

## Prague Spring<sup>1</sup> Ends in Odessa

Naive American language learners  
we land in Odessa after rainy Leningrad  
to holiday on the Black Sea

Sunrise aerobics on the beach  
comrades stretch toward coming light  
smooth waves glint among rocks

As we return along grand boulevard  
a crowd spills outside our hotel –  
we shiver despite bright warmth

Engineering students from Prague  
hold American radios to their ears –  
our festive mood vanishes

Radio Moscow intones  
“We’ll end democracy’s oppression.  
Czechs invite our tanks.”

That night both groups board airport train  
Radio Prague squawks  
new hiding place each hour

Tank locations named in turn  
Czech youth exclaim “My street” “My street”  
In anguish they talk of home

Parents followed rules  
eyes kept forward  
left secret-telling to the old

Aspirations were preserved  
sovereign republic recalled  
possibilities sparked

In these voices we hear Grandma  
enshrining time before time  
when all could walk free

<sup>1</sup>Prague Spring - 1968 Democracy Movement in Czechoslovakia