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Eastern Europe and the USSR in the Aftermath of the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

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EASTERN EUROPE AND THE USSR IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

CONCLUSIONS

A. The Soviets intervened in Czechoslovakia because of their genuine fear that the existence of a reliable Communist authority in Prague was threatened by the reform movement in the Czechoslovak Party. The Soviet leaders believed that if this development was not checked their hegemony would ultimately be jeopardized in Eastern Europe as a whole. The process of forcing the Czechs back into the approved mold is proceeding slowly, and the Soviets may be obliged in the end to move directly against the Prague leadership.

B. Both Romania and Yugoslavia will remain apprehensive about Soviet intentions for some time, especially in view of Soviet assertions of a right to intervene in Socialist countries. The Soviets probably do not now contemplate any direct military action against Romania, although other means of pressure can be expected. A Soviet military move against Yugoslavia seems even less likely. Although by its action against Czechoslovakia the USSR has probably for the time being discouraged assertions of national independence among its East European allies, the growth of anti-Soviet nationalism in the area seems likely to continue and to produce new manifestations of resistance to Soviet authority.

C. The present Soviet leadership will probably continue to strike a course somewhere between attempting to restore complete subservience in Eastern Europe and accommodating the trend toward independence and the expression of national peculiarities. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance will remain generally ineffective, both as an instrument of Soviet hegemony and as a means of fostering East European economic development. Within the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets will probably feel obliged to place greater reliance on their own forces and less on those of the East Europeans.

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D. Although the Soviet leaders were probably in basic agreement that measures had to be taken to arrest the reform movement in Czechoslovakia, over time this crisis will probably sharpen a number of chronically troublesome issues within the Soviet leadership. Yet the Soviet leaders are likely to realize that this is not a propitious time for open displays of disunity. Among other things, they are probably concerned over the effects of their actions in Czechoslovakia on the Soviet population itself.

E. The Soviet move in Czechoslovakia did not signify a general hardening of Moscow's policies toward the West. The Soviet leadership considers the Czechoslovak problem as one internal to its own sphere. But Moscow's attitude toward West Germany will remain quite harsh and the Soviets may authorize the East Germans to undertake new harassments aimed at the West German position in Berlin.

DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The dust and debris raised by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia have yet to settle, and the uncertainties left in its wake involve more than the kind of regime which will govern in Prague. Also affected are Moscow's attitudes toward West Germany and the Berlin question, its policies toward the other Communist mavericks, Yugoslavia and Romania, and its posture toward Eastern Europe as a whole. Involved in addition are the broader questions of the USSR's policies toward Western Europe and the US and its position in the international Communist movement. Finally, the Czech events could affect the relative positions of the various Soviet leaders and the stability of the leadership as a whole, which may have been shaken by differences over Soviet policies during the crisis.

2. The Soviet leadership's decision to invade and occupy Czechoslovakia was apparently arrived at with some reluctance. It came only after various other forms of pressure on the Czechoslovak regime had failed and, presumably, after the leadership had decided that the risks of nonintervention simply outweighed all the probable costs of an invasion. The Soviet leaders, or a majority of them, came to believe that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was no longer reliable and was in effect abandoning control over the country to the "counter-revolutionaries;" that Czechoslovakia was edging toward at least a *de facto* withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and a policy of neutrality; and that the West, and especially West Germany, was almost certain to gain greater influence in Prague. Moscow apparently calculated that the political and strategic consequences of these developments would shake its position in the other countries of Eastern Europe. And the Soviet leaders feared that this, together

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with the example of a liberalized socialism in Czechoslovakia, would ultimately have deeply unsettling effects on the Soviet population itself.

