



**July 10, 1968**

**Memorandum from P. Shelest to CPSU CC**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Shelest reports on a conversation between the Ukrainian secretary of the Transcarpathian Oblast with the first secretary of Czechoslovakia's East Slovakia regional committee. They discussed possible changes to Czechoslovakia's federal structure and Soviet concerns about the ongoing Prague Spring.

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On 9 July 1968, the secretary of the Transcarpathian Oblast committee of the Ukrainian CP, Cde. Yu. V. Il'nyts'kyi, met at 4:00 p.m. on the Soviet-Czechoslovak border with the first secretary of the KSČ's East Slovakia regional committee, Cde. Koscelanský. The meeting took place one-on-one at the request of Cde. Koscelanský.

Cde. Il'nyts'kyi told me that when the meeting began, Cde. Koscelanský informed him about the work of the commission that was set up to arrange the future federalized structure of the Czechoslovak Republic. He said there is no unity in the commission because the Czechs, in seeking quietly to replace the national basis for the division of the country with a territorial basis, are plotting to create a federation of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. The Slovaks do not agree with this because the Czechs and Moravians constitute a united whole, and they will be able to form a majority. As a result, Cde. Husák and one of the Czech comrades have currently been instructed to study the matter and to seek a compromise between the Czechs and Slovaks.[1] Cde. Koscelanský affirmed that the Slovaks will not yield in their demand for equality when deciding on a federalized structure for Czechoslovakia.[2]

During the discussion, Cde. Il'nyts'kyi expressed worry that the forthcoming extraordinary congress of the KSČ might result in the ascendance of rightist elements. Of the 1,400 delegates elected for the congress, only 280 are Slovaks (according to rough data).[3] These delegates might select a CC and Presidium in which Slovaks will be a minority, and it is possible that they will elect members who will take the country to the right.[4]

Cde. Koscelanský responded to Cde. Il'nyts'kyi that such a situation will not arise because it is planned at the beginning of the congress to adopt a resolution that all further resolutions will be enacted only if at least two-thirds of the delegates - two-thirds of the Slovaks and two-thirds of the Czechs - vote for them.

In response, Cde. Il'nyts'kyi warned Cde. Koscelanský that this sort of resolution might not be adopted, since the delegates at the congress were elected not by national origin, but by the number of Communists. Moreover, during a secret vote it will be impossible to discern who voted for one resolution or another (Czechs or Slovaks). Cde. Koscelanský responded to this by saying that they are certain that a necessary resolution will be adopted. He also affirmed that the newly elected CC leadership will include people who deserve that status, including Cdes. Dubček, Černík, and Smrkovský. In Cde. Koscelanský's view, the new CC will not include Cdes. Kolder (on account of his amoral behavior), Indra, Švestka, Rigo, and Barbírek. Those elected to the CC, according to the recommendations of regional and municipal conferences, will include some hard-working old cadres and many new comrades, who will be able to lead the country along a new path.

Cde. Koscelanský also informed Cde. Il'nyts'kyi about the conduct of recent party conferences. He reported that both in the center and in the districts, cities, and regions, the conferences went well. At the party conference in Bratislava, criticism was directed at Cde. Biľak, who, incidentally, has been elected a delegate to the congress, but only by coming in 29th of the 32 candidates who were given votes.[5] When asked how he would explain this, Cde. Koscelanský said there were two reasons. First, there is the question of his national origin. Cde. Biľak is a Ukrainian, and the Slovaks say that all three members of the KSČ CC Presidium from Slovakia are not actually Slovaks (Cde. Rigo is a Gypsy; Cde. Barbírek, as was recently established, is a Czech; and Cde. Biľak is a Ukrainian). Second, Cde. Biľak has not displayed sufficient initiative in replacing the old heads of departments of the Slovak Communist Party CC as well as senior officials in the Slovak National Council.

