

March 29, 1968

**Record of the Plenum of the Bulgarian Communist
Party Central Communist, Sofia**

Citation:

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Summary:

Excerpts of the Minutes of discussion from the Bulgarian Communist Party Plenum regarding the situation in Czechoslovakia.

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

TODOR ZHIVKOV:[1] [...] The discussions have shown that no concluding speech is needed as it has turned out we are unanimous with regard to the evaluation of the situation in Czechoslovakia made by the fraternal [Communist] parties in Dresden [on 23 March 1968]. Let us hope that no extreme steps will be required but if the worst comes to worst we will use our armies.

MISHO MISHEV:[2] In what state is the Czechoslovak army?

ZHIVKO ZHIVKOV:[3] It is in state of ineffectiveness.

TODOR ZHIVKOV: The situation is extremely difficult. What is the state of Politburo? The forces backing the Soviet Union and our policy are all now nearly driven out of the Politburo. You have the [Oldrich] "ernRk's statement. He is behind all this. Now, he is supposed to become the next prime minister. Other vacillating persons have been admitted to the leadership as well. [Alexander] Dubcek himself has neither the experience nor the intellectual capacity and willpower to take the leadership of the party into his own hands. One can only hope that there will be forces in the Presidium and the Central Committee capable of moving things ahead firmly. The situation there is much more difficult than the one we had to face after the April Plenary Session[4] here. Here, too, the situation could have turned very difficult but we immediately thought and found the support of our party members, our working class, of the sound forces within our intellectual circles. In our country the blow aimed at the army's leadership. It was repeated at the meeting of the Central Committee that those were [Stepan] Chervenkov's people, the DC [State Security] institutions were attacked. What did we do? We gave credit to the leaderships of the Army and the DC, we mobilized the Party's resources and the situation was saved. That is the thing they ought to do now in Czechoslovakia. Let us hope that inner strength can be found there to carry this out. If this is not done, the situation will get even more complicated. We should openly inform our party that there is a counterrevolutionary situation there. They are not yet out in the streets with arms but who can guarantee they will not do that tomorrow? It is quite possible that the counterrevolution could take a temporary hold and stabilize gradually. They have drawn their conclusions from the events in Hungary.

What does the present leadership have under its control? Nothing. It has no control over the army; it is demoralized, ineffective. They keep calling sessions, meetings, vote on resolutions to oust this or that person from his post in the army. The trade unions, the organized force of the working class, are crushed. Their official newspaper has turned into hotbed of the counterrevolution. The editorial staff of Rude Pravo is not under the Party's control. What does that mean? You do understand that the Dresden meeting was not called for nothing. Obviously, one could not be fully open in front of nothing. Obviously, one could not be fully open in front of the Czechoslovak comrades, but the situation is extremely grave.

During the sessions of the Political [Consultative] Committee of the Warsaw Pact [in Sofia], we decided to share with our Soviet comrades our anxiety over the events in Czechoslovakia. I had a special meeting with Comrade [Leonid I.] Brezhnev and Comrade [Alexei] Kosygin at which I expressed our concern with the situation, pointing out that we must do all we can, including taking even the ultimate risk, but we cannot permit counterrevolution to go into full swing in Czechoslovakia and to lose that country as a consequence. What is Czechoslovakia's significance? Czechoslovakia is in the middle of the socialist bloc; it is a state of relatively great importance in the socialist system, both politically and economically. We categorically declared to Comrade Brezhnev and Comrade Kosygin that we were prepared to mobilize our armies. We should act even with our cause at stake. Events confirm our assessment [of the situation]. We are very happy that the Soviet comrades took the initiative of calling the Dresden meeting. Let us hope that it will help. The most recent facts, though, do not show any reversal [of the situation]. They have postponed the debate on the program to Monday. We have no information about this program, what

its appeal will be what it will aim at, whether it might or might not be a signal to activate the counterrevolution. At the Dresden meeting we were informed that the counterrevolutionaries had prepared a manifesto to the people and would make it public at the right time. Western intelligence services are operating there. As in Poland, Zionism plays an important role there. However, comrades, we should consider another aspect of this matter. The Yugoslav leadership has a part in these events too. They have been trying to use Romania, Poland and Czechoslovakia to create their own coalition within our family. There is no need for us to use the Stalinist methods of the past but we are obligated to take measures to introduce order in Czechoslovakia as well as in Romania. Afterwards we will introduce order in Yugoslavia, too.

VOICES: Right [applause].

TODOR ZHIVKOV: The West will make use of this. We will be criticized but we will strengthen our position in the international Communist movement, we shall turn the correlation of forces in our favor.

What is the line followed by the Yugoslav leadership? Counterrevolutionary, anti-Soviet! What is the line followed by the Romanian leadership? Counterrevolutionary, anti-Soviet! In whose favor is such a political line? Who permits the heads of the Romanian leadership to play with the fate of the Romanian working class, with the interests of our system, which has been struggling for so many years? Who has permitted them that, who has given them such right?! If we allow all this we will bear great responsibility for our cause and fate before our generation. Indeed, we realize that nothing rash should be done but we must act. We are a revolutionary organization which use revolutionary forces, our methods coincide with the interests of our cause. [...]

1 Bulgarian party chief and prime minister.

2 Member of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP).

3 Member of Politburo CC BCP, First Deputy Prime Minister.

4 In 2-6 April 1956, a Plenum of the CC BCP removed former pro-Stalinist leader Chervenkov and strengthened Zhivkov's own position in the Party leadership."