SANITIZED 6/a

CZECHOSLOVAK CONTINGENCIES

Tension continues to build, partly because tomorrow is the day the Czechs say the Soviets will start moving out. There are added disquieting signs: (1) [redacted] 1.5(c) 3.4(b)(1)
(2) Reportedly, an agreed paragraph in the Warsaw Pact announcement, saying Soviet troops would be leaving, was deleted when the announcement was made; and (3) An unspecified People's Militia "operation" is due to start at 9:00 p.m. tonight.

Possibilities include:

-- The beginning of at least token withdrawals, followed by Czech-Soviet bilateral talks early next week and some sort of inconclusive accommodation.

-- Soviet unwillingness to remove any troops, continued pressure, and continued maneuver.

-- Soviet provocation of an incident, perhaps in connection with an ostensible movement to withdraw, followed by a Warsaw Pact call for reenforcements to protect existing forces.

-- Public disorder and violence, in Prague or elsewhere, which would trigger an unravelling of the Czech party and government.

-- Militia arrests of liberals, with or without Dubcek acquiescence, or moves toward a coup of some kind.

Alternatives for the U.S.

We are obviously not prepared to intervene militarily. Recourse to the UN is probably an "after-the-fact", alternative -- certainly not an immediate option. In the very short term, the following seem to be areas where we have alternatives:

1. World public attention. We could find ways to intensify world-wide press, public and government attention and concern. This might have some inhibiting effect on the Soviets. The disadvantage is that it could further destabilize the situation in Czechoslovakia -- including the discipline and calm of the Czech public.

2. As a further step, we could make various kinds of official U.S. government statements. We could also stimulate European governments to parallel action. However, we must be careful we do not repeat the mistake of 1956, in creating expectations we are not prepared to follow through on.

3. [redacted] may have some capability of stimulating Western European or other Communist Parties and press to call on the Soviets to stop interfering in the internal affairs of a brother Communist Party and nation. 1.5(c) 3.4(b)(1)

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6
NLJ 97-381
By cb , NARA Date 6-5-00

Anything we could do to mobilize independent-minded Communist opinion, before rather than after the fact, would seem worth doing.

4. We might consider what kind of approach to the Romanians and/or the Yugoslavs might be useful. Perhaps some discreet comparing of notes would be helpful.

5. We might consider what kind of diplomatic approach to the Russians could be helpful. The difficulty is that we are dealing with a vital interest of the USSR, and it is doubtful they would be responsive to any pressures we could apply or would be willing to bring to bear. Nevertheless, there might be some possibilitie

We have a whole range of things we could do in our Soviet relationship -- including cancelling the PanAm inaugural, suspending exchange negotiations, bringing Ambassador Thompson home on consultations, deferring our strategic-arms talks proposals, etc. However, our relationship with the Soviets has historically always been paramount, and our Eastern European interest secondary. This is, no doubt, still true.

6. Conceivably we might have some way through a third party, etc; to signal to the Czech leadership to "cool it", pull in their horns on reform, curb their press, etc. -- if we think this is the best and only way to avert a debacle. There are certainly observers who think we should have done this sort of thing at an earlier stage in Hungary. On the other hand, we are not close enough to Czech developments or their leadership to have much realistic chance of trying to steer them.

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