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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Intelligence Information Cable

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PAGE 1 OF 9 PAGES

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GROUP 1  
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DIST 24 JULY 1968

COUNTRY CZECHOSLOVAKIA

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs  
(C)

DOI

24 16 46Z JUL 68

SUBJECT ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs  
(S)

ACQ

FIELD NO.

SOURCE

THEY ARE BASICALLY PRO-SOVIET AND CONSERVATIVE IN  
THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION. ANOTHER POINT WHICH IS TO  
THE SOVIETS' ADVANTAGE IS THAT SOVIET ADVISORS STILL HAVE  
LIMITED ACCESS TO INFORMATION INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

SUMMARY: IT IS SOURCE'S OPINION THAT THE CRISIS IN  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS NOW AT AN END AND THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAKS  
WILL PROBABLY CAPITULATE TO THE SOVIETS. A CURTAILMENT OF THE  
CZECHOSLOVAK LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM IN THE POLITICAL,  
ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AREAS WILL ENSUE AS A RESULT OF SOVIET  
PRESSURE. ALTHOUGH THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP IS CONCERNED  
THAT IT MAY INVITE STRONG ADVERSE PUBLIC REACTION  
BECAUSE OF ANY RETRENCHMENT OF ITS PREVIOUSLY STATED

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6  
NLJ/RAC 99-208  
By Sj, NARA Date 7-5-01



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(PERHAPS SEJNA  
UNDERESTIMATES THE  
NATIONALISM FACTOR)

POSITION, SOURCE FEELS THAT THE REGIME IS OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS SINCE NEITHER THE CZECHOSLOVAK WORKERS NOR THE SLOVAKS HAVE AS YET BECOME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE LIBERALIZATION. BARRING AN EXTREME SITUATION IN WHICH THE WORKERS ARE CALLED TO DEMONSTRATE, SOURCE DOES NOT ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS FROM THE MILITARY, WHO MAY BE CALLED UPON TO RESTORE PUBLIC ORDER, BECAUSE THEY ARE BASICALLY PRO-SOVIET AND CONSERVATIVE IN THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION. ANOTHER POINT WHICH IS TO THE SOVIETS' ADVANTAGE IS THAT SOVIET ADVISORS STILL HAVE UNLIMITED ACCESS TO INFORMATION INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ESPECIALLY TO PRESIDUM PROCEEDINGS THROUGH THE CONSERVATIVE CZECHOSLOVAK ELEMENTS OF THAT BODY. END OF SUMMARY.

1. OF PRIME CONCERN TO THE SOVIETS CONCERNING CZECHOSLOVAKIA TODAY IS THEIR FEAR THAT THE REFORMS AND LIBERALIZING TENDENCIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHICH ARE NOW TAKING PLACE WILL BE CAST IN CONCRETE BY THE UPCOMING COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER 1968. THE SOVIETS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY UNDER VERY HEAVY PRESSURE FROM CONSERVATIVE FORCES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BUT ESPECIALLY FROM CONSERVATIVE FORCES IN POLAND AND EAST GERMANY TO CONTROL THE SITUATION IN

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA. WHAT THESE CONSERVATIVES PROBABLY FEAR MOST IS AN OPENING OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK BORDERS WHICH WOULD ALLOW A MASS EXODUS FROM THEIR COUNTRIES, I.E., POLAND AND EAST GERMANY, TO THE WEST. THEY ARE UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO EXTREMELY CONCERNED THAT THE LACK OF CENSORSHIP AND RESULTANT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL HAVE UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES IN INFLUENCING THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRIES. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE INTENSIFICATION IN SOVIET POLITICAL PRESSURE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA DATES FROM THE PERIOD WHEN THE CZECHOSLOVAKS ABOLISHED CENSORSHIP AND TOOK STEPS TO IMPLEMENT REHABILITATION PROCEDURES IN THEIR COUNTRY.

2. THE PATTERN OF SOVIET PRESSURE ON THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY IN THAT ORDER. WHAT WE ARE NOW SEEING IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS INTENSE POLITICAL PRESSURE WHICH WILL PROVE TO BE THE PRELUDE TO MORE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND MILITARY PRESSURES SHOULD THE RECALCITRANT CZECHOSLOVAKS NOT GIVE IN. THE MOST LIKELY FORM OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE SHOULD IT COME TO THIS WOULD BE A CURTAILMENT OR CESSATION OF SOVIET OIL AND IRON ORE DELIVERIES TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IF MILITARY MEASURES BECOME NECESSARY THE SOURCE IS CONVINCED THAT THESE WILL CONSIST OF LIGHTNING

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MILITARY MOVES BY SOVIET FORCES INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

