

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Svoboda's Speech to the Czech People

At 2:00 p.m. today our time, President Svoboda delivered a ten-minute speech to the Czechoslovak people.

Svoboda said the Soviets assured the Czechs that they support them in their Action Program -- which is the program of internal liberalization and economic reform upon which the Czechs have embarked. In short, the Soviets appear to be saying they will not try to undo the January revolution.

Svoboda also talked about reenforcing the unity of the Socialist countries and the Warsaw Pact, in order to strengthen their defensive against eventual enemy attack. Whether this means the Czechs have agreed to some sort of Soviet military presence in Czechoslovakia is not clear. There has been talk in past days about Soviet observers attached to Czech military units, increased Soviet staff-level participation and other variants short of the actual stationing of Soviet divisions permanently on Czech territory.

Svoboda also mentioned CEMA (the Eastern European economic coordinating body). This could be an oblique reference to some Czech assurance that they will try to solve their economic problems within the family so far as possible, and go slow on economic reorientation toward the West.

Svoboda included a reference to blood shed in the struggle against German Fascism. It would not be surprising if the Czechs gave some assurance that they would go slow in developing ties or relations with West Germany. They may have assured the Russians that they would refrain from disturbing foreign policy initiatives.

There was no explicit reference to censorship of the press. UPI reports, however, that Dubcek agreed to damp down anti-Russian attacks in the Czech press.

Saturday's meeting of the six powers should produce further clarification and further maneuver. It remains to be seen how far the Russians will want to reopen sensitive questions in order to push the Czechs further back.

ND
Nathaniel Davis

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