

July 18, 1968
**Report, P. Shelest to Communist Party of Ukraine
Central Committee**

Citation:

"Report, P. Shelest to Communist Party of Ukraine Central Committee", July 18, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 31, Ll. 1-18, original in Russian. Translated for CWIHP by Mark Kramer.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117296>

Summary:

Report delivered by First Secretary Petro Shelest to an expanded meeting of the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee and the Kyiv Oblast committee on 18 July 1968. A CPSU Central Committee plenum had been held the previous day to endorse the Soviet delegation's decisions at a multilateral meeting in Warsaw on the Prague Spring.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Comrades![1]

My task, in reporting to you about the Warsaw meeting of the delegations from the Communist and workers' parties of the socialist countries, and also about the CPSU CC Plenum that just ended after considering this matter, is facilitated somewhat by the fact that the decree from the CPSU CC Plenum and the Letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from the fraternal parties, as well as the results of the Warsaw conference, have been published, and you undoubtedly have read them. What is more, the CPSU CC has been continually providing information to the party aktiv about events in Czechoslovakia and the measures adopted by the CPSU and fraternal parties.[2]

These documents have meticulously and clearly defined the position we have adopted, provided an assessment of the ongoing events in Czechoslovakia, and drawn all necessary conclusions. After thoroughly discussing the whole report presented by Cde. Brezhnev, the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee affirmed the correctness of his assessments and conclusions. The Plenum wholeheartedly voted its complete approval of the CC Politburo's actions on this matter. With unswerving unanimity, the CPSU CC Plenum expressed its admiration and total endorsement of the results of the Meeting in Warsaw of the delegations from the Communist and workers' parties of the socialist countries.

The Warsaw meeting was the third in a series of meetings on the Czechoslovak question. Dresden, Moscow, and now, finally, Warsaw. Even so, the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia has not drawn appropriate conclusions from the advice and warnings they have received from the other fraternal parties. This has caused the situation in that country to deteriorate even further and to become even more complex. Moreover, the KSČ leadership refused even to take part in the Warsaw conference, having thereby placed themselves in opposition to the parties of the five other countries.

All the participants in the Warsaw conference believe that extremely dangerous events are occurring in Czechoslovakia, that the KSČ is deviating from the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and that a threat has now arisen that the KSČ will be transformed into a social democratic party. There is a grave danger that this transformation will be realized as early as the KSČ's 14th Congress.[3]

The urgency of that danger can be seen in the whole course of events and also in the composition of the delegates who were chosen to devise the KSČ's new Party Rules. The new rules omit the principle of democratic centralism and downgrade the leading role of the party by providing for the formation of factions and groups and the freedom to hold discussions of any sort.[4] Moreover, the KSČ leadership recently adopted a number of mistaken and dubious decisions and steps that will continue to enervate the party rather than strengthen it.

The upcoming elections to the National Assembly, which the rightist elements intend to carry out without the Communists, might lead to a further and irrevocable departure of Czechoslovakia from socialism, the restoration of capitalism, and the establishment of a bourgeois republic.[5]

Thus, the problem today is not just some minor difficulties or complex processes, as the leading officials in Czechoslovakia keep trying to assure us. Instead, the problem is that a grave, right-wing opportunist danger has arisen in a fraternal Communist party, and that anti-socialist, counterrevolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia are growing. The basis for a counterrevolution in that country is the lingering presence of bourgeois elements who are unremittently hostile to Communism.

The KSČ has been diluted by the escapades of petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois parties, especially the Social Democratic and National Socialist Parties.[6] Of the pro-Beneš forces alone, more than 250,000 were admitted into the KSČ. All this has greatly complicated the situation and is vitiating the class essence and class orientation of the party.

Everyone at the Warsaw conference agreed that the alarm expressed by Communists in the socialist countries about the situation in the KSČ has grown rapidly. Since January, the situation has become increasingly dangerous. The resolutions of the May plenum of the KSČ, especially the passage acknowledging the rightist danger as the main threat, have not been carried out. The weaknesses and mistakes of the KSČ leadership are being skillfully exploited by the right-wing opportunists and reactionaries in the struggle against the KSČ and the socialist order. The country is experiencing many trends hostile to Marxism-Leninism, including different types of reformism, revisionism of both the right and the left, and national-chauvinism. In all of this we see a danger that the imperialist and anti-Communist forces are dealing a blow not only to Czechoslovakia, but to all of our socialist countries and to the international Communist and workers' movement.

We understand that on matters of European security our strength is based on the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact, the unity of our efforts and actions, our economic might, and our ideological conviction in the irreconcilable struggle against class enemies.

