

SECRET

Czechoslovakia-USSR: Prague's formal acquiescence in an agreement that will mean a substantial Soviet troop presence reportedly has resulted in growing discord among top Czechoslovak officials.

Dubcek appears resigned to the agreement, but both President Svoboda and presidium member Mlynar are said to be vehemently opposed to it. Premier Cernik, who defended the agreement before the ratification session of the National Assembly, is reliably reported to be "working well" with the Soviets and to be seeking to replace Dubcek as party first secretary. Slovak party leader Husak, who also appears to have Moscow's favor, supported the treaty in a speech on 19 October, adding that even now anti-socialist forces are slowing the process toward normalization.

A polarization also appears to be taking place in lower party ranks. A 20-member faction of "progressive" dissidents allegedly is forming within the central committee. Conservative elements also reportedly have established the nucleus of an organization to challenge Dubcek.

The pro-Dubcek Prague city party organization claims that the conservatives have called for legal proceedings against officials of the mass media, among others, for their activities during and immediately after the invasion. This report may have contributed to rumors that the hardliners have drawn up a blacklist of liberals and plan to stage show trials once they have sufficient power.

The Soviet press has given heavy play to the status-of-forces agreement, and the way now appears to be open for "spontaneous" public and party approval of both this document and Soviet policy in general. This could include endorsement by the full central committee, a meeting of which, the US Embassy in Moscow reports, has been rumored off and on during recent weeks.

25X1

21 Oct 68

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

SECRET