, only in the period following immediately the intervention itself. Specifically, e.g. in the statement of the Czechoslovak Parliament of 22 August 1968 in which the Parliament rejected the intervention (Veselý, 20012, p. 710). Yet in the statement of the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which was the first and immediate reaction to the intervention, the fact that "on the evening of 20 August 1968, troops of the Soviet Union, the Polish People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic and the Bulgarian People's Republic crossed the state border of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic" is described in general terms as an 'act' which is considered "contrary not only to all the principles of relations between socialist states, but as a denial of the basic norms of international law." (Veselý, 2005, pp. 600-601).

[5] The Dictionary of International Law and Politics published in Czechoslovakia during the normalization period lists two entries: *wartime occupation* and *peacetime occupation*; the latter is defined as follows: "a form of international treaty guarantee consisting in the fact that the guaranteeing state contractually commits to tolerate foreign military forces on its territory in peacetime until it fulfils its obligations under

The state of affairs in Czechoslovakia from 21 August 1968 onwards can thus be qualified as an occupation. As will be shown below, this is so for the very reason that the entry and subsequent presence of foreign armies on the territory of Czechoslovakia took place without the prior consent of the relevant Czechoslovak governmental authorities obtained by political and diplomatic means. The situation which thus arose can be defined as an occupation, even though formally Czechoslovakia (a) continued to act outwardly as a sovereign state, (b) the subsequent Soviet military presence on its territory was – with reference to the imposed agreement on the conditions of stay of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia of October 1968 - passed off as an expression of its own interests stemming from its allied relations with the Soviet Union.

1. The problematic nature of the authority and format of the intervention

As is well known, among the main arguments used by the actors of the military invasion to justify the invasion was the threat posed to the socialist system in Czechoslovakia and the statement that the defence of the socialist system was an international duty of the countries of the Pact. The TASS statement issued on the day of the intervention brought the false claim that the intervention was at the request of the Czechoslovak government itself: "TASS is authorized to state that party and state leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have requested to the Soviet Union and other allied states to give to the fraternal Czechoslovak people immediate assistance, including assistance with armed forces. The reason for this appeal is the threat posed to the socialist system existing in Czechoslovakia and to the constitutionally established state system by counter-revolutionary forces that have entered into collusion with external forces hostile to socialism. The events in Czechoslovakia and around it have more than once been the subject of exchanges of opinions by leaders of the fraternal socialist countries, including the leaders of Czechoslovakia. These countries are united on the premise that the support, strengthening and defence of the peoples' socialist gains are the common international duty of all the socialist states."

the treaty..." (Potočný - Regner – Urban, 1988. p. 232). However, it is questionable what international treaty could be in question in the case of Czechoslovakia, as no treaty allowed for external interference in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia (for more see later).

(Vondrová, 1996, pp. 223-224).[6]

Here, however, we encounter fundamental contradictions, the analysis of which will follow in order to clarify two important issues in a coherent manner:

1) the legitimacy of the Warsaw Pact's military intervention against a Warsaw Pact member state carried out on the basis of the above justification; and
2) whether this intervention took place within the framework of the Warsaw Pact and in accordance with the rules adopted by the Pact.

Let us therefore first turn our attention to the focus and principles of the Pact. Nowhere in its founding and other documents is there a link to the nature of the social order and political regime. Article 9 of the founding document *"Treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian's People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Romanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Republic"* states directly to this effect: "The present Treaty shall be open for accession by other States, irrespective of their social and political structure, which express their readiness, by participating in the present Treaty, to help in combining the efforts of the peace-loving States to ensure the peace and security of the peoples." (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 12).

The use of force, after prior consultations, in the event of a threat of armed attack against a member of the alliance is mentioned only in the first paragraph of Article 4 in the context of joint defence in the event of an armed attack against one of the parties: "In the event of an armed attack in Europe on one or more of the States Parties to the Treaty by any State or group of States, each State Party to the Treaty shall, in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, afford the State or States so attacked immediate assistance, individually and in agreement with the other States Parties to the Treaty, by all the means it considers necessary, including the use of armed force." (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 11). It is clear from the wording of this and other articles of the founding document of the Pact that none of the articles refers to the possibility of intervention in the case of specific in the event of specific internal developments

[6] The above argumentation is a succinct expression of the essence of the concept of "limited sovereignty" (of the Soviet bloc states), which Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev formulated at the Congress of Polish Communists in November 1968 (the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine).

in one or another member state.

As can be seen from the aforementioned TASS statement, the interventionist propaganda spoke of the danger of a counter-revolution supported from outside. However, these accusations were constructed using only excerpts from the Western press, taken out of context and therefore arbitrarily interpreted or fabricated. The conclusions drawn in this way about the pre-prepared plans of the Western countries to reverse the situation in Czechoslovakia served just as a tool to justify the intervention.

The printed material distributed by Soviet soldiers coming into contact with the Czechoslovak public represents an example of this kind of Soviet propaganda. At the beginning of the eloquently titled chapter *Counterrevolution in the Czechoslovakia - the offspring of international imperialism,* it states at the outset: "The West's aim was to deal a military-political blow to world socialism by means of the counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia. The international reaction assumed that the situation which had developed in Czechoslovakia in the first half of 1968 was favourable to strike a blow to the entire socialist camp in Europe by way of changing the socialist establishment in Czechoslovakia." (K událostem v Československu, 1968, p. 99).

The ruling structures of the USA, the Vatican and the Federal Republic of Germany were mainly accused of these efforts and plans. However, at the international level (e.g. in the UN), Soviet diplomacy as well as the diplomacy of other intervening states did not warn of such a serious threat as the power reversal in the country of their ally. Also, no document that expresses the concern of Czechoslovakia itself in this respect, as well concern about being threatened by another state, or clear evidence that Czechoslovakia requested assistance from its allies, specifically military one, exists.

The allegation that the socialist establishment in Czechoslovakia was being dismantled was accompanied by claims that the country intended to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. As **J. Rychlík** rightly pointed out, "even if this were indeed the case, it would in no way justify Soviet aggression: Czechoslovakia, as a sovereign state, had the right to determine its own political and social system, as well as decide which military alliances it would join or leave" (Rychlík, 2020, p. 235).

Moreover, the second paragraph of Article 4 on mutual assistance was not respected, in particular the last sentence of it: "Measures taken under this article shall be reported to the Security Council in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. These measures shall be discontinued as soon as the

Security Council takes the necessary action to restore and maintain international peace and security" (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 11).

