

= Prague Spring =

The Prague Spring (Czech : Pražské jaro , Slovak : Pražská jar) was a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia during the era of its domination by the Soviet Union after World War II . It began on 5 January 1968 , when reformist Alexander Dubček was elected First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) , and continued until 21 August when the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact invaded the country to halt the reforms .

The Prague Spring reforms were a strong attempt by Dubček to grant additional rights to the citizens of Czechoslovakia in an act of partial decentralization of the economy and democratization . The freedoms granted included a loosening of restrictions on the media , speech and travel . After national discussion of dividing the country into a federation of three republics , Bohemia , Moravia and Silesia and Slovakia , Dubček oversaw the decision to split into two , the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic . This was the only formal change that survived the end of Prague Spring , though the relative success of the nonviolent resistance undoubtedly prefigured and facilitated the peaceful transition to liberal democracy with the collapse of Soviet hegemony in 1989 .

The reforms , especially the decentralization of administrative authority , were not received well by the Soviets , who , after failed negotiations , sent half a million Warsaw Pact troops and tanks to occupy the country . A large wave of emigration swept the nation . A spirited non-violent resistance was mounted throughout the country , involving attempted fraternization , painting over and turning street signs (on one occasion an entire invasion force from Poland was routed back out of the country after a day 's wandering) , defiance of various curfews , etc . While the Soviet military had predicted that it would take four days to subdue the country the resistance held out for eight months , and was only circumvented by diplomatic stratagems (see below) . There were sporadic acts of violence and several suicides by self-immolation (such as that of Jan Palach) , but there was no military resistance . Czechoslovakia remained controlled until 1989 , when the velvet revolution ended pro-Soviet rule peacefully , undoubtedly drawing upon the successes of the non-violent resistance twenty years earlier . The resistance also became an iconic example of civilian-based defense , which , along with unarmed civilian peacekeeping constitute the two ways that nonviolence can be and occasionally has been applied directly to military or paramilitary threats .

After the invasion , Czechoslovakia entered a period of normalization : subsequent leaders attempted to restore the political and economic values that had prevailed before Dubček gained control of the KSČ . Gustáv Husák , who replaced Dubček and also became president , reversed almost all of Dubček 's reforms . The Prague Spring inspired music and literature such as the work of Václav Havel , Karel Hůsá , Karel Kryl , and Milan Kundera 's novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being .

= = Background = =

The process of de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia had begun under Antonín Novotný in the late 1950s and early 1960s , but had progressed more slowly than in most other states of the Eastern Bloc . Following the lead of Nikita Khrushchev , Novotný proclaimed the completion of socialism , and the new constitution , accordingly , adopted the name Czechoslovak Socialist Republic . The pace of change , however , was sluggish ; the rehabilitation of Stalinist-era victims , such as those convicted in the Slánský trials , may have been considered as early as 1963 , but did not take place until 1967 .

In the early 1960s , Czechoslovakia underwent an economic downturn . The Soviet model of industrialization applied poorly to Czechoslovakia . Czechoslovakia was already quite industrialized before World War II and the Soviet model mainly took into account less developed economies . Novotný 's attempt at restructuring the economy , the 1965 New Economic Model , spurred increased demand for political reform as well .

= = = 1967 Writers ' Congress = = =

As the strict regime eased its rules , the Union of Czechoslovak Writers cautiously began to air discontent , and in the union 's gazette , Literární noviny , members suggested that literature should be independent of Party doctrine .

In June 1967 , a small fraction of the Czech writer 's union sympathized with radical socialists , specifically Ludvík Vaculík , Milan Kundera , Jan Procházka , Antonín Jaroslav Liehm , Pavel Kohout and Ivan Klíma .

A few months later , at a party meeting , it was decided that administrative actions against the writers who openly expressed support of reformation would be taken . Since only a small part of the union held these beliefs , the remaining members were relied upon to discipline their colleagues . Control over Literární noviny and several other publishing houses was transferred to the Ministry of Culture , and even members of the party who later became major reformers ? including Dubček ? endorsed these moves .

= = Dubček 's rise to power = =

As President Antonín Novotný was losing support , Alexander Dubček , First Secretary of the regional Communist Party of Slovakia , and economist Ota Šik challenged him at a meeting of the Central Committee . Novotný then invited Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev to Prague that December , seeking support ; but Brezhnev was surprised at the extent of the opposition to Novotný and thus supported his removal as Czechoslovakia 's leader . Dubček replaced Novotný as First Secretary on 5 January 1968 . On 22 March 1968 , Novotný resigned his presidency and was replaced by Ludvík Svoboda , who later gave consent to the reforms .

