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## SOVIET UNION THREATENS TO INTERVENE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Moscow placed Czechoslovakia under the threat of military intervention last week, evidently fearing that Dubcek, who had talked with the Soviet leaders on 4 and 5 May, was not going to be able to control liberal extremists in Prague.

The Soviet pressure began to build up on 7 May when TASS attacked the Czechoslovak press for alleging Soviet involvement in the death of former foreign minister Masaryk. The TASS item has been followed by a series of Soviet press attacks on Czechoslovak liberals. The first reports of Soviet troop movements on Czechoslovakia's borders were received on 8 May.

The goals and the degree of Soviet pressure on Prague seem to be limited, however, and for the time being suggest that the Soviets do not intend actually to intervene in Czechoslovakia. The troop movements seem instead to be an exercise in psychological warfare, and the pressure is being continued. Moscow and Warsaw announced on 16 May that joint exercises were taking place in Silesia. On the same day, most of southern East Germany, in an area contiguous to the exercise area in Poland, was

closed to travel by allied military authorities for ten days.

Throughout the period of the Soviet military moves, there has been no discernible reaction by the Czechoslovak armed forces.

The Soviets have so far made no public attack on any Czechoslovak leader and they do not seem to expect or want at this time to bring about Dubcek's ouster. Their aim appears to be to persuade him to rein in the more extreme liberals, whose policies Moscow finds threatening to the party's control.

Moscow may not be confident Dubcek can steer a moderate course, but it would be badly mistaken if it counted on the conservative elements to turn back the clock without armed intervention by the USSR, a step that it is probably hesitant to take.

Although the Dubcek regime has not bowed to Soviet pressure tactics, it is now attempting to mollify the USSR. Reports of a party conference in Prague on 12-13 May suggest that Dubcek apparently intends to move against dogmatic party members and the

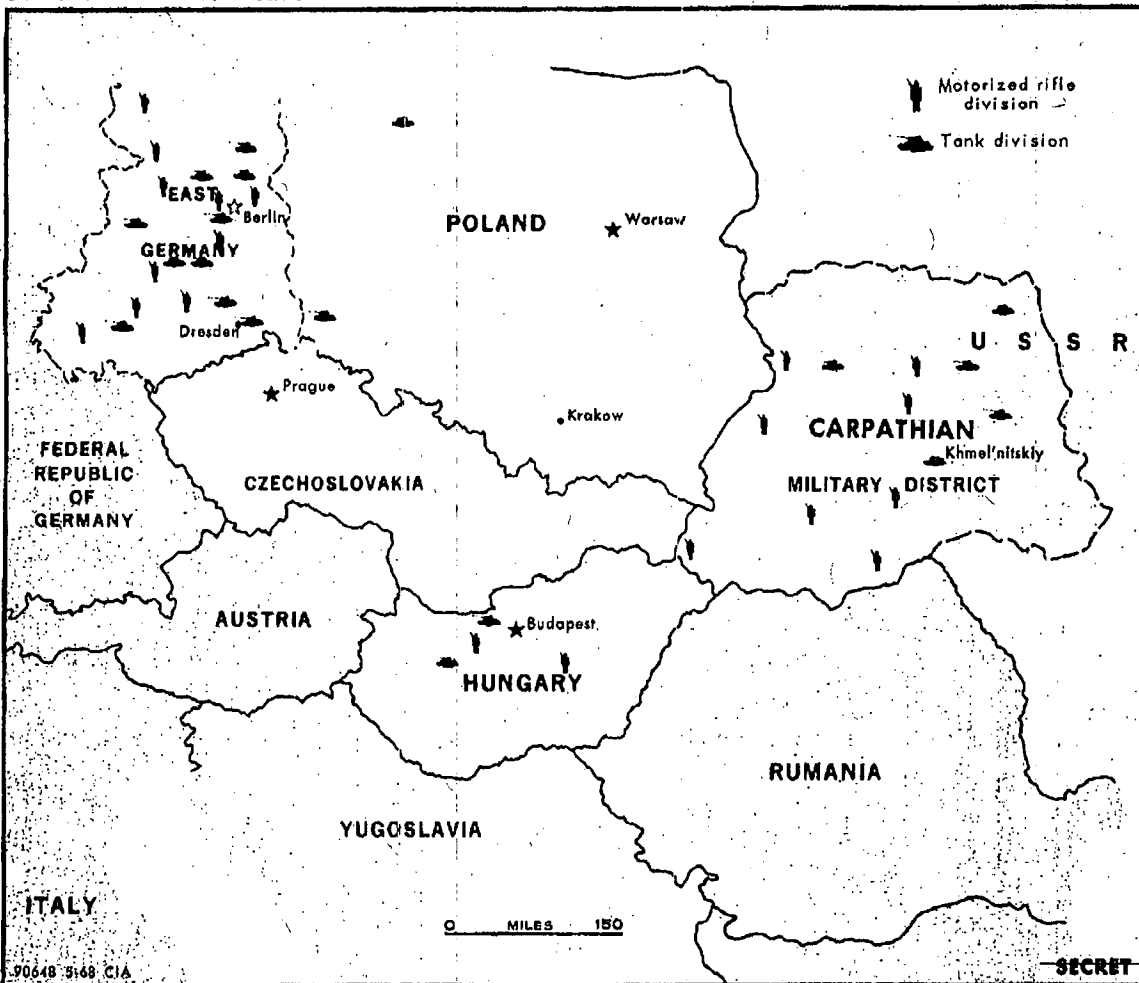
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extreme liberals, although he will still continue the party's reform program.

On 14 May, Premier Cernik, in another gesture to Moscow, re-

affirmed that Prague's foreign policy is based on cooperation with the USSR and the socialist countries. Cernik also played down reports of discord between Prague and Moscow.

**Soviet Divisions Near Czechoslovakia**



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The Czechoslovak party reportedly has also asked its journalists--who have been polemicizing with Soviet, Polish, and East German news media--to exercise voluntarily some measure of restraint.

Probably in reaction to the Soviet tactics, National Assembly chairman Josef Smrkovsky, who accompanied Dubcek to Moscow and is a leading spokesman of the party liberals, called for an end to indiscriminate criticism of the party, declaring that it will not "permit anyone to imperil the principles of socialism."

At the central committee plenum later this month, a date will be set for the controversial party congress at which the liberals had hoped to oust conservatives and Novotny supporters from the central committee. Now, however, the liberals may be somewhat restrained by the knowledge that the USSR will assess their performance critically in order to judge the future course of developments in Czechoslovakia.

The current crisis in Czechoslovak-Soviet relations seems to be leading to a further polarization of Communism in Eastern Europe. A special relationship

may possibly develop between Rumania and Yugoslavia on the one hand and Czechoslovakia, the latest backslider, on the other. Bucharest is reported to have already criticized Moscow for last week's "little summit" to which Czechoslovakia and Rumania were not invited. Yugoslav Foreign Minister Nikezic suddenly visited Prague from 13 to 15 May, presumably to demonstrate Belgrade's support and to give advice on how to deal with Moscow's pressures.

Relations between these three independently minded countries and Poland and East Germany are likely to become increasingly strained, particularly if the Prague press continues to criticize the internal developments of their northern neighbors and Pankow persists in its subversive campaign "to influence the atmosphere" in Czechoslovakia.

Hungary and Bulgaria are not as free to express their views on the current conflict. Nevertheless, the Hungarian regime has been sympathetic to Czechoslovakia. The Bulgarian press has not touched on the current developments in Czechoslovakia, which reflects both Sofia's caution as well as its inability to fully agree with the Soviet position. ~~(SECRET)~~

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