

SECRET

CZECHOSLOVAK LEADER CALLS FOR UNITY

Party leader Dubcek this week appealed for national unity and reaffirmed Prague's friendship for and reliance on the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the intraparty struggle continued and rumors circulated that the Soviet Union was applying economic pressure.

Dubcek, speaking at the annual May Day celebration in Prague, reiterated that the "revival process" will continue but added that in solving the "exceptionally exacting tasks" that face Czechoslovakia, unity within the party and within the nation is required.

These remarks were probably intended to reassure the now somewhat skeptical and nervous liberals that the reform program will not be further compromised in an effort to placate conservatives. The liberals and others who support the moderate Dubcek apparently were highly disturbed this week when several Novotny supporters, who had earlier been ousted from high-level posts, were given positions on important parliamentary committees.

Dubcek earlier had attempted to assuage the liberals when he

informed the Prague party meeting that it is necessary to elect a new central committee and that this should "obviously" be done before the next party congress, due in 1970. Dubcek then equivocated somewhat, however, by reiterating that preparation for the congress requires time. He did say that he will propose to the central committee plenum in May that the congress be convened as soon as possible.

Pressure to convene an extraordinary congress at which the conservatives could be ousted continues to mount. The important Prague city conference and another regional party conference have recommended this course of action. The party rank and file as well as organizations of writers, artists, and scientists also favor an extraordinary congress. The May plenum, then, may be a stormy one.

Dubcek's foreign policy comments were low-keyed. They were probably intended to reassure the Soviet Union that Prague does not intend to change its basic foreign policy orientation and the Czechoslovak population that Moscow is not pressuring the regime.

25X1

* * *

SECRET