

[ Czechoslovakia: The official Czechoslovak news agency has tardily and somewhat wanly acknowledged reports of Soviet troop movements by asserting that they are part of a Warsaw Pact exercise and that Prague had prior notice.

Some 48 hours after reports first began to circulate that Soviet troops were on the move toward Czechoslovakia, Moscow has still not broken silence. If the Russians were interested in sparing Czech nerves they would have spoken out before now. When it does react, Moscow probably will claim blandly that its troops in Eastern Europe have been engaged in routine Warsaw Pact maneuvers. If this happens, Moscow's explanation will conform with Prague's but the Soviet meaning meanwhile will have been made clear to the Czechoslovaks.

The Poles seem to be engaged in an effort to influence the Czechoslovak leaders to curb their liberals. A 9 May message from the Polish leaders to their Czechoslovak counterparts, although effusive and cordial on the surface, when read against the background of the 7 May Polish protest and of critical Polish press commentaries clearly was reminding Prague of its binding ties with the USSR, Poland, and other Communist states. The Warsaw regime remains clearly nervous about the potential effects of Czechoslovak events on the internal Polish situation.

On the same day delegations from Poland and Czechoslovakia, headed by influential provincial secretary Gierak and secretariat member Indra respectively, issued a resolution in Tesin, Czechoslovakia, which sanctioned the Czechoslovak "democratization process" while warning that the two parties will not allow "anti-socialist" elements to exploit this process. The resolution is probably designed to reassure Prague's allies that the Czechoslovak regime has not lost and will not lose control of the situation. ]

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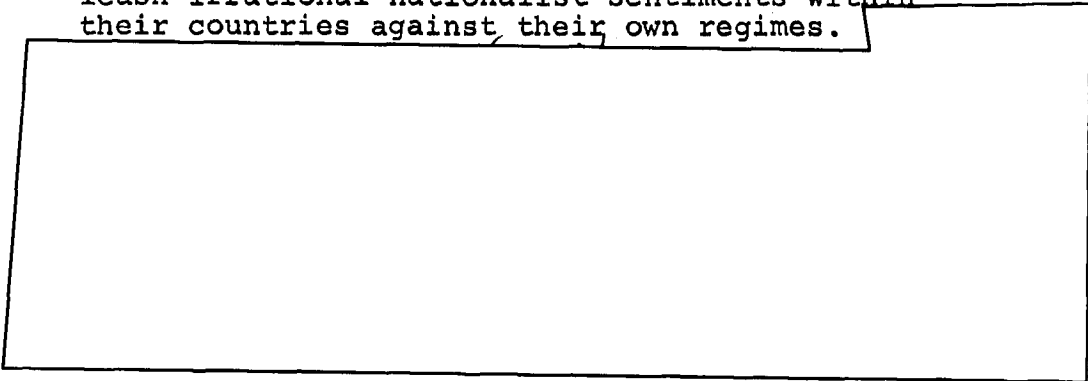
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[ Reporting in most other Eastern European media has not reflected the critical situation between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union nor has news of Soviet troop movements toward Czechoslovakia been made public. Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Hungary were effusive in their congratulations to Czechoslovakia in honor of its National Day on 9 May. While Bulgaria's congratulations were a shade cooler than in 1967, Bulgarian attendance at the Czechoslovak National Day reception in Sofia was slightly more prestigious than last year's.

Tito has applauded the turn of events in Czechoslovakia from the beginning and neither he nor Rumanian boss Ceausescu would collaborate in whatever measures Moscow might take against Czechoslovakia. On the contrary they are almost certain to exert whatever influence they have to oppose any intervention in Czechoslovak internal affairs. The Yugoslav Foreign Office regards the situation as serious and expects Soviet psychological pressures to continue in various forms.

With the possible exception of Ulbricht and Gomulka, other East European party leaders would not favor Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia despite anxieties they may have over the course of Prague's democratization. They undoubtedly recognize that such a course of action on the part of the Soviets would seriously set back their own hard-won independence from Moscow and could unleash irrational nationalist sentiments within their countries against their own regimes.

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