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82. Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 173.
83. Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 174.
84. Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 174.
85. Hermann Axen (1916–1992): 1932 member of the Communist Youth Organization; imprisoned after 1933, inc. in Auschwitz concentration camp; 1945 KPD; 1970–1989 member of the Politburo of the SED, Central Committee secretary for international affairs.
86. Priess et al., *Die SED und der "Prager Frühling"*, 215.
87. Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 175.
88. RGANI, F. 3. op. 72, d. 197, pp. 3–6, Politburo resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU P 95 (I), 17 August 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #62.
89. SAPMO-BA, DY 30/3621, pp. 57–61, minutes of the discussion between members of the delegations of the SED and the KSČ, 13 August 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #86; RGANI, F. 89, op. 76, d. 73, pp. 1–2, Politburo resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU P 94 (82), 10 August 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #54.
90. On the significance of this discussion for the forming of opinion in the Central Committee apparatus of the CPSU, see also Prozumenshchikov, "Inside the Politburo of the CPSU," in this volume.
91. RGANI, F. 3. op. 72, d. 197, pp. 3–6 (see note 2).
92. Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 228–62.
93. On this, see Manfred Wilke, "Protokoll der 47: Sitzung der Enquete-Kommission: Der Prager Frühling 1968 und Solidarnosc 1980/81," in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission der 12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages*, vol. 1, ed. Der Deutsche Bundestag (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), 170; AdBIK, holding "Prager Frühling," stenographical record of the meeting of the interventionist coalition in Moscow, 18 August 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #87.
94. Priess et al., *Die SED und der "Prager Frühling"*, 226–84, and Pauer, *Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes*, 283–391.
95. SAPMO-BA, DY 30/11836, pp. 1–116 (see note 59).
96. Boris Meissner, *Die Sowjetunion im Umbruch* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988).
97. Memorandum on a discussion between the general secretary of the Central Committee of the SED and chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Comrade Erich Honecker, and the member of the Presidium and secretary of the Central Committee of the KSČ, Comrade Vasil Bil'ak, on 24 November 1988 in the offices of the Central Committee, SAPMO-BA, DY 30/2439, p. 3.
98. SAPMO-BA, DY 30/2439, 5.
99. Robert Havemann, *Fragen Antworten Fragen: Aus der Biographie eines deutschen Marxisten* (Munich: R. Piper, 1970), 59.

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Hungary and the Prague Spring

Csaba Békés

The reform movement in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) that began in January 1968 coincided with the introduction of the "new economic mechanism" in Hungary.¹ The Hungarian leadership saw three possible scenarios on which to base a prognosis regarding the potential consequences of the events in Prague on Hungary. In the best-case scenario, the Czechoslovak reforms would remain moderate; they would, if reluctantly, be accepted by the Soviets in a development that was analogous to that in Poland in October 1956. In this case, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the two leading reformist countries within the Soviet Bloc, would be able to support each other and serve as an example to the other countries. This would echo the first half of the 1960s, when Hungary and Poland had played a leading role in de-Stalinization.

In a second, much more probable scenario, the Czechoslovak reforms, which were above all political in nature, would sooner or later—perhaps even contrary to the original intentions of their initiators—move beyond the limits set by the Soviet leadership. This would ultimately lead to an armed intervention on the pattern of Hungary 1956 and could seriously jeopardize all initiatives and reforms in the Soviet Bloc that deviated from the Soviet model, including the Hungarian economic reforms.

In the third scenario, the far reaching political reforms in Prague might prove unacceptable to Moscow, which could lead to Hungary's course of moderate restructuring, which did not threaten political destabilization, being given a green light as the lesser of two evils. A comparison of the two processes, which differed in their objectives, might even awaken a certain amount of sympathy on the part of the Soviet leadership for the downright moderate Hungarian reforms, which only aimed at improving economic

efficiency and indirectly also served Soviet interests. It was, in fact, this third scenario which was turned into reality in 1968 and the ensuing years. The Soviet leadership, after being rather tolerant at the beginning, exerted substantial pressure on the Hungarian leadership in the early 1970s to prevent the reforms from leading to the country's destabilization, and they made sure that the leading reformists were removed. János Kádár himself was not removed, however, whereas Władysław Gomułka and Walter Ulbricht were both forced to resign from their posts during those years; the most important measures of the Hungarian economic reform were allowed to remain in place.

Since the beginning of 1968, it was quite clear that there was only one objective for Kádár and the Hungarian leadership: to do everything in their power to make the first scenario come true. Failing that, the next one in order of preference was the third one; the second one, discrediting all reforms, was to be avoided at all costs. This determination was the driving force behind Kádár's repeated attempts to persuade the Czechoslovak leaders to be cautious, to slow down the pace of reform, to acknowledge realities while he worked hard up to the middle of July, and even after that to convince the Kremlin and the other Soviet Bloc leaders to muster more understanding and patience because the cause of socialism was not yet critically endangered there.

It is important to make it quite clear from the outset that the difference of opinion between Kádár and the Soviets and/or the other Socialist leaders did not concern the question whether the Soviet Union and the member states of the Warsaw Pact were entitled to intervene if a restoration of capitalism was to be attempted in Czechoslovakia. Kádár had given an unequivocal answer to that question at the session of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) held on 19 and 20 June 1968:

If we conclude that this is a counterrevolution and that the counterrevolution is gaining the upper hand, then, quite frankly and if truth be told here among us, one has to go to the limit, and I would raise both my hands in favour of those Warsaw Pact countries that are prepared to do so occupying Czechoslovakia. This is what has to be done because the socialist world cannot afford to lose Czechoslovakia.²

This statement showed Kádár running true to form. This was, after all, the same man who accepted the leadership of the countergovernment in 1956 and went on to suppress brutally the Hungarian Revolution with the help of the Red Army. He was even the only political leader in the entire Eastern Bloc to have overseen a "rescue operation" of the Communist system in a serious crisis.³ So the difference was not one in the degree of loyalty to the Communist system, but in the assessment of the situation, that is, in

choosing the right moment once it was obvious that there was no longer the chance of a political settlement and that Czechoslovakia could only be kept within the Socialist camp through a military invasion. Yet in this question he stubbornly clung to the formula that was for him a tried and proven one on the basis of his own experience: armed intervention was the method of choice only once the counterrevolution had already gained the upper hand. If this undesirable development did indeed come to pass, then the Soviet Union was in a position to restore order and the Communist system in a matter of a few days. This was the reason why at the beginning there was so much emphasis on the Hungarian assessment of developments in Czechoslovakia, particularly regarding the fact that despite negative tendencies there was as yet no counterrevolutionary danger; the goal was merely the correction of earlier mistakes.

By early May 1968 Kádár, too, saw the danger of a counterrevolution and the seriousness of the situation and modified his position accordingly. From that point on, he underlined that at least the counterrevolution had not yet been victorious. At the Warsaw meeting of the "Five" in July, Kádár endorsed the plan of a joint invasion *in principle* and declared Hungary to be prepared to participate, but he continued to do everything to prevent a drastic solution from happening.⁴ In the end, he bowed to the inevitable, and Hungary took part in the military action on 21 August. Even then Kádár rather curiously refused to give up his theoretical point of view. In mid-August, in the days immediately preceding the intervention, he told Leonid Brezhnev that the Czechoslovak developments had their closest parallels not to the Hungary of 1956, but to Poland. The Soviets nevertheless opted for the "Hungarian solution."⁵ Kádár maintained that Czechoslovakia, as opposed to Hungary in 1956, had not yet reached the counterrevolutionary phase in August 1968. He remained true to himself when he felt that the intervention had been premature.

