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CZECHOSLOVAKIA WINS RESPITE FROM THE USSR

The Bratislava agreement of 4 August marked a step back from Prague's confrontation with Moscow and its allies, and reduced the attendant threat of massive military intervention in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovaks have won at least a reprieve but it is too soon to tell whether this will develop into any sort of modus vivendi. Much will depend on how much they had to give the Soviets in return for breathing space and on how the Dubcek regime uses the time it has won.

Unless there are secret codicils to the Bratislava agreement-- and neither side has yet done anything to suggest that there are-- the results of the Bratislava conference fall well short of the maximum Soviet demands as expressed in the Warsaw joint letter of 15 July.

There was oral agreement on all sides in Bratislava to end mutual public recriminations and to this end Czechoslovak leaders have asked their news media to exercise voluntary restraint, especially in reporting on foreign affairs. The Czechoslovak press is restive under this restriction, however, and will probably continue to report on controversial subjects, but without invective.

The Bratislava agreement also called on the Czechoslovaks to harmonize more closely their economic, defense, and foreign policies with those of the hard-line Warsaw Pact states. The conference communique reiterated the call made earlier at the Dresden conference in March for an urgent top-level economic conference to be held "in the near

future." Such a conference might discuss economic assistance to Czechoslovakia. In addition, long-standing issues such as pricing policies, partial currency convertibility, and CEMA policy on trade with Western countries are likely to appear on the agenda. Since Bratislava, the Dubcek regime has acknowledged its economic dependence on CEMA, but has also stressed that strengthened Communist economic ties do not preclude expanded trade with the West.

At Cierna, Dubcek apparently fended off Soviet efforts to station Soviet troops on Czechoslovak soil. In return, however, the Czechs may have had to agree to accept Soviet military advisers and to give up any plans they may have had for cutting their own defense establishment in the interests of economy. No increase in the army or in the defense budget is contemplated before 1970, however.

Dubcek's concessions in foreign policy may have been more apparent than real, for the regime had already decided to move slowly in this area. It would appear that the Czechs have agreed to further postpone ideas of re-establishing diplomatic relations with West Germany or Israel, and that Czechoslovakia's foreign policy orientation will veer more toward the Communist world than toward Europe, as had been originally planned.

No participant at Bratislava was completely satisfied. Hungarian party boss Kadar has said that differences remain. Kadar was not

SECRET

SECRET

specific, but he was probably reflecting the concern he shares with the East German and Polish leaders over the political impact in their own countries of the Czechoslovak domestic reforms.

Since its return to Moscow on 5 August, the Soviet leadership has done everything in its power to represent the Cierna and Bratislava agreements as victories for Communist unity and orthodoxy. In part, this is necessary to explain how the Soviet leaders could suddenly go from bitter denunciation of Prague to smiles and handshakes with so little concrete to show for it. Moscow's public treatment of Bratislava is also intended, however, to remind Prague that it will be expected to follow up its general pledges with deeds.

The Soviet leadership has also gone to some lengths to demonstrate that it is united behind the policy decisions made last week. How strong that unity is, however, is open to question and, should the Czechoslovaks back-slide on what Moscow thought was achieved at Bratislava, the strains in the leadership would increase.

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During the past week, there were indications that some Soviet units in East Germany were preparing to return to garrison from locations near the Czechoslovak border. 25X1

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Prague announced that the last Soviet troops left Czechoslovakia on 3 August. The Soviet force of at least divisional strength, observed by a US attaché in central Czechoslovakia on 29-31 July, probably was included.

The entire southeast quadrant of East Germany remains restricted to Allied mission travel until 15 August. Parts of this area have also been denied to other Westerners as well.

There have been reports that some East German reservists have been called up. These call-ups are probably part of the large Soviet Rear Services exercise due to expire on 10 August. Moscow previously announced that East German and Polish reserves would take part in the exercise. [REDACTED]

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