The KSČ, through its own actions, is weakening the socialist forces in Europe and is violating the common line of the socialist countries on foreign policy issues. Evidence for this comes from the invitation to Brandt to visit Czechoslovakia, where, by some accounts, he will bring up the matter of the return of the Sudeten Germans to Czechoslovakia.[7] And what are we to think when we hear ever louder statements opposing the Warsaw Pact? The government organs [of Czechoslovakia] are flirting with the FRG and the United States of America. There is a danger that Czechoslovakia will fall under their influence, since it is known that the USA wants to create a Little Entente that would encompass Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the FRG, thereby establishing American hegemony in Europe.

The serious mistakes of the Czechoslovak leaders bring joy to our enemies. The imperialists in the USA and the FRG do not conceal the fact that they have selected Czechoslovakia as the target of their ongoing actions. They are trying gradually, through peaceful means, to destroy the socialist order there. But it is possible under some circumstances that they will use other means as well. We must be prepared for all of this.

That is why, in the letter to the KSČ CC, officials from the fraternal parties who took part in the Warsaw conference candidly, firmly, and resolutely expressed all their concerns about the danger that is looming over Communists and socialist gains in Czechoslovakia. They called on them to embark on a vigorous struggle against the right-wing opportunist danger and the threat of a counterrevolutionary takeover. The situation has now reached the point where the loss of every hour through indecisiveness is playing into the hands of our enemies.

Do the Czechoslovak leaders yet understand the full complexity of the situation, and will they draw the necessary conclusions? We'll be able to tell in the near future.

It must be said that in addition to everything that has happened, a further complication arises from the fact that certain leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia are losing their class instinct. They pay lip service to the existence of a serious danger, but at the same time they fail to wage a decisive struggle against it.

One might ask: why? Can it be that they are just spineless, wishy-washy liberals? Hardly! Dubček, Černík, and certain other leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia know no equal when it comes to the struggle against so-called conservatives, even though the latter pose no threat to anyone and include many devoted Communists.

Under the banner of this struggle, they have dismissed hundreds of party, council, economic, administrative, and military officials and subjected them to groundless attacks, harassment, and outright persecution. This has occurred both in the center and in outlying areas. They have replaced almost all the secretaries of regional, municipal, and district parties. This action, too, was not motivated by any real necessity.

The Czechoslovak leaders disregarded the fact that among all these officials were many hard-working and devoted Communists, who created the party, worked in the anti-fascist underground, fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army against the fascists and in the partisans, and bore the entire burden of establishing a workers' and peasants' regime and of building socialism.

At the same time, these leaders have failed to impose strict party disciplinary measures against even a single member of the vile right-wing opportunist group of Kriegel, Císař, Šik, and others.

The rightist elements are carrying out endless attacks and seeking to isolate and put pressure on the healthy forces in the KSČ. They are now putting forth a new slogan: With Dubček against the Dubčekites! And they are engaged in an unrestrained campaign to compromise and persecute the best cadres of the KSČ who adhere to sound political positions. This applies, in particular, to Kolder, Indra, Bifák, and others.

Moreover, under the guise of democracy, the Czechoslovak leaders are displaying what for Communists is an unacceptable degree of tolerance for the statements of anti-socialist, counterrevolutionary elements and their direct attacks against the USSR and the other socialist countries - Poland, the GDR, Bulgaria, and Hungary. In this way, they are fundamentally betraying the interests of the working class and of socialism.

At the Dresden conference it was said that the CC of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia has lost control of the mass media - the press, radio, and television. The Czech leaders acknowledged this at the time. They assured us that they would adopt the most urgent and decisive measures to restore order in the party and the country. Since then, more than three months has passed. But has the situation changed? No, not in the slightest. Not only has the situation failed to improve; it has actually gotten worse. And the point to be stressed here, as you understand, is that the matter could have been resolved within hours if they had asserted order and taken the situation into their own hands. But nothing of the sort has been done.

As previously, these powerful levers of ideological influence are under the control of opportunist and anti-socialist elements, who are actively using them to carry out political terror, deceive the working class, and exert pressure on the healthy forces in the party.

The press, radio, and television are openly featuring hostile, counterrevolutionary, anti-socialist propaganda and are bringing pressure to bear on the district and regional conferences that are now under way. They are continuing to engage in unfounded persecution against devoted party cadres and are branding them with the label of "conservatives" while extolling the "progressives," who are members of the

opportunist, revisionist group.

Only in such circumstances could a patently counterrevolutionary manifesto appear in the central newspapers in Czechoslovakia under the title "2,000 Words." [8] Despite the KSČ CC Presidium's formal condemnation of this document, the press, radio, and television are giving wide and positive coverage to it. Moreover, this shameful document has become a lively topic of discussion at district and regional party conferences. At some of the conferences, through the connivance of the CC and regional party committees, the document has been endorsed by some of the delegates.