In this case, however, Kádár's assessment of the situation was mistaken. In 1956, Gomułka had got the measure of Soviet tolerance and its limits and was able to contain developments within boundaries that were acceptable to Moscow. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, had undergone a process of democratization by August 1968 that could not be arrested without the use of force, either internally or from outside and that, in fact, recalled two developments in Hungary.

First, the process occurring between February and November 1956 brought about, by the time of the second Soviet intervention on 4 November, a situation in which Communist power had ceased to exist;⁶ the general elections, which were due to be held shortly, would most certainly have resulted in the establishment of a bourgeois democratic system.

At first sight, a comparison of the two crises seems to show up significant differences, the chief one being that there was no armed uprising in

Czechoslovakia. Yet a closer look will reveal that such developments as the extraordinarily fast decay of the Communist Party's self-confidence resulting from the freedom of the press and the societal pressure it generated, the evaporation of its legitimation, its erosion and subsequent dissolution would have taken place within a very short time in Czechoslovakia as well. In Hungary, these developments unfolded step by step in the half year leading up to the revolt and at an accelerated pace during the two weeks of the revolution.⁷

Secondly, the regime change in Hungary in 1988/1989 highlights in an extremely instructive manner how the Communist Party attempted at that time, in a transitional situation similar to the one in Czechoslovakia in 1968, to take into account society's changed interests to a larger extent than had previously been the case in order to revitalize its legitimation. From a starting point of accepting pluralism within the party, it was propelled by pressure both from radicals in the party and in society very quickly to the nominal acceptance of a multiparty system, which the party envisaged as coexisting with its dominant role remaining intact within an overall framework of regulated power sharing. This "new model of socialism" evolving from the middle of 1988 was, in fact, very similar to Alexander Dubček's vision of "socialism with a human face." By May 1989, however, once the danger of a Soviet intervention had gradually receded into the background, this position swiftly gave way to the party's *voluntarily* accepting the idea of genuine free elections. The subsequent Round Table talks resulted in September in an agreement between the party and the opposition on holding free elections the next spring, and in early October, the HSWP itself morphed into a social-democratic party.⁸

In Soviet, Polish, East German, and Bulgarian prognoses, it was precisely these fears that were expressed in the summer of 1968 with reference to the developments in Czechoslovakia, and for this there was good reason. The free press, the foundation of political clubs (that were clearly proto-opposition parties), the preparations for a relaunch of the Social Democratic Party, the "2,000 Words" manifesto and the reception it met with in public opinion, and societal demands of increasing radicalism all concurred in underlining that the Czechoslovak society, which had a powerful streak of nostalgia for the parliamentary democracy of the interwar years, would not have limited its political goals to the acceptance of a reformed Socialist system if it had not been for a military intervention from outside. There is no doubt that the reform movement that was underway in Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 gradually but rather quickly progressed from visions of a reformed Socialist model toward a nontotalitarian system and would ultimately have reached the modern variant of such a system, that of parliamentary democracy; this is indeed what happened in 1990 without pressure from outside in a matter of months.

The Dubček leadership, which was at least in nominal control of developments until the military intervention in August, had two options in this situation. The first one was to restrict liberalization to below the Soviet threshold of tolerance (the Gomulka model of 1956). In this scenario, the gradual relaxation since January 1968 and the freedom of the press would have resulted in a serious conflict between the established power of the state and society so that the increasing societal resistance would probably have had to be dealt with domestically by the use of force (Jaruzelski model of 1981). Yet Dubček, like Hungary's Imre Nagy or Poland's Stanisław Kania, belonged to the "soft" type of Communist leader who was neither willing nor capable of using brute force against society in a crisis to suppress the process of democratization. In this sense, Kádár, who as leader of Hungary's "soft" dictatorship was regarded as a liberal Communist in the West, clearly belongs with Communists of the "hard" type. Another notable representative of this type was Josip Tito, whose independent foreign policy line was highly appreciated in the West while the Yugoslav political and economic model was the most serious deviation from the Leninist-Stalinist-type Communist model. Moreover, he was also lucky for not having had to face and handle a serious internal crisis during his reign. Nevertheless, when Nikita Khrushchev and Georgi Malenkov secretly visited him before the Soviet intervention to crush the Hungarian Revolution in November 1956, Tito not only agreed that intervention was necessary to save the Communist system there, but also promised to help eliminate his virtual allies—Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his adherents—from political life.⁹

The second option—and this is the one that both Nagy in 1956 and the Prague leaders in 1968 chose—consisted of attempting to avoid the conflict with society and yielding gradually to societal pressures. At the same time, it was necessary to convince the Soviets that the political reforms, no matter how far reaching they might appear, were still within the framework of the Socialist system. The Czechoslovak leadership did not accede to the Soviet demands contained in the agreement of Čierna nad Tisou in August 1968 because they understandably concluded that this would be interpreted by the people as a betrayal of the cause of the Prague Spring and provoke determined resistance.¹⁰ The Soviets in their turn viewed the inactivity of the Prague leadership as irrefutable proof of their inability and their unwillingness—which was even worse—to channel developments into the direction of Soviet expectations.

In view of an unreliable party leadership and an increasingly free press, Moscow had by early August also lost confidence in the Czechoslovak security services and in the country's military leadership, as they, too, seemed loyal not to the Soviet Union, but to the Prague leadership.

It was the same four factors as in Hungary in 1956 that were interpreted as symptoms of a deep crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and this realization

propelled Moscow toward the military intervention that spelled the end for the Prague Spring.¹¹

In moral terms, the two actions constituted blatant interferences in the internal affairs of nominally independent allies, yet in terms of *realpolitik*, the Soviet Union, having its own imperial interests at heart, was making rationally justifiable decisions.¹²

KÁDÁR MEDIATES BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND DUBČEK

On taking office as leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), Alexander Dubček held his first international negotiation with János Kádár. Having received an official invitation to Moscow on 10 January, Dubček confidentially asked the Hungarian party leader for a secret meeting before his trip to Moscow.¹³ Kádár was an obvious choice for the Czechoslovak leader. De-Stalinization, which had been carried out successfully in Hungary in the early 1960s, and the reformist élan of the leadership made the Hungarian party automatically a potential ally of the Prague reformers and one to which they were looking for support of their policies.

Dubček was of course well aware that the Soviets would learn of the meeting, yet he possibly banked on the meeting being legitimized in the Kremlin's eyes by an—ultimately unrealized—move that Leonid Brezhnev had suggested during the crisis of a month before, in December 1967, which would also have involved a mediating role for Hungary.

