

The resonances of a conflict – the 1968 Czechoslovak crisis and its effect on Yugoslav-Hungarian foreign relations

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1. Introduction

With the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Prague Spring more and more focus is once again put on the evaluation of the events. The aim of this paper is not to showcase the political changes in Czechoslovakia itself, but to present the important effects that it had on the historically sensitive Yugoslav-Hungarian foreign relations.² Being a member state of the Warsaw Pact and having a common border with Czechoslovakia Hungary was particularly interested with the evolution of the Czechoslovak reforms. With the introduction of widespread changes in the economy – which officially were introduced on the 1st of January 1968, as parts of the New Economical Mechanism – the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) led by János Kádár found itself in the limelight of negative attention from the more orthodox communist states, most notably East-Germany and Bulgaria. Therefore Alexander Dubček's new, pro-modernization government seemed like an ideal new ally within the Socialist Bloc against the more conservative member states. Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia on the other hand, while also giving home to a socialist system, was carefully balancing between the east and the west and saw in the freshly elected Czechoslovak party leadership, a potential new ally through which it could strengthen its foreign political position in Europe. Some prominent members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) even went as far as to outline, during the early stages of the Prague Spring, the creation of a new, loose socialist alliance in Europe, consisting of Tito's Yugoslavia, Dubček's Czechoslovakia and Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania.

2. Negotiations

While the internal power struggle within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) has been going on for several years prior to 1968, it still came as a surprise for most political observers, when Antonín Novotný was replaced by Alexander Dubček, as the first secretary of the party. Kádár was one of those few outsiders who did expect a shift of power within the CPC – as the HSWP's leader was already informed during a phone conversation by Leonid Brezhnev in

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² For more details about the Prague Spring and the Czechoslovak reform movement see: STOLARIK, M. M. (ed.) 2010: *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 – Forty years later.* – Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Mundelein; BISCHOF, G. – KARNER, S. – RUGGENTHALER, P. (eds.) 2010: *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia.* – Lexington Books, Lanham; RADIĆ, R. (ed.) 2008: *1968 – Četrdeset godina posle.* – Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Belgrade; PAUER, J. 1995: *Prag 1968: Der Einmarsch des Warschauer Paktes: Hintergründe – Planung – Durchführung.* – Edition Temmen, Bremen; HUSZÁR T. 1998: *1968: Prága-Budapest-Moszkva: Kádár János és a csehszlovákiai intervenció.* – Szabad Tér, Budapest; NAVRATIL, J. (ed.) 1998: *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Documents Reader.* – Central European Press, Budapest; WILLIAMS, K. 1997: *The Prague Spring and its aftermath.* – Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

December 1967 about Novotný's weakening support within the CPC.³ For the newly elected Dubček Kádár's Hungary was an ideal example where the reformists within the party managed to realize important changes against the will and intentions of the more conservative party members and foreign criticism. This was clearly signaled by the fact that even before his first official visit to the Soviet Union Dubček arranged a secret meeting with Kádár in Tepličany. The introductory meeting was conducted to the satisfaction of both sides, after which Kádár immediately informed Brezhnev about his positive impressions regarding the new leader of Czechoslovakia – from this moment on, until the meeting in Dresden in March, Kádár became the chief negotiator between Dubček and Brezhnev. During the next months the Hungarian party leadership became the foremost supporter of the Czechoslovak reforms within the Socialist Bloc. Throughout February and March Kádár continuously tried to convince the more and more skeptical Soviet, East-German, Polish and Bulgarian comrades that the widespread reforms represent no danger to the integrity of the Socialist Bloc.

