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## CZECHOSLOVAKS CONCENTRATE ON DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

The Dubcek regime's attention this week was primarily focused on solving domestic problems, but the coolness in Czechoslovak-Soviet relations was once again reflected in commentaries by key party officials.

The most significant action of the National Assembly was the enactment of a constitutional law preparing the way for establishment of a Czech-Slovak federation, which will give Slovakia the autonomy it has long sought. The law established a Czech national council, to be composed of Czech members of the assembly and other leading personalities, that will work with the existing Slovak council in preparing a joint proposal on federalization. The assembly thus side-stepped the problem of working out an acceptable federal arrangement in the assembly itself, where Czechs could outvote Slovaks if a divisive issue were involved.

The assembly also enacted a rehabilitation law providing for review of past criminal sentences as well as monetary compensation for persons who were unjustly imprisoned or whose property was seized.

In addition, after a stormy debate, the existing press law was amended to abolish censorship of the press, radio, and television. According to the minister of culture and information, censorship is sweepingly defined as "any intervention by a state body

against freedom of speech and illustration, and their dissemination." A new and presumably more liberal press law will be proposed after the party congress in September.

Reporting on his recent trip to the USSR, assembly chairman Smrkovsky noted that the Soviets "were of slightly different opinion" concerning the role of the press, even after listening to the Czechoslovak arguments. Smrkovsky, who had earlier come under fire by Czechoslovak news media for some of his comments in the Soviet Union, added that many problems remain between the two countries, but that Moscow "tolerates" Czechoslovak views and developments. Moscow, however, is still taking a critical view of Czechoslovak liberals. The Soviet press last week continued its antiliberal polemics and prominently featured a "letters to the editor" campaign illustrating its support of conservative elements in Czechoslovakia.

Earlier in the week, party secretary Cisar replied to the criticism the Soviets recently made of him in Pravda. Cisar's comments, although made in low-key fashion, suggest that the Czechoslovaks will not accept public criticism of leading party officials without replying. Moreover, the regime continued to move against appointees of ex-party chief Novotny by dismissing four deputy ministers of the interior.

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