

EE Reaction to President Johnson's Speech

Communist news media in Eastern Europe generally view President Johnson's TV address on 31 March as a strategic maneuver, the full significance of which remains to be seen. A UPI report states, however, that according to "authoritative East European diplomatic sources," Hanoi believes the Communists have "won the war in principle."

The sharpest critical reaction thus far seems to stem from Poland, East Germany, and Bulgaria. Each of these regimes particularly stresses the President's decision to increase the number of US troops in SVN. Each also emphasizes the "ambiguity" of both the locales and time period applying to the plan for reduced bombing.

In contrast, reaction by Hungarian, Rumanian, Czechoslovak, and Yugoslav news media generally has stressed factual coverage, and their commentary has been light.

Albania has reported Washington's increased military commitment to Saigon, but Tirana stands alone in failing to inform its listeners of the President's decision not to seek reelection.

25X1

More Old Liners Resign from Czech Party

Jiri Hendrych and Vladimir Koucky, two of the leading conservatives of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, resigned on 2 April as the party's central committee reconvened in plenary session for the third day.

Hendrych had been a member of both the Presidium and Secretariat as well as a member of the Ideological Commission; Koucky had been a secretariat member. Both men, leading theoreticians, were members of the "old guard" who undoubtedly found the current scene in Czechoslovakia not to their liking. They have been under fire, along with others of their ilk, for some time.

25X1

COMMENT: Details on the plenum are lacking, but more personnel changes are expected. Party leader Dubcek presented the party's action program to the central committee yesterday, but specifics on this are not yet available.

GROUP I
EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC DOWN-
GRADING AND DECLASSIFICATION

25X1

Czech Supreme Court Deputy President Found Hanged

The Czech Interior Ministry announced on 2 April that Dr. Josef Brestansky, a deputy president of the Supreme Court, was found hanged in a woods some 12 miles west of Prague. Brestansky, who was heading an investigation of trials held during the Stalinist 1950's, had been missing since Thursday. According to AP, the police stated that they were 99% certain that Brestansky had committed suicide. The Interior Ministry has called a press conference for the afternoon of April 2nd.

Brestansky's mysterious disappearance and death has predictably led to much speculation by both western and Czech papers and news-services. One Prague paper, Svobodne Slovo, ruled out suicide, and asked in an editorial "could not Dr. Brestansky have been removed because he knew too much? Perhaps even removed by agents from another country?" But according to AP, a Bratislava paper accused Brestansky of framing some chemical plant workers in 1955. Brestansky learned of this charge on Thursday, and then traveled by streetcar and taxi to the woods where he was found. The implication is clear--Brestansky committed suicide rather than defend himself. The Prague trade union newspaper, Prace, reported, however, that Brestansky vanished after being summoned to an important "party" meeting.

25X1

25X1

25X1

Poles "Postpone" President Ochab's Visit to Iran

The Iranian counselor in Warsaw confirmed on 1 April that the Poles have inexplicably postponed announcement of Ochab's visit to Iran, which had been scheduled for the first week in May. The announcement of the visit--in return for the Shah's trip to Poland last year--had been expected at the end of March. [redacted] 25X1

COMMENT: Even excluding rumors that the ailing Ochab is on the way out, the intra-party struggle now going on in Poland is sufficient reason to postpone or cancel the visit. Although Ochab and his vote on the politburo may be needed in coming months in Warsaw, his silence throughout the student crisis and persistent reports that he is slipping point strongly to his being ousted soon.

Hungarian Economic Reform Boss Visits Poland

Rezso Nyers, Hungarian party expert on economic reforms, left for Warsaw on 1 April at the head of a party delegation. Nyers was invited to Poland by the Polish Central Committee. [redacted] 25X1

COMMENT: The Polish leadership probably is interested in the gradualism of the wide ranging Hungarian economic reform.

Czechoslovak Party Leader To Travel To Rumania

The Austrian ambassador in Bucharest informed Ambassador Davis that he "understands" Czechoslovak party leader Dubcek will pay a visit to Rumania toward the end of April. Hungarian party leader Kadar will follow Dubcek to Bucharest in May, presumably before the De Gaulle visit, now scheduled to begin 14 May. The Austrian ambassador based his comments on conversations he had had with Polish and other Eastern European diplomats. [redacted] 25X1

COMMENT: Dubcek has had private meetings with the Polish, Hungarian, and Soviet party leaders since becoming first secretary. Improved bilateral ties will undoubtedly be the main subject under discussion during the coming visits. However, much more progress is expected to stem from Dubcek's talks with Rumanian party and state chief Ceausescu than during the Kadar-Ceausescu exchanges. [redacted]

NOTE: THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE REPRESENT ONLY THE ANALYSIS OF THE EE DIVISION [redacted]