

Bulgarian Foreign Policy in the Context of the Prague Spring

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Submitted to
Central European University
History Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2009

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Abstract

The thesis deals with the Bulgaria's foreign policy during the Prague Spring 1968. The main accent is on the level of the involvement in the decision-making process of Bulgaria as a participant in the Warsaw Pact.

The process is represented in the context of the general development of the reform the crisis between Czechoslovakia and the state-members of the Warsaw Pact. In addition it represents in the internal division in terms of motivation on behalf of the so called "satellite states" – East Germany, Poland and Hungary, and the place of Bulgaria in this context.

The contribution of the thesis consists of the exploration of the evolution of the foreign political doctrine expressed by Bulgaria and its contribution to the process of Elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

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Introduction

The reform policy of CPCZ, in 1968, generated one of the most severe crises in the communist block in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, which greatly endangered the Ideological unity of the Eastern Block. It also aggravated the division in the World Communist Movement and marked the rise of the Euro-Communism in Western Europe. This thesis explores the peculiar case of Bulgaria's role in the decision-making process in the Warsaw Pact, which at the end concluded in the military intervention in Czechoslovakia and the Elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

In the countries in Eastern Europe which were under political dominance of the Soviet Union, the crush of the Prague Spring meant the end of the Khrushchev legacy in terms of reforms and national roads to Socialism. In its place appeared a new doctrine of "Restraint Sovereignty. Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and GDR followed this path, driven mostly on loyalty towards Soviet Union, but their policy had also its internal reasons, which could be divided into two, firstly there were fears from the spread influence of the Prague Spring, in their countries and secondly concerns existed on endangered International Stability of the Eastern Block.

Within the context of this crisis, the foreign policy strategy chosen by Bulgaria was to represent its own socio-political system as a successful model of socialism, which can intercept the deviant model represented by the CPCZ. This resulted in clash between Todor Jivkov and Alexander Dubcek, on their understanding on the content of the reform and the function of the state. The position of internal justification of the foreign policy was the model proposed by Jivkov during the first months of the struggle between Czechoslovakia and the "Five".

The importance of the topic revealed by the fact, that despite its small size and well-established role of a “loyal satellite”, Bulgaria managed to mingle the political motivation expressed above, into the process of elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine which climaxed during the period after the Intervention, known in the Historiography as “The Normalization. It would be an overstatement to say that Bulgaria was in the core of the doctrine, but my thesis will provide enough facts, which would illustrate concerns and solutions expressed by Jivkov which will find its place in the final version of the Doctrine.

The chronology of the research traces the course of the events within an already established in the Historiography framework, which divides the history of the Prague Spring in three – negotiation, intervention and Normalization. The period encompasses the tensions which shaped the internal division of the Warsaw Pact and the different roles of the leaders of the “Five” in during that time.

The thesis consists of Four Chapters. In the introductory theoretical chapter I focus on the content of crisis in the Eastern Block, by comparing the crisis of 1956 to that of 1968 in terms of motivation, goals and political role of two “satellite countries”, - Romania during the Hungarian Revolution and Bulgaria during the Prague Spring. The final outcome provides an answer on the level of benefits, based on foreign policy, which two satellites regimes can gain.

The First Chapter presents the background of the political situation in the Warsaw Pact before 1968. Afterwards it deals with the first summit of the Warsaw Pact in Dresden on March 23 related to the situation in Czechoslovakia and response in Bulgaria in terms of political

measures part of the Bulgarian resentment of the events happened in Czechoslovakia between January and March.

The Second Chapter traces the most intensive period of political meetings and negotiations among the leaders of the Warsaw Pact member states. It covers the development of the crisis between April and July – from the launch of the Action Program until the Warsaw meeting on July 17th. In this period, the main ideas of the Bulgarian leadership, mostly based on concerns about the unity of the Block, were enforced by the quickly changed context of the situation in Czechoslovakia.

The Third and last Chapter follows the last diplomatic efforts before the military Intervention and the Normalization process. It will show the problematic areas in the Normalization, expressed by the Bulgarian Army Command during the Bulgarian troops were stationed in Czechoslovakia. In the last part, the chapter will explore the final outcome of the elaboration of the Brezhnev doctrine, which was concluded in the context of the military intervention.

The research is based mostly on primary sources, most of which are now published for the first time. Mostly it includes documentation of the Bulgarian Communist Party, which now belongs to the Central State Archive. In terms of methodology these primary sources will be placed in the realms of ideas about the Prague Spring, which are already established in the Historiography.

The lack of Bulgarian historiography, on the foreign policy in 1960s conducted by the Bulgarian Communist Party, is related to two main problems. Firstly the evaluation of the

personal role of Todor Jivkov – as clever statesmen who uses the situation to “bargain” Bulgaria’s support to the Soviet Union for economical advantages¹, or as a political leader whose actions are based on the idea to stay loyal to the Soviet Union in order to keep his power². Secondly there is the concept about Bulgaria in 1968, as a country which remained untouched by the massive spread of social tension, and therefore its political position during the Prague Spring, can not reveal its own argumentation³.

In this context my attempt is using the methodology stated above, to create different view, which aims to place the foreign policy of Bulgaria in terms with the general trends of the political attitude of the participants in the Intervention, and based on its motivation and contribution to define the decision-making model of Communist Bulgaria

¹ Iskra Baeva and Eugenia Kalinova, *Bulgarskite Prehodi* (The Bulgarian Transitions), Sofia : Tilia 2000

² Boyan Kastelanov, *Todor Jivkov: Mit I Istina* (Todor Jivkov: Myth and Truth), Sofia: 2005

³ Luchezar Stoyanov, *Svetut I Bulgaria prez 1968* (The World and Bulgaria in 1968) published in a collection of essays “Sofia between Paris and Prague”, Sofia : Siela 2009

1. Theoretical Approaches

The anatomy of the crisis: From Khrushchev's Legacy to the Elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine

1.1. The Khrushchev Legacy

The process of De-Stalinization provided the “Communist” and the “Capitalist” world with a binding doctrine of “peaceful coexistence”. In other words the doctrine recognized the division between two rivalry systems, but it also accepted that this division is based on political systems which obey different rules. The material expression of this was the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Due to mutual benefits the Doctrine was unchallenged by the West and the conflict took place in “neutral ground” outside of Europe in places like Vietnam and the Third World.

The countries in the Socialist Block were very important for the geopolitical strategy of the Soviet Union. The foreign policy doctrine elaborated by Khrushchev was revealed by his 1959 statement when he publicly announced the victory of Socialism⁴. The framework in which the socialist countries were to develop was the “commonwealth of the socialist states” in which differences could be overcome through coordination.⁵

This ideological framework was needed in terms of the misleading message of the De-Stalinization, which reflected in the Hungarian Revolution and its struggle for independence. Therefore the ideological unity was to be reestablished in Khrushchev's view with broader role of Institutions like the Council for Mutual Assistance, and also by exact division on official

⁴ R.Judson Mitchel, *The Brezhnev Doctrine and Communist Ideology*, The review of politics Vol 34, No 2, April.,1972
ibid

recognition of the existence of different approaches to socialism and prohibited review of the historical gains of the communism.⁶

1.2. Two crises of Soviet Dominated Systems

These two events represented the most vivid act of aggression on behalf of the Soviet Union in order to restore the unity of the socialist system. In terms of foreign policy reasoning and motivation, the two military interventions exhibit many similarities allowing us to study them under a common theoretical and methodological framework.

