

May 14, 1968

**KGB Lt. Col. A. Zhabchenko's Report to the
Ukrainian SSR's Council of Ministers**

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R E P O R T

On 13 May, I had a meeting with the head of the Interior Ministry Directorate in the East Slovakian region, Colonel J. S. Majer, at his request. He arrived at the meeting alone. According to Cde. Majer, his deputy from State Security, Lieut.-Colonel A. A. Dovin, was home sick from a serious nervous disorder. Accompanying me was the head of the 5th Department, Cde. Maiorchuk.

Having said nothing about the reasons for and goals of the meeting, Cde. Majer began, at his own initiative, to speak about the situation in his country, which in his view is becoming more complicated and is characterized by the following:

1. The anti-socialist forces and demagogic and anarchical elements are stepping up their activity. The mass media- the press, radio, and television-remain in the hands of right-wing intellectuals, including many Zionists. The press, radio, and television are ever more vigorously exploiting for their own ends the agitation, demagoguery, and incitement of passions around the so-called rehabilitations. Cde. Majer gave a direct assurance that something will be done to counter this. On 3 May in Prague a meeting of 50,000 students took place. Speakers who endorsed Marxist positions were booed and jeered.

Several days ago, at the grave of one of the founders of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak who was a former general in the French service, Stefánik (roughly 60 kilometers from Bratislava), a demonstration of 100,000 people took place, featuring many speeches hostile to socialist Czechoslovakia. At other meetings and demonstrations, too, the participants are carrying anti-Communist banners and yelling anti-Communist slogans.

2. Three groups have taken shape in the KSC CC Presidium:

- conservatives
- centrists
- rightists.

With regard to the conservatives, Cde. Majer was not able to report anything concrete. It is generally understood that they are adopting a wait-and-see position.

The centrists, headed by Cde. Dubcek, also include Cde. Lenárt, Cde. Cerník, the secretary of the Slovak Communist Party CC, Cde. Bilak, and the secretary of the party committee at the Kosice metallurgical combine, Cde. Rigo-all of whom firmly support socialism and friendship with the USSR.

The right wing is headed by Smrkovský. They are supported by pro-Zionist circles, including Goldstücker, the rector of Charles University (in Prague); Kriegel, a member of the CC Presidium; and Ota Sik. They advocate an orientation toward the West.

They are heatedly debating the question of whether to convene an Extraordinary Congress. Four regional organizations have declared their support for convening it. Among these is the Prague organization. This is especially unfortunate because the Prague committee is the largest and most influential of the party organizations, and includes many intellectuals among its members. In the Central Committee the rightist group headed by Smrkovský has spoken in favor of a congress.

Cde. Majer affirms that a serious danger has arisen that if an extraordinary congress is convened under current circumstances, the top of the party will be hijacked by

rightists. He explains that this will be the likely result of the congress because pro-Zionist elements who have a stake in it enjoy wide support in the provincial party organizations, which in turn will have a strong influence on the congress delegates. They are also raising large amounts of money for this purpose, and, as indicated above, the press, radio, and television are in their hands.

3. Many reactionary organizations have been formed. The largest of them (with nearly 100,000 people) is the so-called Organization of Politically Active Non-Communists. Others include youth organizations, professional groups, sport clubs, Legionnaires (participants in the Czechoslovak rebellion in Siberia and their successors), cultural organizations, and others.

4. The working class is standing on the sidelines, away from these events. This can be explained by the fact that the KSC, despite having a stake in activating workers, has been deprived of the means of activating them through the press, the radio, and so forth.

5. Colonel Majer showed me a leaflet he had been given, which had been typeset in Czech on a sheet of paper a bit smaller than the standard size. The leaflet was phrased in a Marxist-Leninist spirit and was written skillfully for public consumption. It says that events in the CSSR are nothing other than a struggle between socialism and capitalism, and that the question has arisen of who-whom. It also says that the reactionary, bourgeois forces are trying, by means of demagoguery, imprecations, and wild speculation about the inevitable mistakes of the recent past, to lead Czechoslovak workers astray, do away with socialist gains, and plunge the country into the grip of imperialism. It then calls on workers to rise up in defense of the KSC and socialist gains, to put an end to the anti-popular actions of the reactionaries, and to defend their own rights. Cde. Majer says that these sorts of leaflets were distributed in large quantities in Prague. I get the impression that he suspects the Soviet organs are in some way involved in the dissemination of the leaflets. In an emphatically worried manner, he further said that reactionary leaflets in the form of brochures also are being distributed in the country.

