



World Wide Photo

Following the overthrow of Alexander Dubcek, Soviet officials worked at restoring relations between Russia and Czechoslovakia. By 1973 Leonid Brezhnev was able to receive the Order of the White Lion from Czechoslovak President Ludvik Svoboda.

to housing and infrastructure and import priorities from capital to consumer goods.

Despite these positive achievements, however, the normalization left intact all the basic problems of the Czechoslovak economy. While a decline in the productivity of capital, as well as the waste of raw material and energy, was stopped by the economic reforms in the second half of the 1960s, the reversal of this positive trend is signalled by recent official statistics. The shortage of manpower in trade and services is due to declining productivity of labour in industry. The trade balance with the West is marked by a growing deficit. Czechoslovak consumption of steel and energy per unit of GNP is twice as high as in developed Western economies. All these factors remind one of the situation preceding the recession in 1962-63 that finally forced the Government of Mr. Novotny to accept the reform program. The worst is yet ahead: as of January 1, 1976, the price of Soviet oil, gas and other raw materials is expected to rise to the world-market level.

Nor is the political situation too stable. Half a million people expelled from the party were deprived of jobs commensurate with their qualifications and their children are admitted to neither secondary schools nor to universities and colleges. These "second-rate" citizens do not keep

quiet, since they have nothing to lose. A kind of national reconciliation is already overdue. It is being delayed because any reconciliation would threaten the position both of the ultras and those who recently replaced the purged reformers. In this respect, Mr. Husak is not eager to follow the patterns set by Mr. Kadar.

For the Czechs, the Prague Spring has been a net political loss — they were thrown back to the late Fifties. The Slovaks gained, however. Only one objective of the 1968 reform — the federal arrangement — survived the Soviet invasion. To be sure, the federation has been curtailed by the reintroduction of the old centralized system. Nevertheless, the Slovaks (with 30 per cent of the population) for the first time in the history of Czechoslovakia were given full political parity with the Czech majority. Even more — in addition to the joint federal organs and institutions in which the Slovaks and Czechs are equally represented, they have their own national institutions, associations and organs. For instance, along with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, there is the Communist Party of Slovakia with its own central committee, secretariat, presidium, etc. The Czechs, however, have been denied the right to establish their own Czech Communist Party. They are

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