Also, the bilateral alliance treaties concluded between the states of the Soviet bloc immediately after the Second World War during the formation of this bloc in the second half of the 1940s did not contain a common commitment to defend the social order and political regime of any state.[7] Moreover, mutual assistance was only concerned with a possible attack by Germany and its allies. The same was true of the treaties concluded between the countries of the Soviet bloc in the 1960s.[8] These treaties state (e.g. in Article 1 of the Czechoslovak-Bulgarian Treaty) that the signatories "shall continue, in accordance with the principles of socialist internationalism, to consolidate lasting and indissoluble friendship between the peoples of the two states, to develop all-round cooperation and to render assistance to each other on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the other party." (Veselý, 2001, p. 239). The obligation to provide assistance, including military assistance, was incumbent on the parties (as stated, for example, in Article 8 of the treaty with Hungary) only in the event of an armed attack by "any State or group of States", and as the exercise of the "right of individual protection" under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and the UN Security Council was to be informed immediately of adopted measures. (Veselý, 2001, p. 253).[9]

Importantly, this assistance could only be implemented with the consent of both signatory countries. However, this was not the case with the intervention against Czechoslovakia. Thus, neither the multilateral treaty (Warsaw Pact) nor

[7] As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, the first and most important of these was the treaty with the Soviet Union concluded during the World War II on 12 December 1943. After the World War II it was the treaty with Yugoslavia (1946) and with Poland (1947) first. Other treaties were concluded after the establishment of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia with Bulgaria and Romania (1948) and with Hungary (1949).

[8] Regarding Czechoslovakia, the new alliance treaty with Poland (1967), the first bilateral alliance treaty with East Germany (1967) and new treaties concluded before the invasion in the spring and summer of 1968 with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

[9] The commitment to the common defence of socialism in one or another country (i.e. in fact interference in internal affairs) was in this context only contained in the new Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty concluded after the occupation in Prague on 6 May 1970. The Article 5 states: "The High Contracting Parties, expressing their unwavering and determined will to continue the building of socialism and communism, will take the necessary measures to protect the socialist achievements of the people, the security and independence of both countries..." (Veselý, 2012, p. 735). (It is worth noting the typical language and the cryptic wording and turns of phrase used).

the bilateral treaties between Czechoslovakia and the individual states were respected.[10]

From the available documents of the Soviet leadership, it is clear that the Soviet leadership counted on being able to properly justify this action with the consent of the Czechoslovak side, obtained with the help of pro-Soviet exponents on the Czechoslovak side. After the final decision to intervene had been taken at the Soviet leadership meeting on 15-17 August, **Brezhnev** subsequently presented the scenario at a meeting with the top leaders of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and East Germany on 18 August. The first step was to be that the pro-Soviet exponents, having been assured that the intervention would begin on the night of 20-21 August, would ensure that the final dissension in the party leadership "would take place by midnight, a resolution expressing political distrust of the right would be adopted, and that this group would take over the de facto leadership of the party and the government." (Vondrová, 1996, p. 196). Then the second step was to follow: "A document will be prepared with an appeal to the people and a call to the fraternal parties for help to the healthy forces …On 21-22 August a plenary session of the Central Committee [of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia] will be convened, as well as a session of the National Assembly, which will no doubt support their activities and approve an appeal to the fraternal parties asking for military aid." (Vondrová, 1996, p. 196). As can be seen, even in this scenario, which was not realised due to the incompetence of its Czechoslovak initiators, the approval of the Czechoslovak party was not envisaged until after the intervention had begun.[11]

Although the proposed scenario ended in a fiasco, the Soviet side in particular initially argued in this way; in addition to the aforementioned TASS statement, for example, similar argument can be found in a statement approved by the Soviet party leadership on 19 August 1968, just before the invasion. Soviet Ambassador in Washington **Anatoli F. Dobrynin** was to communicate the

[10] That is why the Czechoslovak Parliament, in the aforementioned statement qualifying the action as occupation, also states that it considers it "a self-proclaimed act of violence on an international scale which contradicts the principles of the treaties of alliance which the Czechoslovak Republic concluded with these states." (Veselý, 2012, p. 710)

[11] The consent and the request of the legitimate Czechoslovak authorities could in no way be replaced by the requests of the pro-Soviet wing in the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which were in the form of so-called invitation letters addressed to the Soviet leadership before the intervention (see below). In fact, their content and the names of the specific signatories remained secret until the fall of the communist regime. They became known only after their copies were handed over in July 1992 by Russian President Boris Yeltsin to President Václav Havel.

contents of this statement to US President **Lyndon B. Johnson**. It stated: "In connection with the further aggravation of the situation which has arisen as a result of the conspiracy of foreign and internal reaction against the existing social establishment in Czechoslovakia and the statehood enshrined in the country's constitution, the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has appealed to the Allied States, including the Soviet Union, to provide immediate assistance, including assistance by armed forces." (Vondrová, 2011, p. 209; FRUS, 1996, pp. 237-238). When this fabrication was clearly discredited, it was argued by completely unproven and unrepresentative and anonymous requests from Czechoslovak citizens themselves.[12] Numerous statements by top Czechoslovak officials rejecting the intervention and declaring that it was being done without the knowledge and consent of the Czechoslovak side compounded the political failure of an otherwise perfectly planned military action.[13]

The following considerations are organically intertwined with the aforementioned problem of the legitimacy of the Warsaw Pact intervention against its own member state. The key question is whether the intervention was carried out in the format of the Warsaw Pact, in terms of consent, preparation and implementation. Here, the Political Consultative Committee had a key role as is enshrined in Article 6: "For the purpose of carrying out the consultations provided for in the present Treaty between the States Parties thereto, and for the consideration of matters arising in connexion with the application of the present Treaty, a Political Consultative Committee shall be established, in which each State Party to the Treaty shall be represented by a member of the Government or by some other specially appointed representative." (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 12).

