

History Homework

How similar were the uprisings in 1956 and 1968?

	Hungary, 1956	Czechoslovakia, 1968	How similar? Give reasons
Aims of rebels	<p>After Stalin's death, people in Eastern Europe sensed an opportunity to achieve political reforms. In Hungary those were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic and Democratic Reforms • Free speech • Disbanding of the much hated secret police • Return of Nagy as Hungarian leader • All Soviet Troops to leave Hungary • Former hard-line Communist Hungarian leader Mátyás Rákosi to be removed from office. He was seen as corrupt and the one who "imposed restrictions with his Communist style". Ernő Gerő, who was put in charge by the USSR to replace Rákosi, wasn't accepted by the Hungarians either. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Czechoslovakian leader Dubček wanted to impose „Socialism with a human face“, meaning less censorship for the press, more freedom of speech for the people, right to travel, and a reduction in the activities of the secret police • More radical opposition criticized the government for being "useless“, and even demanded a second political party, the Social Democrat Party. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both rebel groups wanted reforms to create more freedom under the communist rule. They wanted economic and democratic reforms so that the people could be "more happy“, and wanted to be more independent from the Soviet Union. • However one major difference between the two uprisings is that Dubček had learned from the Hungarian revolution, and made it clear not to pull out of the Warsaw Pact.
Attitude towards communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagy was "a true communist“, but believed in new reforms to make it more free • Protestors were more radical, in an address of the crowd on Oct 23rd 1956 Nagy wasn't able to calm the demands as he asked them to leave the Hungarians to leave the reforms up to him <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The Hungarian revolutionaries were more hostile to communism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubček was a "committed Communist“, but wanted Communism to be more free for the people. The previously mentioned point of "Socialism with a human face“ was essential. Communism was a good concept in his opinion, but it could be made better for the people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagy and Dubček believed in Communism, and wanted to remain partners of the Soviet Union, but wanted to make it more human (e.g. freedom of speech“. In both cases most protestors were more radical, especially in Hungary. Here it was even demanded to abandon communist control
Attitude towards democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagy's government wanted to impose reforms such as free elections, and the creation of impartial courts. These were characteristics of the democratic west, that the Communist USSR wouldn't allow under Khrushchev. The Hungarian rebels were very attracted towards more democracy, and hoped the west would intervene if the USSR responded militarily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubček wanted to make the communist rule in his country to be more democratic, people should be able to express their opinion freely. However he was not looking for complete democracy. The idea of having a Social Democratic Party in Czechoslovakia was already regarded as radical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly to the previous point, the two uprisings shared the goal of reaching more democracy, however the Hungarian demands were more radical. Ben Walsh states that "there was even talk of allowing another political party [in Czechoslovakia]“, whilst the Hungarians were demanding complete free elections.

Attitude towards the USSR	The Hungarian revolutionaries were very unhappy about the Soviet rule, and wanted to abandon many of their policies (secret police, one party state, etc.). As Nagy demanded, they wanted to be a neutral state like Austria. Yet Khrushchev did not allow this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubček did not want to cut ties with the USSR, he wanted to remain in the Warsaw Pact, all he was looking for were reforms to make Socialism more human. On the other hand it is important to note that he did not easily give in to Soviet orders. 	In this point the two sides are very different. The Hungarians wanted to remain completely neutral, and leave the Warsaw Pact. Dubček had learned from the outcome of this motion, and promised to keep up the ties with the Soviet Union.
Attitude towards the West	“There was a widespread optimism that the new American President Eisenhower, [...] would support the new independent Hungary“ (page 402). Yet US President Eisenhower was more alert to another conflict the British and the French had started the Middle East, the Suez Crisis. Hence couldn't commit to aiding the Hungarian revolution, and let Khrushchev know that "as far as Eisenhower was concerned, Hungary belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence“.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West did not play a major role in the Prague Spring. Still it is safe to say that Dubček was not looking to completely change sides and search aid from the West, but wanted to remain a part of the Eastern Bloc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once again, the two uprisings diverge in this point as well. Whilst the Hungarians were hoping for Western aid for their revolution, the West played no major role in the 1968 revolution. As previously explained, the Hungarians wanted to become neutral, what would imply that they would be closer to the West than Czechoslovakia, that wanted to remain in the Warsaw Pact.
Why the USSR intervened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At first, Khrushchev did what the protestors demanded, and removed Rákosi and Gerö from office • Yet, with Nagy as Hungarian leader, the demands were running out of control. The USSR felt that abandoning one party rule would go too far, and Nagy's plan to leave the Warsaw Pact lead to the USSR's intervention by force, as this would create a direct border between the West and the USSR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many leaders of Communist nations such as Honecker in East Germany were nervous about the changes in Czechoslovakia, and feared that the ideas from the Prague Spring would spread into their own nations, and lead to revolutions. They put pressure on the Kremlin to halt the movement in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore Czechoslovakia was centrally placed, and with its industry an important partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USSR intervened in both cases due to planned reforms that it could not tolerate. In Hungary those reforms were more radical than in Czechoslovakia, what triggered the USSR to a greater extent. This point is supported by the fact that it required the pressure from Ulbricht and Gomulka to launch a military charge into Prague.