The scheme suggested by Ivan Volyges⁷ in his comparative research, focused on three main demands which were proposed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Firstly the crisis of legitimacy, as the regime had lost its authority and the change that was seen into an establishment of new model of unification between the party and the society. Secondly, it was the process of modernization which included a desire to cross economic boundaries provided by the Soviet Union. The third point was the demand in Czechoslovakia and Hungary to be back to the European Community in terms of culture and economy.

These three main concepts clashed with the understating of the reform on behalf of the Soviet leaders. Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev would not allow reforms which questioned ideological principles and mostly which endangered the predominant position of the Soviet Union in Central Europe.

⁶ The Soviet Block in Evolution ch1 From Budapest to Prague,

⁷ Ivan Volgyes, The Hungarian and Czechoslovak Revolutions : A Comparative study of Revolutions in Communist Countries, published in "The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia : Its Effects on Eastern Europe, New York : Praeger publishers, 1972

In the case of Hungary, the military intervention was justified by the Khrushchev doctrine. In Czechoslovakia, the crisis provided the basic stimulus for the elaboration of a new doctrine which was to provide “*adjustment born of necessity to be sure in the direction of socialist solidarity and away from Khrushchev’s acceptance of separate roads to socialism*”.

That difference reflected in the situation of the two countries after the Invasion⁸. In which the situation in Hungary after 1956 had not cut the reforms and even on the eve of 1968, the country was one of the most reformed in the Socialist Block, in difference with Czechoslovakia after 1969⁹.

The general atmosphere of crisis in both cases provided also a case study of the internal relations between the states which were under the control of the Soviet Union. In this respect it is interesting to notice the comparison between the attitude of Romania in 1956 and that of Bulgaria in 1968.

Firstly the situation in the political leadership resembled the two cases. In 1956, Gheorgiu Dej was an example of a political leader from the Stalinist period, who was confronted new political conjuncture in the face of the denunciation of the Cult of Personality, in this respect the crisis was a motivation to become close to the Soviet leader on which was dependent.

Todor Jivkov became a protégé of Khrushchev. The road to power of Jivkov to power, between 1953 and 1962, was personally supported by the Soviet leader¹⁰. After 1964 and the denunciation of Khrushchev, was a period in which the Bulgarian communist leader, had to

⁸ See also Zvi Gitelman, “The politics of Socialist Restoration in Hungary and Czechoslovakia,” *Comparative politics*, Vol. 13. No 2 (Jan 1981) pp. 187-210.

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Boyan Kastelanov Todor Jivkov *Mit I Istina* (Todor Jivkov : Myth and Truth), Soifia 2005

represent his loyalty to the new demands coming from Moscow. In this respect Jivkov was again successful because the Brezhnev era, was the most successful for him.

The task of Gheorgiu Dej to negotiate withdraw of the Soviet Army from Romania was an example of the attempt in gaining an internal benefit for his regime, connected to the anti-Soviet feelings in Romania.

On international level Jivkov, attempted to calculate his loyalty, when in 1973 he asked the Soviet leaders to rise of the delivery of Gas and Electro energy¹¹. However, he also embodied his demands into the idea of rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

These strategies can provide two conclusions about the nature of the demands on which they would try to during a crisis based on loyalty they attempt to reconfirm its political future and also to advocate the solution of main problems concerning the social stability. However it has to be stated that the main preoccupation for both leaders was the conservation of the regime and its unity, which they found impossible without the Soviet Union.

However the situation in 1968, illustrated that Romania changed its political perspectives by embracing the national-communism concept, while Bulgaria represented its static political development. It allowed the regime to survive second major crisis in the Eastern Block, without any consequences in terms of the stability of the political leadership or any turmoil in the society.

¹¹ Iskra Baeva and Eugenia Kalinova, *Bulgarskite Prehodi(The Bulgarian Transitions)*, Sofia : Tilia 2000

2. Bulgaria's foreign policy in the context of the meeting in Dresden

The chapter aims to introduce the international relations context in Eastern Europe, and the place of Bulgaria since the creation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 until the first meeting of the pact on the Czechoslovakian problem, which took place in Dresden on March 19th 1968. The chapter will end with brief introduction of the two communist leaders in this period – Todor Jivkov and Alexander Dubcek, in terms of their ideological background differences and common political experience.

2.1. The situation in the Warsaw Pact

The Warsaw pact was created in May 1955 as a response to the Paris Agreements by which West Germany was added into the Brussels Treaty, and therefore the Western European Union was created. The pact came also as a response to the West Germany entering in NATO. The states which signed the treaty were Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union.

Its creation was the first act of official unification of the states from the Eastern Block under the leading role of Moscow. However the program of the pact did not include ideological postulates and recognized the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of every state and non-interference in their internal affairs”. In addition it did recognize United Nations and proclaimed the defense of peace as main priority.

However, the “ideal” formula of the Pact was to be challenged one year after the establishment of the Organization, when Hungary tried to leave the pact in pursuit for independence. The attempt was averted with Soviet military intervention. In the beginning of the

1960s there was a second challenge for the Pact, when the tension between Moscow and Peking, gave the opportunity to small members to use the situation for gaining more independence. Albania took this chance and was “de-facto” excluded from the pact in 1962. The unity of the pact, however, was threatened most seriously in the second half of the 1960s when inaugurated an autonomous foreign policy.

The Romanian communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu opposed to the centralization of the Pact, which in other words meant a challenge towards the leading role of the Soviet Union. In 1967 Romania boycotted to the pact’s meeting in Sofia. Therefore, its attitude during the Prague Spring was in a way predetermined by its political doctrine of independence in the realm of the communist ideology.

2.2. Bulgarian foreign policy doctrine

J.F Brown, the historian who dealt with Bulgarian history after the Second World War, defined the situation in the country’s foreign policy at end of 1967, in an attempt to establish its priority outside of the role of a satellite, as following: *“Yet it is worth discussing the motives, for this policy, as well as those areas where Bulgaria has played an active, rather than passive role, and finally, the recent signs of Bulgaria’s will to play a positive role in foreign affairs, although still under the Soviet aegis”*¹²

In addition, there were three areas where Bulgaria played a role - the international political field, the Balkan region, and in the relations to the Soviet Union.

¹²Brown, J *Bulgaria under Communist Rule*. New York, Preager Publishers, 1970

Since the mid-1950s, on the international level Bulgaria adopted the new Khrushchev doctrine of “peaceful coexistence” and as a result reestablished its relations with United States and West Germany. Also, the Bulgarian leader Todor Jivkov visited Paris in 1966, and due to the anti-NATO official line of De Gaulle, Bulgaria regained the traditionally good relations with France.

Nevertheless the place where in Brown’s concept Bulgaria was active was on the Balkans. In the mid 1960s, especially after the partial defection of Romania, Bulgaria became the only state in the region completely loyal to the Soviet Union. The situation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia must be explained in order to be clarified the correlation between Bulgaria’s Balkan policy and its position towards Czechoslovakia.

In the 1960s, the “Macedonian question”¹³ continued to dominate the relations with Tito’s Yugoslavia. Therefore during a plenum in 1963¹⁴, Jivkov tried to come up with a solution, which would open the space for political maneuvers. He denied the existence of historical Macedonian national consciousness, but on the other hand he recognized the existence of a process of its formation after, which started after Second World War. Therefore, Jivkov represented the Bulgarian policy as not being aggressive abroad, but with certain conviction to keep the unity of the nation. In the period of the conflict, he would try to put Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the same context, firstly from Propaganda purposes, in order to represent it as easily recognizable enemy of the Communist unity, and secondly to use the situation to encourage the Soviet Union for more direct actions against deviationists like Tito.