From the beginning on Yugoslavia was clearly interested in the ongoing political changes in Czechoslovakia. Tito wanted to establish good relations with the new Czechoslovak party leadership, as he saw the chance for the creation of a loose alliance of socialist states in Europe, consisting of Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which on the longer term could strengthen the global political position of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, Dubček and his associates clearly realized that the creation of close links with Yugoslavia and Romania could further harm the already strained relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, therefore until July the CPC leadership only maintained low level contact with Belgrade and Bucharest.⁴ In this situation the LCY had no other option then to indirectly support the reform process in Czechoslovakia, while also encouraging other countries – especially Hungary which, as a Socialist Bloc member state could do the most to influence the other socialist states to take the changes favorably – to do the same. During the increasingly tense months of negotiations, Yugoslavia's ambassador to Hungary, Geza Tikvicki⁵ constantly tried to highlight to his conversation partners how positively Tito regards the Hungarian efforts to prevent the escalation of the situation. As he mentions during one of the meetings: *“According to Yugoslavia, the importance of the help provided by the Hungarian party to the Czechoslovak party goes beyond the level of bilateral relations. The positive stance of the Hungarian party helps other socialist countries to understand better the ongoing democratization process in Czechoslovakia, while on the other hand also strengthens the effects of democratic aspirations in other socialist countries.”*⁶ While on another occasion he explained that: *“Yugoslavia rejects all kinds of intervention into the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, whatever noble causes might motivate them. (...) Other countries have to provide the Czechoslovak leadership with that kind of help that it requires.”*⁷ The Hungarian leadership politely welcomed Yugoslavia's support however it was completely aware that Tito pursues different foreign political aims with the support of the Czechoslovak reform process than Hungary.

³ VIDA I. 1993: A magyar pártvezetés és a csehszlovák válság. – História, Vol. 15, No. 9–10, p. 35.

⁴ PELIKÁN, J. 2007: Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring on the Eve of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia. – In: SKŘIVAN, A. – SUPPAN, A. (eds.): Prague Papers on the History of International Relations. – Institute of World History, Prague, 394 p.

⁵ Geza Tikvicki (1917-1999), Yugoslavian politician and diplomat.

⁶ MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 0034/11, 2.

⁷ MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 0034/14, 2.

Kádár's role as an intermediary between Dubček and Brezhnev could only last until the end of March. While the meeting of the Warsaw Pact member states between the 22-23rd of February in Prague, in order to celebrate together the 20th anniversary of the communist power takeover in Czechoslovakia, seemed to reunite the different fractions in the eyes of the public, however in reality no solution was found to ease the rising tensions within the Socialist Bloc.⁸ Dubček's creditability in the eyes of the Kremlin was further damaged by the abolition of the censorship in the Czechoslovak media. Therefore it came as no surprise that the meeting of the Warsaw Pact states on the 23rd of March in Dresden took place in under a tense atmosphere.⁹ Dubček and the CPC's delegation had to endure strong criticism from Brezhnev and the other heads of state present, but finally – if only for a temporary period – they managed to assert the skeptics that the communist party's position is in no danger in Czechoslovakia. For the first time since the beginning of the negotiations in January Kádár – while still stating his full support towards the CPC's reformists – voiced his personal concerns, most notably about the radical liberalization process. Kádár strongly reflected to the events of 1956 in Hungary, underlining that the radicalization of events can quickly make even a good communist turn into an enemy of the socialist state.¹⁰ To the disappointment of those who had hoped that the consultations in Dresden will act a deterrent for the Czechoslovak reformists, the liberal changes in Prague continued. On the 5th of April the CPC's central committee voted in favor of the party's new program, thereby openly declaring the wish to go on with the liberalization process in the country. In response Brezhnev started to organize a secret meeting of the remaining five "true" socialist countries – the Soviet Union, East-Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary.¹¹ As Brezhnev declared during the conversation with Kádár on the 16th of April "*We are on the verge of losing Czechoslovakia*" therefore a crisis meeting had to be organized as fast as possible.¹² The meeting took place in the end on the 8th of May in Moscow and it ended with the complete isolation of Kádár's position of non-intervention. Besides Kádár all the party leaders present in Moscow agreed that the Czechoslovak events showed every possible sign of anti-revolutionary tendencies and therefore preparations had to be undertaken to guarantee, with all possible means, the exclusive power of the communist party in the country. With a last ditch effort Kádár tried to alert Dubček to the seriousness of the situation during the CPC delegation's visit To Hungary in June. The main event of the talks was the renewal of the treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, however during the talks Kádár once again emphasized the importance of stronger state control, as without it the party can easily lose control of the events. Although, Dubček assured Kádár that the CPC will do everything necessary to maintain its leading position, the events in Prague seemed not to reinforce his claims. Radical elements within the party were loudly demanding the Czechoslovak political system's transformation according to

