*A study in perspective.*

# SOVIET DECEPTION IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK CRISIS

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The various postmortems and retrospective analyses of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 have revealed a considerable amount of disagreement among analysts concerning the deception measures taken by the Soviet Union during that summer. Some analysts believe that the USSR conducted a deliberate and fairly successful political and military deception campaign at least from mid-July onward (that is, from the start of major mobilization and deployment of the invasion forces), which was intended to conceal the scale and purpose of the military movements, and to deceive the Czechoslovaks and others into believing that there would not be an invasion. On the other hand, there are analysts who believe that the USSR did not engage in any significant deception effort, and that if we or the Czechoslovaks were misled at all it was a result of wishful thinking or self-deception. Aside from those relatively few specialists who have examined all the evidence in detail, most of us probably have a very inexact understanding of this question and why there should be a difference of opinion in retrospect.

This article does not purport to provide a definitive solution. It is intended rather to outline the problem and the evidence available and to draw some tentative conclusions. Perhaps more usefully, it also attempts to put the episode into perspective in relation to what we know of the USSR's doctrine and past practice with respect to deception, and to suggest what the USSR might be able to do to deceive us on another occasion. In short, there are some lessons to be learned from our experience during the summer of 1968.

## *Types of Deception*

There are various kinds of measures which a nation bent on initiating surprise military operations can undertake in an effort to conceal its intentions. In all cases, standard security precautions would be taken. These, of course, may involve a variety of means to prevent outsiders or potential enemies from observing or otherwise detecting that military

movements or logistic buildups are in progress, or at least to conceal the full extent of the buildup, the units involved, etc. It is important to understand, however, that such measures to achieve military secrecy do not in themselves constitute an active deception effort, particularly in nations which practice rigid military security as a matter of course, and the sophisticated analyst will take care to distinguish the true deception effort from conventional security measures. Nonetheless, the line between deception and security is a narrow one; the two are often confused, and an effective security program can do much to deceive the intended victim even if no other measures are undertaken. Soviet security measures therefore will be considered in this article.

The most common and easiest to carry out of all types of deception, a political deception program may involve a variety of measures. The simplest of course is the direct falsehood. Through diplomatic channels, public statements or by other means, the nation bent on military aggression or some other venture it wishes to conceal merely states that it has no such intention and that all such charges are false. Although such tactics are by no means unheard of, particularly when the stakes are very high, many nations will seek insofar as possible to avoid the direct lie in favor of some type of indirect or slightly more subtle deception. Thus, even in the Cuban missile crisis, in which Soviet spokesmen unquestionably directly misinformed the President of the United States, an examination of public Soviet statements shows that nearly all of them were indirect rather than absolute falsehoods. The USSR as a rule did not flatly deny that it was putting IRBMs and MRBMs into Cuba. Rather it said that all weapons being sent to Cuba were "designed exclusively for defensive purposes," or that there was "no need" for the USSR to deploy its missiles to any other country, etc. This type of statement, although extremely misleading, is not totally untrue and thus permits the prevaricator to maintain some degree of credibility if or after he has been caught in the act.

Among the more subtle means of political deception is the effort to mislead by implying that the situation is not serious, that the nation does not consider its vital interests at stake or that its relations with the intended victim are really pretty good. Ordinarily such a deception effort will be maintained only over a relatively short period, usually no more than a few weeks, although in some cases it may last for several months. Generally, it will involve the downplaying of the situation in propaganda and diplomacy after political means at solution have failed and a decision has been reached to conduct a surprise attack or at least to prepare military forces for such attack. This type of situation may be

marked by quite a sudden change in the tone and volume of propaganda, particularly for foreign consumption, in an effort to lull suspicions. Dictatorships, including the Soviet Union, are usually masters of this type of political deception; their complete control of the press and secrecy of the decision-making process make it relatively easy for them. For example, in the weeks and even months before the Soviet attack on Japanese forces in Manchuria in August 1945, the USSR undertook to ease political tensions with Japan and to be "almost cordial" to the Japanese Ambassador, as all the while it was building up its military forces in the Far East for the attack.