[12] This reasoning can be also found in the aforementioned *Lessons*, which states: "Thousands of communists, individual citizens and entire collectives of workers...have been searching hard for a way out of the difficult critical situation. Since the right-wing section of the Party leadership was unwilling to take any measures that would lead to the thwarting of the counter-revolutionary coup and the averting of civil war, they began to appeal to the leadership of the fraternal parties and to the governments of our allies to provide the Czechoslovak people with international help in the defence of socialism at this historically serious moment." (Veselý, 2005, p. 631)

[13] A statement by the Communist Party leadership dated 21 August says: "This happened without the knowledge of the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the First Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee and these bodies." (Veselý, 2005, p. 600). Similarly, the parliamentary statement quoted above states that "Similarly, the above-quoted parliamentary declaration states that "no constitutional body of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was empowered to negotiate, did not consent to negotiations, and did invite the occupying forces of the five Warsaw Pact states." (Veselý, 2012, p. 710)

The Joint Command of the Warsaw Pact member states (established simultaneously with the conclusion of the Treaty) was subject to the Political Consultative Committee. The resolution on its establishment states: "The consideration of common questions relating to the strengthening of the defence capability and organisation of the armed forces of the States participating in the Treaty shall be the responsibility of the Political Consultative Committee, which shall take the appropriate decisions." (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 14). The armed forces allocated by each member state were subject to the Joint Command; the very first ever supreme commander was Soviet Marshal **I. S. Konev**. The last paragraph of this resolution was very important in relation to the subsequent situation of Czechoslovakia, stating: "The deployment of the combined armed forces on the territory of the States participating in the Treaty will be carried out according to the needs of mutual defence, after agreement between these States." (Organizace Varšavské smlouvy, 1985, p. 15). However, this wording is unclear and vague, because it is not clear whether the agreement on deployment also expects a mutual agreement of involved states on the entry of the joined military forces.

And here the greatest weakness of the attempt to conceive or present the invasion of Czechoslovakia as an action carried out on the basis and decision of the Warsaw Pact becomes apparent. In fact, not only that no meeting of the Political Consultative Committee neither discussed nor approved the intervention, but also did not authorize the Joint Military Command to prepare and execute it. Nor were reservations about Czechoslovakia ever discussed at that level. The last meeting of the Political Advisory Committee before the invasion took place in Sofia on 6-7 March 1968.[14] Except for Albania, all the states of the Pact were present.[15] The subjects of the meeting were support for Vietnam against American aggression and nuclear non-proliferation. Regarding the internal agenda of the Pact, the topic was the centralization of its military command, which met with opposition from Romania.[16]

[14] The next meeting of the political committee held in this format took place a year after the invasion on 17 March 1969 in Budapest.

[15] Albania, which at the time of the Soviet-Chinese rift was oriented towards supporting the line of the Chinese Communist leadership, had not been active in the Pact since the early 1960s. After the invasion, it even withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in September 1968.

[16] Romania, although a rigid communist dictatorship headed by N. Ceausescu, displayed strong autonomist to independent attitudes, especially towards Soviet policy both within the Pact and in the field of foreign policy and international relations. For example, it was the only country in the Soviet bloc that did not break diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six-Day War in June 1967.

As far as the developments in Czechoslovakia and its criticism were concerned, the negotiations on the multilateral level were taking place outside the Warsaw Pact format. Romania and Albania, which would certainly have rejected criticism of Czechoslovakia, were excluded from them. This was justified on the grounds that these were meetings between Czechoslovak representatives and representatives of states neighbouring Czechoslovakia. However, the participation of Bulgaria clearly did not fit into this concept. The first event of this kind, which was attended by only six members of the Pact, or rather took place in a 5+1 format, took place in Dresden on 23-24 March 1968. The Czechoslovak side was told that issues of economic cooperation were on the agenda, not criticism of the situation in Czechoslovakia.[17] Separately and without Czechoslovak participation, the representatives of the 'Five' met secretly at the beginning of May 1968; the subject of the meeting was power intervention in Czechoslovakia.

The next meeting of the 'Five', which was to be attended by the Czechoslovak side, took place in Warsaw on 14-15 July 1968. However, the Czechoslovak side refused to participate. The result of the Warsaw meeting was an open letter addressed to the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, containing criticism of developments in the country and of the Communist Party's policy towards it. The letter already contained a serious threat of intervention, reinforced by the fact that the threat was made public: "In our opinion, a situation has arisen in which the threat to the foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia also threatens the common vital interests of the other socialist countries. The peoples of our countries would never forgive us indifference and levity in the face of such a danger." (Dokumenty, 1968, p. 210).[18] The Czechoslovak leadership, however, rejected this criticism and proposed to conduct bilateral negotiations with the parties.

A number of meetings of the highest Czechoslovak officials took place on a bilateral level. First of all, there were meetings of Czechoslovak representatives

[17] To be more precise, the first objections were voiced by the leaders of the 'Five' as early as February 1968, when they attended the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the Communist takeover in February 1948; Brezhnev also criticised Dubček's prepared speech, which had to be modified. (Kural, 1, 1993, pp. 42-43)

[18] There is a logic to the claim (here and in other statements) that the threat to socialism in Czechoslovakia is also a threat to other Soviet bloc countries. Indeed, the success of the reform process and the Soviet leadership's tolerance of it in Czechoslovakia could be an unwelcome and contagious inspiration for other countries in the bloc. This was especially true for Poland and Hungary, which had already attempted to implement similar process in 1956.

with leaders critical of developments in Czechoslovakia, such as with the Soviet Prime Minister **Nikolai Kosygin** during his 'medical' stay in Karlovy Vary, with the Polish **Wladyslaw Gomulka**, the East German **Walter Ulbricht**, the Bulgarian **Todor Zhivkov** or the Hungarian **János Kádár**.[19] Czechoslovakia was also visited by top Soviet military officials - Minister of Defence **Andrei A. Grechko** and Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact Allied Forces **Ivan I. Jakubovsky**. However, there were also a number of meetings with political and state officials who expressed their support for the Czechoslovak leadership. Among the Warsaw Pact member countries, it was for example **Nicolae Ceausescu**, who visited Czechoslovakia just before the invasion on the occasion of the signing of the new Allied Treaty. Support for Czechoslovakia had also been expressed shortly before by the Yugoslav President **Josip Broz-Tito** and the leaders of the Communist Parties of Italy and France, **Luigi Longo** and **Waldeck Rochet**.

On the bilateral level, the most important meeting happened between the Czechoslovak and Soviet leadership and took place in Čierna nad Tisou in Eastern Slovakia at the turn of July and August 1968. After these talks, the situation seemed to have calmed down. At the multilateral level, the joint meeting of the leaders of Czechoslovakia and representatives of the 'Five' held in Bratislava in early August 1968 was expected to manifest this development. At the end of this meeting, a joint declaration was adopted. However, the declaration did not deal at all with the situation in Czechoslovakia, even though this situation was the main focus of the closed-door negotiations. The declaration contained the familiar clichés condemning international imperialism, stressing the indissoluble unity and united action against it and cooperation between the countries of the Soviet bloc.[20] It also spoke of the joint protection of the

[19] The meeting with Zhivkov and Kadar took place on the occasion of the signing of the new alliance treaties in April and June 1968.

