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**Report of Vadim Zagladin on his conversation with
Chairman of the Czechoslovak Association for U.N.,
Deputy Chairman of the Committee for European
Security, Jan Pudlak**

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Summary:

Vadim Zagladin's report of his conversation with Jan Pudlak about Czechoslovakia's political opposition and strife within the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Pudlak now also is director of the Institute of International Policy at the Foreign Ministry of the CSSR. He participates in the work of the Commission of the CC CPC on international affairs. I have known him for a long time.

[According to him Czechoslovakia] is in a 'deep moral and political crisis.' This crisis can be compared with the one that had preceded 1968. One difference today is that the living standards of masses are considerably higher than in 1967. This means a lot for the Czechs... However, these positive factors are about to disappear... On the mass level, all groups of the society, but first of all in the working class, among intellectuals and in the youth, there is a time-bomb of discontent.

Gradually a broad opposition is being formed. But it is a diverse phenomenon. It would be not all that bad, if there were only hostile groups like 'Charter-77' or 'Renewal.' But along with them there is a considerable (up to half a million) group of former party members who, without joining the opposition... voice their active dissatisfaction, both with their own position and the situation in the country.

Simultaneously the mood of discontent has spread among a great number of party members, members of the Communist Youth. And non-party members are not calm as well... The youth is comparing the activities of the authorities to the actions of 'fascists.'

[Vaclav Havel's arrest [and], his imprisonment has converted this mediocre writer into a martyr, and for the discontented people he has become a national hero. This is a priceless gift for the West. In all truth, he could have been gagged up [spravitsia] with softer, political means... The leadership failed to demonstrate the skill 'to think several moves ahead.' Today it is most important to operate by political means, to 'cage' discontent into discussions...

[It is necessary to reassess 1969 and the role of Alexander Dubcek.] However, it is difficult so far to do, one part of the leadership was totally involved in those events, another fears by inertia a repetition of 1968 (although if the party became a true political leader of perestroika, this would not happen). Cautiously, gradually we must approach it...