During his trip to Moscow in November, Antonín Novotný had invited Brezhnev to Prague without informing the leadership of the KSČ; he hoped that the presence of the Soviet leader would bolster his own weakened position. In a move unusual even by the standards of Soviet Bloc practice, Brezhnev made Novotný also invite Kádár to Prague, again without informing the KSČ. The Soviet leader had obviously concluded that Kádár's international standing and his "experience" in dealing with domestic crises and in the consolidation of a difficult situation might help persuade the disgruntled members of the Prague leadership to defer Novotný's ousting. As the Hungarian party leader shared this view regarding Novotný at the time, he signaled his willingness to accept the invitation.¹⁴

The following incident is evidence of the dramatic pace at which the Czechoslovak developments were unfolding. In a telephone call on 13 December 1967, Brezhnev attempted to motivate Kádár to undertake the trip to Prague, which was then only three days away, by saying that the Czechoslovak leaders were impatiently looking forward to his arrival—only to be told by Kádár that Novotný had withdrawn the invitation on that very day.¹⁵

The meeting between Dubček and Kádár, which also included a hunting expedition, took place on 20 and 21 January 1968 in Polarikovo and Topolčianky in Slovakia. The two leaders had known each other for a long time, which gave the meeting an amicable atmosphere. This is also evidenced by Kádár's greeting, which was not what one might call a standard formula: "Congratulations—and my most sincere condolences!" With this unusual phrase, he signaled that he was only too familiar with the Czechoslovak problems.¹⁶ "The atmosphere was excellent, Comrade Dubček even said that for obvious reasons there was hardly anyone apart from Kádár with whom he could have talked about those topics in the same manner."¹⁷

Dubček gave Kádár a detailed report on the causes of the Czechoslovak crisis and mentioned the mistakes that had been made since the 1950s in a historical retrospective. He also spoke about the circumstances of Novotný's removal and his own election. Kádár admitted openly that Brezhnev and he had felt in December that Novotný should have been removed at a later date. Kádár knew intuitively that Dubček had actually sought the meeting in the hope of being given friendly advice, and he was unlikely to disappoint him. Kádár therefore advised restoring unity in the party leadership and tackling the problems methodically, calmly, and patiently. He also told Dubček that he must on no account embark on an "offended" political course and that he had to put up with other fraternal parties not being happy about the changes in Prague.¹⁸ "Tell yourself that they are only insufficiently aware of the circumstances and of your own point of view. They will become more aware of the actual situation before long and revise their assessment accordingly."¹⁹

These encouraging words reflect Kádár's initial optimism. They also proved to have been a prophesy which was soon to come true—if in a way that was disastrous for the Czechoslovak leaders. Kádár also mentioned that he deemed secret meetings inadvisable. It was agreed that the Czechoslovak leaders were to come to Budapest in late March or early April for a friendly visit, on which they would report. In retrospect, Kádár called the meeting "an open, straightforward private conversation" and Dubček a "sane, sober-minded communist motivated by a sense of responsibility and also struggling with problems."²⁰

The next meeting between Dubček and Kádár took place before March as developments were picking up momentum not only in Prague and Moscow, but also in East Berlin and Warsaw, where leaders were becoming increasingly concerned about the situation in Prague.²¹ The Czechoslovak leaders' trip to Moscow took place earlier than originally planned, at the end of January. A meeting with Gomulka was arranged for 10 February.²² An invitation to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had also arrived. Therefore, it became important for Dubček, once he had completed his introductory visit to Moscow, to schedule the first official negotiations

with one of the countries of the Soviet Bloc. This first country was to be Hungary, which was considered a close ally, a fact that Dubček openly addressed in the letter of 27 January to Kádár containing the invitation.²³ The hectic pace of developments in Prague becomes apparent from the fact that Dubček originally planned to go to Budapest on 5 February; the information was accordingly conveyed to the Hungarian embassy in Prague. A few minutes later, Dubček himself called the ambassador and asked him to make arrangements for a meeting in Komárno on 4 or 5 February instead.²⁴

In order to underline the official character of this meeting, which took place on Czechoslovak soil in Komárno, the list of participants included the foreign policy secretaries of the two parties, Vladimír Koucký and Zoltán Komócsin, as well as Hungarian deputy foreign minister Károly Erdélyi.²⁵ Dubček reported on the Action Program that was going to be submitted to the session of the Central Committee scheduled for March, and mentioned that "they did not want to tackle too much at once."²⁶ For the time being, priority was given to solving the most important problems. The necessity of drafting a document that dealt in detail and from a long-term perspective with the problems confronting the party, the state, the economy, and society, which would have to be passed by the KSČ's Central Committee, was not mentioned by anyone. Kádár expressed his concerns with regard to the Czechoslovak developments extremely diplomatically when he said: "Mark my words: now everyone is at work there on their own Action Program."²⁷

At the Politburo session of the HSWP on 6 February, the Hungarian leader formulated this concern much more pointedly. According to information he had received two days before the meeting in Komárno, things had taken a turn in Czechoslovakia

that made one's hair stand on end. In a number of different areas all kinds of twelve-point programmes are formulated and submitted to the Central Committee. Their tenor is not hostile or directed against the party but the initiative has been taken out of the hands of the Central Committee and some proposals go beyond the CC's presently held position. They contain such issues as whether Novotný could be allowed to continue as President.²⁸

At the meeting, Dubček painted his visit to Moscow as a great success. He said that Brezhnev and the other Soviet leaders had assured him of their assistance. He underlined that he had explicitly made the point that he wanted to solve all problems in close cooperation with the Soviet Union. Dubček and Kádár agreed in their assessments of the international situation across the board (Middle East, Vietnam, the issue of the Budapest Conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties, and so forth). The most interesting discussion was the one regarding relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Kádár noted with relief that the Czechoslovak and Hungarian points

of view were identical and felt sure he had found an ally in the Czechoslovak leadership in a question that was crucially important to the Hungarian economy. The secret protocol that had been endorsed under Polish and East German pressure by the Conference of Foreign Ministers in February 1967 in Warsaw made it impossible, after Romania's earlier unilateral move, for Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to enter into diplomatic relations with the FRG even though the Bonn government had extended this offer to all four countries.²⁹ Kádár and Dubček welcomed the fact that diplomatic relations had been reestablished in the meantime between West Germany and Yugoslavia. There were now three Socialist countries (the Soviet Union, Romania, and Yugoslavia) that had official relations with the FRG. The fact that Dubček agreed with him that this created an entirely new situation made Kádár hope that with help from the Czechoslovak leadership the time might come for the Warsaw directive to be reviewed. Kádár used open, flexible language to describe his point of view to Dubček:

We have accepted this agreement and stand by it without any emotional involvement either way. It came into being under adverse circumstances. The position it creates is a rigid one and the six points [of the Warsaw protocol] create an impression as if we expected the FRG to proclaim itself a Soviet republic. The conditions are over the top and too rigid. I said that we were of course going to stand by the agreement but afterwards we informed all the parties concerned that this was a question that was not going to go away. It continues to be on the agenda. The situation must be reviewed constantly—and the same applies to what needs to be done about it. It's not one of those problems that can be dealt with once and for all. And we cannot afford not to be able to come up with political answers to political questions.

Dubček and Koucký found themselves in complete agreement with the Hungarian leader.³⁰ That Kádár pinned his hopes of bringing about a review of the Warsaw Pact's attitude toward the FRG to Dubček's help appears to be an important clue in any attempt to understand why he insisted for so long that Czechoslovakia's consolidation according to the interests of the Soviet Bloc be carried out with the Dubček leadership rather than with the "healthy forces" backed by Moscow.

