

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~ (P)

August 21, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Czechoslovakia Seen from Europe

In Britain, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary interrupted their holidays and returned to London. The Cabinet Meeting is scheduled tomorrow and Parliament is being scheduled for August 26. Our Charge joined a meeting in the cabinet room at 10 Downing Street to discuss next steps with the Acting Foreign Minister. The British strongly favor primary reliance on the UN. Foreign Secretary Stewart is considering attending the Security Council meeting in New York personally and wonders whether Secretary Rusk might participate.

In France, DeGaulle remains in the country. Debre called in Shriver to state view Soviet could not allow Czech deviation, that Yalta had given Eastern Europe to Soviet domination and that there is "nothing anyone could do." Debre opposed three-power consultation, saying it would only produce a meaningless declaration. Nevertheless, Debre reported that DeGaulle had approved the idea of "taking distance" from the USSR in bilateral relations.

From Moscow, our Charge reports the invasion took all friendly diplomats by surprise (Amb. Thompson is due in Washington tomorrow). Our Charge speculates that there was a shift in the politburo majority, and passes along an unconfirmed report that Kosygin and Podgorny were summoned hastily from vacation on August 19 to be confronted with a fait accompli. Our Charge estimates that many countries will find the Soviet action so repugnant that their bilateral relations with the USSR will suffer at all levels. November Conference of Communist Parties faces virtually insuperable odds and third-world countries are having second thoughts about the Soviets. Apparently the Soviets have started jamming VOA and BBC on at least some channels.

From Prague, you may have seen in the latest Sit Rep that Amb. Beam believes the continuing delay of the Soviets in establishing a puppet government may force the Soviets into an increasingly "sticky situation" legally conducted Czech organs take stands against the invasion. The National Assembly met in rump session today and President Svoboda either sent or spirited out an address to the Nation calling for calm and fortitude. Automatic weapons fire is being heard from the center of Prague this evening. Tad Szulc will report in tomorrow's New York Times that intensive negotiations are going on between the Czech's and Soviets to try to work out the membership of a new government but Dubcek's fantastic popularity is making the formation of such a regime doubtful.

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Walt Rostow

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