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COLD ACTIONS, COLD METHODS, COLD WAR: CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PRAGUE COUP OF 1948

by

Susan A. Villeneuve, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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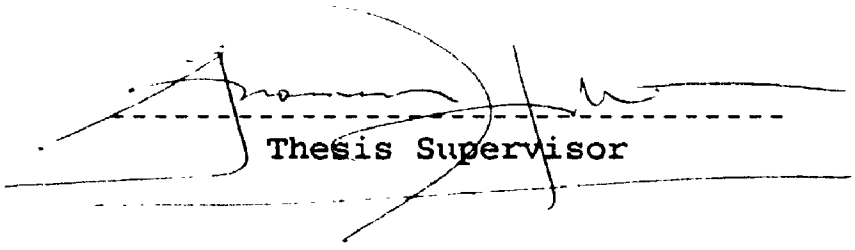
"COLD ACTIONS, COLD METHODS, COLD WAR:
CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PRAGUE COUP OF 1948"

submitted by

Susan A. Villeneuve, B.A.,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts



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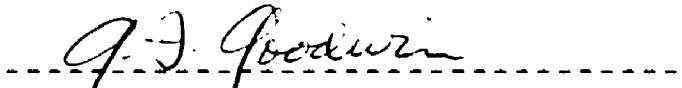

Chair, Department of History

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will view Canadian Cold War policies through the prism of the coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948. It is the first account, based on primary sources, of the Canadian government's response to the coup in Czechoslovakia, of government and media attitudes towards the republic, and of the manner in which the Communist revolution in 1948 affected foreign policy. It will also examine some of the perceptions that Canadian diplomats and foreign policy experts held about the Soviet Union and Communist ideology between 1943 when Canada set up its first Moscow diplomatic mission, and 1949, the year that NATO was formed. The aim of this thesis is to compare attitudes before and after the coup in order to assess Canadian images of the Soviet Union, and also test historians' claims about Canada's role in the Western alliance and the Cold War.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Science and Technology revolutionalize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our responses. Expelled from individual consciousness by the rush of change, history finds its revenge by stamping the collective unconscious with habits, values, expectations, dreams. The dialectic between past and future will continue to form our lives.

Arthur M. Schlesinger

Writing is not like painting where you add. It is not what you put on the canvas that the reader sees. Writing is more like a sculpture where you remove, you eliminate in order to make the work visible. Even those pages you remove somehow remain.

Elie Wiesel

These quotations describe two passions in my life. History and writing. This thesis has given me an opportunity to combine them, and has allowed me to experience all the exhilaration and agony that writing history can bring. But I have not written this paper alone. There are many people whose support and assistance must be acknowledged. First, I would like to thank all the other graduate students in the department who let me babble away about my topic, gave me sage advice about how to deal with writers' block, and who kept telling me that "yes, it really will be finished some day!"

To Norman Hillmer, the words thank you are never enough. The angels were watching over me the day I chose Professor Hillmer to be my supervisor. He has guided my studies and my writing with great care, patience and thankfully, good humour. He has taught me how to sculpt my writing, cutting away the unnecessary, leaving only the story that should be told. I count myself beyond lucky to have Norman Hillmer as a supervisor and a friend and look forward to more years of working together.

My sons, Jamieson and Robert, have been quite amused and delighted that I have homework too! They have given up countless moments with their mother so she could just get one more page done. They are an essential part of the reason that I came to university in the first place and my thanks for their support is combined with a hope that they will also know the love of learning.

And finally, I owe endless gratitude to my husband Mark. His support has never deviated, even in the worst of times. He has always given me the freedom to explore my wildest dreams and the time and encouragement I needed to reach any goal I set for myself. Whatever strength and sanity I have needed over the past years, he has given me unstintingly. For all of these things and so much more, I thank him with all my heart.

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The Cold War defined the economic and political structure of post-war governments. The emerging bipolar world and the growing suspicion and distrust between the former World War II allies, the Soviet Union and the United States, dominated and determined political agendas. In his 1986 article on the Cold War, Reg Whitaker notes that

> The Cold War has become so much the air we breathe that we may forget how primordial it has been to our times. These are among the things which the Cold War has done: it has divided the world into warring military, political, economic and cultural blocs; it has been the organizing principle behind the entire international institutional apparatus and diplomatic practice of the post war world; it has inspired the internal political and economic mobilizations of the nations on both sides and determined the disciplinary limits of thoughts and dissent...[1]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in part as a reaction to the Vietnam War, many analysts of the Cold War began to revise their interpretations of the origins and nature of the Cold War and attacked the old orthodoxy of America as good and moral and the Soviet Union as evil and immoral. While some revisionist history was initially only a simplistic reversal of the two great power roles (the United States was now expansionist and Russia the "innocent victim of encirclement"[2]), it initiated and encouraged discussion as well as the evolution of a post-revisionist interpretation of the Cold War. This third phase of Cold War analysis and writing led to a better understanding of the complex variety of causes and origins of the war. The post-revisionists took some of the essential facts of

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1 R. Whitaker, "What is the Cold War About and Why is it Still With Us?" Studies in Political Economy, Spring 1986, pp. 8-9.

2 D. Smith, Diplomacy of Fear Canada and the Cold War 1941 - 1948 (Toronto, 1988), p. 6.

the orthodox interpretation, added the revisionists re-examination of the events of the early 1940s, and combined these two views with archival sources. This new approach created a more complex, nuanced analysis of the Cold War and images of the Soviets and Communism.[3] The post-revisionist interpretation continues to extract the essential truths while at the same time questioning the sometimes one-dimensional perspectives of earlier historians.

Canadian scholars asked similar questions about the political and economic decisions and policies that emerged in the early Cold War period--and about the orthodox interpretation of the Cold War. One of the first of these was John W. Warnock, who argued that the Canadian foreign policy that developed during the early 1940s, and which could only be understood in the "context of the Cold War", accepted and welcomed the "paranoid attitude and hard line policies of the American government."[4] J.L. Granatstein and Robert Cuff, building on the revisionist Cold War analysis of American historian Gabriel Kolko, contended that the "authorized" or "accepted" version of Canadian policies during this period as "at one with virtue" should have been replaced with a portrayal of Canadian "policy makers as actors in a charade, a charade in which the players themselves were often deceived."[5]

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3 John Lewis Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War," in Diplomatic History, 7:3, (Summer, 1983), 171-190.

4 J. Warnock, Partner to Behemoth: The Military Policy of a Satellite Canada, (Toronto, 1970), p. 1 and p. 16.

5 J.L. Granatstein and R.D. Cuff, "Another Look at the Cold War", in Norman Hillmer (ed.) Partners Nevertheless: Canadian-American Relations in the Twentieth Century, (Toronto, 1989), p. 209.

For Cuff and Granatstein, the authorized version stated that, once Canadian policy makers realized that the United Nations was not going to work and that the Soviets would continue aggressive expansionist policies (as evidenced by the "rape of Czechoslovakia"), they were forced to create a western security alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Canadian involvement in NATO was proof of the government's commitment to internationalism and to the recovery of war ravaged Europe. The real story, according to Cuff and Granatstein, was that Canada simply accepted the American Cold War position. Canadian policies were "motivated by [economic and domestic] self-interest", not virtuous morality and were, for the most part, set by American attitudes and analysis.[6] The authors believed that Canadian perceptions of the Russians were determined by American anti-Communist sentiment and the fear that was promoted by American views was manipulated by the Canadian government to create a sense of national unity (French Canadians were virulently anti-Communist) and to garner public support for Canadian policies towards Europe and the United States.

Historian John English challenged Cuff and Granatstein's claims on several fronts. He pointed out that the Canadian government never attempted to hide the self-interest of economic aid to Western Europe; in fact, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, addressed the issue directly in a major speech in 1947. English also challenged the authors' national unity argument, citing opinion surveys which asked

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6 Ibid., p. 213.

whether Canadians supported sending men to fight in Korea. These surveys, taken before and during the United Nations police action, showed little unity in anti-Communist sentiment between French and English. Statistics compiled from these surveys also indicated that the Canadian government never had to use fear to gain public support for Canadian policies towards the United States. The Canadian public had "embarrassingly amorous" feelings towards the United States in the latter years of the war and thereafter.[7]

Nor did the Canadian government catch an anti-Communist "virus" from the Americans. Instead, English argues that Mackenzie King's anti-Communist stance may have infected some Americans. King was a strong anti-Communist, a feeling sparked in part by the Gouzenko affair.[8] And if the Canadian policy makers did contract an anti-Soviet virus, it was more likely from the British, their major source of intelligence on the Soviets, than the Americans.[9] Even then the King government did not accept the British views, which he suspected, carte blanche. The Prime Minister feared the influence of British policies on his country. Canadian policy makers were also not unaware of the risks of American domination. The author claims that Canadian foreign policy during the early Cold War was an attempt to provide a bridge between the United States and the United Kingdom and to prevent a split between the "two most powerful sides of the North Atlantic triangle."[10]

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7 John English, "Revisionism revisited: a response," The Canadian Forum, LLI, December 1972, pp. 16-19.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

In an 1977 article, historian Don Page and political scientist Don Munton responded to the charges that there were no differences between American and Canadian policies. The central argument of this article is that Canadian officials had a much more balanced and moderate analysis and image of the Soviet Union than argued for by revisionist historians. The authors outlined the basic tenets of the "nascent Canadian revisionist school."[11] Canadian policy makers believed that the United States was a "friendly, non-expansionist power"; they accepted and agreed with the Cold War images that the Americans held of the Soviet Union as a hostile, communist driven, expansionist power; and they feared the possibility of an immediate war. According to Page and Munton, the revisionists believed that these assumptions led Canadian decision makers to form an "anti-Soviet, pro-American postwar policy."[12]

Page and Munton asserted that, while the Canadians did perceive some threats from Soviet actions, they did not accept the image of Soviet policy as necessarily hostile or driven by communist ideology. Rather they believed that Soviet policy was based on "historical imperialism and considerations of power" and was "politically expansionary but not militarily aggressive." In addition, Page and Munton maintained that Canadians were far more alert to and leery of American policies, expansionist tendencies and emotionalism than the analysts realized. There were many complicated factors that underlay Canada's foreign policy--including geographic and economic realities--and it

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11 D. Page and D. Menton, "Canadian Images of the Cold War 1946-7", in International Journal, XXXII, 3, (Summer 1977), p. 581.

12 Ibid.

was misleading in their view to argue that Canada chose a pro-United States policy based solely on the acceptance of the American images of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the authors contended that "Canadian postwar support of American policy emerged despite of not because of, certain images of the United States held by Canadian policy makers."[13] Page and Munton based the majority of their arguments on a 1947 External Affairs memorandum by Escott Reid entitled "The United States and the Soviet Union: A Study of the Possibility of War and Some of the Implications for Canada". They asserted that this memorandum and the various responses to the ideas raised and opinions expressed "provide an excellent indication of the images of the Canadian policy community at a crucial point during the onset of the Cold War."[14]

In 1986, University of Calgary historian David Bercuson challenged Page and Munton's thesis that Canada acted in a balanced and moderate manner as well as their belief that the Reid memorandum was a crystal ball which showed the perceptions held by Canadian policy makers.[15] Bercuson believed that it was difficult and risky to attempt a summary of the views of such a eclectic group. However, he then proceeded to do exactly that and endeavored to determine what perceptions, assessments and images were held by Canadian policy-makers at External Affairs. Bercuson gave his own interpretation of the

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13 Ibid., pp. 599-604.

14 Ibid., p. 584.

15 D. Bercuson, "A People So Ruthless as the Soviets: Canadian images of the Cold War and the Soviet Union - 1946-1950," in David Davies (ed.). Canada and the Soviet Experiment: Essays on Canadian Encounters with Russia and the Soviet Union. pp. 1-2. Bercuson delivered this paper in 1986, but the book was not published until 1994.

Reid memorandum and several other documents, including reports and analysis by Hume Wrong, Canadian Ambassador in the United States, and Dana Wilgress, who served as the Canadian Ambassador in the Soviet Union from 1943-1946.

Canada's harsh images of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, says Bercuson, were moulded by events in Eastern Europe, the Gouzenko spy case, and the belief that agreements and promises were being broken, especially by the Russians, as well as the inability to reach agreement in Germany. These images were "remarkably fixed by the end of 1946."[16] Bercuson contradicted Page and Munton's assertions and maintained that many of the External Affairs officials--he mentions Reid, Wrong, Pearson (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1946-1948), Wilgress, and Maurice Pope (Head, Military Mission to Allied Control Commission, Germany) in particular--held extremely negative views of the Soviet Union.[17]

Bercuson argued that Reid's memorandum did not put forward a modest or dispassionate view in any way. Reid consistently referred to the Soviet Union as a "police state" while defining the American system as a democratic one attempting to maintain a "free way of life," and the majority of the memorandum condemned the Soviet Union and its policies.[18]

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16 Ibid., p. 3.
17 Ibid., p. 2.
18 Ibid., p. 13.

> Canadian images of the Soviet Union and its role in the Cold War...were as hard-nosed as those of the United States in almost every way. In general the Canadian view of the USSR was just as negative and one-sided, its assessment of Soviet intentions just as alarmist, its remedies for dealing with the Soviets just as tough minded, as those of the State Department and the Defense Department in Washington.[19]

For Bercuson it is clear that Canada did not hold a more reasonable view than the Americans about Soviet policy and the Canadian officials never tried to restrain or tame the U.S. government. In fact, the Canadian policy makers were "the coldest of Cold War Warriors."[20]

Denis Smith addressed the attempts at Canadian revisionist analysis as well as the evolution of Canadian Cold War policies in his 1988 book, Diplomacy of Fear: Canada and the Cold War 1941-1948. Smith argued that revisionism was "an American phenomenon" and that Canadian involvement in revisionist and post-revisionist analysis of the Cold War had been modest. This Canadian reevaluation had, for the most part, only mildly criticized Canada's actions, had not seriously attacked or reviewed the American interpretations and had simply strengthened "conventional justifications for Canadian policy rather than to prompt doubts about their wisdom in retrospect."[21]

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19 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
20 Ibid, p. 23.
21 D. Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, pp. 6-7.

The author challenged Page and Munton's claim that there was a "coherent body of Canadian revisionist history" and pointed out that they based their theories of a "nascent Canadian revisionist school" on just two books and two short magazine articles. Smith asserted that Page and Munton then erected "a straw man version of the Canadian revisionist position in order to knock it down on the basis of a study of one major document [the Escott Reid memorandum]."[22] The Reid memorandum on its own, was hardly the sum total of External Affairs or the Canadian government's policies, actions and images of the Soviet Union or the Cold War.

Smith asserted that Canada's role in the early post-war period revealed itself "in detail as more complex than the conventional image...but this role does not fit any simple revisionist pattern of explanation."[23] Canada was not coerced into a pro-American, anti-Soviet policy. Instead the country's decisions and policies were determined by a wide variety of opinions, analysis and sources and by a pragmatic understanding of both the Soviet and American intentions and abilities. Canada entered a Cold War alliance with the Americans and against the Soviets not "just as a pawn of the United States (at crucial points, indeed, it seemed more subject to British than American influences) but with its own calculations of interest in mind." There were nevertheless limits to that independent role and these were understood by the Canadian officials.[24]

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22 D. Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p. 238, footnote 5.
23 Ibid., p. 8.
24 Ibid., p. 8.

One of the more recent additions to Canadian Cold War literature has been provided by the University of Winnipeg historian, Angelika Sauer. She examined the shifts in thinking that took place between 1943 and 1947 in the Canadian foreign policy community. Sauer viewed this period as an "in-between time, straddling the era of no-commitments and a later period of international activism."[25] As the Canadian government moved towards an acceptance of international involvement, foreign policy experts began to fashion a new approach to that type of involvement. This included demands for a new and deeper level of responsibility. The men at External and other government departments believed that Canada had an important role to play "not necessarily in military but in economic and financial terms and in idealism." Sauer claims that the King paradigm of "claiming as [the] biggest achievement, not what was done but what was avoided--gave way to the Pearson paradigm of quick, decisive, sometimes impatient, activism."[26]

Combining with this new level of active involvement with international affairs was a vision of Canada as a "moderating influence and mediator ... [a] concept often associated with middle power diplomacy."[27] But Sauer argues for a new, clearer definition of Canada's middle power role in the world. As she points out, Canada did not join forces or form coalitions with other middle power countries such as Australia. Instead the

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25 Angelika Sauer, "The Respectable Course: Canada's Department of External Affairs, The Great Powers and the 'German Problem' 1943-1947", p. 385. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1993.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., p. 386.

Canadian government claimed a somewhat loftier position as a different type of middle power that had special privileges because of its unique association with the United Kingdom. This relationship between Canada and Britain as well as the developing alliance with the United States meant that

> Canada would not remain neutral in the emerging conflict, which became the Cold War in 1948, was never in doubt. This was not a question of inescapable economic forces, or of ideological indoctrination. It was not a matter of a satellite being bullied into submission by the American Empire. Canada's growing opposition to Soviet aims in Europe was the result of a gradual erosion of trust and hope as a reaction to Soviet behaviour...The country became part of the Western association in 1947 in recognition of the similarity of views, the closeness of perceptions, and the community of interests among those countries. It was quite respectable to be a member of that team.[28]

In his 1994 book on Canada and the Cold War, Reg Whitaker discussed several factors which he believed played an important role in setting Canadian policy during the 1940s. Whitaker referred to 'ghosts' of the past which haunted the Canadian policy makers and affected their decisions. One of these was the Munich agreement of 1938. The

> Canadians drew their own particular lessons from the experience of the 1930s: by pursuing policies of isolationism Canada had shared in the moral guilt of the Western democracies for the onset of the war... The post-war lesson was clear: Canada should do now what it could as a middle power to encourage the formation of the instruments of collective security against the menace of totalitarian aggression and play its fair part in shouldering the burden of the alliance's defence.[29]

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28 Ibid., pp. 388-389.

29 Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957, (Toronto, 1994), p. 5.

Another "wartime ghost hovering over Canadian shoulders" was the fear that the Americans would return to a policy of isolationism. Whitaker argued that this was a "constant spur" to the Canadian and British governments, whose policies were aimed at encouraging American military and economic participation in "blocking the expansionist designs of the USSR."[30] The author states that

> in the earliest stages of the emergent Cold War, in 1945-6, Canada was rather more active than passive in its response to the task of building a new world order in which Western interests and ideals would be safeguarded...Far from being a victim of American bullying, Canada was at Britain's side in encouraging greater American participation and leadership in blocking Soviet ambitions (or what were believed to be Soviet ambitions) and thus in shaping what was to become a powerful Western alliance.[31]

In attempting to determine why Canadian politicians and diplomats made the choices they did in the 1940s, it is necessary to ask exactly how the Canadian government viewed the Soviet Union and Communist ideology. Did these images create Canadian policies that were balanced and moderate, or were Canadians, as Bercuson puts it, the "coldest of Cold War warriors"? One way to respond to these queries is to examine a case study, the 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia.

