

**April 25, 1968**  
**Report by P. Shelest on the April 1968 Plenum of  
the CC CPSU**

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**Summary:**

P. Shelest delivers a report at a Party meeting on the April 1968 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, with particular focus on the stepped-up activity of revisionist, Zionist, and anti-socialist forces in [Czechoslovakia]."

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

TOP SECRET  
REPORT DELIVERED BY P. E. SHELEST AT THE PARTY MEETING IN THE  
"ARSENAL" FACTORY "ON THE RESULTS OF THE APRIL PLENUM OF THE CPSU CC" 25  
APRIL 1968

Comrades! The Communist Party and its Central Committee constantly devote enormous attention to matters concerning the international situation and the development of the Communist movement as the basis for the victory of the forces of world socialism over capitalism. 45 This is necessary because imperialist reaction recently has been launching attacks against the socialist countries and is trying to weaken and create discord within the socialist commonwealth and the world Communist movement. We must always remember the shrewd Leninist warning that imperialism, so long as it exists, will struggle with full force for every position and seek to attack the positions of socialism, probing for its weak points. In connection with this, our party is confronted by an endless flow of new tasks. We live in a world divided into two irreconcilable camps—socialism and capitalism. A fierce, uncompromising class struggle is under way between them. This demands that we precisely and clearly define who is with us in this struggle, who our sincere friends are, and who is reliable and faithful. 46 Our party and people have learned a great deal from our 50 years of struggle against imperialism and reaction. We are able to discern the most insidious techniques of our enemies. The imperialists understand that nowadays they cannot overwhelm the socialist countries with a frontal attack. They are resorting to ever more refined tactics, trying to get us to let down our guard. They are also attempting to sow dissension among our ranks so that they can launch strikes against individual socialist countries. All of this means that the Central Committee and the CC Politburo must keep close track of new phenomena and processes on the international scene, and must react to them in a timely manner.

It also means that they must continually perfect all of our foreign policy activity. The Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, on 9-10 April, was of exceptionally great importance for our party and for the peoples of the Soviet Union. As you know, the agenda of the Plenum was "On Current Problems of the International Situation and on the Struggle by the CPSU for Cohesion in the World Communist Movement." . . . . .

47 Comrades! The Communists and all workers of our country are especially alarmed about events in Czechoslovakia and the stepped-up activity of revisionist, Zionist, and anti-socialist forces in that country. The situation in Czechoslovakia has become so complex because certain leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia have failed to undertake a principled, class-based assessment of ongoing events. And some of them, having succumbed to the pressure of petit-bourgeois elements, are even ascribing legitimacy to the demands for "unlimited" democratization and freedom for everyone and everything. They assert that only under these circumstances will the party be able to carry out a "specific" policy suitable for Czechoslovak conditions. 48 At the same time, hostile elements cloaking themselves with false slogans of "democracy," "reform," and "freedom of thought" are launching an attack on the party and seeking to undermine socialist gains. In this regard, the enemies are acting slyly and insidiously. They are even extolling some of the new leaders, especially those who support notions of "unlimited democracy," "renewal," and "a special Czechoslovak path," as well as those who believe that the intelligentsia must "formulate the party's policy." Some of the leaders of Czechoslovakia do not understand that by losing control over the propaganda organs—the press, radio, and television—and by condoning the persecution of so-called "conservatives" and the glorification of "progressives," they are causing the dissolution of the party and creating conditions for the stepped-up activity of hostile elements. The Dresden conference of the leaders of fraternal parties, 49 which was convened at the initiative of the CPSU, undoubtedly had a great—and, I would even say, a sobering—effect on certain leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. 50 At this conference, the CPSU delegation provided a frank and scrupulous assessment of the situation in Czechoslovakia, emphasizing that events could develop into a counterrevolutionary upheaval unless decisive measures are promptly implemented. Our delegation drew attention to the fact that in the current situation it is necessary above all to appeal to the working class and tell workers honestly about the situation in the party and the country and, by relying on the support of the working class, to embark on an offensive against reactionaries and anti-socialist elements. Only in these circumstances can the situation be rectified. At the same time, the Czechoslovak comrades were told that our party supports Cde. Dubcek and the new leadership and is doing everything to help them remedy the situation and thereby strengthen the positions of the new leadership. We urged them to realize

