

## DOCUMENT No. 119: The Moscow Protocol, August 26, 1968

Source: ÚSD, Sb. KV, K—Archiv MZV, Gs “T”; Vondrová & Navrátil, vol. 2, pp. 271–275.

*The Moscow Protocol established the political rules for rolling back the Prague Spring and “normalizing” post-invasion Czechoslovakia. The 11-page original Russian document, translated here, was signed in Moscow after three days of negotiations between Soviet authorities and Czechoslovak leaders, including Dubček and Černík. During the negotiating sessions, Soviet leaders had made clear that if the Czechoslovak delegation refused to sign a finished document, the Warsaw “Five” would establish a full-fledged military dictatorship in Czechoslovakia.*

*The document was based on a Soviet draft protocol presented to the Czechoslovaks on August 24. Soviet officials rejected efforts by Dubček’s aides to substitute their own draft for negotiation. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak negotiators did obtain some concessions. The final document no longer characterized events before the invasion as “counterrevolutionary,” omitted any mention of the Warsaw Letter, and did not call for a return to the situation before January 1968. Nevertheless, the Protocol forced Dubček and his colleagues to concede to a virtual checklist of Soviet demands: nullify the 14th Congress in Vysočany, give much greater emphasis to central economic planning, ban political groups like KAN and K-231, prohibit the reemergence of the Social Democratic Party, reimpose censorship across the board, dismiss numerous reformist officials (understood to include Kriegel, Císař, Jiří Pelikán, Ota Šik, and Jiří Hájek, among others), refrain from dismissing or carrying out any reprisals against officials who had sided with the “healthy forces,” subordinate Czechoslovak foreign policy completely to Soviet preferences, and retract the ČSSR’s request for the UN Security Council to consider the situation in Czechoslovakia. Finally, the protocol offered no timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet and allied troops from Czechoslovakia; instead, it merely specified that withdrawals would “occur in stages” once “the threat to the gains of socialism in Czechoslovakia and the threat to the security of the countries of the socialist commonwealth have been eliminated.”*

### PROTOCOL

#### on Negotiations between Delegations from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

On 23–26 August 1968, negotiations took place in Moscow between a delegation from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and a delegation from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. . . .

1. During the talks, the two sides considered questions linked with the defense of socialist gains of the Czechoslovak people in the circumstances that have arisen in the ČSSR. They also considered the highest priority measures dictated by this situation and by the presence of troops from the five socialist countries on the territory of Czechoslovakia.

During the talks, both sides abided by the generally recognized standards of relations between fraternal parties and countries, and by principles embodied in the final documents of the talks in Čierna nad Tisou and the conference in Bratislava. They reaffirmed their loyalty to the pledge by the socialist countries to support, strengthen, and defend the gains of socialism and to wage an irreconcilable struggle against counterrevolutionary forces, a struggle that is the common international duty of all socialist countries. They expressed the firm conviction that under present circumstances the main thing is to carry out what was formulated at the Bratislava conference regarding provisions and principles, along with the points agreed upon in Čierna nad Tisou. It is also imperative to consistently realize the measures which stem from the agreements reached there.

2. The CC Presidium of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia declared that the so-called 14th CPCz Congress—which was convened on 22 August without the approval of the CPCz

Central Committee, in violation of the statutes of the CPCz, in the absence of presidium and CC Secretariat members, in the absence of the delegates of communists from Slovakia, in the absence of most of the communist delegates from the Czechoslovak People's Army, and in the absence of communists from many other party branches—as well as the resolutions it adopted, are invalid. All relevant measures on this matter will be taken by the CC Presidium upon its return to Czechoslovakia.

The delegation declared that the Extraordinary 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia will be convened after conditions in the party and the country have been normalized.

