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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

April 15, 1968

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NLJ 97-269
By isa, NARA Date 10-8-98

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Request for Appointment
for Ambassador Beam

Recommendation:

I recommend that you receive Ambassador to Czechoslovakia Jacob D. Beam to present an assessment of recent developments in Czechoslovakia.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

Discussion:

Ambassador Beam arrived in Washington on April 9 for consultation and regular home leave. He plans to be in the Washington area until mid-May, when he will return to Prague.

This is a crucial period for Party First Secretary Alexander Dubcek, who replaced Antonin Novotny in January. Using as political support intellectuals, students and, to an extent, workers, the Dubcek coalition was also able to force strongman Novotny to resign the Presidency. Army "hero," 72-year old General Ludvik Svoboda, a public figure since the thirties, was elected President by the National Assembly on March 30. Oldrich Cernik was appointed as the new Premier on April 8, and a new Cabinet was sworn in on April 9.

A Party Central Committee meeting convened April 1 and adopted the Dubcek action program. Dubcek has declared that the Party would retain its leadership role but that the Government would execute its proper function, the economy would become a socialist market economy, and freedom of public expression and assembly would be guaranteed in law. At the same time, Dubcek has assured

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the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia's other Communist allies of its socialist direction, solidarity, and loyalty. The Bloc is watching Czech developments carefully, but no overt pressures have been applied against Czechoslovakia. Dubcek has said he wants good relations with all countries, including the United States.

Our position is to take no action with regard to Czech developments, except to indicate informally that any liberalization is welcome. Any other position at this time would be likely to embarrass and to prejudice Czechoslovakia in its relations with the Soviet Union. We are, of course, keeping the developing situation under constant review.

Dean Rusk

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