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[USSR-Czechoslovakia: The Soviet leaders and their closest East European allies have gathered in Moscow to consider what pressures they can agree to apply against Czechoslovakia.

The party bosses of East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria flew into the Soviet capital yesterday. The omission of Czechoslovak and Rumanian leaders underscores the dismay of the Soviet leaders and their supporters at Prague's failure to put a check on Czechoslovakia's unorthodox trend. The meeting itself in these circumstances is a form of psychological pressure on Prague and implies that the leaders meeting in Moscow may be prepared to act in concert, perhaps through economic measures, to bring Prague into line.

Soviet impatience with Prague was signaled on 7 May when Moscow, after several weeks of silence, denounced "some Czechoslovak newspapers" for blaming the Soviets for the death of former Czechoslovak foreign minister Masaryk in 1948. The next day, Pravda, in quoting Dubcek on his return from Moscow last weekend, carried the unprecedented admission that the Soviets had "expressed anxiety" on the course of democratization in Czechoslovakia. On the same day, the Literary Gazette made the first Soviet attack on a leading Czechoslovak by name, the deputy chairman of the Writers' Union, Prochazka, accusing him of holding anti-Marxist views.

The Soviet press statements are the most open and direct acknowledgement yet of Soviet hostility to events in Czechoslovakia. Their appearance, hard on the heels of the weekend conference between Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders in Moscow, adds to the impression that these most recent encounters were marked by disagreement.

The Soviet leaders clearly do not accept at face value Dubcek's assurances that he can control]

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[the pace and scope of democratization in Czechoslovakia. Their doubts have probably been reinforced through continued Soviet contacts with former party chief Novotny and his conservative cronies.

The proximate cause for the hardening Soviet position probably was Dubcek's succumbing in late April to pressure by reformers for early convocation of an extraordinary party congress. The main purpose of this meeting will be to replace conservatives on the central committee. From the Soviet point of view, retention of these men in the central committee is probably the most reliable brake on a potentially runaway situation.

Moscow also disapproves of Dubcek's failure to shut off debate on whether the Communists should share power with other parties, as well as a burgeoning Czechoslovak nationalism which is being fed by anti-Soviet press articles. In Prague's defense Foreign Minister Hajek reportedly told his Soviet counterpart on 7 May that Moscow would have to learn to distinguish between official pronouncements and the reporting of Czechoslovakia's newly unfettered press.

[So far the Czechoslovaks have stuck to their positions in the face of outside pressures. Even prior to the Moscow meeting, however, there were frequent press reports of growing fear among the leaders in Prague that the Soviets might exercise pressure in a more forceful fashion.]

The Czechoslovak reaction to the attempts at intimidation by the USSR and its dwindling array of allies is likely to be stiff. Nevertheless, conservative elements will be emboldened to step up their sharp attacks against the Dubcek regime, thus complicating his effort to hold out against the USSR and its allies.

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