

July 22, 1968

**Memorandum from P. Shelest to CPSU CC, On
Czechoslovak Delegation's Visit to Ukraine**

Citation:

"Memorandum from P. Shelest to CPSU CC, On Czechoslovak Delegation's Visit to Ukraine", July 22, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsDAHOU, F. 1, Op. 25, Spr. 31, Ll. 1-4, original in Russian. Translated for CWIHP by Mark Kramer.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/117298>

Summary:

First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Petro Shelest, reports on the visit of a delegation from Czechslovakia to Chernihiv oblast in northern Ukraine. During the visit, delegation members and Ukrainian officials argue about the Prague Spring and whether the democratization process at work was a positive force or a threat allowing anti-socialist elements an active role in Czechslovak society.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

C P S U C C

At the invitation of the oblast committee of the CP of Ukraine, a delegation from the East Slovakian[1] region of the ČSSR, headed by the first secretary of the KSČ regional committee, Cde. Miroslav Štěpán, visited the Chernihiv oblast of the UkrSSR from 20 to 24 July to learn about the livelihood of workers and the further development of friendly ties.

The delegation consisted of the following:

Josef Grösser - chairman of the oblast national committee

Jaroslav Ondráček - member of the KSČ oblast committee presidium;
professor and chair of the department for infectious
diseases at the Hradec-Králové medical faculty of
Charles University

Václav Jindřich - worker at the "Škoda" factory in Hradec-Králové;
secretary of the enterprise party organization

Jaroslava Prof - livestock specialist at a state farm; member of
the KSČ's Trutnov district committee

During their stay in Chernihiv oblast, the members of the delegation learned about work routines in party and government organs and about the daily lives of collectives at enterprises, collective farms, and educational institutions.

The Chernihiv oblast committee of the CP of Ukraine reports that during the discussions the leader of the delegation, Cde. Štěpán, reviewed the current situation in the ČSSR and expressed approval of the processes under way there.

The thrust of his comments was that over the past 20 years the economy of the ČSSR has not developed, national income and people's living standards have not increased, the management of economic and social affairs has been marked by subjectivism and capriciousness, and conditions have been unsuitable for the fruitful activity of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and party and economic workers. He declared that popular trust in the party was undermined by the unreasonable policies of A. Novotný.

Cde. Štěpán repeatedly emphasized that these shortcomings and the discontent they produce are supposedly the result of an uncritical view and blind imitation of Soviet planning methods, Soviet work styles, and the methods of the Soviet party and state apparatus.

During the discussions, the Czechoslovak comrades emphasized that it was impossible to continue that way, since it was threatening the ideals of socialism and the authority of the party. Although they claimed that the process of democratization of social life and the elimination of subjectivist elements in economic development are supported by a majority of the party and the people, they did not deny that anti-socialist, hostile forces are trying to exploit this process for their own aims.

When Cde. Štěpán was asked why anti-socialist elements in the ČSSR were being permitted to return to active political life and to use the mass media, he made an unconvincing attempt to attribute this to the lack of unity in the CC and the party, the

resistance from supporters of A. Novotný, and the necessity of having the people exert pressure on them. Cde. Štěpán also tried to depict this as a tactic aimed at demarcating social forces so that they can identify who the friends and foes of socialism are. He declared that half of the Czechoslovak nation currently supports the KSČ, a quarter are wavering, and the remaining quarter do not support the party's policy.

When asked why this "process" has been dragged out and the KSČ CC, the government, and the local party organs are not always in control of events, Cde. Štěpán argued that the demarcation of social forces is not yet completed. The Communists and healthy forces of the nation, he added, will not permit a change in the socialist course or in the internal and foreign policies of the state; nor will they permit any erosion of friendship with the Soviet Union.

One of the members of the delegation, Professor Jaroslav Ondráček, who was elected a member of the KSČ regional committee presidium at the recent party conference, expressed strong support for the process of "democratization." From his statements it was evident that his sympathies lie with the countries of the West. During one of the discussions, he stated: "I don't understand and cannot explain to students why we must live worse than the West Germans. After all, their economy suffered more during the war years than ours did, and they have a capitalist system whereas we have socialism. Nonetheless, living standards in their country are much higher than in our country." He spoke a lot about the shortcomings in arrangements for cultural exchanges and tourism between our countries. During one of the discussions, he reported that his daughters twice had gone on vacation in the FRG, whereas he supposedly was unable to send them on vacation to the Soviet Union. Although he gave a favorable assessment of the actions of young people and students in the ČSSR, he did not deny that they are leaning toward anarchism.

A worker at the "Škoda" factory in Hradec-Králové, Cde. Václav Jindřich, currently serves as the secretary of the factory's party committee in addition to his regular duties at work. At the recent regional party conference he was chosen a member of the KSČ regional committee. In the past he worked in the KSČ CC apparatus, but he was dismissed because of his disagreement with the CC's line on economic issues. He worked as a secretary at one of the KSČ district committees, but was soon removed from his post. He was then arrested and served time in prison. He is an active supporter of the "democratization" process, and he spoke in support of the economic platform outlined at the May plenum of the KSČ CC by the ČSSR deputy prime minister, Cde. O. Šik. According to the members of the delegation, Cde. Jindřich will be elected a delegate to the 14th KSČ Congress and will be recommended to be brought into the CC.

From the discussions with another member of the delegation, the chairman of the regional national committee, Cde. J. Grösser, it is evident that of all the members of the delegation, he has the most clear-headed view of the situation in his country and realistically sees the threat posed by anti-socialist forces. According to him, the greatest danger is that no one in the ČSSR is in any way exercising leadership and no one knows what techniques and methods must be adopted to build socialism according to a "Czechoslovak model."

While pointing out the serious dangers arising from the situation in the country, he said that as a representative of the old leadership (until May of this year, Cde. Grösser worked as a first deputy chairman of the regional national committee), he is now unable to draw attention to himself, since he will immediately be removed from office. He repeatedly stated that he will do everything required of him to forestall the consolidation of rightist forces in the region. Cde. Grösser reported that he has been called many times on the phone in his apartment by people threatening him with physical reprisals.

When the leader of the delegation, Cde. Štěpán, explained the essence of events in the ČSSR and answered questions, he said that the ongoing process will not impinge on the foundations of socialism or the ČSSR's friendship with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. When asked why Czechoslovakia is tolerating anti-socialist actions, he answered that "even a pure stream brings scum to the top," and that the Czechoslovak people have enough common sense, strength, and courage to clean out everything that is carried up. However, he was unable to say concretely how the party, government, and local organs will regain control of the process, and he limited himself to general comments about the party's authority and the healthy forces in the nation.

The members of the Bureau of the Chernihiv Oblast committee of the Ukrainian CP and the members of the Executive Committee of the oblast Council of Workers' Deputies who took part in the discussions with the Czechoslovak comrades conveyed to them their anxiety about the growing signs of anti-socialist trends in the process of "democratization." They also rebutted the mistaken interpretation that the Czechoslovak comrades have of the essence of this process.

Reported for informational purposes.

CC SECRETARY, CP OF UKRAINE P. SHELEST

22 July 1968

No. 1/74

[1]TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This is clearly a typographical error. It should read East Bohemian, not East Slovakian.