3. THE DUBCEK REGIME IS PROBABLY HAVING A VERY DIFFICULT TIME INDEED IN CONVINCING THE SOVIETS THAT THEY MEAN IT WHEN THEY SAY THAT THEY WILL NOT LET THE SITUATION GET OUT OF CONTROL AND THAT THEY WILL REMAIN LOYAL TO THE SOVIET BLOC. AS EARLY AS JANUARY 1968 RIGHT AFTER DUBCEK REPLACED NOVOTNY AS PARTY FIRST SECRETARY THE LIBERALS BEGAN REASSURING THE SOVIETS ALONG THESE LINES. THE CONSERVATIVES, HOWEVER, WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT TO THE SOVIETS THAT THE LIBERALS WERE LYING AND THAT LITTLE BY LITTLE THEY WOULD LEAD CZECHOSLOVAKIA AWAY FROM SOVIET INTERESTS. WITH THE ABOLITION OF CENSORSHIP, AND CERTAIN STEPS TOWARD REHABILITATION AS WELL AS OTHER REFORMS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE LIBERALS HAVE TO AN EXTENT CONFIRMED THAT THE CONSERVATIVES WERE RIGHT. THEREFORE, THE SOVIETS ARE PROBABLY MORE RELUCTANT THAN EVER BEFORE TO BELIEVE THE LIBERALS. ALTHOUGH DUBCEK IS UNDOUBTEDLY SINCERE WHEN HE TELLS THE SOVIETS THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO WEAKEN THE LEADING ROLE OF THE PARTY OR FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION, HE IS KNOWN TO THE SOVIETS AS WELL AS TO CZECHOSLOVAK POLITICIANS AS A MAN LACKING IN POLITICAL STRENGTH AND FORTITUDE. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING THE SOVIETS AND THEIR CONSERVATIVE ALLIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA FEARED THAT DUBCEK WOULD BE UNABLE TO STAND UP TO INFLUENCE FROM THE MORE RADICAL LIBERALS IN

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THE CZECHOSLOVAK COMMUNIST PARTY (KSC) LEADERSHIP. THEREFORE, BEFORE THE SOVIETS WILL BE SATISFIED DUBCEK WILL HAVE TO MAKE MORE TANGIBLE GESTURES.

4. IT IS SOURCE'S OPINION THAT GIVEN THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY LEADERS IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND GOVERNMENT, THE CRISIS IS NOW AT AN END AND THAT THESE MEN WILL PROBABLY CAPITULATE TO THE SOVIETS RATHER THAN TAKE THE DRASTIC STEP OF WITHDRAWING FROM THE WARSAW PACT. THERE ARE MEN IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP, SUCH AS CESTMIR CISAR AND OLDRICH CERNIK, WHO ARE POTENTIALLY COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO TAKE SUCH A DRASTIC STEP AND WHO COULD GATHER SUFFICIENT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THIS. HOWEVER, THE STRENGTH AND POSITION OF THE CONSERVATIVES IN THE ARMY AND INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES IS SUCH THAT THIS WOULD INVOLVE TREMENDOUS RISK. ON BALANCE, THE SOURCE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WILL GO THIS FAR. MORE LIKELY THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP WILL GIVE IN TO THE SOVIETS ON ALL OR A NUMBER OF THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. IT WILL RETREAT ON CERTAIN IDEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS, SUCH AS ALLOWING A NON-COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE NATIONAL FRONT THE RIGHT TO SET FORTH ITS OWN PROGRAMS.

B. IT WILL NOT ALLOW ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE CZECHOSLOVAK UNION OF YOUTH TO BE SPLIT INTO COMMUNIST AND

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NON-COMMUNIST COMPONENTS.

C. IT WILL ABOLISH THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES OF ALLOWING ELECTION OF POLITICAL OFFICERS IN MILITARY UNITS RATHER THAN APPOINTING THEM.

D. IT WILL TAKE MEASURES TO REINSTITUTE CONTROL OF THE PRESS, PERHAPS NOT OUTRIGHT CENSORSHIP AS PREVIOUSLY EXISTED, BUT RATHER SOME SYSTEM OF SANCTIONS AGAINST EDITORS WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THE LINE. A NEW PRESS LAW WILL PROBABLY BE PASSED IMPOSING THESE MEASURES.

E. CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL GUARANTEE TO ITS SOCIALIST NEIGHBORS THAT IT WILL NOT OPEN ITS BORDERS TO THE WEST.

F. CERTAIN OF THE MORE EXTREME RADICAL LIBERALS SUCH AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL FRONT FRANTISEK KRIEGLER AND KSC CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY ZDENEK MLYNAR, AND PERHAPS OTHERS WILL BE FORCED TO RESIGN.

