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1. Immediately after the removal of Rudolf Slansky from his position as Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC) in September 1951, it appeared that he might merely have been set aside temporarily by the Kremlin in the interest of increased Czech economic production. Considering that Soviet policy in the Satellite countries usually includes the maintenance of two leading antagonistic groups to be played off against each other, it appeared probable that Moscow had agreed to Slansky's transfer to a less influential post, but that he was still to be kept as the head of a group in opposition to President Klement Gottwald. His more recent arrest and denunciation make it clear that Gottwald has taken this action as part of his plan for gaining absolute power in the Czechoslovak Government and KSC.
2. Gottwald began his offensive with the aim of gaining primacy for himself in Government and Party in the fall of 1950. At that time Slansky initiated a purge of KSC leaders, beginning with Ota Sling and Marie Svermova. During the early period Gottwald remained above the conflict, but soon began to put men loyal to him in the positions left vacant by the purge. Later still, at what he considered the proper moment, Gottwald was able to intervene as the supreme judge, and to take action in the interest of vigilance and caution and of a real purge of all inimical elements in the Party. Gottwald accused Slansky of placing his own interests before those of the Party, of striving for personal power and committing gross errors in the process. As a matter of fact, Gottwald had knowingly allowed many of the errors of Slansky to go uncorrected and to grow to serious proportions while he collected evidence against Slansky and his supporters so that he could persuade the Kremlin of the need for him (Gottwald) to assume control of the purge and eliminate the Slansky faction.(1)
3. Gottwald denounced Slansky not only for his responsibility for the confusion in the Government and Party as a result of the duality of control but also as a Trotskyist, a term no longer used in the USSR or in any of the recent purges in the Satellite countries, with the exception of that of Wladyslaw Gomulka in Poland. The reason for the omission of the accusation of Trotskyism in most recent purges is that the term indicates a theory originating in Marxism and Leninism and a deviation of Stalin's explanation of Leninism. The fact that the accusation was made against Slansky indicates that Gottwald and the leadership of the KSC wanted to emphasize the difference between

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Gottwald's and Slansky's approach toward the problem of transforming Czechoslovakia from a bourgeois democracy into a peoples' democracy.(2) Slansky's approach to this transformation can be shown by Gottwald to follow the Trotskyist deviation in its dogma of radical and permanent revolution. In September 1951 Gottwald accused Slansky of a failure to understand the position of the KSC after February 1948 when it altered its revolutionary function to one of directing State activities.

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4. The decision to remove Slansky was not made without the knowledge and approval of the Kremlin. This approval was evidently given in spite of the fact that it meant a radical change in Soviet policy with regard to the development of Czechoslovakia and the removal of Moscow's chief exponent in the country. It is not unusual, however, for the Kremlin to abandon a particular line or man if it means the attainment of its overall program. It seems that Gottwald succeeded in persuading Moscow that Slansky's policy was exclusively responsible for the failure of Czechoslovakia to fulfill the economic plan and for the lowering of workers' morale in the country. Gottwald apparently argued that the situation could be improved only by radical changes in policy and a profound reorganization of the existing system. It is in accordance with Kremlin policy that leading Communists who fail cannot simply be demoted and replaced; they must be severely punished on the basis of accusations made in such a way as to preserve the theory of infallibility of the Stalinist program. Moscow was, therefore, forced to agree to the most drastic action taken against Slansky. The main motive for the consent of the Kremlin to the removal and arrest of Slansky was, not the political or ideological one, however, but its strategic and economic interest in Czechoslovakia, which is paramount today. It was for this reason that Moscow supported Gottwald's proposals for a solution of Czech economic problems.(3)
 5. The naming of Anatol J. Lavrentiev as Ambassador to Czechoslovakia replacing Mikhail Silin indicates that the Kremlin, while accepting Gottwald's arguments for a profound political reorganization, and more particularly for an end of the dual control of Government and Party, is not willing to permit Gottwald to assume complete personal control in Czechoslovakia and sole liaison with Moscow without taking certain precautions. Lavrentiev, who was Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1945 to June 1948, is considered the best Communist analyst of the deviation of Tito. After his recall in 1948 he was promoted to the post of Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. Especially in view of the fact that it is not the custom of the USSR to nominate Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs as ambassadors to countries of the Soviet orbit, it seems apparent that Lavrentiev was sent to counter the centralization of power in Czechoslovakia in the person of Gottwald. The multiple liaison channels between leading Communists in Prague and the Kremlin have been destroyed by the recent purge; their function is now to be taken over by Lavrentiev with the aid of the Soviet missions in Czechoslovakia. In spite of this action, it remains a fact that Moscow's position in Czechoslovakia has been weakened by the removal of all its exponents from positions of leadership. The explanation for the Kremlin's acceptance of this situation must be its overriding interest in the productivity of the country and the fulfillment of Czech commitments to the USSR.(4)
 6. The fundamental reasons behind Gottwald's ouster of Slansky were, in addition to his personal ambition and his dislike for Slansky, his recognition of the serious condition of Czechoslovakia's economy, with lowered living standards and the resultant popular unrest, the deterioration of workers' morale and the corresponding drop in productivity, and the increasing
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His importance and popularity are still too limited, however, for him to take over the position formerly held by Slansky as leader of the opposition group.