¹³ Political term illustrating the attitude towards The Bulgarian population living in the mountain of Pirin(today in Bulgaria, the population living around the river Vardar(today in Macedonia) and the population living in the region named Egeia (today in Greece)

¹⁴ ЦДА, ф1Б, оп..5,а.е. 567 (All translations from Bulgarian archival sources are mine)

The relations with the Soviet Union were the third pillar of the Bulgarian foreign policy. There were two main reasons for these close relations - the complete dependence of the economy and political leadership which needed official recognition of Moscow. In 1963, BCP convoked a plenum in which Todor Jivkov, in which he spoke about the possibility Bulgaria to become part of the Soviet Union¹⁵. *“about future involvement and in depth rapprochement with the perspective of unification between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union”*.

Therefore on the eve of the Dresden meeting Bulgaria had already testified its readiness and loyalty, this created an opportunity for the country to become decisive factor in the socialist camp, although officially Jivkov denied such claims.

In Warsaw pact the most understandable towards Dubcek's reforms was the Hungarian communist leader Janos Kadar. His attempts of stabilizing the country after 1956, with moderate reforms, were accepted by the Soviet Union leadership. Personally he supported Dubcek in his attempts to finish the process of De-Stalinization¹⁶. Therefore, Kadar became the mediator between the “Five” and Czechoslovakia.

The case with the polish leader Gomulka was more peculiar at first glance he was supposed to be more understanding to the situation in Czechoslovakia. The problem was the instability of the regime in Poland in that period which concluded in the events from March 1968. So, the polish communist leader had no other choice but to become strongly anti-Dubcek,

¹⁵ ЦДА, ф1Б, оп.5,а.е 568

¹⁶ Czerwinski, E.J, Jaroslaw Piekalkiewicz. *The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia: Its effects on Eastern Europe, ch.6 Hungarian and Polish Attitudes on Czechoslovakia*, 1968. New York : Praeger Publisher, 1972

also having in mind the song that polish students were singing during the March protests: “Poland is waiting for her Dubcek”¹⁷.

The situation in GDR must be seen in the context of its fears from the “*Ostpolitik*” strategy and the attempt of Czechoslovakia to leave the door open in terms of relations with West Germany¹⁸. The case of the East- German communist leader Walter Ulbricht was mixture between the endangered international positions of the state as leading factor and secondly the reflection of the Dubcek reforms on the domestic sphere.

2.3. The meeting in Dresden and its aftermath

The atmosphere of this meeting was described by Dubcek: “*I sat down and saw that I was facing a tribunal that was all ready for me. I thought where have I ended up? I suddenly felt like Jan Hus at the council of Constance*”¹⁹”

The meeting in Dresden was the first official recognition about the existence of a problem in Czechoslovakia. It came as a result of two months of political maneuvers by Dubcek in the form of meetings with the leaders of the countries in the Eastern Block. The leadership of Soviet Union, lost its patience on the growing signs for independence and different ideas of changes in the economical and social life, all of this accompanied by publicly expressed critical attitude against the political system in Eastern European countries and particularly in the Soviet Union.

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Mcadams, James. *East Germany and Détente: Building Authority after the Wall*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press 1985

¹⁹ Sugar, Andras *Dubcek speaks*. London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd 1990

However, the existence of the problem was kept in secret from the public for which suggested the decision, during the meeting not to be taken stenographic records. So the official statement of the meeting did not refer to any problems in Czechoslovakia. This gave the communist parties possibility to deal with the problem in their own countries, and practically to narrow the decision-making process at the highest party hierarchy.

The method of correlating the official policy within the party elite has two parts. Firstly, there was a meeting of Politburo-the highest political organ of BCP, in which the problem was discussed in restricted political circle. This meeting was held on March 26th 1968 and it was decided: firstly to be organized detailed observation on the situation in Czechoslovakia that has to be provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bulgarian Telegraph Agency²⁰. BTA was to play an important role in the whole period as an informer and buffer of the information and also as a toll for the Propaganda. Secondly the Politburo decided that *“Under the control of the department of Propaganda and Agitation of CC of BCP to take measures for proper clarification of our community with the use of press, radio, television and other sources, about the events in the Czechoslovakian Socialist Republic”*²¹.

On March 29th a plenum was convoked in which the second level of in the party hierarchy. The Central Committee was to be informed, from Stanko Todorov, an important member of Politburo, who represented Bulgaria in Dresden. A report on the situation in Czechoslovakia was presented by Stanko Nedelchev, who expressed key points on which the Bulgarian foreign policy would be based during the period.

²⁰ ЦДА, ф1Б, оп.,.35.а.е 127

²¹ *ibid*

Stanko Todorov's reconstitution of the meeting in Dresden begun with a general defense of the existing order in the Warsaw Pact states compared to what was happening in Czechoslovakia. Todorov begun his speech with the words *"Everything in Czechoslovakia happens under the slogan for democracy and liberalization, but in all of us rises one question – isn't socialism a democracy and what is liberalization, and which is its content"*²². This introduction posed the basic question asked in the next months why it was needed such a turn, in a system which worked correctly in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, GDR and the Soviet Union.

The protection of the system as unchangeable also was posed against trends in Czechoslovakia for revisiting the last 20 years of communism²³ and in this respect the following critic was given on *"the talks of bringing back the Masaryk type of democracy, and not the socialist democracy"*²⁴. Keeping the system in the sense of a global perspective was easy and useful task for Bulgaria, because the party leadership was satisfied with the successfully completed struggle in all spheres, against the bourgeoisie influence of elements from the pre-war period²⁵.

The ideological unity was also defended in this informational bulletin of Todorov. *"The events in Czechoslovakia are example for the struggle between two world systems – the capitalistic and socialistic. It is unthinkable that now in these new conditions when there are no antagonistic classes there are no class contradictions and class struggle"*²⁶. *This is impossible now, when in Europe, the German militarism is preparing for revenge and the war in Vietnam*

²² ЦДА, ф1Б, оп., 58, а.е3

²³ ibid

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ Ivailo Znepolski, *Bulgarskiat Comunism* (The Bulgarian Communism), Sofia : 2008

²⁶ ЦДА, ф1Б, оп 58, а.е3

and in the Middle East is still going". This resume was supposed to describe an international context in which, the policy of CPCZ was implacable.

The inner party control was the strongest argument of the Bulgarian position and was expressed by Todorov. The critical approach was based on mistakes in the internal party work made by CPCZ in two highly important areas – the policy with the cadres and the propaganda.

Firstly based on the concept that the importance of internal security for each communist state relies on the army and the secret police (in Bulgarian's version it was the State Security). In this connection the changes made in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Security on behalf of Czechoslovakian Communist Party were posed by Todorov as a great threat and attack of the basic ground of a socialist state. It was to show that in order to keep the unity of the state its leader must never take drastic measures when dealing with this system.

The report delivered by Todorov, expressed it clearly that the leading role of the party had diminished over the control of the social processes. In addition, he gave the example of The Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, which had received information from the Czechoslovakian, about events organized by *"the most extreme elements in the country, who had put the question of reestablishing the bourgeoisie democratic republic from the inter war period"*²⁷.

The lack of control over the social sector and especially the intelligentsia was also mentioned by Todorov as a consequence from the lost party control *"Obviously long years it has not been conducted system ideological work with the intelligentsia"*. This political line would also be part of Bulgaria's main arguments against Czechoslovakia, pointing out the model of

²⁷ *ibid*

Bulgaria as a state which had achieved complete control over the intellectuals with “ideological work and appropriate cadres policy”²⁸

The report of Stanko Nedelchev aimed to support Todorov’s speech with examples from Czechoslovakia. In this respect he pointed out that the “liberal intelligentsia” continued its work in the administration and now was part of the “ideological and cultural front”. And the lost control over the information “*The so called progressive group has under its control all the tools of propaganda – Radio, Television, Cinematography*”²⁹

The concluding speech delivered by Todor Jivkov underlined the main problems mentioned during the plenum and sharpened the messages.