that the current leaders of the KSC have an enormous responsibility for the fate of socialism in Czechoslovakia and for ensuring the proper internal policy and foreign policy line of the KSC. Our delegation declared that the CPSU will not remain indifferent to the course of events. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries are taking all necessary measures to forestall the victory of counterrevolution. The prospects for wider economic cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries were also discussed in Dresden, and it was proposed that this matter be considered at the highest level in the near future. All the delegations of the fraternal socialist countries completely supported and endorsed our assessment and candidly told the KSC officials about their alarm at the situation in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak comrades acknowledged that the situation in the republic is complex, but they declared that Czechoslovakia is not turning away from the socialist path and will maintain a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It also will uphold its obligations to the Warsaw Pact. 51 The meeting in Dresden was timely and worthwhile. It helped the Czechoslovak comrades correctly grasp the situation in their country, and it had a significant effect on the proceedings and results of the recent KSC CC Plenum. Just after the Conference, some KSC leaders said that for them Dresden was a learning experience and that the Soviet comrades were absolutely correct when they warned about the threat of counterrevolution. It must be said that the recent CC Plenum of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia showed that the party leadership is striving to regain control of events and focus the party's attention and the attention of all workers on the fulfillment of positive tasks of socialist construction. 52 The resolutions of the KSC CC Plenum draw attention to the necessity of increasing the leading role of the party in the country. They also refer to the great importance of the activity of all organs of the party and state apparatus, including the army and state security organs. But some leading officials at the Plenum, and even Cde. Dubcek, to varying degrees supported the demands that are now fashionable in Czechoslovakia for comprehensive "liberalization." It must be said that overall Cde. Dubcek's speeches, despite some negative points, provided a better sense that the KSC leadership understands the necessity of waging a struggle against anti-socialist forces. In the near future it will be evident to what extent the resolutions of this KSC CC Plenum can help shift events in the country back onto the right path. However, even after the KSC CC Plenum, the situation in the country remains extremely complicated. The revisionist and right-wing opportunist elements, styling themselves as "progressives," continue to attack the party and denigrate the achievements of socialism in the name of "renewal" and "democratic development." They are exploiting the press, radio, and television to further their anti-party aims, having planted anti-socialist and Zionist elements in the mass media. Recently—on 13 April, to be exact—the central organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, "Rudé právo," published a long article by someone named Kaplan. 53 The author claims that the time has come to reexamine the party from its very roots. "This is an important step," he writes. "Changes should be made in all the policy-making procedures. The country's policies must be determined by the whole society, not just by one small part of it" (i.e., the party). Further on, Kaplan says that "all progressive forces have not yet had their say. Non-Communists must play an important role in the political and social life of the country and be able to influence the elections of political leaders." And this has been published repeatedly in the official organ of the Communist Party after the KSC CC Plenum! In the same newspaper someone named Šulc writes that the "new policy" cannot be devised by the "old people." 54 These pronouncements are being made in defiance of statements by certain members of the KSC CC Presidium, who are calling for the "hysteria surrounding specific cases of rehabilitation to be condemned." They emphasize that the party cannot permit a mass exodus of officials and must support honest party workers. Šulc believes that "the issue here is not only about a 'changing of the guard,' when everything else remains the same, but about the beginning of fundamental changes in the party and society." The newspaper "Práce," which generally has embraced anti-socialist positions, featured an article claiming that if matters are to be decided by a universal vote, it is doubtful that the KSC has the right to continue to lead the society. 55 The failure of the Communist Party to put up a struggle against the revisionist and anti-socialist elements, and the discussions by Communists about "democratization"

