

USSR AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA AT STAND-OFF

Soviet Premier Kosygin quietly departed from Prague this week without fanfare or final public statement, which suggests that his talks with Czechoslovak leaders were to some degree inconclusive.

The Soviets did succeed in reaching at least some understanding with Prague concerning the Warsaw Pact. The Czechoslovaks accepted Marshal Grechko's urgings to participate in a Warsaw Pact exercise in June.

Recent public pronouncements by the Czechoslovak party leadership have been phrased in more conciliatory language and both sides seem to be toning down polemical press exchanges. Another sign that tensions have eased somewhat is that the rotation of Soviet troops between East Germany and the USSR apparently is proceeding normally.

A Czechoslovak journalist claimed that the Soviets brought up the question of stationing some of their troops in Czechoslovakia, but they apparently did not press the issue when the Czechoslovaks demurred.

Moscow now seems to be awaiting the results of the important meeting of the Czechoslovak Central Committee Plenum which began on 29 May before deciding on a loan to Prague or withdrawing its troops from Czechoslovakia's borders.

The various party factions in Czechoslovakia continued this

week to prepare for the plenum, with indications that the intra-party struggle might be heading toward a climax. Party liberals continued publicly to call on conservative central committee members to resign. The liberals also continued to press for the early convening of an extraordinary party congress.

The conservatives, who doubtless will maneuver actively at the plenum to counter the liberals' demands, were less outspoken publicly than in recent days but probably were involved in the spreading of more leaflets in Prague which appealed to workers to oppose attempts to remove "experienced personnel."

Two days before the plenum began, party leader Dubcek again appealed for party and national unity. Writing in the party's main daily, Rude Pravo, Dubcek suggested that the party should "resolutely dissociate" itself from those who had hampered progress in the past but implicitly cautioned against witch hunts. Dubcek stated that the party will implement its action program, but also appealed for "understanding" that not all problems will be solved immediately.

Clearly reflecting Kosygin's presence in Czechoslovakia, Foreign Minister Hajek on 26 May advised against any "illusions and mistaken hopes" that Prague will make basic changes in its foreign policy, but he and other foreign ministry officials have also suggested that Prague is indeed contemplating drawing closer to the West.

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Deputy Foreign Minister Pudlak stated on 24 May that the establishment of diplomatic relations between Prague and Bonn is considered a "long-term affair" by both sides. Pudlak im-

plied that Prague's only prerequisite for the establishment of diplomatic ties is that Bonn declare the Munich agreement null and void ab initio. [REDACTED]
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