

August 22, 1968

CIA-State Consultations on Czechoslovak Crisis

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Summary:

Consulted by Cord Meyer, Deputy Undersecretary of State Charles Bohlen approves RFE's cautious approach to covering the Soviet invasion and also agrees to use of RL transmitters to reach Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia

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22 August 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Soviet Meeting with Deputy Under Secretary Bohlen
Regarding Czech Developments

I met with Bohlen alone in his office regarding Czechoslovakia and we covered the following topics:

1) RFE Policy Guidance

I reviewed for Bohlen the careful guidance that we had laid down for RFE broadcasting during this crisis and he agreed with this approach. I raised the problem of how RFE should handle the rebroadcasting of the loyalist radios that continue to broadcast within Czechoslovakia. Mr. Bohlen approved the following language which was proposed by Ralph Walter, RFE Director in Munich:

"I have considered we should be handling these reports briefly, with clear attribution, stating that they are unconfirmed by any other source, and so instructed BD Directors at a lengthy policy and programming discussion here this morning. Realize this is a delicate problem, but, subject to above rules, believe we should register all but calls for violence or active resistance. For example, clandestine stations allege some army units are claiming that if leaders are not produced, they expect orders to resist. We are not, repeat not, using this material in any form. Czechoslovak BD itself is registering clandestine reports, but is repeating and emphasizing the multitude of calls for calm issued by various leaders and in the names of many groups in the last 36 hours. I hope that we will be able to continue the same practice."

2) Radio Liberty broadcasts to Russian troops in Czechoslovakia.

After some discussion, Mr. Bohlen approved the use of RL transmitters to broadcast the regular Radio Liberty Russian program to Czechoslovakia. However, he specifically requested that no direct appeal be made to the Russian troops and that no change in the program be made which would differentiate it from the broadcasts that regularly go to the Soviet Union. He asked that we be particularly careful to comply with this policy requirement.

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3) I informed Mr. Bohlen that, after coordination with Mr. Truheart's office in State, we were now authorizing RFE headquarters in New York to supply directly to Ambassador Ball's office RFE monitoring reports bearing on the Czech situation. I mentioned that James Reston of the New York Times had requested similar access to this material and that we had authorized it provided there was no attribution.

4) I informed Mr. Bohlen that the question had arisen as to whether this was an opportune time [redacted] and I said that the Director had requested his advice on this point. Mr. Bohlen was opposed to surfacing at this time and I have passed this guidance to [redacted]

5) For about 15 minutes, we discussed the Soviet decision to intervene militarily and its future ramifications. Mr. Bohlen made these points:

a. He feels it important to establish when and if the Central Committee met in Moscow and the exact time of the return to Moscow of Kossygin, Fergorny, and Brezhnev from vacation. He speculates that the majority in favor of intervention may have resulted from the absence of these gentlemen and they have been ratified by the meeting of the Central Committee. I have already taken these questions up with OCL.

b. In view of his absence during the last ten days, he would like to review all reporting within the Blue during this period. I undertook to make sure that he got these promptly.

c. He was disturbed by the timing between the actual movement of Soviet troops across the Czech border and the visit of Dobrynin to the President. He said that he had been questioned by Chalmers Roberts of the Washington Post on this point and that he had been able to answer truthfully that he did not know the answer in view of his absence on vacation.

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d. He is convinced that this military intervention will have deep and far-reaching implications for Soviet rule within the Bloc and for Communist parties outside of it. He asked that we alert all our agents and possible sources within the Bloc countries, particularly Rumania and Poland, and he would not rule out real trouble within the Soviet Union itself. I said this alert had already been given.

e. He was much impressed by the analysis of Ralph Walter, the Director of RFE in Munich, which I showed him and which is attached. He feels that the apparent lack of political planning by the Soviets is further evidence that the decision is a last-minute one.

CORD MEYER, JR.

Cord Meyer, Jr.
Acting Deputy Director for Plans

Attachment

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2 - ADDP
Orig. - The Director
2 - Registry
1 - C/CA

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