

[Czechoslovakia-USSR: There is little to indicate that the talks between Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov and Czechoslovak leaders are moving toward resolution of outstanding differences.

Kuznetsov conferred in Bratislava yesterday with Slovak party chief Husak, and with the head of the Slovak government as well. The special Soviet emissary may be on a simple fact-finding mission, but there is some suggestion of substantive exchange in yesterday's meeting with Husak. Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko was a participant yesterday, despite Czechoslovak hopes that Kuznetsov's presence in the country would ease the ambassador out of the picture.

The Soviet news agency, TASS, reportedly issued a statement last night highly critical of certain Czechoslovak newspapers for their allegedly "hostile statements" and "antisocialist positions." Until publication of this item, Soviet commentators during the past few days had been at pains to balance approval of Czechoslovak progress toward "normalization" against warnings that much remained to be done. Pravda, for example, referred yesterday to the persistence of "unhealthy manifestations" of nationalist and anti-Soviet sentiment, and added that counterrevolutionaries were plotting the formation of a secret front.

Czechoslovak news media obviously provoked the Soviets with a wave of muted, thinly disguised criticism over the weekend. By 9 September all newspapers had resumed publication, although some reported their offices in shambles after Soviet troops moved out. The Czechoslovak news agency resumed operations, and additional radio and television stations, some in bad condition, have been turned back to the Czechoslovaks.

Government officials continue to discuss censorship requirements and other new restrictive legislation. Two editors of liberal journals have been]

10 Sep 68

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

SECRET

SECRET

[replaced. On 8 September the chief of the newly created press and information office in Prague confirmed that the two guiding principles for Czechoslovak editors are to avoid overt criticism of the occupying nations and to publish nothing which detracts from the leading role of the Communist Party. On the same day, the justice minister indicated that the government was preparing for submission to the National Assembly legislation which would regulate the rights of assembly and travel. Until these laws are enacted, he added, the government would consider extraordinary measures to limit public assemblies and to disband "illegal" organizations. According to Slovak party boss Husak, another such measure may be the imposition of temporary restrictions on the issuance of exit passes for travel to Western countries.

At the same time the government is considering legislation to recompense individuals and corporations for damages suffered during periods of illegality, an obvious reference to the invasion and occupation. In addition, it was announced that political rehabilitations of the victims of Stalinism will begin in late September or early October. Work continues on long-standing plans to weaken the Interior Ministry by transferring its jurisdiction over the prisons system to the Justice Ministry.

Premier Cernik may have gone to Moscow yesterday to discuss economic relations, according to unconfirmed Western press reports. This meeting may have been scheduled for some time. In the past few days Czechoslovak news media have often recounted some of the economic losses suffered by the country as a result of the invasion, and this matter may enter into Cernik's talks, if indeed he is in Moscow.

There has been no significant change in the military situation in or around Czechoslovakia.

25X1

10 Sep 68

Central Intelligence Bulletin

4

SECRET