

## **The Bratislava Meeting.**

**The Bratislava meeting, held in the City Hall on Aug. 3 and ending the same evening, resulted in a signed declaration which made no reference to the reforms in Czechoslovakia but dwelt at great length on the need to protect and consolidate the international Communist movement, and which contained frequent references to American “aggression” and West German “revanchism.”** The declaration was worded in part as follows:

“...The representatives of the Communist and Workers’ Parties discussed ways of strengthening and promoting fraternal co-operation among socialist States.... In the years that have passed since the rout of fascism and the advent to power of the working class, the peoples of the European countries which have taken the road of socialism have scored victories in all spheres of public life. In these years the parties, overcoming difficulties and permanently improving their work, ensured the creation of powerful industry in every socialist country and the reorganization of life in the countryside; achieved steady growth of people's welfare and the flourishing of the national culture. Millions of working people have been awakened to conscious political life. The Soviet Union achieved particularly major successes in building socialism and communism. The international influence of socialist States, their role in solving major problems of world politics, has grown immeasurably.

“Support, consolidation and protection of these gains... is a common internationalist duty of all socialist countries. Such is the unanimous opinion of all participants in the conference, who expressed their unbending determination to develop and defend the socialist gains in their countries and to work for new achievements in socialist construction.

“On the basis of historical experience the fraternal parties have become convinced that it is possible to advance along the road of socialism and communism only by... consolidating the leading role of the working class and its vanguard—the communist parties. In so doing, every fraternal party... takes into consideration specific national features and conditions.

“Unswerving loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, the education of the masses in the ideas of socialism and proletarian internationalism, and an irreconcilable struggle against bourgeois ideology and all anti-socialist forces, provide a guarantee of success in strengthening the positions of socialism and in administering a rebuff to the schemes of imperialism.

“The fraternal parties firmly and resolutely set their unbreakable solidarity and their high degree of vigilance against each and every effort by imperialism and also by all other anti- communist forces to weaken the leading role of the working class and the communist parties. They will never allow anyone to drive a wedge between socialist States or to undermine the foundations of the socialist social system....”

After a denunciation of the “American invaders” in Vietnam and the “Israeli aggressors” in the Middle East, the declaration continued:

“The participants in the Bratislava meeting discussed the situation in Europe and point out that the increasing activity on the part of the forces of revanchism, militarism, and neo-Nazism in West Germany directly affects the security of socialist States and creates a threat to the cause of world peace. We shall continue consistently to pursue a concerted policy in European affairs in keeping with the common interests of the socialist countries and the interests of European security, and shall continue to rebuff any attempts to revise the results of the Second World War and violate the frontiers that have taken shape in Europe. We shall continue to insist that the Munich Agreements were null and void from the very outset. We shall continue to render resolute support to the German Democratic Republic. We shall go on rendering constant support to the Communist Party of Germany and to all forces which fight against militarism and revanchism and for democratic progress....

“Now, when the imperialist forces of the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and other countries are flaunting their aggressive activity and making persistent attempts to weaken the socialist community, the representatives of the fraternal parties consider it necessary to emphasize once again the particular significance of the Warsaw Treaty. This treaty, concluded by the socialist States in reply to the fact that revanchist West Germany Joined the aggressive NATO imperialist bloc, has been and continues to be a powerful factor making for the peace and security of the peoples of Europe. The treaty raises an insurmountable obstacle in the path of all those who would like to revise the results of the Second World War. It securely protects the gains of socialism and the sovereignty and independence of the fraternal States. It is aimed at consolidating European security and preserving world peace.

“The present situation demands of us tireless efforts to enhance the defence potential of each socialist State and of the socialist community as a whole, and to consolidate political and military co-operation within the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The participants in the conference regard it as their duty to fight consistently for consolidation of the cohesion of the international Communist movement....

“The parties participating in the Bratislava conference make this statement, being deeply convinced that the positions and views expressed therein are in line with the interests of all fraternal countries and parties, the cause of the unbreakable friendship of the peoples of our countries, the interests of peace, democracy, national independence, and socialism.”