Early signs of change were few . When the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) Presidium member Josef Smrkovský was interviewed in a Rudé Právo article , entitled " What Lies Ahead " , he insisted that Dubček 's appointment at the January Plenum would further the goals of socialism and maintain the working class nature of the Communist Party .

= = = Literární listy = = =

However , right after Dubček assumed power , the scholar Eduard Goldstücker became chairman of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers and thus editor @-@ in @-@ chief of the previously hard @-@ line communist weekly Literární noviny , which under Novotny had been filled with party loyalists . Goldstucker tested the boundaries of Dubček 's devotion to freedom of the press when he appeared on a television interview as the new head of the union . On 4 February , in front of the entire nation , he openly criticized Novotny , exposing all of Novotny 's previously unreported policies and explaining how they were preventing progress in Czechoslovakia .

Despite the official government statement that allowed for freedom of the press , this was the first trial of whether or not Dubček was serious about reforms . Goldstucker suffered no repercussions , and Dubček instead began to build a sense of trust among the media , the government , and the citizens . It was under Goldstücker that the journal 's name was changed to Literární listy , and on 29 February 1968 , the Writers ' Union published the first copy of the censor @-@ free Literární listy . By August 1968 , Literární listy had a circulation of 300 @, @ 000 , making it the most published periodical in Europe .

= = Socialism with a human face = =

On the 20th anniversary of Czechoslovakia 's " Victorious February " , Dubček delivered a speech explaining the need for change following the triumph of socialism . He emphasized the need to " enforce the leading role of the party more effectively " and acknowledged that , despite Klement Gottwald 's urgings for better relations with society , the Party had too often made heavy @-@ handed rulings on trivial issues . Dubček declared the party 's mission was " to build an advanced socialist society on sound economic foundations ... a socialism that corresponds to the historical

democratic traditions of Czechoslovakia , in accordance with the experience of other communist parties ... "

In April , Dubček launched an " Action Programme " of liberalizations , which included increasing freedom of the press , freedom of speech , and freedom of movement , with economic emphasis on consumer goods and the possibility of a multiparty government . The programme was based on the view that " Socialism cannot mean only liberation of the working people from the domination of exploiting class relations , but must make more provisions for a fuller life of the personality than any bourgeois democracy . " It would limit the power of the secret police and provide for the federalization of the ČSSR into two equal nations . The programme also covered foreign policy , including both the maintenance of good relations with Western countries and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc nations . It spoke of a ten @-@ year transition through which democratic elections would be made possible and a new form of democratic socialism would replace the status quo .

Those who drafted the Action Programme were careful not to criticize the actions of the post @-@ war Communist regime , only to point out policies that they felt had outlived their usefulness . For instance , the immediate post @-@ war situation had required " centralist and directive @-@ administrative methods " to fight against the " remnants of the bourgeoisie . " Since the " antagonistic classes " were said to have been defeated with the achievement of socialism , these methods were no longer necessary . Reform was needed , for the Czechoslovak economy to join the " scientific @-@ technical revolution in the world " rather than relying on Stalinist @-@ era heavy industry , labour power , and raw materials . Furthermore , since internal class conflict had been overcome , workers could now be duly rewarded for their qualifications and technical skills without contravening Marxism @-@ Leninism . The Programme suggested it was now necessary to ensure important positions were " filled by capable , educated socialist expert cadres " in order to compete with capitalism .

Although it was stipulated that reform must proceed under KSČ direction , popular pressure mounted to implement reforms immediately . Radical elements became more vocal : anti @-@ Soviet polemics appeared in the press (after the formal abolishment of censorship on 26 June 1968) , the Social Democrats began to form a separate party , and new unaffiliated political clubs were created . Party conservatives urged repressive measures , but Dubček counselled moderation and re @-@ emphasized KSČ leadership . At the Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in April , Dubček announced a political programme of " socialism with a human face " . In May , he announced that the Fourteenth Party Congress would convene in an early session on 9 September . The congress would incorporate the Action Programme into the party statutes , draft a federalization law , and elect a new Central Committee .

