

November 24, 1989

Czechoslovakia: Opposition Grows Daily□□□

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Summary:

An analysis of the opposition's continued growth and potential Party responses.

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Although the hardliners still appear to be contemplating the use of force to maintain their power, the burgeoning of the opposition makes the prospect of success in repressive measures increasingly unlikely. [redacted]

Some 300,000 demonstrators called for the ouster of the hardline Communist regime in Prague yesterday, and 50,000 protesters heard Alexander Dubcek, party leader during the Prague Spring reform efforts in 1968, speak in Bratislava. Cardinal Tomasek, head of the Czechoslovak Catholic Church, has also backed the opposition, appealing to believers to help in ousting the current regime peacefully. Many factories have pledged to support the general strike called for next Monday. [redacted]

The regime's control of its own institutions appears to be eroding. [redacted] the party's armed militia in Prague has rejected orders to quell demonstrations and has refused to accept ammunition for weapons. [redacted] police elements in Prague have also publicly refused to participate in suppressing protests. [redacted]

General Secretary Jakes and Premier Adamec are vying for power. [redacted] Former Premier Strougal, representing 30 other party Central Committee members, has called for the resignation of the entire presidium. [redacted]

Comment: Active opposition has spread from Prague to many other cities and now includes virtually all segments of society. The vast dimensions of the protest suggest any last-ditch bid to reassert control will be futile. Any attempt at violent suppression would be as likely to intensify public hostility as to stifle it and would also leave the regime virtually isolated in both Eastern and Western Europe. [redacted]

The power struggle between the Adamec-led moderates and hardliners in the presidium may be decided at the Central Committee plenum today. The Central Committee has not elected a party leader since the choice of Dubcek in 1968 and has become a more orthodox body; it is not likely to tap a radical reformer. Should the hardliners prevail, their desperation might tempt them to risk a crackdown despite the odds against success. If Adamec's perspective is accepted, the regime probably would quickly enter into negotiations with the opposition in an effort to gain popular trust. [redacted]

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