Firstly, the Bulgarian leader complained that the people in CPCZ, who had supported the policy conducted now by Bulgaria, were expelled from the Politburo. Then he continued with personal evaluation of Dubcek “*Dubcek himself does not have the experience, the intellect and the will to lead the party*” Personal qualifications were part of Jivkov’s political style and the object of it in the next three months would be Dubcek. Afterwards he relied on the experience of BCP in the reforms made during the De-Stalinization, embodied in the Plenum of April 1956³⁰. In this respect he claimed that the reforms related to the abolishment of the cult of Personality, did not involved the Army and State Security, as it was happening now in Czechoslovakia.

Jivkov also informed the Central Committee about his personal meeting with Brezhnev and Kosygin. In front of them the Bulgarian communist leader had demanded an immediate

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ The plenum of April was part of the process against the cult of personality, spread around Eastern Europe, in order to imply Khrushchev’s reform.

response to be provided “even if we should take risk”³¹ He even had gone further by suggesting to the two Soviet top officials “*We must be ready to act with our armies*”³². So Jivkov became the first political leader who proposed military intervention as a solution of the problem. The idea behind can be found in his proposition, that after restoring the order in Czechoslovakia, the pact has to the same in Romania, and at end in Yugoslavia³³.

The official part finished with an agreement that everything was to be kept in secret, while different departments of the party begun to transfer the reports down to the party hierarchy.

The concerns presented by the speakers in the Central Committee meeting exemplified in which spheres the unity of the communist state was endangered by Czechoslovakia. The domination of the party as a stronghold for the unity of the regime was to be the main argument in the foreign policy of Bulgaria during the crisis. Nevertheless this representation of the regime as a solid ground, gave Jivkov the opportunity to use it also in proclaiming Bulgarian Communist Party achievements. This would be visible in the next period, when the problem officially appeared and in the political language through which BCP justified its foreign policy in front of the population.

2.4. The political leaders

The introduction of the two leaders, Todor Jivkov and Alexander Dubcek, would illustrate the two personalities on the level of their belonging to the communist world. Such a

³¹ ЦДА, ф1Б, оп., 58, а.е3

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid*

parallel might be important because of the nature of the decision-making process, but it also can explain partly the political behavior of the two leaders.

Ideologically both experienced the system in a very different ways. Dubcek's father was a social-democrat and afterwards a founder of the CPCZ. He involved his family to travel in the Soviet Union, in his search for jobs opportunity encompassed with his ambition to be part of the building of socialism. Dubcek retained his fascination with the situation in Soviet Union and the economical and industrial development³⁴. Even though, it coincided with the period of the great purges, it did not give him any doubts about the efficiency of the system and the just cause of the ideology.

The case of Jivkov, on the other hand, was predetermined by the nature of Bulgarian communism after 1925³⁵. He was a pupil with poor results who fled to the capital in search for realization. His political life, begun in the printing house popular with its workers with left political attitude, in the early 1930s. In the time when Dubcek, was experiencing the communists success in Soviet Union, Jivkov was head of the department for street actions. In practice that meant, that he was responsible for the street fights which were happening often during that time.

The road to power for both of them was part of the De-Stalinization and implementation of the new communist elite, rooted in the domestic sphere of communist rule. However, the pace differed, and in 1962 when Dubcek took his position as a member of the Czechoslovak Party Presidium, Jivkov had already completed his road to power³⁶.

³⁴ William Shawcross – Dubcek and Czechoslovakia 1918 – 1990, London : The Hogarth Press, 1990

³⁵ After 1925 the Bulgarian Communist Party was abolished, because of the organization of a bomb assault in the church "Saint Nedelya"

The key to the success for both was in the hard work into the *party apparatus*. It presented a very threatening game in which both of them, being in the shadow of influential communist leaders – Antonin Novotni and Vulko Chervenkov, had to gain confidence and support from the young generation without jeopardizing its position in front the old party elite. In the whole gamut of methods included public discredit on the basis of the reformation “spirit”.

Meanwhile, the two would-be leaders sneaked into the circle of the leader and after a certain period, they managed to shake his authority. Nevertheless everything had to happen with the official bless of Moscow, and it was the denial of support from Khrushchev for Chervenkov and from Brezhnev to Novotni, that provided the successful outcome for Jivkov and Dubcek.

In terms with the importance of the official ideology in the period, Jivkov was chosen because he was a “domestic communist” who completely fit into the Khrushchev’s new political course³⁷. On the other hand the Soviet Leadership during the Brezhnev Era, based on his past considered Dubcek to be an Orthodox Communist, totally loyal to the Soviet Union³⁸.

This background would completely change during the process of the Prague Spring in which Jivkov stood for the orthodox communist principles and Dubcek, was considered to be revisionist and anti-Soviet. However, the main argument between both of them was not on the relation to the Soviet Union³⁹, it was mostly about personal evaluation of the system. In this respect Jivkov based his political credo on extreme pragmatism, while the Czechoslovakian communist leader, thought that he could transfer the communism to the new realities.

³⁷ Ilyana Marcheva, *Todor Jivkov: Putyat kum Vlasta* (Todor Jivkov : The road to power), Sofia : Institut po Istoria:2000

³⁸ William Shawcross, Dubcek and...

³⁹ For the positive attitude of Dubcek towards the Soviet Union see also Andras Sugar : Dubcek Speaks, New York : I.B Tauris, 1990

At the end of March, Bulgaria reminded of a participant in a sanitary cordon stretched around Czechoslovakia. The development of this process in the next two months, would have unleashed all the possible means which the Bulgarian Communist Party had established, to support the foreign policy. The most important part of Bulgaria will be to justify the policy of the “Five”,⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Term used in the period of the Prague Spring to define the division between Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, GDR, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union

3. Bulgaria in the development of the crisis: From the April Action Program until the Warsaw Meeting

The chapter traces a period of intensive development of the relations between the “Five” and Czechoslovakia. Bulgaria played an important role as becoming part of the most conservative wing of the Pact. Its role in the following period will be a reflection on the relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, but in this framework the Bulgarian foreign policy will mingle its own construction for motivation into the general line provided after the Warsaw meeting.

3.1. The Crisis’ Progression :April – July 1968

In the beginning of April, during a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the April Action Program was accepted. This program was an attempt to adjust the communism to the new reality and to regain the authority of the party with economic and social reforms⁴¹. In terms of two main preoccupations expressed by the Bulgarian communist leadership during the plenum after the meeting in Dresden, namely the role of the party and State Security Services, the Program stated. On the first issue the program stated the following:

The communist party enjoys voluntary support of the people; it does practice its leading role by ruling the society but by most devotedly serving its free, progressive socialist development. The party cannot enforce its line through directives but by the work of its members, by the veracity of ideas⁴².

⁴¹ Zeman, Zbinek. *Prague Spring: A Report on Czechoslovakia*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1969.

⁴² Ibid – quotation from the Action Program, used in the same book

The position of the State Security was specified in the Program, by narrowing its area:

The party declares that this apparatus should not be directed and used to solve internal political questions and controversies in the socialist society.

