

**U.S. Media and the Communist Collapse: 1968 and 1989**

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### **I. Comparative Analysis and Methodology**

When Czechoslovakia exploded in reform in 1968 and experienced the shock of the Warsaw Pact invasion, most observers interpreted the Prague Spring as an isolated series of events. Most saw continuity between the level of Soviet control prior to the year 1968 and the reimposition of controls after August 1968. The Czechoslovak reform movement was merely a blip on the horizon and was a nonrepeatable event, at least in that "normalized" country. However, by the late 1990s the Prague Spring looks entirely different. In fact, the events of 1968 appear to be in many ways hints of the more consequential developments of 1989. It is possible to find the seeds of 1989 embedded in the soil of 1968. Despite the interval of more than twenty years, the two sets of reform movements invite comparison.

There are marked similarities between the origins of the reform movement of 1968 and the reasons for the overthrow of communism in 1989. Principally, the persistence of an authoritarian political system that resisted all efforts at meaningful change was the provocative spark that created revolutionary feelings and needs. In both cases the old regime was both unchanging and unyielding. In both cases, many persons within the country recalled the memory of the democratic policy of the interwar years. To them the centralized regimes that occasionally used totalitarian methods were too sharp a contrast.

Specifically, in 1968 the Czechoslovak citizenry had endured twenty years under Soviet-style communism. It had taken a full three years after the end of World War II for the Czechoslovak Communist Party to achieve full power. Many observers within and outside the country saw this 1948 coup as a betrayal of the democratic aspirations and past of the relatively new country. Many understandably saw the establishment of the Gottwald regime as an imposition by Moscow. There was a clear imitation of patterns in the Soviet Union with respect to centralization of the economy, deemphasis on the organs of the official government, restrictions on the press, reliance on the communist party as the effective replacement for the state organs of power, and assertion of cultural controls. The purges in the early 1950s were especially shocking in a nation and for a people that prided itself on a long history of civility. Little changed with the advent to power of Antonin Novotny in 1953. While Poland and Hungary in their own individual ways made efforts to modify the excesses of their communist regimes in 1956, Czechoslovakia under Novotny remained the same (Taborsky, 1961). While Tito and Yugoslavia challenged Soviet leadership within the bloc all during the 1950s and 1960s, leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party remained close to Moscow. Even East Germany began a meaningful economic reform movement in 1962 that was not duplicated in nearby Czechoslovakia. Romanian leadership in the mid-1960s became quite maverick in foreign policy. The unyielding nature of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and its leaders was clearly ripe for a sharp internal challenge.

Similarly, in 1989 the Czechoslovak experience had been one of exactly twenty years of unchanging centralized rule by the Husak and Jakes regimes. "Normalization" after the invasion

by the Warsaw Treaty Organization powers had made Czechoslovakia into one of the most hard-line states in East Europe. In particular, there were few changes in top leadership positions in the entire twenty year period. The Presidium and Secretariat remained seemingly impervious to the process of personnel change. The leadership abandoned the experimental economic concepts connected with Prague Spring reformer Ota Sik. Challenges presented by Charter '77 in the 1970s met with stern resistance. However, there was some economic progress at least up until the early 1980s. Some contended that the regime had established a bargain with the population in which individuals sacrificed personal freedoms and rights but remained politically passive because of more optimistic economic prospects (Brown, 1988). Some Czechs were additionally unhappy because of their perception that Slovak First Secretary Husak had provided proportionately more political positions to Slovaks than would normally occur. As a consequence the Czechoslovak people were just as prepared for a significant change in 1989 as they had been in 1968.

At the same time, there are a number of important contrasts between the two widely separated reform movements. They include the relation of the reforms to other changes in the bloc, the outcomes and success of the reform movements, the role of the West in the changes, and the impact on Czech-Slovak relations.