Another facet of this type of political deception is to offer to enter into negotiations in an ostensible effort to solve the matter at issue, when there is actually no intention of reaching an agreement. The Soviet Union also has been known to use this tactic. On the evening of 3 November 1956, less than 12 hours before Soviet forces struck throughout Hungary to suppress the revolt, Soviet officers began negotiations in Budapest with Hungarian defense officials on Soviet "troop withdrawal." (The growing Chinese Communist concern with Soviet intentions in late 1969 is said to have been attributable in part to Peking's fear that the USSR had proposed the border talks as a deception measure prior to attack.)

In the interests of preserving secrecy as to its real intentions, a nation bent on surprise action also may attempt to deceive (or at least not inform) its allies of its plans. There is reason to believe, for example, that the USSR informed only the top leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries, and probably belatedly at that, of its plans in Cuba in 1962. It almost certainly did not make its intentions known to the non-ruling Communist parties. As is well-known, the reluctance by the US to believe that Great Britain was preparing for attack against Egypt in 1956 was based in large part on a confidence that one of our closest allies would not undertake such action without informing us first.

We have coined the term "political-military deception" to denote a type of attempted military deception which is carried out solely by putting out false statements about the nature, scale, or purpose of a military buildup. It is in effect a political deception effort designed to camouflage or conceal the real intention behind the military buildup by attributing it to something else. This type of deception, to be distinguished from true military deception described below, proceeds from the premise that since the enemy is likely to detect the military movements, it is therefore desirable to offer him some seemingly plausible explanation, other than planned aggression, for the activity.

The most usual explanation is that the troops are "on maneuvers." It may also be possible, on occasion, to find some other pretext for troop movements, such as alleged internal disturbances in a border area. US intelligence has long recognized that the Soviet Union would probably seek to mask preparations for aggression under the guise of maneuvers. Similarly, the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies are extremely suspicious of major NATO exercises as potential covers for attack.

True military deception, as opposed to the various means described above, is the most difficult and complex of all types of deception to orchestrate, at least on a large scale. It is most commonly used when hostilities are already in progress, when it may be used with other deception measures to disguise the scale of a buildup, the date or place of attack, and/or to lead the enemy to believe that an attack is planned in one area when in fact it is not. It involves such techniques as permitting seemingly valid, but actually false, military orders to fall into the hands of the intended victim; the sending of invalid military messages in the clear or in easily read ciphers, or the maintenance of completely spurious radio nets; assignments of false designations to military units; setting up of dummy aircraft or other equipment to suggest that units have not left home stations; sending out false "defectors" with erroneous but plausible reports, etc. Measures of this type call for very sophisticated and highly coordinated planning, since the chance that an obvious slip would be detected is great, and detection might betray the whole plan. Such measures can, however, be highly effective in tactical situations in leading the enemy to misdeploy his forces or to misjudge the timing or area of the main thrust. Obviously, such tactics have a more limited use when one is trying to conceal that an attack is planned at all.

The planting of false reports, through established intelligence channels or the diplomatic service, may be used as a part of the political or military deception methods described above. A military attaché is a useful channel for putting out a seemingly plausible explanation or disclaimer concerning a troop buildup, as is a diplomat to provide a false political story. These channels, along with the professional clandestine services, also may be used simply to flood the market with a mass of conflicting stories and reports. Particularly when reports are sensational but otherwise appear to have some authenticity, they can be a tremendous distraction. If the volume of such planted disinformation is large enough, the analytical system can be so overwhelmed by it that the truly reliable or useful intelligence may become lost in the mill. It is difficult to overestimate the damage that this type of deception can do to the process of assessing and evaluating information in a crisis situation.

*Actual Soviet Security and Deception Measures in the Summer of 1968*

With this brief background, we shall attempt to analyze what the USSR did and did not seek to do in the way of deception prior to the invasion of Czechoslovakia. This requires that we also attempt to determine whom it may have wished to deceive—the Czechoslovaks, the US and NATO, or others, including other Communist parties.

The USSR's objective in Czechoslovakia was to reverse the course toward liberalization and to restore orthodox Communist Party control there. Insofar as possible, the USSR wished to achieve these aims through the Communist apparatus in Czechoslovakia rather than by overt military intervention. The objective was not to carry out a surprise military operation, which was only the final means to the end. The USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies decided on massive military invasion only after a series of lesser political and military steps had not been successful. It is thus obvious that the amount of deception which the USSR could usefully employ against Czechoslovakia was limited. In order to induce the Dubcek regime to comply with its wishes, the USSR clearly had to insure that its political pressures were such that Czechoslovakia would have no doubts concerning the seriousness of Soviet intent. To lend added weight to the political effort, it was also desirable that Czechoslovakia recognize the possibility of Soviet military action—and indeed the first device used by the USSR to attempt to put troops into Czechoslovakia was simply to request that Soviet units be stationed there.

