

**May 30, 1968**  
**Report on Statements by Ukrainian Journalists in  
the CSSR**

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**Summary:**

P. Shelest reports to the CPSU CC about the observations of Ukrainian journalists inside Czechoslovakia during the developing 1968 crisis.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

C P S U C Cln connection with preparations for the Days of UkrSSR Culture in the CSSR in May, a group of journalists from the Ukrainian SSR visited Czechoslovakia. They stopped in Prague, Bratislava, Brno, Ostrava, Hradec Králové, Banská Bystrica, and Košice, where they met and spoke with party activists, members of the press, television and radio employees, and the creative intelligentsia. The content of these discussions sheds light on the current situation, which is the backdrop for events now under way in Czechoslovakia. Some of the Czechoslovak comrades, when characterizing the general situation in the country, told our journalists that "Czechoslovakia today is reminiscent of a furiously speeding stagecoach whose horses are pulling it from whatever side they please. The tragedy of the situation is that the stagecoach does not have a driver. That's why no one knows where it will end up." 192 It was also said that "democratization" now is reminiscent of an uncontrollable rock avalanche that no one is able or brave enough to stop. During a trip around the country, our journalists were repeatedly confronted by evidence that the KSC is occupying a passive, wait-and-see position, and that members of the party often are not even putting up a fight before conceding the political battlefield to people who not only are estranged from socialism, but are even outright enemies. The reason for this, in their view, is the cult of Novotný, the disregard for principles of intra-party democracy, and the unjustified repression of many honorable people. Some of them cited a figure of 40,000 people who had been repressed, and others gave higher figures. 193 All these actions of the party were supposedly justified by the intensification of the class struggle under socialism. 194 Among the reasons for the KSC's loss of authority, they also mentioned that Novotný had blindly copied the experience of Communist construction in the USSR, based on simplistic and often subjective information about life in the USSR as a model for other socialist countries. The population had reacted very passionately to the many statements and press reports claiming that Soviet advisers working in Czechoslovakia deserved the greatest share of blame for the mistakes committed by Novotný and for the "deformation of society." These propagandistic notions confirm that criticism of Novotný in many instances is bound up with criticism of the socialist system in general, and especially with criticism of the Soviet Union. As the evidence shows, the main discussions are being held on the question of the reestablishment of Masaryk's bourgeois republic. In Prague, a Masaryk club has been set up, consisting of well-known writers, journalists, actors, and scholars. On the streets, a brisk trade is under way in portraits of Masaryk. Everywhere they are organizing all kinds of photograph exhibitions and displays devoted to Masaryk. His philosophical works are being given great publicity. One of the popular slogans used by the columns of marchers in the 1st of May demonstration in Prague was the appeal "Study, study, study . . . only writings by Masaryk!" Residents of Brno carried posters with the inscription, "Lenin to the Russians, Masaryk to the Czechs!" Many of the Czech comrades with whom our journalists spoke emphasized that during Masaryk's time Czechoslovakia was a leading European power both economically and politically, whereas now it trails far behind. It is often the case that this campaign to idealize Masaryk and to restore the arrangements that prevailed during the bourgeois republic is being supported and publicized by the KSC. At a press conference for the UkrSSR journalists, a member of the KSC CC, Jan Nemeč, stated: "We are publishing the works of Masaryk. But we are not afraid of a slide toward bourgeois democracy. Our press will help explore the works of Masaryk. The main thing in the process of democratization that is now under way is to unite Marxism-Leninism with democratic traditions so that we can create our own model of social development." Throughout the country, particularly in the Czech lands, various new parties and committees are being set up with programs that have not yet been widely published. The most popular among them is the "K-231" union, the aim of which, according to the Czech comrades, is to restore the good names of those who "were destroyed or repressed by the agents of Beria" who supposedly were working in the State Security organs of Czechoslovakia. This union consists of some 70,000 to 130,000 people. Its activities are supported by the KSC. "If we were to act in any other way," J. Nemeč told our journalists, "we would not be worthy of our nation." In many discussions the subject came up of the "Union of Politically Active Non-Communists," the club of participants in the 1st and 2nd resistance, and others. They reported to our journalists that the Czechoslovak Socialist Party, of which Beneš was a member, has grown since December 1967 from 30,000 members to 40,000. 196 The number of members in the People's Party also has increased, and the same is true of the Slovak