In part the Prague Spring reforms were related to other signs of protest within East Europe. The plans for incorporation of a limited profit principle and price incentives were parallel to those adopted in East Germany at the beginning of the decade. Some of the political goals connected to democratization bore the marks of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters of 1956. However, in the main the Prague Spring of 1968 was an isolated occurrence within the bloc. East European leaders such as Walter Ulbricht in East Germany and Wladislav Gomulka in Poland were very suspicious of the changes and feared they might infect their own country. The outcome of the crisis would be an invasion by the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and this would be the only time during the Cold War that that regional organization took such an action against one of its own members. Tito of Yugoslavia was sympathetic to the reformers, and the Romanian leadership ended up not taking part in the Warsaw Pact invasion. However, neither of those countries stood up to the rest of the bloc in any meaningful way.

In contrast, the Czechoslovak reforms of 1989 were part of a region-wide phenomenon. In fact, they came in the middle of the East European revolutionary year. Poland was the site of the initial challenge to Soviet bloc leadership. Election results in the late summer placed a non-communist government in charge of the country. Soon thereafter Hungarian leadership opened the border to Austria with widespread repercussions for the Hungarian political situation as well as for fraternal relationships within the bloc. In early November the Berlin Wall opened up for the first time and major changes took place within East Germany. It was at the end of that month that the massive public demonstrations took place in Prague, and in early December the power transition took place. Change in the Balkans came very quickly for Romania and in a more evolutionary way for Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia (Roskin, 1997). There is no doubt but that the reform process spread like a prairie fire within the region. In that sense, the

Czechoslovak reforms received inspiration from the process of renewal taking place in surrounding countries. Probably, the mass demonstrations that were one of the unique features of the Czechoslovak revolution had a delayed ripple effect on change in the Balkans in the mid-1990s.

Obviously, a second contrast between the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia and the changes of 1989 lay in the outcome. In 1968 the Prague Spring came to a crashing halt with the invasion by Warsaw Pact forces in August. It is true that the Dubcek-era leaders remained in power for some months, but they soon yielded to the hard-liners who then commenced the normalization process. More important, the tanks effectively ended the reforms which had been unfolding during the previous seven months. Of course, in 1989 the reforms were much more permanent. The emergence of a non-communist transitional government at the end of the year was only the first step in a profound set of changes. Early in the next year, the new leaders established the democratic process in earnest. Totally free elections took place in the late spring, and the normal development of political parties and interest groups occurred.

The third major difference between the two reform periods centered on the role of the West. In 1968 the role of the West was mixed and unplanned. No doubt, the new foreign policy of Ostpolitik in West Germany had some impact on the Prague Spring reformers (Golan, 1973). Foreign Minister and later Chancellor Willy Brandt anchored West German foreign policy on new ties with some of the communist regimes to the east. East Germany was the initial target of this policy, and visits took place. Although the relationship with the Czechoslovak leadership never developed that fully, clearly the prospects tantalized the Prague Spring reformers. Prospects for increased trade and visits across Cold War barriers may have encouraged especially the economic reformers within Czechoslovakia to continue to press their campaign to begin rolling back central controls of the economy. On the other hand, the West was quite passive when the invasion by Warsaw Treaty Organization forces actually took place. President Johnson denounced the move, and other western leaders made similar statements. However, there was no coordinated policy to undo the reforms through active diplomacy in the United Nations or through sanctions of other kinds. With respect to American ability to respond, the timing of the invasion was fortunate from the Soviet standpoint. The Johnson Administration was preoccupied with the battle in and over Vietnam, and the presidential race to succeed Johnson was at white heat.

In contrast, in 1989 the West played a much more active role. President Reagan during the 1980s had tried to develop a proactive policy that would weaken the economy and will of the Soviet Union, and the Bush Administration gave encouragement to the reforming regimes in the second half of 1989. In fact, the situation of the superpowers was reversed in 1989. In that year the Soviet Union was at the end of a prolonged involvement in Afghanistan, while the new Bush Administration had fresh energy as well as a keen interest in the design of American foreign policy in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal. In welcoming the new post-communist governments, President Bush claimed some credit for the United States in the actual outcome.

