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COMMUNIST AREA

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Internal affairs

17 May 1968

CZECHOSLOVAK SITUATION DISCUSSED FURTHER IN YUGOSLAV PRESS

The newly created political organizations in Czechoslovakia "probably will not be banned nor thwarted by administrative measures." This conclusion was recently reported by Velimir Budimir, the Prague correspondent of Yugoslavia's Tanjug news agency.¹ Budimir, however, reports that the new Czechoslovak Party leaders are still rather disturbed by the activities of both the dogmatic old-guard elements and by "certain anti-socialist forces." However, most of these new leaders are of the opinion, Budimir asserts, that the opponents of the present regime, both on the Left and the Right, have no chances whatsoever of endangering Party rule. On the other hand, Budimir adds, "the new political groups, which are not yet consolidated although they are now appearing and growing strong (especially in the principal cities), are creating confusion among the less important Party leaders."

Budimir's Belgrade colleague Milos Mimica, who recently spent two weeks in Czechoslovakia, discusses in his second article² the very difficult economic situation in the country. Without radical changes Czechoslovakia may lose both the Western and Eastern markets. Moreover, should the Czechoslovak economy remain as it is now, "even the domestic market cannot be satisfied," Mimica said. He adds that "an imbalance exists between

1) Vjesnik, Zagreb, 16 May 1968.

2) Politika, Belgrade, 16 May 1968.

the production and the satisfaction of the populace's normal daily necessities." The over-expanded system could not but inflict great harm on a country such as Czechoslovakia. In order to illustrate how abnormal the situation of the Czechoslovak economy has been, the Yugoslav journalist told the following joke circulating in Czechoslovakia:

A man went into a luxurious Prague restaurant for lunch. He ordered the waiter to bring him, if possible, a fried camel's liver à la Venetian. The waiter said the wish of the guest would be fulfilled and left. Fifteen minutes later, the man was surprised to observe through the glass wall a real camel being driven into the restaurant's courtyard. However, several minutes later the waiter came and begged to be excused since his patron's wish could not be fulfilled. "But how is this possible," the surprised man said. "I have just seen the camel in your courtyard." "Yes, sir," the waiter answered, "we were able to obtain a camel. But we can find no onions and you know that fried camel's liver à la Venetian cannot be prepared without onions!"

In Mimica's opinion the above-mentioned anecdote perfectly describes what has been the chief obstacle for the Czechoslovak economic system: despite accomplishing virtual miracles in major branches of industry, poor economic planning and distribution bottlenecks have brought the country's economy to its present stagnant state. Without radical changes, the country will suffer ever greater setbacks. Of course, Mimica observes in concluding his report, the Czechoslovak leaders are aware of all of these dangers, but without taking risks the economy will not be able to survive.

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