

MEETING NOTES
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MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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August 22, 1968

9:00 P. M.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tom

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of the Cabinet meeting held in the Cabinet Room Thursday, August 22. Those attending the meeting were:

- The President
- The Vice President
- Secretary Rusk
- Secretary Clifford
- Secretary Fowler
- Secretary Freeman
- Secretary Wirtz
- Postmaster General Watson
- Secretary Boyd
- Attorney General Clark
- Secretary Smith
- Secretary Weaver
- Secretary Cohen

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 94-146

By 2/28, NARA, Date 8-23-94

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The staff members attending the meeting were:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Walt Rostow | George Reedy |
| Charles Murphy | Mike Manatos |
| Jim Jones | Ernest Goldstein |
| Joe Califano | Jim Gaither |
| John Macy | DeVier Pierson |
| Barefoot Sanders | Larry Temple |
| Charles Zwick | Nat Davis |
| Art Okun | Ed Hamilton |
| Charles Maguire | Ed Fried |
| Bob Hardesty | Leonard Marks |
| Harry Middleton | Tom Johnson |

The meeting began at 12:16 and ended at 1:50 P. M.

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PRESIDENT: Czech situation.

1. We did not assume there would be no military intervention.
2. There was massing of troops on the borders.
3. Thompson said they would go to any length to push Czechs back to pre-January site.
4. Tuesday lunch included item on Soviet Central Committee meeting.
5. At 7:05 -- Dobrynin asked for meeting
 - Rostow told Rusk
 - Read Soviet message
 - Rusk sent message to Dnc meeting
 - Asked for NSC meeting
 - Rusk called in Dobrynin
 - Ball instructed to talk to other nations in UN.

Yesterday morning we formalized a statement.

- We have no commitment to intervene militarily.
- It would not be in Czech interests or ours.
- The "Cold War" is not over.
- Our relations with Soviets are in transition.
- We would go anywhere at anytime to further interests of peace.
- We have thought at times we have made Progress.
- We have the NPT, Outer Space agreement and the Consular Treaty.

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-- Soviets thought a pause would enable them to do something in Vietnam. We tried a 37-day pause in the bombing.

-- There are some plusses and some minuses.

We have been disillusioned if not deceived.

SECRETARY RUSK: The political costs the Soviets would have to pay was one reason we thought they would not move.

A decision was made on Monday. If there were military intervention, there would be a world war.

In the Security Council the matter was inscribed, 13 - 2. India, Pakistan and Algeria voted to put it on the agenda. Only two voted against it. They were the Soviet Union and Hungary.

There would be 80 - 90 votes on this issue in the General Assembly.

This action has created violent world reaction.

The National Assembly can speak. The President and the Foreign Minister can also.

As far as the relation between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam -- I see no direct relationship.

I hope members of the Cabinet will not get into this.

SECRETARY WIRTZ: I agree Czechoslovakia and Vietnam are different situations.

There is confusion in the people's minds.

The Czechs spoke to the world as though people do not recognize the difference between this and Vietnam.

Sixty five percent of the people in the world wish us well in Vietnam.

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VICE PRESIDENT: I was shocked to find Galbraith talking as though it was one and the same.

PRESIDENT: I want the Cabinet to have all the information that is available to me.

We want to achieve peace.

SECRETARY CLIFFORD: JCS maintain watch over the Soviet Union. They followed the meetings of the Czechs with the Warsaw Pact countries. They understand the dangers. They watched the exercises on the border. The Warsaw nations had rehearsed it.

Planes moved in. Elements of 26 different divisions took part. They went into radio silence.

Dobrynin's message was the first notice.

There is no basis for resistance on the part of Czechs. We have no mutual assistance pacts.

We do have an understanding with West Germany.

This action on the part of the Soviet Union may be helpful to us in not getting the troop cutback in Europe.

Vietnam:

Facts do not support that there is a lull.

In 1967 170 men were killed per week for the first seven weeks.
In 1968 180 men were killed per week for the first seven weeks.

For the same period of time in 1967 2400 friendly troops were killed in action as compared to 2800 killed in 1968.

There really was no lull.

The level of activity has gone up considerably in the last three days.

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They will attempt a third offensive. A pattern will resemble the Tet offensive and offensive in May. It will be close in identity to those two periods.

They are prepared for a full offensive.

RUSK: On items which involve mutual de-escalation, we have consistently had a turn-down.

PRESIDENT: I made my March 31 statement on my own -- about my personal career, about bombing, and about political circumstances. I did not consult with the Cabinet.

We did get discussions started.

Our bombing has stopped ten to 20 percent of their trucks.

We have stopped bombing eight times.

MARKS: By this action the Soviets have almost unanimously been denounced by the free world. They have restored the cold war and have hardened public opinion against the Soviet Union.

Communist papers in other parts of Europe have been critical of the Soviet Union's action in Czechoslovakia.

Only one paper outside of the Soviet Union has supported the move. That paper was in North Vietnam.

Five years ago the Soviets stopped jamming radio programs aimed across the Iron Curtain. Last night they restored the jamming.

Since March 31, Vietnam has become a secondary issue. No major criticisms have been voiced.

The Harris Poll shows that 61 to 24 are against stopping the bombing.

SECRETARY SMITH: Should we have export control?

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