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Czechoslovakia: Party Under the Gun [] [] []

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Summary:

An analysis of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and its decision to add seven new Presidium members.

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~~Top Secret~~




6.2(d)

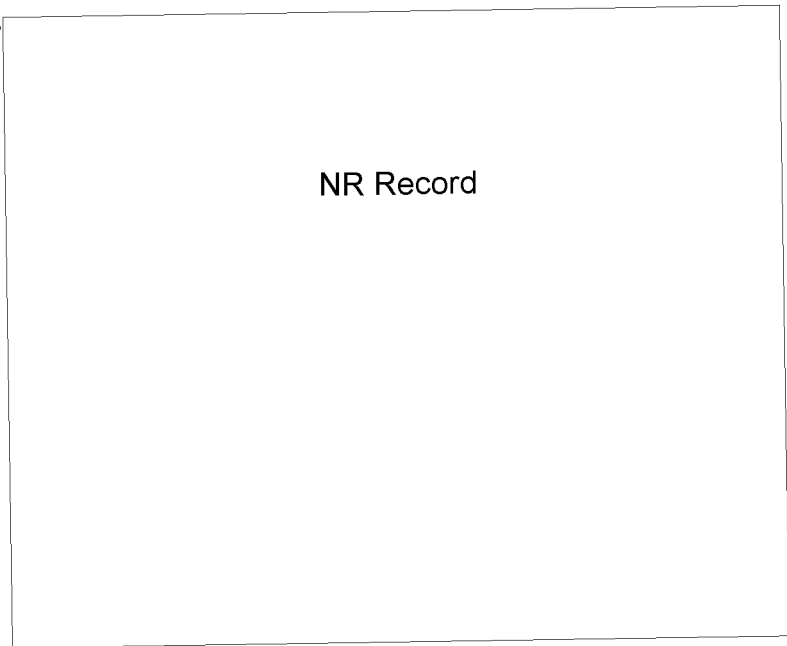
CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Party Under the Gun

The Czechoslovak Communist Party's crisis deepened throughout the weekend as members demanded sweeping leadership and policy changes. An emergency session of the Central Committee met last night; seven new Presidium members were added, and Prague party boss Stepan, Trade Union boss Zavadil, and hardliner Jozef Lenart were removed from their posts. General Secretary Urbanek has called for an extraordinary party congress for 26 January. 

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Comment: The swift ouster of Stepan, Zavadil, and Lenart underscores the growing power of the newly founded Civic Forum, which had demanded their removal. Angered by the results of the Central Committee's session on Friday—which removed some hardliners but retained others—and responding to popular pressure, party members apparently forced the leadership to convene another emergency session yesterday to carry out additional changes. An extraordinary congress would enable party reformers to sweep the old guard from the Central Committee and to install reform-minded leaders. Civic Forum, however, almost certainly will continue to call for mass demonstrations—a two-hour general strike called for today is ensured of widespread support—until the party formally repudiates its monopoly on political power. 

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