A fourth contrast between the two sets of reforms lies in the impact of the process on

ethnic relations. One reform that actually survived the period of the Prague Spring was the new federal law that went into effect at the beginning of 1969. That law did establish some additional basic rights for the Slovaks who constituted roughly one-third of the population. For example, the Chamber of Nations within the Federal Assembly was restructured in such a way that Czechs and Slovaks played a co-equal role. Each could select 150 representatives to the body (Golan, 1973). In addition, there was to be an emphasis on placing more Slovaks in administrative positions within the federal bureaucracy. In fact, First Secretary Gustav Husak went further than that. He placed higher proportions of fellow Slovaks in the Presidium as well as in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. These changes were heartening for Slovaks but did not result in significantly more responsive policies. Such an improvement could only come about with more thorough transformation of the party apparatus itself.

The impact of the 1989 revolution was certainly much different on Czech-Slovak relations. This was particularly evident with the new burst of political activity in early 1990. Separate political party structures emerged in both regional areas. Civic Forum and its spin-offs became the primary political vehicle of Czech political aspirations. Public Against Violence served the same objective for the Slovaks. Slovaks obtained far more political rights than they had before in the Czechoslovak state. However, there were also ominous signs that led to the break-up in 1993. Czechs and Slovaks had not been successful in joining together in common political parties in the aftermath of the completed revolution. Further, they developed a complicated and unworkable formula for making key political decisions which included the selection of the President. Major decisions required a 3/5 vote of support within the national legislature as well as in the two legislatures anchored in the Czech/Moravian and Slovak regions. Such features led to the separation into two countries in 1993.

Having outlined the key similarities and contrasts between the changes of 1968 and the revolution of 1989, it is now necessary to present the methodology for analysis of U.S. media perceptions of those two movements. In this study the primary source material studied consisted of major newspapers. Such newspapers provide annual indexes which helped structure the process of study.

For the reforms of 1968, the newspapers and indexes readily available included the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Christian Science Monitor. All three of these are major east coast papers and of course present the outlook prevalent in New York City and Washington, D.C. For 1989 the available newspapers included the same three. Other national newspapers included the Washington Post and USA Today. It was also possible to examine major newspapers from each of the four major geographic regions of the nation. They include the Boston Globe, the Atlanta Journal/Constitution, the Chicago Tribune, and the Los Angeles Times. Such a blend of national and regional publications should make the study of 1989 encompassing.

A number of quantitative and qualitative findings can emerge from such a study. Quantitative measures will include the number of articles published in each newspaper overall,

the frequency of articles appearing in particular months of the year, number of articles presented on page one, and the proportions of page one articles appearing each month. For 1989 it is also possible to assess the importance placed on the events in Czechoslovakia by looking at the length of the articles. Comparison of the lengths of the articles among the various months of the crisis can also help determine how effective the newspaper was in following the early roots and beginnings of the changes. The qualitative analysis will focus exclusively on page one articles. What kinds of topics do the newspapers cover? What kind of priority do the publications place on certain topics? It will be important to discover how overall media coverage differed between the two years of reform and change. However, it will also be significant to study whether different regions of the country treated the events of 1989 in different ways. It will also be useful to assess similarities and differences in coverage among the newspapers with a more national scope. This final topic will have a broader set of five units of analysis in 1989 but only three for 1968.

## II. Outline of Political History

Before beginning the analysis of media coverage of the two crises, it is necessary to outline some of the key themes to which the media responded and which it covered. Instead of offering a chronology of each of the main steps in the process, the spotlight will linger over three roughly similar topics for each year. First, what kind of leadership changes took place during the year? Second, what was the actual process of the reforms? Third, in general terms what kind of outcome emerged from the reform year?

