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Czechoslovakia-USSR: (Information as of 2300 EDT)

The talks between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders continued well into the night yesterday, a sign that an agreement may be imminent.

As of 0630 Moscow time, TASS had not published the expected communiqué on yesterday's talks, suggesting that consultations may have continued all night.

25X1 [redacted] Prime Minister
25X1 Cernik, a member of the delegation in Moscow [redacted]
[redacted] "the most important questions" were being discussed. In an effort to reassure those Czechoslovaks who have been urging the delegation to return in order to get a firsthand account of the occupation, Cernik added that the delegation was aware of the situation at home and was striving for an early conclusion to the negotiations.

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In Czechoslovakia, tension between the people and the occupation forces remained unabated, although fewer incidents of violence were reported than in previous days. Czechoslovak workers staged another 15-minute strike to demonstrate their opposition to the take-over. Loyalist authorities, however, apparently are concerned over the prospect of a general strike. The government, parliament, and trade unions addressed a joint appeal to the nation, warning that any strike action of more than a few minutes' duration would cause "immense harm" to the country.

In the capital, Soviet military equipment was somewhat less in evidence than before, although troop strengths there are believed to have remained unchanged. Last night, for no apparent reason, Soviet troops vacated the building housing the government presidium. The US Embassy comments that the attitude of most Prague citizens now is one of resignation to the presence of the occupation troops.]

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[Collaborators, possibly with Soviet connivance, have been appealing to Slovak nationalism in an effort to breach the almost solid front of Czechoslovak resistance. Although the Slovak party central committee reportedly denounced a proposal to proclaim a separate Slovak state two days ago, a loyalist radio station in Slovakia reports "independence" demonstrations are to be held today. The station denounced these plans as "obvious provocations," and expressed the hope that no one would participate.

In a possibly related move, the Slovak party congress convened yesterday, although it had earlier been put off until Czechoslovak party leader Dubcek's return. The last minute decision to hold the congress as scheduled may have been taken in order to strip authority away from first secretary Bilak, a member of the delegation in Moscow and a conservative opponent of Dubcek. The report of the first day's proceedings stressed that the competence of the central committee, of which Bilak is the head, ceases once the congress is in session.

Soviet commentary on developments in Czechoslovakia has become not only increasingly defensive but also somewhat more threatening in tone. Arguing that the pervasive and unremitting resistance proves the existence of an anti-Socialist plot, Pravda admits that the situation remains "complex and tense," a gloomier description than the earlier hints that things were not going as well as they might. Soviet commentators, increasingly virulent in defending the Soviet-sponsored "rescue mission," maintain that it has separated the "true fighters against imperialism" from those who merely pay lip service to that struggle. The commentators also point out that those who question the Soviet action--Rumania and Yugoslavia in particular--are following the line of the "imperialists."]

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[Troops from the western USSR are probably reinforcing Soviet elements in northwest Czechoslovakia. A Soviet convoy seen on 25 August in southern East Germany heading toward the Czechoslovak border apparently came from the USSR instead of from the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. In the convoy were many civilian trucks that had been converted for military use. These vehicles were probably called up during the recent "rear services" exercise in the western USSR.

On 26 August, [redacted] reported that the Soviet troops which initially occupied Prague were being replaced by "occupation or rear guard units." These new units have a higher proportion of young troops, who appear "jumpy" and "nervous" while patrolling. He also said the estimates of occupation troops in Prague may go as high as 80,000 to 90,000 rather than the 50,000 originally estimated. The higher figure reflects a reassessment of Soviet strength rather than an augmentation of occupation troops in Prague. [redacted] (Map)]

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