

Wednesday, September 4, 1968, 1:15 P.M.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: NSC Meeting on Czechoslovak Crisis

Leonard Marks telephoned to say that he would be prepared to discuss Western European press and radio reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia at this afternoon's NSC meeting. I recommend that you ask him for a brief report following Director Helms' comments on fears aroused in Germany by the Russian movement into Czechoslovakia.

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W. W. Rostow

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Wednesday, September 4, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Order of Business for NSC Meeting
on Issues Raised by the Czech Crisis

The purpose of the meeting is:

- To assess the impact of the Czechoslovakian crisis on Western Europe.
- To discuss how we can use the crisis to strengthen Western European defense and NATO.
- To discuss how we carry on our current business with the Russians and Eastern Europe.

(Attached is a State Department paper discussing the problems.)

Ask Secretary Rusk to summarize the major issues and possible ways of dealing with them.

Ask Secretary Clifford to speak to the defense of Western Europe in the light of reactions to the Czech crisis and the new dispositions of Soviet troops in Central Europe.

Director Helms is prepared to reply to the question, "How scared are the Germans?"

Secretary Fowler wishes to comment on the problems from Treasury's viewpoint.

Ask Secretary Rusk to comment on the work we should be doing with the Congress.

Conclude the meeting by asking for specific recommendations on ways to strengthen Western Europe and NATO.

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By g/lis, NARA, Date 5-3-91

W. W. Rostow

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The United States, Europe, and the Czechoslovakia
Crisis

I. Introduction

The Czechoslovak crisis has raised grave issues for the United States and its Western European allies. It has cast into question such matters as the future of detente, the defensive capability of Western Europe, and the future of Communism and the independent states of Eastern Europe.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the issues and the current and prospective means for meeting these problems by the United States and its allies.

II. Detente

The August 20-21 occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact provided a cold douche for the future of detente, or the progressive rapprochement of East and West. In the late Sixties, the achievement of detente had become an important objective in the policies of most Western European nations as well as the United States. It had become a key element in the work program of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. But its assumed basis was seriously undermined by the Czechoslovak crisis.

Most Western nations have reacted with strong expressions of disgust at, and disapproval of, the Warsaw Pact occupation of independent Czechoslovakia. There was almost universal support for the United Nations consideration of this problem and approbation for the resolution supported by the majority in the Security Council.

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To give further meaning to their disapproval, most Western nations undertook to limit contacts with the Soviets and the occupying powers of the Warsaw Pact, and cancelled plans or proposed visits in the political and cultural fields. As the repression of Czechoslovakia continues, with the possibility of the installation of a de facto occupation regime, the deterioration of East-West contacts may well continue.

These relatively limited actions do not necessarily preclude the possibility of return in due course to the pursuit of detente. The present disposition of many European nations is to avoid actions which might impair the eventual resumption of closer relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. The positions of the United Kingdom and the Government of France on this score are particularly apparent.

US actions have so far generally paralleled those of its Western European allies. For the time being we are seeking a balanced approach that will satisfy the immediate objective of expressing censure of Soviet action without destroying overnight our longer-range goals.

In the cultural field we propose the following criteria:

- a. Cancel or postpone highly visible exchanges susceptible to being interpreted as evidence of goodwill or friendship toward the invading powers. (For example, the trip of the Minnesota Band to Russia.)
- b. We do not propose disrupting low-visibility exchanges already in progress. (For example, graduate students, individual scientists and researchers already on study tours.) But we should discourage new initiatives.

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c. We should avoid across-the-board restrictive measures, such as indiscriminate restrictions on travel that could be construed as a return to the cold war.

d. We should maintain exchange activities with Czechoslovakia to the extent possible, and with the still-independent state of Romania. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, we should participate in the Trade Fair at Brno if the Czechoslovak Government decides to hold it.

In the political and economic fields similar criteria should prevail. We are considering cancelling or discouraging activities such as the second inaugural flight of AEROFLOT.

We might continue certain scientific and technical activities which are of special interest to us, such as oceanographic research and the renegotiation of the US-USSR Atlantic Fisheries Agreement.

In the area of peace and security, important decisions will need to be taken. For example, should we agree to open missile talks at any definite early date. Similar decisions involve US participation in the solar eclipse experimentation in the USSR, US-USSR discussions on peaceful nuclear devices, etc.

In the economic area we should discourage the development of new commercial activities with the aggressor states, and we are considering a curtailment of export licenses.

III. The Defense of Western Europe

The movement of Warsaw Pact forces into Czechoslovakia and the continuing occupation of that country has obviously affected the military situation in Europe. The status quo has been changed. There are larger military forces present in Central Europe than at any time since the post-war period. The military occupation

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of Czechoslovakia puts Soviet forces in a country where they have not been since World War II. There is no assurance as yet that the Warsaw Pact forces will soon return to their deployment where they existed six weeks ago.