[20] On this occasion, Brezhnev was to be presented with the above-mentioned letter of invitation, in which the signed pro-Soviet exponents (Alois Indra, Antonín Kapek, Drahomír Kolder, Oldřich Švestka, Vasiľ Bilak) demanded Soviet intervention: "The political means and the means of state power in our country are at present already largely paralysed. The right-wing forces have created favourable conditions for a counter-revolutionary upheaval. At this difficult moment, we appeal to you, Soviet Communists, leaders of the CPSU and the USSR, to give us effective support and help by all means at your disposal. Only with your help will it be possible to extricate the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic from the imminent danger of counter-revolution." A personal letter of similar wording was probably to have been received by Brezhnev from A. Kapek during the negotiations in Čierna nad Tisou. (Janáček and Michálková, 1993, pp. 87-96).

achievements attained in the building of socialism. This part of the declaration soon reached its ominous fulfilment. “The promotion, protection and consolidation of these achievements, which the peoples have attained by their heroic efforts, by the self-sacrificing work of the people of each country, are the international duty of all socialist countries.” (Dokumenty, 1968, p. 253) And, as further developments showed, this defence was not only the responsibility of each individual country (or, better, the Communist Party ruling it) on its own, but also of the other countries of the bloc, even against the will of the country and the Communist Party there.

The above-mentioned formulation can be understood as an expression of the concept of limited sovereignty of the Soviet bloc countries, referred to as the Brezhnev Doctrine. Czechoslovak side, by signing the Bratislava Declaration, expressed its identification with this approach (unlike aforementioned letter of the Warsaw meeting of the ‘Five’ (unlike aforementioned letter of the Warsaw meeting of the ‘Five’ which also contained this concept). In doing so, it also accepted the logic, which was used by its critics to justify the right of the other countries of the Soviet bloc to interfere by all possible means in the situation in the country. This logic can be briefly expressed as follows: 1. developments in Czechoslovakia threaten the existing ruling regime, 2. the collapse of this regime will weaken both the international position of Czechoslovakia and the security of the entire Soviet bloc, and 3. this will destabilize the existing international order (and may even lead to a revision of the results of the Second World War). The fateful significance of this formulation included in the Bratislava Declaration is thus evident.

The Communist party leaders, spontaneously supported in their actions by a large part of the domestic public, mistakenly believed that the above two negotiations had prevented further escalation of the contradictions with the Allies and that it would therefore be able to concentrate on the preparation of the extraordinary 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ).This Congress was expected to take place in early September and was to confirm the orientation towards the democratization process.

However, military activities on the territory of Czechoslovakia remained worrying. These took the form of joint military exercises carried out within the framework of the military dimension of the Warsaw Pact and, of course, on Soviet initiative and under Soviet direction and command. The joint exercise of Soviet and Polish troops on the Czechoslovak-Polish border on 10-23 May 1968 can be considered a kind of prelude. With the participation of Czechoslovakia, and

partially on Czechoslovak territory, the *Šumava* exercise took place on 20-30 June 1968 at a time of intensifying criticism of Czechoslovakia. A total of 30-40 thousand soldiers took part in the exercise (which took place on the Soviet, Polish, East German, Hungarian, and Czechoslovakia territories), of whom 24 thousand was located on the Czechoslovak territory (the command of exercise was in location Mladá in Central Bohemia). (Benčík, 1994, p. 44). Both the thorough reconnaissance of the terrain of the victim of the upcoming intervention, and the sluggish and slow departure of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia after the end of the exercise represented a significant problem for Czechoslovakia.

However, the decision to take, under the code name *Operation Danube*, different and completely liquidating action against the Prague Spring, was made long before the aforementioned military exercise took place. The order to begin immediate preparations for this operation was issued, with the approval of **L. I. Brezhnev**, by the top Soviet military officials as early as 8 April 1968 (i.e. just three days after the end of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia meeting, on which a program of reforms called *The Action Program of the Communist Party of the Czechoslovakia* was adopted!).[21] This decision was taken on the grounds that "the counter-revolutionary forces of Czechoslovakia have disorganized – with the active help of the US and German agents – the system of government in Czechoslovakia. The NATO armies, taking advantage of this situation, are threatening Czechoslovakia with occupation, overthrowing the existing government of the people and establishing a government acceptable to NATO counties." (Benčík, 2013, pp. 8-9). Other military activities (military exercises), happening without Czechoslovakia participation, were also a part of this process (for more see Povolný, 2018).

The intervention was preceded by an instrumental political 'preparatory artillery barrage' by the Soviet leadership against the Czechoslovak leadership for not fulfilling the agreements from previous meetings. The intervention was then launched on the night of 20-21 August 1968. Some 300,000 soldiers took part in this intervention.[22] In terms of scale, it was the largest military operation in

[21] The preparation of the operation only by Soviet military officials was a model that was also used in the preparation of another possible intervention, namely in 1980 against Poland in the form of the *Soyuz-80* military exercise. The plan for the exercise was drawn up by the Soviet General Staff, with only Soviet officers representing the Joint Command. (Bílý, 2016, p. 318)

[22] Their number was to be increased to 500,000 and later temporarily to 800,000. (According to the information of former Prime Minister Oldřich Černík from 1991 (see Pauer, 2004, p. 188); in more detail and with some differences Benčík, 199, p.:118; Kural, 1, 199, pp. 160-161). The Czechoslovak

Europe after the Second World War. However, it was not military operation against a foreign enemy, but against its own ally.

2. Political and military aftermath of the intervention

Although the intervention was well executed militarily, the situation that arose as a result of the occupation of Czechoslovakia was a political failure. This was clearly reflected in the fundamentally negative attitudes and statements of the top Czechoslovak representatives and authorities, as well as in the resolute rejection of the intervention by the Czechoslovak population. The way out of the trap of the political failure was to negotiate with the Czechoslovak leadership.[23] However, these negotiations took place only at the bilateral Czechoslovak-Soviet level, on 23-26 August 1968 in Moscow. That is, completely outside the structure of the Pact and without the participation of representatives of the other intervening states. They were informed by the Soviet side about the results of the negotiations separately, without ever meeting the Czechoslovak representatives. The format of the negotiations thus clearly documented that decision-making was in fact in the hands of the Soviet side alone. This, of course, does not exonerate the others involved from their participation in the intervention; but it does clearly show that the previous meetings, these collective tribunals of the 'Five' against Czechoslovakia, were not a community of equals, albeit equally denouncing Czechoslovakia.