So far as the West was concerned, it was not in the USSR's interests to attempt to mislead us unduly concerning its military movements lest these be misinterpreted as a threat to NATO. And the future support of other Communist parties was of importance to the USSR; it wished these parties to understand its concern with and actions toward Czechoslovakia. To deceive them unnecessarily would be counter-productive.

*Military Security Measures*

As everyone knows, Soviet military security is extremely tight. As a matter of normal practice, the USSR never identifies an active military unit by its true designator in the open press, and never reports a buildup of its military forces anywhere (except temporarily for exercises). Moscow has occasionally reported a reduction of forces, although not necessarily accurately, when it has seemed politically expedient to do so. It usually identifies by position only a small group of top-ranking commanders, and

the names and locations of its military districts, groups of forces, and other major commands such as the fleets. It may or may not report the whereabouts of top military officials, including the Minister of Defense, as it chooses. It nearly always denies travel in the USSR to US and other Western military attachés (and sometimes to all diplomats and tourists as well) to any area in which significant military movements are under way; it is most unusual for any Westerner to see a unit redeployment. The same security restriction is carried out in East Germany by imposing restricted areas, some permanent and some temporary, on the three Allied Military Liaison Missions.

A review of the military security measures taken by the USSR from early May (when the first deployments to the Czechoslovak border were made) up to the date of the invasion on 20-21 August leads to the conclusion that the steps taken were about normal for the USSR. Security was not relaxed (at least not intentionally—there were a few slips), but neither was it drastically tightened. There was no announcement of the early May deployments in the Carpathian Military District, Poland, and East Germany, and no announcement that a partial mobilization had been carried out to bring these units up to strength where needed (we learned this after the invasion from a defector). Throughout the summer, the USSR denied most travel by military observers to areas of the Soviet Union where the buildup had occurred, and in East Germany a "temporary" restricted area was continuously reimposed throughout the summer in the southern area near the Czechoslovak border. At least one unusual security measure was taken in East Germany: in early August an unprecedented ban on travel by virtually all foreigners was imposed in the area of the military buildup along the Czechoslovak border.

In Poland, however, which was to be the major line of communication for support of the invasion, there was only the most minor effort on perhaps two occasions during the summer to restrict movements of attachés, diplomats, tourists and newsmen. Only the actual encampments of Soviet forces were ever placed off limits. There were any number of observations by Western sources of the Soviet troops along the Czechoslovak border, and the start of the massive movement into Poland in late July of troops from the Baltic and Belorussian Military Districts was fortuitously witnessed and promptly reported to the US Embassy by several US tourists and other travelers. Why this contrast with the security measures in the USSR and East Germany? Did the Soviets want us to learn about movements in Poland but not elsewhere? A more likely explanation is that Poland traditionally does not impose major restrictions on travelers, and that it either was not prepared to or did not

wish to do so in the summer of 1968, particularly at the height of the tourist season. Presumably the Soviets made no major issue over this policy (although we do not know this for certain), but it would appear unlikely that they really wanted us to learn about their troop movements. We would judge that they would have preferred secrecy (there was a report that the Poles had a public announcement ready in late July that Soviet troops were entering the country, but never issued it), but that secrecy was not considered of overriding importance.

In Hungary, the other area of pre-invasion deployments, partial but not complete restrictions were imposed on attaché movements. Western attachés did observe the major deployments of Soviet units from their garrisons toward the Czechoslovak border in late July.

*Political Deception Measures*

The USSR, from at least the time of the Dresden conference in late March, repeatedly and progressively made it evident that it was most gravely concerned with the course of events in Czechoslovakia. All indications are that it used virtually every political device at its command to bring pressure on the Dubcek regime to reverse the trend toward liberalization. Thus it is evident that there was no political deception in the strategic sense, no attempt by the Soviets to play down the importance of the issues. And this message also came through loud and clear to us.

