

**EUROPEAN FLASHPOINT 4: CZECHOSLOVAKIA (PRAGUE SPRING) 1968**




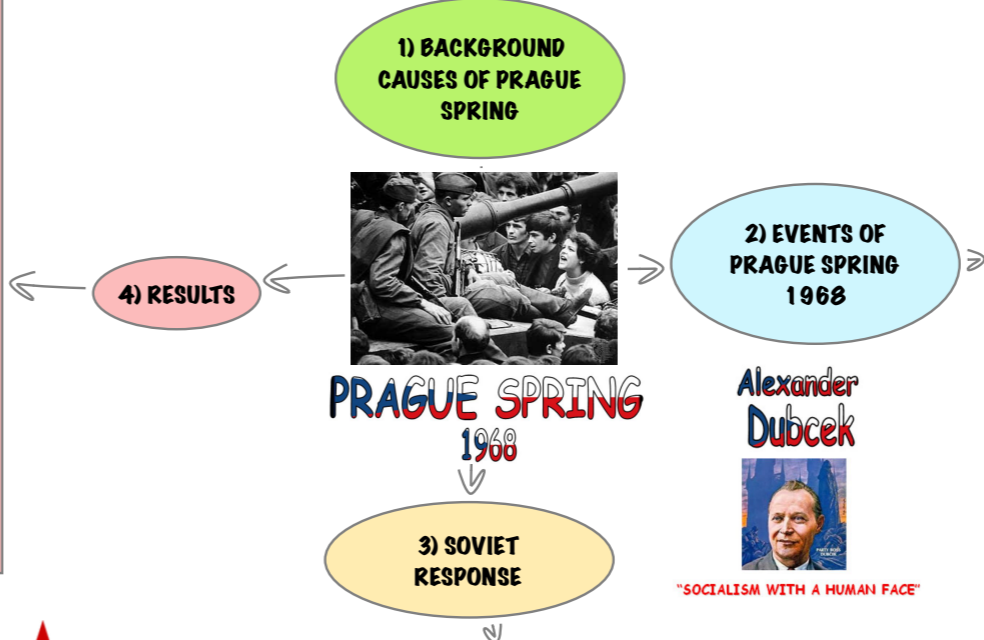
**KEY POINTS IN BACKGROUND THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:**

- 1) In the USSR the more moderate **KHRUSHCHEV** was replaced by the more hard line **BREZHNEV** in 1964. This **removed hope for change for many in Eastern Europe**.
- 2) Brezhnev's **first test** as premier was in the important EASTERN EUROPEAN country of **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**.
- 3) Czechoslovakia had become Communist after World War Two. However, this was **not** wholly successful.
- 4) People in Czechoslovakia were deeply **angry** about the **economic and social impact** of communism which seemed to have created a lot of **poverty** in a **previously prosperous** country. Like Hungary in 1956 they saw **Czechoslovak products** being shipped to the **USSR** while they struggled.
- 5) They also longed for more **freedoms** in a strictly controlled country where civil rights were not upheld. **Culture** was very important in their country and this was restricted by **censorship**. People demanded for **freedom of the press and of expression**.
- 5) The hardline Czech Communist leader **NOVOTNY** was unpopular and people began to demonstrate for change and **REFORM**. They put their faith in one man... a Czech communist called **Alexander DUBCEK**. He **replaced Novotny in January 1968**.



**THERE WERE SEVERAL RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRAGUE SPRING:**

- 1) BREZHNEV DOCTRINE**  
This was introduced to justify the Soviet actions against the Prague Spring after much international criticism of the actions. It is important to note that even other communist regimes in Eastern Europe openly criticised the harsh actions. Countries like Albania and Romania and Yugoslavia for example. The Brezhnev doctrine aimed to counter this. It stated that :  
  
**BREZHNEV DOCTRINE**  
"It is the **duty of Communist countries to act together to prevent another Communist country becoming Capitalist**"
- 2) LACK OF WESTERN INTERVENTION**  
It is also important to note that the U.S. / West **DID NOT ACT** over Czechoslovakia . The U.S. was too much involved in its own serious problems with Vietnam and civil rights protests. They also did not want to risk a nuclear confrontation over an Eastern European country.
- 3) CONTINUED OPPRESSION**  
Due to the passive resistance less than 100 people died in the Prague Spring. DUBCEK survived but was sidelined. However, there was other implications for the many who were involved. Many struggled to get adequate housing or were restricted in their jobs. The secret police spied on many. Millions of people, especially the young, were deeply frustrated. Some such as Jan Palach took the ultimate form of protest and set himself on fire in Wences...




**PRAGUE SPRING**

- 1) In Jan 1968 **NOVOTNY** was replaced by **DUBCEK**, the much more **moderate and reforming Czech Communist leader**.
- 2) DUBCEK was of course a **COMMUNIST** and it is important to realise that he **believed in communism** BUT he believed in a different type of Communism. He wanted to allow much more **FREEDOM**. He believed communism was **unpopular** in Czechoslovakia because it was much too **restrictive**. He called his ideas for reform: **'SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE'**

This is his **ACTION PLAN**:

**Dubcek's Reforms**



1. Freedom of speech & Press (newspapers)
2. Less centralised economic control
3. Increased trade with foreign countries
4. More freedom to travel abroad
5. Reducing the powers of the secret police

**HOW DID THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE REACT?:**

The Czechoslovakian people were very happy with the proposed reforms. This time became known as the **PRAGUE SPRING** as a new spirit of openness and freedom was briefly encouraged....

**KEY PEOPLE IN PRAGUE SPRING**



**ALEXANDER DUBCEK**  
Czech reforming communist leader

**DUBCEK**: REFORMING AND POPULAR CZECH COMMUNIST LEADER WHO WANTED REF...



**BREZHNEV**

**BREZHNEV**: hardline Soviet leader who feared what the reforms of the Prague Spring might lead to and ...



**JOHNSON**

**US President Johnson**  
Too caught up in problems at home with civil rights and abroad with Vietnam to have any time to support the Prague Spring

**NOVOTNY**: hard line communist leader who was replaced by DUBCEK

**HUSAK**: Hard line communist leader ...



**UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAKS, THE USSR DID NOT SHARE THEIR VIEWS:**

- 1) Brezhnev was only recently made premier when the Prague Spring happened. He was regarded as **hard line** replacing Khrushchev who was regarded as weak after Cuba. Therefore **BREZHNEV** was **determined** to make his mark.
- 2) Brezhnev was **NOT HAPPY** about Dubcek's reforms, **despite Dubcek's reassurance about his commitment to the Warsaw Pact**. Brezhnev **feared other East European countries would follow Czechoslovakias example** and that this would lead to a **collapse of Communism** in Eastern Europe. His fears were **shared by hard line communist leaders** in neighbouring east European countries.
- 3) In response he ordered **400,000 WARSAW PACT soldiers** into Czechoslovakia. He tried to claim that this action was carried out on the **request of other Warsaw Pact countries** and at the request of Czech communists ( in reality **only 4 Czech communists had requested action!**)
- 4) **DUBCEK**, possibly remembering the massacre of 30,000 in Hungary in 1956, feared a bloodbath in Prague- a beautiful and populous city. As such he requested that the people of Czechoslovakia **DO NOT FIGHT** but instead take part in **PASSIVE RESISTANCE** - **unarmed, non violent protests**.
- 5) **DUBCEK** was ordered to **MOSCOW** to speak with **BREZHNEV**. When he returned he told the Czech people that the **Prague spring was over**. he was soon replaced by another more hard line leader : **HUSAK**

