

SECRET

**[** Czechoslovakia-USSR: Moscow is trying to reduce public concern over its military pressures on Prague, but Soviet troops remain on the Czechoslovak frontiers.

The USSR, using the face-saving formula put forward by the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry last week, stated on 16 May that joint Soviet-Polish maneuvers were "taking place" in Poland's Silesian Military District. The Soviet announcement differs from a similar but earlier Polish release by adding that the exercise was held in "accordance with a plan" of the Warsaw Pact command.

The Soviet Army newspaper yesterday reported an awards ceremony and other festivities in Raciborz, Poland, in connection with the exercises, implying that they were completed. The Czechoslovak press service also announced that Soviet Marshal Grechko, who attended the ceremonies in Raciborz, would arrive in Prague today for an official visit.

There are no indications yet of the recall of any Soviet units and Moscow is keeping up its sub-rosa war of nerves. On 15 May the Soviet commander in East Germany banned Allied Military Liaison Mission personnel from travel in a large area of southern East Germany. The restricted area included a portion contiguous to Silesia and the area in which Soviet units are deployed along the East German - Czechoslovak border.

Moscow apparently intends to keep military units near Czechoslovakia's borders until it is more certain that the Dubcek regime can control developments in Prague. The contradictory voices coming out of official Prague probably have done little to change Moscow's view that the future of the Czechoslovak party's leadership is still in doubt.

Prague remains calm. Czechoslovak party and state officials have made conciliatory gestures to **]**

17 May 68

3

SECRET

SECRET

[Moscow, but also have reaffirmed that Czechoslovakia will continue on its new domestic and foreign course.

Additional information on Premier Cernik's interview on 14 May shows that, although he stated that Prague's foreign policy is based on cooperation with Moscow, he added that Czechoslovakia's relations with its allies are based on equality and noninterference. He stressed that Prague is "interested" in cooperating economically with Western nations. At the same press conference, Deputy Premier Husak implied that additional political parties will be allowed in Czechoslovakia.

One of the leading spokesmen of the liberals in the party, presidium member and National Assembly chairman Smrkovsky, said the Soviet leaders feared Czechoslovak developments, and he warned that the party will not permit any individual to use the democratization process for his own aims. Smrkovsky's statement apparently was aimed primarily at the liberals, and particularly the non-Communists in Czechoslovakia.

The East Germans meanwhile have continued their subversive campaign aimed at reversing the liberal trend in Czechoslovakia. The country's media have kept up polemics with Prague, featuring a specious story that US tanks and troops are in the Czechoslovak capital.

25X1

17 May 68

4

SECRET