The result of these negotiations, conducted in an atmosphere of pressure from the Soviet side, was the so-called Moscow Protocol. The Protocol was prepared by the Soviet side and its text was secret. While the Protocol built on the jointly accepted demands that had emerged from the pre-occupation negotiations in Čierna nad Tisou and Bratislava, in the new power situation created by the intervention, it went much further in its requirements and contained uncompromising demands, with character of ultimatum, leading to the end of the

army at that time numbered approximately 200 thousand soldiers. Although the East German leadership was one of the most active supporters of the intervention, due to potential unfavourable historical reminiscences among the population, the participation of the East German army in the invasion of Czechoslovakia's own territory was limited to the level of liaison officers and logistics. The East Germany army, with a strength of 2 divisions, had the role of a reserve force prepared at the Czechoslovak border and guarded the border with the Federal Republic of Germany (Benčík, 1994, p. 119, in more detail and with some differences from the previous Pauer 2004, pp. 188-189).

[23] The negotiations were initiated by Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda in a situation when all leading Czechoslovak officials were in Soviet captivity and had no contacts with him.

democratisation process in Czechoslovakia. The Protocol reaffirmed, as a common position, "the fidelity of the socialist countries to support, consolidate and defend the achievements of socialism, to struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces, which is the common international duty of all socialist countries." (Veselý, 2012, p. 713). The Czechoslovak side declared the proceedings and conclusions of the extraordinary 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia void and promised to restore control over the media, which supported and were engaged in the process of democratisation of Czechoslovakia. As regards the presence of the occupying troops, the protocol did not indicate at all on the basis of which act corresponding to the constitutional order of Czechoslovakia and of which provisions of the Allied treaties these troops entered the territory of Czechoslovakia. In return for the consolidation of Czechoslovak society, the content and time frame of which were not defined in the Protocol, the withdrawal of troops was promised; however, the time frame for this withdrawal was as vague as the definition of the situation in which the Soviet side would consider its demands met. In this context, the multilateral dimension of the pacification of Czechoslovakia, carried out in the interests of the entire Soviet bloc, was also recalled: "Once the emerging threat to the security of the countries of the socialist community has passed, the withdrawal of Allied troops from Czechoslovak territory will be carried out in stages" (Veselý, 2012, p. 714).

In the Protocol, the Soviet side also forced the Czechoslovak leadership to prevent the initiative of Foreign Minister **Jiří Hájek** to bring the so-called Czechoslovak question to the UN Security Council. The relevant 11th point was as follows: "In connection with the discussion of the so-called question on the situation in Czechoslovakia in the UN Security Council, the leaders of the Communist Party and the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic declared that the Czechoslovak side had not asked for the discussion of this question in the Security Council. The leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia informed that the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic had instructed the Czechoslovak representative in New York to protest categorically against the consideration of the question of the situation in Czechoslovakia in the Security Council or any other organ of the United Nations and to demand categorically that this item be withdrawn from the agenda." (Veselý, 2012, pp. 715-716). On this basis, the Czechoslovak side issued instructions that the negotiations at the Security Council, initiated by the acting Czechoslovak representative **Jan Mužík** and continued by the Minister of Foreign Affairs **J. Hájek**, should be terminated. Although initially the above-mentioned

Czechoslovak representatives qualified the intervention in Czechoslovakia as an 'act of use of force' and therefore relevant to the deliberations of the international forum, on 27 August 1968 the Czechoslovak representative, on the basis of a government instruction, requested that the matter be withdrawn from the agenda of the Security Council; this happened on the grounds that "during the Soviet-Czechoslovak talks held in Moscow from 23 to 26 August 1968, agreement on the substance of the problem was reached." (Vondrová, 1996, p. 283). Thus, the Czechoslovak leadership itself put on a straitjacket allowing it to solve the problem only on a bilateral basis with the superpower that militarily occupied its territory.

By accepting the Moscow Protocol, the Czechoslovak representatives managed to retain their position in the leadership both of the party and the state and thus to prevent the installation of other power structure as well as of the establishment of an unconcealed military occupation regime. At the same time, however, it found itself in a situation which historian **Jan Pauer** has summarized as follows: "The signatures to the Moscow Protocol were not only a confirmation of the political dictate of the superpower, a pseudo-legally codified control convention of the occupying power, which was not legally contestable or even ratifiable, because the overall concept of the protocol was not precise enough even for the needs of the Soviet side. The reformers' signature in the first place meant the legalization of the principle of blackmailing and a commitment to collaboration. Therein lay its significance for the Soviet leadership...The return of the reformers to their state and party functions also meant the de facto legalization of the state of occupation brought about by military intervention." (Pauer, 2004, p. 281).

On 16 October 1968, a treaty on stationing of soviet forces in Czechoslovakia was presented to the Czechoslovak side; this treaty, conceived in a similar bilateral format, was intended to formally legalize the Soviet military presence in the country. The preamble to the treaty states that the reason for its conclusion is the desire to strengthen friendship between the two countries and other countries of the Soviet bloc and "to safeguard the achievements of socialism, to strengthen peace and security in Europe and throughout the world in accordance with the declaration of the Bratislava meeting of 3 August 1968, bearing in mind the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-War Cooperation of 12 December 1943." (Veselý, 2012, p. 719)

In fact, the subsequent articles of the treaty dealt only with the situation arising from fait accompli of an unsolicited Soviet military presence; there is no

mention of how this presence was negotiated between the signatories to the treaty.[24] Moreover, although the stationing of the Soviet troops on Czechoslovak territory was defined as temporary, the treaty did not limit its duration at all. As regards the duration, the treaty contained a formulation that was truly arbitrary on the Soviet side and absolutely unprecedented in the history of treaties – that the treaty would remain in operation "during the temporary stay of Soviet troops" on the territory of Czechoslovakia (Veselý 2012: 723). Here, too, the framework of the Warsaw Pact, including at least a formal link to it, was completely disregarded.

The process of the treaty ratification also went in an unusually fast manner. Already on 18 October, i.e. two days after its signing, the National Assembly approved the treaty with ten abstentions and four votes against. On the basis of this treaty, 80,000 members of Soviet troops remained stationed in Czechoslovakia for more than twenty years as a part of the so-called Central Group of Soviet troops. (Benčík, 2013, p. 272).

