

Module 05: 1968 — A Generation in Revolt?

Evidence 16: Letter to the People From Czech Leadership, August 21, 1968

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Introduction

Written by the leadership of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party the day after the August 20 invasion, the following document outlines the government response to the military occupation.

Question to Consider

- What kind of political language did the leaders use to condemn the invasion?

Document

To All the People of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic:

On Tuesday, 20 August 1968, at approximately 11 P.M., the armies of the USSR, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic, and the Bulgarian People's Republic crossed the state borders of the CSSR [Czechoslovakian Soviet Socialist Republic]. This occurred without the knowledge of the president of the Republic, the chairman of the National Assembly, the prime minister, and the CPCz CC first secretary, and without the knowledge of these organs as a whole.

The border crossing occurred while the CPCz CC [Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party] Presidium was meeting to make preparations for the 14th CPCz Congress. The CPCz CC Presidium calls on all citizens of the republic to remain calm and to refrain from putting up any resistance against the advancing troops, since it would now be impossible to defend our state borders.

Accordingly, units of the Czechoslovak army and the People's Militia have received no orders to defend the republic. The CPCz CC Presidium believes the border crossing not only contravenes all principles governing relations between socialist states, but also violates the fundamental provisions of

international law.

All leading officials of the state, the CPCz, and the National Front are remaining in the posts to which they were elected as representatives of the people and of the members of their organizations, in accordance with the laws and other valid regulations in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

The constitutional representatives have convened an immediate session of the National Assembly and the Government of the Republic. The Presidium of the CPCz Central Committee is convening a CPCz CC plenum to discuss the situation that has arisen.

The CPCz CC Presidium

Source:

Jaromír Navrátil et al, eds., *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, translated by Mark Kramer, Joy Moss, and Ruth Tosek (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 414-415.

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