What is occurring in Czechoslovakia and in the KSČ is far from an internal matter. It is an attempt to strike a blow against the socialist countries and against the international Communist movement.

Demagoguery about freedom of speech is being exploited by the counterrevolution to inflict the most dangerous blows against the revolutionary gains of the working class.

That is where the game of "unlimited" democracy, a Czechoslovak "model of socialism," and "renewal" has brought us! All of this indicates that the activity of a hostile center, possibly in the KSČ CC Presidium itself, long ago conceived these plans and operations.

The Czechoslovak comrades babble on about their wholehearted support for "democratic socialism," but they disregard the fact that our country, the first country in the world in which socialism triumphed, has already been living and prospering for more than 50 years in accordance with socialist laws. What sort of "democratic socialism" are they promoting?

If you look closely at what is going on, you find that the word "democratic" is a subterfuge for a transformation of the socialist order, depriving it of its class essence. No such thing as abstract democracy exists in nature. Democracy always was and is class-based. Anyone who fails to recognize this cannot be called a Communist.

The KSČ leadership should have understood long ago that Western policy in Eastern Europe is a seductive policy for unstable elements. Various types of economic reforms and an improvement of the economy in return for Western credits - this is only a trap by the bourgeoisie. [9]

Some in Czechoslovakia are calling for the Communist Party to become an elite party, not a party of the working class. These rightist forces want to soften and dilute the KSČ even more. They are proposing to give the party an injection by suddenly bringing into its ranks some 250,000-300,000 young people, primarily students. [10] What does this mean?

This "theory" is alien to Marxism-Leninism insofar as Communists always have totally defended the interests of the vanguard in our society, the working class. The proposed growth and increased membership of the party must come primarily at the expense of workers.

But that, unfortunately, is not where matters end. It is all too obvious that the KSČ, from January on, has been losing one position after another, and that the most important segments in the country are ceding leadership to the hostile forces. A full-fledged counterrevolution has now engulfed the political arena. Now they are no longer speaking, as they were earlier, about mistakes and shortcomings connected with the activities of certain individuals. Instead, they are blaming everything on the

party and the socialist order. The chronology of events attests to the consistent and rapid expansion of the rightist elements.

All manner of hostile groups are emerging in the country. The former right-wing Social Democrats have reestablished their party and set up primary organizations as well as district and regional supervisory centers.

All of these hostile and provocative outbursts and actions have not been met with a necessary rebuff either from the KSČ leadership or from the government. Moreover, the KSČ leaders say that the CPSU and other fraternal parties supposedly are exaggerating the situation in their party and country.

This is being done to gloss over what is in fact a dangerous situation, to induce us to let down our guard, and to disorient the healthy forces in the KSČ.

For this reason, we can say, with full responsibility that by losing control [of the mass media], discarding the principles of democratic centralism, engaging in unprincipled discussions and malicious criticism, and failing to punish the increased activity of the right-wing opportunist group, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia is abandoning the principles of Marxism-Leninism and a class-based, proletarian assessment of processes and events in the party and country.

How can it be that a "permanent" plenum of the Prague municipal committee is allowed to carry out its subversive work against the resolutions and measures of the KSČ CC and attacking the CC from a right-wing opportunist standpoint?

Undoubtedly, there are healthy forces in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, but if they do not soon begin to act and do not take decisive measures in the near future to destroy the enemies of socialism, and if we do not give them comprehensive support, it cannot be ruled out that these healthy forces will come under pressure and be thrown out of the party.[11] That would be a tragedy for the KSČ, the working class, and the socialist order of Czechoslovakia.

This is something that we, the Soviet Communists, will not permit. It is also something that the other fraternal parties who attended the Warsaw Meeting will not permit. Obviously, our means and capabilities, and the efforts we are making in connection with the changing situation in Czechoslovakia, are already inadequate. For that reason, it is essential to act faster in using all means and measures to put an end to the counterrevolution.

We undoubtedly are using all political, ideological, and psychological means to influence events, but if, in the struggle, the healthy forces end up being threatened with mortal danger and the counterrevolution keeps up its attacks against the KSČ and socialist gains, we will rely on the will of our party, the will of our people, and the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact to resort to the most extreme measures.[12]

We understand that there may be a great uproar, and it is even possible that there will be rash actions and armed resistance by extreme right-wing elements acting at the behest of foreign intelligence services.[13] Perhaps this will complicate the situation in the international Communist and workers' movement.[14] We will be using decisive measures to teach a fundamental lesson to the imperialist intriguers as well as the rightists and counterrevolutionary elements.

A blow also will be struck against some anti-party and anti-popular elements who are active from time to time in certain countries that are friendly to us. The counterrevolutionary elements can then blame themselves. Everything must be done

to preserve the KSC as a Marxist-Leninist party and to preserve the socialist gains of the working class in Czechoslovakia.

