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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

22 July 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

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1. Concerning our military options in the event of Czech-Soviet hostilities, I find that they are quite slim on a unilateral basis, and even less when action in coordination with possible allies is postulated. Essentially, we have in effect now (as do the Germans) border security instructions which are of the firm-but-not-provocative type, plus a general U.S. plan for deployment of less than a division-size force to support a pro-western or neutral government against uprising or external aggression. Otherwise, the current military plans do not apply directly to the type of operations envisioned for a Czech-Soviet showdown.

2. Operations in concert with allies are even less likely, inasmuch as the FRG, the best situated potential interventionist from the west, was reluctant during the April crisis to consider any actions which might be provocative to the Soviets. Quadripartite and NATO actions suited for Czechoslovakian contingencies have not been planned.

3. In the event of hostilities, it is estimated that the Czech borders facing FRG and Austria would be initially open to the West at the option of the Czech government, making possible some evacuation, supply, or reinforcement operations. However, deliberate initiation of hostilities by the Soviets would signal an intent to bring much power to bear, if necessary, to restore the situation; it is unlikely that less than a division in force or any feasible level of supply would significantly alter the outcome. Inasmuch as the Czech military and people are rather well stocked now, any emergency relief required might best be handled through International Red Cross channels.

4. While our post-hostilities military options seem to be very limited, there might be some deterrent value in suggesting to the Soviets that a more liberal Czech government would almost certainly result in a reduction of NATO or U.S. forces deployed in Europe. This might tend to divert some of the hard-line pressure within the Soviet government, because the new Czech trend is probably being evaluated primarily in terms of the current East-West force relationship, rather than a less tangible "equilibrium" relationship in the future.

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WILLIAM L. LEMNITZER

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