The following representatives of Communist and Workers’ parties took part in the Bratislava meeting:

Bulgaria—Mr. Todor Zhivkov, Mr. Stanko Todorov, and Mr. Poncho Kubadinsky.

Czechoslovakia—Mr. Dubcek, Mr. Cernik, Mr. Smrkovsky, Mr. Bilak, and Mr. Lenart. President Svoboda also attended the meeting.

German Democratic Republic—Herr Ulbricht, Herr Stoph, Herr Erich Honecker, Herr Hermann Matern, Herr Gunther Mittag, and Herr Hermann Axen—the last four members or alternate members of the Socialist Unity Party's Politburo.

Hungary—Mr. Janos Kadar, Mr. Jeno Fock, and Mr. Zoltan Komocsin.

Poland—Mr. Gomulka, Mr. Cyrankiewicz, Mr. Kliszko, and Mr. Artur Starewicz, the last-named being secretary of the P.U.W.P. central committee.

Soviet Union—Mr. Brezhnev, Mr. Kosygin, President Podgorny, Mr. Suslov, Mr. Shelest, Mr. Katushev, and Mr. Ponomaryov.

Mr. Dubcek said on television on Aug. 4 that no secret agreements had been concluded either at Cierna or Bratislava; that there need be no anxiety about the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia; and that agreement had been reached at Bratislava on general principles of future collaboration to “consolidate the unity of the international Communist movement.” The Cierna and Bratislava meetings had confirmed the Marxist principle that in applying socialism every party must respect the specific conditions in its country, and “we believe that we have thus created an atmosphere of peace and trust for successful work in consolidating mutual relations.” Stressing that “everything we have done in the past few months has been aimed at consolidating our relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries,” Mr. Dubcek declared that true internationalism must link the principles of mutual aid with those of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

**The last Soviet troops left Czechoslovak soil on Aug. 3 during the Bratislava meeting—more than a month after the ending of the Warsaw Pact manoeuvres. Large-scale Soviet military exercises nevertheless continued on the Soviet, Polish, and East German borders with Czechoslovakia.**

Ulbricht-Dubcek Meeting at Karlovy Vary.

Herr Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader, visited Karlovy Vary on Aug. 12 for talks with Mr. Dubcek. Unlike the enthusiastic welcome given a few days earlier in Prague to President Tito of Yugoslavia[see below], Herr Ulbricht had a cool reception from the crowds in Karlovy Vary, who, however, cheered Mr. Dubcek enthusiastically. A strong opponent of the Czechoslovak party's liberalization policy, Herr Ulbricht was believed to have taken a particularly “hard” and uncompromising line at the Warsaw and Bratislava talks with the Czechoslovak leaders.

An official statement described the talks between Mr. Dubcek and Herr Ulbricht as “cordial and comradely” and revealed that the German problem was the main issue of the Karlovy Vary discussions. The communiqué said that both Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic would continue their stand against “West German militarism” and at the same time “give their full support to the democratic forces” in the Federal Republic.

At a press conference in Karlovy Vary before returning to Berlin, Herr Ulbricht said that the whole of Europe had soon through the pretensions of Western Germany's *Ostpolitik* (the new

approach by the Federal Republic to the Communist countries of Eastern Europe). Before there could be improved relations between Western Germany and the socialist countries, said Herr Ulbricht, the Federal Republic would have to fulfil certain conditions—namely, to abandon its claim to speak for the whole of Germany; to accept the invalidity of the 1938 Munich Agreement *ab initio*; to renounce the possession of atomic weapons; and to “regulate” its relations with the, German Democratic Republic.

Herr Ulbricht claimed that the G.D.R. had the most stable regime in Europe and that its people had always practised and enjoyed democratic socialism; as a result, he said, East German citizens were sometimes at a loss to understand the meaning of the recent events in Czechoslovakia. He also said that East German citizens found it difficult to understand the references to the abolition of press censorship in Czechoslovakia, since, he asserted, press censorship had never existed in the German Democratic Republic.

Yugoslav Support for Czechoslovakia. - President Tito's Visit to Prague.