Dubček 's reforms guaranteed freedom of the press , and political commentary was allowed for the first time in mainstream media . At the time of the Prague Spring , Czechoslovak exports were declining in competitiveness , and Dubček 's reforms planned to solve these troubles by mixing planned and market economies . Within the party , there were varying opinions on how this should proceed ; certain economists wished for a more mixed economy while others wanted the economy to remain mostly socialist . Dubček continued to stress the importance of economic reform proceeding under Communist Party rule .

On 27 June Ludvík Vaculík , a leading author and journalist , published a manifesto titled The Two Thousand Words . It expressed concern about conservative elements within the KSČ and so @-@ called " foreign " forces . Vaculík called on the people to take the initiative in implementing the reform programme . Dubček , the party Presidium , the National Front , and the cabinet denounced this manifesto .

= = = Publications and media = = =

Dubček 's relaxation of censorship ushered in a brief period of freedom of speech and the press . The first tangible manifestation of this new policy of openness was the production of the previously hard @-@ line communist weekly Literární noviny , renamed Literární listy .

Freedom of the press also opened the door for the first honest look at Czechoslovakia's past by Czechoslovakia's people. Many of the investigations centered on the country's history under communism, especially in the instance of the Joseph Stalin @-@ period. In another television appearance, Goldstucker presented both doctored and undoctored photographs of former communist leaders who had been purged, imprisoned, or executed and thus erased from communist history. The Writer's Union also formed a committee in April 1968, headed by the poet Jaroslav Seifert, to investigate the persecution of writers after the Communist takeover in February 1948 and rehabilitate the literary figures into the Union, bookstores and libraries, and the literary world. Discussions on the current state of communism and abstract ideas such as freedom and identity were also becoming more common; soon, non @-@ party publications began appearing, such as the trade union daily *Prace* (Labour). This was also helped by the Journalists Union, which by March 1968 had already convinced the Central Publication Board, the government censor, to allow editors to receive uncensored subscriptions for foreign papers, allowing for a more international dialogue around the news.

The press, the radio, and the television also contributed to these discussions by hosting meetings where students and young workers could ask questions of writers such as Goldstucker, Pavel Kohout, and Jan Procházka and political victims such as Josef Smrkovský, Zdeněk Hejzlár, and Gustav Husák. Television also broadcast meetings between former political prisoners and the communist leaders from the secret police or prisons where they were held. Most importantly, this new freedom of the press and the introduction of television into the lives of everyday Czechoslovak citizens moved the political dialogue from the intellectual to the popular sphere.

= = Soviet reaction = =

Initial reaction within the Communist Bloc was mixed. Hungary's János Kádár was highly supportive of Dubček's appointment in January, but Leonid Brezhnev and others grew concerned about Dubček's reforms, which they feared might weaken the position of the Communist Bloc during the Cold War.

At a 23 March meeting in Dresden in East Germany, leaders of the "Warsaw Five" (USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and East Germany) questioned a Czechoslovak delegation over the planned reforms, suggesting any talk of "democratization" was a veiled critique of other policies. Władysław Gomułka and János Kádár were less concerned with the reforms themselves than with the growing criticisms levelled by the Czechoslovak media, and worried the situation might be "similar to the prologue of the Hungarian counterrevolution". Some of the language in April's KSZ Action Programme may have been chosen to assert that no counter @-@ revolution was planned, but Kieran Williams suggests that Dubček was perhaps surprised at, but not resentful of, Soviet suggestions.

The Soviet leadership tried to stop, or limit, the changes in the ČSSR through a series of negotiations. The Soviet Union agreed to bilateral talks with Czechoslovakia in July at Štiwna nad Tisou, near the Slovak @-@ Soviet border. At the meeting, with attendance of Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin, Nikolai Podgorniy, Mikhail Suslov and others on the Soviet side and Dubček, Svoboda, Oldřich Černík, Smrkovský and others on the Czechoslovak side, Dubček defended the proposals of the reformist wing of the KSZ while pledging commitment to the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. The KSZ leadership, however, was divided between vigorous reformers (Josef Smrkovský, Oldřich Černík, and František Kriegel) who supported Dubček, and conservatives (Vasil Bičák, Drahomír Kolder, and Oldřich Vestka) who adopted an anti @-@ reformist stance.

Brezhnev decided on compromise. The KSZ delegates reaffirmed their loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and promised to curb "anti @-@ socialist" tendencies, prevent the revival of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, and control the press more effectively. The Soviets agreed to withdraw their armed forces (still in Czechoslovakia after manoeuvres that June) and permit the 9 September Party Congress.