and "liberalization," have been skillfully exploited by the enemies of socialism to reinforce their activities. Of late, the People's (Catholic) Party and National Socialist Party have been increasingly active. 56 Until recently, these parties did not have primary organizations, but now they have set them up. It is sufficient to note that in the past three months alone, the People's Party has expanded by 100,000 members and is already demanding to be given not just one but several posts in the government. We increasingly find in the press, radio, and television, and in speeches at gatherings of intellectuals and students, calls for "renewal." They explain that these statements are in support of a return to the republic of Masaryk and Beneš—that is, a bourgeois republic under the guise of "socialism." 57 The events in Czechoslovakia show that hostile elements in that country are being directed by a skillful hand from abroad. It has become known that since 1966, the West German and American governments have made an enormous effort in Czechoslovak society to undermine the authority and influence of the KSC leadership headed by Cde. Novotný. By skillfully manipulating the nationalist sentiments of Slovaks and Czechs and the discontent of various strata of the population with violations of "democracy"—discontent that is particularly acute among certain members of the intelligentsia and youth—they have succeeded in intensifying the struggle against leading figures in the party and state. The US and West German imperialists are following a cautious policy and are deftly using all channels of ideological and economic influence to achieve a further weakening of the role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the state affairs and political life of the country and to provoke a gradual schism between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. To this end, they propose to continue a broad campaign justifying and supporting demands about the necessity of carrying out fundamental reforms in the country, establishing a multiparty or at least two-party system in Czechoslovakia, and granting automatic rehabilitation to all those who were earlier convicted. The revanchists from the Federal Republic of Germany are even proposing to give Czechoslovakia economic assistance of some 260 million marks to develop light industry and improve the population's living standards. 58 Ideological subversion and bribery of Czechoslovak citizens are increasing. This policy is reflected in articles in the Czechoslovak press. On 10 April the weekly "Student" published a lecture by some professor named Sviták under the title "With a Head Against the Wall," which he presented to students at Prague university. 59 In this lecture he voiced the demand: "Support the workers' movement, but without any officials in the party apparatus; place intellectuals in charge of the movement." His entire presentation reflected a malicious, anti-socialist orientation. He criticizes the entire political system of socialism, declaring that the "maximum program of the Communist Party is our minimum program," and that personnel changes in the leadership are of no interest to him. On the contrary, "we have a fundamental stake in adopting profound structural changes because they will clear the path to an open, socialist society." Finishing his lecture, this sorry excuse for a professor declared: "The totalitarian dictatorship is our enemy no. 1. We must destroy this dictatorship, or it will destroy us." Events in Czechoslovakia and to some extent in Poland confirm that the American and West German imperialists are using new and, I would say, step-by-step tactics. In Hungary in 1956 the imperialists urged the local reactionaries to embark on an armed attack to seize power, whereas in Czechoslovakia they are trying to establish a bourgeois order by "peaceful means." That is, they are trying gradually to change the situation so that the reactionaries can gradually seize one position after another. They are building up their forces with the aim of launching a battle—that is, achieving a majority of the votes—in the upcoming elections to the National Assembly. There is already a serious danger that the People's and People's-Socialist Parties in Czechoslovakia will take part in the elections not as part of the National Front (as was done previously), but on the basis of their own demagogic platform in the hope of gaining more votes and demanding the creation of a coalition government, in which the main role will be played by reactionary forces seeking to restore the bourgeois order. The rationale for this new tactic of imperialism has been explicated by one of the American "theoreticians" of psychological warfare, Margolin. 60 He wrote that "in the future the role that artillery played in preparations for an infantry attack will be played by subversive propaganda. Its task is to destroy the enemy psychologically before the armed forces even begin to mobilize." The author argues that "this sort of strategy, if applied correctly, can

