Document 1

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Two Thousand Words for Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone (27 June 1968)

In early 1968 a reform-minded communist government lifted some restrictions on personal freedom in Czechoslovakia. Young writers and students began to criticize Soviet influence, calling for the state to pursue its own path to Socialism. This period of relative freedom and experimentation is known as the "Prague Spring."

The life of this nation was first threatened by the war…Most of the people of Czechoslovakia optimistically accepted the socialist program, but its direction got into the wrong people's hands…

After the war people had great confidence in the Communist party, but it gradually preferred to have official positions instead of the People's trust…The incorrect line of leadership turned the party from a political party and ideological grouping into a power organization which became very attractive to power-hungry egotists, reproachful cowards, and people with bad consciences…

Because the party became linked with the state it lost the advantage of being able to keep its distance from executive power. There was no criticism of the activity of the state and economic organizations. Parliament forgot how to debate: The government forgot how to govern and the directors how to direct. Elections had no significance, and the laws lost their weight…What was still worse was that we could not trust each other anymore…You didn't get anywhere by being honest, and it was useless to expecting ability to be appreciated. Most people therefore, lost interest in public affairs…

…The practical quality of the future democracy depends on what becomes of the enterprises and what will happen in them…We have to find good managers and back them up. It is true that, in comparison with developed countries, we are all badly paid…

We must turn the district and local press, which has degenerated into a mouthpiece for official views, into a platform for all the possible positive political forces. Let us demand that editorial councils composed of members from the National Front be set up, and let us found other newspapers. Let us establish committees for the defense of the freedom of the press…

Document 2

Memorandum of Conversation between Leonid Brezhnev and Alexander Dubcek (13 August 1968)

Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev initially supported reform in Czechoslovakia. He hoped it would increase communist authority and economic productivity. Because he was pursuing cooperative agreements with the West he did not want to intervene militarily. However, the growing hostility of the "Prague Spring" forced his hand. In extensive conversations with Dubcek, he called on the Czechoslovak leader to rein in young activists. When this failed Brezhnev ordered a Soviet bloc invasion of the country on 20 August 1968.

13 August 1968

Brezhnev: We have little time, and so let me get straight to the point. I'm turning to you with anxiety about the fact that the mass media in your country are not only incorrectly depicting (us), but are also stepping up their attacks against the healthy forces and continuing to purvey anti-Sovietism and anti-socialist ideas…

Dubcek: I have already told you what measures we are taking to put an end to anti-Soviet and anti-socialist manifestations in the mass media…We need time to take care of it. We're not able to restore order…in just two or three days.

…

Brezhnev: …As far as the Czechoslovak organs of mass media are concerned, they're keeping up their relentless attacks against the CPSU and the Soviet Union and have even reached the point where they've been attacking the leaders of our party. They've already been branding us as "Stalinists" and other such things. And what, I might ask, do you say about this?

Dubcek: (falls silent)

Brezhnev: …I must candidly say to you, Sasha, that by dragging your feet in the fulfillment of these obligations, you're committing outright deceit and are blatantly sabotaging the decision we jointly reached…For this reason we are considering new, independent decisions that would defend both the CPCz and the cause of socialism in Czechoslovakia.

Dubcek: I only want to say to you…that we are working in this direction…We need time for this.

Brezhnev: …I am obliged to say that we're not able to wait much longer and you shouldn't force us to open new polemics with your mass media and to respond to all the articles and activities that are being permitted now in Czechoslovakia against our country, against our party, and against all socialist parties…