After the republic of Czechoslovakia was created in 1918, there were a series of changes in that country that played a part in the development of policy and attitudes in the Western world. Understanding the evolution of those perspectives is an important step in

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30 Ibid., pp. 5-6
31 Ibid., pp. 114-115.

comprehending the final reactions to the coup in 1948. Throughout the interwar period and after the Second World War, the Czech republic maintained a democratic po'itical and economic structure as well as a clearly defined middle class.[32] This image of a democratic Czechoslovakia played a role in determining the reaction of the Western world to the signing of the Munich agreement in 1938, which stripped Czechoslovakia of its independence. In a speech, made after the 1948 coup, Louis St. Laurent, then the Secretary of State for External Affairs, alluded to the importance of Munich, stating that "the nazis were well aware that in conquering Czechoslovakia they were striking a formidable blow at world democracy."[33] After the Second World War, Czechoslovakia was once again regarded as a symbol of democracy, and of peaceful coexistence between the East and the West.[34] President Eduard Benes' attempts to create a fusion between democracy and socialism, and to make his country a bridge between the East and West were regarded with admiration and hope by the Western world.[35] This hope that the Czech republic would be able to maintain its democratic traditions made the eventual fall of the country to the Communists even more difficult to accept. St Laurent noted that, as the nazis had known it in 1938, "the communist dictators of today are equally conscious of the importance of the Czech democratic tradition to the western world."[36]

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32 See Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954 (New York, 1972), p. 199.

33 The Honorable Louis St. Laurent, speaking to the House of Commons, April 29, 1948.

34 Herbert Feis, From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War 1945-1950, (London, 1970), p. 291.

35 Edward Taborsky, President Edvard Benes: Between East and West, 1938-1948 (Stanford, 1981), p. 250.

36 House of Commons Debates, April 29, 1948.

This thesis will view Canadian Cold War policies through the prism of the coup in Czechoslovakia. It is the first account, based on primary sources, of the Canadian government's response to the coup in Czechoslovakia, of government and media attitudes towards the republic, and of the manner in which the Communist revolution in 1948 affected foreign policy. I will also examine the some of the perceptions that Canadian diplomats and foreign policy experts held about the Soviet Union and Communist ideology between 1943, when Canada set up its first Moscow diplomatic mission, and 1949, the year that NATO was formed. My aim is to compare attitudes before and after the coup in order to assess Canadian images of the Soviet Union, and test also historians' claims about Canada's role in the Western alliance and the Cold War. The thesis will be based on a review of available primary sources: official records and private papers at the National Archives of Canada, including Department of External Affairs files, the King diaries, and the St. Laurent and Reid papers. In addition, I have used those U.S. State Department documents that are available through the Foreign Relations of the United States document series as well as those British Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office sources available in the National Archives of Canada. I have also had access to selected British Cabinet documents, located in the Public Record Office in Kew, England. Finally, I have reviewed several media sources, including the Globe and Mail, Maclean's and Saturday Night.

Chapter One looks specifically at the evolution of the External Affairs foreign policy experts' understanding of Soviet actions and policies between 1943 and 1947. To

properly understand the responses to the images of the Prague coup, it is important to know how Canadians developed these images and policies in the years leading up to 1948. External Affairs came into its own during the latter part of the Second World War and the early post-war years. Prior to that, the department had been limited in scope and ambition, with the Prime Minister holding the reins and making the decisions. After the war, the Department developed quickly into a functioning independent organization to respond to the crises that were arising on the international scene. During this period, External Affairs had a group of extremely capable experts who attempted to analyze the international situation. The Department of External Affairs had been, in the words of British diplomat Sir William Hayter, "built up from nothing one of the highest-powered Foreign Services in the modern world,"[37] and it was during this period of rapid development that the Canadian foreign policy experts were attempting to define their policies towards the Soviet Union.

Chapter Two will deal specifically with Czechoslovakia. This will include historical data in order to set the stage and the context for a discussion of the coup in 1948. This will allow the reader to gain an understanding of certain choices and decisions which were made by the Czech government in the early days of 1948. The early post-war years were crucial for the republic, and indeed many argue that the process of Sovietization was begun in 1943 and that the 1948 Prague coup was only the culmination of a long process.

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37 James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence (Toronto, 1972), pp. 41-42.

This chapter will also present an examination of the coup itself, and discuss how and why the coup occurred. Canadian officials both in Prague and in other embassies around the world watched the events in Czechoslovakia closely. Although logical analysis had led many to believe that the Czech republic would eventually fall within the Soviet sphere,[38] there was still an deep emotional reaction to the "bloodless coup". In the Canadian parliament, Louis St. Laurent lamented

> the tragedy of the countries of eastern Europe which have become victims of the dictatorship of the communist minority...They have sunk back into a deeper, despotism that they have ever known before...Czechoslovakia, however, is one country which had earned and deserved a better fate. The sordid details of the process by which the Czechoslovak people were despoiled in a few days of their hard won liberty and exemplary parliamentary democracy are too well known...The fate of Czechoslovakia is indeed a frightening case history of communist totalitarianism in action.[39]

The coup in Prague in 1948 became a Cold War watershed and the kaleidoscope of images that spilled into diplomatic channels had an enormous, if difficult to measure, impact on the foreign policies of the United States, Britain and Canada and those governments' analyses of the Soviet Union. A close study of this event, the images that it produced and the reactions of the Canadian government, will provide an opportunity to show whether the Canadian government was turning towards a harder line stance against

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38 George Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, (Boston, 1967), p. 254.

39 The Honourable Louis St. Laurent speaking to the House of Commons, April 29, 1948.

the Soviets or leaning towards "containment with a human face" against the threat of Soviet expansion.

Chapter Three will examine the aftermath and effects of the coup. Some experts argue that the coup in Czechoslovakia led directly and specifically to the signing of the Brussels Treaty, the Mediterranean security pact and the creation of NATO[40]. At the very least, there were calls from British, American and Canadian diplomats and the Canadian media for a much stronger Western alliance that could respond to and protect against Soviet aggression. New policies were developed and changed on almost a weekly basis as the Western powers reacted to the Soviets' new moves against other smaller countries, such as Finland and Norway. As it became apparent that Stalin and the Soviet Union, like Hitler, would not just stop with Czechoslovakia, Canadian policy makers were forced to make crucial decisions very quickly and under crisis conditions. Critics , such as Granatstein and Cuff, have seen the Canadian government's decision to enter the Western alliance as simple capitulation to the Americans.[41] This section will attempt to answer a question which goes to the heart of this thesis: was Canada fighting her own Cold War, or was the country simply a foot soldier in another country's army?

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40 Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcus, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957, (Toronto, 1994), p. 5.

41 J.L. Granatstein and R.D. Cuff, "Another Look at the Cold War", p. 209.

CHAPTER ONE - **Canadian Views of the Bipolar World**

The coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 tested the procedures and policies of the Department of External Affairs, which had to deal swiftly with fallout of the 1948 Communist overthrow and decide how Canada would respond to this new world crisis. The Canadian government's understanding of the Soviet Union and Communist ideology as well as the policies that were developed in 1948 did not emerge from a vacuum. External Affairs had been seriously discussing and analyzing the Soviets since 1943, and the emerging bipolar hostilities since the end of the Second World War. When the Department was faced with the tense situation in the days and weeks following the coup and forced to make crucial policy decisions quickly, it was able to turn to expert analysis that had evolved over several years. In order to judge Canadian perceptions of the Soviet Union that emerged after the coup, it is essential to understand how these attitudes evolved and, for comparison purposes, to know what these images were before the coup.

In 1942, in response to a growing pressure to establish and formalize diplomatic relations between Canada and the Soviet Union, Canada signed an agreement to recognize the Soviet Union and exchange representati es with Moscow. By 1943 External Affairs had set up a Canadian mission, initially and temporarily located in Kuibyshev, later settling in

Moscow.[42] Dana Wilgress was appointed to the position in November 1942. Wilgress already had some understanding of Russia. He had served as a Trade Commissioner first in Omsk then in Vladivostok between 1916 and 1918. He had married a Russian woman and he spoke the language reasonably well. Canadian officials believed that Wilgress was a pragmatic man, and External Affairs was depending on his past experience with the Russian people and system. Except for brief absences in 1945, Wilgress would remain in Moscow until the summer of 1946. His views and opinions were respected by his colleagues in Ottawa as well as his peers in England and the United States.[43]

A review of some of Wilgress's first reports from Moscow in July 1943 show that he believed that the quest for security was the driving force behind Soviet foreign policy, and to that end they based their policy on

> (a) a strong Soviet Union with strategic frontiers and (b) the permanent weakening of Germany as a military power. They envisage the Anglo-Soviet alliance as the future guardian of European security with the United Kingdom occupying the dominant position in Western Europe and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.[44]

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42 J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957 (Toronto, 1982), p. 231; and D. Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p.36.

43 John Holmes, The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the search for world Order 1943-1957 Volume 2 (Toronto, 1982), p. 19; also see D. Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p. 45. Smith notes that Wilgress provided a clear and detailed commentary on the Soviet system, policies and intentions; and J.L. Granatstein in The Ottawa Men, p. 230, points out that Wilgress was seen as having "breadth and flexibility of view."

44 L.D. Wilgress to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (SSEA), April 22, 1943, p. 1. Department of External Affairs (DEA) File 2 AE-1(s), pt 1/2. Also see Donald Page, "Getting to Know the Russians - 1943-1948" in Aloysius Balawyder, (ed.), Canadian-Soviet Relations 1939-1980 (Oakville, 1981), p 20.

Soviet-American relations were improving, and Wilgress credited this to the dissolution of the Comintern which was a sign of the Soviet government's move towards cooperation and goodwill. He argued that the Soviet quest for security included strategic frontiers, a buffer zone between them and Germany, and the establishment of "friendly" governments in bordering Eastern European countries. But he did not believe that this would necessarily lead to military hostilities or political interference in Eastern or Western Europe.

> The Soviet Union will want peace in the immediate future above all else and definitely will not want to interfere in the affairs of other countries except where her vital interests are concerned. A general realization in the United States of these facts is the most important prerequisite for future cooperation between these two countries.[45]

Throughout the rest of 1943 and early 1944, Wilgress described attempts by the Soviet Union to eliminate suspicion about the aims of their policies and mistrust of the goals of the communist ideology. In early 1944, he asserted that the results of Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers and other important Soviet moves should

> serve to set at rest fears of Soviet aggressive intentions. They clearly indicate the point...that the Soviet leaders above all else desire a long period of international peace and tranquillity in order that the country can be reconstructed and the standard of living raised...They realize that such a period of peace and tranquillity can only be assured if the rest of the world have no fears of aggression on the part of the Soviet Union and if the

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45 Wilgress to SSEA, July 3, 1943, p. 7. DEA Files 2 AE-1(s) pt 1.

> Soviet Union cooperates fully with the other great powers in the maintenance of peace.[46]

Wilgress was accused by Arnold Smith, an officer working at the Canadian Embassy, of showing too much sympathy for the Soviet Union in his pre-1945 dispatches. During the spring of 1945, Wilgress was called from Russia to attend the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco. While the ambassador was away, Smith took the opportunity to present his own views on Soviet policies and intentions. He believed that, as the hostilities and German military threats were ending, the Soviets were moving away from cooperation and towards isolationism. They were creating their own cordon sanitaire and sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, and were emphasizing the need for further and more military preparations beyond the end of the war. Smith also pointed that the British and American ambassadors in Moscow, who had until recently supported Wilgress's more positive analysis, were reluctantly accepting the new situation and agreeing that it would be necessary to adopt a firmer stand in their diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.[47]

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46 Wilgress to SSEA, November 18, 1943, p. 4; see also Wilgress to SSEA, July 6, 1943 p. 4; Wilgress to SSEA, August 31, 1943, p. 1; Wilgress to SSEA, November 18, 1945, p. 4 and Wilgress to SSEA, January 6, 1944, p. 1. DEA File 2 AE-1(s) pt. 1.

47 J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men, p. 234. Granatstein states that Smith prepared various dispatches for the signature of the Chargé, Leon Mayrand who refused to sign them and they were only sent to Ottawa as memoranda. John Holmes, The Shaping of Peace, p. 20. Holmes argues that Smith's views are found in various despatches from Leon Mayrand, the Chargé D'affaires. Holmes asserts that Mayrand took responsibility for the views in these despatches although "the drafters initials indicate that they were written by Smith.", p. 397, footnote 17. Also see despatches from Leon Mayrand to SSEA, dated April 16, 1945, pp. 1-6, April 18, 1945, pp. 1-2, April 19, 1945, pp. 1-3 and May 18, 1945, pp.1-5.

The line taken by Smith and the support it received in Ottawa did not, however, undermine the respect given to Wilgress and his earlier analyses.[48] Although he appeared to be delivering a sympathetic appraisal of the Soviets and their policies, there was never any indication that Wilgress was blind to the potential dangers of the emerging post-war world. Wilgress was a realist who accepted that there was as much chance of the Soviets turning to isolationist solutions as to international organizations and collective security arrangements. In 1944, the Canadian government supported Wilgress's argument that the Soviet Union was a country that was desperate for a long period of peace.[49] The Soviet government was striving for an equal role with the Americans and British in the setting of new international policies. The Soviet government's overarching goal was maintaining strategic frontiers and security. Wilgress did not spend a lot of time examining the communist ideology and certainly did not portray it in a negative light. He accepted the fact that the Soviet government might return to an isolationist stance, but this possibility was not seen as a potential threat to world peace or safety.

When Wilgress returned to Moscow in September 1945, it was to a "situation entirely different to that which prevailed when I left."[50] In his report to External Affairs, he noted that he needed some time to regain his equilibrium, and he cautioned that his views were preliminary and tentative. The Soviet Union had just gone through a tumultuous few

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48 See Reg Whitaker, Cold War Canada, pp. 115-116. Whitaker says that Smith represented the 'tough' school and Wilgress represented the "moderately conciliatory" school in Canada and that the Wilgress school defeated the Smith school.

49 Ibid.

50 L.D. Wilgress to SSEA, September 25, 1945, p. 1. DEA File 2 AE-1, pt. 1.

months with the end of hostilities with Germany and Japan. The country's representatives had attended important conferences which had provided a "testing ground for the ability for the Soviet Union to cooperate with the outside world." There was now a "marked deterioration all along the line in relations between the Soviet Union and the two Anglo-Saxon powers." Wilgress saw several reasons for this decline, including the fact that

> The Anglo-Saxon powers are still a long way from finding the proper method of dealing with the Soviet Government...Unfortunately the advent of the Truman administration to power has coincided with the ascendancy of those advisors who have been preaching "toughness" towards the Soviet Union. I am not sure if toughness for the sake of being tough may not at times take the place of that policy of being "firm but fair" which I would like to see applied to dealings with the Soviet Government.

The diplomatic relations between the Soviets and the Americans and British were suffering because

> the United Kingdom Government appear to have abandoned any attempt to maintain a balance between the Anglo-Soviet alliance and the gradual evolution of the "Atlantic Community"...this...policy is undoubtedly correct as instinctively reflecting the true interests of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but it is leading the Soviet Union to feel isolated in its relations with the other two powers.[51]

Wilgress was especially disturbed by the level of mistrust and suspicion and the "resumption of that pre-war game usually described as the war of nerves." While the

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51 Wilgress to SSEA, September 25, 1945, pp. 1-2.

Soviets had every intention of cooperating with other world powers in supporting the United Nations Charter, they would also take advantage of the present "state of flux" in world affairs. The decisions made in the next few months would set a pattern that would last for a long time and the level of doubt and distrust would make these decisions more difficult. Wilgress feared that "we may lose the substance of genuine Soviet cooperation for the shadow of elections in the politically immature countries of Eastern Europe."[52]

Even with this somber and negative report, Wilgress was not convinced that the Soviets were moving away from their stated policy of desiring a long period of peace towards expansion, political or military. The idea of a Soviet expansionist policy was being raised and discussed by several Americans, including George Kennan, the Chargé D'affaires in the Soviet Union. In a 1945 memorandum to the Secretary of State, Kennan had reviewed the USSR's international position as hostilities with Germany were ending. He examined the Soviet Union's new status as a world power with rather sudden control of a large land-mass and he questioned how the country would deal with her new responsibilities and whether or not the country could consolidate its hold. Kennan raised the issue of Russia's historical expansionism and stated that

> Behind Russia's stubborn expansion lies only the age-old sense of insecurity...Will this urge now become a permanent feature of Russian psychology, provide the base for a successful expansion of Russia into new areas of east and west. And if initially successful, will it know where to stop? Will it not be inexorably carried

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52 Ibid., p. 6.

> forward, but its very nature, in a struggle to the reach the whole--to attain complete mastery of the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific?[53]

In a subsequent memorandum to the Secretary of State, Kennan attempted to predict how the outcome of the London Conference of Ministers could affect Soviet actions and foreign policy. He first discussed the blatant efforts by the Soviet leaders to publicize the possibility of ending the alliance with the United States and Britain and he argued that there was a clear resurgence of the original

> Leninist thesis of [the] spuriousness and viciousness of "capitalist democracy"...perilously close to a reversion to entire ideology of "capitalist encirclement" which preceded Russia's recent gestures towards collaboration with Western powers..if again adopted at this time, would involve a fundamental change in Soviet foreign policy...[54]

The Soviets believed that they had lost ground at the London Conference and although the government would not do anything seriously drastic, such as unilateral action in Turkey, there would be concerted efforts by the Soviets to discredit American and British policies and to create situations which would force diplomats of these two countries to "become more pliable to Soviet purposes." Stalin would do nothing to push towards a

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53 Memorandum written by George F. Kennan, Counsellor, American Embassy in Moscow, 1945 (no exact date) in Foreign Relations of the United States - 1945 (FRUS), Volume V, p. 854.

54 George F. Kennan, Charge in Soviet Union, to the Secretary of State, United States, October 4, 1945 in (FRUS), Volume V, pp. 889-890.

final break with the West, but Kennan argued for a much tougher American and British policy stance.[55]

Wilgress accepted that Kennan had a "deep knowledge of the Soviet Union," but believed that his views were heavily biased because of his pre-war experiences in the Soviet Union when "foreign representatives became indoctrinated with anti-Soviet ideas as a result of the purges and subtle German propaganda." Wilgress saw the next move by the "Anglo-Saxon powers" as crucial, again arguing his case for the firm but fair approach. But "what is more necessary than anything else, however, is an attempt by the United States to allay Soviet suspicion and mistrust by abandoning the philosophy of the tough school and resorting once more to the Roosevelt touch--even though the master hand is no longer present."[56]

At the end of 1945, Wilgress was less optimistic about future alliances and cooperation between the Soviets and the West. Still, he did not adhere to the emerging "tough school" [a term he used] approach to dealing with the Soviet Union. He continued to think that there was a chance for a post-war alliance if the mistrust could be eliminated and if the Americans could at least begin to accept that the idea of a "security belt" was of critical importance to the Soviets and should not necessarily be viewed as an act of hostile expansion.

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55 Ibid.