During the conversation, Cde. Il'nyts'kyi complained to his interlocutor that the Czechoslovak press, radio, and television had recently been stepping up their coverage and broadcasts of anti-socialist, anti-popular, and anti-Soviet materials,

particularly the publication of the so-called "2,000 Words" manifesto. # Cde. Koscelanský responded that it was not worth paying attention to this matter, since 1,960 of the 2,000 words in the article had been lifted from the KSC Action Program (albeit in paraphrase), and only 40 words, which had been condemned by all the regional and district conferences, had been deemed improper. Cde. Koscelanský argued that it was not worth attaching any special significance to such articles, since by criticizing them (as was done by Cde. Konstantinov in "Pravda") you might do more harm than good.[6] Regarding the statements by Cde. Konstantinov, he expressed the view that it would be better to conduct these sorts of discussions in theoretical journals, rather than in the mass press. Cde. Koscelanský also reported that he personally had been insulted by articles published in the GDR press that had equated the KSC "progressives" with American imperialists.[7]

Cde. Koscelanský acknowledged that some of the rightist elements behind the onslaught in the press and on radio and television had hoped that the KSC leadership would turn to the right. However, because this did not happen, they are now trying to provoke the leadership into using force against them. But we, declared Cde. Koscelanský, will not give in to these provocations and will not behave that way if only because the West would think that we are retreating from democracy.[8] Now, said Cde. Koscelanský, we shouldn't spend further time on fruitless discussions, but should instead do more for the people and think about how to achieve good results at the forthcoming party congress. Already, he emphasized, we have attained results, and the people are supporting us. Whereas in the past, he continued, it was difficult to engage the people in a conversation, there are now so many who want to speak with us that we do not even have enough time to meet with them all. It is also extremely important, according to Cde. Koscelanský, that we have substantially raised the pay of workers and are compensating peasants for equipment that was made common property during the period of collectivization, and so forth.

Summing up what he had said, Cde. Koscelanský declared that many new things are now being created in the development of socialism (as shown, in particular, by the newly coined slogan of "democratic socialism"). However, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries now do not understand the essence of these internal events. Perhaps they will grasp these changes only after three to four years, as was the case with Yugoslavia, when it was first proclaimed revisionist, and then, after eight years had passed, the other socialist leaders began kissing the party and state leaders of that country.[9]

Czechoslovakia, Cde. Koscelanský emphasized during the conversation, was formerly at the same level of economic development as the leading West European capitalist countries, but it now lags far behind them. Thanks to the new path of "democratic socialism," we are trying to bolster the country's economy. It is not accidental, Cde. Koscelanský declared, that many in the West now say that if the KSC succeeds in creating a new model of "democratic socialism" (of a European nature), this will be a great setback for the bourgeoisie.

Cde. Koscelanský noted that internal reactionaries will continue to engage in various attacks, if only to provoke the leadership of the country and party into using force and if only to compromise the new ideas of democratization.

Toward the end of the conversation, Cde. Koscelanský sought to reassure Cde. Il'nyts'kyi that all the anxiety about the threat to socialism in the ČSSR is unwarranted. He emphasized that these worries, obviously, have arisen mainly because the information provided to the CPSU CC Politburo and personally to Cde. Brezhnev by the Soviet embassy in Prague is so unreliable. The Soviet embassy, he said, had long been accustomed to the old times of Novotný and is now totally unable to grasp the spirit of the current situation.[10] For this reason, he continued, it would be essential to replace the current personnel at the Soviet embassy in Czechoslovakia.

The Soviet Union's worries and anxiety about extremist elements in the ČSSR are not always understood by the Czechoslovak comrades, Cde. Koscelanský emphasized. To illustrate the point, he noted that one of the speakers at the KSČ Prague conference had earned applause from the audience when he declared that they are grateful to the Soviet Army for having liberated them in 1945, but do not want to see it on their territory now.[11]

Cde. Koscelanský also reported that enormous criticism had been voiced about the letter from the meeting of the People's Militia that was sent to workers in the Soviet Union, and also about the personal behavior of the head of the People's Militia, Cde. Gorčák.[12] The workers of Czechoslovakia did not know about this letter and learned about it only from the Soviet press. Responses to the letter, published in the Soviet press, are viewed here as interference in the ČSSR's internal affairs.

Cde. Koscelanský also informed Cde. Il'nyts'kyi that sessions of the KSČ CC Presidium had been held both yesterday and today, where they had considered what stance to take on the letters sent to the KSČ CC Presidium by the CPSU CC Politburo and by the CCs of the Communist parties of Poland, the GDR, and Hungary.[13] In Cde. Koscelanský's view, the KSČ CC Presidium finds itself in a difficult position, since, on the one hand, it is impossible to publish these documents in the press, but on the other hand, they need to explain the documents to the nation. All these documents, Cde. Koscelanský declared, propose the holding of a conference of the leaders of the Communist parties of socialist countries to discuss the events in Czechoslovakia. However, he personally does not understand why such conferences need to be convened so frequently.