Renewal and Freedom Parties. 197 Rumors are circulating that all these parties will put forth their own candidates separately in the upcoming elections. "If the elections were held today," a secretary of the KSC regional committee in Banská Bystrica, Cde. Urbanovic, 198 said in a conversation with our journalists, "there is a danger that the KSC would suffer a crushing defeat, since it has lost all its authority." According to the observations of our journalists, young people in Czechoslovakia are the furthest of all from socialism and from the Soviet Union. People of age 30 or younger make up only 5-6 percent of the members of the Society for Friendship with the USSR. The Czechoslovak Youth Union has ceased to function for all practical purposes. In its place organizational committees have been set up to form separate unions of working-class, rural, and university youth. In addition, the former bourgeois youth organizations—the Falcon sports association, the Boy Scouts, the Cub Scouts, and others—have been resurrected. 200 On the first of May in Brno, separate detachments of these organizations marched through, demonstrating cadences from the bourgeois period of Masaryk's republic. Young people are not volunteering to join the party, and the KSC is therefore growing physically older in its complexion. According to a senior official in the KSC's Eastern Bohemian regional committee, F. Kruml, 65,000 of the 160,000 party members in the region are over 50 years old, and nearly 50,000 are over 60, whereas only 8,000-10,000 are 30 or younger. According to the Czechoslovak comrades, patently anti-socialist and anti-Soviet sentiments grew especially rapidly in April and May. Weekly broadcasts covering the Soviet Union disappeared from programs on Czechoslovak radio and television. In Prague, study groups and courses to learn the Russian language have been discontinued. In Brno, during the holiday marking the 23rd anniversary of the liberation of the city by the Soviet Army from the fascists, Soviet flags were torn down, and some groups of demonstrators carried placards reading "Even Further from Moscow!" In Prague, on the sides of houses and on park fences one finds graffiti saying "Down with Communism!" and "With Císar to freedom!" and "Democracy + Císar = Freedom." Our journalists witnessed an attempt to disrupt the celebration of Victory Day in Prague in J. Fucík Park. During speeches by Comrade Svoboda and Konev and a triumphal concert, they shut off the microphones dozens of times. This occurred in the presence of leaders of the CSSR, Cdes. Dubcek, Svoboda, Smrkovský, Cerník, and Císar. It is worth noting that before the meeting started, the leaders of the CSSR who attended the ceremony were busy hugging and kissing representatives of the recently revived petit-bourgeois club known as "Barracks." In that same park a concert took place that featured parodies of Soviet songs, with Soviet soldiers played by grotesque and dim-witted people and drunks. Our journalists also were dismayed by what they found during a visit to the Prague museum of V. I. Lenin. In the exhibits there they saw many portraits family photographs, official photographs, documents, and written materials of Zinoviev, Rykov, Trotsky, Radek, Stolypin, Milyukov, Guchkov, Rasputin, Tsar Nicholas II, Hitler, Mussolini, and Mao Zedong. 202 As it turned out, this "modernization" of the museum was carried out during the process of "democratization." Such items underscore what the results of "unlimited democracy" are. Our comrades said that many honest Communists and friends of the Soviet Union are receiving anonymous letters with threats of physical attacks. There have been instances when the children of "dogmatists" and of Novotný's supporters were forced out of the schools. In Prague alone, according to local data, nearly 20 party officials have committed suicide. 203 Obviously, discipline and order in the Czechoslovak People's Army have gravely declined. 204 Many soldiers are wandering the streets. In conversations, some officers spoke openly against the Soviet Union. Officers and party officials confirm that the People's Army is now highly unpopular, and that young people do not want to serve in it. From various sources, our comrades learned that roughly 40,000 Germans who fled to the FRG and Austria during the events of 1948 have now returned to Czechoslovakia. In conversations with the journalists, many Czech comrades expressed alarm at the emerging situation in Czechoslovakia. 205 Doctor Erban, an old Communist and the chief editor for the press of the CSSR Academy of Sciences, declared: "Our greatest problem now is that there is no unity in the government. If this continues a month longer, it will be too late to fix it. I must say that over the past 10-12 days, openly anti-Soviet sentiments have sharply increased. During three months of "democratization," we have regressed some 20 years. If the supporters of Masaryk win out, we will regress 50

