

Czechoslovakia: Party leader Alexander Dubcek's remarks before the central committee yesterday were the strongest affirmation yet of Czechoslovak sovereignty.

In effect he said that the Czechoslovak Communist Party alone will make decisions affecting the country's course and will resist attempts by other countries to interfere.

Dubcek asserted that Prague "does not overlook related affairs" in the international Communist movement but that "responsibility for our internal developments... rests primarily with... this Communist Party." Dubcek's comments undoubtedly were meant in part to reject flagrant attempts by the East Germans to intervene in Czechoslovak politics as well as criticism by various other Soviet bloc parties.

Prague has begun to seek economic assistance from the West. On 19 March, a representative of a group claiming to be anxious to encourage foreign investment in Czechoslovakia visited a privately owned US firm in Geneva to solicit an invitation for talks. A Czech correspondent in Moscow has stated that the Czechoslovak purpose in attending the Dresden meeting was to seek economic assistance, presumably expecting a refusal, as a preliminary to making an overture to the West.

The liberal's grip on the Czechoslovak party, meanwhile, was further strengthened on 28 March with the election to high party posts of Josef Smrkovsky and Cestmir Cisar and the resignation from the presidium and secretariat of Antonin Novotny.

The central committee also nominated General Ludvik Svoboda to be president. Svoboda's election by the National Assembly on 30 March appears assured because Smrkovsky and Cisar, also nominees, declared in his favor. Svoboda's selection is a gesture to the

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Soviet Union because he is a well-known advocate of a strong alliance with Moscow. He will probably, however, be little more than a figurehead.

Adoption of the party's "action program" apparently has been postponed until the central committee reconvenes on 1 April.

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