

GDR Justification of the Warsaw Pact Intervention in Prague (August 21, 1968)

Abstract

The Central Committee of the SED needed to explain the bloody repression of the Czech experiment with “socialism with a human face” to its own citizens. In its party organ, it argued that the intervention of Warsaw Pact troops served to protect the socialist order against counterrevolutionary machinations.

Source

The Central Committee of the SED, State Council, and Council of Ministers on the Intervention in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

On August 20, as announced on radio and television, representatives of the party and state of the ČSSR (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) loyal to socialism openly took up the struggle to protect the socialist political order against counterrevolutionary machinations. This became necessary after an acute political crisis was triggered in the ČSSR by a group in the leadership of the KPČ (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), which took up an intensified, right-wing course, and by increased activity of anti-socialist forces.

On August 21, in light of the danger resulting from the subversive activity of counterrevolutionary elements and efforts at interference by the imperialist powers, these representatives of the party and state of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic turned to the socialist states allied with the ČSSR—the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, the People’s Republic of Poland, the Hungarian People’s Republic, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—with a request to render immediate assistance, including military assistance, to the Czechoslovak fraternal state and its people. In accordance with official treaties on friendship, mutual support, and cooperation, the Councils of Ministers of these fraternal socialist states have met this request.

The citizens of the GDR had breathed a sigh of relief when, as a result of the important meeting in Bratislava of communist and workers’ parties from socialist countries, the prospect arose for pushing back those forces hostile to socialism in the ČSSR and for preparing their well-deserved defeat. At the meetings in Cierna-nad-Tisou and Bratislava, the delegation of the KPČ had concluded solid agreements with the representatives of brother parties in order to provide effective guarantees (in accordance with the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism, and as defined by the joint declaration) for the protection of the socialist achievements of the Czech and Slovak peoples. The delegation of the KPČ committed itself immediately to securing the political management of the press, radio, and television in the spirit of socialism, to promulgating without delay a law prohibiting the activity of anti-socialist parties, clubs, and organizations, and to creating the necessary guarantees to allow for a consistent course in the party and state leadership that will serve the vital interests of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

The participants in the meetings in Bratislava had hoped that these commitments would be met without delay. Unfortunately, a group in the Presidium of the Central Committee with A. Dubček at its head not only failed to attempt an implementation of the contracted agreements but intensified their right-wing course even after Bratislava. This encouraged the anti-socialist elements. The above group concealed the agreements reached in Bratislava from the members of the KPČ and the Czechoslovak people. It feigned

public approval of the Bratislava resolutions, yet simultaneously allowed anti-socialist forces to conduct a treacherous campaign against the objectives formulated in the Bratislava meeting. At the talks in Karlovy Vary, the delegation of the SED insisted on consistent implementation of the declaration of Bratislava. Yet the delegation of the KPČ stubbornly refused to implement the agreements from the Bratislava meeting, which are directed toward the struggle against anti-socialist and counterrevolutionary forces as well as against all manifestations of bourgeois ideology.

The plan of the anti-socialist groupings and clubs consisted in undermining the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and rendering it unfit for action, so as to clear the way for the goal they were striving for: toppling socialism and establishing a state capitalist regime in Czechoslovakia oriented toward the imperialist Western powers. All of this was supposed to transpire under the Social Democratic slogan of “democratic socialism.” This is, incidentally, nothing new. Ever since the Great Socialist October Revolution, imperialist forces in different countries have repeatedly abused the concept of socialism that has become so dear to people everywhere in order to strangle socialism and democracy.

Every citizen of the GDR, looking at the map, understands that an intolerable situation would have arisen for our republic, and for the other socialist brother countries, if the anti-socialist forces, inspired in particular by West German imperialism, had been able to carry out their counterrevolutionary activities from the south, that is, from our [southern] flank.

In the interest of their security, in the interest of other nations and of world peace, the socialist brother countries can and may not permit the ČSSR to break away from the community of socialist states. By immediately answering the Czechoslovak patriots’ urgent call for help, the governments of our countries are providing a shining example of socialist internationalism, and with all the energy at their disposal they are realizing the solemn duty of the declaration of Bratislava, whereby the support, consolidation, and protection of the socialist achievements of our peoples is the common international duty of all socialist states. [...]

Source: “Das Zentralkomitee der SED, der Staatsrat und der Ministerrat zur Intervention in der ČSSR,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 21, 1968. Republished with permission.

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