The meeting also produced an agreement on a continued development of bilateral economic and cultural relations. At Dubček's request, Kádár was willing to consider that the friendship treaty between the two countries that had been concluded for twenty years in February 1949 should be renewed a year before its termination, with a clearly demonstrative purpose in the summer of 1968.

The next meeting between Kádár and Dubček also took place earlier than had originally been planned, at the anniversary of the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1968. Initial planning had provided for the

invitation of delegations from the "fraternal countries" headed by one Politburo member, yet in mid-February Dubček, citing "domestic and foreign policy reasons," requested in no uncertain terms that the Soviet delegation be led in person by Brezhnev.³¹ According to the ritual of "imitation," which was well established in the Soviet Bloc, it now became imperative for all other countries to be represented on the occasion by their party leaders as well. In Prague, Kádár had his most important conversation curiously enough not with Dubček, but with Novotný. The Hungarian leader was not only interested in Novotný's views on the developments in Czechoslovakia, but he also tried to persuade the deposed politician not to be swayed by injured pride and not to block reform. A positive outcome was dependent on a unified leadership, Kádár told Novotný, and advised him "to work for a solution of the problems alongside the comrades."³²

In March, the news from Czechoslovakia that reached the countries of the Soviet camp became more and more perturbing. After the abolition of censorship, ever more radical views found their way into the media. Novotný's suggested removal from the post of president, for instance, did not even make it into the list of the particularly courageous "proposals." The Soviet leaders therefore concluded that a meeting must be called immediately to enable leaders of "fraternal countries" to offer Dubček and his comrades Communist assistance in the task of consolidating the situation.

The story of the meeting in Dresden on 23 March 1968 and Kádár's role as a mediator are sufficiently well known. What is less well known is the precise role Kádár played in the run-up to the meeting, which, generally speaking, was the result of agreements involving Brezhnev, Gomulka, and Kádár. During the Czechoslovak crisis, Brezhnev was in regular contact by telephone with the leaders of the five other countries of the "Six"; he was also regularly in touch with Kádár for purposes of sharing information and consultation. On average, he spoke to Kádár at least once a week, with occasional peaks of twice a day.

Wishing to provoke Kádár into speaking his mind, Brezhnev told him on 11 March that Gomulka and Todor Zhivkov, who were both deeply worried about the Czechoslovak developments, had suggested a meeting in Prague in that very week, if possible. Because Dubček himself had suggested at the March meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee in Sofia that the members should meet more frequently at top level to discuss issues of economic cooperation, this meeting was to be advertised as one devoted to economic consultations, which meant that, in addition to the party heads and prime ministers, the leaders of the state planning boards would have to be invited as well.

Kádár's reaction to the proposal was far from enthusiastic, yet he did not think it prudent to reject it out of hand. He suggested holding the meeting in Uzhgorod rather than in Prague "so that things were less obvious." He

also objected to painting the meeting as something different from what it was actually going to be: "Comrade Dubček must be told the truth whole and unabridged." He also suggested that participation in the meeting should be confined to the party heads of four countries, namely the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. Because Kádár knew the points of view of each of the respective leaders, he concluded that a smaller forum, excluding Bulgaria and the GDR, was going to provide more opportunity for offering the KSČ genuine constructive advice and assistance and at same time reduce the probability of it ending in outright condemnation of the Prague leadership's erroneous ways.³³

On 12 March, Brezhnev took the "initiative" out of the hands of "mediators." He was now saying that dangerous tendencies were becoming apparent in Prague that were spreading to the military as well and that this made a meeting necessary. At first, Gomulka was in favor of inviting Novotný and suggested Moravska Ostrava as a possible venue for the meeting, yet after learning about Kádár's proposal, he, too, favored a reduction of the number of participants; he would even have agreed to limiting the invitation to the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.³⁴ On the next day, Brezhnev announced that he had spoken to Dubček on the phone and had mentioned the proposal of a meeting. Dubček had reacted positively, saying he would give his answer later. Brezhnev told Kádár that the Soviet leadership was examining a variety of moves, among others also inviting Dubček to Moscow, and signaled that "certain other measures would be taken as well," which he was not prepared to discuss on the phone, even if it was supposedly tap-proof. This meant, in other words, that preparations for a military solution were underway.³⁵ On 16 March, Brezhnev told Kádár that Dubček still welcomed the idea of a meeting, but had as yet been unable to commit himself to any details. He had, however, mentioned that he was going to speak to Kádár and perhaps even to travel to Hungary for discussions with him. Brezhnev noted that "it was obvious that Dubček was eagerly looking forward to meeting Comrade Kádár; the relationship is a very good one and marked by complete trust." Brezhnev was trying to curry favor with Kádár for a good reason: mutual trust would stand him in good stead in the realization of their common goal. He signaled approval of the idea; in a bilateral meeting, Kádár would be able to address their common worries and problems and prepare the ground for the four-party meeting.³⁶

Dubček, however, changed his mind in the meantime, abandoned the idea of going to Hungary, and informed Brezhnev on 19 March that he was ready for a meeting. He named Dresden as a possible venue because he had never been to the GDR and considered Dresden neutral territory. In light of the GDR leadership's point of view,³⁷ Dubček's proposal does not really make sense in retrospect. What is even more curious is the fact that in the

meantime Dubček had even adopted Brezhnev's idea of the smoke screen; he suggested making the meeting appear like an "economic forum," which would necessitate including the heads of the planning boards.³⁸ What he was probably hoping for from this solution was that it might make it easier for him to ward off both international and national criticism of the Czechoslovak leadership's decision to take part in a meeting whose main topic was bound to be an assessment of the situation in Czechoslovakia. In the literature on the Prague Spring, the myth, born in 1968 and still generally surviving, suggests that the Czechoslovak delegation was ensnared in Dresden only to realize the true nature of the meeting after its opening. Now it is obvious, however, that Dubček was aware of the situation from the outset and it was precisely him, who "forgot" to inform his colleagues. Thus the rest of the Czechoslovak delegation was sincerely shocked when they recognized the trap.

Brezhnev had, therefore, achieved his goal. All that remained to be done for him was to ensure that the Bulgarians were going to take part. To "soften up" Kádár, he told him that Gomulka had already agreed in principle.³⁹

The same day also saw a session of the Politburo of the HSWP. Several members of that body viewed the meeting with considerable anxiety; they were worried that it might be construed as a clear case of interference in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia and, therefore, inflict unnecessary political damage on the Prague leadership. The proposal was floated to hold the meeting in Budapest. Quite a few asked Kádár to advise the Czechoslovak leaders not to go to Dresden on account of the dangers lurking for them there.