achieve fantastic results.”<sup>61</sup> Whereas the imperialists and fascists used to speak openly about the destruction of socialism and the enslavement of the populations of other nations, bourgeois propaganda is now concealing its genuine aims by prattling on about “an increase in the material well-being of people,” “unlimited democracy” and “freedom,” and the “delights of the American way of life.” Even the supervisors of that patently anti-Soviet broadcast station, Radio Liberty, have begun to claim that they are not anti-Soviet and not anti-Communists.<sup>62</sup> They supposedly are interested only in the “development of democracy” and “equality among the Soviet republics,” as well as “personal freedom.” The complexity of the struggle in a number of socialist countries is evident from the fact that they must struggle not only against a foreign enemy – imperialism – but also against the remnants of hostile classes and against manifestations of bourgeois ideology. Bourgeois propaganda and malevolent imperialist intelligence services are using all manner of insidious techniques to try to undermine the trust that the peoples of socialist countries have in their current state and social order and in the internal and foreign policies of the Communist Parties. They are making every effort to discredit the Communists and leading organs of the party and to disrupt party and state discipline. They are also seeking to tarnish the activity of the state security organs, the police, the courts, the procurator's office, and the senior officials in those agencies. By inciting nationalist sentiments, the enemy is doing everything to undermine the friendship between the peoples of socialist countries. Under the guise of a “struggle for democracy,” they are stirring up an outdated and unsavory mood among segments of the intelligentsia and young people. At the same time, the imperialists are resorting to economic subversion. Through front organizations they are providing credits to certain socialist countries, supposedly in the hope of “building bridges” between West and East.<sup>63</sup> In reality they are seeking to undermine the socialist commonwealth and its economic ties. Bourgeois propaganda and imperialist intelligence services are carrying out their subversive activities through a multitude of channels: the radio, the press, different unions, tourists, and other contacts. The big bosses of imperialism are taking vigorous measures to activate bourgeois-émigré counterrevolutionary centers. During the events in Czechoslovakia and Poland, hostile elements reared their heads. However, they did not dare to speak out openly in support of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet demands. They understand that this game is over once and for all. As a result, while providing cover for themselves with demagogic statements about “friendship” with the Soviet Union, the enemies at the same time are sowing doubts about some sort of “inequality” and about the pursuit of a special, “independent” foreign policy. They are also trying to undercut the leading role of the party. We all are well aware that they must do this in order to lead workers astray, particularly the gullible younger workers, and to strengthen their anti-popular positions. Under the nationalist slogan of a “special course,” they are waging a struggle against socialism and Communism. At the moment it is still impossible to give any sort of definitive assessment of the events in Czechoslovakia. The CC Politburo supports continual ties with the Czechoslovak comrades and with the leaders of a number of fraternal parties to help the Czechoslovak friends. We know that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia contains healthy forces, who are able to regain control of the situation and guide the country back onto the socialist path. Our task is to provide comprehensive assistance to these forces and to keep close tabs on the way events develop. In the event of danger, all of our means and capabilities will be employed to thwart the intrigues of our enemies who want to tear fraternal Czechoslovakia out of the commonwealth of socialist countries.<sup>64</sup> The Communists of Ukraine and the entire Ukrainian nation wish, with all their heart and soul, great success to the Czechoslovak friends in their complex struggle to normalize the situation in the party and the country and to attain new victories in socialist construction....<sup>65</sup>

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest is referring here to a CPSU Central Committee plenum held on 9-10 April 1968. The full transcripts and supporting documents for this plenum were declassified in 1995 (though the materials were not actually available for another five years, reflecting the ambiguity of what the words “classified” and “declassified” mean in Russia). See “Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS – XXIII Soyvz: Aprel'skii Plenum TsK KPSS (9-10 aprelya 1968 g.),” 9-10 April 1968 (Top Secret), in RGANI, F. 2, Op. 3, Dd. 89-108. The plenum (and Brezhnev's keynote opening speech) were organized around the theme of “Ob aktual'nykh problemakh