56 L.D. Wilgress to SSEA, November 14, 1945, p. 3. DEA File 2 AE-1(s) pt. 1/2.

If in late 1945 Dana Wilgress was still holding out some hope for any sort of alliance, by the spring of the next year a sense of impending doom permeated his reports and memorandums. In March 1946 Wilgress returned to Moscow from a trip abroad "exactly three years to the day since I arrived first in Kuibyshev." He noted sadly that in all those years he had never seen relations between the allies so strained as they were now and he saw little or no hope left for future cooperation with the Soviet Union. From Wilgress's perspective, it appeared that "the Soviet Union apparently has decided to go its own way." The Soviet government still distrusted American and British intentions and would do all they could to take advantage of the present discord among the western countries. Wilgress disagreed with the American contention that the Soviet government had a definite plan. Stalin was responding to and acting on immediate and fluid situations. Stalin would see the western disunity and "vagaries of their policies as circumstances he just has to exploit...the pickings seem too easy for him not at least to have a try at helping himself."[57]

The Soviet Government desperately needed a long period of peace for their economy and system to recover from the war and they "are no longer interested in spreading communism for its own sake." The proper response to what Wilgress called the Soviet's "irresponsible opportunism" was not "that policy of toughness which in the minds of its advocates means treating the Soviet Union as inferior or as a pariah, but a policy of

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57 Wilgress to SSEA, March 21, 1946, p. 5. DEA File 2AE(s) pt. 1/2.

firmness based on a coalescing of American and British policies on a high moral plane."[58] This "high moral plane" was defined as a unity between British and American policies on the Soviet Union which should be based on the ideals, principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. "There could be no more compromising with these principles for the sake of brief vodka honeymoons in Moscow."[59]

In a major report in 1946, Wilgress responded to several questions about the nature and thrust of Soviet foreign policy. Were the Soviets prepared to risk another major war; did the quest for security drive the foreign policy; did the Soviets have aggressive aspirations; did they want the UN to work; did they wish a stable world; was the spread of Communism a main goal of their policy; and finally, what were the main objectives of Soviet foreign policy? The Soviets, Wilgress thought, could not and would not risk another major war. They saw security as the most important feature of their foreign policy and this quest for security could be used to justify any Soviet acts that were viewed as aggressive by the Western world. Soviet behavior could also be explained by fears that the country would be deprived of her immense war gains, an apprehension based on past experiences. The Soviets wanted the UN to work because it allowed them to play a leading role in world affairs and provided a "vehicle for Soviet propaganda". They of course wanted stability within their sphere of influence, but they hoped for instability everywhere else. The spread of Communism did not play a large role in Soviet

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58 Wilgress to SSEA, March 21, 1946, pp. 5-6. DEA File 2 AE-1 pt. 1/2.

59 Ibid.

foreign policy and, while it was extremely difficult to determine the major objectives of that policy, it appeared that security and the consolidation of war gains were central.

Wilgress conceded that, given the present situation, the United States and Britain should not respond with a "policy of appeasement". Appeasement would be bound to fail and the various western allies would have to resort to

> that policy of firmness now being pursued by the other two partners of the coalition. The pursuit of this policy is a frank recognition that the attempt to prevent the world being divided into two camps has failed. It is a new attempt to find an equilibrium between the two camps on the basis of relative power. It is important to remember, however, that the distinction between the two camps is not merely that one is communist and the other capitalistic but chiefly that one is dynamic and the other static.[60]

In the last year that he was to serve in Moscow, Wilgress's analysis of the Soviet policies had definitely altered and the tenor of his reports had taken on an almost despondent tone. He accepted that the Soviet Union would go its own way, that there would be no post-war cooperation between the former allies. The world was now divided into "two camps". Wilgress did not, however, react with unreasonable fear and did not call for a tough response or approach to the Soviet actions. There are no signs of the rhetoric of the Cold War in Wilgress's reports. There is no mention of the menace of Communism, no apprehension about a Soviet threat to the Western world, no description of Soviet desire

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60 Wilgress to SSEA, April 24, 1946, pp. 8-9. DEA File 2-AE(s) pt. 1/2.

for, as Kennan had written, the "complete mastery of the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific". In one of his last reports from Moscow there was no evidence to show that he was reacting in an alarmist manner, or that he was one of the "coldest of Cold War warriors", as David Bercuson has claimed. Instead, Wilgress presented a realistic analysis of a changing situation and, for the most part, maintained this attitude towards the Soviet Union and its policies.

The defection of Igor Gouzenko, a Soviet cipher clerk, and the realization that there was a Soviet spy ring in Canada sent shock waves through the government. Initially though, there was little concrete action taken and there were weeks of indecision about how to handle the situation. There was reluctance on Ottawa's part to admit exactly what was going on. Fears about a hostile reaction by the Soviet Union towards Canada in particular, and the potential serious consequences for international affairs in general, delayed public knowledge of the story. One of the eventual consequences of this case after the story became public was that Ottawa, as a rather timid sign of their displeasure, pulled their Ambassador out of Moscow. Wilgress left Moscow in July and spent some time working on the Canadian delegation for the opening sessions of the United Nations. In 1947 Wilgress was appointed the Canadian Minister to Switzerland.[61]

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61 J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men, p. 235 and J. Holmes, Shaping the Peace, p. 25 and G. Pearson Seize the Day Lester B. Pearson and Crisis Diplomacy (Ottawa, 1993), p. 15.

By the end of 1947, changes on the international scene, as well as shifts in American foreign policy, inspired Canadian foreign policy analysts to reevaluate their own future directions and decisions. In early 1947, Escott Reid began working on a paper initially entitled "Political Appreciation of the Possibility of the Soviet Union Precipitating War Against the United States" as part of External's attempt to redefine policy.[62] Reid's career at External Affairs began in 1938 when he was hired as a Second Secretary in the Department and assigned to Washington. His experiences in Washington set his attitude towards the United States. In the early 1940s, Reid argued that the U.S. was following a policy of "domination, cooperation [and] absorption." Canada was being treated like a subordinate by the Americans because "we have refused to behave as adults." This analysis of the Canadian-American situation had a hand in Reid's initial calls for a new collective security system to replace the League. Canada could not simply move away from the shrinking power of Britain only to have the dim light of independence blocked out by the growing shadow of the United States. A new system of collective security was the only strategy that would allow an effective and balanced cooperation between Canada and America.[63]

Reid was part of the Canadian delegation at the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organization and he was involved in the attempts by the Canadian government to develop a new middle power role for Canada. He believed in the purpose

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62 Draft memorandum prepared by Escott Reid, Head Second Political Division, External Affairs, February 18, 1947. DEA File 52-F(s) pt. 1/2.

63 J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men, p. 245.

and principles of the United Nations, but he was quickly disillusioned by the Soviet Union's actions. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Reid was sympathetic towards the Soviet Union and its policies. This empathy was gradually replaced by a growing pessimism and by the early days of the United Nations, Reid was taking a much harder line with "those goddamned Russians".[64] By 1946 his pessimism had deepened and he was quoted by a reporter from the Winnipeg Free Press as saying "we are now up against an ideological conflict without parallel since Elizabethan times. The communists today are the Papists of the last seventeenth century...You have citizens who give an allegiance elsewhere and your normal system of justice and individual rights breaks down."[65]

It was obvious to Reid that the United Nations would not be capable, because of Soviet actions, of working effectively towards a peaceful world. He therefore began to raise the notion of a "regional security organization", and spoke about it at a conference in 1947.[66] The political scientist James Eayrs believes that Reid's suggestion was "almost certainly the first public statement by a government official advocating a collective defence organization of the western world."[67] It was from this philosophical stance and under these conditions that Escott Reid began preparation of his much discussed and debated 1947 memorandum.

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64 E. Reid, Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid (Toronto, 1989), p. 194.
65 Quoted in J.L. Granatstein's book The Ottawa Men, p. 247.
66 E. Reid, Radical Mandarin, p. 223.
67 J. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada Growing Up Allied (Toronto, 1980), p. 17.

As previously noted, one of Reid's major background sources for his memorandum was Wilgress's analysis of the Soviet Union. Reid was both a friend and a "devoted admirer of Wilgress" and held his professional abilities in high esteem.[68] Reid also quoted from George Kennan's article, which presented an historical background to the political profile of the Russians and the evolution of the Soviet ideology. Kennan evaluated the policy as it stood in 1947 based on the fundamental principle of the "innate antagonism between capitalism and Socialism."[69] Soviet policy would therefore inevitably include "pressure against the free institutions of the western world" and continued "expansive tendencies." In response, United States policy would have to be "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment." Kennan did not accept that the United States could enjoy friendly relations with the Soviets; instead they would have to continue to regard "the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner in the political arena."[70] Although there were similarities between Wilgress and Kennan, Wilgress did not believe that Soviet policy was driven by a communist ideology and did not hold with some of the "more inflammatory interpretations of Soviet intentions held by some Western diplomats."[71] Using these two sources, Escott Reid began the process of drafting his own analysis of the situation.

The process began in February 1947 and by August Reid had prepared a final draft of the report titled "The United States and the Soviet Union: A Study of the Possibility of War

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68 E Reid, Radical Mandarin, p. 153 and p. 213.

69 "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" by "X" (it is commonly accepted that George Kennan was the author). Reprinted from Foreign Affairs An American Quarterly Review, July 1947, p. 7.

70 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

71 J. Holmes, The Shaping of Peace, pp. 22-23.

and Some of the Implications for Canadian Policy". Reid no longer viewed the possibility of war as limited only to the actions of the Soviet government. With the emergence of a bipolar world, it was important to consider the possible behavior of both of the major powers. In the first section of his report, Reid endeavored to present a balanced examination of the expansionist tendencies of both the Soviet Union and the United States.

> Each side desires to expand its defence area because each side believes that the other constitutes a menace to its way of life. It constitutes a menace because its way of life is so different from the way of life of the other...Each side desires to expand its defence area because each side fears the threat to its security which results from the other's expansionist moves...It is obvious, indeed that both the Soviet Union and the United States are expanding powers.[72]

Reid's attempt at balance was not completely successful. He referred to the Soviet Union as a "police state in which individual rights and democratic methods of government..can hardly be said to exist" while the United States was a "highly developed democratic and capitalistic state..anxious to maintain the existing system of democratic values...[and] a desire to retain the benefits of a free life." Reid did not believe that there was a ready solution to the various conflicts between the two powers; they each had their own reasons for pursuing a policy of expansion. The question that had to be addressed was whether these conflicts would lead to war.

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72 Draft memorandum prepared by Escott Reid, August 30, 1947, in DCER, pp. 368-369.

Reid argued that the neither of the two powers would precipitate major military actions against the other. He maintained that the Soviets were realists about their present status. They truly believed that time and truth were on their side, and that "the ultimate struggle between communism and capitalism is inevitable and that communism will emerge victorious." The only possible risk came if either side perceived the balance of power tipping against them. A decision to go to war was a choice "made in the minds of men" and "the reality with which we are concerned, therefore, is not the actual balance of power but the picture of that actual balance in the minds of the members of the governing class."[73] And for Escott Reid, there was more to fear about American misperceptions than Soviet calculations. There was only one solution. The Western powers must "maintain an overwhelming balance of force relative to that of the Soviet Union" and "use the threat of this force to hold back further extensions of Soviet power."[74]

Finally, in the conclusion to his memorandum, Escott Reid appeared to lose a bit of his objectivity and allow a more optimistic perspective on the issue. He raised the idea that there was some chance left for if not peace, at least a truce. He argued:

> It is moreover true that no curtain, even of iron, is impenetrable. No two civilizations have, in the past, been able to live side by side without becoming more and more like each other. The longer, therefore, that the Soviet and Western worlds live side by side in peace, even if it is an uneasy peace, full of conflicts and crises, the more similar to each other they will become..the more manageable will become the conflicts

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73 Ibid., p. 372.
74 Ibid., p. 376.

> and crisis which will arise between them..the less they will have to fear from the triumph of the other's way of life, and the less will each want to impose its way of life on the other.[75]

Even if he believed that the communists were the new Papists of the twentieth century, Reid was still holding out hope, at least in 1947, that the Soviet system would mellow or collapse. His argument that the Western world had to maintain an "overwhelming" balance of power was not a fearful reaction to Soviet expansion or the menace of an ideology. Instead, he believed that this was necessary so the United States and its people would not panic and start a third World War. He, much like Wilgress, was not mapping out choices based on any "unbalanced fear and hatred of Russia and Communism".[76]

The Reid report was sent to at least thirty External officials in Headquarters and across the world for reaction and comments. In the end, nineteen diplomats responded with commentaries, suggestions and changes.[77] There was somewhat of a split vote on the two-power theory which stated that both the Soviet Union and the United States should be viewed as expansionist powers. Marcel Cadieux argued that the Soviet Union was the only expanding power and any attempt made by the United States to expand "its defence

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75 Ibid., p. 382.

76 Memorandum by Hume Wrong, Ambassador in United States, "Influences Shaping the Policy of the United States Towards the Soviet Union", December 4, 1947 in DCER, p. 446.

77 For a list of External officials who received a copy of Reid's memorandum see Memo from the Office of the Under-Secretary of State to the Secretary of State dated October 3, 1947 requesting the recipients to provide "suggestions for revision". DEA File 52-F(s) pts. 1/2. (There is a French version of this memorandum in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 395). A list of those who responded to this request is available in D. Page and D. Munton, "Canadian Images of the Cold War 1946-7", p. 584, footnote number 20.

areas have been warranted by the aggressive policies of the U.S.S.R."[78] Arnold Smith, who was now teaching at the National Defence College, agreed with Cadieux and maintained that any "danger of war arises almost exclusively from the existence and expansionist policies of the present regime in the U.S.S.R."[79]

On the other side of the debate was Maurice Pope, Head of the Military Mission to the Allied Control Commission in Berlin. Pope held that the Soviets' desire for an Eastern European security zone was as "natural and reasonable as the United States desire for bases as far away as Greenland and Dakar" and he thought it was desirable to take a "fifty-fifty" approach to this kind of study.[80] R.A.D. Ford, the Chargé d'affaires in Moscow, agreed with Reid's assessment of both the United States and Soviet Union as expansionist and added that "there is also a deep-seated, almost mystical feeling in each nation of the righteousness and justness of its own cause, the superiority of it system over all others and the inevitability of (a) American democracy, or (b) Soviet Communism spreading all over the globe."[81]

There was general agreement with Reid's diagnosis of the conditions which could lead to war, his definition of the concept of the balance of power and his predictions about the

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[78] Memorandum from M. Cadieux to J.M. Teakles, Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 17, 1947. Document Number 234 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 401.

[79] Letter from A.C. Smith to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, December 10, 1947. Document number 244 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 449.

[80] Memorandum from M. Pope to DEA, September 29, 1947. Document number 230 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 391.

[81] Memorandum from R.A.D. Ford to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 10, 1947. Document number 232 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 398.

possibilities of a war developing between the two superpowers. There were no serious disagreements with the various measures Reid suggested to diminish the possibility of a war, including the idea of the West holding an overwhelming balance of power and a continuation of the "firm but fair" policy towards the Soviet Union. There were different interpretations of the words "firm" and "fair" but, for the most part, the majority of External officials fell in line with Charles Ritchie's statement that, while the various arguments raised by Reid's memorandum did not "invalidate the necessity for the Western powers to command overwhelming force in relation to the Soviet Union" they also clearly "illustrate how much self-restraint and moderation will be needed to employ this force wisely."[82]

The strongest criticism was reserved for Reid's conclusion, which held out hope that the Soviet system may "mellow or collapse". His wistful belief that no curtain "even of iron is impenetrable", that two societies could become more similar and that an uneasy peace could be achieved, were seen as somewhat naive. R.M. Macdonnell, the Chargé d'affaires in Czechoslovakia, found

> the last two paragraphs unduly optimistic, and I would prefer a concluding note of gloom as follows. ... It is also argued that ... the longer the Soviet and Western worlds live side by side in peace, even if it is an uneasy peace, the more similar to each other they will become... But at best, this can only be a pious hope, capable of realization over a very long period of time. Moreover, it can be argued with equal conviction that

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82 Memorandum from Charles Ritchie, Counsellor, Embassy in France, November 6, 1947. Document number 236 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 416.

> tension breeds tension and that after ten or fifteen years of containment the Soviet Union--patient and willing to wait--will be as restless as before and even more consumed with a sense of frustration.[83]

Pope stated that Reid's conclusion "smacks of sentimentality" and added, "Russia has lived a long time alongside Western Europe and has always differed from it. Even if the Soviet system collapsed, Russia would still remain."[84] Pope felt that it was more reasonable to hope that "the two groups of people on the opposite sides of the iron curtain can be brought to the belief that they can each cultivate its garden in peace and that it is not necessary for the one to feel an irresistible urge to put a spade in that of the other."[85]

There were others, though, who believed that the iron curtain could be penetrated and that with much time and "considerable restraint and vigilance on the part of the western states...fears and motives of aggression will decrease accordingly and normal diplomatic intercourse between the Soviet states and the western world may again become possible."[86] St Laurent did not believe that the Soviets and West would become more similar; instead the Soviets would become just like the West because it was "the

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83 Memorandum from the Chargé D'affaires in Czechoslovakia, to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, September 25, 1947. Document number 229 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 389.

84 Memorandum by Head, Military Mission to the Allied Control Commission, Germany, September 29, 1947. Document 230 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 394.

85 Ibid.

86 Memorandum from M. Cadieux, Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to J.M. Teakles, Office of the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, October 17, 1947. Document number 234 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 406.

civilization which most nearly conforms with the true nature of man that is bound to affect the other."[87]

Charles Ritchie wrote one of the more nuanced assessments of the situation. He argued that cultural similarity did not necessarily prevent wars. It can in fact cause them--"mieux comprendre is not always mieux pardonner." The encouraging fact was that neither of the superpowers "can be reasonably considered to want a war." Ritchie saw a long, difficult, precarious time where the

> struggle between the Western and Soviet worlds will go on by all methods short of war. [...] the only two alternatives seem to be the conclusion of a settlement between the two systems based on hard bargaining but with some promise of stability and even of fruitful development, or a tacit agreement to go our separate ways abandoning attempts at cooperation, yet trying to avoid war. After weary months of negotiation the first alternative seems further away than ever. Perhaps increasing danger of an unwanted war might bring an eleventh-hour agreement. [...] It would be truce rather than a peace and it would be a difficult truce to maintain in a world in which our two ways of life and thought meet at so many points and threaten to collide.[88]

Ritchie's words were as reasonable an assessment of the situation as was possible in 1947. His words can be considered representative of the Department. Throughout the letters

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87 Memorandum by Louis St. Laurent, the Secretary of State for External Affairs. October 13, 1947. Document number 233 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947.

88 Memorandum by Counsellor, Embassy in France, November 6, 1947. Document number 236 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 417.

and memoranda from the various External Affairs officials, there is a clear pattern of grave consideration and intelligent suggestions. Obviously not all the opinions expressed maintained a moderate tone and there were flashes of pious attitudes and anxious reactions towards the Soviet Union and Communist ideology. In general, there was a serious attempt to evaluate the power, policies and desires of both the Soviet Union and the United States in an equitable manner. A careful review of Dana Wilgress's opinions, as well as the conclusions in Reid's memorandum and the criticisms and revisions suggested by the departmental officials, gives much more credence to Page and Munton's thesis of a balanced analysis of the Soviet Union by External Affairs than to Bercuson's argument that the Canadian view of the USSR was negative, one-sided and alarmist.

The overwhelming and unavoidable implication for the development of Canadian foreign policy was that the 1947 bipolar world described by Escott Reid would tie Canada even more tightly to and "bring us into still greater dependence upon the United States."[89] This dependence carried benefits and burdens. The evolving relationship with the United States would create economic growth and military security. At the same time, Canadian policy-makers would have to discover a means to balance the country's stated practice of a "firm but fair" approach towards the Soviets against the United States' policy of "containment". External Affairs officials realized that any disagreements with U.S. policy would have to handled with extreme caution and delicacy, but "since we are in the

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89 Letter from Dana Wilgress to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, April 25, 1947, p. 3. This letter is directly quoted in Escott Reid's memorandum in Part Six. Document number 226 in DCER, Volume 13, 1947, p. 380.

same boat with the United States make it wholly proper for us to tell the United States to stop rocking the boat or driving holes in its bottom." Canada would have to play a very difficult diplomatic game in disagreeing with or attempting to affect United States policy, but "the weight of influence the Canadian Government can bring to bear on Washington is considerable."[90]

As the world trudged towards the Czech coup, the buoyant hopefulness of the early 1940s had given way to a growing sense of anxiety. Reid's analysis appeared at a crucial moment in the developing cold war. From 1946 to 1947, there had been a less than subtle shift in the post-war world. There was no longer a sense of hope. Instead there was fear, fear which for many Westerners was confirmed and reinforced by the Czechoslovakia coup. The question that now had to be answered was how the Canadian government would react to that apprehension. Until the coup, Canadian policy held to a firm but fair approach. Would that position hold in the face of the hostility and tension created by the Communist overthrow in Prague in February 1948?

