

Czechoslovakia: The party "action program" emerged from six days of central committee debate as one of the most progressive reforms yet attempted by a Communist government.

Essentially, the approved version, which is somewhat less forthright than the original outline, is a program for transition. Its compromises reflect the fears of many of the central committee members, who were appointed under the Novotny regime, of altering the status quo too quickly. In addition, the program as revised is an attempt to allay Moscow's fears that the Communists might lose control of the situation.

The program provides for guarantees of personal rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and travel and work abroad. It calls for a court system independent of political influences and for electoral reforms. It also recommends constitutional changes which will result in a federated Czech-Slovak state, thus giving Slovakia greater freedom. In a similar vein, it offers new hope to formerly repressed minorities, even including Germans.

The civil police will be brought under control of local governments, and the secret police are henceforth to concern themselves exclusively with foreign intelligence. Domestic matters will presumably become the responsibility of the civil police.

Most of the compromises will affect the pace and scope of economic reform, suggesting that this was the price for keeping intact the sections on personal freedoms. In general, the changes mean a more gradual approach to solving economic problems than the liberals wanted.

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12 Apr 68

3

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The foreign policy section is brief, but it reaffirms positions previously taken by the Dubcek regime, and reflects no compromises, except perhaps in its somewhat ambiguous tone. Nevertheless, it appears clear that henceforth, Czechoslovakia's interests will be the primary consideration in the formulation of foreign policy, even though Prague also will consider the interests of Moscow and other Communist capitals. [REDACTED]

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12 Apr 68

4

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