



ALEXANDER DUBCEK

Prompted invasion

CIA Role In Czech Uprising

By Thomas B. Ross

WASHINGTON — (CST) —

The Central Intelligence Agency has secretly claimed a large share of credit for the rise of the liberal and ill-fated Dubcek regime in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The specific claim is that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, two CIA broadcasting stations in West Germany, were instrumental in provoking the ouster of Antonin Novotny, a pro-Soviet Stalinist, as head of the Czech Communist Party.

Alexander Dubcek replaced Novotny in January, 1968, and established a major program of liberation that led to the Soviet invasion the following August.

In justifying the invasion, Moscow alleged that members of the Dubcek regime were plotting with western agents to upset the Communist system in Czechoslovakia.

But Senate sources, who have investigated the activities of RFE and RL, discounted any parallel to the Hungarian uprising in 1956, when RFE was accused of encouraging the insurgents to expect the United States to intervene militarily against the Russians.

A close check of subsequent transmissions, one source said, showed that the two stations have scrupulously avoided any statements implying that the United States might come to the aid of liberal, anti-Soviet regimes in eastern Europe.

The fate of RFE and RL is in the hands of a Senate-House conference committee debating how to shift their operations from the CIA to a *bove-board* government control. Emergency financing for the stations has ended but enough CIA funds are thought to be on hand to keep them going until Congress makes up its mind.

The CIA's role in the events in Czechoslovakia came to light in a confidential report by the Council on Foreign Relations.

The report contains a digest of a discussion between several former high-ranking CIA officials and others in New York Jan. 8, 1968, three days after Dubcek replaced Novotny.

Among those taking part were the late Allen Dulles, first director of the CIA, and Richard Bissell, former deputy director for plans (clandestine operations).

RFE and RL are widely listened to throughout eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, where they are considered much more reliable than the party-controlled press and radio.

Early this year, Sen. Clifford Case (R-N.J.) officially disclosed the badly-kept secret that the CIA controlled and financed the two stations. He argued that their credibility would be enhanced by openly admitting what virtually all informed persons in Europe already know.

The Senate-House conference is weighing Case's bill to turn over RFE and RL to the State Department under a \$35 million-a-year appropriation, and a bill by Rep. Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.) to set up a two-year commission to study where to put the stations.