⁸ A Romanian delegation, led by Nicolae Ceausescu himself and representatives of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia also took part in the celebrations.

⁹ Romania did not take part in the meeting.

¹⁰ BÉKÉS CS. 2008: Kádár János és a prágai tavasz. – Beszélő, Vol. 13, No. 7, p. 106.

¹¹ Ceausescu was not invited to meeting, due to the ongoing row between the Romanian and Soviet party leadership and Romania's rejection of any form of external intervention in Czechoslovakia.

¹² BÉKÉS CS. 2008: Kádár János és a prágai tavasz. – Beszélő, Vol. 13, No. 7, p. 107.

the Yugoslav model, while in the same time political groupings started to be organized outside the ranks of the CPC.¹³

3. Yugoslav ambiguity

Feeling the growing internal and external pressure Dubček and the CPC's reformists were finally ready to directly approach Romania and Yugoslavia by the beginning of July. With the establishment of closer ties to Belgrade the CPC hoped to gain an ally which, at least with symbolic steps, will support the current reforms in Prague, thereby easing the pressure on Czechoslovakia. In his previous public statements Tito encouraged the changes within Czechoslovakia since their beginning, however in the reality the Yugoslav ruling circle was not less skeptical about the end results of the reforms than the other East-European communist states. The student protests that erupted in the previous month in Belgrade made Tito even more careful.¹⁴ He realized that Yugoslavia could not support too closely the events in Prague as they might quickly trigger similar demands within Yugoslavia itself. On the other hand Tito, as the "champion" of the Non-Aligned Movement and the leader of a socialist state that chose to go its own way against the will of the Soviet Union could not refuse to offer a helping hand when the CPC directly asked for it. Therefore Yugoslavia pursued a highly ambiguous foreign policy towards Czechoslovakia throughout the last months of the Prague Spring. According to this policy preparations were made for Tito's visit to Prague, while in the same time also signals were sent to the Czechoslovak party members that highlighted the importance of cracking down on non-party opposition organizations. The LCY's leadership particularly considered the reappearance of the Social Democrat Party an alarming signal.¹⁵ Similarly to Kádár, Tito also tried to convince Dubček that only with the consolidation of the power can the reformist wing of the CPC avert an ever more looming Soviet military invasion. Nonetheless, Tito was only prepared to support the CPC as long as it did not seriously affect the stability of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Yugoslavia's ambiguous position resulted in hesitation and concealed passivity which was further strengthened by the indecisiveness of Dubček's inner circle.¹⁶

After the meeting of the "five" states between the 14-15th of July in Warsaw the foreign political position of Czechoslovakia further deteriorated and the chances for a military end of the

¹³ Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations were also negatively influenced with the publication of „The Two Thousand Words” manifesto and with the appearance of an article in the *Literární Noviny* newspaper that commemorated the execution of Hungarian prime minister Imre Nagy in 1958. For more details see: BÉKÉES CS. 2008: Kádár János és a prágai tavasz. – *Beszélő*, Vol. 13, No. 7, p. 109; VIDA I. 1993: A magyar pártvezetés és a csehszlovák válság. – *História*, Vol. 15, No. 9–10, p. 42.