At the CPSU CC Plenum, Comrade Brezhnev's fully authoritative report gave a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and in the country. It showed the enormous work carried out by our party's Politburo and the Politburos of the other fraternal Marxist-Leninist parties in helping the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia evaluate the situation objectively and properly, and in helping them forestall any retreat from Marxism-Leninism.

They have been warned against taking any ill-conceived actions that would be disastrous for the party and for socialism. It must be said that they closely listened to our explanations, agreed with our arguments, and even thanked us for the advice and claimed that all the negative phenomena in the party and the country can be explained by the fact that they, as new leaders, still have not fully gained control of the situation. They also claimed that they will not relent in the struggle against the enemies of socialism, and they assured us that they would need just two weeks to restore order - which soon became a month, and then a month-and-a-half.

The months passed, and matters did not improve. On the contrary, the situation became even more alarming and dangerous. Finally, after assuring us that the situation would be remedied after the May plenum of the KSC CC, and then after the district and regional party conferences, they are now assuring us that it will be fixed after the 14th KSC Congress. But there is great reason to be doubtful about this.

Life has shown that some of these leaders merely assumed the guise of revolutionary phrasing, friendship with our party and country, devotion to the cause of socialism, and fawning assurances. In reality, they acted as double-dealers, saying one thing and doing another.

As you know, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia adopted an important document, the so-called "Action Program," even though the best program for them would have been the resolutions of the KSC's 13th Congress. [15]

We have not expressed open criticism of the "Action Program," although we have candidly told the Czechoslovak comrades about its weaknesses, in particular about its retreat from the Marxist-Leninist conception of the leading role of the party. We said that this program itself provided for a further weakening of the KSC. It envisages an unacceptable partnership with other parties in supervising the country's affairs.

We warned them that their enemies might exploit the weak points of this program. Unfortunately, that is precisely what happened. With the connivance of the KSC CC, the rightist elements are conducting propaganda precisely by exploiting the weak and ambiguous points in the "Action Program." On this basis, the Social Democrats are stepping up their activity, and various clubs of a dubious nature and purpose are taking shape.

We must now candidly speak out and criticize the "Action Program" from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. The point here is not only that with the advent of a new leadership, this propaganda has not been given a necessary rebuff, but also that in Czechoslovakia itself the propaganda has been given pride of place on the pages of newspapers and on television and radio.

In Prague, an American and unadorned Zionist gives a public speech in which he calls socialist Poland a "social-fascist" country, but Dubček and Černík simply remain silent.[16] It is obvious that all of this is being indulged from above. Such an

accommodating stance by the KSČ can only play into the hands of the counterrevolution.

Are these developments accidental? Not in the least! This is evident from the unusual interest that the imperialist circles of the USA and West Germany are displaying toward events in Czechoslovakia and the elaborate promises of large-scale loans that they will give if right-wing opportunist forces come to power and break away from the Soviet Union.

The German revanchists are especially happy about these events. They have even broached the idea of a "united Europe," that is, they say that the "hour of truth, having arrived in Czechoslovakia in different spheres of social and state life, is creating favorable conditions for a united Europe." [17]

Still, these enemies understand certain things; Bonn and even the Pope in Rome are evaluating the situation in Czechoslovakia and do not want to establish diplomatic relations or conclude any type of agreements, much less give credits, until the KSČ has been destroyed once and for all.

The effort by class enemies to bring about the destruction of the KSČ must instill caution in all of us Communists. Caution is precisely what was expressed at the Warsaw meeting of the leaders of the parties and governments of the socialist countries, where it was said, with all the frankness customary of Marxist-Leninists, that a terrible danger is hanging over the Communist Party and the fate of socialism in Czechoslovakia. That is why all necessary aid will be provided to the KSČ to destroy the forces of counterrevolution, bolster the unity of the party on a Marxist-Leninist basis, and defend socialism and the great gains of the working class in Czechoslovakia.

Comrade Gomułka said in his speech that the inviolability of the borders of the socialist countries rests on our unity, the strength of the Soviet Union, and the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact. [18]

Comrade Kádár declared that the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the government are ready for any actions that are needed to block the path of counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia.

Comrade Ulbricht said that the Czechoslovak leadership is not in a position to contend with the raging counterrevolution and the demagogic elements, and our duty is to use all means to help the KSČ and its healthy forces gain control of the situation and restore order in the country.

Comrade Zhivkov said that obviously the means we have brought to bear so far have proven insufficient, and the fate of the country and the KSČ are not in the hands of the current leaders. Increasingly, the right-wing and counterrevolutionary elements are in control of the situation. We must comprehensively support and deliver a blow against the counterrevolution through all possible means. [19]

From our delegation, Comrade Brezhnev said that the CPSU and government and the peoples of our multinational country are ready to provide all possible means of assistance to socialist Czechoslovakia against the burgeoning counterrevolution. Every party bears responsibility first and foremost before its own working class and its own nation. At the same time, it bears responsibility before the international forces of socialism.

