

~~SECRET~~

Received washington CommCen  
10:46 A.M. EDT Tuesday 27 Aug 68

Redeived LBJ Ranch CommCen  
10:25 A.M. CDT Tuesday 27 Aug 68

Relayed Austin CommCen  
10:30 A.M. CDT Tuesday 27 Aug 68

PA

OO WTE15  
DE WTE10 397AU  
EEA315  
OO WTE10  
DE WTE 3453

FROM WALT ROSTOW  
TO THE PRESIDENT  
INFO GEORGE CHRISTIAN  
CITE CAP82177

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6  
NLJ 97-162  
By isa, NARA Date 9-8-97

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AUGUST 27, 1968 10:00 A.M.

SUBJECT: CZECH-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE AND GENERAL SITUATION

THE CZECH-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE HAS JUST BEEN PUBLISHED IN MOSCOW. IT CALLS FOR THE GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF OCCUPYING TROOPS -- AS THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IS NORMALIZED. SOVIET TROOPS ARE NOT TO INTERFERE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS (AND APPARENTLY ARE WITHDRAWING FROM THE CENTER OF PRAGUE). THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO SAID CZECH LEADERS HAD "EXPLAINED" HOW THEY WERE STRENGTHENING THE LEADING ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND SOCIALIST INSTITUTIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. WHILE THIS IS NOT EXPLICIT, WHAT IS PROBABLY REFERRED TO IS A CZECH ASSURANCE THAT NON-COMMUNIST PARTIES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO MOVE OUT ON TO THE POLITICAL SCENE. INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE CZECHS HAVE AGREED TO IMPOSE SOME SORT OF CENSORSHIP TO PROTECT THE WARSAW PACT ALLIES FROM ATTACK AND THE PUBLICATION OF UNPALATABLE TRUTHS. CZECHOSLOVAKIA REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE WARSAW PACT, THE EAST-BLOC ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND THE GENERAL LINES OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY--PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS BONN.

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IN RETURN, THE SOVIETS HAVE ACCEPTED THE CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE OF DUBCEK, CERNIK, SMRKOVSKY AND APPARENTLY EVEN CISAR. TO ACCEPT THESE MEN, BRANDED ONLY DAYS AGO AS TRAITORS TO COMMUNISM, REPRESENTS A PAINFUL BACK-DOWN. CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S PROGRESSIVE ACTION PROGRAM IS TO GO FORWARD AND IN MOST AREAS HER CITIZENS' NEWLY WON FREEDOMS CONTINUE.

A CONTINUING INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE IS LIKELY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PARTY NEWSPAPER, RUDE PRAVO, HAS APPEARED UNDER THE APPARENT EDITORIAL DIRECTION OF ITS CONSERVATIVE-LEANING EDITOR --WHO DISMISSED TWO OF HIS MAIN LIBERAL COLLEAGUES JUST BEFORE THE INVASION. RUDE PRAVO ASSERTS THAT THE EXTRAORDINARY PARTY CONGRESS HELD IN PAST DAYS IN A PRAGUE FACTORY IS INVALID. THERE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE A DRIVE BY THE CONSERVATIVES --AND THEY WILL BE HOPING AND RELYING ON SOVIET SUPPORT--TO RESTORE THE DELICATE BALANCE OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE FORCES THAT PREVAILED IN THE OLD PRESIDUM AND OLD CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THEY WILL BE TRYING TO BUCK ALMOST UNIVERSAL POPULAR SENTIMENT.

IT IS NOT CLEAR--NOT WITHSTANDING THE COMMUNIQUE--WHETHER THE SOVIETS HAVE REALLY AGREED TO WITHDRAW ALL THEIR TROOPS. THE MOSCOW TALKS OBVIOUSLY HIT A SNAG YESTERDAY, HOLDING UP FINAL AGREEMENT AND THE COMMUNIQUE FOR MANY HOURS DURING THE NIGHT. IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IF THIS TROOP ISSUE CAUSED THE DELAY --WITH THE SOVIETS INSISTING ON A CONTINUING PRESENCE AND THE CZECHS PRESENTING MOUNTING EVIDENCE FROM BACK HOME THAT THEIR PARTY, PEOPLE, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND GOVERNMENT WERE DETERMINED TO DEMAND THAT THE RUSSIANS MUST GO. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT FURTHER TALKS BETWEEN THE RUSSIANS AND CZECHS WILL BE NECESSARY.

THE AGREEMENT REACHED IS UNEASY AND UNSTABLE. IT HAS ELEMENTS VERY DIFFICULT TO SWALLOW ON BOTH SIDES. THE REMARKABLE THING IS THAT CZECH DETERMINATION, COURAGE AND INGENUITY HAVE PRODUCED A REAL COMPROMISE.

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