years. But we are Communists and veterans of the party, and we will seek to halt these events. I think we must wage a resolute fight against the reactionaries and take steps to repeat what we did in February 1948."The comrades from Slovakia also sought to emphasize the national element. Cde. Cvik, 206 the secretary of the KSC regional committee in Banská Bystrica, told our journalists: "The Czechs are disregarding a class-based approach and are ignoring the fact that Masaryk ordered the shooting of workers. He was a bourgeois leader, and Communists should not purvey his philosophy. We don't agree with the theories of Masaryk-Beneš-Novotný about a unified Czechoslovak nation. 207 For us, the main thing is to resolve the matter of an equal federation of Czechs and Slovaks. We must build our own model of socialism, based on the Leninist precept that every nation puts something of its own into its model . . . We can assure you, comrades, that even when we change the methods of our work, we will not be departing from socialist positions by a single millimeter."The editor of the regional newspaper "Východoslovenské Noviny," Cde. Šemorádik, 208 said: "For us, the main thing is to have the same rights that the Czechs have. Why do we live four times worse off than the Czechs do? Why do we have two or three shifts in our schools, whereas the Czechs have just a single shift? In Slovakia they build factories that require hard physical labor, whereas in the Czech lands the work is easier and the pay is higher. For this reason we now say: Enough! We gave a spark to the process of democratization. If it turns out that this process does not resolve our grievances, we will place our machine-guns along the border with the Czech lands and unite our country with the Soviet Union. 209We will not relinquish to anyone the cause for which thousands of Soviet and Slovak soldiers died. Let everyone know—we are your friends to the very end."A lot of statements, directed against the Soviet Union and the policy of the CPSU, lavished endless praise on the actions and services of Cde. Dubcek. Teodor Fiš, the head of the editorial board for the "Political Literature" publishing house in Bratislava, said in a conversation: "I am dissatisfied with the great power policy of Brezhnev. The policy of Khrushchev was better. Why are you interfering in our affairs? Why do you forbid us from obtaining a loan from the capitalist countries? Why are we unable to travel whenever we want to your country, the country of our friends, but are able to travel to the countries of our enemies—Austria and the FRG—whenever we wish? I believe that the KSC has compromised itself by its own policy and its collusion with Beria's advisers. If the party breaks down completely, we will build socialism without it. Luigi Longo spoke to us about this possibility." 210 Adolf Hoffmeister, the secretary of the Artists' Union of Czechoslovakia and a close friend of Cde. Dubcek, told our comrades that he regards Dubcek as a national hero who reflects the sentiments and aspirations of the entire nation, and it is only now that artists have received genuine freedom. 211 For informational purposes, the CC of the Ukrainian CP is transmitting these reports and observations of the group of journalists. CC SECRETARY, CP OF UKRAINE, SHELEST30 May 1968No. 1/38192 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: These statements harken back to a famous passage in the novel *Dead Souls* (first published in 1842) by the great 19th-century Russian writer Nikolai Gogol: "And you, my Russia, are you not also speeding along like a troika [three-horse carriage] that nothing can overtake? Is the road not smoking beneath your wheels, and are the bridges not thundering as you ride across them, leaving everything far behind . . .? What does that awe-inspiring progress of yours foretell? What is the unknown force that lies within your mysterious horses? Surely the winds themselves must be lodged in their manes, and every vein in their bodies must be an ear stretched to catch the celestial message that bids them, with their iron-clad breasts and hooves that barely touch the earth as they gallop, to fly forward on a mission of God. Where, O my Russia, are you speeding off to? Where? Answer me! But no answer comes – only the strange sound of your carriage bells. The air roars past you, dividing into a thousand pieces, for you are overtaking the whole world, and one day you will compel all nations and all empires to stand aside and let you race ahead!"<sup>193</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The figure of 40,000 is at the lower end of the generally accepted range of 38,000 to 80,000 who were unjustly accused and repressed. See Gebauer et al., *Soudní perzekuce politické povahy v Československu 1948-1989*, pp. 3-111.<sup>194</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This refers to Stalin's infamous dictum that class struggle intensifies as socialist development approaches Communism. The implication was that violent repression had to be increased to cope with the surging

