

COMMUNIST REACTION TO EVENTS IN POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Fear of contamination is apparent in Eastern European and Russian reaction to recent events in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The Bulgarians have shown unusual sensitivity, waiting eight days before reporting on the Polish student demonstrations and giving only the sketchiest treatment to Czechoslovak events. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the commentary has been factual or hostile, with Yugoslavia reporting fairly objectively, more so than Rumania or Albania. In Poland, Gomulka is disturbed enough to charge that the Czechoslovak developments are the work of "imperialist reaction and other enemies of socialism," an analysis that will not be welcome in Prague.

In East Germany, it is evident that the regime fears for its internal stability and for its position in the bloc. Public East German commentary on Czechoslovak developments has been selective, tendentious,

and misleading. As for the Polish demonstrations, they are said to have been caused by "antisocialist troublemakers" led by "Zionists and West German agents."

Moscow continues to withhold all information on the Polish student demonstrations from the public, and to describe the political changes in Czechoslovakia in the blandest terms. The regime is showing some signs of concern, however, that Western radiobroadcasts are getting through to the Soviet population with the true story of Eastern European developments. A Pravda editorial on 14 March calling for more than "passive loyalty" could lay the groundwork for more direct criticism of Polish and Czech events. It may also herald a further crackdown on intellectual dissidents in the USSR, and there are unconfirmed reports of Soviet efforts to limit gatherings of university students in Moscow and to intensify police surveillance of student activity in general.

There has been no evidence of Russian or Eastern European military activity that can be directly related to the political unrest in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Normal seasonal training is being conducted, however, with the tempo expected to increase during the next four weeks as the end of the winter cycle approaches.

Various sources have reported that a Warsaw Pact exercise involving Soviet, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Czech, and Hungarian forces would be held in eastern Bulgaria from 22 to 27 March. Plans have been canceled, however, for a large-scale military exercise in March in Czechoslovakia--possibly a pact exercise. The cancellation was revealed on 20 March by the Czechoslovak deputy chief of staff, who said this was being done for the sake of calm and that only small units would be in the field.

In view of the recent events in Poland and Czechoslovakia, as

well as the Sejna defection, a meeting of Soviet and Eastern European representatives could be called soon to discuss and review various aspects of European security policy and the German problem. Rumania might absent itself from such a meeting, however, because its views on these issues would be at considerable variance with those of its nominal allies.

Although the implications of the absence of a Rumanian delegation would not be lost on those present, Bucharest's nonattendance might also be welcomed. Unified policies and viewpoints, for example, are of paramount importance to the East German regime in terms of its stability. Moreover, in striving for a consensus at such a meeting, the members could exert an indirect, but nevertheless effective, pressure on the Czechoslovaks, forcing them to acknowledge--at least for the time being--that their fortunes would best be served by loyalty to the USSR and the Eastern European allies. ~~(SECRET)~~

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