

# Czech, Slovak Officials Angered by Russian Documentary on 1968 Invasion

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The flag of the Czech Republic

Czech and Slovak officials have voiced anger over the way Russian state television depicted the 1968 Moscow-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in a recent documentary film.

In early 1968, Prague spearheaded liberal reforms in then-Soviet dominated Czechoslovakia. Within months, the Soviet Union invaded the country alongside Warsaw Pact members Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Hungary, ultimately stifling the reforms widely referred to as the Prague Spring. The occupation lasted until 1989, when the Velvet Revolution brought about the end of Communist rule in the country.

In the film "The Warsaw Pact — Unclassified Pages," which aired May 23 on Rossia-1, the invasion was portrayed as a defensive maneuver, carried out to stave off an invasion being plotted by NATO countries.

"The historical narrative of an alleged peaceful civil uprising with a romantic name, the Prague Spring ... has been undermined by those that lived through these events," the film's narrator said.

State Duma Deputy Yury Sinelshchikov, who served in one of the military groups that participated in the Warsaw Pact operation in Prague, featured prominently in the documentary. In an interview filmed in Prague, he attested to the theory that the popular historic interpretation of the invasion — that it was carried out in a bid to quash the Czechoslovakian liberalization policies — was incorrect.

Czech Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek summoned Russia's ambassador to voice his dissatisfaction with the film, The Associated Press reported Monday, citing Zaoralek's spokeswoman as saying the minister found the film to be misleading.

The Slovak Foreign Ministry echoed the sentiment, saying the documentary attempts to "rewrite history and falsify historical truth," the Associated Press reported.

Russian state radio and television holding VGTRK denied the allegations of foul play emanating from the former Soviet space, claiming the film was made ethically, the RBC news site reported Tuesday, citing Pyotr Fyodorov, head of the company's international relations department.

President Vladimir Putin met with Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico in the Kremlin on Tuesday. A partial transcript of the meeting released by the Kremlin lacked any mention of the controversial film.

The Warsaw Pact was a Moscow-led collective security alliance that comprised the Communist states of eastern and central Europe, including Czechoslovakia itself. Having been established in a bid to counteract NATO, it was dissolved in 1990 as the Soviet era neared its end.

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