

RADIO FREE EUROPE
MUNICH

OUTGOING CIPHER MESSAGE

TO: 18:58

MUN 85 23 JUL 68

TO DURKEE INFO YARROW HOVEY KAUFMANN (PETZALL ACTING)
MOXLEY ROWSON
FM WALTER INFO COLLINS COOK DIAMOND LYON REYMAN KINGSLEY
RIVELES

URGENT 23/1809.

OPD HIGHLIGHT NO. 83

THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE SOVIET UNION CONTINUED TODAY AN AGGRESSIVE TWO-PRONGED ATTACK ON THE POSITIONS OF PRAGUE. ONE ARM OF MAJOR SOVIET PSYCHOLOGICAL THRUST CONTINUED TO ASSUME THE THREAT OF A POTENTIAL MILITARY INTERVENTION. A SECOND CONSISTED OF AN AGREEMENT TO NEGOTIATE WITH CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS ON THEIR OWN TERRITORY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DELIVERING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA WHAT IS REPORTED TO BE A STIFF DIPLOMATIC NOTE. IF THE PROSPECT OF FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS GAVE THE APPEARANCE, AT THE VERY LEAST, OF A CZECHOSLOVAK TACTICAL VICTORY OVER THE COMMUNIST CONSERVATIVES LED BY MOSCOW, THE ANNOUNCEMENT THIS AFTERNOON OF MILITARY MANEUVERS IN THE WESTERN SOVIET UNION--THAT IS THE WESTERN PART OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, BYELORUSSIA, LATVIA, AND THE UKRAINE--WAS A GROSSLY TRANSPARENT EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE SOVIET UNION TO NEUTRALIZE PSYCHOLOGICALLY THIS TACTICAL CONCESSION. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MANEUVERS JUST ANNOUNCED WILL INCLUDE REGULAR ARMY TROOPS OF THE MILITARY DISTRICTS OF THOSE AREAS, PLUS CIVILIAN RESERVISTS, AND TRUCKS AND AUTOMOBILES "TAKEN FROM THE NATIONAL ECONOMY". THESE EXERCISES, ACCORDING TO WESTERN NEWS AGENCIES, WILL CENTER ON QUESTIONS OF ORGANIZATION, OF ADMINISTRATIVE REAR INSTITUTIONS, TROOP SUPPLY, AND THE REPAIR OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THE ANNOUNCEMENT'S VERY NATURE WOULD TEND TO LEND GREATER CREDIBILITY TO A SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, SINCE BY AND LARGE THOSE UNITS STATIONED AROUND CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON HER BORDERS WITH EAST GERMANY, POLAND, HUNGARY, AND THE UKRAINE ARE LINE OUTFITS WHICH COULD REQUIRE EXTENSIVE QUARTER-MASTER SUPPORT IN CASE OF COMBAT OPERATIONS. HOWEVER, FROM EVERY RATIONAL POINT OF VIEW, THE SOVIETS HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO LOSE AND NOT A WHOLE LOT TO GAIN FROM A MILITARY INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA TO RESTORE MUSCOVITE

MORE

PAGE TWO

ORTHODOXY. HAVING SAID THAT, ONE CANNOT EXCLUDE A DOCTRINAIRE, EVEN ABERRATED, SOVIET DECISION TO INTERVENE BECAUSE OF THE BELIEF THAT THE MILITARY SECURITY OF THE SOVIET UNION AS REGARDS THE "IMPERIALIST" WEST IS ENDANGERED, AS WELL AS FUNDAMENTAL FEARS THAT SOVIET SOCIETY ITSELF WOULD BECOME SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE CZECHOSLOVAK LIBERAL VIRUS IN THE LONGER TERM. THUS, ONE MUST SEE THIS LATEST SOVIET ACTION AS DESIGNED TO TEST TO THE EXTREME THE COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS OF THE PRAGUE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. AND AGAIN, THIS LATEST ACTION MORE THAN BALANCES THE SEMI-CONCILIATORY PRAVDA ARTICLE WHICH AT LAST RECOGNIZED THE CZECHOSLOVAK