5. COMPLICATING THIS WHOLE SITUATION FOR THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP IS THE FACT THAT WHILE IT RECOGNIZES THE SOVIET DISPLEASURE, IT MUST ALSO CATER TO POPULAR OPINION IF IT IS TO CONTINUE TO HOLD THE AUTHORITY IT NOW HAS. WHAT WILL MAKE CAPITULATION TO THE SOVIETS TRICKY WILL BE THE NEED TO DEVISE SUBTLETIES WHICH WILL NOT ENRAGE A DISAPPOINTED CZECHOSLOVAK POPULATION. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE

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FACT THAT NEITHER THE SLOVAKS AS A WHOLE NOR THE CZECHOSLOVAK WORKERS HAVE AS YET BECOME VERY ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE LIBERALIZATION, THE REGIME'S PROBLEMS IN THIS RESPECT ARE NOT AS GREAT AS THEY MIGHT BE. EVEN UNDER CAPITULATION DUBCEK MAY STILL REMAIN AS PARTY FIRST SECRETARY, BUT IN THIS INSTANCE MERELY AS A FIGUREHEAD UNDER THE CONTROL OF A MORE CONSERVATIVE REGIME RATHER THAN UNDER THE CONTROL, AS HE NOW APPARENTLY IS, OF THE LIBERALS. AS A POSSIBLE INDICATION OF CZECHOSLOVAK READINESS TO CAPITULATE UNDER EXTREME SOVIET PRESSURE, SOURCE TAKES NOTE OF THE FACT THAT YUGOSLAVIA'S PRESIDENT TITO AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF RUMANIA'S COMMUNIST PARTY CEAU'ESCU HAVE DELAYED VISITS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHICH WERE TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE AT THE END OF LAST WEEK. SOURCE ATTRIBUTES THIS TO SOVIET PRESSURES WHICH INFLUENCED DUBCEK TO CANCEL THE VISITS OR AT LEAST POSTPONE THEM. WHEN THE CZECHOSLOVAKS DO CAPITULATE, SOURCE BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS FOR THEIR PART WILL MAKE CERTAIN CONCESSIONS, ALBEIT RELATIVELY MEANINGLESS ONES, SUCH AS GRANTING THE CZECHOSLOVAKS OSTENSIBLY GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE WARSAW PACT COMMAND. SPECIFICALLY, THIS WOULD MEAN THE APPOINTMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKS TO MORE PROMINENT ROLES WITHIN THE WARSAW PACT STAFF, ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF WOULD STILL REMAIN THE

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CENTER OF EFFECTIVE MILITARY POWER WITHIN THE WARSAW PACT.

6. BARRING AN EXTREME SITUATION IN WHICH CZECHOSLOVAK WORKERS ARE CALLED TO THE STREETS IN DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE SOVIETS, SOURCE DOES NOT ANTICIPATE THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS. ALMOST ALL MILITARY LEADERS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WITH ANY POSITIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE, I.E., DIVISION COMMANDERS AND ABOVE, ARE CONSERVATIVE IN THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND BASICALLY PRO-SOVIET. SOME, SUCH AS THE NEWLY APPOINTED CHIEF OF THE MAIN POLITICAL DIRECTORATE OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, FRANTISEK BEDRICH, ARE EXTREMELY PRO-SOVIET. COMMANDERS AT LOWER LEVELS, WHILE MORE LIBERAL IN ORIENTATION, HAVE LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF EFFECTIVELY ORGANIZING INTO A UNITED FORCE.

7. AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR WHICH WORKS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE SOVIETS IN THE CURRENT CRISIS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS THEIR STILL UNLIMITED ACCESS TO INFORMATION INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA. FROM NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS IT IS EVIDENT THAT SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS ARE STILL TRAVELLING THE BREADTH OF THE LAND ALMOST AT WILL, AND THE SOVIET ADVISORS ATTACHED TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAVE NOT YET BEEN RECALLED. FURTHERMORE, THROUGH PEOPLE OF CONSERVATIVE ORIENTATION, SUCH AS PRESIDIUM MEMBER DRAHOMIR KOLDER AND

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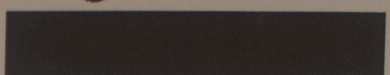
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SECRETARIAT MEMBER ALOIS INDRA, THE SOVIETS HAVE ACCESS TO PROCEEDINGS WITHIN THE KSC PRESIDUM ITSELF. THUS THE SOVIETS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF ALL SIGNIFICANT KSC PLANS AND INTENTIONS AND ARE ABLE TO DEVISE COUNTERMEASURES.

8. [REDACTED] DISSEM: USCINCEUR, USAREUR, USAF, CINCUSNAVEUR.

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