

GDR/15

GDR: Foreign  
relations

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GDR ATTACKS OPPONENTS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK INVASION

Summary: The GDR still views the Czechoslovak situation as critical. The East German press regularly warns that the progress towards normalization in the CSSR will be slow and exacting. East German papers warn that the situation cannot stabilize as long as journalists and others responsible for "anti-Socialist" developments in the CSSR continue to hold their positions. Neues Deutschland has declared that there is no third way as an alternative to a socialist one requiring loyalty to Moscow or a capitalist one. The GDR's concern over the possible holding of a conference of West European Communist Parties is apparent. Also obvious is the indecision over how to treat the Czechoslovak situation and those Parties which opposed the invasion.

The Czechoslovak situation, as viewed by the GDR, is still critical. This at least has been the outlook reflected in the East German press which continuously warns the CSSR to expect a slow, exacting journey towards "normalcy." Several articles serve to clarify what precisely the GDR means by "normalization," with the implication that many further changes will be demanded in Czechoslovakia. Communist parties deviating from the Moscow line have been brought under sharp attack in connection with the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The outward calm in Czechoslovakia, warns a Berliner Zeitung article of 10 September, should not lead to the mistaken conclusion that the situation there has improved greatly. The article states that "anti-socialist," "counterrevolutionary forces" still exist under the guise of nationalism. Neues Deutschland accused Czechoslovak journalists of collaborating with "underground forces," failing to understand the content of the Moscow Agreement, and holding a large share of the responsibility for development before 21 August. The paper added that the mass media are controlled by the same people today as before the invasion.(1)

Kurt Zimmerman wrote a three-part series tracing the roots of the Czechoslovak situation back ten years.(2) He blamed the "counterrevolution" on intellectuals, writers, artists, economists, sociologists and others who, he alleged, were connected with imperialists abroad and who spread a "petit bourgeois nationalist ideology." These individuals formed a "brain trust," according to Zimmerman, which brought the mass media under its control and, after having abandoned Marxist-Leninist principles, placed itself in a position to control the policies of Czechoslovakia.

Neues Deutschland quoted SED ideologist Kurt Hager's speech on the occasion of "Victims of Fascism Days."(3) He stressed that the consolidation process in the CSSR will be "long and difficult" and can be accomplished only through the "consistent implementation of the Cierna, Bratislava and Moscow agreements."

Meanwhile the GDR press continued to show dissatisfaction with the implementation of these agreements and stressed that the Czechoslovak leadership must begin the ideological battle against the "counterrevolution." Berliner Zeitung argued that the absence of any attempt at "ideological clarification" makes impossible a victory over the "anti-socialist forces" and rapid normalization.(4) It was made evident that, to the GDR, "ideological purification" is the most important feature of the demands confronting Czechoslovakia. From the East German viewpoint it is not sufficient to limit the press and move slightly in the direction of orthodoxy in government and party policies. According to East German papers, those responsible for the previous situation must be replaced. While the primary emphasis is on the replacement of journalists and editors, government and party functionaries are not excluded from the category.(5)

- (1) Neues Deutschland, 16 September 1968.
- (2) Neues Deutschland, 10 September 1968, 11 September 1968, 12 September 1968.
- (3) Neues Deutschland, 9 September 1968.
- (4) Berliner Zeitung, 10 September 1968.
- (5) Neues Deutschland, 12 September 1968, 16 September 1968



Two prominent Western Communists were sharply attacked by Neues Deutschland on 13 September. In separate articles condemning Austrian CP leader Ernst Fischer and Swedish CP leader Carl Henrick Hermansson, the newspaper rejected the existence of "different types of socialism," thereby striking a blow at those Parties which have not been consistently imitating Moscow. Hajo Herbell, in an article on Ernst Fischer, remarked that loyalty to the Soviet Union is the true test of every Communist party. Ernst Fischer's encouragement that alternatives be provided within the socialist system was condemned as an effort to restore capitalism in the "socialist" countries. Herbell reasoned that since there is only one socialism, (requiring loyalty to Moscow) any alternative can only be capitalistic because "the repeatedly mentioned third road does not exist." By emphasizing that a loyal attitude towards the Soviet Union is a necessary element of socialism, Herbell established the basis for branding any Communist Party which rejects Moscow's policies (in this case the 21 August intervention) as not only anti-Soviet but anti-socialist. Along the same line, Neues Deutschland, with reference to Hermansson, declared that "there is no third road between socialism and capitalism." Herbell called the desire on the part of Fischer to hold a conference of Western Communist Parties an attempt to weaken the international communist movement, but expressed doubts as to whether the parties of Greece, West Germany, France or Finland would accept him as the spokesman of all West European parties.

At this point the East German attacks on Western parties which voiced opposition to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and particularly the Swedish and Austrian CPs, are aimed at discouraging a conference of West European Communist Parties, the outcome of which would certainly be a public condemnation of the "Warsaw Five" for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The growing stress on socialist unity in the GDR press should be regarded partly in the same light.

The split in the communist movement over the Czechoslovak invasion has left the GDR in a dilemma. On the one hand there is the desire to preserve the domestic image of unity of most parties behind the invasion. On the other hand, as there is little chance of reconciliation, a compelling need to launch an offensive against the innumerable critics is felt.

A similar dilemma is apparent in the handling of the Czechoslovak situation.

The apparent contradictions in East German media treatment of the Czechoslovak situation result from the inherent conflict between the deep-seated fears of the Ulbricht leadership of future developments in that situation (reflected in the warnings of "continued threats to socialism") and the attempt to present a public image of a relatively stable situation.

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