In fulfilling our internationalist duty, our party and people bore colossal sacrifices to

destroy the dark forces of fascism and to liberate the peoples. Our relations with the Communist Party and people of Czechoslovakia are sealed in the blood we jointly shed during the struggle against a common enemy. They are also sealed in fraternal allied relations.[20]

The demagoguery of certain KSČ leaders on this matter is inappropriate and pernicious, and it plays into the hands of class enemies. For this reason we are unable and do not have the right to stand idly by while all of this is going on in socialist Czechoslovakia, so close to our western borders.

And if the Czechoslovak leaders do not want to mobilize the party and country for a struggle against the counterrevolution to neutralize it and then deal it a fatal blow, we can openly say that we see things differently and might end up on the other side of the barricades.

They must know that the Soviet Union and its friends in the Warsaw Pact will not permit the counterrevolution to rend asunder the Communist Party and people of Czechoslovakia. In accordance with this, the Warsaw Pact countries will fulfill their alliance obligations to defend the socialist gains of the Czechoslovak people.

We must react sharply to the complex events in Czechoslovakia. These events affect the interests of all socialist countries, and we cannot stand on the sidelines, since we are Communist-internationalists.

The rightist forces are trying to cover up their underground counterrevolutionary activities by pontificating about sovereignty. To be sure, we respect the sovereignty of every country, particularly a socialist country. But if, under the cloak of sovereignty, the counterrevolutionary forces are eviscerating the Communist Party, destroying socialist gains, and undermining alliance obligations, we are not able to tolerate this and must give a decisive rebuff that will annihilate the rightists, destroy the counterrevolution, protect the party and socialist gains, and thereby uphold the existing sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.[21] The behavior of the rightists and their games about sovereignty are reminiscent of a boat sailing on the sea, with each passenger sitting in his own place. Everything begins fine, but imagine that one of the passengers begins drilling a hole in the boat under his sovereign seat, while declaring that sovereignty must be observed. Would it not be better in this case if all the others in the boat ganged up against and tossed overboard anyone who would defend such sovereignty?

In the dangerous situation we face, we must act in a well-conceived way, but boldly and decisively, since time is running out and the threat to the great cause of socialism does not entitle us to act differently.

I, as a participant in the Dresden and Warsaw meetings and also in bilateral meetings with the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, would like to emphasize the profound anxiety of the leaders of the fraternal parties and governments of the socialist countries and of the KSČ's healthy forces about the situation in Czechoslovakia. I would also like to emphasize their unanimous assessment of events and of the measures that must be taken to preserve socialist gains in that country.

The letter sent by the participants in the Warsaw meeting to the KSČ Central Committee undoubtedly will help the healthy forces deal a blow to the opportunist group and mobilize the workers and all laborers to destroy the counterrevolution and defend socialist gains in Czechoslovakia.

Comrades! Permit me to express my certainty that Communists in the capital of our

republic and the capital oblast, as well as all other workers in the hero city and oblast of Kyiv, unanimously and fervently support the measures and actions of the Central Committee and CPSU CC Politburo aimed at defending socialist gains in Czechoslovakia.

The Communists of Ukraine and the whole people of our republic know very well what is going on in our neighboring state, Czechoslovakia. They evaluate the situation properly and forthrightly.

We assure the CPSU CC that we are ready at any moment to provide urgent assistance to the Communists and Czechoslovak people in the difficult situation that has emerged.

[1]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This document is untitled and undated, but a number of things - a brief cover note, the content of the document, and references to it in other documents - indicate that it is a report delivered by Shelest to an expanded meeting of the UkrCP Central Committee and the UrkCP Kyiv Oblast committee on 18 July 1968. A CPSU Central Committee plenum had been held the previous day to endorse the Soviet delegation's performance at the Warsaw meeting. Shelest's presentation to the UkrCP Central Committee was part of a massive effort to transmit the CPSU Politburo's views (as endorsed by the CPSU Central Committee plenum) to Communist Party organizations all around the Soviet Union. Although some passages from Shelest's remarks to the CPSU Central Committee plenum are repeated almost verbatim in his speech to the UkrCP Central Committee, the latter contains many paragraphs and sentences that are not in the plenum speech. Moreover, even when passages are duplicated, it is useful to see what Shelest chose to emphasize (and omit) for the UkrCP Central Committee, and it is also valuable to gauge how he presented his case.