3. The intervention did arrest the political developments in Czechoslovakia which the Soviets viewed as dangerous, but the process of forcing the Czechs back into the approved mold is taking some time. Moscow would like to avoid further violence and to oblige the Czech leaders themselves to take the responsibility for undoing the reforms so intensely supported by the population. Probably Moscow would also like to discredit the present leaders and to displace them with others willing to collaborate in the old way. To this end the Soviets are trying to build up a pro-Soviet faction within the Party and to place men loyal to themselves in the security organs and communications media. Their hope is that ultimately the present leaders, under the demoralizing conditions of occupation, can be divided among themselves and discredited with the population.

4. It is difficult to see how the present indirect manifestations of resistance can be sustained indefinitely or how these alone could force the Soviets to abandon the aims for which they intervened. If necessary, the Soviets will probably take direct measures to install a reliable leadership and will use force to suppress any demonstrations by the population. If they are obliged to go to these lengths, however, the political costs of the intervention will be compounded and the problems of maintaining Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe will in the longer term be still further complicated.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

Near-Term Repercussions

5. Among the other states of Eastern Europe, Romania and Yugoslavia were most immediately affected by the shock waves flowing from the Soviet action. Fear of a similar Soviet move against themselves was for a time quite high in both Belgrade and Bucharest. The reactions in each capital, however, seem to have been different. Following a brief period of public outrage, the Romanians have, on the whole, been more restrained. Clearly, as initial fears recede, the Ceausescu regime is determined not to surrender its sovereignty, but it is equally anxious to tailor its actions so as not to provoke Moscow into moves against it. Tito, on the other hand, was appalled by the invasion and—more certain of his independence—was perfectly willing to say so to the Soviets and to the world at large. The Yugoslavs saw in the invasion an assault on their own principles and policies, both domestic and foreign, and foresee a long period of strain in their relations with the USSR.

6. Soviet pressures on Romania and hostility toward Yugoslavia seem likely for some time to come. Anti-Yugoslav propaganda, some of it directed against Tito personally, will probably remain fairly intense, in part because of Moscow's anxiety to remind the other East Europeans of its attitude toward all forms of "revisionism." Pressures on Romania, perhaps including hints of military moves and additional demands regarding Warsaw Pact maneuvers on Romanian soil,

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will probably continue at least so long as Bucharest insists on behaving in an independent, and at times, unfriendly fashion. The Soviets probably do not now contemplate any direct military action against Romania, however, partly because of their calculations of the political costs and partly because they do not consider Romania to be as important strategically as Czechoslovakia. A military move against Yugoslavia seems even less likely. Nevertheless, apprehension about Soviet intentions will persist in both countries for some time, especially in view of the Soviet assertion of a right of intervention in socialist countries.

7. Ceausescu's strong domestic position—which rests substantially on his image as a nationalist—will probably not suffer as a result of his efforts to cultivate the appearance of more harmonious relations with the USSR. These will probably be widely regarded as a simple exercise in prudence. For his part, Tito will probably push all the harder for his program of liberal reform at home and will try to strengthen his ties with both the West and the Third World. In Yugoslavia, the net effect of the Soviet action against Czechoslovakia will thus be to reverse Belgrade's movement toward closer relations with the USSR and to strengthen its determination to pursue an independent and nonaligned socialist course.

8. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Czech invasion may in the short term strengthen the positions of the existing regimes and leaders, but it has also created new problems for them. Gomulka has emerged from the crisis as still the principal Soviet ally in Eastern Europe; this will not help him with his people, nor intimidate for any length of time his enemies within the Party. Kadar's popular reputation may suffer somewhat because Hungarian troops were used in the invasion, and his Party position may suffer somewhat because he supported Dubcek. Generally, however, the Hungarians are likely to appreciate more than ever that, under Kadar, they have enjoyed relative prosperity and freedom. Ulbricht, in East Germany, has seen his harsh attitude toward the Czech experiment adopted by the Soviets (and he himself thus vindicated), but he has also had to face increased expressions of public dissatisfaction. Zhivkov in Bulgaria has behaved entirely as the Soviets wished him to, and their support of him, as a result, is probably assured for some time. The apprehensive Albanians have begun to show a friendlier face toward both Romania and their traditional enemy, Yugoslavia, while stepping up their attacks on Bulgaria.