struggle.<sup>195</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: These figures are accurate but misleading. Most of the members took little active part in the organization. <sup>196</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The figures given here are roughly correct, albeit somewhat high. (Only about 18,000 to 20,000 members were actively involved in the party.) The active membership of the Czechoslovak People's Party was closer to 50,000, which may be the reason that the figure of 40,000 was cited here. For more on the non-Communist Czech parties in 1968, see the relevant annotation to Document No. 4 above.<sup>197</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Slovak Freedom Party (Slovenská strana svobody, or SSS) and the Slovak Renewal Party (Slovenská strana obrody, SSO) both were created in the late 1940s out of remnants of the Slovak Democratic Party, which had been set up just after World War II as a de facto successor to the banned Slovak People's Party. In the 1946 elections, the Slovak Democratic Party won 62 percent of the vote in Slovakia, compared to only 30 percent for the Slovak Communist Party. In response, the KSS (supported by the KSC) used a variety of legal and illegal means to pressure and destroy the Democratic Party, a process that was completed by 1947, several months before the Communist takeover. The Slovak Freedom Party was established in late 1946 by former Democratic Party members who had been persuaded by the KSS to leave, and the Slovak Renewal Party was set up in 1948. The two parties continued to exist after 1948 within the National Front (i.e., under KSC domination), but were largely moribund. By the mid-1960s, their membership had been reduced to almost zero. In 1968 the Slovak Freedom Party and Renewal Party, headed by Michal Žákovíc and Jozef Mjartan, respectively, experienced a slight revival, but remained of little efficacy. In neither case did the party's membership exceed 1,000. Hence, although it is true, as Shelest claims, that "the number of members [of the SSS and SSO] has increased," the increase was of very little significance.<sup>198</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Miroslav Urbanovic had been a secretary in the Central Slovakian regional committee of the Czechoslovak Youth Union since June 1965.<sup>199</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The official Czechoslovak Youth Union (Československý svaz mládeže, or CSM), the equivalent of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) in the Soviet Union, was greatly discredited and weakened during the Prague Spring. Its membership fell sharply, and even those who still belonged to the CSM took no part in its activities.<sup>200</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: For cogent discussions of these youth groups, see Golan, *Reform Rule in Czechoslovakia*, pp. 69-78; Horský, *Prag 1968*, pp. 183-190; Kusin, *Political Grouping in the Czechoslovak Reform Movement*, pp. 81-96; and Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, pp. 596-599.<sup>201</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Marshal Ivan Konev and Marshal Kirill Moskalenko were distinguished military commanders in World War II and were appointed to a number of top-ranking command and defense ministry positions in the postwar era. In 1968 they were still serving, respectively, as Inspector-General and Chief Inspector of the Soviet armed forces. From 8 to 14 May 1968 the two officers led a high-ranking Soviet military delegation on a visit to fifteen Czechoslovak cities at the behest of the CPSU Politburo. See "Sovetská vojenská delegace odcestovala," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 15 May 1968, p. 1. The ostensible purpose of the trip was to mark the 23rd anniversary of Victory Day on 9 May (commemorating the defeat of Germany in World War II), but the Soviet delegation also toured a large number of military facilities, defense industrial plants, and security force bases to assess both the popular mood and the readiness of Czechoslovakia's "healthy forces" to "combat the counterrevolution." In addition, the visit was clearly designed to exert pressure on the KSC leadership, as Brezhnev privately acknowledged at the five-power meeting in Moscow on 8 May. By "sending a large military delegation," he argued, the Soviet Union was taking a "concrete measure" to "help our friends defend the leading role of the [KSC] and uphold the cause of socialism in Czechoslovakia." (Quoted from "Zapis' besedy v TsK KPSS s rukovoditel'yami bratskikh partii Bolgarii, Vengrii, Germanii, Pol'shi," L. 159.) In this regard, Konev's speech during the Victory Day celebration (which Shelest mentions here) was unusually blunt in warning that "the Soviet armed forces are always in full combat readiness" and will "always firmly and reliably defend our socialist gains and our frontiers of the socialist camp," especially in "the CSSR, which is a bridgehead right next to the capitalist world."