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P. Shelest's Analysis for the CPSU CC

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Summary:

P. Shelest analyzes comments by Czechoslovak informers.

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CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE

An analysis of materials coming in from various organs in the UkrSSR about the reaction of the republic's population to events in the CSSR leads to the conclusion that the overwhelming majority of workers in the UkrSSR are reacting properly to events in that country, expressing full and unqualified approval of the internal and foreign policies of the CPSU and the Soviet government.

Interest in the abovementioned events has been particularly keen in the republic's oblasts that are contiguous with the CSSR, where the population has the opportunity to hear and view Czechoslovak radio and television broadcasts and where various printed materials flow in directly from the CSSR by mail and through channels of private visitors. These materials include publications that, in some issues, have featured defamatory and anti-Soviet materials.

Many residents of these oblasts in the republic express deep alarm about the future development of events in Czechoslovakia. . . .

Along with this, certain individuals are using the situation in Czechoslovakia to express openly hostile, anti-Soviet sentiments.

Negative commentary about the events is especially salient among nationalist, Zionist, religious, and other anti-Soviet elements.

Thus, a resident of Uzhhorod, S. V. Lendai, who is of Jewish nationality and works as a lawyer in the oblast collegium of lawyers, stated in a discussion:

". . . strikes have occurred at factories in the CSSR and have lasted until the Communist directors were removed. One might think that here, too, the same thing will happen, since many Transcarpathian Communists support these movements in the CSSR."

A biology teacher at the V. Bychkovs'ka boarding school in Transcarpathian Oblast, I. N. Ivasyuk, who lived until 1958 in the CSSR, said in one of the discussions:

"There, in the CSSR, is a genuine democracy unlike what we have. We, too, need that kind of democracy."

In the view of S. I. Bogysh, a bookkeeper at a drugstore in the Mizhhir'ya village of Transcarpathian Oblast:

". . . in Czechoslovakia they now want to establish the same type of regime that exists in Yugoslavia, that is, to distribute land to the peasants and disband the collective farms. In the USSR, they're also eliminating collective farms. Why should things have to remain along the lines that Stalin set up?"

In the view of a teacher at the Bilotserkivtsi middle school in the Rakhiv district of Transcarpathian Oblast, I. Yu. Vlad, who is of Romanian nationality, "there's not much time left before we settle accounts with those who are in power. . . ."

A certain I. I. Vovkulych, a resident of Onokivtsi village in the Uzhhorod district of Transcarpathian Oblast, even said in a village club: "Soon will come the time when they'll hang those stupid Russians." 159

A student in the 3rd year of the Khust forestry technical school, M. I. Kurlyshchuk, after a Komsomol meeting where he was not reelected by the Komsomol organization, said in the presence of an instructor and fellow students:

"Everything is done by coercion in our country. The CPSU long ago lost its authority among the people. The socialist countries increasingly are beginning to reject the CPSU's policy. This is being done by Poland, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, and Romania, and it is all because our government tries to impose its own policies on the other socialist states. 160 . . . In the near future the whole socialist system will fall apart, and I'll be happy to see it."

Certain Zionist elements are commenting on the events in the CSSR to promote their own aims. For example, someone named L. I. Shulman, who lives in Khust in Transcarpathian Oblast, declared:

"Czechoslovakia certainly will break away from the USSR, as Romania has already done. After that, Poland and Hungary will go down this same path. This will weaken the socialist system, and capitalism will become strong, all of which will benefit Israel. Once Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary have broken away from the USSR, they will emulate Romania in establishing friendly relations with Israel." 161

Certain nationalist elements from the ethnic minorities living in Ukraine have expressed independent judgments. Two collective farmers from the Perekhrestya village in the Vynohradiv district of Transcarpathian Oblast, B. A. Komlosi and Yu. S. Szentmiklosi, 162 the latter of whom is a candidate member of the CPSU, and certain other collective farmers of Hungarian background, have expressed satisfaction that the national question has been placed on the agenda in the CSSR. In their view, it would be worth raising the question of autonomy for Hungarians in the USSR as well. 163

There are even some who believe that the CSSR government intends to incorporate the territory of Soviet Transcarpathia back into the Czechoslovak state.