¹⁴ For more details see: JUHÁSZ, J. 2009: 1968 Jugoszláviában és Csehszlovákiában. – In. BARTHA E. – KRAUSZ T. (eds.): *1968 és a világ*. – L'Harmattan Kiadó – ELTE BTK Kelet-Európa Története Tanszék, Budapest, pp. 79–86; Rusinow, D. 2008: *Yugoslavia: Oblique Insights and Observations*. – University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, pp. 62-104.

¹⁵ The Social Democrat Party was not yet legalized in Czechoslovakia, however a preparatory committee was already set up in Prague, that heralded the party's possible reappearance in Czechoslovak politics.

¹⁶ PELIKÁN, J. 2007: Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring on the Eve of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia. – In. SKŘIVAN, A. – SUPPAN, A. (eds.): *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations*. – Institute of World History, Prague, p. 397.

conflict seemed likelier than ever.¹⁷ In response to the events Tito would have agreed to immediately come to Prague as an act of support in the face of the growing pressure from Moscow. However, once again, the indecisiveness of Dubček's inner circle came to light, as the CPC's reformists could not decide whether the Yugoslav delegation's visit would do more good than harm to their cause. Seeing the hesitancy of the CPC as a sign of weakness, Tito eagerly accepted Dubček's offer to postpone the Yugoslav delegation's visit. Tito became even more skeptical towards the Czechoslovak reformists following Brezhnev's and Dubček's meeting in Čierna nad Tisou and the six party talks in Bratislava – the defying opposition that the CPC showed after the “five's” Warsaw letter, vanished in the favor of trying to find a last minute compromise with Moscow.¹⁸

The Yugoslav delegation's visit to Prague finally took place on the 9th of August, after the seemingly successful negotiations in Čierna nad Tisou and Bratislava.¹⁹ Originally in July, when the Yugoslav delegation was invited to Prague, the meeting's aim was meant to be the partial easement of the growing pressure on the CPC's reformists, however that moment has unalterably passed and by the middle of August there was nothing more left to discuss after the assurances given to Brezhnev and the other communist party leaders just a few days earlier.²⁰ Therefore the meeting of Tito and Dubček in Prague was a meeting of two heads of states who in reality had very little to talk about, but nevertheless had to meet as the public opinion expected them to do so. After the tense months of negotiations, threats, compromises and uncertainty the citizens of Czechoslovakia looked at Tito's the only Eastern-European politician who dared to defy the mighty Soviet Union, as a result Tito received a champions welcome when he arrived to lead the Yugoslav delegation's talks in Prague. According to the Hungarian foreign reports Tito was greeted ecstatically by the Prague citizens: *“Without any sort of organization a huge demonstration evolved in support of Tito and Yugoslavia, to which only Gagarin's reception in Prague can be compared.”*²¹ Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, due to the internal political situation in Yugoslavia, the Czechoslovak-Soviet agreements and Dubček's hesitation there was almost nothing to discuss between the two leaders. Tito was also careful not to issue any statements during the visit that could jeopardize the relatively balanced Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Consequently throughout the negotiations Tito mainly focused on convincing the CPC's leadership about the importance of the political consolidation in Czechoslovakia. As Tito stated: *“Democratization is an (essential) thing and political struggle and persuasion form an important and essential part of that, however these can only be*

¹⁷After the CPC's rejection to participate in the meeting Kádár was left alone to argue in favor of a peaceful solution of the conflict. During the talks the Hungarian stance became more and more isolated, finally giving up its position. The meeting ended with the drafting of the Warsaw letter which was intended to serve as a last warning to Dubček and his allies. With the rejection of the letter, unknowingly, the CPC's reformists gave green light for the preparation of the military intervention against Czechoslovakia.

¹⁸ PELIKÁN, J. 2007: Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring on the Eve of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia. – In: SKŘIVAN, A. – SUPPAN, A. (eds.): Prague Papers on the History of International Relations. – Institute of World History, Prague, p. 399.