TERM. THUS, ONE MUST SEE THIS LATEST SOVIET ACTION AS DESIGNED TO TEST TO THE EXTREME THE COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS OF THE PRAGUE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. AND AGAIN, THIS LATEST ACTION MORE THAN BALANCES THE SEMI-CONCILIATORY PRAVDA ARTICLE (JULY 22) WHICH AT LAST RECOGNIZED THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP (AS OPPOSED TO UNDEFINED "HEALTHY FORCES") AS A FACTOR CAPABLE NOT ONLY OF MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS, BUT ALSO OF CONTROLLING THE SITUATION TO SOVIET SATISFACTION.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF PARTIAL MOBILIZATION DOES NOT, HOWEVER, ADD A COMPLETELY NEW FACTOR; IT COMPOUNDS ONE OF THE ELEMENTS (MILITARY INTIMIDATION) IN THE OLD. MEASURED AGAINST THIS ESCALATION OF PRESSURE, IT IS NO GREAT SURPRISE THAT SERIOUS WEST GERMAN DISCUSSIONS OF CANCELLING THE SO-CALLED "BLACK LION MANEUVERS" ARE SUMMARILY DISMISSED BY SOVIET MEDIA. INDEED, IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE DISAPPOINTED IF "BLACK LION" IS CANCELLED AS THIS WOULD DEPRIVE THEM OF A PRIME PROPAGANDA ARGUMENT. NOR SHOULD IT BE EXPECTED THAT THE SOVIET MEDIA WOULD GRANT AN IOTA OF CREDIBILITY TO U.S. DISCLAIMERS OF INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT MOSCOW, HAVING YIELDED TACTICALLY TO THE CZECHS AS REGARDS THE BILATERAL NATURE OF TALKS AS WELL AS VENUE, DECIDED TO LEAVE NO DOUBT THAT WHILE NEGOTIATIONS WILL TAKE PLACE, THE SOVIET UNION WILL ARRIVE AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE WITH A FULLHEAD OF STEAM. CONVERSELY, THE PROBLEM OF THE DUBCEK LEADERSHIP REMAINS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME; ITS DIMENSIONS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO EXPAND. DUBCEK AND CO. HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO CONTINUE TO EMPLOY THE SAME TACTICS WHICH HAVE PROVED EFFECTIVE IN THE PAST. THEY HAVE COME TO

MORE

PAGE THREE

ENJOY IN THE LAST WEEKS POPULAR SUPPORT WHICH NO COMMUNIST REGIME IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT HAS EVER ENJOYED. ONLY AN INFINITESIMAL SPLINTER OF THE NATIONAL BODY POLITIC OPPOSE IT-- AND THIS NOT EFFECTIVELY. IT WAS THIS SEGMENT OF THE OLD RULING APPARATUS WHICH MOSCOW HAD COUNTED ON TO PROVIDE POLITICAL CONTINUITY IN CASE OF ACTIVE INTERVENTION.

IF ONE PROJECTS THE NEGOTIATING SITUATION, THE ROOM FOR MANEUVER ON EITHER SIDE--FOR THE REASONS STATED ABOVE-- APPEARS TO BE NARROW INDEED. THE SOVIETS CONTINUE OSTENTATIOUSLY TO ASSUME PUBLIC POLITICAL POSTURES FROM WHICH THEY WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO REVERSE WITHOUT A SUBSTANTIAL LOSS OF FACE (THIS LOSS OF FACE COULD VERY POSSIBLE LEAD TO PERSONNEL CHANGES AT THE SUMMIT LEVEL OF THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP). IF THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP AND PEOPLE HAVE EMBRACED ONE ANOTHER WITHIN THE FRAME OF A NEW NATIONAL SENSE OF PURPOSE, THIS EMBRACE ALSO SETS STRICT LIMITS ON THAT LEADERSHIP'S MANEUVERABILITY. THE ONLY FEASIBLE AVENUE OUT OF THIS GRAVE POLITICAL CRISIS MAY ONCE AGAIN PROVE TO BE THE REMARKABLE COURAGE, CALM, AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DUBCEK POLITICAL TEAM. GIVEN THE HIGH TENSIONS GENERATED PRACTICALLY UNILATERALLY BY MOSCOW AND ITS CONSERVATIVE ALLIES, THE DUBCEK LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE TO INDULGE IN AN EXTENSIVE SEQUENCE OF VERBAL ACROBATICS (WHILE NOT YIELDING ON PRINCIPLE) IN ORDER TO CREATE A NEW BASIS FOR A MODUS OPERANDI BETWEEN PRAGUE AND MOSCOW. ONE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THOSE MODERATE VOICES SURELY OBTAINING IN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WILL IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ALSO HAVE THEIR DAY IN COURT.

END MSG