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THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY CONTINUES

Czechoslovak district party organizations began preliminary selection of delegates to the party congress amid controversy over a published appeal to drive out conservatives from their positions of power. There also apparently are differences between Prague and Moscow about the final phase of the Warsaw Pact exercise.

The district conferences selected delegates to regional conferences which, in turn, will pick representatives for the party congress in September. The conferences also discussed a variety of topics, particularly the appeal published on 27 June in three papers and the writers' journal. This emotional statement charged that a majority of entrenched party functionaries are preventing change and it called on progressives to hold public demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts in order to force these conservatives to resign. It also suggested that workers in various enterprises elect their "natural leaders,...irrespective of party affiliation." It voiced concern over the possibility of foreign intervention--obviously Soviet and pledged to support the government with arms, if need be.

Reactions to the appeal varied with the views of the factions within the party and bared the dissensions existing among the reformers themselves.

One conservative denounced the appeal as a "call to counterrevolution." Secretariat member Alois Indra, who is emerging as a spokesman of the conservative wing of the new leadership, called it an attempt to disintegrate the party and establish anarchy.

The party presidium immediately commented critically, denying the appeal's major theses, calling it "politically irresponsible," and vowing to oppose any attempts to implement it. In a more moderate vein, however, the presidium stated that it did not question the good intentions of the appeal's signers. It urged them to re-examine their views and called on the public not to disturb the calm, constitutional nature of the changes which are taking place.

Premier Cernik, addressing the National Assembly, echoed the presidium's views, and the assembly voted unanimously to support the government's stand. The unanimity of this vote suggests that even some liberals were afraid that it was too contentious.

Some of the district conferences, however, criticized the presidium's commentary, and called for an active discussion of the appeal. Several conferences elected as delegates to the regional meetings supporters of the appeal,

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including at least one of its signers.

An apparent controversy over the disposition of Soviet troops ensued after TASS announced that the exercise had ended, then withdrew the announcement. A German correspondent claimed that TASS had stated that the item was withdrawn because it was "wrong." Czechoslovak officials, however, repeated that the exercise was over and that

all foreign troops were preparing to leave Czechoslovakia.

TASS, however, finally announced on 3 July that Marshal Yakubovsky had participated in an evaluation of the exercise with many of the top Czechoslovak leaders. The TASS statement indirectly confirmed the completion of the exercise, but made no mention of troop withdrawals. In a probable effort to allay public apprehensions, Prague scheduled a press conference on 3 July to discuss the results of the meeting. [REDACTED]

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