At the end of the discussion, Cde. Il'nyts'kyi told Cde. Koscelanský that from the conversation it was clear that they [the KSČ leadership] were not at all worried about recent events in the country and in the party, whereas "I had thought," said Cde. Il'nyts'kyi, "that you were coming to request appropriate advice or assistance. However, this is not the case." In response, Cde. Koscelanský said with great optimism that everything in the ČSSR is going well, and that there is no basis for any alarm. If something unfortunate should happen, he said, they themselves will ask us, as an older brother, to provide necessary assistance.

During earlier meetings with Cde. Il'nyts'kyi, Cde. Koscelanský had said that it is a very difficult time right now and that he obviously will wait until after the congress to go on vacation. However, at this latest session, he suddenly declared that on Saturday he is leaving on vacation and is driving his car to Romania, all the way to the Black Sea. When Cde. Il'nyts'kyi asked him why he was not going to the Crimea "after Cde. Shelest invited you and you accepted his invitation," Koscelanský responded that the Crimea is too far and that the KSČ CC had approved a decision to send him on vacation to Romania.

Reported for informational purposes.

P. SHELEST

10 July 1968

[1]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: See my annotation later in this document for more about Gustáv Husák's role in July 1968.

[2]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The notion of full "equality" between the Czech lands and Slovakia, and the elimination of "majority domination" (majorizacia), were central demands put forth by Slovak officials and groups in 1968.

[3]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The data cited here by Il'nyts'kyi are inaccurate, though the

proportions are roughly correct. A total of 1,543 delegates were elected, of whom some 1,251 (81 percent) were from the Czech lands and 292 (18 percent) were from Slovakia. In terms of nationality, the proportions were slightly more even. The 1,215 Czech delegates represented 78.6 percent of the total pool, and the 300 Slovaks made up 19.4 percent. The remaining 28 delegates included 14 Hungarians, 7 Ukrainians, and 7 Poles. It is worth noting that the projected representation of Slovak delegates at the Fourteenth Congress in 1968 was greater than at the Thirteenth Congress in 1966, when Czechs outnumbered Slovaks by 1,192 to 265 (82.6 percent versus 17 percent).

[4]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: As in other documents, Il'nyts'kyi here assumed (as Soviet officials generally did) that most Slovaks were decidedly less reform-minded than the Czechs.

[5]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: In early July 1968, a few days before this meeting between Il'nyts'kyi and Koscelanský, a municipal party conference was held in Bratislava. Although Gustáv Husák did not yet occupy a senior position in either the KSS or the KSCĽ, he was able to gain wide publicity at the conference by voicing strong criticisms of those who were "obstructing reform," a not-so-subtle reference to Biľak, among others. Husák declared that the long-festering problems in Slovakia should be blamed "not just on Novotný," but on "some of our Slovak comrades as well." He demanded that a Slovak Party congress be held in late August, prior to the KSCĽ's Extraordinary Fourteenth Congress that was due to start on 9 September. A Slovak party congress, he argued, would give a much-needed fillip to the reform process. The municipal conference endorsed his suggestion, and two weeks later (on 18 July) the KSS Central Committee formally voted to hold an early Slovak party congress on 26 August. This change of date was important because it established a de facto deadline for Soviet military action. Soviet leaders feared that if they did not act before the KSS congress took place, reformist forces in the Slovak party would use the gathering to press for the removal of Biľak and other hardline, pro-Soviet officials, paving the way for the wholesale ouster of "healthy forces" at the KSCĽ's own congress two weeks later. Thus, the concern was that if the Soviet Union waited beyond 26 August before sending in its troops, it would be faced with a *fait accompli* that would be extremely costly and difficult to undo.