Leadership changes were central to the reforms connected with the Prague Spring. Early in the year Antonin Novotny, who had been First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, yielded to Alexander Dubcek. Novotny had been the leader since 1953 and had the reputation for being disinterested in any meaningful reform of the system. In January 1968, Dubcek looked to be a dependable communist leader who had the advantage of being a Slovak. Slovaks had been as disappointed with any progress in minority rights under the post-1948 communist regime as they had been during the interwar republic. As the reform movement developed in the spring of 1968, the currents of change gradually captured Dubcek. By the summer meetings with Soviet leadership, he was indeed in the unique situation within the bloc of being a reformist communist leader (Golan, 1971). After the events of August 1968, his political power was rapidly diminished. Another, more reliable Slovak leader emerged as First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. That, of course, was Gustav Husak.

Leadership patterns in the reform year 1989 were similar in one sense. The year opened with a hard-line leader in place. Milos Jakes had replaced Husak in 1987, and the pattern of stagnant leadership persisted. Jakes had played a key role in cleansing the party of reformists in the immediate aftermath of the Prague Spring. Hence, he enjoyed the trust of the Soviet leadership. He continued in that mode through 1989, but by that point Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was prodding him to consider some policies of relaxation. During the turmoil of the fall,

the real focus was on personnel changes in the office of Prime Minister as well as the cabinet. After the non-communist forces obtained full political power, Jakes and the leaders of the communist party apparatus moved quickly to the sidelines. However, the symbolic leadership change of greatest importance inside and outside Czechoslovakia pertained to the Presidency. In December former dissident, playwright, and Civic Forum organizer Vaclav Havel moved into the Presidency of Czechoslovakia (Wheaton and Kavan, 1992). In this sense, the year 1989 ended up quite differently in terms of leadership than had the year 1968.

The process of reform was very different in the two periods. During the earlier Prague Spring, most of the key changes took place in the spring of the year. Publication of the Action Program in April outlined many of the goals for change. Freedom of interest group activity and political party competition received discussion within the top circle of party leadership. In June Ludvik Vaculik and others expanded the public discussion to include the possibility of greater protection for freedom of speech. While the population was swept along with the anticipated change, mass demonstrations were not a key impulse for change. At the July Bratislava meeting between Czech and Soviet leaders, there was an outpouring of affection for the reformist Czech leaders, but there was no coherent support for a program of public policies. In the aftermath of the invasion by Warsaw Pact forces, there were expressions of protest. However, there was not outright resistance to the reality of occupation.

In the fall of 1989, a unique feature of the Czechoslovak reforms was the power of mass demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of persons gathered day after day in Wenceslaus Square. Their demands escalated from a call for a role for non-communists in the cabinet to the requirement that a non-communist government be established. In contrast to the process of 1968, the communist leadership was unyielding. Turbulent change took place, for the most part, outside of the Communist Party. Interest groups and incipient political parties such as Civic Forum played the critical role in developing an alternative political agenda. Civic Forum also helped organize the mass demonstrations and prepared alternative strategies for leadership change (Wightman, 1993).

The sharpest contrast between the two reform periods occurred in the general outcomes of the reform process. By the end of 1968 it was clear that the reform process was over. In the wake of Warsaw Pact tanks came the realization that the old patterns of central control were reemerging (Mlynar, 1980). Both Central Committee and Presidium contained many new faces. These collective leadership bodies, which had been purged of Prague Spring reformers, did not just rely on pre-1968 leaders. Husak, for instance, had been in jail for political reasons during much of the Novotny regime. However, the mindset of the new leadership was similar to that of the old. Jakes, as head of the Central Control and Auditing Commission, purged the party of those who were guilty of the excesses of the reform period. An extended period of normalization set in, and the goals of the new Czechoslovak leadership meshed imperceptibly with those of the Brezhnev Regime in the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the outcome apparent by the end of 1989 was profoundly different. Political

power in Czechoslovakia was in the hands of former political protesters. Communist Party leaders stood on the outside looking in. In a broader, regional sense, however, the outcomes had a thread of commonality. After the halting of the Prague Spring reforms at the end of 1968, patterns in Czechoslovakia fit again into the general trend within the region. Czechoslovakia was once again a solid member of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Similarly, at the end of 1989 Czechoslovakia was at one with general trends within the bloc. Nearly all of the East European communist regimes had thrown off their Cold War communist leaders and were planning the transition to democracy. Of course, this regional commonality in which Czechoslovakia shared was based on political principles which were the opposite of those that abided in the late 1960s.

