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Czechoslovakia: Prague has taken two significant steps that probably will rekindle Soviet suspicions about the aims of the Dubcek regime.

On 15 June the Czechoslovaks renewed a treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with the Hungarians reaffirming their commitments to the Communist world. In contrast with similar accords signed recently by other Eastern European states, however, the new treaty is remarkably free of polemics against the West, and leaves the way open for eventual establishment of relations with West Germany. In addition, the fact that the party first secretaries unprecedentedly did not sign the document will tend to play down its political importance. Moscow Radio's initial commentary ignored these latter aspects.

Speaking in Budapest, Czechoslovak Premier Cernik cited the "growth of neofascist forces in the Federal Republic despite endeavors by realistic circles there," but stressed that the new treaty was not directed against any state. The premier implied, however, that Czechoslovakia would not recognize Bonn diplomatically until West Germany acknowledged the existence of East Germany and guaranteed existing borders. He was echoed by party chief Dubcek, who urged a "realistic arrangement" between the two Germanies but added that it was in Czechoslovakia's interest to "normalize" relations with the Federal Republic.

Immediately upon his return from Budapest Dubcek participated in the signing of an agreement between the Communist and other parties of the National Front expressing "the concept of a plural political system" and confirming "the absolute departure from the monopoly of political power" until recently held by the Communists.

The Communist Party will retain its "leading role," but members of the front will participate in the drafting of policies, as well as in their implementation, casting off the traditional Communist

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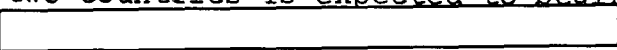
view of the front as a "transmission belt" from the party leadership to the people. Within the vague concept of "socialism," front members will be allowed to formulate their own programs according to their separate needs and requirements.

The Soviets are sure to regard this as a serious deviation from Marxism as they preach it, and had earlier objected to the concept. So far there has been no commentary from Moscow on this agreement.

Press polemics between the two countries continue, with unofficial Czechoslovak newspapers responding heatedly to a recent Soviet attack on one of the party's liberal leaders. The Soviets in turn may respond to a Prague radiobroadcast on 14 June commemorating the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, and making an invidious comparison with Czechoslovakia's situation today.

In the meantime, the Soviet Defense Ministry announced on 12 June in its newspaper, Red Star, that Marshal Yakubovsky, the commander in chief of Warsaw Pact forces, would command pact exercises to be held "soon" in Poland and Czechoslovakia. A Warsaw Pact command-staff exercise on the territories of the two countries is expected to begin early this week.

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