

NSC BRIEFING

25 April 1956

WIDESPREAD DISMISSALS OF SATELLITE OFFICIALS

1. A wave of dismissals of Communist officials is underway in Eastern Europe in the Soviet bloc campaign to demonstrate to the Satellite people that a new era of legality and greater freedom of expression has opened. The only strong man to fall to date is former Bulgarian Premier Vukho Chervenkov but top officials in Poland and Czechoslovakia, particularly those who have been associated with the administration of justice and security matters in the Stalin era are also being dismissed.

2. Chervenkov who has been demoted to one of six vice premiers, was probably the most subservient and imitative of Stalin of all the East European strong men. Even in such details as his dress he wore a worker's blouse and cap imitative of Stalin. His rise to the top began when the famed Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitrov, became fatally ill in the summer of 1948. Chervenkov, who was Dimitrov's brother-in-law, eventually emerged victor in a factional fight with Traicho Kostov for the succession. Kostov, leader of those Bulgarian Communists who had fought the war as partisans in the country, was executed in December 1949, condemned as a Titoist spy. His "rehabilitation" this April appears to have been one of the causes of Chervenkov's downfall.

3. The dismissals in Poland have included both the civilian and military prosecutor generals, and the minister of justice and culture. On 20 April the Polish regime also announced the dismissal of Stanislaw Radkiewicz, the Minister of Public Security from

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1944 to 1954, from his post as minister of state farms. He was dismissed as security minister in December 1954 following the revelations of the former Polish security official Joseph Swiatlo and the release of Norman Field. His present downfall is probably due to his responsibility for the Polish purge trials during the Stalin era.

4. In Czechoslovakia Politburo member Cepicka has been criticized for developing a cult of personality within the army and will probably be dismissed from his post of Minister of National Defense.

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Former defense minister Cepicka is also vulnerable because of his unpopularity within the party due in part to the fact that as the son-in-law of former President Gottwald, he rose rapidly in the party during the post-war years.

5. While these dismissals are designed to convince the people that a clean break is being made with Stalinist practices, certain aspects of these developments suggest that Moscow may be permitting the satellites some increased control over their internal affairs.

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[Redacted] Anton Yugov, is a leader of the Bulgarian Communists who spent the war years in Bulgaria and generally take a Bulgaria-first approach. He originally sided with Koster in his struggle for power with Chervenkov in 1946-1949 and barely escaped Koster's fate.

6. Some greater latitude for the Satellites to exercise a greater degree of responsibility for their affairs is also evidenced in the diverse manner the Satellites are reprocessing the cases of their Stalinist purge victims. Bulgaria and Hungary, for example have completely exonerated their major Titoist victims--Koster and Rajk. Poland on the other hand has refused political rehabilitation to its national deviationist, former party security general Wladyslaw Gomuika. Albania also has indicated that it does not intend to exonerate its Titoist victim Kose and Czechoslovakia has recently broadened its charges against its major purge victim, former secretary general Hlansky.

7. Most of the purges were in part the outgrowth of serious factionalism or struggle for power within the Satellite parties at the time. With the exception of Hungary, each of the Satellites today appears to be handling its rehabilitations in a manner which it considers least likely to revive serious factionalism within the party.

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