On 3 August representatives from the "Warsaw Five" and Czechoslovakia met in Bratislava and signed the Bratislava Declaration. The declaration affirmed unshakable fidelity to Marxism @-@

Leninism and proletarian internationalism and declared an implacable struggle against " bourgeois " ideology and all " anti - socialist " forces . The Soviet Union expressed its intention to intervene in a Warsaw Pact country if a " bourgeois " system ? a pluralist system of several political parties representing different factions of the capitalist class ? was ever established . After the Bratislava conference , the Soviet Army left Czechoslovak territory but remained along its borders .

= = = Invasion = = =

As these talks proved unsatisfactory , the Soviets began to consider a military alternative . The Soviet Union 's policy of compelling the socialist governments of its satellite states to subordinate their national interests to those of the " Eastern Bloc " (through military force if needed) became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine . On the night of 20 ? 21 August 1968 , Eastern Bloc armies from five Warsaw Pact countries ? the Soviet Union , the GDR , Bulgaria , Poland and Hungary ? invaded the ?SSR .

That night , 200 @, @ 000 troops and 2 @, @ 000 tanks entered the country . They first occupied the Ruzyn? International Airport , where air deployment of more troops was arranged . The Czechoslovak forces were confined to their barracks , which were surrounded until the threat of a counter @-@ attack was assuaged . By the morning of 21 August Czechoslovakia was occupied .

Neither Romania nor Albania took part in the invasion . During the invasion by the Warsaw Pact armies , 72 Czechs and Slovaks were killed (19 of those in Slovakia) , 266 severely wounded and another 436 slightly injured . Alexander Dub?ek called upon his people not to resist . Nevertheless , there was scattered resistance in the streets . Road signs in towns were removed or painted over ? except for those indicating the way to Moscow . Many small villages renamed themselves " Dubcek " or " Svoboda " ; thus , without navigational equipment , the invaders were often confused .

Although , on the night of the invasion the Czechoslovak Presidium declared that Warsaw Pact troops had crossed the border without the knowledge of the ?SSR government , the Soviet Press printed an unsigned request ? allegedly by Czechoslovak party and state leaders ? for " immediate assistance , including assistance with armed forces " . At the 14th KS? Party Congress (conducted secretly , immediately following the intervention) , it was emphasized that no member of the leadership had invited the intervention . More recent evidence suggests that conservative KS? members (including Bi?ak , ?vestka , Kolder , Indra , and Kapek) did send a request for intervention to the Soviets . The invasion was followed by a previously unseen wave of emigration , which was stopped shortly thereafter . An estimated 70 @, @ 000 fled immediately with an eventual total of some 300 @, @ 000 .

The Soviets attributed the invasion to the " Brezhnev Doctrine " which stated that the U.S.S.R. had the right to intervene whenever a country in the Eastern Bloc appeared to be making a shift towards capitalism . There is still some uncertainty , however , as to what provocation , if any , occurred to make the Warsaw Pact armies invade . The days leading up to the invasion was a rather calm period without any major events taking place in Czechoslovakia .

= = = Reactions to the invasion = = =

In Czechoslovakia , especially in the week immediately following the invasion , popular opposition was expressed in numerous spontaneous acts of nonviolent resistance . On 16 January 1969 , student Jan Palach set himself on fire in Prague 's Wenceslas Square to protest against the renewed suppression of free speech . Civilians purposely gave wrong directions to invading soldiers , while others identified and followed cars belonging to the secret police .

The generalized resistance caused the Soviet Union to abandon its original plan to oust the First Secretary . Dub?ek , who had been arrested on the night of 20 August was taken to Moscow for negotiations . There , he and several other leaders (including all the highest @-@ ranked officials President Svoboda , Prime Minister ?erník and Chairman of the National Assembly Smrkovský) signed , under heavy psychological pressure from Soviet politicians , the Moscow Protocol and it was agreed that Dub?ek would remain in office and a programme of moderate reform would

continue .

On 25 August citizens of the Soviet Union who did not approve of the invasion protested in Red Square ; seven protesters opened banners with anti @-@ invasion slogans . The demonstrators were arrested and later punished ; the protest was dubbed " anti @-@ Soviet " .