[6]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Fyodor Konstantinov was a prominent hardline commentator for the CPSU throughout the 1968 crisis. However, the main article in the Soviet press denouncing the "2,000 Words" manifesto was not by Konstantinov, but by the pseudonymous I. Aleksandrov, "Ataka protiv sotsialisticheskikh ustoev Chekhoslovakii," *Pravda* (Moscow), 11 July 1968, p. 4. The article by Konstantinov to which Koscelanský is referring here was not a response to the "2,000 Words" manifesto; instead, it came in response to a lengthy speech delivered by the reformist KSCĽ CC Secretary, Čestmír Císař, on 6 May to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth. See "Marxův myšlenkový odkaz je záštitou, oporou a inspirací: Večer k 150. výročí narození Karla Marxe," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 7 May 1968, pp. 1, 3. In the speech, Císař declared that "every Marxist-Leninist Party must have its own policy, which takes account of national conditions." He insisted that no Party (i.e., the CPSU) could have a "monopoly on the interpretation of Marxism in contemporary circumstances," and he chided those who wanted "a part of the Communist movement to be subordinated to another part of the movement." Konstantinov was assigned the task of drafting a comprehensive rebuttal to Císař's speech, "Marksizm-Leninizm - Edinoe internatsional'noe uchenie," *Pravda* (Moscow), 14 June 1968, pp. 2-3. Císař promptly responded in a lengthy article, "V cem je sila živého marxismu-leninismu: Odpověď akademiku F. Konstantinovovi," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 22 June 1968, p. 3. Konstantinov later responded to Císař's reply, publishing another lengthy article, "Leninizm-Marksizm sovremennoi epokhi," *Pravda* (Moscow), 24 July 1968, p. 4.

[7]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: For samples of the articles that might have antagonized Koscelanský, see Hajo Herbell, "Bonn zwischen Furcht und Hoffnung," *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), 24 May 1968, p. 6; and "Graf Razumovsky und die '2000 Worte'," *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), 3 July 1968, p. 7.

[8] TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: To the extent that this statement is accurate, it sheds interesting light on the influence that Western countries wielded vis-à-vis events in

Czechoslovakia - probably without even realizing it.

[9]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Koscelanský is referring here to the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in mid-1955. At the end of World War II the Communist regime in Yugoslavia was staunchly loyal to the Soviet Union, but by 1948 Stalin had provoked a bitter conflict with Yugoslavia, a conflict that came to the brink of war. The enmity between Moscow and Belgrade remained acute through the rest of the Stalin era. Soon after Stalin's death, however, leaders on both sides began pursuing a Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation, an effort that culminated in a landmark visit to Belgrade by Khrushchev in May 1955. A vast amount of formerly secret documentation on the Soviet-Yugoslav split and the subsequent rapprochement has been released from the Russian, Yugoslav, and other East European archives since the early 1990s. On the reconciliation in 1955, see, among many other items, the hundreds of documents in "Ob itogakh sovetsko-yugoslavskikh peregovorov" in "Plenum TsK KPSS - XIX Sozyv: 4-12 iyulya 1955 g.," July 1955 (Strictly Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 1, Dd. 157-180. See also the many valuable materials pertaining to Soviet-Yugoslav relations in 1955 in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 28, Dd. 306, 342, and 404 and RGANI, F. 5, Op. 30, Dd. 88, 90, 121, and 170. On the split itself, see the relevant items in the four volumes of declassified documents edited by T. V. Volokitina et al, (under the titles *Sovetskii faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope* and *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov*, both cited in my annotation to Document No. 19 above), as well as "Sekretnaya sovetsko-yugoslavskaya perepiska 1948 goda," *Voprosy istorii* (Moscow), Nos. 4-5, 6-7, and 10-11 (1992), pp. 119-136, 158-172, and 154-169, respectively. For insightful analyses drawing on newly declassified materials, see Leonid Gibianskii, "The Origins of the Soviet-Yugoslav Split," in Norman M. Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 122-152; I. Bukharkin, "Konflikt, kotorogo ne dolzhno bylo byt' (iz istorii sovetsko-yugoslavskikh otnoshenii)," *Vestnik Ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR* (Moscow), No. 6 (31 March 1990), pp. 53-57; L. Ya. Gibianskii, "U nachala konflikta: Balkanskii uzel," *Rabochii klass i sovremennyi mir* (Moscow), No. 2 (March-April 1990), pp. 171-185; I. V. Bukharkin and L. Ya. Gibianskii, "Pervye shagi konflikta," *Rabochii klass i sovremennyi mir* (Moscow), No. 5 (September-October 1990), pp. 152-163; L. Ya. Gibianskii, "Vyzov v Moskvu," *Politicheskie issledovaniya* (Moscow), No. 1 (January-February 1991), pp. 195-207; and the related series of articles by L. Ya. Gibianskii, "K istorii sovetsko-yugoslavskogo konflikta 1948-1955 gg.," in *Sovetskoe slavyanovedenie* (Moscow), No. 3 (May-June 1991), pp. 32-47 and No. 4 (July-August 1991), pp. 12-24; and *Slavyanovedenie* (Moscow), No. 1 (January-February 1992), pp. 68-82 and No. 3 (May-June 1992), pp. 35-51.

