

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

August 21, 1968

MEMO FOR WALT ROSTOW AND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

SUBJECT: Key Points in Secretary Rusk's Backgrounder on  
Czechoslovakia this Afternoon

The following information will be reported as "from State Dept. sources":

1. Our private sources of information do not differ substantially from what appears in the public press.
2. The US position was eloquently expressed in the President's statement.
3. We are not going to discuss the specifics of the conversations with Dobrynin.
4. A number of countries are interested in a Security Council discussion -- there may be a meeting later today.
5. There will be a Cabinet meeting tomorrow and Czechoslovakia will be discussed.
6. There is information that the National Assembly in Czechoslovakia is asking the Soviets to release Dubcek and remove foreign troops.
7. The Czech Foreign Minister is still in Yugoslavia, where he had been vacationing.
8. Our first word was from Dobrynin, but obviously we knew troops were in the area and had exercises there.
9. We do not know when or how Soviets decided on this move, but there is speculation Ulbricht's visit may have been a significant factor.
10. Soviets are faced with a dilemma of trying to prevent the spread of freedom vs. the penalty of negative world reaction.
11. World reaction is almost universally against the Soviets -- with the notable exception of North Vietnam.
12. We are under no formal obligation to the Czechs, and we should keep in mind that their arms are in North Vietnam. But, we are interested in the right of small states against outside interference.

13. He chided reporters on the gloom stories and said we are going about our business as usual in the Capital.

In response to questions, Sec. Rusk made the following points:

1. He saw no organic connection between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam.
2. Recent events would have a negative effect on US-Soviet relations, would make them more difficult, but would not dispose of the mutual problems facing us; events may also effect how the Senate treats the NPT.
3. The Soviet line of a foreign threat to Czechoslovakia is totally unfounded.

On the Record: Rusk rebutted the NYT editorial: asked if the Times advocated military action by us, why not come out and say it; pointed out we have a commitment to SVN. End On the Record

4. He thought the possibility of Soviet helping the SVN conflict had always been slim and is now slimmer.
5. Said he was worried about Dubchek's safety.
6. Said our forces in Europe are taking natural precautions against border violations, but that the occupying troops on the Czech side may initiate border violations because of their unfamiliarity with the boundries.
7. Said he had not noticed any diminished interest in NATO, by its 14 members, but recent events might effect the French view of NATO and might also effect those who advocate reduction of our troop level in Europe.

Lou Schwartz

cc: Mr. Davis  
Mr. Fried  
Gen. Ginsburgh  
Mr. McManis

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