Kádár had not anticipated such a critical attitude on the part of his Politburo. The thought that, in a situation where Brezhnev had finally succeeded in persuading Dubček to attend the meeting, it might fall to him to "abort" the plan quite obviously rattled him. Political maneuvering, manipulation, and the untiring search for compromise formulas were definitely Kádár's strong points yet it was unthinkable for him to thwart openly Brezhnev's intentions. He therefore told the Politburo in a long argumentation that there was simply no way the meeting could now not take place. He did not even shirk from using arguments the implausibility of which he himself was perfectly aware. For instance, he wound up his speech by saying that "it was possible for the meeting to have no other result than to convince us, the others, of the necessity to support wholeheartedly the concept of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Party." He then added in a more realistic vein, signaling his own doubts: "If this becomes apparent there, then that in itself would be no mean result."⁴⁰ Kádár telephoned Moscow on the same day to inform the Soviets about the positive result of the Politburo session, yet he added that this body "had reacted to the proposal with mixed emotions because they did not expect much good to come of it and they foresaw a negative echo both inside and outside Czechoslovakia."⁴¹

In Dresden, Kádár attempted to divide his efforts out of genuine conviction evenly between the two goals he had set himself: to assure the Czechoslovak leaders of his unqualified support and, at the same time, to point out to them emphatically the dangers inherent in the present situation. In his speech, he underlined the Hungarian leadership's solidarity with the KSČ; what was happening in Czechoslovakia had to be considered an internal affair of that country in which no one was entitled to interfere. He urged solving the present problems in a manner that would result in a strengthened Socialist system. He also pointed out that the leadership was not unified and that there could be no successful conclusion to the present troubles without unity. A second precondition for victory, according to Kádár, was a recognition of the necessity to wage consistently a two-front war to fight for the correction of mistakes that had been made in the construction of socialism prior to January 1968 and to fight antisocialist phenomena and tendencies. Kádár spoke at length on his view that Czechoslovakia had not yet—contrary to the assertions of Brezhnev and Gomulka—reached the stage of counterrevolution; there was, however, that danger because the present situation resembled in a number of ways the one that preceded the Hungarian "counterrevolution" of 1956. He expressed the hope that the outcome would be different in Czechoslovakia. The most effective argument that Kádár advanced was that the people who had brought about the Hungarian crisis had not been ardent counterrevolutionaries either. Rather, they had been a confused lot without firm convictions, who had rallied to the cry of putting the resolutions of the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) into practice and had caused tremendous damage without intending to do so: they had opened the gates of the Socialist fortress to the class enemy. In case this was not yet powerful enough as a warning note, Kádár added for good measure: Imre Nagy had not been a conscious counterrevolutionary aiming for regime change; he was carried away by the events of 25 and 26 October and made common cause with the class enemy. Finally, Kádár said quite bluntly to the Czechoslovak delegates: "These events can turn any one of you into an Imre Nagy."⁴² Because Kádár was the only representative of the five parties openly to support the Dubček leadership and to maintain that the solution of the Czechoslovaks' problems was exclusively their own concern, his speech was the most liberal at the meeting in Dresden. Conversely, it must be said that his remarks about Nagy were by far the bluntest reference to a worst-case scenario; everyone knew that Nagy had been executed.

The Hungarian leaders came to play an important role in drafting the final communiqué. The Soviets had originally proposed to itemize in detail the tasks and obligations of the Czechoslovak leaders in the communiqué. Because this would have constituted a blatant interference in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, it was unacceptable for the Hungarians.

During a break at the close of the meeting, Prime Minister Jenő Fock told the Czechoslovak delegation that a communiqué of this sort might have disastrous consequences for the Prague leaders and that they must on no account allow that to happen. Drahomir Kolder felt that mentioning all these points in the communiqué would be tantamount to a death sentence for all of them. Kádár, the master of compromise, insisted that at least mention must be made of the discussion of these points in the course of the negotiations "for if we don't mention that, the world will make fun of us for not having discussed the situation in Czechoslovakia at this juncture." Dubček signaled his agreement to the communiqué mentioning that the KSČ had informed the other parties about the situation in their country. Then Brezhnev entered and announced that a new text was being drafted in which Czechoslovakia was not mentioned. The Hungarians said they had just struck a compromise with the Czechoslovaks. Thus the final draft of the communiqué was written by a Soviet-Czechoslovak-Hungarian "ad hoc committee."⁴³

FROM DRESDEN TO WARSAW: "IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA THE COUNTERREVOLUTION HAS NOT YET GAINED THE UPPER HAND"

The meeting in Dresden fell short of reaching its aims. Despite the "fraternal" parties' warnings, the Czechoslovak leadership failed to halt democratization and attempted to paint the whole process as a renewal of socialism. In a manner that was actually rather naïve, they continued to believe that this was not going to endanger the position of the Communist Party.

In view of the latest developments, Brezhnev summed up his assessment of the situation in a conversation with Kádár on 16 April: "We are about to lose Czechoslovakia." He hinted at the necessity for the fraternal parties to meet again in secret very soon to discuss the situation; this time without the KSČ. Kádár signaled his readiness to attend this meeting. However, as he sensed that the handling of the crisis was about to undergo a drastic qualitative change, he demurred that "he could not envisage discussing [the Czechoslovaks'] fate in their absence."⁴⁴

In spite of Kádár's doubts, this undesirable situation materialized very soon, and at the Moscow meeting on 8 May the only option left to the Hungarian party leader was an attempt to convince his comrades that the present Czechoslovak leadership only needed sufficient support in order to get the situation back under control. However, the representatives of the other parties who had assembled in Moscow saw the situation as indisputably counterrevolutionary and the KSČ leaders as incapable of consolidating it. From this date onward, the idea was gaining ground that

consolidation through political means was to be achieved by "healthy forces" seizing power internally. Kádár acknowledged in his statement that there was rampant anarchy in Czechoslovakia and that this fact was being exploited by antisocialist forces. The leadership was weak, divided, and unable to control state or society. There was, however, no doubt that it was engaged in a two-front struggle. This was to be welcomed, and there was no alternative in any case. He called the KSČ's Action Program a "big zero" because it could be interpreted at will either as a defense of socialism or as its abandonment. What it meant depended on what people wanted to read into it. So the situation was indeed dangerous, but counterrevolution had not yet gained the upper hand in the country.⁴⁵ Kádár therefore proposed that in assessing the situation simplistic schemata should "be replaced by societal analyses, by the analysis of necessities." To illustrate the point he was trying to make, he chose examples that cannot have been to the Soviets' or any of the others' liking, for he appeared to caricature the simplifications endemic to the Eastern Bloc: "For instance, if you call Mao Tse-tung and his clique insane, Castro a petty bourgeois, Ceaușescu a nationalist, the Czechoslovaks crazy, you have not actually done anything to deal with the underlying problems."⁴⁶ After that, he emphasized that "the struggle would ultimately be decided in Czechoslovakia, in the party, by the working class, by the people. This sets out clear boundaries for our actions: to do everything on the one hand to make a communist solution to this difficult situation possible and on the other to do nothing that might give comfort to our enemies."⁴⁷ He was certain that there would be those that advocated a military solution, so he closed with a plea for restraint, saying that he, too, was in favor of using military maneuvers as a means to exercise pressure on both the Czechoslovak leadership and on the people, yet "the problem cannot be solved by military means alone; the political issues are too complex for that." He used a curious example to illustrate that point: "One should bear in mind for instance that Soviet troops were stationed in Hungary in 1956 and that it was their deployment that served as a pretext for the counterrevolution."⁴⁸ He was trying to make the others, most notably Brezhnev, understand that there was an enormous difference between the stationing of Soviet troops and their deployment to restore order, and that the latter could easily backfire.