The status of Czechoslovakia as a satellite was confirmed by the new Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty (of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) dated on 6 May 1970. This treaty, signed in Prague, in contrast to the previous treaties of alliance with the socialist countries, enshrined the principle of limited sovereignty: "the consolidation and protection of socialist achievements, which have been attained by the heroic efforts and sacrificial work of the people of each country, are the common international duty of the socialist countries". (Veselý, 2012, p. 734). However, nothing is said in the treaty about the fact that the aid had already been 'pre-emptively' secured by the presence of Soviet troops; military aid is only mentioned (as in the above-mentioned treaties with other states) with general reference to the guarantees to Allies mentioned in the Warsaw Pact (Articles 9 and 10) and with reference to Article 51 of the UN

[24] In this respect, a certain parallel can be drawn with the Munich Agreement of 1938. This agreement also did not address the main issue, i.e. whether the Czechoslovak borderlands would be ceded to Germany, but only the conditions and methods of this cession. There is also a parallel between the German occupation of 1939 and the Soviet occupation of 1968, despite several differences. On the one hand, Adolf Hitler forced Czechoslovak consent for the subsequent occupation by pressuring President Emil Hácha and as a result of formal diplomatic negotiations. The Soviet side did not succeed in doing anything similar, even though it initially falsely claimed to do so. On the other hand, there was a difference in the consequences of the occupation. Hitler's occupation abolished the existence of the state as a whole and developed plans for genocide against the Czech nation; the Soviet occupation had an impact not on the very existence of the state, but led to the restoration of the regime within it and to the restoration of its international status, limited as before by a series of ties which effectively made it a satellite and tied it to the Soviet Union and its bloc.

Charter.

Over time, the Czechoslovak leadership – namely **Gustáv Husák**, his successor in the party leadership**, Miloš Jakeš**, and Prime Minister **Lubomír Štrougal** – tried to get the Soviet leadership to end the Soviet military presence in the country. However, they did not do so on the basis that this military presence was the result of an unjustified act of intervention. They argued that normalisation in Czechoslovakia under Soviet dictates had already been successfully carried out and that the reasons for a Soviet military presence had therefore passed. After all, this was also foreseen in the Moscow Protocol of August 1968. But their efforts were unsuccessful, both in case of negotiations with **Brezhnev** and later with **Gorbachev**. (For more see Veselý, 2021, p. 379 et seq.)

3. Distance from intervention after 1989

A major shift regarding the continued presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia took place after November 1989, after the fall of the communist regime. The first step at the political level was taken by the reconstructed communist government of Ladislav Adamec. On the very day of its appointment, 3 December 1989, the government adopted a position in which it qualified the August intervention as a "violation of the norms of relations between sovereign states" (Pecka, 1996, p. 30) and the Prime Minister Adamec called on the representatives of the states that had participated in the invasion to take the same position. The Soviet government did so first, but in a very mild and evasive manner. A day later, it declared: "In 1968, the then Soviet leadership took a one-sided stance on the internal dispute concerning objectively imminent tasks in Czechoslovakia. This unbalanced, inadequate approach and interference in the affairs of a friendly country was justified by the sharp confrontation between East and West." (Pecka, 1996, p. 32). On 5 December, at a meeting in Moscow, the representatives of the remaining states expressed rejection of intervention of Czechoslovakia.

After the political rejection of the intervention by all involved, it was only the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of Czechoslovakia that stood in the way of the full restoration of Czechoslovak sovereignty. The aforementioned position of the Czechoslovak government on the intervention, after condemning it, went on stating that "the federal government proposes to the government of the Soviet Union to initiate negotiations on an intergovernmental agreement concerning the temporary stay of Soviet troops on the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist

Republic…the question of the departure of Soviet troops must also be dealt with in accordance with the progress of the pan-European disarmament process." (Pecka, 1996, p. 31). Very vaguely was this matter formulated in the relevant passage of the programme statement of the Government of National Understanding[25] of 19 December 1989. In addition to the requirements on equality and non-interference in internal affairs under the Warsaw Pact, the programme statement only stated that "our negotiations with the Soviet Union concerning the temporary stay of Soviet troops on our territory correspond to these demands." (Veselý, 2005, p. 677)

As can be seen, the Czechoslovak side only considered the possibility of modifying the conditions of stay of the Soviet troops on Czechoslovakia territory. The reticence in the matter of the radical demand for the departure of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia can be in the given situation attributed to two facts: (a) the burden of Czechoslovakia's satellite past and the resulting lack of courage on the part of Czechoslovak leaders to make such categorical demands of Moscow, (b) the obvious concern of the new Czechoslovak leadership about the direction in which the situation in the Soviet Union would develop and whether Moscow would not try to save its collapsing bloc by another exercise of power through intervention.

Negotiations finally began in mid-January 1990.[26] Initially, the Soviet side did not want to negotiate the withdrawal of troops at all, but only to transform the status of the troops in the country. In this context, it argued that Czechoslovakia needs Soviet military presence in order to ensure its security vis-à-vis Germany. Because the Czech side rejected this argument, in the next step the Soviet side expressed concern that withdrawing from Czechoslovakia would weaken its position in the Vienna negotiations between NATO and Warsaw Pact states on the reduction of troops and armaments in Central Europe. In response, the Czechoslovak side declared that the problem was bilateral, not multilateral, and stated that not only did it consider the Soviet troops to be occupying force and that their arrival or presence is not enshrined by no Warsaw Pact agreement.[27]

[25] The government led by Marián Čalfa, in which the Communists no longer had a majority.

[26] Their course with all its peripeties is captured in the memoirs of the leading protagonists, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Jiří Dienstbier and his advisor Jaroslav Šedivý. (Dienstbier, 1999; Šedivý, 1997, 2008, 2012).

[27] J. Šedivý reflects on the Warsaw Pact: "I was quite surprised in recent years that Moscow did not come up with a proposal to replace the original bilateral treaty on the temporary stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia of 18 October with another one that would put the status of Soviet troops

The next stage of the negotiations already concerned the withdrawal of troops. Negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia were finally concluded during President **Havel**'s visit to Moscow. On 26 February 1990, the Czechoslovak-Soviet intergovernmental agreement was signed. In its preamble, the Agreement referred to the above-mentioned declarations of the Czechoslovak and Soviet governments of 3 and 4 December. The first article set out the essentials: "The complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic shall be effected in stages, the first stage being completed by 31 May 1990, the second stage being completed by 31 December 1990 and the third stage by 30 June 1991." (Veselý, 2012, p. 743) The Agreement entered into force on the date of signature. It is a document of special significance because it abrogated a situation that had previously arisen not as a result of an agreement between the two parties, but as a result of unsolicited and rejected intervention by one party against the other party. There was a compelling reason for concluding the Agreement in the form of an intergovernmental arrangement. If the matter were to be settled at the level of an international treaty, there would be a danger that the entirely legitimate interest of the Czechoslovak side in the earliest possible departure of the Soviet troops, regarded as occupying forces, would be endangered. Thus, a document in the form of an international treaty would only make withdrawal more difficult to implement, as it would have to be ratified. And given the unpredictable developments in the Soviet Union, this could jeopardize the process of withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Protocol on the Termination of the Warsaw Pact, adopted by the Pact's Political Consultative Committee on 1 July 1991 in Prague (sic!), may be recalled in this regard. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Protocol was ratified by the Russian Federation. The relevant ratification document was not deposited in Prague till 18 February 1993 (Veselý, 2021, p. 417).

