

December 2, 1989

Czechoslovakia: Communist Party Falling Apart

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Summary:

An analysis of the political climate in Czechoslovakia and its effects on the Communist Party.

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English

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1411

~~Top Secret~~

[Redacted]

6.2(d)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Communist Party Falling Apart

The splintering of the Communist Party is eroding both the ability of hardliners to interfere in democratization and the party's potential role in determining Czechoslovakia's future. [Redacted]

6.2(d)

The party's Presidium, led by General Secretary Urbanek, appears incapable of curbing rank-and-file demands for radical changes in the party. The powerful Prague city party organization, for example, has rejected the recent Central Committee shuffle as inadequate, according to Western press reports. The Democratic Forum of Communists, a reform wing of the party, is demanding abolition of the People's Militia, the party's paramilitary force, and has expressed agreement with the Civic Forum's platform. It may turn to Dubcek-era reform Communists—or even to Dubcek himself—to bolster its legitimacy. [Redacted] A group of Slovak reform Communists expelled from the party after the Soviet-led invasion in 1968 have established a Democratic Socialist Party and hope to attract party members and others willing to support political pluralism. [Redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

Although some party officials outside Prague are demanding that "order be restored," other apparatchiks are beginning to worry about their futures. [Redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

Comment: The calls by hardliners to reassert party domination appear to have little backing from the rank and file, and their fears of ouster are probably justified. Many reformists, formerly silenced by the hardline leadership, are beginning to show their true colors. As long as hardliners control the Central Committee, however, the more radical reformers probably will defect to newly formed socialist parties or simply defy orders from the leadership. [Redacted]

6.2(d)

General Secretary Urbanek must react to these changes soon if he is to regain control and prevent the party's eclipse. At the next Central Committee plenum on 14 December, he may try to move up the extraordinary party congress, scheduled for late next month, in an effort to purge the party of hardliners. If he fails to stem the party's disintegration, it could end up with little or no voice in a future government coalition. [Redacted]

6.2(d)

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