In this speech, Kádár did no less than rewrite history, at least for the benefit of those who were present, by fundamentally reinterpreting the causes of the "counterrevolution" that had officially been diagnosed in December 1956: the mistakes of the Rákosi-Gerő group, the treachery of the Nagy group, and the disruptive and destructive influence of internal and external reactionary forces. What he was actually saying amounted to a claim that the intervention of the Soviet troops, whose aim had been the restoration of order following the outbreak of the armed revolt on 23 October, had

caused the escalation of the revolution and of the anti-Soviet freedom struggle. This assessment of the sequence of events is indeed borne out by the latest research.⁴⁹ Through this interpretation, Kádár was indirectly blaming the Soviet Union for the consequences of the revolution of 1956.

Kádár was soon given an opportunity to play again the role of mediator that he had assumed from the beginning: he was asked to influence Dubček. The visit of the Czechoslovak leaders that had originally been planned for March finally took place on 13 and 14 June, and a delegation consisting of party and government representatives left Prague for the Hungarian capital.⁵⁰ In order not to leave anything to chance, Brezhnev telephoned Kádár on the previous day and urged him to help Dubček understand "the dangers that are threatening the KSČ, socialism and himself." If they wanted to count on Soviet support, then the least they had to do was get the mass media under their control and detach and distance themselves from the revisionist group.⁵¹ After the Moscow meeting of the "Five," this visit had something of a demonstrative character anyway, which was further enhanced by the renewal for another twenty years of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between the ČSSR and the People's Republic of Hungary. In public, Kádár assured the Czechoslovak leadership of his support for their efforts to consolidate the situation. In private, however, he sounded a note of warning. The Hungarian experiences of 1956 showed that it was necessary to curb democratization and to draw an unmistakable line against deviations and hostile tendencies; otherwise, the party was bound to lose control. Dubček replied in a self-confident vein:

If the antisocialist forces were to become so powerful as to endanger the socialist system, they [Dubček and the other leaders] would not hesitate to confront them and neither their hands nor their knees would be trembling as they did so. They were powerful enough to call those who were scheming against the socialist system to account, even if there was the threat of external interference.⁵²

This determination began to sound increasingly hollow to Moscow, and the news from Prague was ever more worrisome. An article published by *Literární Noviny* on the tenth anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy, which called him wrongfully executed and a martyr, caused indignation in Budapest as well as in Moscow. Kádár considered this as sniping that was taking aim at him personally and at his support for the Prague leadership. What he found particularly galling was the fact that the leadership of KSČ did not react unequivocally to this provocation. The "2,000 Words" manifesto, which was published on 27 June, was counterrevolutionary in the eyes of the Hungarian leadership, and they expected it to draw a number of resolute administrative responses. In a letter to Dubček of 5 July, Kádár

outlined in detail his utter condemnation of the two documents. Whereas in his reply Dubček classified the article on Nagy as a provocation, he defended the KSČ's attitude concerning the "2,000 Words" by pointing out that the manifesto had produced no tangible result.⁵³ It is important to declare that contrary to previous interpretations, neither the Nagy article nor the "2,000 Words" manifesto was a turning point in the policy of the Hungarian leadership, since the HSWP's position remained to avoid a military solution at all costs, even in the middle of July.

Toward the end of June, Kádár traveled to Moscow at the head of a party delegation. Brezhnev painted a somber picture of the ČSSR: Dubček was gradually drifting to the right, the right was growing in strength, Czechoslovakia was getting ever closer to going down the road of Yugoslavia, and its further trajectory might even take it into the bourgeois camp.⁵⁴ Brezhnev announced that Moscow was planning two moves: first, a letter to the KSČ and, second, another meeting with those of its allies who had been present in Dresden. Kádár agreed in principle, but remembering the negative Czechoslovak echoes of the meeting of the "Five" in Moscow in May, he underlined the crucial importance of allowing Czechoslovakia to participate in the meeting. The Hungarian leadership itself differed at that time from the Soviet line on a number of issues, such as economic relations with the West in general and relations with the FRG in particular, so it seemed important to maintain the goodwill of the Soviet leadership. Kádár presumably felt that the time had come to make it quite clear that, while the Hungarian party favored a political solution for the Czechoslovak crisis in principle, it would support a military intervention as a measure of last resort if a political settlement could not be achieved and the continued existence of the Socialist order was in danger. This had been his point of view all along yet from what he had said so far, the Soviets could not be sure. This is why his "declaration of loyalty" was so important. Kádár did not want to irritate Moscow with aberrations of which he was not guilty. The minutes of the meeting of the Politburo of the CPSU of 3 July 1968 contain Brezhnev's take on the topic: "In expounding his thoughts on the Czechoslovak situation, Cde. Kádár said it was obvious that an occupation of Czechoslovakia was inevitable. 'If this should become necessary, we will vote in favour of this move.'"⁵⁵ In the version of the report prepared for the Politburo of the HSWP, this pledge is not mentioned. Nevertheless, we may follow Tibor Huszár in believing that Kádár actually made some similar statement, provided we assume that it was made in the dialectical form outlined above in which military intervention was seen as a measure of last resort.

Brezhnev distorted Kádár's statement to foreground the part that he himself played and to be able to present it as evidence of an important political victory he had gained by forcing a wavering ally back into line with the rest of the Soviet camp. This was certainly the interpretation that the members

of the Politburo of the CPSU made of it.⁵⁶ It was by no means Brezhnev's first "distortion" of Kádár's point of view: in the meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU on 17 July 1968, he claimed that in their assessment of the Czechoslovak situation at the Moscow meeting of the "Five" on 8 May there had been "unanimous agreement," even though Kádár had put forward a point of view there that differed sharply from that of the others.⁵⁷

Kádár also came to play an important role in preparing the meeting of the "Warsaw Five" on 14 and 15 July in Warsaw. Brezhnev had informed the others on 9 July that the Presidium of the KSČ had on the previous day declined at short notice the invitation to another meeting of the six "Dresden" allies. Kádár was taken aback by the reaction of the KSČ, for during his visit to Budapest, Dubček had voiced his dissatisfaction with the fact that in May the "Five" had met for consultations in Moscow without the Czechoslovaks. This is why Kádár proposed a meeting between representatives of the KSČ and the CPSU within a day or two, which would be followed in seven to ten days' time by a meeting of the six allies. This would allow the leaders from Prague sufficient time to do their homework. If they were to decline this invitation as well, then the meeting would have to go ahead without them.⁵⁸ On the next day, Presidium member Oldřich Švestka, one of the representatives of the "healthy forces" told János Gosztonyi, editor-in-chief of the HSWP's daily who had been sent by Kádár on a secret mission to Prague to gather firsthand information, that the Presidium of the KSČ had come out unanimously against the proposal. Kádár therefore, echoing Švestka, told Brezhnev that the Warsaw meeting was making the situation of the left more difficult by shifting the center to the right.⁵⁹ Vasil Bil'ak, another representative of the "healthy forces," had been in Budapest a few days before; in his talks with Kádár and György Aczél, he had repeatedly stressed that Czechoslovakia was capable of solving its problems on its own and needed no help from outside.⁶⁰ Kádár therefore suggested to Brezhnev wording the letter to the KSČ in a tone that would make the Czechoslovaks' participation possible. He added for tactical reasons that the topic of the talks had better not be the situation in Czechoslovakia; each party was to be asked to report on its own situation.⁶¹

In this difficult situation, Dubček asked Kádár urgently to meet him in secret. The meeting took place on 13 July on Hungarian soil, in Komárom. Yet the hopes of Dubček and his companion Černík were disappointed. Instead of offering assurances of continued support, Kádár and Fock severely criticized them for declining to take part in the Warsaw meeting. Kádár told them not only that this had been their worst mistake since January, but that they had also reached a point of no return, which meant "that we have parted ways and will be fighting on opposing sides."⁶²

When Kádár set out for the meeting in Warsaw on 14 and 15 July he did so equipped with a resolution of the HSWP Politburo that continued to call for a political settlement for Czechoslovakia and that was designed to keep the leaders of the "fraternal parties" from opting for a "military solution."