Unconditional Yugoslav support for the democratization process in Czechoslovakia, and condemnation of interference by “some” other Communist parties in Czechoslovak affairs, was expressed on July 18 by the Yugoslav Communist Party in a declaration transmitted to the party leaders of the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries, including Czechoslovakia herself. The Belgrade statement said that any outside interference by other Communist Powers “could be interpreted as an attempt to limit the independence of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as well as to jeopardize the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia,” and would be “harmful for the further development of socialism.”

The leading Belgrade newspaper *Politika* said on the same day (July 18) that the Warsaw letter sent to the Czechoslovak Communist Party by the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, and East German parties “proclaims a new international legal principle—the right to intervene in the affairs of other socialist countries when they do not like what is going on.”

Mr Leo Mates, former secretary-general to President Tito and now director of the Yugoslav Institute for International Politics and Economics, on July 21 described the Soviet Union's pressure on Czechoslovakia as “a tragic blunder... which inflicts far-reaching harm on the Soviet Union.” Writing in *Nedeljne Informativne Noviny*, Mr Mates said that Soviet pressure on Czechoslovakia, even if successful in hindering progress in that country, would have “grave consequences for the political position of the Soviet Union” and would harm not only Czechoslovakia but also the international community.

President Tito, accompanied by leading members of the Yugoslav Communist Party, paid a three-day visit to Prague on Aug. 9–11 for talks with Mr. Dubcek and other Czechoslovak leaders. The President of Yugoslavia received one of the greatest welcomes ever accorded in Prague to a visiting Head of State, being cheered by large crowds waving Czechoslovak and Yugoslav flags as he drove with Mr. Dubcek to Hradcany Castle, where the talks were held.

A communiqué on the talks said that they had taken place “in an atmosphere of cordiality and friendship and a spirit of mutual comprehension,” and laid emphasis on the friendship between

the two parties and peoples. The two sides, it was stated, had “exchanged information on the problems of building socialism in their two countries” and also on problems affecting the international communist and workers’ movement. “The representatives of the two communist parties,” said the communiqué, “expressed their satisfaction at the harmonious development of relations between them and agreed that these relations should be developed in all spheres.... Discussing the problems of the communist movement, the two parties emphasized their desire for the development of bilateral co-operation in all domains.... They attach equal importance to multilateral collaboration and in the widest initiatives in the struggle for peace and socialism....”

#### Rumanian Support for Czechoslovakia. President Ceausescu's Visit to Prague.

Alone among the Warsaw Pact Powers, Rumania expressed no criticisms of the Czechoslovak liberalization policy and did not participate in the Warsaw and Bratislava meetings. Speaking at Galatz on July 17, President Ceausescu of Rumania said: “When the Warsaw Pact was set up, it was conceived as an instrument of collective defence of the member-countries against attack.... Not for a moment and never has anyone conceived that the Warsaw Treaty can be a reason for justifying interference in the internal affairs of other States. We consider that it is the duty and responsibility of each people, of each party, to organize its internal life;... nobody can claim to be the holder of universal truth or of a particular universal method in socialist construction.... That is why our people, the Rumanian Communist Party, do not share the view of those who are alarmed at what is happening in Czechoslovakia.... We have full confidence in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, in the working class, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, the Czech and Slovak peoples; and we are convinced that... they will know how to build socialism in Czechoslovakia in accordance with their hopes and aspirations. We wish them success from the bottom of our hearts....”

President Ceausescu paid a two-day visit to Prague on Aug. 15–16, accompanied by Mr Maurer (the Rumanian Prime Minister), Mr. Manescu (the Foreign Minister), and other Rumanian leaders. The Rumanian President, who like Marshal Tito was given an enthusiastic welcome in Prague, had talks with Mr. Dubcek and other Czechoslovak leaders, a communiqué being issued at their conclusion.

