

July 3, 1989
**Czechoslovakia: Threatening Antidissident
Campaign**

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Summary:

An analysis of Prague's efforts to crush dissent amidst the Party's growing unpopularity.

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Threatening Antidissident Campaign

Prague apparently is preparing to tighten the screws on dissidents in response to rising criticism of the regime's resistance to reform. The official media last week warned that activists have exceeded the regime's patience and alluded to US complicity in attempts to destabilize Prague. The regime also expelled a US Embassy officer for allegedly participating in illegal gatherings and linked several men arrested last week for industrial sabotage and murder to dissident organizations. Recent leadership statements have uncharacteristically admitted that disaffection is on the rise even among party members.

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Comment: Hardliners in the leadership probably fear their authority could be eroded irreparably unless they crack down soon. They are nonetheless concerned about Moscow's reaction and may hope linking dissident groups to violence and to Western interference will both intimidate activists and dampen Soviet criticism. Prague's warnings are not likely to be effective because its past vacillation on dissidents probably has convinced many Czechoslovaks that it lacks the will to stick to a policy of repression. New confrontations are likely and will further alienate the populace and increase party tensions; some 10,000 members—less than 1 percent but indicative of malaise—have quit the party this year.

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