For example, the head clerk at the Rakhiv regional consumer union in Transcarpathian Oblast, I. I. Bobel, declared:

"Czechoslovakia is struggling and demanding that the Soviet Union give back Transcarpathia, since this territory is an integral part of the CSSR, and Czechoslovakia aspires to reclaim it."

Rumors of a different sort, amounting to a provocation, are circulating among the population in the border oblasts to the effect that the president of the CSSR, L. Svoboda, was supposedly murdered, that the borders between the FRG and Czechoslovakia and on the territory of the CSSR are open, that Bundeswehr troops have entered CSSR territory, and that American military formations are congregated on Czechoslovakia's western borders. 164

The redeployment of individual Soviet military units for military exercises and the measures to call up a certain number of reservists into the army are being interpreted in this light.

During one of the discussions, an instructor at the L'viv music academy, Vasylenko, expressed his view that the Soviet government intends to send its troops into Czechoslovakia to prevent it from leaving the socialist camp: "Today the Iron Division," he said, "moved with its logistical support branches to Poland. The transfer of the division to Poland and the mobilization are connected with the events in Czechoslovakia."

During a discussion at the "Teplokontrol" factory between officials of the USSR Ministry of Defense-3rd

Captain Studenkyn, Major Kapytun, and the shop superintendent of the factory, Gargas-the question came up about the mobilization of some of the factory workers for service in the Soviet Army. Believing this measure to be necessary under the circumstances, Studenkyn said:

"If the Czechs have forgotten who liberated them in 1945, they must be reminded of this through the introduction of our troops onto their territory."

Agreeing with this, Kapytun added:

"If we fail to send troops into Czechoslovakia, West Germany will try to send its own troops, and we will lose not only Czechoslovakia, but also our authority in the eyes of the working class. The problem in Czechoslovakia concerns not only the government with its highly obscure behavior, but also the Czech working class, whom we are not justified in leaving to the whims of fate."

During a conversation with a foreman at the L'viv cinematographic factory, I. Mukalov, about the situation in the CSSR, a worker from the "Luch" firm in L'viv, E. Butenko, declared:

"Evidently, the citizens of that country have forgotten about the decisive role of the Soviet people in their liberation. We must be vigilant, and that is why a mobilization of reservists for the army is under way."

Supporting Butenko, Mukalov said:

"The FRG revanchists can exploit the tense situation in Czechoslovakia to carry out their predatory and revanchist aims. Hence, the call-up of reservists into the Soviet Army is a necessary measure."

The head of the physics education faculty at Uzhhorod University, S. A. Mykhailivych, saw things this way:

"The redeployment of troops and mobilization of reservist units show that the Soviet government has reached agreement with the CSSR government and, at the CSSR government's request, has sent Soviet troops onto the territory of Czechoslovakia under the guise of carrying out military exercises. 165 This will be a very timely measure. It will eliminate any possible repetition of the events that took place in 1956 in Hungary.

"The presence of Soviet troops will sober up the frenzied representatives of anti-socialist circles who want to restore the old order in Czechoslovakia."

Analogous suggestions about the possibility of sending Soviet troops into the CSSR, and the reasons for and necessity of such a step, were mentioned by many other people.

A metalworker at the Uzhhorod station, M. Pryatka, recounted his meeting with soldiers from one of the military formations that had arrived at the Syurte station. 166 He praised their combat elan and high spirits and, in particular, he said that after the meeting he no longer had any doubt that "no matter what happens, the USSR in the end will triumph."

On the other hand, certain citizens, despite having many patriotic sentiments, are

following the events in a one-sided and non-objective manner, evidently because of anti-Soviet radio broadcasts and various wild ideas and rumors.

