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### Language

There were several major national movements against Soviet-style Communist Party rule in Eastern Europe. The death of Stalin in March 1953 precipitated an unarmed uprising in the GDR led by the trade unions, whilst the growing resistance to Stalinism in both Poland and Hungary was given new impetus by Khrushchev's February 1956 'Secret Speech' to the 20th CPSU Congress denouncing Stalin's crimes. In Poland a groundswell of opposition among workers and intellectuals meshed with significant unrest at higher levels of the Communist Party to achieve a peaceful transfer of power in October to Gomulka (a former leader who had been a victim of Stalinist repression) and to avert the threatened Soviet military action. This movement included some riots and the burning down of Communist Party headquarters in Poznan in June 1956, but was essentially a significant example of civil resistance. In Hungary there was a student-led uprising in October 1956, and the promotion of another anti-Stalinist Communist leader, Imre Nagy. But the movement began to resurrect previous political parties and demand withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. When Soviet tanks (briefly withdrawn) rolled back into Budapest, the Hungarians took up arms. Imre Nagy was executed in 1958 – his reburial in 1989 attracted a mass demonstration.

The next significant national movement for major political reforms – 'socialism with a human face' – developed in 1967 and 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The Prague Spring was formally inaugurated by the new Communist Party leader Aleksander Dubcek, but was propelled from below by students, intellectuals and journalists – workers joined in rather belatedly. The Soviet Union under Brezhnev feared the movement was out of control, and the Warsaw Pact invaded in August 1968, when the Czechs and Slovaks improvised impressive unarmed resistance that lasted for months (see A.4.b.)

Here we list four recent titles, that give weight to the movements from below, and were able to draw on archives opened after 1989:

- Machcewicz; Latynski, [Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956](#) [1] (C. I.1.c. Poland 1953-56 [2]) .
- Ostermann, [Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, the German Question and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain](#) [3] (C. I.1.a. East Germany (GDR) 1953 [4]) . (A documentary history in sections, including: i. origins of crisis April 1952-mid-June 1953; ii. the uprising; with introductions to each section and general well referenced introduction.)
- Sebestyen, [Twelve Days: The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution](#) [5] (C. I.1.b. Hungary 1953-56 [6]) .
- Williams, [The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968-1970](#) [7] (C. I.1.d. Czechoslovakia 1968-69 [8]) .

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### Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/rebellious-satellite-poland-1956> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/section/c-popular-resistance-communist-regimes/c-i-soviet-bloc/c-i1-soviet-bloc-1950s-1970s-major-2> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2003/uprising-east-germany-1953-cold-war-german-question-and-first-major-upheaval-behind> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/section/c-popular-resistance-communist-regimes/c-i-soviet-bloc/c-i1-soviet-bloc-1950s-1970s-major-0> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2006/twelve-days-story-1956-hungarian-revolution> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/section/c-popular-resistance-communist-regimes/c-i-soviet-bloc/c-i1-soviet-bloc-1950s-1970s-major-3> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/1997/prague-spring-and-its-aftermath->

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[czechoslovak-politics-1968-1970 \[8\] https://civilresistance.info/section/c-popular-resistance-communist-regimes/c-i-soviet-bloc/c-i1-soviet-bloc-1950s-1970s-major-1](https://civilresistance.info/section/c-popular-resistance-communist-regimes/c-i-soviet-bloc/c-i1-soviet-bloc-1950s-1970s-major-1)