

**Czechoslovakia-USSR:** The Czechoslovak National Assembly's ratification yesterday of the status-of-forces agreement with the Soviets was reached in a stormy session punctuated by speeches and resolutions opposing the treaty.

Premier Cernik presented an elaborate rationalization for the treaty. He asked for approval of it in the interests of Communism and of Czechoslovakia, and emphasized that it was necessary to strengthen ties with the Warsaw Pact. Cernik said that the treaty specified that the majority of Soviet troops and all of the other Warsaw Pact forces will leave the country in stages within two months after ratification by both sides. Moscow Radio yesterday reported that the presidium of the Soviet parliament met and approved the treaty, which theoretically means that the bulk of the occupation forces will be out of Czechoslovakia by mid-December.

As described by Cernik, the agreement appears similar to treaties that the Soviets have with Poland and Hungary. The forces remaining in Czechoslovakia will be billeted in military areas and "will not interfere" in internal Czechoslovak affairs. "Representatives" of the Soviet forces, however, will remain in Prague and Bratislava, probably in a liaison capacity.

According to Cernik, the treaty "respects" Czechoslovak sovereignty and guarantees the security and living standards of the population. The agreement also spells out the legal provisions affecting both the Czechoslovak population and the Soviet troops, and provides that the Soviets will pay for all goods and services--primarily through the delivery of Soviet products to Czechoslovakia.

Cernik's description of the agreement is similar to the text issued by the Soviet news agency TASS last night. Many of the specific articles in the ]

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[ TASS version, however, appear to lend themselves to various interpretations, and some of them will require additional negotiations between Prague and Moscow.

There is also speculation in Prague that the Czechoslovaks and Soviets have made other agreements which were not mentioned in the TASS version. According to these rumors, approximately 70,000 Soviet troops will remain in the country, stationed primarily in northern Bohemia and near the major cities of Prague, Bratislava, and Brno. The Czechoslovak Army allegedly will be reduced in exchange for improved technical equipment, and the Soviets have presumably agreed to remove their secret police and military intelligence units when the bulk of regular forces depart. In addition, the Soviets are said to have agreed to pay Prague nearly \$2 million for occupation damages to date.

The Soviets, however, are also rumored to have imposed additional controls on Czechoslovak political life. They are prohibiting mass public celebrations on the 50th anniversary of the First Republic on 28 October, while forcing Dubcek and his colleagues to allow pro-Soviet conservatives to meet openly in preparation for an anniversary "celebration" of the October Revolution on 7 November.

Moscow is also said to be insisting that the Czechoslovak party central committee postpone its meeting until after 27 October. The Soviets are probably hoping that the dissension among top Czechoslovak leaders over the treaty will intensify while conservative elements, who are being encouraged by the Russians, have additional time to strengthen their position.

Soviet forces have apparently begun to withdraw from Czechoslovakia. A Western attaché reported on 18 October that some Soviet troops in western Czechoslovakia were moving toward Poland, possibly on the ]

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[redacted] way back to the USSR. [redacted]

[redacted] a large Soviet convoy moved from southern East Germany to the Berlin area during the morning of 18 October.

Other reports on 17 and 18 October indicated that there was heavy Soviet and East German military traffic on the autobahn south of Berlin. These reports suggest that East German forces deployed in areas of southern East Germany near the Czechoslovak border may be returning to garrison. [redacted]

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