On the level of personal changes, two persons who were severely criticized by Bulgarian communist leaders took high positions. Josef Smurkovsky was elected as a speaker of the National Assembly while Oldrich Cernic became prime minister. Although, it might appear radical on the point of view of Bulgaria, the new membership of the Presidium was balanced and only three of its members could be classified as hard core liberals⁴³

The first reaction by Bulgarian official was a secret report produced for Politburo and submitted on September 8th by Dobri Djurov, the minister of National Defense. It had three main points. Firstly, that Dubcek and Svoboda might have been a cover for counter- revolutionaries, which raises the possibility later both to be replaced and the country to take the same direction as Yugoslavian and Romanian communists “and even more right”. Secondly the Army and the State Security were “softened”, thirdly the report noted a rumor that the Czechoslovakians were selling tanks to the Israeli Army⁴⁴. Nevertheless, the role of that kind of reports might be seen as to serve in justifying the official position, rather than changing it.

On April 24th, one month after Dresden and two weeks after the launch of the Action Program, the Bulgarian communist leader, Todor Jivkov, went on an official visit to Czechoslovakia to meet Alexander Dubcek and Vasil Bilyak⁴⁵.

⁴³ Harry Schwartz, *Prague's 200 days: The struggle for Democracy*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1969

⁴⁴ ЦБА, ф.24, оп.X^a, а.е.21

⁴⁵ Vasil Bilyak was considered to be main opposition to Dubcek and totally loyal to Moscow

Dubcek reconfirmed his position of loyalty to the Warsaw Pact states and answered indirectly to the preoccupations of the “Five” and to those expressed during the Plenum of the CC of BCP. He described the situation in Czechoslovakia after January as “*spontaneous awakened activity on behalf of communists, and lowest organization*”, everything was part of process of rehabilitation and de-Stalinization that had not been accomplished during the Novotni Era⁴⁶

The Czechoslovakian general secretary reassured the Bulgarian leadership, that there was no trend of denying the last 20 years of Communist power, and any trends of nostalgia on the pre-war period were part of the euphoria related to the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Republic. This statement was concluded in the words “*All of us here are communists, and in our blood burns the internationalism.*”

The leading role of the party was underlined by Dubcek “*when we were talking about the leading role of the party, we never questioned its existence, but mostly the way that it has to be applied*”. However he mentioned that the reforms had raised questions about the relation between the party and the government, without giving details.

On the international context the Czechoslovakian communist leader, reassured the importance of the relations with the Soviet Union and the rest of the Socialist states. Based on the Action April Program, he suggested more important role for Czechoslovakia in Europe, due to its geographical position.

⁴⁶ ЦДЛ, ф.1Б, оп.60, а.е.7

Jivkov based his arguments on the concerns expressed during the Central Committee plenum. His main concept was based on a parallel between the Plenum of April 1956⁴⁷. The major problem pointed out was the unity of the party, during that time. “There was unofficial line which was conducted by two people Yugov and Chankov”. The two were Jivkov’s main rivals in his struggle to power, in front of Dubcek he described them as conductors of policy which aimed to cross the limits of the De-Stalinization by endangering the immunity of the system – the army and the State Security.

However, Jivkov described his vision for democracy as the most important part was the “*increased role of the public organization*”⁴⁸. To testify it the Bulgarian general secretary used as an example the last Congress of Culture and the newly elected leadership, which had proven that “*whole cultural front is now governed on state-public bases*”. To conclude it, Jivkov proudly said “*Our intelligentsia marches in the same line with the party*”

In terms of the international situation, the main priority for Bulgaria was the increased role of the United Leadership, which had to bring the unification lacked in the previous years. Jivkov, also denied any ambitions of Bulgaria to dominate in the Balkans, which might be compared to the idea of Dubcek, about the role of Czechoslovakia.

Officially the meeting concluded with the signing of Treaty for Friendship which renewed the one from 1948. It included “*mutual respect for the state sovereignty and non-*

⁴⁷ During this plenum was criticized the Cult of Personality, and it also opened the road to power for Jivkov.

⁴⁸ ЦДА, ф.1Б, оп.60, а.е.7

intervention in internal affairs”⁴⁹ and the two states also were obliged to “*protect the immunity of its borders*”⁵⁰.

The beginning of May was marked by the meeting between the Soviet and Czechoslovakian party leadership. Brezhnev criticized the CPCz, about the situation after January in the country. In his final words the Soviet leader, said “*The main thing is to decide in what manner the cause of socialism can be defended. This question concerns not only Czechoslovakia, itself, but your neighbors and allies, and the entire world communist movement. We ourselves are ready to do this, and because I know the views of comrades Gomulka, Ulbricht and Jivkov, and the others I can say they are prepared for this as well*”⁵¹

The first three names listed in the speech of the Soviet leader, the presence of the Bulgarian leader was not accidentally it represented the new situation expressed also in two international scandals

On the May 1st a demonstration took place in front of the Polish Embassy in Prague, in order to support the polish students and to protest against the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland. On May 6th the polish government officially protested against these incidents. During another demonstration in May, there was a placard proclaiming that Macedonia belonged to Yugoslavia⁵². Although the latter might be seen also as a provocation, it was enforcement for the motivation of the two leaders to calm a situation which begun to influence the political stability of their own regimes. In connection with gradual fear of East Germany, about any development

⁴⁹ ibid

⁵⁰ ibid

⁵¹ Prague 1968 A National Security Archive Document Reader, Document No. 28 Stenographic Record of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Summit meeting in Moscow, May 4-5, 1968(Excerpts)

⁵² Harry Swartz Prague’s 200 days...

of the relations between Czechoslovakia and West Germany, mini “alliance” had been created in the framework of the Warsaw Pact.

This intensified situation led to unofficial meeting of the “Five”. The fierce attacks on behalf of Dubcek, Gomulka and Jivkov, were opposed by Kadar who still insisted that there was no counter revolution in Czechoslovakia⁵³. Gomulka supported by Jivkov suggested Military exercise to be held before the meeting⁵⁴. The meeting concluded with the idea that there are healthy forces in the party and they have to be “boldly supported”.

On May 20th the vice-chairman of the Committee for State Security, Pavel Shopov, sent a report to Politburo about his meeting with members of the Czechoslovakian State Security. Considering the conclusions the officials whom, he met, represented the “healthy forces” in the office. The report described the situation with the Czechoslovakian internal security as a complete devastation. Jozef Pavel, the Czechoslovakian minister of internal affairs was blamed for not having protected the members of his department, from becoming victims of purges in the System and allowing disclosure of agents and staff. In addition it was pointed out that the work of the Department was focused mostly on foreign intelligence. The last conclusion could be found in April Action Program. At the end there was personal description of the Minister, who had too much publicity and was ruining the prestige of the institution⁵⁵.

⁵³ Prague 1968...Document No 31 Minutes of the Secret Meeting of the Five in Moscow, May 8, 1968(Excerpts)

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ 16 Radio Free Europe f.805

The report resembled the one previously made by Dobri Djurov after the April Congress of CPCz. However, the main bottom line of Shopov was to represent the State Security as a victim of the policy conducted after January and therefore it had decreased its working capacity.

The contradictions between Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia on international level, reflected during the Congress of the Writers Union, in openly negative attitude towards the Czechoslovakian guest of the forum, the writer Petr Puiman. His speech was not broadcasted, and his attempt to explain the vision of the cultural freedom in Czechoslovakia was attacked from Georgi Djagarov, the chairman of the Bulgarian Writers Union.⁵⁶

The scandal was popularized by Radio Free Europe and the Belgrade Radio. In the reports the situation was expressed as an act of marginalization of the Czechoslovakian representative. The behavior of the Djagarov, however, could exemplify the connection between the Party and Intelligentsia, expressed from Jivkov in front Dubcek. On the other hand, it proved the deepest division between Czechoslovakia and the “Five” on different spheres. This act concluded the intensive period of May and during the first weeks of June the situation was tranquilized.