More difficult and controversial is the question whether the USSR was engaged in a political deception effort at the Cierna and Bratislava conferences and in the succeeding days prior to the invasion. The theory that the conferences were deception, convened at Soviet insistence to mislead the Czechoslovaks and to gain time for the continuing military buildup, rests largely on a presumption that the Soviet leadership took a final decision in mid-July that any further political effort was useless and that the only recourse was military invasion, that all developments from that time forward were in preparation for that invasion, and that the timing was determined solely by when the military forces were ready. This hypothesis assumes that the Soviet leaders went through the motions at Cierna and Bratislava only for political effect; they had already decided to invade as soon as all military preparations were complete; and that they concealed such an intention from the Dubcek regime.

A review of the military evidence alone yields much to support this hypothesis, and a quite plausible case can be made that the date for the invasion (or at least the date when the forces would be ready) was set well in advance. The chain of military preparations from about 20 July

onward appears almost unbroken, and a final review and inspection of the deployed forces was apparently completed by the Soviet high command on about 16 August (their visits to the forward area between 13-16 August were announced by the Communist press). It may be conjectured that Marshal Grechko then returned to Moscow, informed the political leadership that all was ready, whereupon the final military orders were issued and the invasion proceeded on schedule.

The political evidence, however, is not so readily explained. From what we know of the Cierna conference, it appears that the USSR was compelled to expend a tremendous effort to get the Czechoslovak leadership to hold the talks at all (finally agreeing to the border town as the site after other proposed sites had been rejected), that a great deal of hard bargaining went on at the talks, and that an agreement of sorts was reached whereby Czechoslovakia undertook to carry out certain measures to strengthen Party control and its relations with the Warsaw Pact. A case therefore can be made, also with considerable plausibility, that the talks were a genuine, albeit desperate, effort by the USSR to reach some sort of political accommodation so that the invasion would not be necessary. The reduction in Soviet polemics which followed the talks was then part of the agreement, not just a deception to lull Czechoslovak suspicions.

If this is correct, one cannot view the Cierna and Bratislava talks as pure political deception. This, however, does not resolve the question of what the Soviets actually told the Czechoslovaks and whether or not they misled them—by omission, direct statements, half truths or innuendoes—concerning their military buildup and intentions. Unfortunately, on this crucial question, our evidence is far from adequate. The contention, which appears logical to us—that the USSR should have given Dubcek some unequivocal warning that Warsaw Pact forces were prepared to invade unless he complied with the terms of the agreements—may or may not be valid. It was reported in Budapest following the invasion that the purpose of Kadar's meeting with Dubcek on 16 August was to warn him that the USSR would invade unless its demands were fulfilled, and it has been implied that others also warned Dubcek of this. Charges have been made that Dubcek withheld from his colleagues some of the communications which he received from the Soviet Union, including a letter from Brezhnev on 16 August and a letter from the Politburo of the CPSU to the Czechoslovak Party on 17 August, which in the view of Dubcek's opponents allegedly provided some warning of impending Soviet action. Dubcek, on the other hand, is reported to have denied to the Czechoslovak Central Committee plenum

in September 1969 that Kadar had mentioned possible imminent intervention, or that the letters from Brezhnev and the CPSU contained warnings of impending armed action. Although Dubcek was of course attempting to justify his actions and his statements therefore are suspect, there is some evidence to support his denials. We do not know the content of the Brezhnev letter, but we do have the reported text of the CPSU letter of 17 August. While it called for immediate action to implement the Cierna agreements and said that delays in this matter "are extremely dangerous," there was no threat of *military* action in the letter. Also, it must be noted that Soviet public commentaries were notably devoid of saber-rattling and statements or even direct hints that massive Soviet forces were capable of overrunning Czechoslovakia at any time.

In short, we lack sufficient evidence to make a firm judgment whether or not the Soviets directly threatened Dubcek and his colleagues with invasion and if so how convincing this was to the Czechoslovaks. Similarly, we do not really know whether most of the Czechoslovak leadership was as surprised by the final military action on the night of 20 August as it has appeared. It is probable that those who really had understood the Soviet position did expect invasion sooner or later. They may have been tactically, but not necessarily strategically, surprised. On the other hand, those who did not understand the USSR's attitude and tactics—foremost of whom was probably Dubcek himself—may have been impervious to any kind of warning and hence genuinely surprised. It is not unlikely that many Czechoslovaks, like ourselves, were the victims of a good bit of wishful thinking—they just could not believe that the Soviets would invade.