10. On the other hand, Prime Minister Antonin Zapotocky, most popular leader in Czech Communist circles after Gottwald, is even less radical than Gottwald and is primarily interested in the well-being of the workers. The relationship between Gottwald and Zapotocky is not especially good, but the new trend in Gottwald's policy can be assumed to provide a basis for mutual support at least temporarily. Gottwald needs Zapotocky to pacify the working class, to increase their productivity and improve morale. Gottwald also needs Zapotocky to share the responsibility for the execution of the program of which he has gained complete control. At some later date, however, there is no doubt that Zapotocky will be relieved of his position as Prime Minister because of his domination of the trade unions through his popularity with the workers. Zapotocky, who is an old man and in poor health, will probably resign from his position and move into the background.
11. Now that he has gained the complete control for which he has been striving, Gottwald must take positive action to improve the domestic situation in Czechoslovakia and to increase production. Although it can be assumed that he will not act in such a manner as to aggravate the Kremlin immediately, but will start with minor measures which will give indications of slow improvement until he has consolidated his position in power, it is inevitable that his program will cause a conflict with the USSR's interests. The fact that the country has been transformed as a result of Soviet policy into the most powerful arsenal in Central Europe means that in case of an armed conflict Czechoslovakia would suffer in the first days of the war more serious consequences than it did under the Nazi occupation. It is believed that because of his understanding of this situation, Gottwald wishes to choose for Czechoslovakia a more independent line. Gottwald will not follow the policy of Tito; he does not wish to sever the alliance and bonds between Czechoslovakia and the USSR, but his primary interest is in the well-being of Czechoslovakia.

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- (1) Comment: In a self-criticism before the Central Committee of the KSC in September 1951, Gottwald admitted that he had overlooked many mistakes, but added that it was better to act even though belatedly. It is known that in March 1951 Gottwald was quietly investigating Slansky's connections with Arthur London and the French Communist Party. The manner in which Gottwald assumed control of the purge initiated by Slansky is similar to that by which Josef Stalin gained control of the purge of the Soviet Communist Party after the assassination of Sergei Kirov in 1934 and secured for himself absolute power in the USSR. Therefore, the Kremlin can make no formal reproach to Gottwald for his conduct of the Czechoslovak purge.

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- (2) Comment: For a fuller discussion of this point by the same sources, see

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- (3) Comment: It is also possible that the Soviet Politburo split on the question of support for Gottwald or Slansky, with Stalin supporting Gottwald and Zhdanov and Malenkov favoring Slansky.

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- (4) Comment: This situation is comparable to that in Poland where Moscow's exponent Wladyslaw Gomulka was removed from office for economic failures and was replaced by Boleslaw Bierut, who was without rival in internal Polish politics. However, Moscow is able to control Bierut in the person of Marshal Rokossowski, who has direct control both of the Polish Politburo and Army. Similar measures are anticipated in Rumania where Anna Pauker appears to be the most likely victim of a Communist Party purge.

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instability of the national regime. It is clear that Gottwald connected the person and policies of Slansky with this situation; it is hardly conceivable that he did not realize that Slansky alone could not be the sole cause of the difficulty, but that the real culprit was Moscow, whose policies Slansky was carrying out. By removing Slansky, Gottwald was actually opposing Soviet policy in Czechoslovakia, in spite of the fact that he has tried to disguise this fact by explaining his actions on political grounds.

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7. It is apparent that this new line taken by Gottwald represents at least an effort to obtain greater independence for Czechoslovakia, an improvement of its security in international relations, and a recognition of the specific problems that face the country. There is no doubt that Gottwald realizes that the steady change in the international situation is forcing concessions on the side of Soviet policy. Gottwald today considers himself a President who will make history and feels more than ever the full burden of his responsibility. He may be of the opinion that a modification of the relationship between his country and the USSR would be advantageous to both parties. Gottwald may not intend to create a situation which would lead to a break with the Kremlin, but such a policy, even if based on his fullest sincerity toward Moscow, carries within it the seeds of an inevitable conflict. The USSR could not accept any modification of the relationship between the two countries, and it is doubtful that Gottwald will at a later date be willing to make concessions which would reestablish the situation which he is at present trying to alter.
 8. Gottwald's position is made clear by the fact that he is in the process of gaining absolute control of both the State and the Party machinery by removing from key positions all men not fully trusted by him, primarily all supporters of Slansky and exponents of the Kremlin, and replacing them by his own followers. Control of the Czechoslovak Army is held by Gottwald's son-in-law, Dr. Alexej Cepicka; the Vice Minister of National Defense is General Bohumil Lastovicka, long Gottwald's personal secretary; Colonel Leopold Hofman, like Lastovicka a veteran of the Spanish International Brigade and, therefore, logically suspect, has been named commander of the SNB. Dr. Marta Gottwaldova-Cepickova, Gottwald's daughter, is in charge of the section for peoples' democracies in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Ivan Kopecky, 26-year-old son of Vaclav Kopecky, the Minister of Information and Gottwald's closest collaborator and adviser, heads the Soviet section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The new ministries created by the reorganization of September 1951 are headed by men trusted by Gottwald, as are the political and organizational secretariats of the Communist Party Central Committee. Finally, the positions of vice ministers in the various ministries are all held by followers of Gottwald and his clique.
 9. As a result of this concentration of all power in his own hands, Gottwald has wrecked the Kremlin's means of intervention in Czechoslovakia through its agents in key positions, and its policy of maintaining counter-balancing forces with which to oppose Gottwald in case of necessity without direct action on its part. Today there exists in Czechoslovakia no group sufficiently influential and politically qualified to be used by the Kremlin in opposition to Gottwald. The only man on which it could concentrate as a potential rival is Viliam Siroky, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is indebted solely to Moscow for his steady political ascendance since 1948. Although considered a Gottwald supporter, Siroky is too ambitious not to be willing to take such a position, even if it would mean the liquidation of Gottwald.

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