The changed East-West military situation in Europe is of significance to the security of the United States and its allies. In the light of these developments we are reviewing with our allies what the implications may be for existing arrangements to provide for our common security.

The principal forum for this review will be NATO. Since the onset of the Czech crisis, the NATO posture has combined three essential elements: (a) vigilance by the NATO political and military authorities; (b) a low public profile while the spotlight was on the United Nations; and (c) intensified consultations among the Allies regarding implications of the situation for Western security interests.

As a result of NATO consultations a number of issues require consideration. These are outlined below.

A. Proposals for high-level NATO meetings

Following a period of speculation and trial balloons--including Kiesinger's public mention of a Heads of Government meeting--the British on August 30 took the initiative. They have sought our views on two alternative proposals. Both take account of the fact that Defense Ministers of seven NATO countries are already scheduled to meet in Bonn, October 10-11, as the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG).

The first alternative envisages postponing the NPG until the end of October or early November, advancing the date of the usual year-end NATO meeting

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to the end of October or early November, and holding both sessions in Brussels. The result would be a stock-taking meeting of Foreign and Defense Ministers to consider defense and political matters arising from the crisis. Like the normal December meeting, fourteen countries would meet to examine defense issues while the French would join them later to examine political problems. In the course of the three (or four) day session, the seven-nation NPG would meet for a day.

The second alternative involves simply broadening the presently scheduled (October) NPG meeting to include all defense ministers (except presumably the French). The British favor the first alternative on political, psychological and practical grounds. It would permit a maximum amount of business to be transacted and avoid a "nuclear affairs" meeting as NATO's first major response to the Czech crisis.

A key question, in either case, is whether the necessary groundwork can be laid in time to permit ministers to take substantive decisions. A meeting without concrete results could be disappointing for NATO as an organization and for public opinion.

Another possible course would be to hold a special meeting of Foreign and Defense Ministers towards the end of September to issue a new program of work for NATO. The usual year-end meeting would be held in December. A September meeting would have the advantage of an early public response by NATO to the crisis.

B. General Alliance policy on East-West Relations

In connection with any special meeting, Ministers would have to decide whether the Czech crisis--and Soviet and Warsaw Pact policies demonstrated by recent events--call for any changes in Alliance policy objectives as stated in the Harmel Report (on future tasks

of the Alliance), the Reykjavik declaration on mutual force reductions, or other public pronouncements (such as on strategic concept) issued by NATO over the past two years.

Our aim, and presumably that of all Member Governments (with France a possible exception) would be to seek a strong public reaffirmation of the Alliance--its defense and deterrent role--while maintaining the long-range commitment to improved East-West relations.

C. Strengthening NATO by extending the North Atlantic Treaty

Italy has suggested--although not yet by formal proposal--that Member Governments consider strengthening the Treaty by formal action to ascertain extended life for NATO. Such action would make clear the Allies intent to refrain from exercising the right of withdrawal for an additional period of years (say, ten) beyond 1969. (Article 13 provides that, after the Treaty has been in force for twenty years, a signatory state can withdraw on one year's notice.)

The Allied Governments could act on this problem either by amending the Treaty or issuing individual declarations of intent to refrain from exercising the withdrawal right for, say, ten more years.

Greater assurance about the Alliance's future would have favorable impact on (a) overall US-European relations and (b) specific issues, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

This subject may arise in preliminary fashion, at least in the corridors, at any special NATO meeting held in the near future. Our current position is that the Alliance will continue and need not be subject to formal action. The Czechoslovak crisis raises issue of need for a more formal commitment.

D. NATO force levels and planning

NATO is presently considering an urgent Military Committee proposal that member governments defer any further force reductions or redeployments pending NATO review of the overall situation. This proposal gives the United States difficulty because of the current examination of further economies in our defense establishment in Europe.

Beyond this immediate question, NATO must now reexamine its entire force posture and dispositions in Europe in light of such factors as what the invasion of Czechoslovakia showed about Soviet and Warsaw Pact operations and capabilities, and the fact that Soviet forces will probably be stationed on Czechoslovakia's western frontier for an indefinite period.

Apart from other US objectives that may emerge as a result of study, we will want to seek increased European contributions to their own defense. This could include improvement of reserves, equipment, and mobilization capabilities as well as any changes in standing forces.

E. NATO strategy, crisis and alert procedures

NATO's present strategic concept based on "flexible response" and "forward defense" is unlikely to be altered fundamentally as a result of the Czech crisis. But certain aspects, notably the doctrine of political warning time, will have to be reexamined. The doctrine envisages that, prior to any overt Warsaw Pact action against NATO, there would be a period of heightened tension and warning permitting the Allies to take necessary reinforcement measures.

Closely related to the foregoing, some at least of the Allies will want reexamination of the reinforcement times, strategic mobility for redeploying US forces

to Europe, NATO alert and crisis procedures, and the efficiency of the early warning radar system covering the Central Front.