mezhdunarodnogo polozheniya i bor'be KPSS za splochnost' mirovogo kommunisticheskogo dvizheniya" (On Current Problems Concerning the International Situation and the CPSU's Struggle for Cohesion in the World Communist Movement). Although Shelest's lengthy speech to the "Arsenal" party aktiv covered all the issues discussed at the plenum by Brezhnev and other officials, only the sections dealing specifically with Czechoslovakia are included here. Substantial portions of Shelest's speech at the plenum itself are featured in Part 3 of my "Ukraine and the Soviet-Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968" the CWIHP Bulletin. Shelest's "Arsenal" speech is much longer and more detailed than his plenum speech, and the "Arsenal" speech touches on certain events in Czechoslovakia that occurred after the plenum was over. However, more than two dozen brief paragraphs (or portions of paragraphs) from the plenum speech are repeated almost verbatim in the "Arsenal" speech. Many of these duplicated paragraphs do not pertain to Czechoslovakia and are therefore not included in the translation here. A small number of duplicated paragraphs concerning events in Czechoslovakia are included here (and are marked as such by annotations) because they were modified significantly from the plenum speech. Numerous paragraphs about Romania that were repeated almost verbatim have been omitted because they can be found in my translation of Shelest's plenum speech in the next issue of the CWHIP Bulletin.<sup>46</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The last three sentences in this paragraph and the whole of the next paragraph are taken almost verbatim from Shelest's plenum speech.<sup>47</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Omitted here are lengthy sections about the Vietnam war, U.S.-Soviet relations, Sino-Soviet relations, internal developments in China, tensions between the Soviet Union and Cuba, plans for the upcoming world Communist conference, tensions with Romania, and other matters that do not bear directly on the Czechoslovak crisis. The section on Czechoslovakia begins on p. 34 of Shelest's 62-page speech.<sup>48</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This paragraph and the next three brief paragraphs are taken almost verbatim from Shelest's plenum speech.<sup>49</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: On 23 March 1968 the Soviet and East German authorities hurriedly convened an emergency meeting in Dresden. Romania was not invited to take part, but the leaders of the six other Warsaw Pact states – Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union – met to discuss recent developments in the Eastern bloc. The Romanians were excluded because they had been uncooperative at top-level meetings in Budapest and Sofia earlier in the year and would probably have behaved in a similar manner at Dresden if they had been invited. Evidently, the rushed timing of the Dresden conference was determined not only by pressure from Ulbricht and the Polish leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, but also by the approach of a KSC Central Committee plenum (which formally started on 28 March) and by Brezhnev's desire to act before a successor to Novotný could be named as Czechoslovak president. Having been left out of many of the recent personnel decisions in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Politburo this time wanted to ensure that a politically acceptable candidate would replace Novotný.<sup>50</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Of all the major gatherings between Czechoslovak leaders and their East-bloc counterparts during the 1968 crisis, the Dresden conference was the only one that remained inscrutable until very recently. In the pre-glasnost era, authoritative analyses of the crisis by Western scholars, notably the books by H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) and Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), contained only brief, sketchy descriptions of the Dresden meeting. Even after the former East-bloc archives opened in the early 1990s, much of what transpired in Dresden remained obscure. Verbatim transcripts of the other multilateral conferences held in 1968 were quickly located in the archives, but no stenographic accounts of the Dresden meeting turned up, and it was generally assumed that none existed. Brezhnev had explicitly requested at the outset of the conference that no minutes be taken and that the stenographers be ordered to leave the room. His request was duly observed. Hence, the closest thing to a stenographic report in the former Soviet archives and in most of the East European archives was the handwritten notes of the participants. Until 1993, these notes, as well as interviews with and memoirs by participants at Dresden, were the only first-hand source of what went on at the conference. It is now clear, however, that a secret stenographic record – albeit a somewhat incomplete one – was kept by East German officials,

