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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLJ 97-158
By id, NARA Date 11-10-98

Received Washington CommCenter:
3:07 PM, EDT, Monday, 23 Sept 68

Received LBJ Ranch CommCenter:
3:13 PM, CDT, Monday, 23 Sept 68

Relayed to San Antonio CommCenter:
3:15 PM, CDT, Monday, 23 Sept 68

FROM WALT ROSTOW
TO THE PRESIDENT
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CITE CAP82476

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SEPTEMBER 23, 1968

HEREWITH BEAM ASSESSES TANGLED STATE OF AFFAIRS ONE MONTH AFTER INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

1. ONE MONTH AFTER SOVIETS AND THEIR FRIENDS OCCUPIED CZECHOSLOVAKIA, QUESTION CAN BE ASKED WHETHER RESULTS FROM MOSCOW'S POINT OF VIEW JUSTIFY COSTS WHICH HAVE BEEN INCURRED.
2. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE IN POSITION TO PUT UNLIMITED DEMANDS ON CZECHS, BACKED BY THREAT OF APPLYING OVERWHELMING MILITARY FORCE ALREADY ON SCENE, SOVIETS CLEARLY HAVE NOT OBTAINED OPTIMUM AIMS IN NUMBER OF FIELDS.
3. SITUATION IN MASS MEDIA IS GOOD EXAMPLE. WHILE CENTRAL DAILY PRESS HAS BEEN LYING LOW, PERIODICALS HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS INHIBITED THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED IN OCCUPIED COUNTRY (THIS WEEK'S ISSUE OF REPORTER IS ONE OF MORE EXTREME EXAMPLES), AND PROVINCIAL PRESS HAS IN SOME INSTANCES INCURRED RE-OCCUPATION BY SOVIET TROOPS. CSCP HAS FORMALLY SANCTIONED OPERATIONS OF CLANDESTINE RADIO DURING OCCUPATION.
4. CERTAIN PERSONNEL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE TO MEET SOVIET WISHES, BUT SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTIONS COME TO MIND: CISAR, SOVIET BETE NOIRE OF LONG STANDING, REMAINS AS HEAD CZECH NATIONAL COUNCIL FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINT HE IS FREQUENTLY IN PUBLIC EYE: SIK, ALTHOUGH OUT OF GOVERNMENT, MAY GET BELGRADE ASSIGNMENT AND IN ANY CASE HAS NOT BEEN REMOVED AS HEAD IMPORTANT ECONOMIC INSTITUTE, AND ECONOMIC REFORM LINKED WITH HIS NAME WAS VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED IN RUDE PRAVO: HAJEK RESIGNATION WAS OFFSET BY CONCURRENT DISMISSAL OF SOVIET AGENT HOFFMAN; MOST IMPORTANT, DUBCEK, WHOM SOVIETS APPARENTLY DOING BEST TO UNDERCUT (WITH SOME SUCCESS IN CERTAIN PARTY CIRCLES), IS BEING BUILT UP BY MEDIA AS SYMBOL OF NATIONAL UNITY AND POPULAR HOPES.

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5. CZECHS PROCEEDING WITH REHABILITATION PROCEEDINGS DESPITE ANTI-SOVIET IMPLICATIONS.

6. CZECHS AND SLOVAKS ALSO PRECEEDING WITH PLANS FOR FORMALIZING FEDERAL SET-UP. WE HAVE IMPRESSION SOVIETS ARE PLAYING COMPLEX GAME ON THIS ISSUE. ON ONE HAND, THEY PRESUMABLY ARE NOT UNHAPPY TO SLOVAK/CZECH FRICTION AS MEANS OF CUTTING PRAGUE LEADERSHIP DOWN TO SIZE; INDEED THEIR BUILDING UP HUSAK MAY WELL HAVE BEEN FOR PURPOSE ENCOURAGING SUCH FRICTION. ON OTHER HAND, ONE STORY HERE HAS IT THAT KUZNETSOV IS URGING CZECHS TO GO SLOW WITH FEDERALIZATION BECAUSE ESTABLISHMENT OF MEANINGFUL FEDERATED SETUP HERE COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS AMONG NATIONALITIES IN SOVIET UNION (AND BRING CLOSER TO HOME CHALLENGE POSED BY YUGOSLAVS TO SOVIET CONCEPT OF HIGHLY CENTRALIZED PARTY OPERATING BEHIND FACADE OF WEAK REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS). IF SOVIETS WERE TO SUCCEED IN IMPEDING FEDERAL ARRANGEMENT (WITHOUT EXPOSING THEMSELVES AS PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE) THEY WOULD BE ADVANCING THEIR INTERESTS ON BOTH COUNTS, SINCE FAILURE BY SLOVAKS TO ACHIEVE DEMANDS WOULD FURTHER EXACERBATE SLOVAK-CZECH RELATIONS.

7. WE CONCLUDE THAT IN SPITE OF SETBACK WHICH SOVIETS HAVE ADMINISTERED TO CZECHOSLOVAK LIBERALIZATION, THEY HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF WHAT APPLICATION OF THIS MUCH MILITARY POWER MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH. IN ABSENCE OF MAJOR CHANGE OF POLICY DIRECTION IN MOSCOW, WE WOULD THEREFORE EXPECT THAT SOVIETS WILL TAKE FURTHER STEPS. ACTIONS SUCH AS OCCUPATION OF MASS MEDIA OFFICES OFFER ONE MEANS OF GRADUALLY STEPPING UP PRESSURE, DEMONSTRATING INABILITY DUBCEK PROTECT CZECHOSLOVAK INSTITUTIONS AND AT SAME TIME MAKING CLEAR THEY BELIEVE DUBCEK INCAPABLE OF IMPLEMENTING MOSCOW PROTOCOL ON HIS OWN.

8. UPCOMING BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH PRAGUE LEADERS WILL OFFER SOVIETS OPPORTUNITY TO BE MORE IMPLICIT ABOUT THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PRAGUE'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER MOSCOW PROTOCOL. APPARENT FOR EXAMPLE THAT TWO SIDES HAVE QUITE DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT WHAT CONSTITUTES INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. INCREASINGLY BOLD LINE FOLLOWED BY CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS POSES NEW QUESTIONS FOR SOVIETS.

9. WHETHER MOSCOW WILL NOW TAKE SIGNIFICANTLY HARDER LINE WITH CZECHS, MERELY ACCELERATE SOFTENING UP PROCESS, OR RESUME DISCREET RETREAT FROM EXTREME POSITION TAKEN AUGUST 21, OBVIOUSLY IS QUESTION WHICH IS BEYOND ANALYSIS FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT SINCE IT INVOLVES NOT ONLY INTENTIONS OF SOVIET LEADERS TOWARD CZECHOSLOVAKIA BUT ALSO THEIR BROADER STRATEGIC OUTLOOK.

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