How the USSR intervened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At first USSR accepted some reforms, and removed its troops from Hungary, and negotiated with Nagy. After Nagy gambled to leave the Warsaw Pact, and become a Cold War neutral state like Austria, the USSR ordered troops and tanks into Budapest to “save the people from banditry and terrorism“ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Soviet Union placed tanks close to the Czechoslovak border, and put diplomatic pressure on Dubček and his government (e.g. economic sanctions). Dubček agreed to introduce measures to restore order, have changes in personell, and gain more control over the mass media, but insisted on most of his reforms at a conference in August 1968. The USSR was not convinced enough, and hence sent paratroops to control the Prague airport, and to arrest government officials. Soon tanks also went into the capital itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In both cases the USSR was acceptant of the new reforms at first. Yet it switched from the negotiating table to military action very quickly, once the demands became too radical. However it is safe to say that the Soviet troops were brutal in Hungary compared to Prague, as the resistance of the protestors were on entirely different levels.
Response of the rebels	<p>The Hungarian rebels resisted the Soviet troops with force in Budapest, leading to „pitched battles in the streets“ .</p> <p>The Hungarians were always hoping for help from the West. Yet this military aid never came, so the Hungarians fought until the “last bullet, the last drop of blood“.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The people in Prague went up to the tanks, and simply discussed with the troops, asking “what is happening“, in a peaceful manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The response of the rebels were very different in the two cases. The Hungarians were ready to fight until the last drop of blood, with the hope of military aid from the West. Many Hungarian soldiers switched over to the rebel groups, and supplied them with army weapons. In Czechoslovakia the situation was entirely different, the Czechoslovaks were a lot more peaceful, and had diplomatic talks with the Soviet soldiers on the streets of Prague.
Casualties	<p>According to latest research ~3,000 Hungarians and ~7,000 Soviet soldiers were killed</p>	<p>According to a secret Interior Ministry report, “82 people had been killed, 300 seriously injured and 500 otherwise injured by the five invading Warsaw Pact armies.“ [6]</p>	<p>The previous point is supported by the major difference in casualties. The number of Hungarian deaths is 36 times greater than the Czechoslovak rate. This is because the two parties in Budapest literally were at war with each other, and shot to beat the other. In Prague the Warsaw Pact armies had a weapon-monopoly, in simple words. Therefore the rate of casualties on the Soviet side is at zero.</p>

<p>Eventual Outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagy was arrested, sent to Romania, executed 1958 for “mending counter revolution“ • USSR restored order, János Kádár put in place as Hungarian leader. He imposed some reforms the rebels demanded, but was clear to remain in the Warsaw Pact • 20,000 Hungarians arrested • 200,000 Hungarians fled the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubček was removed from power, sent to Turkey as an ambassador, and later expelled from the Communist party altogether • The Brezhnev doctrine was introduced, with two main points for each Communist state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A one party system • To remain a member of the Warsaw Pact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both cases the leader during the uprising was removed from office, and replaced by a leader that was more loyal to the USSR. Nagy was executed, Dubček on the other hand ‘only’ downgraded. In the period of chaos before the Soviets restored ordered controlled the borders, 200,000 Hungarians were able to flee into the West. This wasn't the case in Czechoslovakia, where main consequences were with regard to the personell in the communist party, and political reforms in accordance to Soviet policies.
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Sources

Modern World History - Ben Walsh pages 402-406

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsTWqvumQCo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqImvCnO15w>

[CNN - Cold War 7/24 After Stalin 1953-1956](#)

[CNN - Cold War 14/24 Red Spring 1960s](#)

[6] <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1990/07/24/Death-toll-in-Prague-Spring-invasion-revealed/3068648792000/>