[10]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Tens of thousands of pages of documents in the former CPSU Central Committee archive (RGANI), which were available in 1992 and the first four months of 1993 (but are now off-limits again), confirm that officials at the Soviet embassy in Prague did their best in 1968 to convince Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders that a grave threat to socialism and to the USSR's security existed in Czechoslovakia. However, it is doubtful that Koscelanský is justified in saying that these reports had "mised" the members of the CPSU Politburo (which implies that their position would have been different if they had received less alarmist information). On the contrary, all evidence suggests that Soviet leaders correctly understood that, from their perspective (of wanting to maintain orthodox Communism in the Soviet bloc), the developments in Czechoslovakia represented a profound threat.

[11]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Soviet troops had not been permanently deployed in Czechoslovakia since December 1945, but Soviet units had begun entering Czechoslovak territory in late May 1968 for "Šumava" military exercises that began on 19 June. The exercises, which had been hurriedly moved up from their originally scheduled date in 1969, lasted well beyond their projected completion date of 30 June. The aim, as several of the Warsaw Pact generals privately indicated at the time, was to "paralyze and frighten" the "anti-socialist forces" in Czechoslovakia, to "intimidate wavering elements" in the KSČ, and to "bolster and protect true Communists dedicated to the revolution and to socialism." Cited from the top-secret briefing notes prepared by General István Oláh, Hungarian deputy minister of defense, and General Ferencs Szücs, deputy chief of the Hungarian General Staff, for

the MSzMP Politburo, 5 July 1968, in Magyar Honvédség Központi Irattára (MHKI), 5/12/11, dok. 1. The political objectives cited by Oláh and Szücs took on even greater salience and urgency as tensions increased during the first few weeks of July. Even when the "Šumava" maneuvers finally ended in late July, the Soviet troops that had been taking part in the exercises remained in Czechoslovakia, fueling rumors that Soviet military commanders were hoping to gain a permanent presence there. A top-secret report to the CPSU leadership from the Soviet military attaché in Czechoslovakia, Lieut.-General Nikolai Trusov, left no doubt that the prolonged troop deployments were "causing ill will among the Czechoslovak population" and were widely regarded as a "violation of the sovereignty and national pride of the Czechs and Slovaks." See "Obzor pressy, peredach radio i televideniya v otnoshenii s komandno-shtabnom ucheniem i prebyvaniiem sovetskikh voisk na territorii Chekhoslovakii," Report No. 5-va to K. Katushev, K. Rusakov, and A. Gromyko, 18 July 1968, in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 60, D. 311, Ll. 3-9. Yet even after leaders in Moscow became aware of these sentiments, they made no effort to clarify the status of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. KSC representatives often were unable even to meet with Marshal Ivan Yakubovskii (the commander-in-chief of the Warsaw Pact, who was overseeing the maneuvers), much less get accurate information from him. Time and again in the first half of July 1968, senior Czechoslovak officials announced specific dates as a "deadline" for the military withdrawals, only to find that the Soviet forces had no intention of pulling out. Some limited withdrawals occurred in the second week of July, but they came to an abrupt halt almost before they started. Reports then emerged that Soviet troops were setting up special electronic jamming gear, complex logistical equipment, large-scale ammunition stores, and other facilities that suggested they might want to remain on Czechoslovak territory indefinitely. See "Odjezd sovětských vojsk," Rudé právo (Prague), 19 July 1968, p. 5. Those reports gained extra credence after the Czechoslovak intelligence service intercepted a phone conversation between Marshal Yakubovskii and one of his deputies, General Mikhail Kazakov, in which Yakubovskii averred that Soviet forces would remain in Czechoslovakia "at least until 20 September," the projected closing date of the KSC's Extraordinary 14th Congress. Cited in Pavel Tigrid, *Why Dubček Fell* (London: Macdonald, 1971), p. 68. Although Soviet leaders did finally agree at the end of July to pull out their troops temporarily, the deployments by that point had been highly beneficial for Soviet military planners. The command headquarters that Yakubovskii set up for the exercises remained intact, as did the elaborate military communications network at Ruzyně Airport just south of Prague, which linked Soviet units in Czechoslovakia with the Soviet High Command and with forces in neighboring Warsaw Pact countries. The retention of these installations in July and August greatly facilitated Soviet preparations for the invasion. (The communications center, in fact, proved invaluable in directing Soviet military air traffic on the night of 20-21 August.) The continued troop deployments also enabled the Soviet Union to put together a final list of military bases, air fields, and weapons depots in Czechoslovakia and to monitor the activities of Czechoslovak army units stationed at those sites. Most important of all, the protracted "Šumava" exercises served as a kind of "dress rehearsal" for the real military operation on 20-21 August. The units and entry routes employed during the exercises were, in almost all cases, the same ones used during the invasion.