Another document that was signed the same day by the presidents of both countries (**Václav Havel** and **Michail Gorbachev**) was a declaration on relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The two statesmen declared in it that relations between the two countries "will develop on the basis of equality and full mutual respect for state sovereignty." (Pecka, 1996, p. 109).

on a firmer basis, i.e., that the troops were stationed here as part of the collective defence of the Warsaw Pact. It was only later that I learned at the Ministry that such a treaty had been in the offing, but that the Soviets were so sure of this 'temporary in perpetuity' that they showed an unpardonable and for us later welcome laxity in this matter." (Šedivý, 1997, p. 14)

The scheduled dates for the removal of Soviet troops were met. On 25 June, the plenipotentiaries of both governments signed the final protocol, confirming the departure of the Soviet troops. The last Soviet soldier to leave Czechoslovakia two days later was the commander of the Central Group of Soviet troops, Gen. **Eduard Vorobjov**. With the departure of Soviet troops not only from Czechoslovakia, but also from Hungary and Poland at the same time, these Central European countries were relieved of the main burden that had limited their sovereignty for decades.

And given the issue at hand, which generally concerns the principles of relations between states, a bitter paradox presents itself here. Not long after Czechoslovakia became a victim of the Brezhnev Doctrine, the UN General Assembly, at its XXVth anniversary session on 24 October 1970, adopted *the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States*, which proclaims in the first place the principle that "States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations." (*Veselý 2001: 293*). The Declaration was adopted on the basis of a Czechoslovak proposal, in the drafting of which **J. Hájek**, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, who protested in vain at the UN in August 1968 against the occupation of his country, actively participated.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the mentioned primary facts and knowledge from the available contemporary sources and their interpretation, it can be summarized that the military intervention of the armies of the Warsaw Pact against Czechoslovakia was an unjustified and inadmissible act of aggression. And this is contrary to the mission of the pact, as well as the contractually enshrined rules of its operation. Moreover, it was an aggression against one of the members of the pact and against its will.

The intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was presented and justified by Soviet policy as an internal matter of the Soviet bloc states united under the Warsaw Pact. At the same time, it referred to the principles of relations between the countries of the Soviet bloc, which, however, were flagrantly violated by the intervention or openly proclaimed only after the fact (specifically, the so-called Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty of socialist countries). Based on

the above, it can be concluded that the Warsaw Pact did not fulfil the role of that fig leaf that would help cover the brutal methods of the Soviet hegemonic policy towards its satellites. This documents the validity of one of the accusations against the communist regimes, namely that, in addition to the general norms of relations between states based on international law, they also did not observe their own rules and principles.

References:

BENČÍK, A. 2013. *Operace Dunaj, aneb, Internacionální vražda Pražského jara*. Praha: Krutina Jiří – Vacek, 2013. 399 pp. ISBN 978-80-87493-57-1.

BÍLÝ, M. 2013. ČSSR v organizaci Varšavské smlouvy na přelomu 60. a 70. let. In *České, slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století.* VII. Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2013. ISBN 978-80-7435-792-3, pp. 273-283.

BÍLÝ, M. 2012. Novotného vedení a pokus o reformu Varšavské smlouvy v 60. letech. In *České, slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století.* VI. Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2012. ISBN 978-80-7435-792-3**,** pp. 127-136.

BÍLÝ, M. 2011. Počátky pokusu o reformu Varšavské smlouvy v 60. letech 20. století. In *The Twentieth Century – Dvacáté století*. 2011, 8, No.1. ISSN 1803-750X, pp. 165-172.

BÍLÝ, M. 2014. Romania in the Political Structures of the Warsaw Treaty Organization at the Turn of the 1960s and the 1970s. In *Oriens Aliter*, 2014, 1. ISSN 2336-3959, pp. 44-69.

BÍLÝ, M. 2016. *Varšavská smlouva 1969-1985. Vrchol a cesta k zániku.* Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2016. 430 pp. ISBN 978-80-87912-69-0.

BÍLÝ, M. 2021. *Varšavská smlouva 1985-1991. Dezintegrace a rozpad.* Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2021. 510 pp. ISBN 978-80-88292-94-4.

BISCHOF, G. - KARNER, S. - RUGGENTHALER, P. (eds.) 2009. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*. Lanham etc.: ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS Inc., 2009. 530 pp. ISBN 978-0-7391-4304-9.

CARRADICE, P. 2019. *Prague Spring: Warsaw Pact Invasion, 1968. (Cold War 1945-1991).* Pen & Sword Books Limited, 2019. 136 pp. ISBN 9781526757036.

DEJMEK, J. 2015. K bezprostřední reakci československé diplomacie na sovětskou okupaci 21. srpna 1968. (Několik poznámek a nepublikovaných dokumentů). In *Moderní dějiny*. Sborník k dějinám 19. a 20. století. 2015, 23,No. 2. ISSN 1210-6860, pp. 283-306.

DEJMEK, J. 2016. Zpráva Jiřího S. Hájka o jeho diplomatické aktivitě po 21. srpnu 1968. In *Moderní dějiny.* Sborník k dějinám 19. a 20. století. 2016, 24, No. 2. ISSN 1210-6860, pp. 265-284.

Dokumenty k československé zahraniční politice. 1968. Praha: Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, Panorama, 1968. 271 pp. ISSN 0012-5202.

DIENSTBIER, J. 1999. *Od snění k realitě. Vzpomínky z let 1989-1999.* Praha: NLN, 1999. 441 pp. ISBN 80-7106-325-8.

FIDLER, J. 2003. *21.8.1968 - okupace Československa: bratrská agrese*. Praha: Havran, 2003. 195 pp. ISBN 80-86515-35-4.

FRUS. 1996. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968.* Volume XVII. Eastern Europe. Editor James E. Miller. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996. 579 pp. ISBN 0-16-048091-4. (Available at: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v17)

HÁJEK, J. 1997. *Paměti*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 1997. 349 pp. ISBN 80-85864-26-6.

JANÁČEK, F. - MICHÁLKOVÁ, M. 1993. Příběh zvacího dopisu. In *Soudobé dějiny*. 1993, No. 1. ISSN 1210-7050, pp. 87-101.

K událostem v Československu. Fakta, dokumenty, svědectví tisku a očitých svědků. 1968. Moskva: Tisková skupina sovětských žurnalistů, 1968.