In Warsaw, Kádár stuck to his brief in his first speech. He reported on the meeting in Komárom and underlined the danger inherent in the country's situation, which had, however, not yet reached the stage of counterrevolution. In the debate, Ulbricht and Zhivkov allowed themselves to be carried away in the moment for which there had been no parallel up to then: they not only resolutely and openly condemned Kádár's point of view, but added (the former overtly, the latter indirectly) that it might well be the case for Hungary's internal problems to be next in line for a solution at a comparable meeting of the "fraternal parties."⁶³ This was evidence for the emergence of a dangerous tendency that entitled "fraternal parties" to act as joint trouble shooters not only in crucial crises, but also in the context of developments or reforms that did not endanger socialism as such but were considered undesirable by the others. There was no doubt that Hungary was a case in point at that time.⁶⁴ Kádár therefore thought it advisable to repeat in front of the present company the "declaration of loyalty" he had issued two weeks before in Moscow in order to calm everyone down. He unexpectedly rose to his feet a second time and announced: "We unreservedly agree with the explanations and conclusions of our Soviet comrades and are prepared to take part in any joint action."⁶⁵ Although this was a serious violation of the HSWP's resolution, taking this step was arguably facilitated for Kádár by Brezhnev's making it clear in his speech that despite pressure from the others no final decision would be reached at the meeting itself. Kádár was, therefore, still free, even though he had "publicly" committed himself to agreeing in principle to an ultimate military solution, to work toward a political settlement in the background. Yet the chances for such a settlement were dwindling.

FROM WARSAW TO MOSCOW: KÁDÁR'S LAST EFFORTS FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

After the Warsaw meeting, Kádár concentrated on persuading Brezhnev to make one more effort, to stage one more Soviet-Czechoslovak meeting in order to make it quite clear to Dubček and his comrades that in case they continued to do nothing to stop a development that bore all the hallmarks of total disintegration, there would have to be outside intervention to save the Socialist system. Kádár had the impression that he had succeeded in frightening Dubček and Černík in Komárom; at the end of the meeting,

when they realized the danger they faced, both men burst out crying.⁶⁶ He hoped that a last warning to the leadership by the Soviets would prove effective and trigger at long last the administrative measures required for a consolidation of the Communist system. The Soviet-Czechoslovak meeting in Čierna nad Tisou at the end of July was mainly the result of Kádár's tireless efforts at mediation. At the ensuing meeting in Bratislava, Kádár confronted Dubček quite openly with the alternatives the KSČ had to choose between: either they themselves used force to stop certain tendencies or force would be applied from outside. He illustrated this with his own example and underlined that in 1956 it had been necessary to use deeply unpopular measures to save the Communist system in a context that was much more difficult; yet he had done what had to be done.⁶⁷

At Brezhnev's invitation, Kádár went to Yalta on 15 August. During the ensuing negotiations, everyone knew that a decision in favor of a military solution was in the offing. Kádár now concentrated on the time after the intervention. The situation being as it was, he consented to the military solution, yet he emphasized that, in the long-term, only a political settlement can ensure success. The struggle for the correction of the mistakes made before January 1968 had to be continued, and the KSČ must not relinquish its two-front struggle. Kádár felt that the difficult situation the Soviets were in might provide him with an opportunity to criticize the policy of the CPSU in a constructive manner. He said the Soviet leadership had been impatient in its dealings with the Czechoslovak party and that this impatience had been a key factor in the escalation of the crisis; a more patient approach might have rendered military intervention unnecessary. In this context, he formulated a question that rose far above the present context: "When the CPSU is perceived as rigid by the world, by the global communist movement, who is going to play the role of the standard bearer in the global communist movement?"⁶⁸ He praised Soviet policy after 1956 and said the Soviet leadership had then shown trust in the Hungarian and Polish party leaders and had allowed them to seek new solutions. This had brought a handsome dividend, for they were able to consolidate the situation in their countries.⁶⁹ With these lessons from history Kádár was pursuing two goals. He was first of all trying to make sure that postinvasion Czechoslovakia would be allowed to reestablish order with minimum interference from the Soviets; second, he was trying to broaden with these arguments the maneuvering space in terms of domestic policies in the states of the Soviet Bloc.

In Yalta, Brezhnev entrusted a last mediation mission to Kádár, saying that the Hungarian party was the only one in addition to the CPSU to which Dubček might be prepared to listen. The meeting took place in Komárno on 17 August. It made one thing abundantly clear: the Czechoslovak leaders seemed completely unaware that they were sitting in a train that was heading for the abyss. Even if they suspected their predicament,

they preferred resignedly to wait for the catastrophe; none of them had the courage to pull the emergency brake. It is little wonder that Kádár, who was notorious for his pragmatism, described the meeting as "embarrassing, ill tempered, sterile, pointless."⁷⁰

After the invasion on 21 August, an unexpected opportunity arose for Kádár to influence the course of events positively. On the first day of the crisis management negotiations of the "Five," which took place parallel to the Soviet's talks with the captive Czechoslovak "delegation" between 24 and 26 August in Moscow, he was a fervent advocate of the need to find a compromise with the legitimate Czechoslovak leadership. In order to give emphasis to this Hungarian point of view, he first submitted it to the Soviets in writing.

Ulbricht and Zhivkov clearly advocated a dictatorial solution, the formation of a revolutionary government of workers and peasants in keeping with the Hungarian model of 1956. Gomulka, who was apparently completely out of his depth, went as far as to claim that the situation in Czechoslovakia was much worse than the one in Hungary at the time of the "counterrevolution."⁷¹ In view of the fact that there were a number of influential supporters of a radical solution among the Soviet leaders themselves, Kádár, with his plea for Dubček and his comrades, came down clearly on the side of the realistic solution also favored by Brezhnev and Aleksei Kosygin. He thereby contributed in the end to a political compromise being hammered out that involved the legitimate Czechoslovak leaders and culminated in the signing of the Moscow Protocol.

NOTES

Translated from German to English by Otmar Binder, Vienna.

1. For an overview of the history of the Prague Spring, see H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Jaromír Navrátil et al., eds., *The Prague Spring 1968* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998); Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1997). On Hungary's economic reform in 1968, see Ivan T. Berend, *The Hungarian Economic Reforms, 1953–1988* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1990).

2. Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives] (hereafter cited as MOL) M-KS-288, F. 4/92, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP CC, 19–20 June 1968.

3. While in the Soviet Bloc, there had been two other serious crisis situations as well, the local leaders did not have to play a similar role in those cases. In June 1953 while crushing the Berlin uprising, the Soviet military commander directed operations, and Ulbricht and his comrades returned from hiding only after order

was restored. In October 1956 during the Polish crisis, Gomułka did not have to save the Communist system, but avoid a Soviet military intervention which he did and consequently emerged from the crisis as a most popular leader.

