

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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July 22, 1968

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. W. W. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: The Situation in Czechoslovakia, July 22 - 3:00 P. M.

Tass Moscow has just reported that the Soviet Politburo agrees to meet the Czech Presidium in Czechoslovakia, "having in mind" that the meeting will be attended by both of these top Party organs "in a body." This looks like an important Czech success. However, the Soviets could have in mind a meeting in Kosice -- with their last remaining tank division in Czechoslovakia in the neighborhood. If the Czechs are insisting that all Soviet troops must leave the country before the meeting, we may still have some maneuvering ahead of us. (There are some undoubtedly hardliners still on the Czech Presidium, which is why the Soviets insist that the leadership should meet "in a body.")

Except for the one division mentioned above, most of the Soviet troops seem to have pulled back across the border. They remain in a state of readiness,

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[redacted]
is not reassuring in terms of a genuine stand-down. We also have a preliminary and unconfirmed indication [redacted]

There is an unconfirmed Reuters report that the Soviets handed the Czechs a note today protesting growing Western influence -- particularly West German influence -- and calling for an explanation of Western arms caches.

Today's Evening Star headlines: "Russian Warn U. S. and Czechs." This is a reference to today's Pravda, which is somewhat menacing in tone. Besides descriptions of U. S. press and West German activity in Czechoslovakia, Pravda says the following: "Right Wing anti-socialist forces ... supported by Imperialist reaction, are moving to liquidate the leading role of the Communist Party ... and restore capitalism. They have seized the organs of mass communication -- the press, radio and television

Fraternal ... proposals ... are being ignored [by the Czech leadership]. Thereby displayed is a failure to understand ... the whole depth of the danger.... Is it really necessary to wait until the counter revolutionary forces gain the upper hand ... before starting the struggle against them?

Each of our parties bears responsibility not only to its own working class and its own peoples but also to the International Working Class and the world Communist movement, and the parties cannot avoid the obligations emerging from this." (It might be noted that the Czech government has had considerable success restraining press excesses over the past two or three days, but Soviet polemics make this very difficult.)

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I understand the Secretary has now decided, or at least is seriously considering, calling in Dobrynin tonight (when his call will not be noticed by the press) and strongly refuting Soviet allegations about "American arms caches" and other insinuations about U.S. involvement. How far the Secretary might go -- if at all -- to indicate the serious consequences of any Soviet intervention is not entirely clear.

ND
Nathaniel Davis

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