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90 Ibid., p. 381.

CHAPTER TWO - A "Calamity So Bitter"

The Canadian political scientist and authority on Czechoslovakia, H. Gordon Skilling, argued that the end of the Second World War ushered in a new period of Czech history which broke away from "pre-war and pre-Munich traditions" of at least some form of democratic political and economic systems. Skilling noted that during his second exile from 1938 to 1945 Czech President Eduard Benes developed a program for liberation which was

> a curious amalgam of two seemingly discordant concepts: continuity and revolution. His hope was that Czechoslovakia would be restored to its prewar form, preserving the legal continuity of its constitution and political institutions, but also would be in many ways fundamentally transformed, in keeping with the revolutionary character of the war ... Benes believed ... the Czechs would be able to proceed by our own Czechoslovak path, without intervention and without decision from outside whether from the West or the East.[91]

Benes' somewhat naive concepts were based on a mistaken belief that, as a result of the new stabilization of the Soviet Union's power, "its political system could be expected to be gradually modified in a democratic direction...just as Western democracy was tending towards a socializing democracy."[92] But, in reality, Skilling believed that the swift changes in Czechoslovakia precipitated by the new alliance with the Soviet Union were

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91 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolution and Continuity in Czechoslovakia 1945-1946," in Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XX, January 1961, Number Four, p. 357.

92 Ibid.

bound to cause "internal stresses and strains as well as international tensions." Skilling wrote that

> the events of February, 1948, viewed in this historical perspective and in the light of the world crisis between Soviet Russia and America, were but the climax of the continuing revolutionary transformation of Czechoslovakia since Munich and liberation.[93]

The republic of Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 from the former Austro-Hungarian empire and included Czechs living in Bohemia-Moravia and the Slovaks residing in the east. The man who had been a pivotal force in the independence movement, Tomas Masaryk, was elected president at a National Assembly in the winter of 1918. Through the inter-war period, Czechoslovakia managed to maintain, unlike Rumania, Poland and Yugoslavia, a democratic government and a relatively stable economic base. When the various political parties were formed and the elections were held, the most important parties, the Social Democrats and the Agrarian parties included people, from all the various nationalities. The peasants had been given land from the various estates which had been dismantled, providing an incentive for them to support the new republic. Czechoslovakia had coal and iron mines, and textile and brewing industries in addition to a well established agricultural base which provided a balance between farming and industry. Masaryk continually worked towards a balanced, fair representation of all the various nationalities. The structure of the government and the economic system, as well

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93 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague" in International Journal, February 21, 1949, p. 119.

as the attempts at fair representation, created an image in the Western world, of the Czech republic as a democratic country.[94]

By 1938 the Sudetenland Germans had become a critical issue as Hitler began his campaign for European domination. Hitler demanded protection for his fellow Germans in the Sudetenland as well as the incorporation of the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia into Germany. Historian Felix Gilbert states that "because this area was south of the mountains separating Germany from Czechoslovakia and included the Czechoslovakian line of fortifications, its loss would mean the end of Czechoslovakia as an independent factor in European power politics".[95] The western world was not willing to resist Hitler's demands or go to war over an issue or a country that Chamberlain said was "faraway...between people of whom we know nothing."[96] The Munich Agreement was signed in September of 1938. The Western world agreed to give Czechoslovakia's independence away for an empty promise that Germany would refrain from provoking military action or war. The document gave the Sudeten region to Germany, and German troops quickly moved in; Poland received the disputed Teschen region in Moravia and Hungary gained the Felvidek region of Ruthenia and Slovakia.

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94 Felix Gilbert, The End of the European Era 1890 to the Present - Second Edition (New York, 1979), p. 323.

95 Felix Gilbert, Ibid., p. 323.

96 Quoted in Felix Gilbert, The End of the European Era, p. 323.

Much has been written about the Munich Agreement. It has often been used as an example of how far the world had moved away from the ideals of the League and collective security. In Canada several politicians and diplomats, including Prime Minister Mackenzie King, believed that the "abandonment of Czechoslovakia by Britain and France was statesmanship of the highest order."[97] Others, like Pearson, were appalled at the betrayal of the Czech people and country saw the British and French note to the Czech government as "the most brutal document he had ever read."[98] Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs O.D. Skelton wrote

> Whatever criticism may be made of Chamberlain's and Daladier's course, surely we must recognize that they, and particularly Chamberlain, worked for peace and achieved it. I have personally never doubted that a peace such as could now be obtained would be bought at a great price--that the repressive policy adopted by France for a dozen years after 1918 and the fumbling of British policy in the years just before and after Hitler's coming to power made it impossible now to achieve a good peace suddenly...Peace has been saved by retreat.[99]

Skilling pointed out that this agreement had a far reaching and crucial impact on the Czechs. For them, it was

> with their vivid sense of history, a catastrophe comparable only to Bila Hora (the White Mountain), the battle of 1620 which subjected them to Habsburg rule for three centuries. What to the West is fast

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97 J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men, p. 87.

98 Ibid. p. 88.

99 Memorandum written by O.D. Skelton, Under secretary of State for External Affairs, October 3, 1938. DCER, Volume 6 1936-1938, Document 903, p. 1100.

> becoming an episode of no continuing significance, remains for most Czechs a symbolic warning of the fatal weakness of the Western world at a great historic turning point.[100]

The Munich Agreement forced the resignation of President Eduard Benes, who left the "government of the country to men he believed might get along better with the triumphant Nazis."[101] Benes spent his years of exile in England and in 1940 he established a provisional government in London that was eventually recognized by the British and its new ally, the Soviet Union. President Benes visited Stalin in Moscow in 1943 to discuss the possibility of establishing an accord between the two countries that would serve the post-war objectives of the Czech republic. This period was a time of relative optimism about the possibility of peace and cooperation between the Soviets and the Western world and Benes was swept up by that mood. He held meetings with Stalin and Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, and the Moscow Agreement was eventually signed on December 12, 1943.

The agreement provided for the usual mutual aid and protection against Germany and other enemies of the two countries. Stalin agreed that the Soviet army would hand over all the liberated land of Czechoslovakia to the "Free Czech civil administration". The Soviet Union would also support and recognize the pre-Munich borderlines of the republic. Finally, the agreement pledged that "after the war, both countries would act in

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100 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague," in International Journal, p. 119.
101 Felix Gilbert, The End of the European Era, p. 325.

accordance with the principles of mutual respect for the independence and sovereignty, as well as of non-interference in the internal affairs of the other state."[102] President Benes left Moscow apparently reassured that neither Stalin nor the Soviet Government would interfere in the internal matters of the Czech republic.

Between the 1943 and early 1945 the spirit of the agreement remained the same. In January 1945 the Czechs recognized the Soviet supported Lublin government in Poland, which put them into direct opposition to the United States, British and Canadian governments, which did not recognize the Lublin administration "as a Provisional Government of Poland or...a representative from Lublin in any official capacity in London."[103] The first indication of trouble was the Soviet insistence on the annexation of Ruthenia by the Soviet Union. This territory was valuable to the USSR because it protected important passes from the Ukraine into the Danube Valley which went through the Carpathians. This move obviously violated the promise made to recognize the pre-Munich borders but Benes was helpless, and so was the West.

As the war rumbled towards its end, there were two armies wending their way towards Czechoslovakia to liberate Prague. One was the American Third Army division led by General George Patton.[104] The other was the Soviet army led by General Ludvik

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102 Quoted in Red Star Over Prague, p. 16.

103 Dominions Secretary to SSEA, January 19, 1945. DCER Volume 11, 1944-1945, Document 1189, p. 1910.

104 Frantisek August and David Rees, Red Star Over Prague, (London, 1984), p. 19.

Svoboda. Although the American army could have reached Prague first, it was the Czech (Soviet) Army that liberated Prague on May 9, 1945. The liberation of Prague by the Soviet Union became a legend for Soviet storytellers and a propaganda tool. After the coup in 1948 the new Communist regime in Prague asserted that the American army had "deliberately halted Patton's advance to let the Nazis destroy the 'people's revolution' in Prague."[105] There are many versions of this story, but the probability is that the Soviets refused the United States Third Army division permission to continue an advance which would have put them in Prague first. An American liberation of Prague would have "undesirable political consequences,"[106] because it would have put the United States in a much more positive light than the Communists might have wanted.

After the liberation of Prague, the next step was the transfer of Benes' exiled government to the eastern part of Czechoslovakia. But the negotiations about the structure and platform of the new government were held in Moscow. This time the Communists, led by the Party Chairman Gottwald, were front and center and holding at least some of the power. The Red Army was now on Czech soil, and the Communists were busy setting up committees and workers' militia, and Benes had already been forced to decentralize local government. President Benes was left with little space to negotiate and was faced with the very real possibility of a Soviet occupation if he did not agree with the composition of the new, 'democratic' government of Czechoslovakia.

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105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.

The policies that were discussed and 'agreed' to were referred to as the Kosice programme. It forecast "rapid and deep-seated alterations in Czechoslovak life."[107] There were several key sections of the plan. One was the stipulation that the temporary Provisional government would eventually be replaced by a freely elected Constitutional Assembly. In addition, the new government agreed to the organization of a Czech armed forces that would be set up along the lines of the Soviet Red Army while local powers would be held and determined by National Committees.[108] While these were important, the crucial and revolutionary changes were the

> expulsion of the Germans and the emergence of a predominately Czech and Slovak state ... a flowering of Slav solidarity, expressing itself in the new equality of Czechs and Slovaks, in the intimate relationship with other Slavonic states in Eastern Europe, and in the Soviet alliance as the foundation stone of a new Czechoslovak diplomacy ... [and] the swift trend towards socialism in the economic field.[109]

An important facet of the Kosice programme was the policy that would govern Czech-Slovak relations. It "carved out of Czechoslovak unity a far-reaching autonomy for Slovakia."[110] This scheme sought to realize the principle of equality between the Czech and Slovak peoples and would eventually be described as a "unitary state of two Slav nations of equal rights and providing for a decentralization of legislative and executive

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107 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague", p. 119.
108 Josef Korbel, The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-948: The Failure of Coexistence, (Princeton, 1959), pp. 123-125.
109 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague", p. 120.
110 Josef Korbel, The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia, p. 125.

authority."[111] All of the principles of the Kosice programme were fundamental and complete changes for Czechoslovakia, and Skilling argued, a "milestone in the development of new and distinctive patterns of government" for the country.[112]

Benes, in a position of having no choices, acquiesced in the Kosice programme and the newly formed government, composed of six "approved parties," was formed. Skilling noted that a clear sign of change was the "prohibition of the Agrarian Party, the leading party of almost every pre-war coalition, and of the Slovak People's Party, the vehicle of Slovak separatism. Another sign was the rise of the Communist Party as the leading party and its dominant influence in the formulation of the Kosice programme of the National Front."[113]

The new Prime Minister was Zdenek Fierlinger, a pro-Soviet Social Democrat. Eight of 25 important positions were held by Communists and these included the Minister of the Interior, who controlled the police and security services, the Minister of Information, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Education. In addition, while Jan Masaryk (Tomas Masaryk's son) held the Foreign Minister's post, his Deputy Minister was a Slovak Communist and the Defence Minister and Chief of Staff, General Svoboda, was at the very least a Communist sympathizer. Although eight of 25 posts were not a majority,

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111 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague", p. 126.
112 Ibid., p. 133.
113 Ibid., p. 133.

the power held by these eight men and their friends was more than enough to gain and maintain almost total control.

While there was an almost universal understanding, among the Western powers, that Czechoslovakia fell within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, some of the individual analysts, clung to a somewhat naive belief that there was an independent, even democratic, government being formed in the Czech republic. This wishful thinking was perhaps based on a sense of collective guilt for the Munich sacrifice of Czechoslovakia and a desire for "relief or redemption in restoring Czechoslovakia after the war as an independent country."[114] Another reason that has been suggested is that the Western world saw Jan Masaryk and Eduard Benes as popular heros whose diplomatic skills and balanced approach could pave the way for a "kind of synthesis of democracy and socialism."[115] These positive interpretations were countered by other analysts who believed, apparently correctly, that "what was occurring in that part of Czechoslovak territory occupied by Soviet forces made it evident that every device of infiltration, intimidation and intrigue was being brought into play with a view to laying the groundwork for establishment of a Communist monopoly of power in that country."[116] The Canadian government's foreign affairs analysts, among them Lester Pearson and Hume Wrong, believed that the process might take longer and would follow a different

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114 Herbert Feis, From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War 1945-1950 (London, 1970), p. 291.

115 H. Gordon Skilling, "Lions or Foxes: Heros or Lackeys?," in H. Gordon Skilling (editor), Czechoslovakia 1918-88 Seventy Years from Independence (London, 1991), p. 15.

116 George Kennan, Memoirs, p. 254.

path than other Soviet satellites. But the Czech republic would eventually fall in behind Poland, Hungary and the rest of the Eastern European countries.[117]

Between 1945 and the end of 1947, the Communists in Czechoslovakia continued to plan for the eventual 'coup' in 1948. The Communists became very involved with the new security department, the National Security Corps (SNB), which was designed to work much like the American FBI. Although this organization was open to both Communist and non-Communist members, the Communists who joined were trained in the intelligence school in Moscow. Many important positions in the SNB were held by and controlled by Soviet schooled recruits. These recruits had been taught in the Soviet Union during the war and their training had specifically been aimed at "clandestine collaboration with Soviet intelligence after the war."[118] In addition to the security branch, the Communists began infiltrating and re-structuring the police forces in the republic as well as carrying out a concerted effort to enter and manipulate the armed forces of the Czech republic. While it is true that the Red Army had moved outside Czechoslovakian borders, in reality the security system, the police forces and the internal armed forces were under Soviet command by late 1947.

It was in the summer of 1947 that a truly ominous sign of Soviet control over Czechoslovakia was seen. The Marshall Plan and Czechoslovakia's response to it would

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117 Denis Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p. 222.
118 Frantisek August, Red Star Over Prague, p. 21.

become a testing ground of Czech independence and a watershed in Czech history. The initial response of the Czech government to the idea of the Marshall Plan and European recovery was positive and there was a definite intent to participate in the economic aid project.[119] There were some worries when Moscow reacted with cold reserve to the Marshall plan, but these were put aside when Molotov agreed to attend a conference in Paris to discuss the implementation of the Marshall scheme. The Czechoslovakian government, including all the Communists members, voted to attend the meeting.

These hopeful signs, however, were quickly reversed when Molotov left the session and rejected any chance of Soviet involvement with the economic recovery program. A Czech delegation, led by Gottwald, was leaving for Moscow for discussions on the Czech-Soviet alliance and negotiations on trade relations between the two countries. News of Molotov's departure from Paris became even more foreboding when it was learned that the Polish, Rumanian and Yugoslavian governments had all rejected the invitation to Paris. On his arrival in Moscow, Gottwald was invited to a private meeting with Stalin. Stalin informed the Czech delegation that the Marshall Plan should be considered a direct, hostile attack against the Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia's response to and possible involvement in the Marshall plan would of course affect and determine that country's relationship and future with the Soviet Union. Stalin recommended directly

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119 See Ripka, Czechoslovakia Enslaved, p. 51, and Korbel, The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia, p. 181.

that the Czech government reject the invitation to Paris and refuse to participate or cooperate with the United States' plan. After much discussion it was decided that

> the States of central and eastern Europe, with which Czechoslovakia carried on close economic and political relations, based upon her contractual obligations, will not participate in the Conference of Paris. In these circumstances the participation of Czechoslovakia could be interpreted as a blow to the friendly relations existing between her and the Soviet Union, as well as with her other allies. For this reasons, the government has decided unanimously not to take part in the Conference.[120]

The news of the Marshall Plan had been greeted with relief by many members of the Benes government.[121] These hopes had been dashed by reality. Josef Korbel writes that Czechoslovakia lost her independence on July 10, 1947 because the

> Soviet Union had arrogantly dictated to her government a course of action on a matter of paramount importance to her future. It had violated flagrantly and viciously its assurance, solemnly given and guaranteed by treaty that it would never intervene in Czechoslovak national affairs. As Masaryk said to his friends upon landing in Prague on July 12, "It is a new Munich. I left for Moscow as Minister of Foreign Affairs of a sovereign state. I am returning as Stalin's stooge."[122]

The Soviet Union's next move was the formation of the Cominform, consisting of the Communist Parties of nine European countries considered to be under Soviet power. The intent of the Cominform was the defeat of the Marshall Plan. " Opposed to the US-led

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120 Ripka, Czechoslovakia Enslaved, pp. 61-62.

121 Ibid.

122 Josef Korbel, The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia, pp. 182-183.

camp of the imperialists was the peace-loving camp headed by the Soviet Union. The polarization of world politics was now inevitable as the cold war began."[123]

In July 1947, Canadian ambassador in the United States Hume Wrong's analysis of the situation in Czechoslovakia was one of calm acceptance of the hard fact that

> the popular front governments such as now exist in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania were transitional and must be expected in time to give way to a solid block - i.e. a one party system...[it was] fairly sure that the Politburo had reached firm decisions on their objectives without setting any time limits...[there was acceptance that] it would take a great deal longer to bring about the desired results in Czechoslovakia than it would in other satellites [but the end result would be the same].[124]

At the same time, a telegram from the Canadian Ambassador in Paris to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, predicted that "it would not be surprising if before long there were a Communist coup there."[125]

By late 1947 the situation had worsened and the Communists had been making "bold efforts to strengthen their position" in Slovakia through manipulation of Trade Unions and a "so-called" Resistance Movement". The Slovakian Democrats, faced with possible arrests and imprisonment, eventually "acquiesced in the decision of the Czech

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123 Frantisek August and David Rees, Red Star Over Prague, pp. 26-27.

124 These thoughts are Hume Wrong's response to and analysis of a conversation he had with Llewellyn Thompson, who was the Chief of the East European Division of the American State Department. This is quoted in Denis Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p. 222.

125 The Canadian Ambassador, Paris to SSEA, July 4, 1947, p. 1. DEA File 50165-40 pt. 1.1.

Government that Prime Minister Gottwald should initiate discussions with Slovak National Council and principal political parties with a view to reconstituting Board of Governors." This resulted in a Communist majority on an important governing body in the Slovakian region of the territory.[126]

A memorandum discussing the history and status of a Canadian loan to the Czech government reviewed the situation in the vulnerable republic. While there was still a large measure of personal freedom in Czechoslovakia, the

> democratic forces in Czechoslovakia are in a delicate position. While remaining within the geographic sphere of influence of the Soviet Union they wish above all to retain their democratic freedoms and the independence of their country. In internal and external policy they must compromise with the Czech Communists and with Soviet Russia and yet try to retain as much freedom of action as possible. Because of the constant pressure from the Communists within their borders and from the Soviet Government beyond them, the democratic leaders of Czechoslovakia, notably Dr. Benes and Mr. Masaryk, are anxious to retain and strengthen all possible ties with the Western Powers. They still hope to avoid the division of Europe into two economic blocs, as if a choice is to be made, there is no doubt that Czechoslovakia would have to choose the European bloc.[127]

Benes and Masaryk hoped and believed that "by reason of its history, geographical position, and cultural and ethnic affinities, their nation could serve as a 'bridge' between

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126 The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to SSEA, November 25th, 1947, p. 1. DEA File 50165-40 pt. 1.1.