¹⁹ The bilateral talks in Čierna nad Tisou ended with a surprising compromise between the two sides. Moscow agreed to support the CPC's reform agenda, while Dubček promised to regain control of the media and follow a stricter policy against the opposition movements. The six party meeting in Bratislava ended with the signing of a declaration of mutual cooperation between the socialist countries.

²⁰ PELIKÁN, J. 2007: Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring on the Eve of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia. – In: SKŘIVAN, A. – SUPPAN, A. (eds.): Prague Papers on the History of International Relations. – Institute of World History, Prague, p. 401.

²¹ MOL, KÚM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 49. 003129/1, 5.

pursued until a given level, as everything beyond this point has to be seen as something completely different. If the persuasion does not have the expected effect than its (e.g. democratization's) continuation will lead only to anarchy. Therefore one has to act an use different measures against ideas and movements that represent a danger to the state, the party and its policy."²² Tito especially found the presence of the Social Democratic Party's activists a source of hazard which, together with the liberal media, can cause a serious threat to the CPC's political position.²³ The Yugoslav delegation left Prague on the 11th of August without having achieved any significant agreement with the Czechoslovak government. Unbeknownst to Tito and Dubček the decision for the start of the military intervention has already been made in Moscow and this time no negotiations were able to stop it from happening.²⁴

4. The intervention and its aftermath

The military intervention that begun only ten days after Tito's visit to Prague shocked the Yugoslav political leadership. Even though from the middle of July on – after Dubček's rejection of the "*Warsaw letter*" a military solution to the conflict became an even more likely alternative – Tito did not expect it to happen so soon after the seemingly successful negotiations in Čierna nad Tisou and Bratislava and only ten days after his visit to Prague.²⁵ Initially, after the news about the invasion reached Belgrade during the early hours of the 21st of August, the LCY's leadership did not know how to react to the escalating crisis. For a brief period Tito's inner circle was gripped by the fear that Yugoslavia could be the next target of a Soviet attack and as an imminent answer to an eventual attack by the invading nations the Yugoslav army was put on a state of alert and additional troops were sent to the Hungarian-Yugoslavian border. However, after the first shock had passed it became clear that an attack against Yugoslavia would not happen, nevertheless during the first days following the intervention the whole country remained in a state of readiness to fend off any sort of attack against the state.²⁶

Naturally, together with the Western powers and Romania, Yugoslavia immediately condemned the use of military force in Czechoslovakia describing it as unnecessarily and counterproductive. The CPC's leadership labeled the move as a sign that the "*neo-Stalinist and hegemonic political point of view is increasingly gaining momentum in the Soviet Union*"²⁷ – which not only wanted to suppress the reforms of the Prague Spring, but also wanted to destroy the Yugoslav socialist model as a whole. The intervention also brought to the surface the continuous struggle between the two opposing factions within the LCY and while demands for the complete

²² MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 49. 003129/1, 6.

²³ During his visit Tito actually issued similar concerns to the ones expressed by Kádár in course of the previous months negotiations.

²⁴ Kádár tried to convince, without any success, Dubček for a last time at their final meeting in Komarno on the 17th of August. VIDA I. 1993: A magyar pártvezetés és a csehszlovák válság. – História, Vol. 15, No. 9–10, p. 49.

²⁵ PELIKÁN, J. 2007: Yugoslavia and the Prague Spring on the Eve of the Soviet Occupation of Czechoslovakia. – In. SKŘIVAN, A. – SUPPAN, A. (eds.): Prague Papers on the History of International Relations. – Institute of World History, Prague, p. 414.

²⁶ Yugoslavia's ambassador to Norway, Ilija Topaloski, enquired even more than two weeks after the intervention has started, whether the rumors about Hungarian troop concentrations on the common Hungarian-Yugoslav border are true. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, Yugoslavia, 1968. 22. 5727-1, 1.