The communiqué expressed Czechoslovakia's “appreciation for the sympathy, confidence, and support which the people, the Communist Party, and the Government of Rumania have expressed in the process of democratization in Czechoslovakia.” The newly-signed Czechoslovak-Rumanian treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance, the communiqué continued, “creates new possibilities for the expansion of relations between the two countries in all spheres and expresses their determination to reinforce the defensive union of socialist States in the Warsaw Pact, and to place the development of their political, economic, and cultural relations on bilateral and multilateral bases, including the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.[comcorn]”

It was stated that the Czechoslovak and Rumanian delegations had discussed the strengthening of economic, scientific, technical, and cultural co-operation between the two countries, and had agreed to set up mixed commissions for this purpose which would submit proposals to the two Governments.

As regards the international situation, the communiqué said that “in the spirit of the Bucharest Declaration of July 5, 1968[see 21651 A], the two countries will make every effort to assure European security on the basis of recognition of and respect for post-war realities, in particular the existence of two German States, the inviolability of existing frontiers, including the Oder-Neisse frontier and that between the two German States, and the non-validity of the Munich Agreement[of 1938].”

The two sides expressed their determination to “develop friendly and fraternal co-operation with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the world socialist system” and to “contribute to strengthening the unity and cohesion of the socialist States in the interests of socialism and peace.” At the same time they would develop relations with all countries, irrespective of their social systems, based on the principle of peaceful co-existence.

During President Ceausescu's visit to Prague the Czechoslovak and Rumanian Governments signed a 20-year treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance, replacing one which had expired a month earlier. Under its provisions both countries recognized the post-war European frontiers, including the Oder-Neisse frontier between Poland and East Germany and the frontier between the two German States; committed themselves to opposing “revanchism” and “imperialism”; and declared that the 1938 Munich Agreement was invalid *ab initio*.

*Resumption of Soviet “War of Nerves” against Czechoslovakia. - Invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet and Warsaw Pact Forces.*

*Although the Soviet “war of nerves” against Czechoslovakia was suspended for about a fortnight after the Bratislava meeting, it was resumed on Aug. 16 when Pravda accused “anti-socialist reactionaries” of stepping up “subversive” activities in Czechoslovakia despite the decisions taken at Bratislava.*

The *Pravda* commentator, Mr. Yuri Zhukov, accused several Prague newspapers of “coming out with violent, slanderous attacks against fraternal parties and even opening fire on the Bratislava declaration, which bears the signature of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.” *Literarni Listy* was denounced for printing “a whole salvo of anti-Soviet articles” and *Mlada Fronta* for attacking an article in *Rude Pravo* supporting the Bratislava declaration. *Pravda* said that such utterances in the Czechoslovak press “supplement the malicious acts of the imperialist instigators who are conducting an intensive struggle against the Bratislava declaration and trying to sow the poisonous seeds of discord.” A large part of the *Pravda* article was taken up by an attack on Western newspapers for having allegedly encouraged “anti-socialist” forces in Czechoslovakia since the Bratislava meeting.

*Pravda* again launched an attack on “anti-socialist reactionaries” in Czechoslovakia on Aug. 19, when it came out with a long account of the alleged “persecution” of 99 workers in a Prague automobile factory who had written to *Pravda* on July 30 supporting the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. It was alleged that “the 99” had been subjected to “persecution and humiliation” and to ridicule at factory meetings for having defended friendship between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R.; that they had been criticized in the Czechoslovak press for treachery and lack of patriotism; and that they had been “dismissed from their work in social

organizations.” The alleged “persecution” of the 99 workers, said *Pravda*, “bears convincing witness that the enemies of the working class in Czechoslovakia are openly and impudently attacking socialist achievements. Regrettably, these attacks are not meeting with the necessary rebuff...”

**A special plenary session of the central committee of the Soviet Communist Party—apparently an emergency meeting –was held at the Kremlin on Aug. 20, no mention of this meeting, however, being made in the Soviet press. The same night Czechoslovakia was invaded by Soviet, Polish, East German, Hungarian, and Bulgarian troops, and Prague and other leading Czechoslovak cities occupied within a few hours.** The invasion of Czechoslovakia, and internal and external reactions thereto, will be described in subsequent articles.—(Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian - Le Monde - Neue Zürcher Zeitung - New York Times - Agerpres, Bucharest - Times Literary Supplement)(Prev. rep. Czechoslovakia 22744 A; 22762 B; 22711 A.)

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