

CZECH RED SCORES GOTTWALD 'CULT'

Leader Blames Communists as Party for Veneration of Late President

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Special to The New York Times.

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia, April 9—It was the turn today of the late Klement Gottwald to be downgraded.

Czechoslovakia's first Communist President, who died in 1953 and lies embalmed in a huge hill-top mausoleum overlooking Prague was divested of the veneration accorded him by this country's Communists.

Publication of a speech by Antonin Novotny to the Communist party's central committee ten days ago disclosed an attack on the "cult of the individual" that was far different than that being made against Stalin in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Novotny, the Czech party's first secretary, did not criticize Gottwald. Instead he deplored the committee's collective guilt in propagating a Gottwald cult that had resulted in his being credited with "merits which belong to the party and to the masses." He added:

"This had led to creation of an atmosphere of untouchability around Comrade Gottwald, to the propagation of the idea 'Gottwald thinks for us' and to the weakening of collective leadership in our party."

Alludes to Modesty

Mr. Novotny spoke of Gottwald's "well-known modesty" and of his merit "in the fight for



IS DOWNGRADED: Klement Gottwald, Czechoslovakia's first Communist President, who died in 1953. Czech Communist leaders pleaded guilt for creating Gottwald cult, which credited him with merits belonging to the party.

the overthrow of capitalism" in Czechoslovakia.

What happened, Mr. Novotny added, was that "we have taken over, imitated and developed the system, harmful to the party, which for many years was created in the Soviet Communist party by Stalin."

Mr. Novotny conceded that voices were being raised to ask whether "in fighting against the cult of personality created around Stalin we are not at the same

time creating a new cult—a cult of Lenin." Mr. Novotny dismissed such an idea.

Nowhere in the lengthy published version of his speech was there a mention of Rudolf Slansky, his predecessor as First Secretary; Vladimir Clementis, or any of the other high Communist officials who died in the purges of 1952 and 1953.

This seemed to confirm the statement of Zdenek Fierlinger, a member of the Czech Politburo who told reporters in Moscow last week that the Prague Government had found no reason to restore the reputations of purge victims.