

Czechoslovakia: Statements by Czechoslovak leaders attempting to soften the impact of the recent Moscow communiqué probably will have little effect on the popular impression that the Dubcek leadership has all but caved in to Soviet demands.

[The rather bleak outcome of the talks may have generated a Western press report that the current leadership is about to resign. According to a UPI story of 6 October, high government sources in Prague claim that Dubcek, President Svoboda, Premier Cernik, and National Assembly President Smrkovsky may resign at a plenum to be held sometime this week. Rumors concerning the resignation of the Dubcek leadership have been heard in the past, however, and there is nothing to confirm this latest report.]

Dubcek reportedly was in tears when he embraced Smrkovsky at the airport upon arrival from Moscow just before midnight on 4 October. Only Cernik stopped to comment to reporters, saying the talks had been "very serious, very calm, and without complications." He further claimed that the delegation had pointed to Soviet "shortcomings" in carrying out previous agreements, but made clear that the delegation was reconciled to active Soviet "assistance" in carrying out the "normalization" process.

Details of the communiqué apparently were known in Prague several hours before the delegation returned. Significantly, there was no crowd of Dubcek well-wishers on hand, probably indicating popular dissatisfaction over the outcome of the talks. Should the leadership in fact lose public support or become divided, the Soviets could be expected to make short work of erasing the Dubcek reforms.

On 5 October, Prague radio carried an interview with Czechoslovak Defense Minister Dzur, who expressed optimism over prospects for an early withdrawal of Warsaw Pact troops from Czechoslovakia. Dzur said he counted on the departure of the large majority of these forces before Czechoslovakia's 50th anniversary on 28 October. He qualified this, however, by claiming that much will depend on Prague's implementation of the recent Moscow protocol. [REDACTED]

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