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USSR AND PACT ALLIES TRY TO TAME CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Moscow and four of its Warsaw Pact allies are trying to force a turnabout in Prague but are meeting with steadfast Czechoslovak resistance and growing opposition from other Communist parties in Europe. By week's end the confrontation had become so direct that neither side had much room left for political maneuver.

Party and government leaders of the USSR, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria met in Warsaw on 14-15 July to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia, despite the refusal of the Czechoslovaks to attend. They sent a joint letter to Prague declaring their deep anxiety over the trend of events there, and demanded that the Czechoslovaks turn back the political clock.

The letter charged that political activities in Czechoslovakia were aimed at the foundations of Communism in the country and had not met with any effective rebuff from the party leadership. The signers asserted they could not stand aside while "imperialism" made a breach in the socialist system, "by peaceful or unpeaceful means, from inside or outside," which would change power relations in Europe. Such developments, the letter said, threatened the security of the whole socialist system.

The signers demanded that the Czechoslovak party take four steps to redress the situation: resolutely attack right-wing and anti-socialist forces, mobilize all the power of the state in defense of

Communism, reimpose party control of news media, and return to operation of the party on the basis of Soviet-style principles--including that of complete centralization of power. The letter made no mention, however, of what action the five would take if Prague failed to heed these demands, suggesting that the crisis is still in the talking stage.

The Soviet leadership hastily convened the Communist Party Central Committee on 17 July to add the weight of its formal endorsement to the Warsaw joint letter. A partial text of the committee's resolution broadcast that day repeated the warnings of the letter in more general but no less stern terms. The sketchy information thus far available on the meeting does not indicate whether Brezhnev, who made the major speech, sought central committee approval for any specific policy moves in the future.

The Czechoslovak party presidium has calmly but firmly rejected the demands placed on it. Party chief Dubcek called an expanded meeting of the central committee for 18 July to ratify the presidium's decision. The same day he went on national radio and television to ensure as much national popular support as possible. The implications of these moves cannot help but be understood by the other parties in the dispute.

The Soviet pressure tactics have aroused strong opposition from other European parties. In Eastern

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Europe, the Yugoslav and Rumanian leaders, Tito and Ceausescu, reportedly were prepared to demonstrate their solidarity with the Czechoslovaks by traveling to Prague.

Led by the French, most of the Western European parties--opposed to the Soviet pressure tactics more for domestic political reasons than any other--have voiced support for Prague.

The French Communist Party, in an apparent attempt to ease the Soviet-Czechoslovak crisis, proposed on 17 July that an urgent conference of European parties meet to discuss Czechoslovakia. The call was made on the day that party leader Waldeck-Rochet returned from a trip to Moscow, but it is doubtful that the proposal was made at Soviet instigation. Neither Moscow nor Prague has yet commented on the French suggestion. The Italian, Austrian, and Swiss parties, however, have already responded favorably to the French party's proposal. No European party has as yet rejected the idea, although many have not yet made their positions known.

Czechoslovak leaders, meanwhile, buttressed by strong popular support, maintained their resolute

position. In an outspoken press conference on 15 July, Lt. Gen. Prchlik, chief of the central committee's defense and security department, even accused Pact commander Yakubovsky of having broken his word to Dubcek by interrupting Soviet troop withdrawals, and added that the Soviet marshal would again fail to keep his word if all Soviet forces had not departed Czechoslovakia by 21 July.

The Czechoslovaks also offered several criticisms of the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact command structure. Prchlik complained about the inequalities in the Pact command and said that because the Pact is outdated, Prague will propose revisions. Defense Minister Dzur made a more conciliatory statement, but he also endorsed proposals for a more representative command structure in the Pact. Foreign Minister Hajek joined in the discussion on the Pact, stating that the preamble of the future Czechoslovak-Rumanian friendship treaty pledges adherence to the Pact "as long as it is valid."

Prague apparently is also preparing to meet future Soviet political and psychological measures. A Czechoslovak official stated that Prague has ready contingency plans to counter Soviet tactics. He indicated that the Dubcek regime is wary of a Soviet-supported coup attempt by conservatives. 25X1

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