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Czechoslovakia: The party presidium has apparently bowed to the liberals on the hottest domestic political issue in Czechoslovakia, the convening of a special party congress.

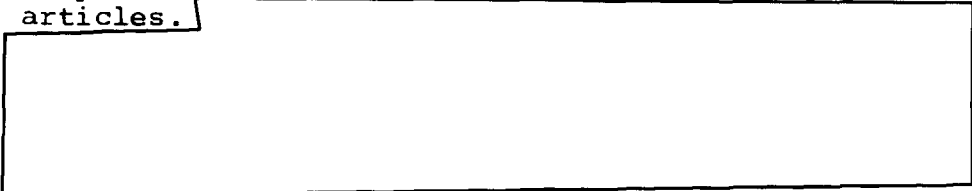
Liberal members of the party for some time have been pressing for an extraordinary congress at which they would try to oust conservatives and Novotny supporters from the central committee. Party leader Dubcek had equivocated on the issue until 26 April, when he said he would recommend to the central committee plenum meeting this month that the congress be held as soon as possible.

Secretariat member Stefan Sadowsky informed a regional party organization last weekend that the presidium is concentrating on convening a party congress. Jiri Hochman, a prominent staff member of the main party daily Rude Pravo, has stated privately that it is virtually certain the extraordinary congress will be held in July. The presidium is scheduling a series of "consultative meetings" of party functionaries from all over the country partly to prepare for a congress.

The factional struggle between liberals and moderates was also reflected in Hochman's report that on 3 May staff members of Rude Pravo demanded at a meeting with Dubcek that the paper's conservative chief editor, new presidium member Oldrich Svestka, be removed.

Svestka is apparently under attack because his views differ from those of the liberals on the staff. In March, the party expressed full confidence in him, but Hochman stated that a "vigilante group" on the paper now stands guard every night to prevent Svestka's making changes in the paper's articles.

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