9. In general, the lesson of Czechoslovakia, like the lesson of Hungary before it, is not likely to be lost on either the ruling parties or the people at large. The USSR has now moved forcefully to set limits on the permissible. No party will be allowed to share power with other organized groups, to institute programs of reform which significantly decentralize political power or economic control or remove restraints on public media. Further, all parties will be under stronger pressure to follow foreign policies (as, for example, toward West Germany) which adhere to guidelines laid down by Moscow. For the next few years, Moscow has probably assured a larger measure of compliance from its East European allies, though most of them will continue to seek ways to pursue their

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own interests as best they can. In any event, resentment of Soviet authority will no doubt continue to smolder, and the political and economic forces working for greater national independence, though subdued or underground, will continue to pose a threat to tranquility and to the Soviet position in the area.

10. The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia probably served, in fact, to dramatize for all the East European peoples the power and the appeal of the Czech movement and the poverty of Soviet efforts to contain it. Thus while certainly made aware of the risks of going beyond the bounds now firmly set by Moscow, East Europeans have also been reminded once again of their unhappy relationship with a doctrinaire, reactionary, and oppressive neighbor. Many East Europeans were clearly chagrined by the invasion of Czechoslovakia and by the use of East European forces in that invasion. All in all, if the Soviet move has served to erect new barriers against the advance of national independence in Eastern Europe, it has also surely failed to halt the growth of a strong anti-Soviet nationalism behind those barriers.

Longer Term Outlook for Soviet Authority in Eastern Europe

11. The Soviets have sought since roughly 1953 and the death of Stalin to transform their system of control and influence in Eastern Europe into a largely voluntary association of allied states owing political and ideological allegiance to Moscow. The use of terror was for the most part discontinued, heavy state-to-state economic and political pressures were played down, and cordial relations between "fraternal" Communist Parties were emphasized. In addition, multi-lateral organizations, principally the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA) and the Warsaw Pact, were used in an effort to coordinate economic and military affairs and to provide the Soviets with mechanisms for exercising their Bloc-wide dominance. At least some Soviet leaders apparently believed that a true "socialist commonwealth" could be established on these new foundations and that it was only natural—and in accord with Marxism-Leninism—for the various states of the commonwealth to identify their national aspirations with those of the USSR. Other Soviet leaders were perhaps more cynical but seemed to be convinced that they could establish a harmonious and viable empire on the basis of strong inter-Party ties.

12. But the predominant trend in Eastern Europe has been toward greater independence from the Soviet Union. Since 1953, the people of two countries have sought to rebel against the Soviet-imposed system: East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956. Poland, swept by nationalist fires, had its moment of defiance in 1956. Albania succeeded in breaking away a few years later. Romania has gradually been acquiring a large measure of freedom from Soviet dominance since the early 1960's. And Czechoslovakia, through a process now called "peaceful counterrevolution" by the Soviets, was well on its way in 1968. Over the past 15 years, then, only one of the USSR's allies in Eastern Europe has remained largely untouched by the currents of nationalism, and even that country, Bulgaria, was the scene of an attempted military coup in 1965 which had anti-Soviet undertones.

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13. This long history of discord and dissension, and in particular, the recent crisis in Czechoslovakia, poses some fundamental questions for the Soviet leaders. Can they continue to approach Eastern Europe in the way laid down after 1953 and, at the same time, maintain their position there, let alone encourage the formation of an enterprising and viable empire? Can CEMA ever manage to coordinate, unite, and develop under Soviet leadership the economies of the entire region? Similarly, can the Warsaw Pact perform adequately in the various capacities it has been assigned—can the various national armies be relied upon, could they fulfill a wartime role against NATO, can the Pact structure be used to help control the member states, could Pact forces be used once more against another socialist state? Are there changes which could be made in either CEMA or the Pact which would significantly enhance their capabilities?

14. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is a going concern only on paper and in a number of particular areas—e.g., in transportation and electric power—where cooperation between the member states is obviously desirable, noncontroversial, and relatively easy of accomplishment. In other areas, and in terms of coordinating and dividing specific national tasks, the organization has consistently run into apparently insurmountable economic and political obstacles. Romania, for example, has since 1963 persistently refused to surrender any of its national economic prerogatives to an international body dominated by the USSR. The Soviets are unable, or are themselves unwilling for various national reasons, to push very hard for the concept of a truly united Bloc economy. It seems highly unlikely that this picture will change very much within the foreseeable future. As an instrument of Soviet hegemony, or even as a means of fostering Eastern European economic development, the future of CEMA does not appear to be at all promising.

15. Instead the Soviets will continue to rely on bilateral relations with the individual Eastern European countries as the main channel for strengthening trade ties with the USSR and for enforcing economic orthodoxy. Eastern European hopes of relaxing political controls over economic life have clearly been set back by the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Economic reforms of the restricted type practiced by East Germany and Poland will remain in effect. The bolder programs of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, such as partial decontrol of prices and foreign trade, are likely to flounder in the absence of political liberalization and closer ties with the West. And Czechoslovakia has been forced to drop the radical plan of setting up workers' councils like those in Yugoslavia. Trade with the West should continue to rise, as fast as the economic facts of life permit, but without the growing Western influence that seemed to be in prospect before the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

16. The Czechoslovak crisis has put in question the USSR's reliance on various East European Armed Forces to function in important roles during wartime.¹ Moscow must consider that the Czech Army can no longer function

¹ For further discussion see SNIE 11-17-68, "Capabilities of the Warsaw Pact against NATO," dated 8 October 1968, SECRET, and the forthcoming NIE 11-14-68, "Soviet and East European General Purpose Forces," TOP SECRET

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as a reliable instrument of Soviet policy, and must also be concerned about manifestations of nationalism in the armed forces of other allied states. As a simple matter of prudence, the Soviets probably feel obliged to place greater reliance on their own forces and less on those of the East Europeans. Moscow may now seriously consider not only the strengthening of its forces in Eastern Europe, but may also seek ways to achieve a more closely integrated Warsaw Pact command structure. Steps such as these would be useful not only against NATO but also as a means to develop a stronger instrument of control within Eastern Europe.

17. The Soviets have for some time sought to enlist the voluntary compliance of the Eastern European regimes but they have also been ready to apply pressure whenever it seemed necessary. Though this approach has been found severely wanting, they probably are not at this point prepared to make many changes in their general policies in Eastern Europe. The Soviet attitude will probably be more unyielding for a time toward deviations, and on key issues Moscow will almost certainly remain harsh and demanding. But it does not now seem that the Soviets are prepared to attempt a general rollback in Eastern Europe toward complete subservience and orthodoxy. Nor, however, does it seem at all likely that the present leadership will entertain any notions of a basic accommodation to the trend toward independence and the expression of national peculiarities.

18. Over the longer term, of course, when new leaders appear in Moscow, the Soviets might come to adapt themselves to the process that is underway in Eastern Europe. They could, for example, become less and less concerned about the orthodoxy of other communist parties and less and less enchanted with the dreary prospects (and rising costs) of trying to maintain their imperial position. Such a stance would certainly have its advantages: it would help to improve relations between Moscow and the presently disgruntled leaders of Western European Communist parties; it would permit a return to detente policies vis-a-vis Western Europe as a whole, West Germany excepted; and it would help to advance the USSR's prestige within the international Communist movement and within the Third World.

19. The ideas and character of the next generation of Soviet leaders are not, however, predictable, and we certainly do not look forward to any change in fundamental Soviet attitudes toward Eastern Europe within the foreseeable future. Probably for a long time, hegemony exercised on the present pattern will be seen as vital to Soviet national interests. Certainly the present Soviet leaders have shown no disposition to allow it to crumble. Khrushchev wished to reform the empire, not dissolve it, and his successors are wary even of reform. Given the continuing growth of Eastern European nationalism, and given the continuing determination of the Soviets to combat it, tensions between ruler and ruled are likely to be endemic and further crises appear almost inevitable.

