

August 23, 1968

Fred W. Valtin, 'Czech Crisis--Policy Guidance from State' [Approved for Release May 6, 2019]

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Summary:

CIA official Fred Valtin conveys to FEC President William Durkee requested guidance from the State Department that RFE should not broadcast calls for active resistance to the Soviet occupiers even if from high-level Czechoslovak officials.

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23 August 1968

(14)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Czech Crisis--Policy Guidance from State

1. Late last night Bill Durkee sought guidance against the contingency that a high-level Czech political figure (e.g., Svoboda or Hajek) issued a statement calling on the Czech armed forces and/or the Czech population to go into active resistance against the Soviet occupation forces. Durkee's question was: Does RFE in that event broadcast such a statement or such statements as "factual news" or does RFE ignore it as being collusive in a chain of events that might end in a blood-bath?

2. Durkee made it clear that he was addressing his query only in relation to statements of this nature that might be issued by Czechs of considerable and undisputed official stature. He said that it was understood both in New York and Munich that calls for active resistance from lower levels would be ignored in RFE broadcasts.

3. In view of the hour and the fact that Durkee was posing a hypothetical question, I decided to postpone seeking guidance from the Department. Accordingly, I called Trueheart first thing this morning. He said that the Department was then wrestling with all manner of hypothetical contingencies and that I had just added another.

4. He called back shortly after noon and advised that it was the Department's position that calls for active resistance must not be broadcast by RFE, no matter from what level of Czech officialdom it emanates. Trueheart said that it was recognized that RFE might incur some loss in credibility, but that this was preferable to RFE's possibly becoming co-responsible for the blood-bath that nobody wants. Trueheart said that this decision harked back to the post-Hungarian revolution analysis of the role played by media under Western control in the final

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outcome of that event. According to Trueheart, the Department wants to be certain that all media under governmental control have an absolutely clean record in case the Czech situation should end tragically.

5. The above guidance has been passed to both RFE and RL.

Fred W. Valtin
FRED W. VALTIN
Acting Chief
Covert Action Staff

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