The next step which enhanced the pace of the crisis was the publication of “*2000 words Manifesto*” on June 27th. The author, Luduvik Vaculik⁵⁷, was devoted communist and one of the leaders of the reform movement in the Czechoslovakian Writers Union. He announced the period after January 1968 in Czechoslovakia as “revival of communism”. The impact from the Manifesto, served as pretext for another wave of severe critics, towards the situation in

⁵⁷ His work “The Axe” was one of the most critical writings during Novotni era.

Czechoslovakia. The reaction in Bulgaria was expressed in the party official “*Rabotnichesko Delo*” (Workers affair) in an article called “2000 words or a call for counter-revolution”⁵⁸. The bottom line of the article lays in this passage “*It was not so long ago, so we can not forget those similar appeals from 1956, just before the counterrevolution in Hungary. The mental initiators attack the identity of the communism, the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, the government of CSSR and the Soviet Union*”.

The process, catalyzed also by the fact that the Extraordinary 14th Congress of CPCz was expected to stabilize Dubcek and the pro-Soviet members would lose their position, concluded in decision for another meeting which would be hosted by Gomulka.

3.2. The Warsaw Meeting

*“We must take into consideration that, we are the driving force of our camp. Not Cuba, not China, not Korea, but our countries! We are the visit card, the face of socialism and its power depends on our unity”*⁵⁹

The Warsaw meeting was the next turning point which marked the change of the context since the meeting in Dresden. There were no Czechoslovakian representatives at the meeting, and it turned this gathering into a trial which had to decide the destiny of Czechoslovakia. The words of Gomulka quoted above, exemplified the meaning added to this meeting. The international context was strongly emphasized in his speech and it implied the new approach of justification - a danger coming from outside and based on the strategically important position of Czechoslovakia. It allowed the build-up of a doctrine for possible intervention. In addition, all

⁵⁸ *Rabotnichesko Delo* July 4 1968

⁵⁹ ЦДА, ф.1Б, оп.58, а.е.8

probable problems mentioned in Dresden, such as revisionism or turn to capitalism, were seen now as a reality. Brezhnev declared that Czechoslovakia “*is now on the dangerous road to detach itself from the socialist camp*”⁶⁰

Jivkov emphasized the deficiency of control on behalf of CPCz over the public sector and the organs of power the solution for him was that “Only by relying on the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact can we change the situation”. In addition he claimed that in Czechoslovakia must be restored the Dictatorship of Proletariat, because the counterrevolutionaries took control also over the party. For him the “healthy forces” had to become aware of the help from the Warsaw Pact. Although, the operation might create strong opposition, the Bulgarian general secretary believed that positive result would be stronger in terms of “A Strike against the opportunism in the international communist movement and it must to be underlined that the opportunism – the rightist and also the leftist, takes higher proportions. His words were embodied in the understanding of “Historical Mission” in the protection of the socialism.

The meeting was concluded with the edition of the “Warsaw Letter” which reconfirmed the positions stated during the meeting and was an ultimatum towards CPCz to take control of the situation.

On July 18th “*Rabotnichesko Delo*” published the “Warsaw Letter” under the title “In order to destroy the counter-revolution”⁶¹. The main argument was the danger about the common interest of all socialist states. Therefore CPCz must restrain the opposition movements, to regain control over the mass information, and unify the party on the bases of Marxist Ideology. This

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ *Rabotnichesko Delo*, July 18 1968

expressed the leading official motivation of the Bulgarian Communist Party, one month before the Invasion.

On July 23rd the official of the Ministry of National Defense, *Narodna Armia* (People's Army), published an article called the "*The defense of the Socialism is an International work*". The text explained the idea of the Internationalism "The socialism in its foundations is an international work. It would be treason if the other communist states did not respond. The newspaper reminded how the fraternal parties fought side by side in Hungary, against the counterrevolution."⁶² Few days later in the same newspaper appeared official statement of the Bulgarian Army, in support of the Warsaw Letter.

The media would take more important role in order to explain the motivation of Bulgaria's participation in the eventual intervention. In the same day when the article was published, Dobri Djurov, gave an order to the 12 regiment for participation in joint exercises.

At the end of July, Bulgaria became arena for another international confrontation, which represented the division in the Communist Movement. Sofia hosted the IX Youth Festival, which political importance was displayed in the preparation period. "*Taking into consideration some essential aspects of the Festival related to its emphatic political content, the complicated situation on international level and in the international workers communist movement, it necessary a serious political work to be conducted. This should be in the center of the attention of the party leadership*"⁶³. It was organized a special corpus of 500 young communists, which

⁶² Narodna Armia, July 20 1968

⁶³ ЦДА, ф.1Б, оп.36, а.е.140

should be part of the audience during political discussions and have to isolate specific groups and manifestations⁶⁴.

Despite those precautions the Festival proved as an implementation of the division in the Socialist Camp. The attempt to marginalize the representatives of Czechoslovakia was not successful. It even created grouping between Yugoslavian, Czechoslovaks and the most radical leftists the French Communists. The incapability of sustaining the conflict which reflected into its international impact, underlined the motivation for intervention based on the fear of the “domino effect”.

The period established a situation in which Dubcek continued to neglect the intensified concerns of the “Five”. Therefore the judgments given by the Bulgarian communist leadership were proven by the situation in Czechoslovakia, which illustrated complete lack of control over the situation in the country on behalf of the Party. In addition the international influence of what was happening in Czechoslovakia, made the situation with

The next period would test the capability of the Warsaw Pact to reestablish the order in Czechoslovakia. The decision-making process portrayed above had not represented a framework on which this had to be done. Under the general concept of defending the socialism The “Five” lacked common strategy for action.⁶⁵ This might also be answered on the basis of the different motivation, in different participants, which would also be revealed in the period of the

⁶⁴ ibid

⁶⁵ Fred.H. Eldin *The logic of “Normalization” The Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia of 21 August 1968 and the Czechoslovakian response*. Columbia University Press : New York, 1980

Normalization. In search for this common framework the Soviet Leadership would develop new project for reuniting its closest allies.

4. Bulgaria and the Normalization

The chapter deals with the period from the beginning of August until the withdrawing of the troops in the end of October. It will represent the attitude of Bulgaria in two processes. Firstly in the context of the general atmosphere on the eve of the Intervention and secondly it will describe the role of the Bulgarian Army, how it was motivated and the main problems during its presence. The chapter closes with the withdrawing of the troops after October 26th.

4.1. *The closing period of the diplomatic efforts*

The meeting in Cierna between the leaders of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union on July 27th was one of the last attempts for peaceful solution of the crisis. In his speech Brezhnev, recognized that the overcoming of previous mistakes and shortcomings was as an internal work of CPCZ, but on the other hand, he emphasized that everything must happen under its control, otherwise counterrevolutionary forces might use the situation to change the system. The fate of Czechoslovakia was denied by Brezhnev to be completely internal matter, because of its “aligned obligation”. The words represented political reasoning set to be implied in further actions.

The tension was lessened after Dubcek and Cernik agreed another meeting between the Five and Czechoslovakia.

The results from the summit in Bratislava, which took place on August 3rd were “*nothing more than long editing session*”⁶⁶. The joint draft kept the possibility for intervention if the situation remained unstable.⁶⁷ The resulting document justified the right of each state to follow its

⁶⁶ Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak politics 1968-1970*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press pg 103

⁶⁷ *ibid*

own path to Socialism, but also the other socialist states had the right to intervene if there was danger of counterrevolution⁶⁸. At the end CPCZ had not provided credibility amongst the “Five” therefore in these first 10 days of August, despite diplomatic efforts, the tension continued to grow.