²⁷ MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 49. 002881/1, 2.

termination of contacts between Yugoslavia and the “group of five” were overruled, the military operation did have a deep impact on the foreign policy of Yugoslavia in the upcoming months.²⁸ In spite of his public statements Tito did not want to go as far as to radically change Yugoslavia’s careful, balancing foreign political stance towards the two global super powers. Although initially the Yugoslav leadership clearly defined the August 21 intervention as a military and political threat to its integrity it did not wish to undertake steps that could radically shift its policy of balance.²⁹ Therefore indirect American suggestions that guaranteed military aid to Yugoslavia in the case of an attack by the Warsaw Pact were swiftly and politely rejected.³⁰ On the other hand, to Tito’s disappointment, the intervention once again highlighted the Non-Aligned States inability to form a united front in response to a global political event. The group, neither for the first time nor the last time, failed to agree about how to adequately react to the Czechoslovak crisis. While Western communist parties, China and Albania also condemned the military invasion in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia’s traditional Arab allies within the movement failed to do so, as they were not prepared to risk a likely negative effect on their foreign political relations with the Soviet Union in exchange for a symbolic gesture of unity.³¹ Yugoslav efforts to speed up the organization of the movement’s new summit meeting also were hindered, as many member states – correctly – assumed that Belgrade would use the meeting to criticize the Soviet Union.³²

In contrast to the events in 1948 the complete termination of links between the invading countries and Yugoslavia did not occur, as Tito did not want to unrecoverably damage the diplomatic ties with the European communist states – however this did not mean that the events did not have an effect on mutual contacts. In the case of the Yugoslav-Hungarian foreign relations, as an immediate result of Hungary’s participation in the suppression of the Prague Spring, all forms of ongoing cultural and economical cooperation were put on hold and several planned visits of different delegations were postponed to an uncertain date. Soon after the invasion the Yugoslav newspapers started a coordinated media attack against Hungary which was continuously fueled by the heated public speeches of prominent communist party members. Kádár and the Hungarian party leaders were especially outraged by articles that hinted some sort of continuity between the political aims of the current and pre-World War Two Hungarian government.³³ Naturally the critical comments in the Yugoslav press were soon followed by

²⁸ The Hungarian Foreign Ministry closely monitored the ongoing rivalry between an “eastern” and “western” foreign policy trend within the LCY in the period leading up to the events in Czechoslovakia. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 001543/12, 12.

²⁹ Nevertheless American-Yugoslav ties considerably became stronger after the Soviet intervention. For more see: TRIPKOVIĆ, Đ. 2011: Titova politika balansa prema supersilama 60-ih godina 20. veka. – Tokovi Istorije, No. 2. pp. 123-131.

³⁰ The Hungarian embassy reported in late October that during the first days of the crisis the USA offered the help of the American 6th fleet should Yugoslavia be attacked by Soviet and Warsaw Pact states. According to the report the offer was politely, but decisively rejected. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 002058/1, 8.

³¹ Out of Belgrade’s traditional allies within the Non-Aligned Movement only Mauritania and Ethiopia expressed their complete support towards the Yugoslav position. Most countries in fact did welcome the Soviet military intervention, while other member states, such as India and the United Arab Republic formulated milder statements. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 001543/4, 7.

³² The Non-Aligned Movements next meeting in the end took place only in 1970.

³³ Many Yugoslav newspapers publicized articles about the “dark side” of Czechoslovak-Hungarian foreign relations. Most notably the Belgrade based daily “Politika” planned to publish a series of articles about “Horthy and the breaking up of Czechoslovakia”. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, Yugoslavia, 1968. 23. S/28-4/68, 8.

articles in the Hungarian mass media that answered to the Yugoslav claims in similar manner – leading to the breakout of a “press war” involving the two countries.