thanks to a hidden recording system. The proceedings apparently were taped and transcribed without the knowledge of the other participants, including the Soviet delegates. A copy of the transcribed proceedings, "Stenografische Niederschrift der Beratung von sechs Bruderparteien in Dresden am Sonnabend, dem 23. März 1968," 23 March 1968 (Top Secret), is stored in the former SED archives in Berlin, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMDB), Zentrales Parteiarchiv (ZPA) der SED, J IV 2/201/777 and 2/201/778. It was discovered in late 1993 by a German researcher, Lutz Priess. The transcript largely corroborates the notes and retrospective accounts of several of the participants in the Dresden conference. For example, the description provided by János Kádár in a lengthy interview in early 1989, based on the extensive handwritten notes he took at the meeting, is amply borne out by the stenographic record. See the interview and documents in János Kádár: Végrendelet (Budapest: Kalligram Könyvkiadó, 1989). Much the same is true of the detailed notes produced by other officials such as Vasil Bilak and Wladyslaw Gomulka, whose perspectives on the conference were very different from Kádár's. Bilak's notes are available on file cards in SÚA, Archiv ÚV KSC, F. Gustáv Husák (01), A.j. 131, in Prague, and Gomulka's notes, titled "Spotkanie w Dreźnie," can be found on notepad sheets (some of which are inscribed "I Sekretarz Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej") in the Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Archiwum Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej (KC PZPR), Paczka (Pacz.) 119, Tom (T.) 54, in Warsaw. For the most part, both the tenor and the content of the session are accurately reflected in earlier records. The discovery of the stenographic report is still of great importance, however, not only because it confirms these other sources, but also because it fills in many key gaps. As with the other multilateral meetings in 1968 for which detailed transcripts have recently become available, the Dresden conference can now be studied as fully as needed.<sup>51</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest's brief account here is selective, but generally corresponds well with the transcript and other newly declassified documents. During preliminary contacts to set up the Dresden meeting, Brezhnev and Ulbricht had assured Dubcek that the talks would focus on multilateral economic and trade matters and on ways of improving military cooperation in the Warsaw Pact. Invitations were extended to the heads of central planning from all the participating countries. It turned out, however, that the presence of those economic officials was almost wholly cosmetic. The discussion turned immediately to the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, forcing the KSC delegates onto the defensive throughout. Dubcek and his colleagues were dismayed when they realized what the underlying purpose of the meeting really was, and the KSC leader voiced a strong "reservation" about the sudden change of agenda. Nevertheless, the five Czechoslovak officials continued to take part in the meeting (rather than walking out) and thereby inadvertently legitimized the notion that Czechoslovakia's "internal affairs" were a valid topic for a multilateral conference. Dubcek spoke vigorously in support of his domestic program and reaffirmed Czechoslovakia's loyalty to the Warsaw Pact. All the other KSC officials at the conference, including those like Vasil Bilak and Drahomir Kolder who were distinctly uncomfortable about the reform process, supported Dubcek's position and rejected allegations that the KSC had lost control of events. The response that the Czechoslovak delegates got, however, was surprisingly hostile. In a lengthy, emotional statement, Brezhnev warned that "chaos" would ensue unless the KSC took urgent steps to reassert strict control over the media, forestall the rise of unofficial political associations, and bolster the "leading role" of the KSC. The criticisms expressed by Gomulka and Ulbricht were stronger still. Both leaders charged that a full-scale counterrevolution was already under way in Czechoslovakia. Gomulka's speech, in particular, was laden with invective and abusive comments that at times threatened to break up the conference. The Hungarian leader, János Kádár, was much more conciliatory, arguing that "the Czechoslovak comrades themselves know best" how to cope with their own problems; but even Kádár sought to convince Dubcek and the other KSC officials that resolute measures were needed soon to prevent the onset of a full-fledged "counterrevolution" in Czechoslovakia. In response, Dubcek and the other Czechoslovak officials again staunchly defended the Prague Spring and their own actions, arguing that the KSC enjoyed greater popular support than ever before and that the Party was fully in control of events. Despite these assurances and the