There is another type of Soviet political deception against the Dubcek regime, which was quite likely considerable although we know little about it. This would have involved an attempt to subvert the regime from within using pro-Soviet elements in the Czechoslovak Party, the security services and the armed forces. According to General Sejna, the Czechoslovak party and governmental machinery was so well controlled by the Soviets during the Novotny era that virtually nothing went on without Moscow's knowledge and usually prior consent. Although there is little direct evidence, there is some reason to suspect that the USSR hoped in the spring to carry out some type of coup within the Party whereby the conservative element would take over from Dubcek, but that it was unable to effect this. We may be almost certain that the USSR subsequently tried any number of devices, without success, to undermine Dubcek's position and to promote the conservatives. On the night of the invasion the USSR clearly had expected an overthrow of Dubcek and the

installation of a new conservative leadership, but again the plan failed. It has been suggested that one reason for this failure was that most of the conservatives were not apprised of the timing of the invasion and therefore were not ready to act. If this is so, the argument that the USSR did not directly forewarn the Czechoslovaks—other than those agents actually involved in the operation—gains considerable weight.

In sum, the evidence which we have concerning Soviet political deception of the Dubcek regime is certainly incomplete and in some important respects inconclusive. These uncertainties, however, apply more to the USSR's techniques than to any attempt to conceal its objectives. On the fundamental issue, the USSR's intent to restore orthodox Party control, there is no good reason to suspect that the USSR ever sought to deceive the Czechoslovaks.

With regard to the West, and particularly the US, there is little indication that the USSR conducted any long-term or elaborate political deception effort—certainly nothing remotely comparable to what it undertook in the Cuban missile buildup. But, since its objectives in Czechoslovakia could hardly be kept secret from us as well, there was comparatively little room for any deception. There may be some basis, however, for believing that in the few days prior to the invasion the USSR sought to lull US suspicions by reaching an agreement to open talks soon on strategic arms limitation. Exactly what happened will have to be revealed by a policy-level official of President Johnson's administration. According to an article in the *Washington Post* on 23 August 1968, a meeting between President Johnson and Premier Kosygin to discuss strategic arms limitation was to have been announced by the White House on the morning of 21 August. The article also noted that on the evening of 20 August, while Ambassador Dobrynin was at the White House informing President Johnson of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Secretary of State Rusk was telling the Democratic Platform Committee in Washington that "we anticipate early and important talks with the Soviet Union on the limitation and reduction of offensive and defensive strategic missiles."

A final note is in order on the CPSU's conversations with and communications to non-ruling Communist parties. A substantial body of evidence is available that the USSR did not attempt to deceive these parties but in fact took steps to inform them between about 15 and 20 July that it might have to take drastic action, including invasion, to control the situation. While we have little information on any subsequent communications, the evidence is that these parties were forewarned about a month before the invasion to prepare their membership for this

contingency and that few if any of them were surprised. Many were dismayed by the final action, but not surprised.

*Political-Military Deception Measures*

We shall now examine the nature and possible intent of the various public statements made by the USSR relating to the buildup of its forces against Czechoslovakia. As we have noted, consistent with its security doctrine the USSR never announced that it was deploying any units to the Czechoslovak border. Following the initial deployments in early May, however, it prevailed upon Czechoslovakia, after considerable pressure, to announce that Warsaw Pact exercises would be held in June in Czechoslovakia and Poland. This "agreement" provided the pretext for the subsequent introduction of Soviet forces into Czechoslovakia under the guise of conducting Pact exercise "Sumava," which was held, according to announcements, during the last ten days of June. The announcement may also have been intended to provide a pretext for the presence in Poland of the troops from the Carpathian Military District which were introduced in early May, and whose movement had been reported in the Western press. Although "Sumava" was concluded on 30 June, TASS immediately retracted its announcement of the termination, and a series of subsequent statements from Prague made it evident both that the USSR had introduced much larger forces than originally announced and was seeking to keep them there. This was the first of the USSR's efforts, and a transparently evident deception, to bring military pressure on Czechoslovakia under the guise of "exercises."