[2]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: These informational reports, as discussed in the introduction to this collection of Ukrainian documents, were part of the strategy embraced by the CPSU Politburo to maintain a top-down style of decision-making during crises. The periodic informational reports were distributed to party organizations and government agencies throughout the Soviet Union (and in other Communist countries). The officials in these bodies were responsible for disseminating the Politburo's views to all party members and reporting back to the Politburo on the "wholehearted and unanimous support" that the reports had earned.

[3]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: As this statement indicates, Shelest and other Soviet leaders were well aware that the KSČ's Extraordinary 14th Congress was likely to result in the ouster of orthodox Communist officials and the election of a strongly pro-reform Central Committee.

[4]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A draft of revised statutes for the KSČ ("Návrh stanov Komunistické strany Československa"), which were widely expected to be approved at the upcoming 14th Congress, was not published until 10 August (when it appeared as a 16-page supplement to Rudé právo), but many of the suggested changes were already known. The proposed statutes represented a major shift in the Prague Spring, for the process of democratization was to extend to some of the most basic aspects of party procedure. By guaranteeing protection for the continued espousal of dissenting views after a decision had been made, the draft statutes (as Shelest argues here) would have contravened the principle of "democratic centralism," which had always been one of the fundamental attributes of a Soviet-style Communist regime. This point had been highlighted in the Warsaw Letter: "We were convinced [in early 1968] that you would defend the Leninist principle of democratic centralism as your most treasured possession. Ignoring either aspect of this principle - whether democracy or centralism - inevitably weakens the party and its leading role, and transforms it into a bureaucratic organization or a debating club."

[5]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The elections to the ČSSR National Assembly (i.e., the parliament, which was renamed the Federal Assembly after the Czechoslovak state was federalized in October 1968) were due to be held in November 1968. Most observers expected that reformist forces, including non-Communist representatives, would gain a dominant majority of seats. From 1948 until 1968, the parliament had been of negligible importance in Czechoslovak politics, but during the Prague Spring the National Assembly had assumed a prominent role, not least by passing legislation for major reforms.

[6]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: For more about these parties, see my annotation regarding them in Document No. 23 above.

[7]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: No formal invitation to West German foreign minister Willy Brandt had in fact been extended, but rumors had been circulating over the previous few weeks that the Czechoslovak government was holding secret negotiations with Brandt and other senior West German officials. (Secret talks had been held with one of Brandt's chief aides, Egon Bahr, in mid-April 1968, but the most senior participant from the Czechoslovak side - the deputy head of the KSČ International Relations Department, Josef Šedivý - was well below the level of a KSČ Presidium member. Moreover, the talks did not lead to any breakthroughs on any major issue. See the declassified report on the talks, "Informace o rozhovorech mezinárodního oddělení ÚV KSČ s představitelem SPD E. Bahrem," cited above.) In addition to playing up speculation about an imminent trip by Brandt to Czechoslovakia, hardline East European officials contended that Czechoslovak foreign minister Jiří Hajek had met secretly with Brandt in Vienna. The East German authorities, in particular, repeatedly accused the Czechoslovak government of seeking to strike a secret deal with the FRG, exchanging diplomatic recognition for large-scale credits. Ulbricht had reiterated this allegation during the Warsaw meeting a few days earlier, and it may well have been these comments that prompted Shelest's remarks. See "Protokół ze spotkania przywódców partii i rządów krajów socjalistycznych - Bulgarii, NRD, Polski, Węgier i ZSRR - w Warszawie, 14-15 lipca 1968 r.," Copy No. 5 (Top Secret), 14-15 July 1968, in Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Arch. KC PZPR, P. 193, T. 24, Dok. 4, esp. Ll. 8-14. No doubt, Shelest's comment was also influenced by a recent shift in Soviet policy. As recently as mid-June, Soviet leaders had authorized the Soviet ambassador in East Germany, Pyotr Abrasimov, to meet with Brandt in East Berlin. The West German foreign minister was not required to show his passport when he traveled across the intra-Berlin border. The East German authorities were dismayed when they learned of Moscow's decision (see the relevant dispatches from Abrasimov in RGANI, F. 5. Op. 60, Dd. 344 and 345), but Soviet leaders proceeded nonetheless. In the first two weeks of July, however, Soviet policy toward the FRG hardened as tensions with Czechoslovakia increased. On 11 July, the Soviet newspaper Izvestiya suddenly began publishing secret correspondence between Moscow and Bonn on the possibility of a renunciation-of-force agreement. This action signaled a temporary halt in the progress toward formal diplomatic relations. It also signaled that, for Moscow, a resolution of the Czechoslovak crisis was now more important than a rapprochement with West Germany.

[8]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: On the "2,000 Words" article, see my annotation in Document No. 22 above.