3. The CPCz delegation reported that in the course of the next six to ten days a joint plenary session will be held of the CPCz Central Committee and the Central Control and Auditing Commission.<sup>48</sup>

The plenum will consider questions of normalizing the situation in the country, topical issues of party and state life, questions about how to improve the work of party and state bodies, and problems of the economy and the standard of living of the people. The plenum also will consider strengthening all links in the supervision of the party and country and of removing from their posts those persons whose activities were not in keeping with the interests of ensuring the leading role of the working class and the communist party, or in keeping with the decisions of the January and May plenary sessions of the CPCz CC (1968), or in keeping with attempts to strengthen the position of socialism in the country and the further development of relations between the ČSSR and the fraternal countries of the socialist commonwealth.

4. The leaders of the CPCz declared it was necessary to carry out a number of immediate measures intended to reinforce the regime of the working masses and the positions of socialism.

In connection with this they especially emphasized the significance of such important measures as control of the mass media so that they are wholly at the service of socialism; the prohibition of anti-socialist and anti-Soviet expressions in the press, on radio, and on television; a ban on activities by various groups and organizations advocating anti-socialist positions; and a ban on activities by the anti-Marxist Social Democratic Party. With this goal in mind, steps will be taken in the coming days to bring about effective action.

Party and state bodies will regulate the situation in the press, radio, and television with the help of new laws and measures. Given the extraordinary nature of the situation, it is essential to approve special, temporary measures to bring order to these sectors so that the government will have effective powers at its disposal to act against the anti-socialist forces in the country. Moreover, if the need arises, the government can use these measures to combat the malevolence of certain persons or groups. The necessary measures regarding personnel will be undertaken to ensure the proper functioning of the press, radio, and television.

As at Čierna nad Tisou, the leadership of the CPSU expressed full solidarity with these measures, being convinced that they are in keeping with the basic interests of the entire socialist commonwealth and its security and unity.

5. Both delegations considered questions linked with the presence of troops from the five socialist countries on the territory of the ČSSR, and agreed that these troops and other bodies of allied countries will not interfere in the internal affairs of the ČSSR. When the threat to the gains of socialism in Czechoslovakia and the threat to the security of the countries of the socialist commonwealth have been eliminated, the allied troops will be withdrawn in stages from the ČSSR's territory.

Questions about the withdrawal and redeployment of troops from cities and villages will be considered by the High Command of the allied troops and the Command of the CzPA as soon as the organs of state power are able to maintain order.

<sup>48</sup> The CC plenum was convened on August 31. Before the invasion there had been plans to hold a CC plenum on August 29.

Allied troops will be deployed in barracks, training grounds, and other military zones. Deployment will be carried out after mutual agreement is reached between representatives of the allied and Czechoslovak armies.

The question of ensuring the security of borders with the FRG will also be examined. The number of troops and their structure and deployment are to be decided in cooperation with representatives of the Czechoslovak army.

To meet the material-technical, medical, and other needs for the temporary deployment of Soviet troops on ČSSR territory, an agreement will be drawn up and approved by the governments of the ČSSR and the USSR. All outstanding problems will be decided at the level of the ministers of national defense and foreign affairs. Controversial questions of principle will be decided by the governments of both states.

An agreement will be concluded between the allied states and Czechoslovakia regarding conditions for the deployment and full withdrawal of allied troops.

6. The Czechoslovak leaders stated that the armed forces of Czechoslovakia were given the necessary orders to prevent incidents and conflicts with troops of the allied countries or any other acts that might violate law and order.<sup>49</sup> The military command of the ČSSR was also given instructions to keep in contact with the commanders of the allied troops.

The CPCz CC Presidium and the government of the ČSSR will take immediate measures to prevent the press, radio, and television from carrying items that might cause conflicts and tension between the population and the allied troops stationed on the territory of Czechoslovakia.

7. The leaders of the CPCz declared that they will not permit officials and employees of the party to be dismissed from their posts—or, even more, to have any sort of repressive measures directed against them—simply because those individuals favored strengthening the position of socialism in the country against the anti-communist forces, or because of their friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union.

8. Agreement was reached that talks will be held in the immediate future on a broad range of economic questions in order to expand and deepen economic, scientific, and technical cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, bearing in mind, in particular, the need for the further development of the socialist economy of Czechoslovakia and support for the above-mentioned plans of the CPCz to improve the national economy of the country.