<sup>202</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: All of the individuals mentioned here were officially regarded as mortal enemies – past or present – of the Soviet regime. The names of Trotsky, Rasputin, Nicholas II, Hitler, Mussolini, and Mao Zedong are undoubtedly familiar to all

readers, but the other names may be somewhat more obscure. Grigorii Zinoviev, Aleksei Rykov, and Karl Radek were rivals of Stalin who were executed in the 1930s after losing out in the power struggle. (Rykov had sided with Stalin against Zinoviev, but Stalin subsequently turned against Rykov as well.) Pyotr Stolypin was the Russian prime minister and internal affairs minister under Nicholas II who carried out significant land reforms in 1906 – reforms that were staunchly opposed by the Bolsheviks, who demanded outright expropriation. Stolypin was assassinated by a terrorist (who was also a secret police agent) in 1911. Pavel Milyukov was the founder and leader of the Constitutional Democrat (Cadet) party in Russia, which tried to prevent the Bolsheviks from coming to power. Aleksandr Guchkov was a leading figure in the Cadet party. Both Milyukov and Guchkov had to flee abroad after the Bolsheviks seized control in Russia.<sup>203</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Although the figure of 20 is much too high, a number of Czechoslovak officials had committed suicide in 1968, especially those who had been involved in torture and repression in the early 1950s. Josef Sommer, the chief physician at Ruzyne prison who had been implicated in many years of coercive practices against political prisoners, committed suicide on 26 April. At around the same time, Jan Breštanský, the deputy chair of the Supreme Court, and Jirí Pocepický, the investigative chief in the Prague branch of the State Security, both killed themselves. Their deaths, like Sommer's, followed revelations in the press about the investigative and judicial abuses of the 1950s. A somewhat different case was the suicide of General Vladimír Janko, who, as discussed in annotations to Document No. 2 above, killed himself in March 1968 after disclosures of attempts in December 1967 and January 1968 to keep Novotný in power through military force.<sup>204</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Turmoil increasingly engulfed the Czechoslovak People's Army (Ceskoslovenská lidová armáda, or CLA) in the spring and summer of 1968. The ouster of many staunchly pro-Soviet military officers and National Defense Ministry personnel in the spring of 1968 allowed the reform movement to extend far into the CLA. A lively debate arose in Czechoslovakia, both publicly and privately, about the possibility of sharply reducing military spending and transferring resources to the civilian economy. Implicit in any such move would be a diminution of the country's military obligations to the Warsaw Pact. Further controversy about Czechoslovakia's role in the Warsaw Pact arose in mid-May 1968 (around the time Shelest was preparing this document) when twenty-one CLA officers from the Klement Gottwald Military-Political Academy released a "memorandum" that strongly criticized the Pact's structures and proposed numerous reforms both in the alliance and in Czechoslovak policy. The implementation of these measures would have resulted in a markedly different Soviet-East European military relationship. The Gottwald Memorandum received overwhelming support within the Czechoslovak armed forces, and many of the document's proposals were included in drafts prepared by the National Defense Ministry for consideration at the KSC's upcoming Fourteenth Congress. Combined with the ongoing personnel changes and the debates over military spending, the Gottwald Memorandum sparked fresh apprehension in Moscow about the future of Czechoslovakia's contribution to the Warsaw Pact. Detailed reports from the Soviet Defense Ministry and KGB, which were sent regularly to the CPSU leadership, offered a gloomy view of the "military-political standing and combat readiness of the Czechoslovak armed forces." See, for example, the voluminous reports and memoranda in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 60, Dd. 232, 243, and 309. In a briefing to the CPSU Politburo on 23 May, Marshal Grechko claimed that the Czechoslovak army was "rapidly deteriorating" and was "no longer capable of defending the border with the FRG." Cited from "Rabochaya zapis' zasedaniya Politbyuro TsK KPSS ot 23 maya 1968 g.," 23 May 1968 (Top Secret), in APRF, F. 3, Op. 45, D. 99, Ll. 260-262. A few weeks later, Soviet military officials warned Brezhnev that if the number of "CLA officers who favor 'democratic reforms in the army'" continued to grow, it would accelerate the "grave decline in the Czechoslovak army's combat capability." Cited from Shelest's diary, "Dnevnik P. E. Shelesta," in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), F. 666, D. 1, L. 325. Brezhnev, in turn, urged the KSC leadership on 4 May to realize that "when your army is being weakened, this is not and cannot be a purely internal matter. We count on your [army's] strength, just as you rely on the might of the Soviet Union." Cited from "Zapis' peregovorov s delegatsiei ChSSR, 4 maya 1968 goda," L. 144.