uneasy compromise that ensued, the Dresden meeting left no doubt that the Prague Spring was creating a serious split between Czechoslovakia and its Warsaw Pact allies.<sup>52</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest is referring here to a plenum of the KSC Central Committee on 1-5 April, which adopted the party's new Action Program, called for the rehabilitation of all persons unjustly repressed under Gottwald and Novotný, and elected a new KSC Presidium and Secretariat.<sup>53</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The article in question is Karel Kaplan, "O výsledcích lednového pléna ÚV KSC," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 13 April 1968, p. 3. Kaplan, a prolific historian, was a member of the commission headed by Jan Piller on political and judicial rehabilitations. In that capacity, Kaplan had access to many secret documents in the party and Interior Ministry archives, which he was able to use to good effect, publishing shorter commentaries as well as longer, serialized articles. Kaplan also was one of five members of an official "Commission on the History of Czechoslovakia After 1945" (*Komisa pro dejiny Ceskoslovenska po r. 1945*), which was set up in early 1968 to reassess the country's history. On the same page on which Kaplan's own article appeared in *Rudé právo* on 13 April, an article was published by the full commission to rebut the speech that Novotný had delivered ten days earlier at the KSC Central Committee plenum. (Although Kaplan was forced to live in exile in Munich after Soviet troops crushed the Prague Spring, he was able to continue publishing valuable books and articles based on his earlier research. Following the demise of the Czechoslovak Communist regime in 1989, Kaplan returned to Prague, where he took up a senior research post at the Institute for Contemporary History and produced a large number of document anthologies and analytical works.)<sup>54</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The reference here is to Zdislav Šulc, "Program nové politiky," *Rudé právo* (Prague), 13 April 1968, p. 1.<sup>55</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Presumably, this refers to Miloš Fiala, "Potreba kritiky," *Práce* (Prague), 12 April 1968, p. 3. <sup>56</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The People's Party and Socialist Party in the Czech lands had ceased to be effective organizations after the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Both parties nominally continued to exist as part of a National Front with the Communist Party, but they had to defer to the KSC on all matters large and small. In 1968, however, the People's Party and Socialist Party were gradually revived as separate entities. Although they had not yet become fully independent parties by the time of the Soviet invasion, they were moving in that direction. This was evident as early as March 1968, when the People's Party elected new officers and issued a statement that it would henceforth promote a "Christian worldview." That pledge was reaffirmed when the People's Party released a new program the following month proclaiming itself "an independent and democratic political party . . . committed to a Christian worldview." Although the party indicated that it would remain in the National Front for the time being, it described the Front as no more than "a voluntary grouping of independent and fully equal political parties" and "a forum for dialogue and exchanges of views." The Socialist Party also elected new officers in March 1968 and pledged to become an independent champion of democratic values. In April the Socialists issued a program declaring that Czechoslovakia must embrace "democratic socialism," based on "humanism, democracy, and personal freedom." The Party affirmed that it would "pursue its own goals in accordance with its members' interests" and would never again accept "the right of a single political party to claim to have a universal, uniquely justified, and exclusively correct interpretation of socialism." Further statements from the People's Party and Socialist Party continued through the summer of 1968, and the membership of both parties rapidly expanded.

<sup>57</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš were two of the three co-founders of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Masaryk served as President of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1935 (he died in 1937), and Beneš succeeded him, serving as President (including a period in exile during the Nazi occupation) until June 1948, a few months after he was forced to acquiesce in the Communist seizure of power. (Beneš died within three months of his resignation.) After 1948, the memory of Masaryk and Beneš was still widely revered in Czechoslovakia, but officially the Communist authorities had denounced them as "bourgeois opponents of socialism."