On 23 July, the USSR announced that rear services exercises would be held in the western USSR until 10 August, would cover an area from Latvia to the Ukraine and would involve the recall of reservists, requisitioning of transport from the civilian economy and demothballing of military equipment. Subsequent announcements outlined a scenario of the "exercises," repeatedly described them as very large-scale, and stated on 30 July that the exercises were being extended into Poland and East Germany. The USSR also announced that a large antiaircraft defense exercise was conducted in the USSR from 25-31 July. On 10 August, a Soviet announcement implied that the rear services exercises had terminated, but no announcement was made that any of the recalled reservists or requisitioned transport were being released. Concurrent with the start of the announced rear services "exercise," the USSR began the major buildup of additional forces along the Czechoslovak border. By 31 July it was evident that substantial forces in East Germany had deployed to the Czechoslovak border, that the bulk of Soviet troops in Hungary

had moved into positions near the Czechoslovak border, and that large numbers of additional Soviet troops, both combat and rear services, were moving into Poland from the Baltic and Belorussian Military Districts. It was indisputably clear that a major deployment of forces was in progress. It was less clear at the time whether exercises were also under way, although there was no discernible indication that any of the deployed forces were engaged in exercises.

What was the purpose of the announcements? Were they intended to provide some ostensibly plausible reason for the forward deployments of forces and supply columns? To lead us to believe that the only mobilization was in the rear services? To deceive us and the Czechoslovaks as to the real purpose, or primarily to put more pressure on the Dubcek regime?

Much of the disagreement concerning Soviet deception is over this issue. It has been argued, and with considerable reason, that the Czechoslovaks (who would be familiar with Soviet deception tactics and who already would have known the Pact training schedule for the year) could not have been so naive as to believe that an exercise was under way. Therefore, it is maintained, the primary purpose of the announcements was to put more pressure on Czechoslovakia, to warn but not to deceive. Perhaps so. We do not know how the Czechoslovaks interpreted the announcements.

But what about the West? Were the announcements intended to deceive us and NATO, or at least to confuse? To most observers, it would seem that they were, and that in fact many were deceived. To judge from current intelligence coverage at the time, it would appear that a majority of analysts were reluctant to say that these were not exercises, or to draw the conclusion that the *only* thing which was in progress was a mobilization and deployment. Only a minority probably firmly believed the latter at the time. And it may be noted that, even in retrospect, some analyses have persisted in referring to the "exercises."

At the same time, however, the Soviet announcements provided us the clearest indication which we had that a mobilization was actually in progress. If they left unclear the extent of it, and whether combat as well as rear services units were involved, they did serve to warn us, even before the military movements became evident, that an extraordinary Soviet military effort was under way. Thus the Soviet statements, if intended to deceive, also were an asset both to analysts and collectors.

*Active Military Deception Measures*

There is reason to believe that the USSR engaged in some active military deception against Czechoslovakia at least as early as June when

it began moving forces into that country ostensibly for exercise "Sumava." Numerous Czechoslovak statements both then and later suggest that the Soviets brought in much larger forces than the Czechoslovaks had agreed to, and possibly attempted to conceal the identity and size of these forces as well. Because there was so little Western observation of these movements, it has been suspected that the USSR moved forces covertly at night, or in small contingents over secondary roads to conceal the extent of this peaceful invasion during June. This may be partially true, particularly of the first elements which were introduced. A Soviet defector from a regiment which entered Czechoslovakia from the Carpathian Military District at the start of the exercise has stated, however, that his unit moved on main roads with no unusual attempt at concealment, although it did travel at night.

We are not sure whether the USSR finally agreed to withdraw its forces from Czechoslovakia during July (the withdrawal was not finally completed until 3 August) as part of a deception plan in connection with the buildup of the invasion forces, or because it really saw no practicable alternative at the time. Similarly, we know relatively little about any deception measures which may have been taken before the invasion to mislead the Czechoslovaks as to its timing. The USSR did employ some active deception against the Czechoslovaks during the invasion, perhaps more than we know. The best-known example was the flight into Prague shortly before the invasion of ostensibly civil aircraft carrying the military personnel who seized the Prague control tower to vector in the military transports. It is likely that other measures also were employed. For the most part, however, the USSR appears to have relied on security and speed of movement to insure tactical surprise.

So far as the West and NATO are concerned, there is virtually no indication that the USSR attempted any active military deception measures designed to mislead us as to the scale, location or purpose of the military buildup or the possible timing of the invasion. The Soviet military leadership had ample time to plan and complete its military buildup, and presumably could have undertaken a more elaborate and sophisticated deception effort than it in fact did. Such a plan would logically have been put into effect as soon as the major military deployments were begun in late July. The argument has been advanced that, if Soviet leaders did not decide to invade until mid-August, they had little time to devise and carry out any active deception measures. This argument appears both unconvincing and unrealistic. It presumes that the Soviet political leadership had not taken any fundamental decisions on possible military action until a few days before the invasion.

