The “Prague Spring” Comes to an End: Woman with a Photograph of Alexander Dubček und Ludvík Svoboda (August 21, 1968)

Abstract

After the election of Slovak Alexander Dubček as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on January 5, 1968, a series of economic, social and political reforms was set in motion, aimed at a democratized “socialism with a human face.” Dubček emerged in the reform process as the symbolic figure of hope for democratic socialism. This made the reaction of the population to the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops on August 20–21, 1968, and the deportation of the Czechoslovak leadership around Dubček to Moscow all the more desperate. President Ludvík Svoboda, a former general, negotiated with the Soviet government in Moscow and was at least able to secure the release of the party leadership imprisoned there. In the Moscow Protocol of August 26, 1968, the Czechoslovaks, under pressure from the Soviets, undertook to roll back all reform measures. Dubček remained in office until April 1969, but “normalization,” i.e., restoration of the Soviet-style state socialist system, was initiated. The woman in this photo, plaintively holding a picture of Dubček and Svoboda, embodies the hopes that the population had placed in both statesmen.

Source

Source: Woman protests and holds a photo of Alexander Dubček and Ludvík Svoboda. Image 2 of 2, August 21,1968. Photo: Hilmar Pabel.
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