127 Memorandum, November 15, 1947, in DCER, Volume 13, p. 1575.

Russia and the West."[128] But by January 1948 Canada's Chargé, R.M. MacDonnell,[129] was saying that

> it is a truism that Communist parties everywhere, in their drive to obtain power, regard control over the police forces of a country as one of their main objectives. In Czechoslovakia the Communists have realized this aim to a very considerable extent, a fact which obviously has bearing on the struggle for power between Communists and the non-Communists.[130]

Still, MacDonnell did argue that, although the "foundations of a police state are thus in course of construction by the Communists...Czechoslovakia is not yet a police state."[131] There was a Soviet structured security system (SNB) and middle of the night arrests of any Czech citizen who criticized the Communists. Yet, there was

> as yet no overwhelming dread of the secret police as in the Soviet Union...to stifle criticism. Places and names are mentioned in complaints about the behaviour of the police and the Ministry of the Interior can be put on the defensive and made to justify its actions as best as it can. The fact that editors and Members of Parliament of courage and conviction can still voice their indignation against outrageous police action undoubtedly hampers the Communist enthusiasts who wish to place all activity, thought and speech under

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128 G. F. Hudson, The Hard and Bitter Peace: World Politics Since 1945 (Don Mills, 1971), p. 60.

129 MacDonnell had joined the ranks of the External Affairs department during the Second World War along with an important group of individuals including John Holmes, George Ignatieff, Saul Rae and Marcel Cadieux. MacDonnell served as first Secretary to the Canadian mission (with Dana Wilgress) in the Soviet Union in 1943, Secretary of the Canadian Section of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence and as the Head ot the Third Political Division (American and Far Eastern Affairs), before being appointed as the Chargé d'Affaires at the Legation in Czechoslovakia in March of 1947.

130 R.M. MacDonnell, Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Legation, Prague, to SSEA, January 9, 1948, p. 1. DEA File 50165-40 pt 1.1.

131 Ibid.

> police supervision...There can be no doubt that in a crisis the police would be solidly on the side of the Communists. So long, however, as the forces of freedom and democracy retain their vitality, there will be a continuing resistance to arbitrary police activity which will slow up the Communists in their campaign for a police state.[132]

The Canadian Chargé d'Affaires, with some reservations, appeared to be aligning himself with some of the U.S. diplomats in Poland who, trying to hold out some semblance of hope for the Czech republic, were arguing that there were signs that the Soviets just might be seeking a temporary truce with the West. Less than two months later, all those who had been watering down their pragmatic analysis with emotion were jolted back to the reality of the Soviet sphere of influence and "security belt" that Dana Wilgress had discussed in 1947.

Communist planning and organization for a Soviet Czechoslovakia had been going on since the liberation of Prague in 1945.[133] The coup in 1948 only took two weeks and while, on the surface, it may have appeared to be sudden and unexpected, it was not. The groundwork had been laid and execution of the Soviets' plans was simply waiting for that one opportune moment. The Communists had gained approximately 38 per cent of the election votes in 1946, which gave them a solid power base, but not the type of control

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132 Ibid., p. 2.

133 See H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948" in Canadian Slavonic Papers, Volume IV, (1959), pp. 88-114, and "Revolutions n Prague" in International Journal, Volume IV (Spring 1949), pp. 119-136. As well see August and Rees, Red Star Over Prague, and Walter Ullman, "Benes Between East and West" in Czechoslovakia 1918-88: Seventy Years from Independence.

they needed. In addition to Communist infiltration of the army and police, the Soviets began to place "sleeper agents" in the various democratic parties in the Czech republic, including the National Socialist Party. In 1947, the Communists, while losing the popular support of the people, were still increasing their subversive measures with the crucial takeover of workers' committees in the factories and expanding and transforming these loose organizations into tightly organized armed workers militia.[134]

In January 1948, the various parties within the National Front Government were deadlocked over various controversies affecting all aspects of national and international policy. The Communists were taking threatening steps and the non-Communists were attempting to "head off the Communist onslaught." Gottwald's Communist Party had called for the workers and peasants groups to hold congresses during the last week of February as a show of support for and an indication of the power that the party held. The deadlock continued throughout January until February 13, when the crisis came to a head. The Justice Minister, a member of the Socialist party, presented a report which exposed the degree and level of Communist control of the police and security forces. In addition, he noted that eight new (pro-Communist) police commissioners had been appointed in Prague. There were demands for a thorough investigation of the situation as well as of the Ministry of the Interior and, for political reasons, the Ministry of Justice. A vote was taken which called for such an investigation to take place. This would revoke any past

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134 Red Star Over Prague, pp. 21-25.

appointments and prevented any new ones taking place. The National Socialist ministers who were spearheading these plans were determined that the investigation would be carried out, and they decided to provoke a political crisis by resigning from the cabinet if the Communists did not accept the inquiry. The next day the Communists refused to provide any information or report on any of the appointments of police commissioners. They asked for a delay of any discussions or decisions until February 20, 1948.

After this minor defeat, the ministers of the National Socialists, the People's Party and the Slovak Democratic Party agreed, Skilling reported, on the

> necessity of causing a governmental crisis by resignation. In a statement issued by the National Socialists in the morning, they stated their opposition to the 'communization' of the security police and to further nationalization of industry, and condemned as undemocratic the forthcoming congresses of workers and peasants. The statement rejected the Communist charge that they were seeking to set up a government of experts, but did not openly reveal the intention to resign.[135]

The ministers met with President Benes to assure themselves that he understood their intent. They explained that they were using the security police issue to force a political crisis and public scrutiny of the Communists' purpose, which would in turn "forestall the Communist plan of precipitating a crisis on the issue of nationalization after the workers congress."[136] The ministers asked for Benes's support of their move, and hoped that he

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135 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 90.
136 Ibid., p. 91.

would not accept the resignations nor a government which was not represented by all three parties.

The Canadian Chargé d'Affaires' perspective was sent to Ottawa from Prague. It was, despite it all, tentatively positive:

> Czechoslovakia is undergoing a political crisis in the form of a trial of strength between the Communists and non-Communists, which, as this despatch is written, may be solved by a typical Czech compromise or by a Communist resort to action. There are many alarming rumors flying about Prague to the effect that the Communists are ready for a coup. On the other hand, the Communists, judged at least by the standards which their party has followed in other Eastern European countries, have been rather restrained or at any rate have not been as violent in their language as they could have been. They have not crawled too far out on a limb to be unable to return some distance in the direction of a constitutional settlement and am moderately optimistic of a compromise solution being reached, although prophecy is admittedly a risky business at this time and place.[137]

The Communists were busy with counter-attacks and a well-orchestrated propaganda plan. They were accusing the non-Communists of attempting to conduct undemocratic elections and install a non-parliamentary government. Apparently the Communists were concerned about the possible outcome of an election. As MacDonnell noted

> Pre-election fevers began to rise noticeably some two or three weeks ago and the word "nervousness" appeared in more and more political speeches and articles. A

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137 Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia, to SSEA, February 23, 1948, DCER, Volume 14, Document Number 1047, p. 1732.

> reading of the charges and counter-charges hurled at each other by the Communists and their opponents suggests that the worst case of nerves was suffered by the Communists who were alarmed at the vigor shown by other parties and despondent of their chances of achieving their boast of 51% at the coming elections.[138]

The Communist Party appealed to the people to respond to this threat to the "people's democratic régime" and to be in a "state of readiness to foil the efforts of reaction."[139] These words were published in the Communist paper, *Rudé pravo*, giving the public the first inkling of the seriousness of the present political situation. There were meetings of Communist delegates of various factory committees and mobilization of the workers militia. While the non-Communists were hoping for a parliamentary solution to the crisis, for the Communists "the mood was evidently not auspicious for a parliamentary settlement."[140] The non-Communists were also dealing with the Social Democratic party which, at least at this point, was divided on the question of the viability and usefulness of resignations. This division would become a pivotal factor in the next few days. The volatile situation took an even graver turn on February 19th with the arrival from Moscow of V.A. Zorin, the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was in Prague, allegedly, to take part in upcoming celebrations, but it is unlikely that many believed this.

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138 Ibid.
139 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 91.
140 Ibid.

On February 20, flames began to grow out of the smouldering crisis. A National Socialist party paper, the *Svobodné slovo*, contained serious criticism of the Minister of the Interior and the police forces comparing them to the Gestapo and the Okhrana. The non-Communist ministers from the National Socialist, People's and Slovak Democratic parties refused to attend a scheduled Cabinet meeting and informed Gottwald that they would not appear unless they were told that the investigation of the security forces had been or would be carried out. Gottwald refused, saying that the Minister of the Interior would attend the Cabinet meeting and present a report. Neither side would relent and the resignations were submitted.

In the end, only twelve ministers resigned from the National Socialists, the Slovak Democrats and the Populist parties. The Social Democrats did not resign and neither did General Svoboda or Jan Masaryk. The decision by the latter two would be used by the Communists to show that there was support for their party and programme from two "heros" of the Czech republic. Since a majority of the ministers remained, the government could continue to function and the political crisis which should have led to early elections was apparently averted. Gottwald and Svoboda attempted to convince Benes to accept the resignations, but the President refused. For now there was a stalemate, and the next move would be critical. The Canadian Legation's view was that

> the Ministers from the National Socialist, Peoples and Slovak Democratic parties, twelve in all, submitted their resignations to the President as a protest against Communist intransigence--with particular regard to Communist control of the police--while the Social

> Democrats took a middle position by criticizing the actions of both sides and calling for compromise and continuations of the National Front Government. These resignations could hardly have been offered unless the dozen Ministers concerned were reasonably confident of being asked and being able to stay at their posts. To present the Communists with a chance to form a government, either with or without the Social Democrats, which would leave the three protesting parties powerless on the sidelines, does not make sense.[141]

The Communists continued to call on the working people of the country to organize and band together to save their country from this anti-democratic and anti-socialist action by the ministers who had resigned. Gottwald was addressing growing numbers of factory workers and workers militia on a regular basis and was building a groundswell of support for his arguments. Benes was approached again and again by the Communists who were demanding that he accept the resignations of the ministers and replace them with a new list, which would be, of course, determined by the Communists and the remaining ministers. The Social Democratic party was becoming a very important player in the game; if the party's ministers decided to resign, the government would fall and elections would have to be held. The Communists continued to urge the party to cooperate with them so they could create "a firm socialist core around which all democratic and progressive forces could group themselves," but there was no consensus within the Social Democratic party and therefore no absolute stand could be taken by the Communists.

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141 Ibid., p. 1734.

The Communists exhorted the working class and continued to hold meetings and congresses. They were able to draw 8,000 people to a meeting in Prague where Gottwald denounced the "reactionaries in the National Front who were seeking a restoration of capitalism, a breach with the Soviet Union, a repetition of 1920 and a new Munich."[142] The Canadian Chargé wrote that

> up to this point the non-Communists had forced the issue and put the Communists on the defensive. I think it is fair to say that the Communists regained the offensive on the morning of February 21st by organizing a mass meeting in the city's largest open square, which was harangued by M. Gottwald and other party leaders. The Prime Minister accused the resigning Ministers of representing domestic and foreign reaction (with much talk of spies and sabotage of the Slav alliances) and called for their replacement by people of good will from all political parties and national organizations.[143]

There was a resolution put forward at the Prague meeting which was accepted by the workers demanding a new constitution, further nationalization of import, export and domestic commerce, tax reductions and land reform. In addition, the resolution called for a one-hour strike on February 24th. There was a Congress of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship held and Gottwald used this meeting to decry the attempts by the "reactionaries" to destroy the alliance between the two countries. He argued that the "fate of our people's democracy, of our revolutionary achievements, as well as the very

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142 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 92.

143 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia to SSEA, February 23, 1948, DCER Document Number 1047, p. 1734.

existence of the nation and its state freedom, are closely bound up with the fate of our alliance with the Soviet Union."[144]

Zorin was at the congress and his presence supported Gottwald's statement. President Benes was also there and even he extolled the importance of the Czech-Soviet alliance, referring to the "unshakable friendship" between the two countries. The response of the non-Communists to all of the Communists propaganda was, ultimately, silence. There were no meetings or attempts to counteract the affect of the Congress of Friendship. February 23, 1948 brought no real change to the situation but, perhaps in reaction to the non-Communists passive attitude, the Communists turned to actions which had a "quasi-revolutionary character." [145]

In Canada, the newspapers and magazines were covering the story with great interest and concern. Saturday Night asked "Can Benes Save Czechs from Iron Curtain?" Benes was represented as a peasant who had made good in life and his passion for his country and its independence was extolled. But this praise and admiration was tempered with a realization that "behind his success as a negotiator for the State which he helped create was the knowledge that the present lands which constitute Czechoslovakia have for

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144 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948". p. 99.

145 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 99.

centuries been coveted by powerful neighbours. Today it is the battleground in the struggle of two great ideologies."[146]

The Czechoslovakian Communists were increasing the stakes at this point, and between the 23rd and the 24th of February, their tactics were shifting. The National Socialist headquarters was the target of a police search and there were hints of arrests and violence to come. Large and impressive police reinforcements were centered in Prague and, reinforced by armed civilians and workers militia, the police were taking up positions in all the public buildings and the various party offices. President Benes still refused to accept the resignations of the twelve ministers and accused Gottwald of "preparing a second Munich and declaring that he (Benes) would never sign a list of new ministers unless it was based on discussions with authorized representatives of the other parties."[147] Benes would not move, Gottwald would not relent in his demands and, as of February 24th, the day of the Communist organized general strike, all participants in the crisis were standing firm.

Benes reiterated his firm belief in and hope for democratic, parliamentary solutions to the crisis. He reaffirmed his acceptance of the principles of socialism and argued that "liberty and harmony were not incompatible with socialism and were indispensable to the

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146 Alec Harrison, "Can Benes Save Czechs from Iron Curtain?" in Saturday Night, February 21, 1948.

147 H. Gordon Skilling, "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 100. See also Hubert Ripka, Czechoslovakia Enslaved, (London, 1950), pp. 202-205 and/or 211-213.

national life."[148] "I have based my political work on these principles and I cannot, without betraying myself, act otherwise." This eloquence was never heard. The Communists were moving swiftly towards their ultimate objective. The meeting of the National Assembly was canceled and there were threats that the one-hour strike would become a general strike. General Svoboda issued orders for army unity and warned against any attempts to interfere with the army's actions. Factory committees took over factories, action committees, on the orders of the Minister of the Interior, assisted the police take over opposition party headquarters as well as all non-Communist newspapers. The final stroke was the capitulation of the Social Democratic Party, which now decided to back the Communist Party.

By February 24th, MacDonnell's words were bleak:

> token strikes, arming of police, arrests and accusations of plots follow a familiar pattern. A technically constitutional solution may well be found but no one will be fooled. It has been proved that Communists are willing to take direct action which cannot be successfully opposed by non-Communists, so that Communists are in a visibly stronger position than before and can insist on a solution acceptable to them. The best that can be hoped for is that the non-Communists can retain enough strength and courage to remain a real, if weakened, Opposition. Elections, even if relatively hones, will see non-Communists climbing on Communist bandwagon to avoid trouble.[149]

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148 Ibid.

149 Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Legation, Prague, to SSEA, February 24, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 50165-40 pt. 1.1 and 1.2.

On the 25th of February, 1948, faced with the increased presence of the security police, an armed civilian militia and threats of more arrests and violence, President Benes finally crumbled. In a two hour meeting with Gottwald, Benes accepted both the resignation of the twelve ministers as well as the proposed list of replacements put together by Gottwald and his Communist party. The "bloodless" coup was successful.

The Toronto Star had covered the coup carefully and the daily headlines were a depressing reminder that relations between the Soviets and the West were worsening. As the coup gained momentum there was more and more space given to the event . The initial, rather calm, headlines "Prague 200,000 Cheer Communist Gottwald", "Communists Arm Prague Police in Czech Crisis", "Czechoslovakia Coup Said Successful" gave way to stronger, more emotional words. "Seal Off Czech Border Refugees Claim Purge Like when Nazis Came", "Disguised Dictatorship Britain, U.S., France Say" were splashed in two inch front page headlines informing the Canadians about the ruthless nature of the Communist actions. Articles on the coup were a daily occurrence and they discussed the significance of the coup both to the Western world and the Soviet sphere. One commentator pointed out that

> Czechoslovakia's absorption is one of Moscow's greatest successes ... if the Communists gained complete control in Czechoslovakia it would be their most important victory in Europe because of all their conquests the Czechs would be the first with an instinctive belief in western democratic freedom. Well, bo..hevism reigns in freedom loving Prague--at least for now. What could be going on behind that iron curtain? We have a right to speculate on that because

> of liquidations and other terrors experienced in Poland, Hungary and elsewhere. ... As things now stand Czechoslovakia is under a Red police government which gets its orders from Moscow. It could be that this will strengthen Russia's hand in its declared intention of defeating the Marshall plan. However, the thing can cut two ways for it may bring the countries of western Europe to a realization that they can't play with Bolshevism and that their safety lies in unity among the democracies. And an while we are on this thought let us repeat ... Anyone who still believes that appeasement will work .. is muddled or mischievous. Czechoslovakia's fate certainly should be a lesson for the appeasers.[150]

Saturday Night also extolled the virtues of Czechoslovakia's democratic traditions and warned that country's fate was just more proof of the endless nature of Russia's expansion. The editorial that ran on February 25, 1948 argued that

> between the two World Wars the Czechoslovaks belonged wholly to the Western world--in the present meaning of that phase. ... The enormous expansion of Russian power during and since the Second World War did not to outward view at least engulf Czechoslovakia. It remained as a democratic island, or rather, peninsula in the Soviet dominated world; or so it appeared. Benes told London interviewers in 1945 that his country, while friendship with Russia would be a key point in its foreign policy, would makes it won decisions independently. That this was largely a delusion became clear last year when the Prague government after accepting the invitation to join other European states in discussing the Marshall Plan, changed its mind on orders from Moscow. This public humiliation ... gave ground for fear that the total absorption of the country into the Russian system was only a matter of time. This week it has apparently

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150 Dewitt MacKenzie, "Lesson for Appeasers Seen as Bolshevists Grab Czechoslovakia", Toronto Star, February 26, 1948, p. 1.

> happened. ... If this is indeed to be Czechoslovakia's fate, an outpost of democracy has fallen; and the world has another warning that Russia's appetite for political expansion is still unsatisfied.[151]

The Toronto Star and Saturday Night defined Czechoslovakia as a democracy that had fallen to the expansion hungry, aggressive, hostile Soviet Union. Whether Czechoslovakia ever really had a realistic chance of maintaining a democratic political and economic system, the media was selling the idea that a true standard bearer of democracy had fallen to the evils of Soviet communism. The press also believed that Moscow stood behind and had a large share of the responsibility for the coup's success.

In his description of the series of events that led to the ultimate success of the coup, MacDonnell referred to the tactics that the Communists used, particularly to the use of action committees and armed civilian militia. These committees,

> composed of determined Communists with a few hangers-on from other parties, have made themselves responsible for the purging of Czechoslovakia's political, economic and intellectual life. The fundamental bases of Communist power have been the armed police, the trades unions and the armed "work militia". Their ability to take over the country was made crystal clear as the crisis developed and made resistance appear to non-Communists as a futile gesture. The country, having thus been frightened into submission, the way was open for the action committees to do whatever they pleased.[152]

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151 "Czechoslovakia in Peril" in Saturday Night, February 25, 1948. Editorial Page.

152 Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Legation, Prague to SSEA, March 3, 1948, DCER, Volume 14, Document 1051, p. 1740.

