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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 August 1968



INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Military Intervention in Czechoslovakia

1. About 2300 hours, local time Prague, (1800 hours EDT) on 20 August Soviet, Polish, East German, Hungarian and Bulgarian troops began moving into Czechoslovakia, according to a Prague radio broadcast. Prague radio stated that the troops were moving into Czechoslovakia without the knowledge of Czechoslovak party and government leaders.

2. At 2145 hours, Prague radio appealed to all citizens to maintain calm and to offer no resistance to the troops moving into the country. According to the broadcast no commands had been issued to Czechoslovak military forces to defend the country. In Prague, the National Assembly (parliament) and the party central committee immediately assembled. They apparently are still in session.

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4. There have been, as yet, no indications of ground forces movements into Czechoslovakia, but it is likely that deployment occurred from assembly positions in Czechoslovakia's borders in East Germany, Poland, the USSR, and Hungary. At least 25 divisions had been deployed in these areas for several weeks. As recently as three days ago they had rehearsed a plan to move into western Czechoslovakia.

5. A member of the Soviet delegation to the UN has stated that the Soviet government and its Warsaw Pact allies were intervening militarily in Czechoslovakia at the request of the Czechoslovak government. Otherwise, there has been no official Soviet statement, either as to the act of intervention or as to the pretext on which the action is based.

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6. According to a press report from London, telephone contact between Britain and the Soviet Union was cut soon after Prague Radio's announcement of intervention.

7. The Soviet intervention came hard on reports of the convening of an extraordinary session of the Soviet Central Committee. Soviet leaders interrupted their vacations in order to attend the session, according to these reports. This sequence suggests that the Soviet leadership was seeking the last-minute approval of the Central Committee for a decision which had already been made. The circumstances raise the possibility that the decision resulted from a rebellion within the Politburo against policies which, in recent weeks, have appeared to put the USSR on the short end in the Soviet-Czechoslovak conflict.