

# PRESS RELEASE



# COMMUNIQUÉ

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

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## SOVIET-CZECHOSLOVAK AGREEMENT

The following statement was made by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs August 27, 1968:

The communique released today by the Soviet news agency Tass, purporting to be an agreement between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders, is couched in very ambiguous and contradictory terms, although it implicitly acknowledges Czechoslovak sovereignty and the uninterrupted authority and legitimacy of the Czechoslovak leadership. Its full meaning and significance will depend on how it is interpreted and implemented. Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia continues to be a harsh political reality and the agreement must be seen in that context.

I would like to repeat what I have said previously: Czechoslovakia's internal affairs should be the concern of that country alone. The ultimate value of the agreement reached in Moscow will depend on whether this principle is, in fact, honoured.

Although the details of whatever understandings may lie behind this agreement are, of course, not known, it obviously changes the situation in regard to the resolution which the Canadian Delegation introduced in the Security Council on behalf of eight delegations on August 24.

The main point of this resolution was the release and safety of the Czechoslovak leaders. Inasmuch as these leaders have been in a position to negotiate with the Soviet Union and have now returned to Czechoslovakia to resume their functions under the Czechoslovak Constitution, the immediate objective of the draft resolution would appear to have been achieved. Furthermore, the debate in the Security Council has helped to focus world attention on the fact that the armed intervention of the USSR and certain of its Warsaw Pact allies was in contravention of two vital principles of the Charter: First, the principle of the sovereign equality of all members of the Organization; and second, the obligation that members must refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Meanwhile, it is the understanding of the Canadian Government that the Council remains seized of the issue as announced yesterday in New York on behalf of the President of the Council.

In conclusion, I should like to express on behalf of the people of Canada our profound admiration for the courage and steadfastness of the people of Czechoslovakia.