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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
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21 August 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Some Observations on Soviet Intervention in
Czechoslovakia, 20 August 1968

1. Move will probably be to seal off borders and hope to avoid battle.
2. May have been a change in Soviet leadership about 15-16 August. New leadership would probably be Shelepin, Shelist, and Podgorny.
3. Basic issues are irreversibility of communist rule, leading role of Communist Party, and strategic geographic position of Czechoslovakia in Soviet defense.
4. Soviet troops will probably provide shield behind which Czech hard line can carry out coup to depose Dubcek.
5. Soviet vital interests are at stake --
 - a. Legitimacy of CPSN to rule inside USSR and to control foreign parties.
 - b. Threat to security of Soviet's western border.
 - c. Change in correlation of forces in Czechoslovakia no longer part of Soviet camp.
6. Don't discount possible connection in timing between Third Offensive in Vietnam and intervention -- Soviets might think we would be preoccupied in SVN and be even less inclined to take action.
7. It seemed to me that intervention was probable when reading study on 20 August that pointed out short logistic capability of Soviet divisions and connected it with Soviet rear service exercise -- Soviet divisions need rear service logistic support after 3-5 days.
8. Czech armed forces probably would not fight the Soviet Army unless directly attacked.

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