6. The situation in Slovakia is significantly better than in the Czech lands, and in Eastern Slovakia it is better than in Western Slovakia.

7. Cde. Majer is very much interested in the reasons for and results of the meeting that took place in Moscow among the leaders of the CPSU, the MSzMP, the PZPR, the SED, and the Communist Party of Bulgaria. We got the impression that this was one of the tasks he had been assigned in asking for this meeting. It is possible that the first secretary of the East Slovakia regional committee of the Slovak Communist Party, Cde. Koscelanský, was the one who gave him this assignment, though perhaps not at his own initiative.

8. On the situation in the army, Cde. Majer said only that it is unfortunate that almost the entire General Staff has been replaced.

9. Cde. Majer refrained from characterizing ethnic relations and the behavior of ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans). With regard to the Ukrainians, he said that in his region they number only 150 (though in reality the number is around 100,000).

10. He recounted a meeting he had with the head of the State Security directorate in the neighboring province of Poland, a colonel. The colonel had asked: "Where are you going, where are the Jews taking you?"

11. On the situation in the CSSR State Security organs.

On 7-8 May a conference of the heads of regional Interior Ministry organizations and of the central apparatus took place in Prague. In a report to the conference, Minister Pavel did not give any sort of practical or basic guidelines of how to act in local branches. He does not take account of any sort of advice or opinions from the locales. He is occupying his post temporarily, as he himself said, giving himself only a year or two to serve in the post of minister. Cde. Majer speaks about him with irony and says that he will act not in accordance with what Pavel says, but in accordance with the orders of the former minister, since these orders have not been rescinded by anyone and are not in contradiction with the policy of the KSC. However, Pavel spoke (as Cde. Majer suggests, with the aim of demagoguery) in his report about indestructible friendship with the Soviet Union. These words were met with stormy applause from the participants, and, as Cde. Majer observed, this reaction in the hall evoked displeasure from the minister, who concealed his sentiments only with great difficulty. 111

When the general part of the conference was over, the minister left. The leaders of the regional directorates

managed to get him to come to their separate conference. They asked him sharp questions, including for example: "Not a single reasonable state, neither in the past nor at present, has refused to use such instruments as agent networks and operational equipment to defend its internal security. Why does the CSSR intend to refuse these things, as minister Pavel himself said in an interview with journalists?" Having been deprived of the opportunity to give an evasive answer, he was forced to say that all these things can be used, but not against honest people.

Yesterday or the day before, Pavel appeared on television. His comments there were much better than the interview he gave to journalists on the eve of the conference and the speech he gave at the conference. This had a positive influence on the mood of State Security officials, who surmised that they had prompted these latest comments from Pavel.

The personnel of the country's State Security organs are top-notch. Without exception, they all firmly support socialist positions and friendship with the Soviet Union. 112 They, as Cde. Majer says, are unable to conceive of any other route.

12. It was noticeable that Cde. Majer was unusually optimistic and sought to "reassure" us. He affirmed that they are in a position to control everything and restore order. We get the impression that he subtly, through hints, tried to give us the idea that this assessment of events should be provided to our superiors.

13. Cde. Majer reported that the CSSR deputy interior minister, Cde. Záruba, would like to award a medal of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Society to Colonel Cde. Trojak. 113 He subtly gave the hint that if such a meeting were held, Cde. Záruba possibly would recount something that would be of interest to us.

At the end of the meeting, Cde. Majer invited my wife, my children, and me to come to his house on 18-19 May.

HEAD OF THE DIRECTORATE OF THE KGB
UNDER THE UKRSSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
IN TRANSCARPATHIAN OBLAST
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL

A. ZHABCHENKO

14 May 1968
Uzhhorod
No. 3273