

Czech History & Culture

Lecture nr. H4:
The formation of Czech state – part IV.
(1968 – 1989)

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Communist Czechoslovakia

- Behind the „Iron Curtain“
- Eastern Bloc – Cold war
- Refusal of Marshall Plan
- Military alliance - Warsaw Pact
- Planned economy introduced
- Building communism
 - Nationalization
 - Industrialization
 - Collectivization
- Secret police, Persecutions
- Censorship (suppression of speech)



Prague Spring 1968

- Period of political liberalization
 - Reformist Alexandr Dubcek became General Secretary
 - Partial decentralization of economy – mixed economy
 - Partial democratization, freedom of speech
 - „Socialism with a human face“
 - Federalization – Federation of Czech and Slovak republics
- Soviet reaction?
- Warsaw Pact military invasion of Czechoslovakia

Military invasion of Czechoslovakia

- During the night 20.8. / 21.8. 1968
- Army of: Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria
- 6.300 tanks, 800 aircrafts, app half million soldiers
- Czechoslovakia surprised – defense not possible
- Soviet propaganda: Czechoslovakia wanted help
- Reactions:
 - Protests of Romania and Yugoslavia
 - United Nations Security Council meeting – problem of bipolarity
 - Street protests and demonstrations, emigrations
 - Jan Palach set himself on fire on Wenceslas square

Normalization

- General Secretary A.Dubcek replaced by Gustav Husák
- Part of Red Army remained in Czechoslovakia till 1991
- Laws enabling reforms was canceled
- Centrally planned economy reestablished
- Power of secret police reestablished
- Censorship and the suppression of speech reintroduced
- Reaction:
 - Dissident movement – Václav Havel
 - Charter 77 (anti-communist initiative)

The Velvet Revolution 1989

- 1989 – Eastern bloc collapsed
- 17.11. Student non-violent demonstration in Prague
 - but violently suppressed by the police at Národní Třída
- Next days protests against the police brutality
 - on Wenceslas Square from 18.11. till 27.11.1989
 - 100 – 300.000 people - jingling of keys
 - General strikes
- Communists under the pressure
- December 1989
 - Non-violent dissolution of communist regime
 - Občanské Forum (Civic Forum) - Václav Havel became president

The résumé

- Reaction to Prague Spring 1968
 - ➔ Military occupation of Czechoslovakia
- Period of reestablishing the country to the situation before the reforms from 1968 (status quo ante)
 - ➔ Normalization
- Non violent end of communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989
 - ➔ Velvet Revolution
- First non-communist president of Czechoslovakia after 1948
 - ➔ Václav Havel