A more pronounced effect took place in Romania , where Nicolae Ceau?escu , Prime Secretary of the Romanian CP , already a staunch opponent of Soviet influences and a self @-@ declared Dub?ek supporter , gave a public speech in Bucharest on the day of the invasion , depicting Soviet policies in harsh terms . Albania withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in opposition calling the invasion an act of " social @-@ imperialism " . In Finland , a country under some Soviet political influence , the occupation caused a major scandal .

Like the Italian and French Communist parties , the Communist Party of Finland denounced the occupation . Nonetheless , Finnish president Urho Kekkonen was the very first Western politician to officially visit Czechoslovakia after August 1968 ; he received the highest Czechoslovakian honours from the hands of President Ludvík Svoboda , on 4 October 1969 . The Portuguese communist secretary @-@ general Álvaro Cunhal was one of few political leaders from western Europe to have supported the invasion for being counter @-@ revolutionary. along with the Luxembourg party and conservative factions of the Greek party .

Most countries offered only vocal criticism following the invasion . The night of the invasion , Canada , Denmark , France , Paraguay , the United Kingdom and the United States requested a meeting of the United Nations Security Council . At the meeting , the Czechoslovak ambassador Jan Muzik denounced the invasion . Soviet ambassador Jacob Malik insisted the Warsaw Pact actions were " fraternal assistance " against " antisocial forces " .

The next day , several countries suggested a resolution condemning the intervention and calling for immediate withdrawal . Eventually , a vote was taken with ten members supporting the motion ; Algeria , India , and Pakistan abstained ; the USSR (with veto power) and Hungary opposed . Canadian delegates immediately introduced another motion asking for a UN representative to travel to Prague and work toward the release of the imprisoned Czechoslovak leaders .

By 26 August a new Czechoslovak representative requested the whole issue be removed from the Security Council 's agenda . Shirley Temple Black visited Prague in August 1968 to prepare for becoming the US Ambassador for a free Czechoslovakia . However , after the 21 August invasion she became part of a U.S. Embassy @-@ organized convoy of vehicles that evacuated U.S. citizens from the country . In August 1989 , she returned to Prague as U.S. Ambassador , three months before the Velvet Revolution that ended 41 years of Communist rule .

= = Aftermath = =

In April 1969 , Dub?ek was replaced as first secretary by Gustáv Husák , and a period of " normalization " began . Dub?ek was expelled from the KS? and given a job as a forestry official .

Husák reversed Dub?ek 's reforms , purged the party of its liberal members , and dismissed from public office professional and intellectual elites who openly expressed disagreement with the political transformation . Husák worked to reinstate the power of the police and strengthen ties with the rest of the Communist bloc . He also sought to re @-@ centralize the economy , as a considerable amount of freedom had been granted to industries during the Prague Spring . Commentary on politics was forbidden in mainstream media , and political statements by anyone not considered to have " full political trust " were also banned . The only significant change that survived was the federalization of the country , which created the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic in 1969 . In 1987 , the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged that his liberalizing policies of glasnost and perestroika owed a great deal to Dub?ek 's " socialism with a human face " . When asked what the difference was between the Prague Spring and Gorbachev 's own reforms , a Foreign Ministry spokesman replied , " Nineteen years . "

Dub?ek lent his support to the Velvet Revolution of December 1989 . After the collapse of the Communist regime that month , Dub?ek became chairman of the federal assembly under the Havel administration . He later led the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia , and spoke against the

dissolution of Czechoslovakia prior to his death in November 1992 .

= = = Normalization and censorship = = =

The Warsaw Pact invasion included attacks on media establishments , such as Radio Prague and Czechoslovak Television , almost immediately after the initial tanks rolled into Prague on 21 August 1968 . While both the radio station and the television station managed to hold out for at least enough time for initial broadcasts of the invasion , what the Soviets did not attack by force they attacked by reenacting party censorship . In reaction to the invasion , on 28 August 1968 , all Czechoslovak publishers agreed to halt production of newspapers for the day to allow for a " day of reflection " for the editorial staffs . Writers and reporters agreed with Dubcek to support a limited reinstitution of the censorship office , as long as the institution was to only last three months . Finally , by September 1968 , the Czechoslovak Communist Party plenum was held to instate the new censorship law . In the words of the Moscow @-@ approved resolution , " The press , radio , and television are first of all the instruments for carrying into life the policies of the Party and state . "

While this was not yet the end of the media ? s freedom after the Prague Spring , it was the beginning of the end . During November , the Presidium , under Husak , declared that the Czechoslovak press could not make any negative remarks about the Soviet invaders or they would risk violating the agreement they had come to at the end of August . When the weeklies Reporter and Politika responded harshly to this threat , even going so far as to not so subtly criticize the Presidium itself in Politika , the government banned Reporter for a month , suspended Politika indefinitely , and prohibited any political programs from appearing on the radio or television .

