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Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek leadership is embroiled in its most serious political crisis since the invasion as a result of anti-Soviet demonstrations over the weekend.

The central government in Prague threatened on 2 April to impose pre-censorship on those publications that do not adhere to party guidelines. It also reaffirmed that the Czechoslovak Army would back up the security forces in combating further demonstrations.

At an "extraordinary session" on 1 April, the party presidium gave broad authority to the Interior Ministry to arrest "the organizers" of last week's nationwide demonstrations. This is a clear bow to the Soviets, who have refused to accept the original Czechoslovak contention that the demonstrations were spontaneous.

The presidium acknowledged that it was a "mistake" not to suppress past dissidence, which it described as "antisocialist," and stated that henceforth it will take action against those who imperil Prague's alliance with Moscow.

This statement criticized the antiparty conduct of certain central committee members, including presidium member Josef Smrkovsky, the only remaining progressive in the party leadership.

The presidium also decided to crack down on the country's maverick press for "arousing...anti-Soviet hysteria." It suspended the party central committee weekly Politika for "grave political errors" and threatened action against other publications that have been circumventing censorship regulations. Two weeklies with anti-Soviet reputations which were scheduled to appear yesterday apparently

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were confiscated. The party leadership even criticized its own daily, Rude Pravo, for failure to attack "views alien to socialism," and threatened to call to account "all Communist journalists."

The leadership's new crackdown is its most dramatic response to civil disturbances since the invasion, but is nevertheless, under the circumstances, a moderate first reaction. It may, however, provoke trade unionists and students, who regard Smrkovsky as the symbol of their hopes and who are united in their opposition to further administrative restrictions. Much will depend on how sternly the presidium's decisions are implemented. Wholesale arrests of those who took part in the anti-Soviet demonstrations or any punitive actions against dissidents could bring about a new crisis.

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*Central Intelligence Bulletin*

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