The Western powers responded to the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia with strong words of condemnation. The American ambassador in Czechoslovakia (soon U.S. Ambassador to Canada), Lawrence Steinhardt, compared the methods used by the Czech Communists to force President Benes' hand with those "employed by Hitler in dealing with heads of state...In short, they [the Communists] have employed identical methods to achieve a successful putsch, which were first employed by the Nazis and subsequently by the Communists in other satellite states."[153] The British believed that the pattern of the coup

> suggests that objective is complete communization of country. Process will probably be more ruthless and barefaced than anything in Poland or orbit countries, partly because it will be necessary to eliminate tradition and recent connections of Czechoslovakia with the West and western ideas, and partly because instigators of coup d'etat seem to have been determined that job must be completed quickly.[154]

The Canadian Chargé d'Affaires wrote that

> we should not hide detestation of this Moscow-directed overwhelming of a free and democratic people which loyally lived to their obligations as an ally of the Soviet Union. They were threat to no one; they were steadily and sturdily rebuilding their economy on a basis of democratic socialism; yet their liberties have been

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153 The Ambassador in Czechoslovakia to the Secretary of State, February 26, 1948. FRUS, Volume IV, p. 739.

154 Telegram from the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Ottawa. March 3, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 50165-40 pt. 1.1 and 1.2.

> ruthlessly wiped out to gratify Moscow's insatiable lust for power.[155]

As the coup moved towards its inevitable conclusion, it was left to the Western world to answer many questions. First, there was consideration of just how the coup had succeeded, and what factors had played the most important part. A second problem was determining whether there had been direct Soviet intervention in and manipulation of the events. And finally, there were doubts raised about Benes and Masaryk remaining in the newly formed, Communist government.

The query about Soviet intervention was dealt with first at the United Nations. On March 10, 1948, Jan Papanek, the Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia at the UN, sent a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, denouncing the Soviet seizure of power and asking that this issue be brought before the United Nations Security Council. In a further letter of March 12th, the Chilean representative to the United Nations formally requested that the question be put on the agenda of the Security Council.

> If it were established that the coup in Czechoslovakia, by the Communists minority was in fact as alleged by this letter 'effectuated successfully only because of official participation of representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which were held in readiness on the northeast boundaries of Czechoslovakia', then clearly a serious violation of the Charter would have occurred. Such a violation is of direct and immediate concur to every member of the United Nations, and any member State, therefore, is abundantly justified in

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155 Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Legation, Prague, to SSEA, February 28, 1948. DCER Volume 14, Document 1049, p. 1738.

> requesting the Security Council to examine the allegations which have been made and to endeavour to establish the facts in the case, what did happen in Czechoslovakia in February?[156]

The Canadian Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, General A.G.L. McNaughton, wrote to the Secretary of State for External Affairs discussing the possible course of action that the United Nations could or would take and asking for further direction on how the Canadians should respond to the issue.[157] He pointed out that both the United States and the United Kingdom were supporting the Chilean submission but neither country had a clear idea about how the United Nations should react or what steps should follow initial discussions. The reaction of the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, Gromyko, would be a determining factor in the process. The Secretary of State replied quickly, but was unable to provide a distinct plan of action for the Canadian delegation. St. Laurent wrote

> It is not easy to decide what should be done about this matter. Putting the subject on the agenda against the wishes of Russia and ultimately forcing a Russian veto may possible result in a useful political warfare victory against the Soviets, but if the Russians did not oppose its inclusion it might constitute an awkward precedent. Might they not then put United States alleged interference in Greece, Italy, etc., on the Council agenda. Furthermore are the Americans sure that a commission investigating charges can establish their validity. I had thought that on the surface there seemed to be little interference by the U.S.S.R. in the Czech

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156 The Canadian Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, New York to SSEA, March 31, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 50165-40 pt. 1.2.

157 Telegram from the Permanent Delegate to the United Nations to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, March 15, 1948. DCER Volume 14, 1948, Document No. 227, p. 324.

> coup. In that case an investigation would probably back-fire. ... However, it would be difficult to oppose the Chilean submission if it were supported by the U.S. and the U.K., and we may have to go along with them. I may be wrong--I hope I am-- but I doubt if putting this matter on the Agenda will have any useful results. If it is put on, however, I think that we might adopt, at the beginning at least, a passive attitude during its discussion until we see how things develop.[158]

On March 17, the Security Council voted to add the Chilean letter and complaint to its agenda and formally invited Hernan Santa Cruz to participate in the debate. A subsequent Chilean draft resolution calling for the formation of a special sub-committee to investigate the events surrounding the coup in Czechoslovakia failed because of the Soviet's negative vote. Canada, the United States and Britain had all supported the attempts to pursue this matter. On March 31, 1948 a teletype from New York to Ottawa contained the full text of the statement made by General McNaughton to the Security Council on the Czech question. It appears that a decision had been made by the Canadian government to take a strong stand on the issue and McNaughton's statement reflected that mood. The General briefly reviewed the "salient features" of the recent events in Czechoslovakia and the allegations that were being made about direct Soviet intervention in the coup. After reassessing the events of February, McNaughton asserted that "it would appear that the Communist party, by direct intimidation, silenced their political opponents and Czechoslovakia became enslaved."[159] This was not a "revolution of the

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158 Telegram from the Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Permanent Delegate to United Nations, March 16, 1948. DCER Volume 14, 1948, Document No. 228, p. 325.

159 Teletype from the Canadian Permanent Delegate to the United Nations to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. DEA File 50165-40 pt. 1, p. 3.

people against tyranny ... on the contrary the coup was undertaken by a group which already held power .. for the purpose of extending that power..."[160] The central question was therefore

> why did the coup take place, and at whose behest? Surely not at the behest of the Czechoslovak people who would have had ample opportunity to change their government ... at the elections ... The events in Czechoslovakia moreover parallel all too closely early developments in other States in Eastern Europe so that they cannot be dismissed as pure coincidence. As has been noted ... it is too much to expect us to believe that the creation of similar regimes in countries like Bulgaria, Hungary and Roumania could have taken place without active and organized help of an outside power. ... Having in mind the intimate associations between the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, as in others countries and the Soviet Union, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Communist Party gained control of Czechoslovak with the knowledge, approval and some help at least from the Soviet Union.[161]

McNaughton acknowledged that it would be very difficult to assess levels and weigh responsibility between the Communist Party of the Czech republic and the Soviet Union. But this truth made it even more important to make all efforts to ascertain the facts of the process "whereby a minority group linked to an outside Power is able to overthrow its political opponents and deprive the majority of the people of their political liberties, for this is not only dangerous to democracy but also creates a threat to international peace and security."[162]

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160 Ibid.
161 Ibid , pp. 3-4.
162 Ibid , p. 4.

In order to determine these facts, McNaughton, and others, believed that the United Nations should set up a UN Sub-Committee which would hear from Czech citizens who were firsthand witnesses to the events and could give testimony which would substantiate the accusations by Dr. Papanek of Soviet intervention in the Czech republic. In May the Canadian Permanent Delegate to the United Nations noted that the Soviet Union's delegate to the UN's stated intent was to use a double veto (voting down both the agenda item and the sub-committee) preventing any examination of Czech witnesses. The General did not see this action as a problem but as an opportunity to gain a "tactical advantage".

By this time the American and British governments had heard some of the testimony of the Czech witnesses. While the testimony was "effective in illustrating Communist tactics," the evidence would not "serve to establish a case that there was direct intervention by the Soviet Government or its agents in the coup d'etat."[163] Since there was no concrete proof of direct Soviet intervention, Gromyko's use of the double veto was a blessing because it provided the Canadian delegation with an opportunity to raise questions and problems with the veto procedure. General McNaughton proposed to make a statement which would strongly protest the

> the spectacle of a double veto applied in relation to a matter which, in the opinion of the majority of the

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163 Cypher from the Canadian Permanent Delegate to the United Nations to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, May 3, 1948. DEA File 50165-40 pt. 1, p. 1.

> members of this Council, is clearly procedural ... We cannot be expected to accept an interpretation of the Charter whereby one member frustrates the will of the majority from applying ordinary common sense procedures necessary for the examination of a case brought before the Council. It will be for the public and the nations of the world to draw their own inferences from the action which has been taken by the Soviet delegation in an effort to prevent the mere setting up of a Committee of the Council to do no more than to examine the evidence available in order to enable the Council to dispel or to prove the grave charges which have been made against the Soviet Union and whose very existence unanswered give cause for great anxiety.[164]

After much wrangling, constitutional and legal discussions and Soviet obfuscation, the vote to create a United Nations Sub-Committee to hear and examine testimony and evidence from Czech witnesses failed and the matter was left unresolved. Canada's final stand was obviously and strongly with the United States and Britain and against the Soviets.

Some in the Western world questioned and condemned Benes and Masaryk for staying in the Communist dominated post-coup government. Because of the security surrounding them and the inability of the Western diplomats on the scene to talk with either of them, there was little understanding why these two men had remained, only supposition and confusion. MacDonnell wrote

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164 Ibid., p. 2.

> I find it hard to see what good Benes can accomplish by remaining President. He will have little influence on government policy and will be so closely watched by the Communists that he will be unable to speak frankly to the country or give advice and leadership to democrats...But if blame for the President's passive acceptance of the situation be tempered with sympathy for the predicament of a sick and elderly man confronted with momentous decisions, no such consideration has applied in the case of Masaryk. He has accepted office in a gang of thugs whom he cannot possibly influence in any way, and is a helpless prisoner. He can justify his doing so on grounds that it may protect his liberty until he is able to escape. He cannot expect anyone to take seriously the argument which he has been putting to some diplomats that he will be a moderating influence.[165]

The question of Jan Masaryk's apparent betrayal of his country took a tragic turn in the first week of March, when his body was found on the ground outside his apartment. There has been much controversy about whether he committed suicide or was murdered by the Soviets, but whatever the manner of his death, it brought "home the seriousness of the situation to people who were inclined to think that after a few purges things [in Czechoslovakia] would go on much as before."[166] Benes disappeared from public life, apparently a virtual prisoner in his own home. He eventually resigned as president after the 'single list' elections in May--which gave the Communists 80% of the vote--and died in September 1948. The events of February 1948, Benes' surrender to the Communists and Masaryk's sudden death made it obvious, to MacDonnell's eye,

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165 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia to SSEA, March 4, 1948. DCER Volume 14, Document 1052, p. 1743.

166 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia, to SSEA, March 11, 1948, p 1. DEA Files 50165-40 pt. 1.2.

> that there appears to be nothing to prevent the Communists from going ahead as fast as they like. There is no force in Czechoslovakia capable of opposing them, no interference will come from outside, and the Communists are evidently no longer restrained by any regard for public opinion in the Western democracies. Repression can go ahead as fast as the Communists can organize it and there will have to be more of it than in Hungary or Roumania because of the much firmer roosts which democracy has put down in Czechoslovakia.[167]

In an editorial on the "Lessons of Prague" in the Globe and Mail, Edward Crankshaw wrote that the Czech crisis allowed the world to see clearly the "technique of militant communism in successful action unsupported by Russian arms and with only remote control from Moscow."[168] He argued that the only type of foreign policy that could counter the Soviet threat were strong domestic policies for the Western governments allied against the East.[169] The theme of creating a strong, unified Western alliance ran through many editorials and articles on the situation. The Globe and Mail March 3 editorial "Canada and the World Crisis" saw one small "compensatory advantage" to the tragedy in Prague. The coup had forced the Western world to wake up and face the reality of the world situation.[170] The editorialist believed that

> the reasons why the Czechoslovak disaster has had a profoundly shocking and awakening effect on the West

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167 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia, to SSEA, March 4, 1948. DCER Volume 14, Document 1052, p. 1744.

168 Edward Crankshaw, "The Lessons of Prague" in The Globe and Mail, March 1, 1948, Editorial page.

169 Ibid.

170 "Canada and the World Crisis", Editorial in The Globe and Mail, March 3, 1948, Editorial page.

> are obvious. Czechoslovakia was a liberal democracy. Its fall proves that countries used to dictatorship ... are not the only possible victims of Communist violence; free countries too, can succumb. ... The long-term way to prevent a third Great War ... is to make free Europe a union or association as strong as the Soviet bloc or stronger--economically and militarily.[171]

Globe and Mail Columnist Dorothy Thompson believed the "Lesson of Czechoslovakia" was that democracy was

> a system which must be defended by power. It cannot protect itself by its own mere functioning. ... Democracy is either a positive philosophy determined to defend itself at all costs or it is not government at all. The Czech republic did not fall on February 23. It fell the day it made a coalition with the Communists and turned over to them its defences. By agreements made between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, "liberated" European states were encouraged and indeed compelled to take Communists into their governments. Thus peace between the Great Powers rested on the sacrifice of the internal and external security of the small. But the sacrifice of their security now threatens the security of Britain and the United States.[172]

While some of the editorials were filled with emotion and fear, Maclean's Magazine provided a more balanced analysis of the situation in its editorial on Czechoslovakia. The news of the coup took some of the older reporters at the magazine back nine years to the Munich crisis. On a night in October, 1938, two possible headlines were prepared: "Czechs Decide to Fight" or "Czechs Decide to Yield". There was no other alternative,

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171 Ibid.

172 Dorothy Thompson, On the Record, "The Lesson of Czechoslovakia" in The Globe and Mail, Editorial Page, March 8, 1948.

and "the tragic plight of an old nation newly reborn, and now deserted, had been reduced to a pair of alternatives so grimly simple that each could be fully expressed in 19 letters."[173] Now the Czech republic faced a new "calamity so bitter" that "emotion's impulse is to give up hope, forget about the possibility of co-operation, or even truce, to throw the United Nations into the same dustbin as the old League."[174] However, the editorial cautioned that, even though the Czechs had managed to maintain a great deal of freedom and independence,

> their foreign policy had not been their own for three years. In world affairs they were bound to Moscow's chariot wheels and they knew it. So for us, if not for them, the Iron Curtain has not advanced, it has merely thickened across the only spot were [sic] formerly a little light got through. The European balance of power has not materially altered. Heaven knows the situation has not improved but neither is it hopeless. There is still room--and time--for the democracies to alter it in their favour.[175]

This editorial supported earlier analyses by Canadians experts, such as Wrong and Pearson, who believed that the illusion of Czech independence would be shattered as quickly as that country made a decision contrary to Moscow's wishes. Now that analysis had proved true, it was crucial to determine in which direction Moscow's chariot wheels were headed.

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173 "There is Still Time" in Maclean's Magazine, Editorial Page, April 1, 1948.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE - **Images and Impacts**

Whatever the origins of the coup in Czechoslovakia, the logical assumption had been that Czechoslovakia would of course end up within the Soviet sphere of influence with Poland and Hungary. These sensible analyses of the eventual fate of Czechoslovakia gave way, in the immediate aftermath of the coup, to emotional and impassioned words that belied the cool logic. Images of Czechoslovakia had already gone through three distinct phases. During the inter-war years, Czechoslovakia was seen as the most "western" and "democratic" country in eastern Europe because of its parliamentary system and its capitalist economy. The signing of the Munich Agreement, and the suffering of the Czech republic during the war, had produced a picture of a vulnerable country and an innocent people betrayed and abandoned by the West. Winston Churchill's words clearly evoke that image. "Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness. She has suffered in every respect by her association with the Western democracies."[176] Finally, during the early post-war years, Czechoslovakia had been, at least for some, a modest beacon of hope for East-West cooperation.

The Czech republic had served as a symbol of the last chance for some sort of alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union, some sort of fusion between democracy and socialism. Those who held out, in the face of logic and the growing East-West

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176 Churchill used these words in a speech he made on October 5, 1938 after the signing of the Munich Agreement. They are quoted in Martin Gilbert, Churchill: A Life (New York, 1991), p. 598.

tension, for an independent Czechoslovakia, saw the fall of that country as far worse than the fall of Poland or Hungary. After the coup in 1948, the central images of Czechoslovakia were those of the "grim mechanism of totalitarian state", and the arrests and purges of the powerless non-Communist politicians, while the free and democratic people of Czechoslovakia were being overwhelmed by the destructive Moscow-directed Communist party.

The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin wrote that:

> the open political methods of the Communists when they are in a coalition Government are shown from the Czechoslovak example to be no less dangerous than their subversive and penetration methods. The Communists used their position in the Czechoslovak Government as they have done elsewhere in order to create dissension...and spreading and exploiting slanders and false accusations...to eliminate from power all those who were not their stooges... Czechoslovakia is now lost to Western Democracy and the Western world...[177]

The American ambassador in Prague, Steinhardt, saw the actions of the Communists as

> intimidation and [the] demonstration of armed forces [which] have succeeded in seizing the government and eliminating all opposition...They are now endeavouring to cover up a ruthless seizure of power by inclusion in the new Cabinet of Left-Wing Socialist Democrats, stooges and quislings from the non-Communist parties, all of who do their bidding. They have wiped out every vestige of true representative government...They have

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177 Memorandum by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, March 3, 1948. British Cabinet Document 129/25. Public Records Office, Kew, England.

> intimidated the public and all of the non-Communist leaders and by their arrests and threatened arrests are about to destroy all effective opposition to their program...They have browbeaten and exercised a degree of duress on President Benes strikingly similar to methods employed by Hitler in dealing with heads of states. In short, they have employed identical methods to achieve a successful putsch which was first employed by the Nazis and subsequently by the Communists in other satellite states.[178]

In a speech in the House of Commons on April 29, 1948, Louis St. Laurent referred to the

> length and strength of the Czech democratic tradition and the peculiar significance it has long held for world democracy. Nowhere has the struggle for human freedom and liberal democracy been carried on more valiantly or more persistently than in the Bohemian lands...The nazis were well aware that in conquering Czechoslovakia they were striking a formidable blow at world democracy. The communist dictators of today are equally conscious of the importance of the Czech democratic tradition to the western world...The fate of Czechoslovakia is indeed a frightening case history of communist totalitarianism in action...Those in each free nation who love freedom should draw the clear lesson of the tragedy of Czechoslovakia. That lesson is that it is impossible to co-operate with the communists. They do not want co-operation. They want domination.[179]

The press in Ottawa and Toronto echoed the professionals. The events in Prague were discussed by Saturday Night in the following terms:

> Czechoslovakia, the country created by the victorious democracies after the first world was, the country

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178 American Ambassador in Czechoslovakia to American Secretary of State. FRUS Volume IV 1948, p. 739.

179 Mr. Louis St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, House of Commons Debates, April 29, 1948.

> abandoned to the Hitler tyranny before the second world war is now abandoned to a tyranny only slightly less terrible. ... Czechoslovakia is the first country with a driving and successfully functioning democratic government to be taken over by the Communists. The lessons which that operation teaches are considerably more forceful and more comprehensible for Canadians than those taught by Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. If those lessons are well learned, the loss of a valuable ally on the frontier of democracy may be compensated for in part, at least by a great stiffening of resolution and improvement of strategy in the centres of democracy.[180]

Even with all the words of regret and denunciation, there were no promises or action. Rather there appeared to be a sense of impotence. The Western world, one more time, had 'sacrificed' the Czech republic.

The Soviet overthrow of Czechoslovakia in 1948 had taken several years and steps to complete. Some, like Skilling, argued that the first step, the Munich Agreement and the betrayal of an independent Czech republic, was taken by the Western powers. For the Czech people and government, this act had created a deep sense of mistrust of the Western world's ability and desire to support and protect their country. When Benes faced Gottwald and the Communist party's demands in 1948, the shadow of the Western world's abandonment of Czechoslovakia in 1938 was probably a factor in the President's mind.[181]

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180 The Front Page, "The Tragedy of Prague" in Saturday Night, pp. 1-2.
[181]H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague", p. 119.

