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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CZECH TASK FORCE

Situation Report, 0600 hours EDT, August 24, 1968

1. Dubcek and Cernik Reported in Moscow: Prague Radio relayed a report from the Free Slovak Radio at Nitra that five Slovak Communist leaders who had been arrested Friday morning were released later in the day. The radio stated that while in detention the five were able to speak with Bilak and Husak who are in Moscow with President Svoboda. Husak reportedly told the group that Dubcek and Cernik had been taken to Moscow ahead of the rest of the delegation and had been permitted to join the delegation.

2. Rumors of Soviet Move Against Romania: A variety of reports of differing reliability reflects growing concern over the possibility of a Soviet military move against Romania. The Romanians are strenuously collecting intelligence on Soviet troop movements, especially in border areas; reportedly, the Romanians have been told that Soviet and Hungarian forces are deployed in Hungary between the Tisza River and the Romanian border. [REDACTED] intelligence services are disturbed by reports of Warsaw Pact power troop movements toward Romania. The Soviet Ambassador in London has reportedly informed a Soviet official to cancel his visit to Bucharest because of "great events there soon." The Romanian Ambassador in Washington claimed no information on such rumors of troop movements, disclaimed full mobilization in Romania, and said country has no intention of leaving Warsaw Pact. The Israelis report Vienna telephone operator unable to contact their Bucharest Embassy. 11325

3. Soviet Press Stresses Conspiracy Thesis: The Soviet media stress the increasing Czechoslovak resistance as proof of external and domestic conspiracy against socialism in Czechoslovakia. Izvestiya's Prague correspondent reports that the "provocateurs and counterrevolutionaries" are stirring up tension and trouble in Prague and are slandering the Warsaw Pact powers in publications such as Prace and Literarny Listy. Vishnevskiy in Pravda blames Western propaganda for fomenting an anti-communist mood and notes without elaboration the dispute at the Geneva ENDC. The TASS announcement of the arrival of Svoboda is pegged to a denunciation of the Czech Party Congress as illegal. Czech broadcasts calling for the neutrality of the country are viewed as proof of a long-prepared conspiracy against socialist Czechoslovakia.

4. Prague Situation: Prague remained relatively calm during the night with only a few scattered incidents of shooting reported. In one incident, some shots fired at a student dormitory near the American Embassy reportedly fell into the Embassy compound. No damage has been reported by the Embassy.

5. Yugoslav Reaction: Friday morning Tito told our Ambassador in Belgrade that strong Yugoslav condemnation of Soviet intervention would intensify and that Soviet-Yugoslav relations will be devoid of trust and confidence. A Yugoslav letter circulated at the UN termed Soviet invasion "in no way justified." In an evening speech at a Yugoslav Communist Party meeting,

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Tito blamed Soviet fear of the spread of the Czechoslovak example to other countries for intervention; he accused Soviet leaders of miscalculating consequences and of not considering reaction among Communist parties and nonaligned countries. Tito warned Yugoslavia will defend its independence if a threat should arise. Foreign Minister Nikezić termed intervention the final collapse of a policy of 20 years duration.

6. Security Council Debate: The Security Council on August 23 continued its consideration of the Canadian draft resolution which would have the Secretary General dispatch a special representative to Prague to ensure the safety of Czech leaders, and then adjourned until 1130 hours EDT, August 24. During the discussion a note from Czechoslovak Deputy Premier Sik was circulated which authorized Czech Foreign Minister Hajek to represent Czechoslovakia in the Security Council and the United Nations. Hajek is expected to participate in today's Security Council session, although he indicated to newsmen yesterday, after a meeting with Secretary General U Thant, that he would not make a final decision on this until the time of the session.

7. Lucet-Leddy Conversation: French Ambassador Lucet at his request called on Assistant Secretary Leddy on August 23 to exchange views on the situation in Eastern Europe. Ambassador Lucet agreed with Mr. Leddy that it would be useful to exchange views on the recognition of any new Czech government which the Soviets succeed in assembling.

8. Saturday Demonstration in Washington: A demonstration involving an estimated 1,000 persons is planned for 1400 hours EDT Saturday near the Soviet Embassy. The peaceful demonstration may last two hours. Various Hungarian Freedom Fighters and anti-Castro Cubans plan to participate. A demonstration against the Soviet UN Mission in New York may be held at the same time.

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