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URGENT

MUN 22 5 JAN 68

TO: RICHARDSON INFO YARROW ROWSON DUNNING KAUFMANN MOXLEY
FM: WALTER INFO COOK DIAMOND LYON REYMAN KINGSLEY

052114: U R G E N T

RE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGES IN CZECHOSLOVAK REGIME.

1. NOVOTNY'S DEPARTURE FROM FIRST SECRETARY'S POSITION IS, OF COURSE, A MOST WELCOME DEVELOPMENT AND ONE LONG OVERDUE. WHATEVER LENGTH OF TIME HE MAY HANG ON AS PRESIDENT, AND HOWEVER MUCH CARE MAY BE TAKEN IN PRAGUE TO ASSURE THAT HE IS NOT PUBLICLY HUMILIATED, POLITICALLY HE IS ALL THROUGH. WITH HIS RECORD OF COLORLESS, FUTILE AND EVER-WEAKER LEADERSHIP, HE IS NOT A FIGURE WHO CAN STAND IN THE WINGS AND WAIT TO MAKE A COMEBACK.
2. APPOINTMENT OF DUBCEK AS FIRST PARTY SECRETARY IS A MAJOR MOVE TO SATISFY SLOVAK DEMANDS. AT THE SAME TIME, IT PUTS THE FORMAL BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY IN SLOVAK HANDS AT A TIME OF MASSIVE DIFFICULTIES AND FORMIDABLE UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. DUBCEK'S FAILURE WOULD BE A MAJOR SETBACK TO SLOVAK ASPIRATIONS. THE SLOVAKS ARE NOW VERY MUCH IN A "PUT UP OR SHUT UP" POSITION. THIS CONSIDERATION MAY HAVE PLAYED A CERTAIN ROLE IN THE MINDS OF SOME OF THOSE WHO SUPPORTED DUBCEK'S CANDIDACY. SLOVAK PARTY MEMBERS WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CRITICISE "PRAGUE CENTRALISM" WITH ONE OF THEIR OWN IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.
3. DUBCEK HIMSELF HAS NOT BEEN A DYNAMIC PERSONALITY DURING HIS PARTY CAREER. RELATIVELY YOUNG (46), HE HAS WORKED HIS WAY STEADILY THROUGH THE RANKS SINCE HE JOINED THE CZECHOSLOVAK CP IN 1939. ONCE A DEFENDER OF PRAGUE CENTRALISM AGAINST THE DEMANDS OF MORE NATIONALISTIC SLOVAK ELEMENTS, DUBCEK HAS MORE RECENTLY BEEN MORE OUTGOING IN HIS ADVOCACY OF SLOVAK INTERESTS. HE HAS NOT THREATENED SLOVAK WRITERS OR PUBLICATIONS AND HE HAS NOT BEEN IDENTIFIED AS OPPOSING ECONOMIC REFORM. LAST JUNE HE CAREFULLY POINTED OUT THAT THE PARTY WAS NOT ABOVE THE PEOPLE.
4. WE ARE PROBABLY GOING TO WITNESS A PERIOD OF COLLECTIVE AND CAUTIOUS LEADERSHIP IN WHICH IT COULD TURN OUT THAT DUBCEK IS A TRANSITIONAL FIGURE. THE NEW REGIME WILL VERY LIKELY GO TO SOME LENGTHS TO APPEAR QUIETLY BUT FIRMLY IN CONTROL AND TO AVOID STARTLING POLICY CHANGES OF ANY KIND. IT WILL BE CAREFUL NOT TO OFFEND IMPORTANT SENSITIVITIES EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. HENCE, IN SPITE OF THE SHAKEUP, WE DO NOT FORESEE A DRAMATIC RE-ORIENTATION OF MAJOR POLICIES. ANY DANGER OF A CRACKDOWN ON WRITERS, INTELLECTUALS OR OTHER

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DISSIDENT ELEMENTS SEEMS UNLIKELY. CALM EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE, REASSURE THE NATIONS AND TO PROVIDE FOR MORE UNFETTERED IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC REFORMS SHOULD BE EXPECTED. REPRISALS OR REPRESSIONS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE AVOIDED. OBVIOUSLY, MORE ATTENTION WILL BE PAID TO SLOVAK ASPIRATIONS AS WAS, FOR EXAMPLE, FORESHADOWED IN NOVOTNY'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE.

5. HOFFMAN HAS REPORTED THAT LENART SIDED WITH NOVOTNY TO THE BITTER END. IF TRUE, DUBCEK'S PROMOTION ALSO MARKS A SPLIT WHICH WILL HAVE BROAD REPERCUSSIONS THROUGHOUT THE PARTY. DUBCEK HAS BEEN THE APPARATCHIK AND HAS HIT THE TOP. LENART, AT ONE TIME REPORTEDLY THE HOPE OF MORE PROGRESSIVE AND LIBERAL ELEMENTS, HAS NOT BEEN CONSIDERED A TYPICAL APPARATCHIK DESPITE HIS LONG PARTY CAREER. HIS PARTY INFLUENCE HAS NOT BEEN AS GREAT OR EFFICIENT AS THAT OF DUBCEK. LENART SURRENDERED HIS POSTS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SLOVAK NATIONAL COUNCIL AND MEMBER OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SLOVAK COMMUNIST PARTY SOME YEARS AGO. LENART WAS LARGELY ISOLATED FROM THE REALITIES OF SLOVAK POLITICS IN RECENT YEARS.

6. AFP (AND ONLY AFP SO FAR) HAS REPORTED THAT LENART HAS BEEN REPLACED BY CERNIK AS PREMIER. LENART'S DEPARTURE WOULD BE LOGICAL WHETHER OR NOT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DUBCEK AND LENART FOR IT STILL WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR SLOVAKS TO FILL BOTH THE POSITIONS OF FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CPCS AND OF PREMIER.

7. CSBD'S FIRST, AND VERY PRELIMINARY, COMMENTARY HAS POINTED OUT THAT CHANGE HAS FOR THE FIRST TIME COME ABOUT AS A RESULT OF WHAT ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN HEATED AND QUITE FREE DISCUSSIONS IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. NOTHING IS GUARANTEED BY THE CHANGE AND ITS REAL MEANING IS AWAITED BY ALL. BD HAS NOT ENTERED INTO SPECULATION.

ATTITUDE WILL BE NEITHER TO PRAISE OR TO DENOUNCE DUBCEK. HIS KNOWN PUBLIC RECORD WILL BE REVIEWED AS WILL THE REPORTS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH BROUGHT HIM TO POWER. BD WILL DEVELOP A POSITION OF CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM IN COMMENTARIES BEGINNING TOMORROW, UNDERSCORING THAT THE PEOPLE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL AWAIT EVIDENCE THAT MORE REALISTIC AND CONSTRUCTIVE POLICIES WILL GOVERN PRAGUE'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS NOW THAT NOVOTNY HAS BEEN FORCED TO RELINQUISH POWER. NEW OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO IMPROVE CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S LOT, BUT THE LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO UTILIZE THEM TO WIN THE INTEREST AND SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE.

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