For example, two residents of Malye Rativtsi in the Uzhhorod district of Transcarpathian Oblast, S. Király and Z. Adam, expressed the view that "the Czechs want to take back Transcarpathia, which is why [Soviet] troops are being moved here. But let them only try, and they'll come up empty-handed." For their part, a group of women from Borzhava village in the Berehovo district of this same oblast, who gathered after their husbands were called to the local military post, loudly criticized "the disorders in the CSSR and the inability of the [Czechoslovak] government to restore order in the country without the help of the USSR, which made it necessary to call back our husbands into the army at the very moment when the springtime work in the fields is at its height."

Some residents of the republic's oblasts adjacent to the CSSR 167 are expressing concern about the arrival of new military units in their oblasts and the partial call-up of reservists, as reflected in the correspondence sent to people in other regions of the USSR. The scale of the events has clearly been overstated in many of the letters.

For example, a female student at Uzhhorod state university, Tokar, reported in a letter to her parents:

"Panic has spread here because many of our fellow students have been drafted into the army and sent off to Czechoslovakia. They're saying that the Czechs are demanding the return of Transcarpathia. The situation is unpleasant."

Another female student at this university, L. Borovyk, indicates in a letter to her parents in the city of Kam"yanets'-Podil's'kyi:

"Everything with me is normal if you don't take into account the international situation in general and our relations with Czechoslovakia in particular. I'm not exaggerating by saying that the panic here is all-encompassing. The store shelves are bare, that is, there are no matches, salt, or sausages. Without exception, all of the male students from the 6th year, and even the vice dean, have been mobilized into the army."

One of the residents of Domanintsi village in the Uzhhorod district of Transcarpathian Oblast wrote a letter to her parents in which she notes, in particular:

"I don't know how things are with you, but here the situation is abysmal, with all the men conscripted into the army and equipment from other oblasts passing through here day and night."

Instances also have been recorded of individual servicemen who have divulged state secrets connected with the redeployment of Soviet troops.

For example, a member of the Border Guards, Frolov, reported to his parents in a letter from a border-control checkpoint in the city of Mostys'ka: 168

"Here once again our 'neighbors' are experiencing some turbulence. Upon receiving a signal yesterday, the Samaro-Ulyanovsk Iron Division, deployed in L'viv, was put on alert. From 3:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m., vehicles and tanks constantly passed through, and some went across the border."

Another serviceman wrote to his acquaintance in Kuibyshev:

"Our division received a signal and went on alert this evening, and by 4:00 a.m. we had already marched off and gone across the border. It is unclear precisely where we are heading."

The leakage of secret information from military units is attested by the fact that numerous civilians are well informed about the redeployment of military formations based in the republic. Thus, during a conversation, an instructor at the Uzhhorod music academy, V. I. Shramya, said:

"On 9 May I returned from L'viv. All the troops deployed in L'viv Oblast are in units filled out with reservists, and they have now gone through Poland to the CSSR-FRG border."

"The troops that have arrived in Transcarpathia are deployed in Khmel'nyts'ka Oblast. They are currently on the highest combat alert."

A laboratory assistant at Uzhhorod university declared:

"The military units that have arrived in Uzhhorod were earlier deployed in Khmel'nyts'ka Oblast, and now they will be sent to the CSSR. The military units deployed in Drohobych have received orders to march to Kraków."

The gathering and analysis of information about the reaction of the population to events in the CSSR are continuing.

P. SHELEST

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No. 1/36

159 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Omitted here are several brief comments by residents of Transcarpathian Oblast who expressed "full and unqualified approval" of Soviet policy and alarm about events in Czechoslovakia. Favorable comments about Soviet policy were always cited in documents of this sort, but the far more interesting portions are the unfavorable comments. Later on in the document, the comments of some other residents who expressed dismay at recent events in Czechoslovakia are included, but that is because they shed interesting light on public sentiment about Soviet military preparations in the leadup to the invasion.

160 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The word "moskalei," used in this sentence, is a pejorative term referring to Russians. It would have the same connotation that a term like "Yankees" or "gringos" would have when used by Latin Americans about the United States.

