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CZECHOSLOVAKS CONTINUE ON ROCKY ROAD TO NORMALIZATION

Czechoslovak authorities are acting more confidently and firmly with the Soviet occupiers, with Czechoslovaks who sympathize with the Russians, and with other extremists.

The federal government last week empowered local officials to arrest individuals responsible for clandestine publications, which are illegal under Czechoslovak law. These publications include Zpravy--the official paper of the Soviet occupation forces--and irregular, anonymous publications that have slandered Czechoslovak leaders.

A burst of activity by Dubcek's progressive and moderate supporters has put three prominent conservatives on the run. Youth organizations in Prague filed a libel suit against party secretary Alois Indra for suggesting that the death by fire of student martyr Jan Palach, as well as youth and journalist meetings in Prague, were progressive plots perpetrated by one "stage director." Another outspoken hard liner, Vilem Novy, claimed that he has been "misunderstood" and announced his retirement from the party central committee and the federal assembly. In addition, former deputy interior minister Viliam Salgovic, charged with collaboration last August, denied that he had a role in the invasion and declared his support for Dubcek.

Czechoslovak officials appear to have fared much better than expected during recent nego-

tiations with the Soviets over housekeeping details of the occupation. The Russians agreed to pay for all goods and services, including rent for "military areas, training grounds, water," and other utilities. Prague reportedly managed to postpone the construction of new housing for Soviet officers by arguing that such work would contradict the agreement on the "temporary" nature of the occupation. Moreover, the Czechoslovaks announced that various Soviet command headquarters in Prague would be reduced to a single office. The Prague leadership has publicly requested, too, that Soviet soldiers refrain from carrying live ammunition when off duty.

A potential source of trouble for Dubcek developed on 25 February when another student committed suicide by fire in Prague. The act allegedly was in protest against the political retrogression that followed the occupation. Because the public mood now is not as responsive, the act probably will not precipitate a political crisis--as did the self-immolation of Jan Palach in January--but it might hurt Dubcek's efforts to curb the conservative extremists.

In addition, the government has become embroiled in a growing dispute with trade union leaders, workers, and industrial managers over legislation on the management of enterprises. This could cripple the economic reform program and, in turn, could mushroom into a serious political problem if the government should lose worker support.

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