Another possible stride towards the coup was the agreement signed by Benes and Stalin in Moscow in 1943. Ambassador Hume Wrong argued that "the Czechs had been used for three hundred years to the acceptance of unpalatable political decisions"[182] and the coup was yet another advance down that road. The Munich agreement, and the Second World War, had also deepened the anti-German sentiment in Czechoslovakia and had led to an obsessive determination to rid the country of the Sudeten German population. A new policy, referred to as the *odsun*, called for the immediate expulsion of the Germans to Germany from Czechoslovakia. This idea was not received well by the United States and Britain. The British Ambassador, Philip Nichols, argued against a unilateral move by Czechoslovakia "inasmuch as they [Britain and the United States] would be on the receiving end of the proposed operation,"[183] and would have to handle a sudden influx of new people in their zone in Germany. For Benes and his government, the expulsion of the Germans was not an option, it was an absolute. Benes was disturbed by the apparent British interference in what he considered internal 'domestic' policy. Meanwhile, the Communists totally supported the *odsun*, and Gottwald even argued that one of Stalin's achievements at Potsdam was to win the assent of the British and Americans for this policy.[184]

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182 The Canadian Ambassador to the United States to SSEA, February 26, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 50165-40 pt. 1.2.

183 Walter Ullman, "Benes between East and West", p. 57.

184 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolution in Prague", p. 122.

As Benes carefully negotiated his way between the two superpowers and Britain, it was apparent that he was trying to find a path for his country somewhere between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. From its independence in 1918, the Czech republic had maintained relatively democratic political and economic systems. Since the end of the Second World War, Benes "was confident that he had been successful in keeping Czechoslovakia secure by balancing East and West and by co-operating with the Czechoslovak communists in paving the way for a kind of synthesis of democracy and socialism."[185]

Benes wanted to maintain a diplomatic and economic alliance with the Western world. He was also "convinced of the need for making the alliance with Soviet Russia the keystone of the new diplomacy." But Czechoslovakia was a simply a pawn in by the emerging post-war hostilities between the Soviet Union and the West. Benes was to find that, attempting to sit on a fence between these two superpowers was impossible. For some in the Western world, Czechoslovakia "had already become a thinly-veiled Communist dictatorship, established contrary to the will of the people under the influence of Soviet troops or Soviet diplomatic pressure."[186] The Communists, and Stalin, saw the Czech republic as too Western and the attempts to maintain the ties to and links with the British and Americans were seen as a 'threat' to the security of the Soviet Union.[187]

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185 H. Gordon Skilling, "Lions or Foxes: Heros or Lackeys?", p. 15.
186 H. Gordon Skilling, "Revolutions in Prague", p. 134.
187 Ibid.

As Canada, and the other Western powers, reviewed the aftermath of the Communist overthrow, it became clear that the meaning and importance of coup in Czechoslovakia transcended the simple idea of the Soviet Union creating a security belt and surrounding itself with friendly governments. There had been admiration of the Czech republic and its government's attempts to maintain a Western alliance and even a naive hope that the Soviet Union would allow Czechoslovakia to develop without interference. Many American and British analysts, however, had feared that eventually Czechoslovakia would fall within the Soviet sphere of influence. George Kennan had argued this as early as 1945. Hume Wrong and Mike Pearson had discussed the issue in 1947 and agreed completely with the American conclusion that "the popular front governments such as now exist in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania were transitional and must be expected in time to give way to a solid block--i.e. a one party system."[188] There was also a belief, in London and Washington, that Benes government and the democratic forces in Czechoslovakia had made some serious mistakes in giving the Soviets the opening they were waiting for and were thus partially responsible for the results and ease with which the coup succeeded.[189]

As early as January 1948, in a personal message from Prime Minister Attlee to Prime Minister King, the British leader had laid out the present world situation from his perspective. Responding to the growing stalemate between the USSR and the Western

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188 See George Kennan, Memoirs, p. 254 and Denis Smith, Diplomacy of Fear, p. 222.

189 See Aronsen and Kitchen, The Origins of the Cold War in Comparative Perspective, p. 146 and Leffler, Preponderance of Power.

powers over the issue of Germany, the British government felt that the time was ripe to boost their support and give a "moral lead" to those still friendly countries in Western Europe and, at the same time, "take a more active line against Communism." The Soviets had formed a solid Communist block and there was little hope of the West intervening or communicating with these satellite countries. What was necessary was to respond to and repel the growing Soviet pressure and threats in Germany, France, Trieste, Italy and Greece. Attlee argued that

> if we are to stem further encroachment of Soviet tide we should organize ethical and spiritual forces of Western Europe backed by the power and resources of the Commonwealth and of the Americas, thus creating a solid foundation for the defence of Western civilization in the widest sense. The countries of Western Europe already sense Communist peril and are seeking some assurance of salvation....We believe, therefore that we should seek to form a Western democratic system...We realise that Soviet Government would react fiercely to what they would describe as an offensive alliance directed against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless we are convinced that if we are to preserve peace and our own safety, we must mobilize moral and material force which will create confidence and energy in our friends and inspire respect and caution in others.[190]

Even before the Communist coup in the Czech republic, the British Prime Minister was calling for a union of the Anglo-American powers which would be able to withstand the Soviet push for power and, more importantly, have the ability and strength to draw a line which the Soviets would not cross. This idea came from Ernest Bevin, Atlee's Secretary

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190 Personal message to Mr. Mackenzie King from Mr. Attlee, January 14, 1948. pp. 1-2. DEA Files E-46 File 12.

of State for Foreign Affairs, but in many ways they mirrored Escott Reid's call, in 1947, for a new collective defence organization of the Western powers. Reid had said that

> The world is now so small that the whole of the western world is in itself a mere region. If the peoples of the western world want an international security organization with teeth, even though the Soviet Union is at present unwilling to be a member of such an organization, they do not need to amend the United Nations charter in order to create such an organization; they can create it consistently with the United Nations charter. They can create a regional security organization to which any state willing to accept the obligations of membership could belong. In such an organization there need be no veto right possessed by any great power. In such an organization each member state could accept a binding obligation to pool the whole of its economic and military resources with those of other members if *any* power should be found to have committed aggression against any one of the members.[191]

In a memorandum prepared by Escott Reid and revised by Lester Pearson in March 1948, there were several suggestions about the different methods that could be used to present a "united front". these included continued support for the European Recovery Plan (the Marshall plan of economic support for Western Europe), and entrenchment of the principles of the Truman Doctrine, as well as collective security to prevent another hot war. The Canadians saw that there was a belief within the corridors of the British Foreign Office that, if the united front was strong enough, "the danger of war which

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191 Escott Reid, Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid, pp. 222-223.

would be liable to result from the Soviet Government overstepping the mark is not imminent."[192]

The first concrete response to the events of February 1948, and an important part of the new Western foreign policy plans, was the signing of the Brussels Treaty. This agreement created a fifty year alliance of Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, which each pledged military and economic cooperation, and agreed to assist each other if any of the five were to suffer an armed attack. In addition to the Brussels treaty, Bevin was calling for two other pacts. The first "would be a regional Atlantic pact of mutual assistance among the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, Ireland and Canada. Spain would added when it once again has a democratic regime. The second would be a Mediterranean security system which would particularly affect Italy."[193]

The United Kingdom asked for the United States to provide "backing" for the Brussels Treaty and become a member of the Atlantic pact. Pearson pointed out that the meaning of "backing" had not been clarified.[194] There was also confusion over the American involvement in the Mediterranean pact. The British saw the Atlantic pact as the most critical of the three, especially with the growing tension over Soviet threats in Norway.

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192 Top Secret Memorandum, originally written by Escott Reid, Revision by Lester Pearson, March 14, 1948, p. 2. DEA Files E-46 File 12.

193 Ibid., p. 3.

194 Ibid., p. 3.

On March 10, 1948 a top secret and personal telegram was sent to the British High Commissioner in Ottawa, who immediately passed the message on to Prime Minister King. The tone of the message was somber,

> events are moving even quicker than we at first apprehended and there are grave indications from many sources that the next Russian move will be to make demands on Norway. From our latest report from our Ambassador in Oslo which Sir Alexander Clutterbuck [British High Commissioner in Ottawa] will show you, there is reason to fear that Russia may move soon. Norwegian Government have consulted United States and ourselves as to the help that they could expect if attacked.[195]

If the events in Czechoslovakia had scared many of the Canadian External Affairs officials, the news of the Soviet threat in Norway scared them even more. The British government exhorted the United States and United Kingdom to "infuse some courage" into the Norwegian people, by pointing out that Turkey and Persia had resisted Soviet pressure and by advising the Norwegian government that they would be "ill-advised to put her [Norway's] foot on the slippery slope by sacrificing her right to conclude pacts with whomsoever she chooses and that if she eventually requires outside support she is more likely to get it by showing resolution than by temporising."[196]

The British government conceded that, even with this "encouragement", Norway might not be able to "hold out" against consistent Soviet pressure. At this point the Western

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195 Telegram from The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Ottawa, March 10, 1948, p 1 DEA Files E-46 File 12.

196 Ibid., p. 2.

powers could not "risk Norwegian defection which would not only involve the collapse of the whole Scandinavian system but would also prejudice our chances of calling a halt to expansion of Soviet influence over Western Europe and would in fact mean the appearance of Russia on the Atlantic."[197] Therefore, it was argued, only a "bold move" could avert the danger that existed; the creation of a regional Atlantic pact of mutual assistance. The British believed that failure to act immediately would be a "repetition of our experience with Hitler" and a slow disintegration of Western power in Europe which would eventually lead to a war to be fought in "much less favourable circumstances" than the last one. Again the shadows of the past were long.

American analysts, specifically Norman Armour, the Assistant Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and John Hickerson, the Director of the Office of European Affairs for the Department of State, were perplexed by the British suggestion of three separate security pacts and bothered by the omission of Belgium and the Netherlands from the Atlantic pact. In addition, they were concerned that more had to be done to assure the Italian people and government of Western support before the upcoming elections in April. Even with these differences in details and priorities, the United States government was eager to move forward on some sort of Atlantic pact that would promise military and economic aid if any of the contracting parties (to be determined after negotiations) were attacked.

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197 Ibid., p. 2.

The Canadian response to the general idea of an Atlantic pact was positive. Reid and Pearson believed that they should keep an open mind about who the eventual participants would be. The new agreement could eventually replace the Brussels treaty and include Italy and Greece and perhaps Sweden. Reid and Pearson also believed that it was very important that the treaty was designed to cover more than just military and economic aid against possible Soviet aggression. It was

> essential to remember that the purpose of the pact is to rally the spiritual as well as the military and economic resources of Western Christendom against Soviet totalitarianism. To do this it should not be a merely negative anti-Soviet military alliance but should be the basis for a positive liberal and democratic counter-offensive. The pact may succeed in giving us a long period of peace if it result in creating an overwhelming preponderance of force against the Soviet Union. This force, however, to be overwhelming should not be only military and economic force; it should also include the force that comes from our ability to rally to our side all non-Communists...the proposed pact should make as clear as possible the methods which the people and governments of the Free World intend to follow to make good their faith in human rights and fundamental freedoms, in the worth and dignity of man and in the principles of parliamentary democracy, personal freedom and political liberty. If it can do this it will underline that this Pact is something far removed from alliances and arrangements of the old kind.[198]

Canadians fully supported the idea of the North Atlantic Treaty and argued for the inclusion of Italy, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and

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198 Top Secret Memorandum, Originally written by Escott Reid, Revised by Lester Pearson, March 14, 1948, pp. 6-7. DEA Files E-46 File 12.

Ceylon, in addition to the original group, and against the inclusion of Portugal. Canadian officials, however, pointed out that recent events, such as the Czech coup, were proof that the Soviets were playing a game of conquering without armed attack and playing that game very well. NATO would be useless if it were only aimed at stopping an armed attack. To give the treaty teeth, it would be necessary to include a clause that each of the signatories would come to each others' aid against (in Reid's words) "not only armed attacks but also against attempts by any state to undermine the political or economic independence of another state by intimidation or by a. y subversive processes of political or economic penetration."[199]

Reid saw a serious need for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to move beyond the old, obviously outmoded, military alliances towards a new of alliance which would combine military and economic affiliation with what can only be described as a "spiritual force" or alliance. Some Canadian officials saw the need for a preponderance of force, which would have to be used to address not only the possibilities of Soviet military threats, but the less tangible enemies of "despair, apathy, doubt and fear" that the Soviets were creating with the new cold war methods and tactics. When Escott Reid wrote about the proposed treaty, he went far beyond the security pacts that Attlee and Bevin were championing and spoke about creating a new multifaceted alliance that would have the "determination to use force if necessary and a determination accompanied by a fervent

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199 Memorandum for Mr. Pearson, by Escott Reid, March 18, 1948, p. 6. DEA Files E-46 File 12.

belief in the society which one is trying not only to defend but to make the basis of an eventually united world. The new treaty must therefore be a living document and create a new living international institution."[200]

Events had moved swiftly since the coup in Czechoslovakia and the immediate results were a new Western realization of the fact that cooperation with the Soviet Union was no longer possible. The only apparent solutions were military and economic security pacts. Pearson later drew a direct link between the coup in the Czech republic and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, stating that "whatever the long range causes of NATO may have been...the overthrow of the Benes government in Czechoslovakia was the immediate reason."[201] Other analyst-historians, like Reid, believed that while the coup in Prague set the stage for the first discussions of the idea of NATO, the final push for the Atlantic pact was the Soviets' pressure against Norway, and the fact that this Russian pressure in the North had been accompanied by threats in the Mediterranean.[202] Wherever the truth lay, the coup had definitely changed the tide of events.

In a letter which discussed the problems and tensions caused by the events in Czechoslovakia, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester Pearson, in a contemplative, somewhat philosophical tone, discussed his views and interpretations of Marxism, Communism and the Soviet leaders. Pearson saw the Soviet leaders as being

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200 Ibid., p. 9.
201 Quoted in James Eayrs, Growing Up Allied, p. 29.
202 Escott Reid, Memorandum for Mr. Soward, June 20, 1951 in Eayrs, Growing up Allied, p. 30.

"so confined within the strait-jacket of their Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist dogma that they can see no fact which is not coloured and distorted by it."[203] Within a totalitarian society, and it was assumed that Soviet society was totalitarian, truth was simply willed to be right, not proven by scientific western methods, and all truths were based on the Communist ideology. In Communist theories there was "no fact or development within Communist society which does not fulfil a Communist purpose; and there is no fact or development outside the Communist society in the non-Communist world which is not intrinsically seen as the negation and the proof-of-the-rightness of the Communist creed.[204] This belief eliminated the possibility for any objective assessment of facts from those who followed the "organic, dialectical view of life." The rigidity of Communism and its leaders' inability to view the world objectively and "examine the economy in isolation from politics" had created the present hostilities and misunderstandings.

Pearson saw little or no evidence that the Soviet leaders were really conscious of the "re-action which their policy produces in the outside world or that they take such re-action into account in formulating their tactics or altering their theory."[205] This meant that the Soviet government did not understand that their actions in the United Nations only strengthened the determination of the United States, Britain and Canada to oppose any and all Soviet policies or proposals. Stalin's men did not see that their attempts to destroy

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203 Letter from Lester B. Pearson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to John W. Holmes, Chargé d'Affaires, Moscow, March 30, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 2AE (s).

204 Ibid., p. 2.

205 Ibid.

the Marshall Plan "in Western Europe by strikes aimed at dislocating the whole national economy of each of the western European states (especially France and Italy) could only lead to the formation of government which could claim to safeguard the national interest."[206]

The Marxist or Communist ideology explained most complex issues or conflicts with a somewhat rudimentary theory that reduced everything to a struggle between capitalism and socialism, between the bourgeois and the proletariat. This theory failed to take into account any other variable, saying that "such factors are but superficial manifestations of the underlying dialectic which is economic in its nature." A consequence of this theory and this approach meant that the Communists, and the Soviet leaders, were unable to look at the influence of other components in the development of the capitalist Western societies including "the free play of political and cultural forces and especially the re-action which Communist tactics throughout the world themselves produce." Pearson ventured the opinion that

> Soviet policy is not so much cleverly contrived as it is rigid, and that, though the Soviet leaders may be governed, in any particular instance, by considerations of expediency, their world strategy is bound and stultified - as is their domestic cultural policy - by the dogmatic tenets of the faith by which they are enslaved.[207]

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206 Ibid.
207 Ibid., p. 3.

John Holmes, the Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, added to this discussion in a telegram to Escott Reid in April, 1948, in which he reviewed the differences between Lenin and Stalin's versions of Communism. Holmes pointed out that in reality Communism did not exist at this point in Moscow. The Soviet Union, according to its leaders, was still in a transitional stage where the "dictatorship of proletariat is necessary until Communism is possible."[208] The Communists believed that this dictatorship was a necessary part of a process that would lead to a Communist state where each person was "rewarded according to his needs", something that was not in total opposition to the liberal (Western) states. While most Russian Communists believed that they were working towards a righteous goal, there was a

> fatal fallacy in their philosophy. They have thought to achieve their end they could establish a ruthless but temporary dictatorship, lie, cheat and employ the most up to date methods of tyrannies, old and new. The Communists do not recognize that all men, not just capitalists, landlords and Grand Dukes are corrupted by absolute power. Nor have they recognized that calculated dishonesty destroys confidence and trust on which alone a peaceful and stable national and international polity can be established. It is not surprising, therefore, that Soviet leaders have lost sight of the goal they set out to achieve.[209]

Lenin's Communism intended that the state would wither away and that all people, when freed from the "evil instincts implicit in capitalism", would be able to live together in unity without State or police control. Instead Stalin's policies had created a state with the

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208 Telegram from the Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Embassy, Moscow to SSEA, April 1, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 2 AE (s).

209 Ibid.

worst characteristics of any Tsarist government including police and state control of all aspects of life. There would be no withering away of the state; indeed, Stalin was arguing that the State could not wither away because of the threats of "capitalist instability abroad." Stalin's Communist state had become the "most omnipotent and pervasive" in the country's history. The people were forced to live under "stultifying terror", protected by the State, and its police, from the "Bad Barons of Wall Street" and the atom bomb. Holmes argued that even if the capitalist threat were removed the power of the State would have to remain because the Communists had failed in raising the economic health of the country or the standard of living for the average Russian. The Soviet government would still have to 'impose' their new order. Furthermore,

> the Soviet State has a new role as weapon for imposing Communism on neighbouring States. There it will be the same story. No Communist State withers away, it only consolidates its own power. To justify its power it invents a foreign menace. In this bogey of their own invention the Communist leaders half believe, and so is create the present intolerable atmosphere of fear and suspicion.[210]

Lenin's Communism called for the elevation of the working people; Stalin's Russia depended on forced labour to achieve unrealistic economic objectives. The ideals of the equal treatment for all non-Russian people under Lenin's policies had been replaced with Stalin's practice of Russian domination of the political agenda. The principle of the equality of the proletariat, and the elimination of the elites had given way to a Soviet

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210 Ibid., p. 2.

politburo which lived "in much greater seclusion from the people they rule than do rulers of capitalist States." Communism was intended to bring freedom to all the Russian people, but their 'freedom' was severely restricted, no one had any defense against arrest, exile, confiscation of their money and land, and no Russian person had the freedom to travel or leave their country by choice. Intellectual life, the arts, science, all of which were to flourish and expand under Lenin's Communism were now "stifled by insistence of orthodoxy." Artists, scientists, university professors, and musicians "are so terrified of diverging from rigid but whimsical party line that cultural achievements of a highly gifted people have declined abysmally since Tsar period and even since earlier days of Soviet State when poetry, music and films were often of a high standard."[211]

Concepts of brotherhood were replaced by a crude Russian nationalism, foreign contact and influence was forbidden, foreign achievements were discredited and Russian or Soviet achievements were exaggerated. Stalin's Communism (which Holmes claimed does not "represent a diversion from the true Communism but [is an] inevitable evolution of Communist policy because of basic fallacies of Marx and Lenin") had created a State which was based on such rigid, orthodox principles that it would allow its people to die rather than admit they were wrong or inferior to the Western world. Holmes and Pearson were both attempting to understand the evolution of the Soviet Union, its ideologies and its leaders. Their perceptions of the Communist system provided one dimension of their

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211 Ibid., p. 4.

image of the Soviet Union and Communism. The other dimensions were provided in an examination of the possible options for political and military policy formulation. This would be provided quite quickly.