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III. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE USSR

Domestic

20. Throughout the recent period of crisis in Eastern Europe, the Soviet leadership acted in public as a unified collective. But Brezhnev, as the most powerful figure on the Politburo and as the leader who was earlier most closely identified with both Novotny and Czechoslovakia, was generally thought to be the major architect of the USSR's policies and the man most responsible for its setbacks. It seems likely that the leadership as a whole was essentially united on the principal proposition: the course followed by the new leadership of Czechoslovakia threatened the vital interests of the USSR. It seems plausible, however, that there were different currents of opinion within the leadership over the degree of danger Czechoslovakia represented at any given moment and over what should be done by the USSR to contain that danger.

21. In addition, the Czech problem will probably in time have the effect of sharpening a number of chronically troublesome issues within the leadership. As a consequence of the invasion, for example, the Soviet military may demand a greater share of the nation's economic resources, to the distress perhaps of some of the leaders especially concerned with the growth of the civilian economy. Policy choices bearing on the international Communist movement and on relations with the West may become more contentious. Discontented and ambitious leaders can be expected to try to weaken the position of rivals who might appear newly vulnerable in the wake of the crisis.

22. The collective has endured for almost four years, and its ability so far to govern with few signs of inner turmoil has surpassed most expectations. The Czech problem probably presented it with its most difficult hours and may have placed some of the top leaders in a weaker position. Although Brezhnev may, for a variety of reasons, become the obvious and most convincing scapegoat for an unsatisfactory episode in the conduct of Soviet affairs abroad, there is no evidence at this time that any other leader has the strength to displace him. It also seems unlikely that a move against Brezhnev, or any of the other top leaders, would come too close on the heels of the events themselves. This is not a good time for open displays of disunity.

23. The Soviet leaders will wish to preserve the appearance of unity within the collective in part because of their probable concern over the effects of their actions in Czechoslovakia on popular attitudes at home. Though many Soviet citizens seem at least initially to have accepted the rationale for the invasion, or to have been apathetic about the whole affair, some of the intelligentsia entertained strong doubts about the official reasons given. (Abrupt changes and contradictions in the Party line—e.g., toward the character of Alexander Dubcek—would be enough in their own right to foster skepticism, or at least bewilderment.) Some Soviet intellectuals—who looked on democratic developments in Czechoslovakia as a happy augury for their own circumstances—have

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apparently been greatly agitated by the invasion and, in some instances, anxious privately to disown it. Finally, within Soviet minority groups, most notably in the Ukraine, there apparently had been growing interest in what was going on in Czechoslovakia, especially concerning the implications for the USSR of Prague's newly tolerant attitude toward its own national minorities.

24. While the problem of intellectual and minority group dissent in the USSR has existed for some time, the growth of democratic and nationalist sentiments in Eastern Europe seems to have stimulated similar attitudes in the USSR. In fact, despite increasingly repressive official policies, signs of disaffection within the Soviet Union have recently become more frequent. Both intellectuals and members of minority groups appear to have become more sullen and less disposed to cooperate with the regime, and radical ideas seem to have maintained currency despite heavy-handed efforts to subdue them. Clearly the Soviet leaders have acted as if they consider this kind of disaffection to be a deeply rooted and long-term problem, though they will probably be able to hold it to manageable proportions for some time.

Foreign Policies

25. The Soviets apparently do not now contemplate any radical shifts in foreign policies beyond those required by the Czechoslovak occupation itself. The move in Czechoslovakia did not signify the USSR's intention to undertake a general hardening of its policies toward the West. As Gromyko made explicit in his recent speech to the United Nations General Assembly, the Soviet leadership considers the Czechoslovak problem as one internal to its own sphere, and therefore as a matter not subject to discussion with outside powers. The Soviet effort to solve this problem was conceived and executed in this context, and the Soviets have sought—except partially in the special case of West Germany—to avoid entangling their policies elsewhere in the world with their actions against Prague. That is to say, Moscow has made no deliberate moves to change course toward the Third World, Western Europe, or the US.