[9]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This point reinforces one of the major themes in East Germany's coverage of events in Czechoslovakia around the time of the Warsaw meeting and shortly thereafter. See, for example, "Mit dem Blick auf die Stärkung der sozialistischen Arbeiter-und-Bauern-macht die Fehler überwinden," Neues Deutschland (East Berlin), 30 July 1968, p. 6. See also "Die Strategie des Imperialismus und die ČSSR," Neues Deutschland (East Berlin), 13 July 1968, p. 6.

[10]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This refers to Čestmír Císař's idea, first proposed at a joint meeting of the KSČ Presidium and KSČ Secretariat on 21 May 1968, of forming a separate youth wing within the Communist Party. (The discredited Czechoslovak Youth Union had been under the KSČ's auspices, but members of the organization were not automatically admitted into the party. Císař wanted to bring young people directly into the KSČ.) Císař's proposal came at an auspicious moment, just a month after the commission chaired by Jan Piller had set forth recommendations that would have eased a large number of "old Communists" out of the KSČ. Soviet leaders

realized that many young people in Czechoslovakia were enthusiastic supporters of the Prague Spring, whereas older KSC members tended to be skeptical of - and even hostile to - the reforms. Hence, Soviet officials denounced Císař's proposal, claiming that it was aimed at "removing from active political life all Communists who are of the soundest ideological-political orientation and who are resolutely speaking out against the right-wing danger." At the Soviet-Czechoslovak meetings in Čierna nad Tisou in late July and early August 1968, Brezhnev also argued (as Shelest does here) that "Cde. Císař's proposal to have the KSC admit 200,000 to 300,000 young people, supposedly to provide an 'injection' for what he calls the 'older' Party, glosses over the deleterious class impact of this grave step." Cited from "Záznam jednání předsednictva ÚV KSC a ÚV KSSS v Čierna n. T., 29.7-1.8.1968," 1 August 1968 (Top Secret), in SÚA, Arch. ÚV KSC, F. 07/15, Sv. 12, A.j. 274, Ll. 17-18.

[11]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This statement indicates a further recognition that the deadline for Soviet action was 26 August 1968, when the Slovak Party Congress was due to convene. As the documents here make clear, Soviet leaders knew that Biľak and others were likely to be excluded from the KSS leadership, paving the way for a decisive victory by "rightist forces" at the 14th KSC Congress in September. Shelest's statement reveals his growing doubts about the ability of the "healthy forces" to act in time without Soviet military support. His contacts with Biľak, as documented in the excerpts from Shelest's diary in my article in Issue 10 of the CWIHP Bulletin (pp. 234-248), had given him ample grounds for skepticism.

[12]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This seems to have been the first direct mention by Shelest to a gathering of other UkrCP officials in 1968 about the likelihood of a military solution to the crisis.

[13]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This comment indicates that Soviet leaders were still uncertain whether the incoming troops would encounter armed resistance in Czechoslovakia. No doubt, this uncertainty influenced the size, timing, and nature of the invading force as it was mobilized over the next few weeks. Grechko made sure that the contingent of soldiers entering Czechoslovakia would be large enough and sufficiently well-armed to crush any groups that might take up arms against the invasion. The potential for indigenous resistance also spurred Soviet officials to adopt political and military precautions that would facilitate the entry of Soviet and allied troops into Czechoslovakia. For example, Warsaw Pact commanders diverted Czechoslovak troops, equipment, and ammunition to western Bohemia, ostensibly for use in forthcoming exercises. The real purpose, however, was to keep the ČLA well away from the main routes that would be used by incoming forces. By the time the invasion began on the evening of 20 August, the risk of encountering armed resistance in Czechoslovakia was deemed to be small. (Moreover, Grechko reduced the risk still further at the start of the invasion by phoning the Czechoslovak defense minister, General Martin Džúr, to warn him that if ČLA units fired "even a single shot" at the incoming troops, the Soviet Army would "crush the resistance mercilessly" and would ensure that Džúr himself was "strung up from a telephone pole and shot.") Even if the risk of encountering armed resistance had been greater, Shelest's comment suggests that it would not have been enough to deter Soviet military action.

[14]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This statement provides further evidence that Soviet leaders were under no illusions that military intervention in Czechoslovakia would be unanimously welcomed by Communist parties in Western Europe and other non-Communist countries. But the consensus in Moscow was that increased discord within the world Communist movement would be an acceptable price to pay for the restoration of orthodox Communism in Czechoslovakia. During a meeting with the leaders of East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary a month after the invasion, Brezhnev disparaged the objections raised by West European Communist officials: "Well, let them make a fuss; the main thing has been done - the path to counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia has been blocked." Cited from "Zapis' peregovorov s rukovoditelyami kompartii i pravitel'stv Bolgarii, Vengrii, GDR, Pol'shi, 27 sentyabrya 1968 goda," 27 September 1968 (Top Secret), in ÚSD-SK, Z/S 13, L. 37.