A far more realistic assessment is that the Soviet leadership in mid-July initiated the massive military buildup because it then believed that a solution by political means was unlikely and that the probabilities were that military invasion would be required to bring the situation under control. Or, to put it another way, the Soviet leadership reached the basic decision in mid-July to carry out an invasion unless a political solution could be reached, but deferred a final decision on whether military action would inevitably be required and hence also a decision on its timing.

Apart from this, however, it is in large part irrelevant to the military deception program just when the political leadership reached the final decision to invade, since the military leaders clearly were directed in mid-July to make all necessary preparations as if invasion were to be carried out, and they did so. Active deception measures would have been an integral part of the military preparations, not something reserved for the last few days.

The apparent lack of major military deception measures may indicate that the USSR saw no need for them against the Czechoslovak forces or did not wish to reveal its more sophisticated war plans and capabilities. It would be optimistic to suppose that more elaborate deception efforts would not be employed in event of attack against the West.

*Confusion and Disinformation Measures*

Possibly the most conspicuous missing element in the picture was the almost total absence of deliberately planted false reports by the Soviet intelligence services, whose disinformation capabilities are well recognized. There was almost no apparent effort to distract and confuse us with this type of material. Again the USSR may have seen no need for this type of effort in the circumstances. It may have preferred not to release a flood of misleading reports which might cause alarm in the West and raise suspicions that the Soviet buildup might be directed at some nation other than Czechoslovakia. Indeed, one of the most notable features of the entire Soviet military and political effort in the summer of 1968 is that it was so clearly directed at Czechoslovakia that there was no cause for any undue alarm in the West, despite the scale of the military buildup. It appears likely that this was a consequence of a deliberate decision by the USSR to keep the temperature in Europe as low as possible.

*Implications of the Soviet Effort*

The predilection of Soviet leaders for secrecy, security, and surprise makes it almost impossible to conceive that they could have carried out an operation such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia without employing some of their traditional deception tactics. So deeply ingrained is the concept of deception that there is reason to suspect that the USSR has sometimes employed such tactics when there was no evident political or military necessity to do so. In the case of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, it was probably also very important to the Soviets that the actual timing of the invasion and the details of the military plans be concealed in order to achieve tactical surprise and reduce the likelihood of any Czechoslovak resistance and loss of life on both sides.

The scope of actual deception measures employed by the USSR was probably far less than might be expected under other circumstances. The security measures were less than we would normally expect to see during a major redeployment, and the buildup was quite evident to us, and presumably to the Czechoslovaks as well. The amount of political deception, although somewhat debatable as regards Czechoslovakia, does not appear to have been very extensive or elaborate. There seems to have been very little active military deception, except possibly during the actual invasion phase. We were spared a disinformation effort by the KGB. About the only significant Soviet effort at deception, at least as far as the West was concerned, appears to have been the attempt to portray the logistic buildup and troop deployments as "exercises," and even here some observers suspect that the USSR never expected us to be deceived. This effort certainly would have been more effective had it been accompanied by drastic security measures to deny US observation of the troop movements and logistic preparations in Eastern Europe. In short, the situation was unusual and should not be regarded as a typical Soviet performance or as an illustration of what the USSR could do in circumstances calling for maximum security and surprise—particularly in an attack against the West.

Even the limited Soviet deception effort, however, serves as a useful reminder that we should always be watchful for the possibility of deception, and that we must continually look behind what the enemy says to what he is actually doing. This becomes even more essential when it is evident that a crisis situation exists in which the use of deception should be anticipated. The fact that any US analysts were taken in by the Soviet announcements on "exercises" is cause for considerable concern that intelligence analysts also might fail to recognize a deception effort

when it might be vital to US security to detect it. Our experience in the invasion of Czechoslovakia has reinforced the opinion long held by warning analysts that the US, at both its intelligence and policy levels, is extremely vulnerable to deception. The intelligence community has profited greatly in other respects from the Soviet invasion, which provided us with valuable data on Soviet mobilization, logistics, and operational concepts. It is to be hoped that the lessons learned with regard to deception will also be the subject of further study. Perhaps there should be more provision in the intelligence schools and in publications such as this journal for study and analysis of this kind of problem.