### III. Quantitative Analysis

Table 1. Number of Articles Overall During the Prague Spring and Page One Priority by Newspaper, 1968.

	Number of Articles	Number and Percentage of Page One Articles
<b>Newspaper</b>		
<u>New York Times</u>	1224	215 (17.6%)
	approximate	
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	74	50 (67.6%)
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	305	61 (20.0%)

In Table 1 the overall number of articles for the New York Times is approximate because of the near impossibility of counting the number of indexed articles. The method for calculation entailed counting the number of articles in one column and then multiplying by the number of columns. The small print and number of pages of references made any other procedure unworkable.

It is apparent from the above table that the New York Times presented by far the highest number of articles on the Prague Spring and related topics. The Christian Science Monitor contained about one quarter of the number of articles in the Times, while the Wall Street Journal had far fewer. On the other hand the Journal placed nearly two-thirds of its articles on the front page. When its editors chose to present information about the reform movement, they gave it full

play in the publication. The other two newspapers devoted about the same proportion of front-page space to the series of events.

Table 2. Monthly Break-down of Articles by Newspaper (Number Beginning on Page One), 1968.

Newspaper	Month											
	J	F	M	AP	My	JN	JL	A	S	O	N	D
<u>New York Times</u>	1	0	10	2	19	3	31	58	45	20	19	7
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	0	0	0	1	1	0	11	17	11	6	2	1
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	0	1	3	0	1	1	14	18	14	5	2	2

All three newspapers reveal similar patterns when the examination focuses on the month of coverage. There was a moderate number of articles from March through May, the months when the leadership was enacting many of the key reforms. The number of articles became heavy in July at the point when serious Soviet warnings were being issued. A very high number of articles came out in August and September. This included the period of the actual invasion and all the related reactions and developments after that fact. October was comparable to July as the peak period of the crisis had passed. However, numerous interpretive articles appeared in an effort to provide a broader framework for readers. It is clear that the media in the United States found the drama of confrontation the most newsworthy story. They may have devoted less space early in the year in the belief that the reforms were not that meaningful and would not really go that far.

Table 3. Number of Articles Overall During the Revolution and Page One Priority by

Newspaper, 1989.

	Number of Articles	Number and Percentage of Page One Articles
<b>Newspaper</b>		
<u>New York Times</u>	186	36 (19.4%)
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	54	33 (61.1%)
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	41	8 (19.5%)
<u>USA Today</u>	21	3 (14.3%)
<u>Washington Post</u>	97	25 (25.8%)
<u>Boston Globe</u>	67	14 (20.9%)
<u>Chicago Tribune</u>	71	10 (14.1%)
<u>Atlanta Journal/Constitution</u>	41	12 (29.3%)
<u>Los Angeles Times</u>	92	34 (37.0%)

The three newspapers that were utilized in the 1968 portion of the study reveal similar patterns in the revolutionary year of 1989. The highest number of articles again came out in the New York Times. Again, the Wall Street Journal placed over 60 per cent of its articles on the front page. Although the Christian Science Monitor had fewer articles than either of the other two, the proportion of page one articles was comparable to that for the New York Times. Data for two other national newspapers were available for 1989, and they are widely different. USA Today had a small number of articles and a tiny proportion which began on page one. On the other hand, the number of articles in the Washington Post was higher than the number for any other national newspaper with the obvious exception of the New York Times. A full quarter of those articles began on the first page.

The data for the four regional newspapers presents a varied picture. In terms of number

of articles and proportion on the first page, the leader was the Los Angeles Times. Apparently, interest on the West Coast was high in these far-off European events. While the number of overall articles was low for the Atlanta Journal/Constitution, the proportion which began on the first page was relatively high. Figures for the Boston Globe were similar to those for the national (East Coast) publications. Finally, the Chicago Tribune contained a respectable number of articles but placed very few on the front page. It appears as if interest in these events was only moderate in the Midwest.

