**European Flashpoint 4: Czechoslovakia (Prague Spring) 1968**

**Key Points in Background that You Need to Know:**
1. In the USSR, the more moderate Khrushchev was replaced by the more hardline Brezhnev in 1964. This removed hope for change for many in Eastern Europe.
2. Brezhnev was determined to make his mark. He was NOT HAPPY about Dubcek’s reforms, despite Dubcek’s reassurance about his commitment to the Warsaw Pact. Brezhnev feared other East European countries would follow Czechoslovakia example and that this would lead to a collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. His fears were shared by hard-line communist leaders in neighboring East European countries.
3. In response, he ordered 400,000 Warsaw Pact soldiers into Czechoslovakia. He tried to claim that this action was carried out on the request of other Warsaw Pact countries and at the request of Czech communists (in reality only 4 Czech communists had requested action).
4. Dubcek, possibly remembering the massacre of 30,000 in Hungary in 1956, feared a bloodbath in Prague – a beautiful and populous city. As such he requested the people of Czechoslovakia to rise up in passive resistance, in protest against his removal.
5. Brezhnev was ordered to Moscow to speak with Brezhnev. When he returned, he told the Czech people that the Prague Spring was over. He was soon replaced by another more hard-line leader: Husak.
6. Unfortunately for the Czechoslovakians, the USSR did not share their views.

**Background Causes of Prague Spring:**

1. Brezhnev doctrine: "It is the duty of Communist countries to act together to prevent another Communist country becoming Capitalist"  
2. Lack of Western intervention: It was also important to note that the U.S. West DID NOT ACT over Czechoslovakia. The U.S. was too much involved in its own serious problems with Vietnam and civil rights protests. They also did not want to risk a nuclear confrontation over an Eastern European country.
3. Continued oppression: Due to the passive resistance less than 100 people died in the Prague Spring. Dubcek survived but was sidelined. However, there were other implications for the many who were involved. Many struggled to get adequate housing or were restricted in their jobs. The secret police spied on many. Millions of people, especially the young, were deeply frustrated. Some such as Jan Palach took the ultimate form of protest and set himself on fire in Wenceslas Square.
4. Results: The Prague Spring was over. The Soviet action was carried out on the request of other Warsaw Pact countries and at the request of Czech communists. The Prague Spring did not see a collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The Brezhnev doctrine remained.

**Events of Prague Spring 1968:**

**Prague Spring**
1. In Jan 1968 NOVOTNY was replaced by Dubcek, the more moderate and reforming Czech Communist leader.
2. Dubcek was of course a COMMUNIST and it is important to realise that he believed in communism BUT he believed in a different type of Communism. He wanted to allow much more FREEDOM. He believed communism was unpopular in Czechoslovakia because it was much too restrictive. He called his ideas for reform: ‘SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE’

**Response**

1. Freedom of speech & Press (newspapers)
2. Less centralised economic control
3. Increased trade with foreign countries
4. More freedom to travel abroad
5. Reducing the powers of the secret police

**How did the Czechoslovak people react?**
The Czechoslovakian people were very happy with the proposed reforms. This time became known as the PRAGUE SPRING as a new spirit of openness and freedom was briefly encouraged...