161 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: It is interesting that the speaker included Cuba among these countries. Serious tensions between the Soviet Union and Cuba had indeed emerged behind the scenes in the 1960s, but few people outside the ruling circles in Havana and Moscow were cognizant of those tensions. Not until the early 1990s did solid information about the Soviet-Cuban differences in 1968 come to light. The recently declassified transcripts and supporting documents of the April 1968 plenum of the CPSU Central Committee reveal that the disputes with Cuba were discussed there quite candidly, both in Brezhnev's main report and in the comments of other senior officials. For example, one of the members of the CPSU Politburo, Viktor Grishin, who spoke immediately after Brezhnev, declared that he and other Soviet

leaders were "dismayed by the deterioration of Soviet-Cuban relations resulting from the special approach adopted by the Cuban leadership on the question of socialist construction and the paths for development of the world revolutionary process. In these circumstances, the CPSU CC Politburo is adhering to a correct policy and is not compromising its principled line. The Politburo is displaying maximum steadfastness and patience and is striving to help the Romanian and Cuban leaders return to correct positions." Quoted from "XXXIII Sozyv: Aprel'skii Plenum TsK KPSS (9-10 aprely 1968 g.)," 9-10 April 1968 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 3, D. 96, L. 5.

161 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Unlike all the other Warsaw Pact countries, Romania did not break relations with Israel after the June 1967 Mideast War. The Czechoslovak government's decision to sever ties with Israel came under sharp criticism in 1968 from numerous reformers (especially from writers) within Czechoslovakia; but no change of policy resulted. The mention of Poland here (if cited accurately) is curious insofar as a vicious anti-Semitic campaign was under way in Poland at the time.

162 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Russian version of these Hungarian surnames is slightly different from the Hungarian (adding a 'v' before the 's' in the '-losi' ending), but I have used the proper Hungarian version here.

163 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Under the border demarcations at the end of World War II, the territory of Soviet Ukraine expanded by more than 25 percent (165,300 square kilometers), bringing tens of thousands of ethnic Hungarians under Ukraine's jurisdiction, predominantly in the new Transcarpathian Oblast. As of the mid-1960s, the Hungarian community in Ukraine numbered roughly 150,000. Restiveness within this community in 1968 was by no means unprecedented. Recently declassified materials in the Russian archives reveal that unrest was rife among the Hungarians in western Ukraine during and for some time after the 1956 revolution in Hungary. I am currently working on an article about this matter and will provide translations of several key documents in the next issue of the CWIHP Bulletin.

164 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: These rumors had been deliberately stirred up by the East German authorities, who highlighted the presence of U.S. tanks in Czechoslovakia in several articles in Berliner Zeitung, Junge Welt, Neue Zeit, and other newspapers on 9 and 10 May. What the East German accounts failed to mention is that the World War II-vintage American tanks (or models of tanks) had been brought to Czechoslovakia by a film production crew to make a documentary. See the Czechoslovak response to the East German reports in "Americké tanky v CSSR: Tendencní výmysl Berliner Zeitung," Rudé právo (Prague), 11 May 1968, p. 3.

165 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually, it was not until 24 May - three days after this document was compiled and shortly after Marshal Grechko had visited Czechoslovakia - that the CSSR ministry of national defense announced that "joint command-staff exercises will be held in June [1968] on the territories of Czechoslovakia and Poland. The staffs of all services of the forces of the Warsaw Pact countries will take part in the joint exercises. The objective is to test cooperation and command-and-control under current operational conditions and to improve the readiness of troops and command staffs. " See "Stánovisko Ministra národní obrany," Rudé právo (Prague), 25 May 1968, p. 1. It was not until 29 May that the first Soviet military units moved into Czechoslovakia, evidently without informing the Czechoslovak authorities. That same day, the chief of the Warsaw Pact's main staff, General Mikhail Kazakov, arrived in Prague with an integrated command staff and a Soviet military liaison unit to make preparations for the forthcoming exercises.

166 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Syurte station is in the Uzhhorod district of Transcarpathian Oblast.

167 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A small typographical error has been corrected here.

168 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Mostys'ka is an old city in the western part of L'viv Oblast, along the current border with Poland