

November 27, 1989

Czechoslovakia: Sweeping Leadership Changes□□□

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Summary:

An analysis of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's responses to public demands by adding new members to the Presidium.

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The extraordinary session of the Communist Party Central Committee late last night responded to continuing public demands by ousting more members of the old guard and installing new, mostly younger faces in the Presidium. Two new members—youth unions chief Mohorita and Writers Union chairman Valek—are moderates who support dialogue with the people. Two women, workers in industry, have been added and presumably will bring workers and women's views to top party decisionmaking. The smaller Secretariat now consists of seven secretaries and two members; five are holdovers. Responsibilities have not been spelled out, except for General Secretary Urbanek.

Urbanek has satisfied one of the demonstrators' demands—removal of the leaders who came to power in the aftermath of the 1968 Soviet-led invasion. But he and his new team must now cope with the remaining demands, including those for radical reforms, free elections, and an end to the party's leading role; it is doubtful that this Presidium will be a strong force. At best it will take new members time to become familiar with their jobs and to learn to deal effectively with a rapidly changing political climate and an increasingly vocal populace. At worst, many of the new faces will not last past the party congress in January.

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