Table 4. Monthly Break-down of Articles by Newspaper (Number Beginning on Page One), 1989.

Newspaper	Month											
	J	F	M	AP	MY	JN	JL	A	S	O	N	D
<u>New York Times</u>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	19	15
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	5	2	3	0	2	0	0	3	3	5	5	5
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	5
<u>USA Today</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
<u>Washington Post</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	11	10
<u>Boston Globe</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	3
<u>Chicago Tribune</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
<u>Atlanta Journal/Constitution</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	3
<u>Los Angeles Times</u>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	17	14

It is also useful to examine the months in which coverage was the heaviest for the nine

newspapers. The five national newspapers all placed the heaviest emphasis on Czechoslovakia at the end of the year. This was true with respect to all the articles included as well as for page one articles alone. For the most part the mass demonstrations took place in late November and the major governmental changes in early December. Thus, it is logical that those two months entailed the heaviest coverage. Several of the national newspapers also provided some coverage in the early months of the year. For example, in the first three months of the year, the New York Times had one front-page article, while the Wall Street Journal had ten. Coverage in the regional papers was similar. Nearly all of the page one articles appeared in the last two months of the year. In the early months of the year, the only newspaper to include a page one story was the Los Angeles Times. These findings reinforce the conclusion that the media was caught by surprise by the momentous changes that occurred in East Europe in the second half of the year.

Table 5. Column Length of Articles by Newspaper (Number and Percentage)

### Column Length of Articles

	Short (6 inches)	Medium (6-18 inches)	Long (18+ inches)	Total
<b>Newspaper</b>				
<u>New York Times</u>	79 (42.5%)	56 (30.1%)		186 (100%)*
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	NA	NA	NA	54
<u>Chrisitan Science Monitor</u>	3 ( 7.3%)	14 (34.1%)	24 (58.5%)	41 (100%)
<u>USA Today</u>	4 (19.0%)	15 (71.4%)	2 ( 9.5%)	21 (100%)
<u>Washington Post</u>	0	35 (36.1%)	62 (63.9%)	97 (100%)
<u>Boston Globe</u>	2 ( 3.0%)	40 (59.7%)	25 (37.3%)	67 (100%)
<u>Chicago Tribune</u>	3 ( 4.2%)	41 (57.7%)	27 (38.0%)	71 (100%)
<u>Atlanta Journal/Constitution</u>	5 (12.2%)	22 (53.6%)	14 (34.1%)	41 (100%)
<u>Los Angeles Times</u>	2 (2.2%)	25 (27.2%)	65 (70.6%)	92 (100%)

\* For the New York Times there were 51 articles (27.4%) for which no column length was listed.

Some data on length of articles is available in the 1989 indexes. Such data was unavailable in the 1968 source material. With the exception of the Wall Street Journal, all of the newspaper indexes presented information on the length of columns devoted to each article. Table 5 includes that information, and the assumption is that longer articles would reflect a higher priority given to the topic by the newspaper. At the same time, it must be noted that some newspapers normally include a higher proportion of long think pieces than others do. For instance, the Washington Post in general includes more lengthy in-depth articles than does USA

## TODAY.

A number of newspapers clearly stand out in terms of providing a high proportion of lengthy, in-depth articles. The clear leader was the Los Angeles Times, which provided long articles in a little over 70% of the cases. The Washington Post and Chrisitan Science Monitor were only a little behind this pace, as both included lengthy articles in well over half of the cases. At the other end of the spectrum was USA Today which included long articles less than 10% of the time. When the focus switches to medium length articles, the newspapers which had relatively small percentages of lengthy articles partly compensated for that situation. For instance, USA Today included over 70% of its articles in this category. Similar patterns existed for the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune, and the Atlanta Journal/Constitution. No data of this sort exist for the Wall Street Journal. It is difficult to interpret the information on the New York Times. While it had the highest proportion of short articles, it is also true that the Times provided to its readers nearly twice as many articles overall as did the periodical in second place in terms of numbers of articles. Missing data on some articles make further analysis of the Times difficult. Generally, there are no resounding patterns in these data. Two of the three national newspapers for which complete data exist devoted a substantial amount of space to a high proportion of articles. Three of the four regional newspapers provided moderate coverage in a high proportion of cases. Thus, there is a slight tendency for national papers to include more in-depth articles and for regional newspapers to offer moderate-length articles that mainly provided the facts of the situation.

