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Czechoslovakia-USSR: The Soviets are keeping up pressure on the leadership in Prague in anticipation of the opening of a party plenum there on 17 April.

The presence in Prague of Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov, may be intended to emphasize that the Soviets are unwilling to tolerate the Dubcek leadership's procrastination in carrying out their demands. He probably is prodding the leadership to make certain that the central committee endorses literally Moscow's demands to ensure control of the situation. At the plenum, the central committee will debate the measures--some reportedly still secret--and presumably will endorse them, particularly since they already have been accepted by the presidium.

The Soviets seem to be playing a role in the precautions taken by the Czechoslovaks to avert strikes that have been threatened over several issues. Semenov met with trade union chief Polacek yesterday, probably in an attempt to figure out the position of the liberal unions in respect to new restrictive domestic measures. If the workers stage a general strike when planned price hikes are announced, the students and other sectors of the population might join them. One Soviet objective may be to coordinate security measures with the Czechoslovaks in case the situation should get out of hand.

Meanwhile, the Dubcek leadership may have worked out a compromise that will avert a strike which students in Prague threatened to call because of press

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ensorship. The students have announced that they will hold only a relatively harmless one-day "teach-in"--a solution that may be acceptable to the Russians.

There are widespread rumors that some top party leaders, including Dubcek and the popular progressive, Josef Smrkovsky, will be ousted at the forthcoming plenum. The Russians allegedly are pressing for Smrkovsky's removal, even though they are aware that this action, as well as other retrogressive measures, could generate a new crisis. [REDACTED]

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