KOCÁB, M. *Vabank 1989-1991.* 2019. *Sametová revoluce. Odchod sovětských vojsk.* Praha: EUROMEDIA GROUP, 2019. 591 pp. ISBN 978-80-7617-844-1.

KURAL, V .- BÁRTA M. et al. 1993. *Československo roku 1968.* 1-2. Praha: Parta, 1993. 207+134 pp. ISBN 80-901337-9-7.

LUŇÁK, P. (ed.) 2019. *Plánování nemyslitelného: československé válečné plány 1950-1990*.

Praha: Dokořán, 2019. 446 pp. ISBN 978-80-7363-959-4.

MLYNÁŘ, Z. 1990. *Mráz přichází z Kremlu*. Praha: Mladá fronta, 1900. 283 pp.ISBN 80-204-0196-2.

Organizace Varšavské smlouvy: dokumenty a materiály 1955-1985. 1985. Third Edition.. Praha: Naše vojsko, 1985. 491 pp.

PAUER, J. 2004. *Praha 1968: vpád Varšavské smlouvy: pozadí, plánování, provedení*. Praha: Argo, 2004. 358 pp. ISBN 80-7203-557-6.

PECKA, J. (ed.) 1996. *Odsun sovětských vojsk z Československa 1989-1991: dokumenty*. 1, 2. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1996. 49+591 pp. ISBN 80-85270-53-6.

PEJČOCH, I. et al. 2014. *ČSLA a NLA v rámci Varšavské smlouvy*. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky - Vojenský historický ústav Praha, 2014.

102 pp. ISBN 978-80-7278-622-0.
PELIKÁN, J. 2008. *Jugoslávie a Pražské jaro*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 2008. ISBN 978-80-7308-220-8.
POTOČNÝ, M. - REGNER, V. - URBAN, J. et al. 1988. *Slovník mezinárodního práva a politiky.* Praha: Nakladatelství Svoboda1988. 461 pp.
POVOLNÝ, D. 2020. *Nejhorší den Československé lidové armády - 21. srpen 1968*. Praha: Academia., 2020.474 pp. ISBN 978-80-200-3121-1.
POVOLNÝ, D. 2018. *Operace Dunaj: krvavá odpověď Varšavské smlouvy na Pražské jaro 1968.* Praha: Academia, 21018. 455 pp. ISBN 978-80-200-2836-5.
POVOLNÝ, D. 2008. *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara. I, Invaze armád Varšavské smlouvy*. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky - Agentura vojenských informací a služeb, 2008. 167 pp. ISBN 978-80-7278-470-7.
POVOLNÝ, D. 2010. *Vojenské řešení Pražského jara 1968. II., Československá lidová armáda v srpnu 1968*. Praha: Ministerstvo obrany ČR - Prezentační a informační centrum MO, 2010. 199 pp. ISBN 978-80-7278-525-4.
PÚČIK, M. 1999. *Rok 1968 a armáda na Slovensku – súvislosti a dôsledky*. Bratislava: MO SR, 1999. 117 pp. ISBN 80-88842-23-9.
RETEGAN, M. 2002. *1968: ve stínu Pražského jara: črta k rumunské zahraniční politice*. Praha: Argo, 2002. 233 pp. ISBN 80-7203-435-9.
Sedm pražských dnů: 21.-27. srpen 1968: dokumentace. 1990. Praha: Academia, 1990. 406 pp. ISBN 80-200-0237-5.
RYCHLÍK, J. 2020. *Československo v období socialismu 1945-1989.* Praha: Vyšehrad, 2020. 415 pp. ISBN 978-80-7601-334-6.
SKILLING, H. G. 1976. *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976. 924 pp. ISBN 0-691-05234-4.
STOLARIK, M. M. (ed.) 2010. *The „Prague Spring" and Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia. 1968: Forty years later*. Mundelein: Bolchazy – Carducci Publishers Inc., 2010. 304 pp. ISBN 978-0865167513.
ŠEDIVÝ, J. 1997. *Černínský palác v roce nula.* Praha: Ivo Železný, 1997. 164 pp. ISBN 80-237-3492-X
ŠEDIVÝ, J. 2012. *Mé putování zmateným stoletím*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2012. 353 pp. ISBN 978-80-74222-188-0.
ŠEDIVÝ, J. 2008. *Velvyslancem u Eiffelovy věže. Praha-Paříž v zahraniční politice*. Praha: Mladá fronta, 2008. 268 pp. ISBN 978-80-204-1716-9.
TOMEK, P. - PEJČOCH, I. 2015. *Černá kniha sovětské okupace: Sovětská armáda v Československu a její oběti: 1968-1991*. 2nd Edition. Cheb: Svět

křídel, 2015. 479 pp. ISBN 978-80-7573-045-9.
VALENTA, J. 1991. *Sovětská intervence v Československu 1968: anatomie rozhodnutí*. Praha: Svoboda, 1991. 192 pp. ISBN 80-205-0213-0.
VESELÝ, Z. (ed.) 2001. *Československá zahraniční politika 1945-1989: (dokumenty)*. Praha: Vysoká škola ekonomická, 2001. 471 pp. ISBN 80-245-0213-5.
VESELÝ, Z. (ed.) 2003. *Československá a česká zahraniční politika 1990-2003: (dokumenty)*. Praha: Vysoká škola mezinárodních a veřejných vztahů, 2003. 259 pp. ISBN 80-86747-01-8.
VESELÝ, Z. 2021. *V silokřivkách mezinárodních vztahů. Mezinárodní postavení, zahraniční politika a diplomacie českého státu od jeho počátků po vstup do EU.* 2nd Edition. Praha: Oeconomica, 2021. 522 pp. ISBN978-80-245-2412-2.
VESELÝ, Z. (ed.) 2005. *Dějiny české politiky v dokumentech*. Praha: Professional Publishing, 2005. 764 pp. ISBN 978-80-86419-89-4.
VESELÝ, Z. (ed.) 2012. *Dějiny českého státu v dokumentech*. Praha: Professional Publishing, 2012. 882+XVI pp. ISBN 978-80-7431-064-5.
VONDROVÁ, J. et al. (eds.) 1995, 1996, 1997, 2011. *Prameny k dějinám československé krize v letech 1967-1970. Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967-1970.* 4/1-4 Brno: Doplněk, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2011. 365+321+393+551 pp. ISBN 80-85270-44-7, 80-85765-76-4, 80-85270-66-8, 978-80-7285-143-0.
WANNER, J. 1995. *Brežněv a východní Evropa 1968-1982.* Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1995. 249 pp. ISBN 80-7184-041-6.