## IV. Qualitative Analysis

It is important to supplement the above findings with information about the kinds of topics covered in the two separate years. Content analysis of principal themes is the technique utilized at this point in the study. The focus here will only be on articles which begin on page one. The themes extracted for analysis are the same ones discussed in Parts I and II above. In Part II there was a discussion of three key themes for each year. In 1968 the main themes discussed were the role of leadership, the nature of the reforms themselves, and the Warsaw Pact invasion and its aftermath. For 1989 the themes were the role of leadership, mass demonstrations and protests, and the process of change towards democracy. Each of those three themes will serve as a magnifying glass through which to analyze the key stories for 1968 and for 1989. In addition, one theme from Part I on similarities and contrasts will receive attention. That fourth theme for each year will be reaction and pressure by the outside world.

Table 6. Coverage of Key Themes by Newspaper (Number and Percentage), 1968.

	Key Themes				Total
	Leadership	Reforms	Invasion	Reaction	
<b>Newspaper</b>					
<u>New York Times</u>	37(17.3%)	36(16.8%)	99(46.3%)	42(19.6%)	214(100%)
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	8(16.3%)	1( 2.0%)	32(65.3%)	8(16.3%)	49(99.9%)
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	10(16.4%)	14(23.0%)	36(59.0%)	1( 1.6%)	61(100%)

The New York Times provided the most balanced coverage with respect to all four themes. Each of the four themes received a respectable amount of coverage. In contrast, the Wall Street Journal gave nearly no coverage to the reforms themselves but devoted nearly two-thirds of its coverage to the invasion. The Christian Science Monitor paid very little attention to the outside reaction to the Prague Spring but gave nearly three-fifths of its space to the invasion. When focusing on the themes themselves, it is clear that the invasion was the topic of most interest to all editorial staffs. This was a spectacular event that conjured up all of the images and stereotypes of the Cold War. At the same time, it is not surprising that coverage of the invasion overwhelmed commentary on the leadership issue and the reaction by the outside world. However, it is surprising that the reforms themselves received such a small amount of coverage early in the year. The Christian Science Monitor led the way in this regard by devoting nearly one quarter of its page one stories throughout the year to the changes that were being enacted by the Prague Spring reformers. Perhaps the press did not expect the reforms to develop to the extent that they did or to be so consequential as to provoke the Warsaw Pact invasion.

Table 7. Coverage of Key Themes by Newspaper (Number and Percentage), 1989.

	Key Themes				Total
	Leadership	Protests	Change	Reaction	
<b>Newspaper</b>					
<u>New York Times</u>	15(41.7%)	13(36.1%)	7(19.4%)	1( 2.8%)	36(100%)
<u>Wall Street Journal</u>	1( 3.0%)	17(51.5%)	3( 9.1%)	12(36.4%)	33(100%)
<u>Christian Science Monitor</u>	1(12.5%)	3(37.5%)	4(50.0%)	0	8(100%)
<u>USAToday</u>	0	1(33.3%)	2(66.7%)	0	3(100%)
<u>Washington Post</u>	6(24.0%)	5(20.0%)	7(28.0%)	7(28.0%)	25(100%)
<u>Boston Globe</u>	5(35.7%)	4(28.6%)	3(21.4%)	2(14.3%)	14(100%)
<u>Chicago Tribune</u>	2(20.0%)	0	4(40.0%)	4(40.0%)	10(100%)
<u>Atlanta Journal/Constitution</u>	3(25.0%)	4(33.3%)	2(16.7%)	3(25.0%)	12(100%)
<u>Los Angeles Times</u>	6(18.2%)	5(15.2%)	12(36.4%)	10(30.3%)	33(100.1%)

