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*Czechoslovakia: The National Assembly yesterday passed a federalization bill designed to give the Slovaks near equality with the Czechs.

The plan, which is scheduled to go into effect on 1 January 1969, calls for separate Czech and Slovak governments which will be subordinate to a pared federal government in Prague. It also paves the way for similar Czech and Slovak divisions in the Communist Party and other nationwide organizations.

There is so much controversy over the bill, however, that its implementation will undoubtedly result in confusion, and could rekindle traditional antagonisms between the Czechs and Slovaks. Many Czech officials oppose the plan because it gives the Slovaks greater rights at the expense of the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia. Some Slovak leaders have complained that the law will not give them the equality they are seeking, but will instead allow the more numerous Czechs to continue to dominate the country. There are also widespread complaints from both sides that the plan has been too hastily prepared.

Moscow apparently has mixed emotions about the federalization. Several Soviet leaders, including Moscow's special emissary to Prague, Kuznetsov, have recommended that the plan be postponed indefinitely. These Russians may believe that a federal setup will lead to internal instability and weaken the Communist Party's leading role. They may also be concerned about the possible spillover effect Czechoslovak federalization may have on their own republics, especially the Ukraine.

Some Soviet officials, on the other hand, may believe that under the federative arrangement they could assert greater control over the country by playing off one nationality against the other. A

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distinct Slovak state might also provide the Soviets with a better opportunity to work with Slovak separatists who oppose even a federation with the Czechs and have been advocating a stronger alliance with Moscow.

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*Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

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