26. Specifically concerning the US, a number of proposed programs already appear to be casualties of the Soviet move and prospects for a number of others have been placed in doubt. Small accommodations, such as the institution of New York-Moscow air services, do not appear jeopardized, but proposals for arms control and disarmament, already inherently difficult of accomplishment, face formidable new obstacles. The economic and military interests which seemed to be moving the Soviet leaders closer to the idea of some arms control arrangement have not in and of themselves been lessened by recent developments in Eastern Europe, though the consensus within the collective on this subject may well be affected by the atmosphere of renewed tension generated by the Czech events. Much will now depend also, of course, on the impact of recent events on the attitudes and policies of the US.

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27. Concerning Germany, the current heavy propaganda and diplomatic campaign against Bonn seems primarily to represent an effort to levy blame for the Czechoslovak crisis on the most convenient and useful outside scapegoat. This effort happens to coincide quite well with the traditional Soviet attitude toward Bonn, and also serves as a rationale for the permanent stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. It seems likely that the USSR's attitude toward West Germany will remain quite harsh, in part because Moscow fears West Germany's relations with Eastern Europe as a potential alternative to Soviet influence. The Soviets clearly want no further forward movement of Bonn's *Ostpolitik*.

28. One way of seeking to blunt these West German policies and of bringing direct pressure to bear on Bonn would be to renew the campaign against the West German presence and activities in West Berlin. The Soviets realize, however, that in the wake of the events in Czechoslovakia, sudden moves by them in Berlin could quickly generate a major crisis. They probably will not, therefore, attack the Allied presence in Berlin directly but, instead, may authorize the East Germans to undertake new harassments aimed at the West German position. On the whole, we think the chances are good that there will be a renewal of tensions around Berlin in coming months.

29. In Western Europe, the Soviets are seeking to repair the damage done their relations with the various governments and the local Communist Parties by the invasion of Czechoslovakia. There are no signs that Moscow is prepared to depart from its preinvasion efforts to cultivate good will, especially in France. Its task is much more difficult now, however, and the heavy-handed propaganda tactics used against Bonn have greatly reduced Western Europe's receptiveness to detente overtures. But the Soviets are anxious, apparently, to convince the West Europeans that their move against Prague was essentially defensive and is not to be seen as a threat against the integrity of any Western country. Kosygin's sudden visit to Finland was probably undertaken to calm Finnish apprehensions about Soviet policy. To a certain extent, of course, the state of relations between East and West is a matter of atmospherics. If the situation in Czechoslovakia appears to return to "normal," concern in Western Europe will gradually abate, and the Soviets will probably then revert to the themes of European security and detente which have been featured in their policy for the last several years.

30. Moscow's relationship with many Communist Parties has been heavily damaged by the action against Czechoslovakia. The international Communist conference, which has long been sought by the Soviets and has now had to be postponed, will have little chance of restoring Communist unity. Both the French and Italian Parties counseled against the intervention but were disregarded by Moscow. Official Soviet doctrine now emphasizes that the USSR has a duty when necessary to interfere in the affairs of any fraternal Communist state, and with military force if circumstances require. The French and Italian Parties

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have rejected this proposition, in part from the conviction that it is ideologically untenable, in part from the knowledge that it is indefensible to their local electorates. Despite grumbling by their Stalinist minorities and pressure from Moscow, the major West European Parties have maintained their initial disapproval of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. They will not be pressured into reversing this decision, although they will continue to pay lip service to "proletarian internationalism" and friendship with the USSR. The Soviets have little prospect of restoring the position of commanding influence over the international Communist movement they once held.

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