Despite its contradictory results the meeting in Bratislava, was illustrated from the media in Bulgaria as great achievement and an evidence for the capability of the Socialist States to solve the problems between each other. Articles appeared, under titles such as “*An important step towards the consolidation of the Socialist Community*”⁶⁹ and “*Our power lays in our unity*”⁷⁰.

On August 11th, Tito was accepted as a hero in Czechoslovakia and in the official newspaper “Borba” was published an article with support, guided except from expressed sympathy for the people of Czechoslovakia, also by “our own experience from the struggle for just principles of socialist and inter-socialist relations”⁷¹. The support was also expressed by the Romanian communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu through which he earned the support of even most anti-communist Romanian citizens⁷². Despite the personal reasons of Tito and Ceausescu, the fact of their visit in Prague, at such critical moment, reconfirmed the decisiveness of the Czechoslovakian leadership to continue its own political path.

⁶⁸ Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring...* pg 103

⁶⁹ Narodna Armia August 6 1968

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ E.J. Cerwinski, *The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia :Its Effects on Eastern Europe*. New York : Praeger Publishers, 1972 pg 172-174

⁷² *Ibid* pg 164-165

In its last attempt to convince Dubcek to take actions against the counter-revolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia and to regain control over the situation, reflected in a meeting between Janos Kadar and Dubcek in Komarno on August 17. The Hungarian leader repeated previously known facts, without hinting, military operation, on the other side the Czechoslovakian leader, responded that plenum of the Central Committee would be convoked and Bratislava agreements would be implied⁷³

The final decision was taken on August 18, during a meeting of the “Five”. It was justified in a speech by Brezhnev, in which after reviewing the situation, he confirmed that the politburo of the CPSU had reached to the conclusion that *“Dubcek was is not going to fulfill any of his commitments, that he has gone over completely to the side of the Right, and that in these circumstances a failure to support the healthy forces would cause the situation to become extremely difficult”*⁷⁴

During the period between July 31st and August 10th, the Bulgarian army forces had been preparing for eventual intervention⁷⁵. This included the equipment of military tools, financial resources, and materials which were in deficiency, provided by the Soviet Union⁷⁶. In this respect when the diplomatic game was finished, Bulgaria was ready to fully participate in a military mission. On August 19th Dobri Djurov, gave an official order for intervention of regiment 12 and regiment 22. *“To liquidate the counter revolution I order the regiments to carry*

⁷³ Prague Spring 1968...Document No 86

⁷⁴ Prague Spring 1968...Document 92

⁷⁵ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.X^a, а.е.22

⁷⁶ ibid

out the assignments ascribed by the commander in chief of the Joint Military Forces mission - the debacle of the enemy elements”⁷⁷.

The two military units stationed in Czechoslovakia, had the following tasks:

Regiment 12 was to take control over Banska Bystrica and to help the local authorities to push back the counter-revolution and to restore the order in the town. The relations with the local population had to be conducted “in the right way and in terms with the party and state policy of the states from the Warsaw Pact”⁷⁸.

Regiment 22 had the task to watch over Ruzyně Airport, situated in 10 km from the center of Prague. It had two main priorities – not to allow landing or taking off of military airplanes of Capitalist States and secondly to be prepared in case of need to brake into the center of Prague⁷⁹.

The political decision was announced on August 20 in the form of Government decree. It represented a response to “*the plea from party and state officials towards the USSR and the other alien countries*” to help the Czechoslovakian people in their fight against the counter-revolution⁸⁰.

4.2. Bulgaria in the “Normalization”

In his memoirs about the motivation of the Bulgarian soldiers, cornel Trifonov, described the feeling that they were implying its Internationalism duty, and total belief that they were

⁷⁷ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.Х^а, а.е.22

⁷⁸ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.Х^а, а.е.22

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Government decree No 39 from August 20 1968

providing support for the Czechoslovakian people. Also it was seen as a response to the global international instability, in which the Socialist system had to be kept united

On the other hand the internal propaganda, which can be seen in Secret reports issued to provide the party with the situation in the society, after the Invasion, claimed total support for the act of the Intervention. It also described the international political reality such as the negative campaign in Yugoslavia provided by Radio Belgrade and its “anti-Bulgarian” rhetoric⁸¹. The Yugoslavian communist leader, in his speech from August 22nd officially expressed his negative attitude towards the action of the “Five” qualifying it as measures “which will have far-reaching and extremely negative consequences for the whole revolutionary movement in the world.”⁸² During the period of Bulgarian presence in Czechoslovakia, with use of its official “Borba”, the Yugoslavian communist party criticized the policy of BCP and the Intervention.

During these last days of August, Dubcek and Svoboda were taken to Moscow and obliged to participate in the first meeting of the “Five” after the invasion. Brezhnev admitted that the right-wing forces had not been scared off after the Invasion⁸³. During this meeting Todor Jivkov, proved his participation in the “alliance” with Poland and East Germany. He suggested as a possible solution “imposition of military dictatorship”⁸⁴. The main argument of the Bulgarian communist leader was that “*Confrontation with the counter-revolutionaries was inevitable*” and Civil War was brewing in the country. He reconfirmed his theory from the Warsaw summit about workers and peasants government and also claimed that the “*Government*

⁸¹ Informational report to Politburo edited on August 21

⁸² *ibid*

⁸³ *Ibid* – document No 118 : Minutes of the First Post –Invasion meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, August

⁸⁴ *ibid*

must be established with Cernik, but without Dubcek”⁸⁵. The Bulgarian leaders supported by Gomulka, also demanded the Czechoslovakian army to be used against the protesters.

“The Moscow protocol” which concluded the meeting imposed to Czechoslovakia: restoration of full control over the media, cleansing the party apparatus and regaining the leading role of the party, eliminate unacceptable clubs and organizations. It is noticeable that the document included all main points, stated by Jivkov during the period since the meeting in Dresden. If we also take into account that he was the first who officially suggested military intervention it appeared that the Bulgarian communist leader visions had been validated.

On August 31st Dobri Djurov sent a letter in order to motivate the Bulgarian soldiers in Czechoslovakia:

You realize that our party and government, by accomplishing its International duty, send you as valiant defenders of the achievements of the communism. Together with the rest socialist armies you are defending the communism not only with arms but also with your attitude, with your moral – political power, communist belief, and class-party consciousness, through which you are struggling to win the honest Czechoslovakian people.

On September 1st under the title “We are protecting the gains of the Communism”, in *Narodna Armia* was published a report on the situation including, opinions expressed in personal conversation with local people, which aimed to show, the acceptance from the local population, “*What the counterrevolutionaries want I know, but what want the astride our compatriots. Great number of our youth was deluded, When we were fighting against the hitlerists, many of those*

⁸⁵ *ibid*

*who today raised their voice of dissatisfaction were not even born. But it is the Press that poisoned them. Once again I would like to express my gratitude that you came*⁸⁶.

On September 8th, check-up was issued, about the political work conducted from Bulgarian National Army. In all military units, political meetings took place, in order to explain the meaning of the mission. The report claimed that the soldiers understood the importance of the execution of the Moscow decisions for normalization of the country. Bulgarian soldiers asked numerous questions such as: Why general Svoboda was not using the National Army against the counter-revolution or, Why Yugoslavia had such a position⁸⁷.