4. For the role of the Hungarian army in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, see Iván Pataky, *A vonakodó szövetség: A Magyar Népköztársaság és a Magyar Néphadsereg közreműködése Csehszlovákia 1968. évi megszállásában* [The Wavering Ally: The Participation of the Hungarian People's Republic and the Hungarian People's Army in the Occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968] (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1996).

5. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/467, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP CC, 20 August 1968.

6. For details on the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, see Csaba Békés, et al., eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002).

7. For a comparative analysis of the two crises, see Csaba Békés, *Európából Európába: Magyarország konfliktusok keresztújében 1945–1990* [From Europe to Europe: Hungary in the Crossfire of Conflicts, 1945–1990] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2004), 223–36.

8. For details of the Hungarian party's policy at the time of regime change, see Melinda Kalmár, "From 'Model Change' to Regime Change: The Metamorphosis of the MSZMP's Tactics in the Democratic Transition," in *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002).

9. Csaba Békés, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics*, Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, September 1996, Working Paper No. 16, <http://cwihp.si.edu>.

10. For details see the chapter of Harald Knoll and Peter Ruggenthaler, "The Moscow 'Negotiations,'" in this volume.

11. See Békés, *Európából Európába*, 233.

12. For details on Hungary's policy with reference to the Czechoslovak crisis, see Tibor Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva: Kádár János és a csehszlovákiai intervenció* [1968, Prague, Budapest, Moscow: János Kádár and the Intervention of Czechoslovakia] (Budapest: Szabad Tér, 1998).

13. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/444, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP Politburo 23 January 1968.

14. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of conversation between Kádár and Dubček, 22 January 1968.

15. Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring 1968*, 22.

16. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of conversation between Kádár and Novotny, 26 February 1968.

17. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/444 (cf. note 13 above); Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 15.

18. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743 (cf. note 14 above).

19. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/444 (cf. note 13).

20. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743 (cf. note 14).

21. For details, see the article by Manfred Wilke, "Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring," in this volume and Paweł Piotrowski, "Polen und die Intervention," in Karner et al., *Beiträge*, 447–60.

22. The meeting was later moved forward to 8 February and finally took place on 7 February.

23. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743 (cf. note 14).

24. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum on Dubček's message to Kádár, 29 January 1968.

25. After the end of the negotiations, Dubček and his comrades paid a half-hour visit to Komárom on the Hungarian side of the border at Kádár's request. Komárom was originally one town, located on both sides of the Danube that was cut in two by the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920.

26. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of conversation between Kádár and Dubček in Komárno, 5 February 1968.

27. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/445, minutes of the session of the HSWP Politburo, 6 February 1968.

28. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/445, minutes of the session of the HSWP Politburo, 6 February 1968.

29. For details on the Soviet Bloc's FRG policy, see Csaba Békés, "The Warsaw Pact and the Helsinki Process, 1965–1970," in *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–1975*, ed. Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou (London: Routledge, 2008), 201–20 and Douglas Selvage, "The Warsaw Pact and the German Question, 1955–1970," in *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts*, ed. Mary Ann Heiss and S. Victor Papacosma (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008).

30. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/445 (cf. note 27).

31. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 13 February 1968.

32. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of conversation between Kádár and Novotný, 26 February 1968.

33. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev.

34. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev.

35. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev.

36. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev.

37. For details on this, see Wilke, "Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring," in this volume.

38. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 19 March 1968.

39. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev.

40. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/451, minutes of the session of the HSWP Politburo, 19 March 1968.

41. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 19/2 March 1968.

42. SAPMO BA, ZPA, IV 2/201/778, minutes of the Dresden meeting, 23 March 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #21.

43. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/452, minutes of the session of the HSWP Politburo, 2 April 1968.

44. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 16 April 1968.

45. Navrátil, *The Prague Spring* 1968, 138.

46. For Kádár's entire speech at the meeting of the CPSU leadership with the leaders of the Communist parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, and Poland on 8 May in Moscow, see AdBIK, holding "Prague Spring," minutes of the meeting of the leaders of the CPSU CC with the leaders of the Communist parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, and Poland, 8 May 1968, reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #77. The quotation as cited above is a translation from the report compiled by Károly Erdélyi, MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/455, cited in Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 86.

47. Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring*, 139.

48. AdBIK, Holdings "Prague Spring," minutes of the meeting between the leaders of the CPSU CC with the leaders of the Communist parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, and Poland, 8 May 1968 (cf. note 46). The quotation as cited above is a translation from the report compiled by Károly Erdélyi, MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/455, cited in Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 88. According to the Russian document, Kádár confined himself to saying how good it had been that there were Soviet troops in Hungary in 1956 because they were at hand to save Hungary, and he mentioned the problem of an intervention from outside only in the context of Czechoslovakia. However, there is good reason to believe that the statement cited here, which is found only in the Hungarian version of the report, expresses Kádár's concerns about the deployment of foreign troops in a more precise and more complex manner.

49. See Csaba Békés, *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában* [*The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics*] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2006), 85–86.

50. The Czechoslovak delegation consisted of Alexander Dubček, Oldřich Černík, Vasil Biľak, and Jiří Hájek.

51. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 12 June 1968.

52. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 117.

53. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 138.

54. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 135.

55. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 145.

56. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 145.

57. Navrátil, *Prague Spring*, 251.

58. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, memorandum of a telephone conversation between Kádár and Brezhnev, 9 July 1968.

59. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, Kádár's letter to Brezhnev, 10 July 1968; MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, János Gosztonyi's minutes of a conversation with Oldřich Švestka in Prague, 11 July 1968.

60. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, minutes of the conversation between György Aczél and Vasil Biľak in Budapest, 6 July 1968; MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743, minutes of the conversation between Biľak and Shelest, 20 July 1968. Biľak was in Hungary

again on 20 July at Brezhnev's behest to organize a secret meeting with Petro Shelest, a member of the Politburo of the CPSU.

61. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 47/743 (cf. note 58).

62. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 4/93, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP CC, 7 August 1968; Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 163.

63. Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring*, 218, 220–21. Kádár's entire speech is reprinted in Karner et al., *Dokumente*, #77.

64. This threat could in no way be regarded as a merely theoretical possibility as indeed, there had been such a precedent not so long ago. Following the failed Hungarian Revolution in 1956, at the Communist summit on 1–4 January 1957 in Budapest, the Soviet, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, and Romanian leaders forced the Hungarian party to make serious concessions concerning the political development of the country, including vetoing the introduction of a limited pseudo-multiparty system akin to the Czechoslovak model. The same forum also decided on the initiation of a court procedure against members of the Imre Nagy group. Békés et al., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution*, 485–95.

65. Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring*, 229.

66. Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring*, 216; MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/462, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP Politburo, 15 July 1968.

67. Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 228.

68. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/467, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP Politburo, 20 August 1968.

69. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/467, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP Politburo.

70. MOL, M-KS-288, F. 5/467, minutes of the meeting of the HSWP Politburo.

71. For details of the negotiations of the "Warsaw Five" between 24 and 26 August 1968, see Navrátil et al., *Prague Spring*, 474–76; MOL, M-KS-288, F. 4/95, minutes of the meeting on 27 August 1968; Huszár, 1968, *Prága, Budapest, Moszkva*, 272–74.