9. There is full consensus that the development of international conditions and the subversive acts of imperialism, directed against peace and the security of nations and against the cause of socialism, calls for the genuine strengthening and improvement of the effectiveness of the defensive Warsaw Pact in the future, as well as of other all-round and bilateral bodies and forms of cooperation among the socialist states.

10. The leaders of the CPSU and the leaders of the CPCz confirmed their determination to closely coordinate their actions on the international scene with the intention of promoting the cohesion of the socialist community and upholding the cause of peace and international security.

As in the past, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia will systematically pursue a policy on European affairs that is in keeping with the common interests of the socialist countries and the specific interests of each of them, as well as the interests of European security. They will decisively resist the militarist, revanchist, and neo-Nazi forces that are seeking to overturn the results of the Second World War and to challenge the inviolability of existing borders in Europe.

The parties to this agreement declare that they will scrupulously fulfill all commitments they have undertaken in multilateral and bilateral agreements concluded between the socialist states.

In close unity with the other countries of the socialist community, they will continue the struggle in the future against the subversive actions of imperialism and in support of national and international liberation movements.

<sup>49</sup> For evidence of how frequently these incidents were arising, see Document No. 127.

11. With regard to the UN Security Council's consideration of the so-called "Matter of the Situation in Czechoslovakia," the leaders of the CPCz and the government of the ČSSR declare that the Czechoslovak side did not request this issue to be brought before the Security Council.

The leaders of the CPCz stated that the government of the ČSSR had directed that its Czechoslovak representative in New York should categorically reject any examination of the situation in Czechoslovakia in the Security Council or in any other UN body and should categorically demand that this item be taken off the agenda.

12. The CPCz CC Presidium and the government of Czechoslovakia declared that they will evaluate the actions of members of the government outside the ČSSR concerning its domestic and foreign policy in the name of the ČSSR government, especially from the viewpoint of whether these actions are in keeping with the line of the CPCz and the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The appropriate conclusions will be drawn from these assessments. In connection with this, the CPCz CC Presidium also believes it necessary to carry out several additional personnel changes in party and government bodies and organizations in order to secure consolidation in the party and the country as soon as possible.

These questions will be examined thoroughly after returning home. Furthermore, the actions of the Interior Ministry will also be examined and, on the basis of this, conclusions will be drawn about how to strengthen its leadership.

13. Agreement was reached to exchange party-government delegations as soon as possible to explore questions in greater depth pertaining to relations between their countries, as well as current international problems. Agreement also was reached that relevant decisions will be taken.

14. In the interest of both parties and to bolster friendship between the USSR and the ČSSR, the delegations agreed that the contacts between the leadership of the CPSU and the CPCz in the period after 20 August, and in particular the content of the current negotiations, should be regarded as strictly confidential.<sup>50</sup>

15. The leadership of the CPSU and the CPCz in the name of their parties and governments declare that the efforts of the CPSU, the CPCz, and the governments of the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic will be directed toward an improvement of the traditional and time-honored friendship between the peoples of both countries, bolstering their fraternal and permanent friendship.

By agreement of the two sides, both parties will sign the Russian-language text.

<sup>50</sup> Initially, the protocol was treated as a secret document, and no mention of it was made in the joint communiqué released after the Moscow negotiations. In the speeches that Dubček, Svoboda, Černík, and Smrkovský delivered when they returned from Moscow, they carefully refrained from making any direct reference to the protocol. Although a number of Western correspondents promptly learned of the existence and general content of the protocol, Soviet and Czechoslovak officials denied all reports about the matter. At a closed CPCz Central Committee plenum on August 31, Smrkovský revealed the terms of the document to the participants, but in public he still made no mention of the protocol. On September 8, *The New York Times* published a version, based on the Soviet draft, not on the final protocol. On September 9, Smrkovský publicly mentioned the protocol for the first time, though he did not specify its contents. A few days later, Dubček also referred explicitly to the protocol during a televised speech (which was published in *Rudé právo* on September 15), and he briefly alluded to some of the provisions. The document itself, however, was not actually published in Czechoslovakia until more than twenty years later.