Discussion of the findings revealed in Table 7 will center on a comparison of the five national newspapers with the four regional papers. The most balanced coverage of all four themes took place on the pages of the Washington Post. The Wall Street Journal did not provide much coverage of the leadership issue or the process of democratic change, while the New York Times did not provide much central coverage of the outside reaction to the changes. The number of page one stories for the Christian Science Monitor and for USA Today was so small that patterns are not meaningful. With respect to the themes themselves, the New York Times provided the highest proportion of coverage to the leadership theme, while the Wall Street Journal emphasized in numerous stories the mass protests that took place in the fall.

Among the regional papers, the striking finding again is the high relatively high number of page one articles offered by the Los Angeles Times. That newspaper provide relatively balanced coverage of each of the four topics, with the process of democratic change being the favorite. Balanced coverage of themes took place also in the Boston Globe and the Atlanta Journal/Constitution. However, the former put the heavier emphasis on leadership themes, while the latter gave the stronger emphasis to the mass demonstrations and protests. The Chicago Tribune provided no front page coverage of the protests, but they did offer the highest proportion of articles on the outside reaction to the changes. In this situation in 1989, it is clear that there was really no pattern to the coverage among the regional papers. In fact, each of the four regional newspapers chose to give its greatest page one emphasis to a different theme.

This content analysis of themes reveals principally that the coverage of the 1989 revolution did not fit any standard, cookbook formula for the nine newspapers studied. There was no sharp distinction between the coverage provided by the national media and the regional newspapers. Most important, each media source took its own independent approach towards selection of themes that deserved page one emphasis.

## V. Conclusion

There are a number of general conclusions that emerge from this comparative study of U.S. media perceptions of two tumultuous years in the history of the Czechoslovak state. In 1968 it is clear that the media was most impressed by the prospect of a Soviet invasion. When the invasion actually came, the number of articles and the priority put on the story were almost overwhelming. The tone evident in the articles was very much part of the Cold War mindset and the set of expectations that existed in the late 1960s. At the same time, the media analyzed in this study did not put much of an emphasis on the types of reforms being enacted. Those changes were actually very significant as descendants of the reforms of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters of 1956 and as pointers toward the reform proposals of 1989. Given the long period of authoritarian and even totalitarian patterns within the communist bloc, it is a surprise that the media did not spotlight those changes as a significant story.

Several impressions shine through the media coverage of the actual anti-communist revolution of 1989. The priority which newspapers placed on the Czechoslovak chapter of that revolutionary year varied from paper to paper. The New York Times paid much attention to the changes, while USA Today provided little coverage. Heavy coverage was not confined to the East Coast-based national newspapers. For instance, the Los Angeles Times provided relatively heavy coverage. At the same time, the Chicago Tribune devoted less space to the story. Thus, there was varied coverage among the regional newspapers as well as among the national newspapers. Also, there was no central theme that elicited the most media interest. Some were more interested in the mass protests, while others gave fairly detailed analysis and consistent coverage to the movement towards democracy. As the Cold War ended, there was no central picture like the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968 that helped the media organize

perceptions. This reality freed the media to treat the changes of 1989 in very individual ways.

This study has placed the emphasis on coverage of the two revolutionary years by major newspapers. As such it is only a partial study of media perceptions. Expansion of the study could include a focus on the role of television as well. In the late 1960s television coverage would have included the evening news shows of the three major national networks with occasional late evening documentaries. In contrast, the coverage would have been much broader and more varied in 1989. The number of channels would be much higher, and the emergence of all-news stations would have provided more continuous coverage. A focus on radio would also provide further conclusions. In particular, the tone and topics included in NPR would be fruitful to analyze. It is probable that the individualistic styles discovered in newspaper coverage of the 1989 events would be the finding in other media as well.

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