It was perceptible that the type of questions illustrated the situation after the first 20 days of the Intervention. The motivation of the soldiers was put in question in respect with the reality – non-cooperation on behalf of the local people, and no support from the military services of Czechoslovakia.

The check-up by colonel Genchev from September 11th reconfirmed the fact that in spite of improvement of the relations with the Army, and that the Czechoslovakian soldiers approved that there was a common enemy – „the counter-revolution” they denied its existence in the country and also did not approve the presence of the Bulgarian soldiers⁸⁸.

Based on these facts, in the letter to Todor Jivkov, Dobri Djurov informed him that the normalization process was going slowly and „ In this situation we don't have the right to leave

⁸⁶ Narodna Armia September 1 1968

⁸⁷ ЦБА, ф.3, оп.VI, а.е.74

⁸⁸ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.X^a, а.е.22

Czechoslovakia, until the danger of losing it as socialist state still exists. Therefore, our troops must stay”,⁸⁹

The logic of this was also confirmed by Dubcek’s statement on September 12th when he announced that the Czechoslovakian leadership would stick to the Moscow Protocol, but at the same time will never return to the pre-January politics.

On September 30th Radio Sofia in a bulletin related to the justification of the Intervention and its results, concluded – „Facts have been discovered about the real danger under which was Czechoslovakia. It was quoted 4 of the Contract which stated : In case of danger for country in the Unity, it has to provide immediate assistance, individual or with an agreement with other states members of the Pact, with all measures , which it found appropriate, including military force”.

The bulletin stressed also the character of the Warsaw Pact as an organization which was not „just common grouping of states” and it has deepest reasons rooted in the character of the social order in the Socialist countries namely – the Marxist-Leninist ideology that „cemented the unity”. In conclusion it was said that the situation in Central Europe was stabilized and the attempt of the imperialist to change the balance of powers in this area failed. The intervention was also strong warning against the revisionists from West Germany⁹⁰.

On October 3rd, coronel Mitev representative of the Central Command of the Bulgarian National Army reported the condition at the end of September, which contradicted the official

⁸⁹ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.Х^а, а.е.22

⁹⁰ ф.321

statements. He declared that the process of Normalization was very slow and the „forces of the counter-revolution were still not thrown away”,⁹¹.

On October 20th Dobri Djurov sent a report to Todor Jivkov, related to the withdrawing of the Bulgarian forces. The report was based on decisions taken after the meeting between the ministers of the Defense of the „Five” with Czechoslovakian representatives. During this meeting it was decided that only the Soviet troops should remain in the country⁹². It was referred to the report of Gromyko the Soviet Foreign Minister stated that on political reasons it was not appropriate such an amount of troops to be kept in Czechoslovakia and it was the Czechoslovakian representatives who had underlined only Soviet troops to remain, in the country.

This was a political act which answered to this part of the period of the Normalization. The Soviet troops remained there, which was a serious support for the members of the Presidium, who were openly Pro-soviet⁹³.

The Bulgarian army presence in Czechoslovakia, expressed in the documents cited above illustrated the minimal role it had and the unsuccessful process of explaining the concepts of its presence in front of the local population. On the other hand, the political leadership of the Bulgarian Communist leadership with its political attitudes managed to prepare itself for the rising of the Brezhnev doctrine, which had been crystallized in the process of reacting to the situation in Czechoslovakia.

⁹¹ ДВИА, ф.24, оп.Х^а, а.е.22

⁹² ДВИА, ф.24, оп.Х^а, а.е.22

⁹³ *ibid*

4.3. *The Elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine*

The process of the Normalization was not finished, after withdraw of the Bulgarian troops. The most important act, however was the framework of the Doctrine appeared in the text by Sergei Kovalev in Pravda on September 26th 1968⁹⁴. The principles which appeared reconfirmed theses which were circulating during the Normalization and even before. The sovereignty of individual countries can not be in contradiction with the world socialism. Also that each party is free to apply the principles of the Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these principles. In this respect the article stated the most important argument: The weakening of any of the links in the world system of socialism directly affects all socialist countries and they cannot look indifferently upon this.⁹⁵

The article by Kovalev, which was the theoretical foundation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, it was followed by finally elaborated in a speech delivered by Brezhnev on November 12th 1968 in which he stated 6 concepts which contemplated the article of Kovalev. 1. The weakest link of the communism. 2. The contradictions of Socialism. 3. The possibility of restoration of the capitalism. 4. The Vanguard role of the communist party 5. The common natural laws of socialist development. 6. The revolutionary basis of Sovereignty.⁹⁶

The principles such as the leading role of the party, the possibility of restoration, were in the major concerns expressed by Stanko Todorov during the meeting in Dresden on March 23rd and then implemented into the Plenum of the Central Committee from March 29th. The principles

⁹⁴ Mark Kramer, *Beyond The Brezhnev Doctrine* International Security, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Winter, 1989-1990), pp. 25-6

⁹⁵ *ibid*

⁹⁶ R.Judson.Mitchel, *The Brezhnev Doctrine*, The Review of Politics Vol. 34, No. 2 (Apr., 1972), pp. 190-202

which appeared, later during the conflict, were also defended on behalf of the communist party with certainty that the internal situation in Bulgaria corresponded to them.

The outcome from the Normalization and the Elaboration of the Brezhnev Doctrine proved the argument of Jivkov, in which he proposed his version of Communist State, as the appropriate model in the Socialist Camp.

Conclusions

The political path that Bulgarian foreign policy took during the process of the Prague Spring represented an internal representation of a Socialist State which had managed to build the perfect communist social order. This social order was imposed as a weapon in defense of the main principles of the Socialist Camp, which were challenged by Dubcek and his people.

In deep correlation between this internal stability and international duty Bulgaria based the motivation and justification of its foreign policy. The first period was the interception of the Reforms in Czechoslovakia on the bases of the De-Stalinization made in Bulgaria. The conflict between April 1956 and the April Action Program marked the general line of Motivation of Jivkov. This contradiction was in terms with general preoccupations of the Soviet Union, on the rumors about revision in social and international concepts happening in Czechoslovakia.

The next period was marked by on side by openly expressed social opposition towards the policy of the participants in the Five, and also posed the question to which extend CPCZ was in control. In this debate Bulgaria was to represent its view of non-existing system of control in Czechoslovakia which resulted in the other socialist countries. The alignment with the polish communist leader Gomulka was an example of another quality of Jivkov, to find allies which were in tough position and probably would support him, although the situation in Poland and Bulgaria exemplified almost the two most different regimes in terms of liberalization and political control.

The final meeting in Warsaw was the last attempt to challenge the ambiguity of CPCZ. The problems were no more narrowed in discussion between political leaders. In situation of

divided Warsaw Pact, complete of support in the Communist Movement and especially on behalf the European communist parties, the Five gave one of their last signs.

The uncompromised Czechoslovakian communist party in this second period provided ground for speculation on the degree of the crisis. It was used by the Bulgarian Communist leaders to elaborate its theory.

The third period in which the Soviet Union, posed the problem in front of Czechoslovakian leaders in personal meetings and when these attempts also failed, the military intervention became inevitable. The duality between the argumentation in terms of a response to the Czechoslovakian society” and the feeling in the reports from the Bulgarian solders of problematic relations and misunderstanding on behalf of the local population and the Army, resulted in mission which failed to establish immediate outcome. Bulgarian troops left, while the situation was uncertain and Dubcek was still in power.

The most important outcome was the binding line between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. The motivation of Jivkov from the first months plus his interpretations on the situation mingled into the Brezhnev Doctrine. This was the biggest achievement of the Bulgarian communist leader, who kept his power during the whole reign of Brezhnev.

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