[12]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A "letter to the Soviet people" from the KSC People's Militia (Lidová milice), the paramilitary units who were traditionally among the most orthodox, pro-Soviet elements of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, had been published in the Soviet press on 21 June 1968. The letter and a resolution were approved on 19 June at a nationwide gathering in Prague of some 10,000 to 12,000 members of the People's Militia. According to the declassified transcript of Brezhnev's speech at the CPSU Central Committee plenum on 17 July 1968, the People's Militia conference was convened on the basis of the Soviet Union's "repeated recommendations and urgent advice." See "Rech' tovarishcha L. I. Brezhneva," in "Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS - 17 iyulya 1968 g.," 17 July 1968 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 3, D. 214, L. 18. Newly declassified documents (e.g., the items in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 60, D. 1, Ll. 101-104 and D. 24, Ll. 104-126) also reveal that a highly publicized campaign of letter-writing by Soviet "workers" in support of the KSC People's Militia in late June and early July was entirely orchestrated by the CPSU CC

Propaganda Department. In many cases, the Soviet workers who supposedly had written "spontaneous" letters of support for the People's Militia were unaware of the letters until they read about them in the Soviet press.

[13]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Koscelanský is referring here to numerous letters sent in the first week of July urging the KSČ leaders to regain political control in Czechoslovakia and inviting them to take part in a multilateral summit meeting in Warsaw. On 4 July, the Soviet Politburo dispatched a letter to the KSČ Presidium expressing "alarm" at recent events in Czechoslovakia and demanding that the Czechoslovak authorities "adopt concrete and effective measures" to repulse the "anti-socialist and counterrevolutionary forces." Similar letters, though with an even more hostile and minatory edge, were sent to Prague by the East German, Polish, and Bulgarian Communist Parties (Koscelanský mistakenly omits mention of Bulgaria), and a somewhat less threatening letter was sent by János Kádár of Hungary. The letters were not published, but word of them quickly leaked out. In a follow-up to these documents, Brezhnev sent a letter to Dubček on 6 July inviting him to an allied meeting in Warsaw, which was intended to bring together the top officials of all the Warsaw Pact countries (other than Romania) to consider what the Soviet leader described as "the threat to Communism in Czechoslovakia posed by the Two Thousand Words." The other leaders of the "Five" (a group consisting of the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary) extended similar invitations to the KSČ First Secretary over the next few days. But Dubček, having been buoyed by expressions of support from the press and the public as well as from KSČ organizations, rejected all such invitations, claiming that only a series of bilateral talks on Czechoslovak soil would be worthwhile in light of the wide discrepancy between the KSČ Presidium's views of the situation in Czechoslovakia and the views expressed by the leaders of the "Five." Dubček indicated that a joint conference could follow the bilateral meetings, but he urged that Romania and Yugoslavia be invited to take part as well. His position on this matter was unanimously endorsed by the KSČ Presidium (even by the hardline members such as Biřák and Kolder) at both of the meetings that Koscelanský mentions here, on 8 and 9 July. See "Shifrtelgramma," 10 July 1968 (Top Secret/Eyes Only), from S. V. Chervonenko, Soviet ambassador in Czechoslovakia, to the CPSU Politburo, in AVPRF, F. 059, Op. 58, Po. 124, D. 571, Ll. 145-149. The leaders of the "Five" declined to take up Dubček's proposals, in part because they believed he was just trying to buy time until the KSČ's Extraordinary Fourteenth Congress, scheduled for September 1968, had created a fait accompli that would leave the reformists in the KSČ beyond any challenge from the party's "healthy forces." Brezhnev and his colleagues decided to proceed with the meeting in Warsaw even without Czechoslovakia's participation.