The intellectuals were stuck at a bypass ; they recognized the government ? s increasing normalization , but they were unsure whether to trust that the measures were only temporary or demand more . For example , still believing in Dubcek ? s promises for reform , Milan Kundera published the article ? Cesky udel ? (Our Czech Destiny) in Literarni listy on 19 December . He wrote : " People who today are falling into depression and defeatism , commenting that there are not enough guarantees , that everything could end badly , that we might again end up in a marasmus of censorship and trials , that this or that could happen , are simply weak people , who can live only in illusions of certainty . "

In March 1969 , however , the new Soviet @-@ backed Czechoslovakian government instituted full censorship , effectively ending the hopes that normalization would lead back to the freedoms enjoyed during the Prague Spring . A declaration was presented to the Presidium condemning the media as co @-@ conspirators against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in their support of Dubcek ? s liberalization measures . Finally , on 2 April 1969 , the government adopted measures " to secure peace and order " through even stricter censorship , forcing the people of Czechoslovakia to wait until the thawing of Eastern Europe for the return of a free media .

Former students from Prague , including Constantine Menges , and Czech refugees from the crisis , who were able to escape or resettle in Western Countries continued to advocate for human rights , religious liberty , freedom of speech and political asylum for Czech political prisoners and dissidents . Many raised concerns about the Soviet Union and Red Army 's continued military occupation of the Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s , prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of Communism in Moscow and Eastern Europe .

= = = Cultural impact = = =

The Prague Spring deepened the disillusionment of many Western leftists with Soviet views . It contributed to the growth of Eurocommunist ideas in Western communist parties , which sought greater distance from the Soviet Union , and eventually led to the dissolution of many of these groups . A decade later , a period of Chinese political liberalization became known as the Beijing Spring . It also partly influenced the Croatian Spring in Yugoslavia . In a 1993 Czech survey , 60 % of those surveyed had a personal memory linked to the Prague Spring while another 30 % were familiar with the events in another form . The demonstrations and regime changes taking place in

North Africa and the Middle East from December 2010 have frequently been referred to as an " Arab Spring " .

The event has been referenced in popular music , including the music of Karel Kryl , Lubo? Fi?er 's Requiem , and Karel Husa 's Music for Prague 1968 . The Israeli song " Prague " , written by Shalom Hanoch and performed by Arik Einstein at the Israel Song Festival of 1969 , was a lamentation on the fate of the city after the Soviet invasion and mentions Jan Palach 's Self @-@ immolation . " They Can 't Stop The Spring " , a song by Irish journalist and songwriter John Waters , represented Ireland in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2007 . Waters has described it as " a kind of Celtic celebration of the Eastern European revolutions and their eventual outcome " , quoting Dub?ek 's alleged comment : " They may crush the flowers , but they can 't stop the Spring . "

The Prague Spring is featured in several works of literature . Milan Kundera set his novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being during the Prague Spring . It follows the repercussions of increased Soviet presence and the dictatorial police control of the population . A film version was released in 1988 . The Liberators , by Viktor Suvorov , is an eyewitness description of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia , from the point of view of a Soviet tank commander . Rock ' n ' Roll , a play by award @-@ winning Czech @-@ born English playwright Tom Stoppard , references the Prague Spring , as well as the 1989 Velvet Revolution . Heda Margolius Kovály also ends her memoir Under a Cruel Star with a first hand account of the Prague Spring and the subsequent invasion , and her reflections upon these events .

In film there has been an adaptation of The Unbearable Lightness of Being , and also the movie Pelí?ky from director Jan H?ebejk and screenwriter Petr Jarchovský , which depicts the events of the Prague Spring and ends with the invasion by the Soviet Union and their allies . The Czech musical film , Rebelové from Filip Ren? , also depicts the events , the invasion and subsequent wave of emigration .

The number 68 has become iconic in the former Czechoslovakia . Hockey player Jaromír Jágr , whose grandfather died in prison during the rebellion , wears the number because of the importance of the year in Czechoslovak history . A former publishing house based in Toronto , 68 Publishers , that published books by exiled Czech and Slovak authors , took its name from the event .