<sup>58</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Economic ties between Czechoslovakia and West Germany had been expanding since the mid-1960s, when Novotný had agreed to the establishment of a West German trade mission in Prague. Economic relations between the two countries continued to develop rapidly in the first few months of



1968. In late March 1968, the Western press disclosed that Czechoslovakia had made overtures to the West German government about the possibility of obtaining a large hard-currency loan (in the range of 200 million to 300 million Deutschmarks). These reports, as indicated in the annotation to Document No. 3 above, were subsequently confirmed by Czechoslovak deputy prime minister Ota Šik. The revelations provoked a sharp rebuke from the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, who wanted to forestall any improvement of relations with West Germany unless the West German government formally recognized the permanent existence of two German states and accepted the Oder-Neisse border (with Poland) and the inner-German border (with East Germany) as inviolable.<sup>59</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This refers to a celebrated speech by Ivan Sviták, a former Communist and Marxist philosopher who became one of the harshest critics of the Communist regime as far back as the mid-1950s. (A series of articles by Sviták in *Literární Noviny* in 1956 and 1957 had brought the first of many official condemnations of him as a "revisionist" and "opportunist.") Before 1968, Sviták had been subjected to reprisals and disciplinary measures (he was dismissed from the Institute of Philosophy in 1964 and then expelled from the KSC), but in 1968 he became a highly visible proponent of fundamental political changes, including free elections, which, he argued, the Communist Party could win only if it transformed itself from "a militarized, bureaucratic organization into a civilian party that upholds fundamental human rights" and "respects the sovereign will of the people as the basis for all power." In his lectures at Charles University and in other public forums, Sviták especially tried to organize young people around the cause of radical democratization. Many of his essays and commentaries from 1968 were published in translation in the West, notably in the collection *The Czechoslovak Experiment, 1968-1969* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). Some of his other writings from that period are in an earlier anthology, *Verbotene Horizonte: Prag zwischen zwei Wintern* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1969).<sup>60</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This refers to Leo Jay Margolin, a professor of business administration at New York University and Manhattan Community College. Earlier, he had written a widely-used book about psychological warfare in World War II, *Paper Bullets: A Brief History of Psychological Warfare in World War II* (New York: Froben Press, 1946).<sup>61</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This paragraph and the next three were taken almost verbatim from Shelest's speech to the plenum.<sup>62</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The future of Radio Liberty (RL) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) was under review in Washington even as Shelest spoke (though he most likely was unaware of the confidential deliberations). In the mid-1960s, lengthy articles in *The New York Times* and other American newspapers revealed that the two broadcasting agencies had been receiving secret funding from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These disclosures sparked a debate about the desirability of preserving RFE and RL. Senior officials in the Johnson administration were trying to devise funding and programming options that would prevent Congress from eliminating (or at least drastically curtailing) the radios' activities. See "The Future of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty," memorandum from the secretary of the interagency 303 Committee to President Johnson, 25 September 1967 (Secret/Eyes Only), in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Eastern Europe, 1964-1968*, Vol. XVII (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), pp. 56-66 (hereinafter cited as FRUS with years and volume numbers).<sup>63</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: On 23 May 1964, President Lyndon Johnson adopted a "bridge-building" policy toward East-Central Europe, announcing that "we will continue to build bridges across the gulf which has divided us from Eastern Europe. They will be bridges of increased trade, of ideas, of visitors, and of humanitarian aid." See his speech in Lexington, Virginia in U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1964* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), Vol. 1, pp. 708-710. For an intriguing collection of declassified materials on the implementation of this policy over the next four years, see FRUS1964-1968XVII, pp. 12-112, *passim*. An extended rationale for "bridge-building" was laid out by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book *Alternative to Partition: For a Broader Conception of America's Role in Europe* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965). The basic notion was that the United States and other Western countries would seek to build political and economic "bridges" to East European countries (rather than going through Moscow) in the hope

of loosening those countries' ties with the Soviet Union.<sup>64</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Some phrases (but no entire sentences) in this paragraph were taken from Shelest's speech to the plenum.<sup>65</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Omitted here are another 17 pages of Shelest's speech that condemn "Zionists, bourgeois chauvinists, and nationalists" and that deal generally with the world Communist movement and preparations for the world Communist conference slated for November 1968.