5. Normalization

By mid September the first signs for the gradual normalization of the tens Yugoslav-Hungarian foreign relations started to appear. While maintaining the highly critical tone towards Hungary and the other four “occupational states” the daily Yugoslav press once again featured articles that highlighted the importance of economic and cultural cooperation between the two states. Yugoslavia’s ambassador to Hungary, Géza Tikvicki, even went even as far as to admit – during a private meeting with the Hungarian Central Committee’s Secretary for Foreign affairs, Zoltán Komocsin – that in some cases the Yugoslav press overly attacked Hungary during the months following the August intervention.³⁴ This statement certainly seemed to showcase the willingness within the LCY leadership to return to the pre-August state of affairs with Hungary, as previously all Hungarian objections concerning the Yugoslav press were firmly rejected by Belgrade – the main argument being that the party has no direct control over the press in Yugoslavia.³⁵ With the gradual easement in the press the public outbursts of Yugoslav politicians against Hungary were also becoming more and scarcer. The official end to the open conflict between Hungary and Yugoslavia was marked by Tito’s speech and the following press conference in Jajce on the last day of November. While answering the questions of the journalists Tito stressed the importance of unity between the socialist states in Europe and dismissed suggestions that the Soviet Union represents a source of danger to Yugoslavia.³⁶

6. Conclusion

Compared to 1948 and 1956 the events of 1968 have not caused a deep fracture in Hungarian-Yugoslav relations, as neither Budapest, nor Belgrade was interested in the long term deterioration of foreign relations between the two countries. The first shock following the intervention quickly passed away and soon the Yugoslav leadership also became convinced that there is no threat of a military attack against its territory. With the partial easement of the tensions and the reevaluation of the global political situation Tito had to realize that Yugoslavia would gain nothing from an ongoing political conflict with the Soviet Union and its European allies. On the other hand the statements uttered in response to the suppression of the Prague Spring highlighted the Non-Aligned Movements inability to act as a stable political platform that can effectively represent the interests of the group itself and not that of the individual member states – therefore the maintenance of good relations with the European socialist states became the more important. Finally Tito and his inner circle also had to admit it, at least only to themselves, that with the removal of Dubček and the elimination of the Czechoslovak liberals,

³⁴ MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 48. 00341/27, 1.

³⁵ Tito event went as far as to declare during his visit in Prague that there is no need for press censorship in Yugoslavia, as the press is able to censor itself. MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Yugoslavia, 1968. 49. 003129/1, 7.

³⁶ MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, Yugoslavia, 1968. 22. 3053/3, 1-4.

Yugoslavia managed to get rid of a dangerous precedent that could have easily disrupted the existing exclusive position of the communist party in Yugoslavia.

Összefoglaló

Az 1968 elejétől felgyorsuló csehszlovákiai politikai változásokat a magyar és a jugoszláv pártvezetés a kezdetektől fogva kiemelt figyelemmel kísérte. Különböző okokból mindkét ország vezetése fontosnak tartotta az új csehszlovák vezetéssel való pozitív kétoldalú kapcsolatok kialakítását. Míg azonban Kádár János a Prágai Tavasz kezdetétől a közvetítő szerepét töltötte be az Alexander Dubček fémjelzte csehszlovák reformerek, valamint a Varsói Szerződés többi állama között, addig a jugoszláv-csehszlovák felek közötti komoly tárgyalásokra egészen a prágai politikai helyzet megromlásáig várni kellett. Ekkor azonban már nem jöhetett létre érdemleges együttműködés, a jugoszláviai diákmegmozdulások hatására a prágai reformokat egyre inkább szkeptikusabban szemlélő Jozif Broz Tito, valamint az ágcsernyői és pozsonyi megegyezés miatt kevés mozgástérrel rendelkező Dubček között. Az augusztus 21.-i intervenciót követően az addig kiegyensúlyozott magyar-jugoszláv kapcsolatok erősen megromlottak, ami elsősorban a két ország között kialakult „sajtóháborúnak” volt köszönhető. A kezdeti sokkhatás elmúltával azonban mindkét állam a kapcsolatok újrarendezése mellett foglalt állást, hiszen hosszútávon egyik félnek sem állt érdekében a kétoldalú gazdasági és kulturális együttműködések megszakítása.

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