

## CZECHOSLOVAKS MOVE TO SUPPRESS ANTI-SOVIET DISSIDENCE

Widespread anti-Soviet demonstrations last weekend seriously complicated relations between Prague and Moscow and led the Dubcek leadership to impose new restrictions in an effort to prevent further anti-Russian outbursts.

On 28 and 29 March, there were acts of violence against Soviet installations, equipment, and personnel in ten cities, and lesser incidents elsewhere. Soviet defense minister Grechko and deputy foreign minister Semenov arrived in Prague on 31 March to look into the situation and to give meaning to Soviet diplomatic protests. They reportedly met with the Czechoslovak party presidium on 1 April. Moscow is said to have bluntly warned that Soviet troops will be prepared to put down similar disturbances should they occur in the future.

Under Soviet pressure, the presidium gave broad authority to the interior ministry to arrest those who allegedly organized the anti-Soviet disturbances. This is a concession to the USSR, which refuses to accept Prague's view that the demonstrations were spontaneous.

The presidium also stated that henceforth it will take ac-

tion against any who imperil Prague's alliance with Moscow. The statement criticized the anti-party conduct of certain central committee members, including presidium member Josef Smrkovsky, the only remaining progressive in the party leadership. This move appears to be an initial response to Soviet insistence that the party, government, and mass media be purged of antiparty dissidents.

In addition, the presidium decided to crack down on the maverick press for "arousing...anti-Soviet hysteria." It suspended the party central committee weekly Politika and threatened actions against other publications that have been circumventing censorship regulations. On 2 April, the government press chief announced the press would be subjected to pre-censorship, but he did not spell out the details of this new restriction.

The Dubcek leadership's new crackdown--its most dramatic response to civil disturbances since the invasion--is nevertheless a minimal reaction. It will, however, probably provoke the trade unionists and students, who regard Smrkovsky as the symbol of their hopes. Another crisis could develop if the police make wholesale arrests of those who took part in the demonstrations.

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