[15]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: See my annotation about the KSC's Thirteenth Congress in Document No. 23 above.

[16]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest is referring to a celebrated public lecture by the then-professor Zbigniew Brzezinski in Prague on 14 June 1968. In his speech, Brzezinski offered strong support for the KSČ's efforts to carry out sweeping reforms and "improvements of socialism." His comments about Poland, to which Shelest is referring here, were made during a discussion period after the main lecture. Brzezinski's remarks sparked angry commentaries in the Soviet, East German, and Polish media, which alleged that Brzezinski's endorsement of the Prague Spring merely underscored how "bankrupt and obsolete" the KSČ's "right-wing opportunist and revisionist policies" truly were. See, for example, "Vneshnyaya politika i ideologicheskaya bor'ba na sovremennom etape," *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'* (Moscow), No. 6 (June 1968), pp. 3-7. At the Warsaw meeting, Ulbricht denounced Brzezinski again, claiming that the "2,000 Words" statement had been inspired by "the well-known American Sovietologist Brzezinski, who was in Prague and delivered a public lecture. Many people attended, and a discussion ensued. No one who was present contested Brzezinski's thesis. Not a single person there expressed opposition. Nor did Dubček express even the slightest opposition [to Brzezinski's remarks]. . . . What is going on here? Is it not a counterrevolution if an American anti-Communist can speak publicly in Prague and purvey slanders about People's Poland before the members of the Party, saying that this is a fascist country? And it was not only People's Poland that he attacked; he also attacked the Soviet Union." Cited from "Protokół ze spotkania przywódców partii i rządów krajów socjalistycznych - Bulgarii, NRD, Polski, Węgier i ZSRR - w Warszawie, 14-15 lipca 1968 r.," Ll. 9-10. Most likely, Ulbricht's denunciation of Brzezinski's speech helped prompt Shelest's criticisms of this "American and unadorned Zionist." Evidently, Shelest mistakenly assumed that anyone who would condemn Poland's Communist regime (which was promoting an anti-Semitic campaign at the time) must be an "unadorned Zionist" (i.e., a standard codeword in East-bloc countries for a Jew).

[17]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This paragraph and the preceding one appeared as a single paragraph (with slightly different wording) in Shelest's speech at the plenum the previous day. The two paragraphs are significantly toned down, however, by the paragraph that comes immediately after them - a paragraph that does not appear in Shelest's plenum speech.

[18]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest's very brief summary of points emphasized by speakers at the Warsaw meeting is largely accurate. The full transcript is available in "Protokół ze spotkania przywódców partii i rządów krajów socjalistycznych - Bulgarii, NRD, Polski, Węgier i ZSRR - w Warszawie, 14-15 lipca 1968 r."

[19]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Shelest's summary of Zhivkov's remarks is accurate, but it is puzzling why Shelest did not also mention that Zhivkov explicitly urged the allied countries to "restore the dictatorship of the proletariat" in Czechoslovakia through military intervention: "There is only one appropriate way out - through resolute assistance to Czechoslovakia from our parties and the states of the Warsaw Pact. At present, we cannot rely on internal forces in Czechoslovakia. . . . Only by relying on the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact can we change the situation." (Cited from "Protokół ze spotkania przywódców partii i rządów krajów socjalistycznych," L. 29.) Shelest noted in his diary that in informal conversations with Zhivkov right before and after the Bulgarian leader's speech, Zhivkov had urged the Warsaw Pact countries to be "more decisive," adding that "the sooner troops are sent, the better." Cited from "Dnevnik P. E. Shelesta," Ll. 338-339.

[20]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: At least one line appears to be missing here, but the omission has no discernible impact on the substance of Shelest's speech.

[21]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This statement encapsulates what later became known as the Brezhnev Doctrine. Compare, for example, S. Kovalev, "Suverenitet i internatsional'nye obyazannosti sotsialisticheskikh stran," *Pravda* (Moscow), 26 September 1968, pp. 2-3; S. Kovalev, "O 'mirnoi' i nemirnoi kontrrevolyutsii," *Pravda* (Moscow), 11 September 1968, p. 4; and "Zashchita sotsializma - vysshii internatsional'nyi dolg," *Pravda* (Moscow), 22 August 1968, pp. 1-2. For a cogent review of the genesis of the Brezhnev Doctrine, see Karen Dawisha, "The 1968 Invasion of Czechoslovakia: Causes, Consequences, and Lessons for the Future," in Karen Dawisha and Philip Hanson, eds., *Soviet-East European Dilemmas: Coercion, Competition and Consent* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 9-25. See also Mark

Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine," in Carole Fink, Detlef Junker, and Philippe Gassert, eds., 1968: The World Transformed (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 61-124.