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NEW CZECHOSLOVAK REGIME TALKS OF FUTURE PLANS

In the wake of the forced resignation of President Novotny on 22 March--which was engineered without precipitating a crisis--the Czechoslovak leadership has turned to mapping future policies.

The presidium of the Czechoslovak party met on 25 March to prepare for a central committee session on 28 March. The presidium approved party boss Dubcek's "action program," and changes in the party leadership, responded favorably to demands for postponement of local elections until the electoral law can be revised to move toward a federal system of government, and endorsed the rehabilitation of a large number of individuals subjected to past political penalties.

Dubcek's "action program" specifies that the government, rather than the party, is "the supreme organ of state power." A new constitution is to be completed by 1970. The National Assembly will meet on 30 March to select a new president, and to begin consideration of the changes recommended by the party central committee.

The "action program" will open the way in the party and parliament for other demands. Many of them, by Communist standards, are far-reaching, such as freedom of travel in and out of Czechoslovakia, strict legal control over the police, and genuinely free and secret elections. All these matters will be topics of debate in the coming weeks.

The specifics of the action program in the economic sphere have

not been spelled out, but a drastic reshuffle of the state economic apparatus is in prospect. Some major government offices are to be abolished and others created, such as a special ministry for residential housing construction, which is sure to be popular.

The new regime has inherited limited foreign exchange reserves. One of its first tasks will be to get outside economic assistance. Steps toward getting aid from Western governments have already begun, but Czechoslovakia for some time will continue to depend essentially on its close ties with the East and the Soviet Union.

The central committee at its meeting on 28 March approved a number of changes in the leadership including the resignation of Novotny from the party presidium and central committee, the elevation to the party presidium of Josef Smrkovsky, a liberal reformist, and promotion to the party secretariat of culture chief Cisar. It now appears that consideration of the action program has been postponed until 1 April, when the central committee session resumes.

The party leadership has nominated 73-year-old Army General Svoboda to fill out the remaining 18 months of Novotny's presidential term. Svoboda is something of a national hero, but poorly equipped to be president, and will be mostly a figurehead. His selection is probably in part a gesture to the Russians to whom he is well-known as an advocate of a strong alliance with Moscow. ~~(CONFIDENTIAL)~~

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