F. The Mediterranean

While the Czech crisis has focussed attention on the NATO Central Front, concern about Soviet pressures against Romania and Yugoslavia raises anew the problem of Mediterranean security. At the June meeting in Reykjavik NATO ministers gave various directives aimed at improving command arrangements, stand-by naval force dispositions, and surveillance activities. These were directed primarily at the increased Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean. Recent events may require review and/or speeding up of NATO work on security in the Mediterranean and on NATO's south-eastern flank.

G. The French attitude

On all of the foregoing subjects, the French are in a special position for two reasons. First, they do not participate in most aspects of the integrated military system. Second, since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, de Gaulle has reaffirmed his policy of opposition to "blocs". As a corollary, the French have been negative on the idea of special high-level western meetings--NATO, WEU, or European Community.

In all probability, the French would, however, be represented at any Ministerial session of the North Atlantic Council. They would expect the Fourteen to meet without them for part of the session to deal with NATO military questions. The best hope for improving French cooperation in Eastern defense would probably be through practical steps--improved liaison with the NATO military or improvement of French forces in Germany. The Germans are probably in the best position to sound out the French on these questions.

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H. The key role of Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany--on the Central Front with the largest land army of the continental allies--has been particularly hard hit by the Czechoslovak crisis. The actions of the Warsaw Pact aggressor states have thrown into question the German policy of seeking better relations with the countries of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the rapidity with which the Soviet Union, with little apparent warning, undertook this action, has shaken German confidence in the warning time principle of the NATO strategic concept.

The Soviet actions have also caused a reexamination of the German attitude towards signature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While no public decision has been made on this subject the issue is obviously one now being subjected to re-appraisal. The Germans feel that to sign the NPT--with its duration--might well jeopardize their future security.

The German press is heavy with charges of "super power complicity" in the Czechoslovak crisis and expressions of uneasy doubts of the ability of the US and other of Germany's allies to stand up to the Warsaw Pact. In addition, there is the problem of Berlin. The actions of the Warsaw Pact aggressor states, following upon the June actions of East Germany against Berlin, raise doubts in German minds about the future of that city which they regard as an important part of Free Germany.

The result is a general malaise through Germany. Kiesinger reacted to this feeling in his recent interview when he urged a NATO summit meeting as a means of putting new life in NATO.

Germany is key to the security of Europe and to the effective functioning of the NATO alliance. While

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the current malaise may be founded on emotionalism rather than fact, it remains true that Germany is uneasy and disturbed. Such an attitude can have a multiplier effect throughout Europe unless steps are taken now to reaffirm the solidity and efficacy of Western defense within NATO.

In short, high-level review and reappraisal by NATO nations could well be an important ingredient in calming the German attitude. It could also be an important factor in the continuance of constructive US/German relations.

IV. Communism and the Future of Independent States of Eastern Europe

A. The Communist World The USSR has become increasingly isolated within the international Communist movement and has undercut its position of leadership because of its rigidity and inability to adjust to changing times. As things stand, the "Communist family" has now been reduced to "The Five": The USSR, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Bulgaria. Clearly this is too thin a margin of support even for Soviet foreign policy purposes. Moreover, the loyalty and stability of some of even these regimes is not beyond question. We may find that the domestic positions of Gomulka, and perhaps also of Kadar, have been weakened much more than now appears by their willingness to serve as the tools of Soviet intervention.

B. Czechoslovakia The Soviet leaders may hope that a kind of balance can still somehow be struck in Czechoslovakia (as it has in different ways in Hungary and Poland, for example). This is far from certain. If the Czech leaders prove unable to keep order or if, keeping order, they end up with a sullen, despondent population that would leave the country as stagnant as it was before, Czechoslovakia may end up as little more than a Soviet military protectorate.

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Over the short-term at least, this would retard the whole process of normalization in Eastern Europe and perhaps even lead to more Soviet strong-arm actions against others who have not played the game by the Soviet script, e.g., Romania and, less likely, Yugoslavia. Any such eruption of Soviet imperial fury could have the most profound effect in the USSR itself, leading to greater domestic repression but possibly also an upheaval shaking the regime to its foundations. It could also engage Western interests directly.

One possibility of a calmer evolution lies in the eventual emergence of a new type of Soviet leader who recognizes that Soviet interests are best served by having neighboring countries pursue their own aspirations and interests, including a healthy friendship with the USSR.

C. Romania We are carefully following all reports bearing upon a possible military action against Romania by the Soviet Union. Contingency papers have been prepared in the eventuality of an attack.

The President's strong statement on August 30 against further aggression and Secretary Rusk's warning to Dobrynin that night place the United States clearly on record and should leave no doubt in the Soviet mind as to our position. The response by Dobrynin on August 31 may indicate that the Soviets have taken full account of the U.S. position.

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