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Czechoslovakia-USSR: The Soviets seem intent on whittling away Dubcek's popular support by gradually eliminating his maneuverability.

The US Embassy points out that while Dubcek did not totally capitulate during his visit to Moscow on 3-4 October, the Soviets have forced another backward step and reduced his ability to frustrate their aims. The embassy believes Prague risks open condemnation, if not severe reprisals, if it fails to carry through on its new commitments, such as the imposition of tighter controls on mass media.

As a consequence, the previously firm pledge of Czechoslovak leaders to continue Dubcek's liberalization program has been weakened. The embassy also believes that the absence of any reference in the recent Czechoslovak presidium communiqué to the 14th Czechoslovak party congress or to the new draft national party statutes probably means that these projects have been shelved. It interprets the language used in the Czechoslovak presidium's denial of imminent leadership shifts as suggesting that Prague suspects Soviet sources of spreading at least some of these rumors.

Moscow, meanwhile, is likely to see the Czechoslovak presidium statement--which in part modifies the Moscow communiqué--as an effort by Prague to weaken some of its promises. In deference to Moscow, Czechoslovak leaders have said that orthodox party members would receive preference in personnel appointments, but they added a condition of their own, that such persons would also have to have the "confidence of the people." This phrase probably will be interpreted in Prague to refer to liberals loyal to Dubcek.

The Soviets seem to be waiting for Prague to make other moves. This may account for the lack of Moscow commentary on the presidium's communiqué and the lull in anti-Czechoslovak propaganda in the Soviet press.

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