Since the Czechoslovakian coup in February, the British and American governments had been providing information, evaluations and suggestions to each other, and to the Canadian government, about Stalin, the Soviet Union and the relationship that would evolve from this point between East and West. From Moscow, John Holmes wrote that he had the opportunity to see the reports put together by both the United Kingdom and the United States Embassies in Moscow and he offered a summary of these reports as ideas for possible Canadian policy. The U.S. and Great Britain had both based their interpretations on the "acceptance of the view that the Soviet leaders consider inevitable a struggle between the 'socialist' world led by the U.S.S.R. and the 'anti-socialist' world led by the U.S.A."[212] The question was not if, but where and when this struggle would occur. The Soviets had rejected the idea of cooperation and turned back to the basic principles of Communism when dealing with "capitalist-imperialist states."

What form that the struggle would take was carefully examined. Neither the British nor Americans believed, at least in April 1948, that the Soviet government would not take any actions which would provoke a "shooting-war" in the near future. Rather the Soviets

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212 Letter from John Holmes, Canadian Chargé d'Affaires, Moscow, to Lester Pearson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, April 9, 1948, p. 1. DEA Files 2AE (s).

would continue their "war of nerves" tactics that had worked in Prague. At this point the Soviet Union could not afford and did not want a war, but if

> the Russians come to the conclusion that their cold methods will achieve no more success in the West and that the West is beginning to consolidate its strength so that it will become invincible, then they may take the decision to strike while their striking force is still much greater than that of their opponents.[213]

The various analysts discussed all the variables that could be important and relevant if there was a war. It was estimated that the Soviets could occupy Europe to the Atlantic within a few weeks. Even with the devastation of the military during the war, there was no comparable force in Europe which could stop the Soviet armies if they moved to conquer. Holding the conquered territory, however, would be much more difficult for the Russians. It would be deterrents like this, combined with the economic crisis and the apathy of the Russian people, that could tip the balance against any attempts to take over Europe within the next few months. Holmes said that both London and Washington supported the theory that the Communists would want to give the country a much longer breathing space between wars to build up their economy, expand their agricultural surpluses and "bring the satellites into shape." The Western world was waiting to see what would happen in Italy and France, and it was agreed that the results in those two countries would be determinants in the decision and policy making process.

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213 Ibid., p. 2.

For the time being, it appeared that the best offense was a good defence. This included continued economic, political and military support of the Western European countries with the Marshall Plan and the proposed Western security union. Even this plan would have to be handled delicately because

> the dilemma at the moment seems to be that although the consolidation of the economic, political and military strength of the democratic countries is of urgent importance, the determination with which it is done may provoke the Russians into action while they retain their present advantages. it seems unlikely, however, that they will underestimate their prospects in a cold war.[214]

Holmes noted that there were certain "differences in emphasis" between the British and American evaluations of the situation, with the United Kingdom being more "reassuring on the whole". This greater degree of assurance in the situation was based on the fact that the British analysts had a "higher opinion of the striking power of the United States than the Americans do of themselves." As he perused the reports of Canada's two closest allies, Holmes was able to draw at least two conclusions for his government's policy. The first was that:

> we should in the next few months take particular care to leave the Russians grounds for retreat. Certainly we should leave them no room to advance. Whatever the risks of firmness, the risks of weakness are greater. If we accept, however, the premise that the Russians will go as far as they possibly can but will not want to start a war, we must be particularly careful that we have not drawn them on to ground from which they cannot retire

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214 Ibid., p. 5.

> without a loss of face they could not contemplate. I think this has been a guiding principle of our policy in the Security Council, and I do not pretend that mine is a new suggestion.

The second conclusion was that:

> It is frequently said here among Westerners that the real danger of war in the near future comes from the trigger-happy U.S. military, who argue that the best way to prevent the next war is to drop an atom-bomb on the Kremlin. It seems to me of desperate importance that we use our considerable influence in the coming months to prevent the United States from taking heady action without calculating the consequences.[215]

Wilgress read Holmes' letter of April 9, 1948, and he commented on it in a May 25th letter to Pearson. Wilgress "clung to the view" that a war was not likely in the very near future because the Soviet Union would not start a war they could not win (apparently it was clear to Stalin that he could not prevail in a war) and because the rest of the "democratic countries" would not be able to garner enough popular support for a preventative war. He did accept, though, the American argument that the Soviet leaders considered inevitable the struggle between the socialist bloc, led by the USSR, and the anti-socialist bloc, led by the U.S. The Soviets' policies would be geared towards preparing for that struggle,

> but their main obsession is to see that the struggle when it comes, does not result in their undoing. They are fearful of anything which might threaten their own personal position of power. Stalin, in particular, is sure of his position in history, and does not want to take any

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215 Ibid., p. 9.

> action which might undermine all that he has done to make Russia relatively the greatest power that she has ever been.[216]

Because of this obsession to maintain its new place in history, as well as its new power, the Soviet Union, at least at this point, could not risk war. Even though the Red Army was three million strong and had no real competition in Europe, Stalin was a pragmatist and could see quite clearly that the Soviet Union and its satellites were still

> a long way behind the United States and its allies in military-industrial potential, and before staking everything on an all-out war he will want to lessen the gap between the relative industrial strengths until the superior military-industrial potential of the United States is not sufficient to offset Soviet advantages in manpower, their strategic location in the heart of Eurasia and their monolithic organization geared to military objects.[217]

Stalin would be hard pressed to raise any ardent popular support in his country for any type of hot war. The Soviet Union had just emerged from a long, devastating conflict "in which their sacrifices and suffering exceeded anything known in the West." All of these factors together put Stalin and the Soviet Union in the position of realizing that any war in Europe would involve the United States and, that for now, the Soviet Union could not take on the United States and win. Therefore, for the next few years, the Soviets would continue to fight the cold war, "the purpose of which will be to divide and weaken the

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216 Letter to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs from D. Wilgress, Canadian Legation, Berne, Switzerland, May 25, 1948, p. 2. DEA Files 2 AE-1(s).

217 ibid., p. 4.

Western powers." Stalin's government would renew its efforts to embarrass the United States and promote any situation which would cause disagreement between the Western allies. The Soviet Union would proceed to push the limits of her sphere's boundaries, grabbing whatever territory she could without provoking war. Obviously, the Soviet government would persist in supporting and encouraging any and all Communist governments and parties in other countries.

This would be the easiest way to embarrass and weaken Western powers. Nevertheless, it was unlikely that the same tactics that had been employed in Czechoslovakia would be used in France and Italy. Czechoslovakia had been "entirely in the Soviet orbit of power and there was nothing which the Western powers could do to help the Czechoslovaks." France and Italy were not in that same orbit of power, and any attempts by the Soviet Union to assist the Communist parties in those countries could provoke a war with the United States. While the Communists would continue to act within those countries, it would be done very carefully and delicately. Even with these somewhat optimistic words, Wilgress cautioned against relaxing any efforts to consolidate the "Atlantic Community."

There should be a renewed stress on the distinctions and differences between the totalitarian Soviet sphere and the Western (Atlantic), sphere which still believed in individual liberty. Wilgress thought that the Western powers had to meet the "Soviet appeal" with something positive: a renewed emphasis on the ideal of personal or

individual liberty and the stressing of "the material as well as the spiritual benefits which the pursuit of this ideal has already accorded, as witnessed by the accomplishments of our civilization up to date.[218] It was important to have something more than the "mere negative blackening of the Soviet Union" to counter the Soviet doctrine, which had "an intellectual as well as a sentimental appeal to the frustrated."

Wilgress urged caution and called for a positive offensive approach towards the Soviet Union. It was essential that the Western powers "consistently bear in mind the possibility of a major clash between the two great powers some ten, fifteen, or twenty-five years hence." Continued efforts to consolidate the power of and the cooperation between members of the "Atlantic Community" were necessary to answer the threatening tactics of the Soviet Union. The best policy was to leave the Soviet Union alone, to

> treat Soviet isolationism with the neglect it deserves. Since they have erected the Iron Curtain, I would treat the Iron Curtain as a fact and I would consistently strive to ignore the Soviet Union ... I would not have General Smith submit Notes explaining United States policy because this only the Soviet leaders the opportunity for scoring propaganda points ... resist firmly any efforts they might make to extend the territory under their control ... but I would not pay them the compliment of taking and writing about them as has been done in the past ... by stressing our own virtues and the benefits we derive ... we can make ourselves more immune to Soviet propaganda instead of following the more negative course of constantly trying to wage propaganda battle with the Soviet Union on grounds of their own choosing.[219]

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218 Ibid., p. 7.
219 Ibid., p. 6.

The letters of Wilgress and Holmes, Canada's men from Moscow, were not filled with recommendations for aggressive policies or actions. Neither of the Moscow experts called for belligerent constraint or roll-back of Soviet power or their sphere of influence. Rather they spoke of leaving the Soviets grounds for retreat, leaving them alone behind their Iron Curtain. They also argued that the Canadian government should attempt to restrain their U.S. counter-parts from making any rash moves. It was important to take a balanced approach. There should be no relaxation of efforts to hold the Soviets against advancing--territorially, materially or spiritually. At the same time, it was crucial not to force the Soviet Union into a corner where the only way out was war.

CONCLUSION

The Department of External Affairs had an early and close up view of the Soviet Union. Dana Wilgress had watched the evolution of the Soviet Union from 1943 to 1946 and he continued to keep a careful watch over developments thereafter. In 1943 Wilgress had called for the West to develop a patient understanding of the Soviet demand for a security belt of friendly, Communist countries. The early perceptions that Canadian policy mak··· had of the Soviet Union were predominantly of a country that was misunderstood. What some in the West saw as aggression was seen by men like Dana Wilgress as a desire by the Soviet government for security. But the line between aggression and security was so fine that, in the post-war years of fear and apprehension, it was quickly blurred.

By 1946, the new impressions that Wilgress saw and sent to Ottawa were based on a fundamental acceptance that the world was divided into two camps. This bipolar world had to find an equilibrium between those two sides, and the methods for finding balance were based on perceptions of power, and on economic and military alliances, not on attempts at peaceful coexistence. Still, Wilgress did not talk about the menace of Communism. There was no paranoia in his words or analysis, no expectation of world conquest by hostile Russian expansion. Wilgress had developed images of the Soviet

Union and Communism that were premised on the idea of understanding, and accepting the Soviet Union's desire for security and a long period of peace.

By 1947, the situation had worsened and the fragile post-war stability was crumbling quickly. American and British analysts were shifting towards a more pessimistic appraisal of the Soviet Union and the Communist doctrines. Soviet actions in Eastern Europe and threats towards Western Europe were now viewed as naked aggression. The Americans believed that the Soviet Union was moving towards total world conquest and not just simply enhancing power within its own sphere. Events were occurring so fast no one could slow down or stop the momentum of belligerence and mistrust.

Pearson, Reid, Wilgress and Holmes used darker words and tones to describe the Soviet Union and the advance of Communist governments in Eastern Europe, but there was no sharply increased sense of urgency or fear. There was a sad acceptance that there could be no real relationship between the Soviet and Western spheres, but not a belief in any Western right to invade the Soviet sphere or attempt to take away Soviet gains within that realm. Canada conceded that the United Nations was failing and with it the wartime alliance. Yet still the Canadian analysis maintained its balanced view of the Soviet Union, sometimes in fact allowing for a slight sympathy towards that country.

Some historians believe that the coup in Czechoslovakia was the real beginning of the cold war. It seems more likely that the coup was simply the coup de grace for the

Western powers. Whatever the arguments, it is clear that the coup in Prague in 1948 was a cold war watershed. Other East European countries had fallen within the Soviet sphere and there had been oppression in different places before Czechoslovakia. The emotion that overwhelmed the Western world as Prague fell may not have been reasonable but it was not totally unexpected.

Czechoslovakia was a symbol. The country had maintained a Western leaning parliamentary government and a capitalist economy through German occupation and Communist interference. Before 1946, some analysts in the West had viewed the Czech republic as a sign of the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the Soviet and Western spheres. The coup in Prague was called a "frightening case history of communist totalitarianism in action," and it taught the hard lesson that it was impossible to cooperate with the Communists. The Soviet leaders did not want collaboration; instead they wanted domination. The coup showed the "Communists demonstrated ability and willingness to use naked force."[220] Any and all hope about the possibility of an enduring alliance between the Western world and the Soviet world ended in Prague. The impassioned words and bitter disappointment, however, did not alter the temperate Canadian analysis of the Soviet Union and Stalin's policies and doctrines.

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220 Telegram from the Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Legation in Czechoslovakia, to SSEA, February 28, 1948. Document Number 1049, p. 1738 DCER Volume 14, 1948.

In March of 1948 Lester Pearson, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, advised Louis St. Laurent on his response to questions being raised about Canadian intentions in Prague. Pearson called for Canadian endorsement of the three-power statement issued by France, Great Britain and the United States condemning the "development of the consequences" of the coup, as well as a statement that "it was not the intention of the Canadian Government to sever diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia." Pearson went on to call for some sort of declaration that

> so long as communism remains a menace it is vital to maintain a preponderance of military strength on the side of freedom and to secure that degree of unity among the nations that will ensure that they cannot be defeated and destroyed one by one. From this you might go on to state that the Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia may hasten the creation within the United Nations of an association of democratic and peace-loving states which are willing to accept more specific international obligation in return for greater national security.[221]

When St. Laurent rose in the House of Commons on April 29, 1948, it appears that he had accepted Pearson's advice with his words that

> the tragedy of Czechoslovakia in September 1938 and March 1939 was a prelude to war. The tragedy of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 need not be a prelude to war. It does however, underline the necessity for the free states of the world to unite their material, their political and their moral resources to resist direct and indirect totalitarian aggression.[222]

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221 Memorandum from the Under Secretary of State for External Affairs to SSEA, March 2, 1948. Document Number 1050, p. 1740, DCER 14, 1948.

222 The Honourable Louis St. Laurent, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Speech in the House of Commons, April 29, 1948.

Canadian policy makers and diplomats did not downplay the seriousness of the consequences and lessons of Prague. They accepted that the coup had completely destroyed any illusions of an alliance with the Soviet Union and its satellites. The Canadian government realized that the United Nations would not be able to answer the needs of and threats to the emerging post-war world. The signing of the various security pacts, including NATO, was seen as a partial solution to the problems that the Western world faced in its relationship with Stalin and Russia. Many of the decisions that were taken in the aftermath of the events in Czechoslovakia were made in a time of extreme anxiety and strain and with additional threats of Soviet aggressive expansion in Norway, and Italy.

Yet, in the final analysis, Canadian policy experts did not entreat the Western world to slay the Soviet beast. Instead, Wilgress, Holmes, Reid and others called for Canada, and the other Western powers, to leave Russia alone behind her iron curtain. They exhorted their allies to promote the positive, Western, ideals of individual liberty, democracy and moral superiority as constructive counterparts to the Communist doctrine. The people at External Affairs based their policy suggestions on perceptions that were determined by on the spot observations as well as analysis by Americans and British foreign policy specialists. The Canadians in Moscow, Prague and Ottawa were able to supplement their own observations with the combined wisdom of the American and British diplomats. It allowed the Canadian government a unique look at the events in Eastern Europe through

many eyes and perceptions. The Canadians used the American (and British) evaluations to augment and support their own ideas and suggestions. Nor were the Canadians limited to Anglo-American reports. External Affairs and the Canadian Legations had friendly and informative relationships with many of the other countries' diplomats, allowing for a more wider understanding of the events in Moscow and Prague.

Throughout the documents, memoranda and letters, it appears that some External Affairs officials were more preoccupied with the aggressive policies of the United States than the threat of the Soviet Union. Some Canadians, like Reid and Holmes, believed that the Soviet doctrines were aimed at the overthrow of free and democratic countries, but they also concluded that the Soviets would not provoke a hot war with the Western powers unless they were pushed too far. They argued, moreover, that the one variable that could push the Soviets over the line was the United States. Canada's solution was to find every means possible to restrain the United States. Escott Reid was convinced this goal required that the United States hold the preponderance of power, or at least believe they did. Another factor for the Canadian government was a strong desire to keep the United States from returning to its pre-war policy of isolation. So while it was important to hold the Americans from taking any "heady action" it was also necessary to keep them in the game.

The Canadian government had changed its attitudes towards international involvement. Before the Second World War, Mackenzie King and his Ministers pushed the world, and

international commitments, away because involvement with that world could break the country apart. In 1948, in the precarious early years of the Cold War, international involvement was a necessity abroad and a unifying force at home. Canada became the world's greatest joiner, championing the multiracial Commonwealth and the GATT, and becoming active members of the United Nations and NATO. These obligations were one way to balance and offset the now overwhelming influence of the U.S. and to constrain the American government's "methods and bluster".[223] At the same time, the Canadian government was "attempting to carve out for Canada a special position in the hierarchy of international power."[224] The Canadians fought for, and received, international status as a middle power. This new position provided additional avenues for the Canadian government to raise its voice in attempts to temper any impetuous American policies towards the Soviet Union.

In attempting to ascertain how Canada viewed the Soviet Union and Communism in 1948 and how those perceptions affected foreign policy, several clear impressions emerge. Initially, Canadian perceptions of the Soviet Union were of a country that was attempting to create a *cordon sanitaire* around its borders. Canada's earlier images of the Soviet efforts towards this end were much more sympathetic than the United States. Canadian policy makers held on to a policy of a firm but fair approach with the Soviets while the Americans turned to the "tough" school approach. As it became obvious that the Soviet

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223 Norman Hillmer, "Introduction," in Norman Hillmer (editor), Partners Nevertheless: Canadian-American Relations in the Twentieth Century, p. 4.

224 Angelika Sauer, "The Respectable Course", p. 9.

Union would probably continue some form of aggressive expansion, Canada's attitude towards the Russians and their doctrines became more somber and pessimistic. Nevertheless, the External officials maintained a calm approach in determining Canadian policy towards the Soviet Union. They preferred to leave the Russians alone rather than taking aggressive steps to constrain them.

The policies that were determined by the various images which emerged from the Soviet Union, its Communist doctrines and the coup in Prague inevitably and obviously brought Canada into a much closer alliance with the United States. This does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Canadian government simply surrendered to the American vision. The people in the Department of External Affairs accepted that the world had been divided into two spheres and Canada belonged to the Western, anti-Soviet bloc. One of the more serious dangers of war lay not in Soviet aggression, but in American misperceptions about the shifting of the balance of power. Canadian policies and alliances were geared towards keeping a lid on the situation by restraining the Americans without pushing them back to a policy of isolation. On the surface, it may appear that the Canadian government simply stepped into the emerging Pax Americana without reservation or objection. A deeper investigation shows that the situation was much more complex.

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