<sup>205</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Actually,

almost all of the Germans who left Czechoslovakia after World War II did so in 1945 and 1946 (as discussed above), not 1948. They were forced out in mass expulsions. Of the very large German community that existed in Czechoslovakia before World War II (nearly 3.5 million), only a small fraction (roughly 165,000) remained after 1946, and the numbers gradually declined thereafter.<sup>206</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Rudolf Cvik had been first secretary of the Central Slovakian regional committee since July 1960 and was also a member of both the KSC Central Committee and the KSS Central Committee until the end of May 1968 (shortly after the Ukrainian delegation visited Czechoslovakia), when he stepped down under pressure at the KSC Central Committee plenum.<sup>207</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Although it may seem strange to lump Novotný with Masaryk and Beneš, the speaker is correct that on one key issue – the need for a united Czechoslovakia, with Czechs in a dominant role (at least implicitly) – the views of the three were similar. Many Slovaks developed a general resentment of majorizacia (majority domination) and tended to make relatively few distinctions among Czech leaders. For a cogent overview of the Czech-Slovak divide, placing the events of 1968 into a wider context, see Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of the State, 1918-1987* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).<sup>208</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Anton Šemorádik had been editor-in-chief of *Východoslovenské noviny* (East Slovakian Newspaper) since December 1966. His surname is mistransliterated as “Shemuradi” in Shelest's memorandum, but the proper Slovak spelling is given here. I am grateful to Darina Kozuchová, the chief librarian at Šafárik University in Košice, and Lubica Poklembová, the head of the regional bibliographic department at the State Research Library in Košice, for materials from the archive of *Východoslovenské noviny* confirming that Šemorádik was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper in 1968.<sup>209</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Proposals to have Slovakia become a Soviet republic, rather than be reunited with the Czech lands, were devised as far back as the early 1940s by several prominent members of the Slovak Communist Party. See Article 2 of “Programa Komunistickej strany Československa,” 1 May 1941, reproduced in *Sborník Ústavu dejín KSS, Vol. I* (Bratislava: Ústav dejín KSS, 1959), p. 12. The idea also was taken up by a few Slovak nationalists who had served in Jozef Tiso's government. In particular, the Slovak defense minister, General Fran Catloš, transmitted a secret “Memorandum” to Stalin in 1944 via Slovak Communist intermediaries. In the Memorandum, Catloš promised to support the Red Army during its entry into Slovakia and to turn over the entire Slovak Army to the Soviet Union, while allowing Slovakia to become a constituent part of the USSR after the war. This plan aroused hostility from both Beneš and the Czechoslovak Communists. Although Soviet officials reassured Beneš that they had “no intention of protecting traitors” such as Catloš, they expressed interest in “temporarily” following up on the defense minister's ideas. See Zdenek Fierlinger, *Ve službach CSR, 2 vols.* (Prague: Orbis, 1948-1949), Vol. II, p. 326. Only after further protests by Beneš did the Soviet government finally reject Catloš's proposal. In the meantime, the status of Slovakia continued to provoke tensions among Czechoslovak Communists. In September 1944 the Slovak Communists and Social Democrats held a joint congress in Banská Bystrica, where they formally merged into a single Communist Party. The exiled KSC leaders (led by Klement Gottwald) were not consulted or even informed in advance about this step. Although the statement issued by the joint congress indicated that KSS officials were willing to accept a new “Czecho-Slovak” state based on strict “equality” between the Czech lands and Slovakia, it also left open the possibility that events might “force our nation to turn in the direction of other fraternal nations,” meaning the Soviet Union. Cited from “Rezolúcia zjednocovacieho zjazdu Komunistickej strany Slovenska a Československej socialnodemokratickej strany robotnickej na Slovensku,” *Pravda* (Banská Bystrica), 17 September 1944, p. 2. The prevailing sentiment among top KSS officials (e.g., Ladislav Novomeský and Gustáv Husák) – who argued that Slovakia would be better off by joining the Soviet Union after the war – was one of the major points of contention with Gottwald and the other leading Czech Communists, who by 1944 had come out firmly in support of restoring Czechoslovakia as a unitary state. Gottwald was aware that Soviet leaders were unwilling to endorse Slovakia's accession into the USSR, but the proposal itself, by indicating a degree of independence on the part of the KSS, ran contrary to the KSC leader's intention of recentralizing the Communist Party. In part for this reason, Slovak Communists who

had played a prominent role in the 1944 Slovak National Uprising and in the wartime Slovak National Council (e.g., Husák) were singled out for persecution after February 1948 on charges of "bourgeois nationalist deviations."<sup>210</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Luigi Longo, the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), had visited Czechoslovakia on 5-7 May 1968 during a hard-fought parliamentary election campaign in Italy, the first nationwide elections since Longo took office after Palmiro Togliatti's death in 1964. Although the Italian Communists were initially cautious about the changes in Czechoslovakia, they soon became enthusiastic supporters of the Prague Spring. Longo's meetings with Dubcek were widely covered in both the Czechoslovak and the Italian media. During private sessions with the KSC leader, Longo readily acknowledged that the PCI hoped to "take full advantage" of the excitement created by the reforms in Czechoslovakia to enhance its own electoral prospects and to legitimize its program of "open, democratic socialism" for Italy. Longo's unreserved support for the Prague Spring during his visit irritated many Soviet officials. At the summit of the "Five" in Moscow on 8 May, Brezhnev complained that Longo's remarks were being "exploited by the unhealthy forces in Czechoslovakia." (Cited from "Zapis' besedy v TsK KPSS s rukovoditeliyami bratskikh partii Bolgarii, Vengrii, Germanii, Pol'shi," L. 158.) Many other formerly secret documents from the PCI leader's visit were declassified in the early 1990s and are now available in the files of ÚSD-SK and at the SÚA. See, in particular, "Zpráva o navšteve generálního tajemníka Italské Komunistické strany soudruha Luigi Longa v Praze ve dnech 5.-7. kvetna 1968," May 1968 (Top Secret) in SÚA, Arch. ÚV KSC, F. 02/1, A.j. 30, Ll. 173-176.<sup>211</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Adolf Hoffmeister, born in 1902, received a legal degree and served as a diplomat in the late 1940s and 1950s, but spent most of his career both before and after World War II on artistic, cultural, and literary pursuits. He was a renowned caricaturist and sketch artist, and his portraits of well-known contemporaries were similar in quality to the drawings by David Levine featured in *The New York Review of Books* in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Hoffmeister was the illustrator of dozens of books and was in wide demand for his satirical and political cartoons. He also gained prominence as a painter, writer, art and music critic, and food and wine connoisseur. Many anthologies of his drawings, paintings, cartoons, and writings are available in a number of languages, including English. (Hoffmeister lived for a while in Great Britain and the United States, so he ended up publishing a substantial number of cartoons in English translation.) For a small but useful sample of his wide-ranging art, theater, and music criticism, see *Kuo-Cha: Cestopisná reportáž o cínském malířství* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, 1954); *Mrakodrapy v pralese* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1964); *Slepcova písť'alka aneb Lidice: Hra o predehre a trech* (New York: Vydaly New-Yorské listy, 1942); *Hry a protihry* (Prague: Orbis, 1963); Karel Václav Klíč: *O zapomínaném umelci, který se stal vynálezcem* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, 1955); and *Soucasné cínské malířství* (Prague: Nakl. československých výtvarných umelcu, 1959). For a useful collection of his popular travel writings, see *Lety proti slunci/Pohlednice z Číny/Vyhliídka s Pyramid/Made in Japan* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1959), which covers China, Egypt, and Japan. A good sample of Hoffmeister's artistic work is now also on display at the appropriately named Hotel Hoffmeister in Prague, which has a whole gallery devoted to his drawings and paintings. Hoffmeister was appointed chairman of the Czechoslovak Union of Fine Artists in December 1964, a post that commanded great authority in Prague. In that capacity he actively promoted cultural and political freedom. He died in 1973.