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DATE: 8/30/68

TIME: 10:15 PM

CALLER: Dean Rusk

Pages of Transcript: 2 pages

Barbara Cline
Archivist

Secy Rusk
August 30, 1968
10:15p

First: He and I do not now have an appointment for tomorrow. That is a matter of some significance.

I started out by asking him to tell me tonight what he had in mind telling me tomorrow. He thereupon gave me a what was in effect a rebuttal on Czechoslovakia. It was a re-statement of their justification for the actions taken..along the familiar lines. A text of that is on its way down to you...because he gave it to us in writing, although it was an oral communication. In it, he took some strong exception to the strength of our opposition to it, and the debate in the Security Council...and referred again to threats against the Socialist countries...that's another word for German...when he got through with that, honestly, I was somewhat relieved that that was the subject that he wanted to talk about. I then referred him to the fact that a week ago I had asked about whether he got any information about Rumania...telling him that we had some disturbing rumors from several sources, but not from the Rumanians. He said he had sent that inquiry to Moscow and had had no reply. I then told him that we have had considerable number of reports -- again not from the Rumanians -- particularly in the last twenty-four hours which caused us deep concern -- reports of troop movements and even some alleged incidents on the Rumanian-Soviet border. I asked him if he could give me assurances that there was no intention to take action against Rumania. He said he had no instructions on the subject. He expressed his personal view that there would not be action against Rumania, but he emphasized that he had no instructions. I then said well, then, I want you to know...I want your government to know, that the President and I have been in communication in the last hour on these reports that we are getting...the President wanted me to see him this evening and to say to him that if there is any possibility of such intentions on their part that in the name of all of humanity, we call upon them not to do it. That such action...the effect of such action on the total world situation would be incalculable. I elaborated that a bit...the memo of conversation will be on the way down to you...Tommy Thompson was with me and is writing a memo of conversation...

I pointed out that the situation already is very bad with regard to Czechoslovakia, that the President had made known very clearly our view on such matters, that we do not assert that the NATO pact gives us the right to move our forces into NATO countries to hinge around their political arrangements, we don't think that the Warsaw

pact gives the Soviet Union any special right with respect to members of the Warsaw Pact. That the President, while making his own point of view very clear, had been trying to keep some options open and had thereby exposed himself to some criticism in this country, and that the Soviet Union should not under estimate the strength of the feeling of the American people on these matters. That was the essence of what I said on that point.

I told him that I would see him another day or two to discuss specifically the material he presented me on Czechoslovakia. Now, that's so much for the talk. More details will be down in the ~~xxxxxx~~ memo of conversation.

Now, as far as the actions on the ground are concerned, Admiral Taylor indicates that they just don't really confirm the kinds of things that would be associated with any such major movement...so that he can kind of discount somewhat the effect of the reports we've had thus far. Both Bohlen and Thompson put the odds rather high against their taking action even both these men have seen all the information we have thus far. I was interested that Chip Bohlen who was 51-49 on the Czech movement put this at least 70-30 against...and Thompson more or less agreed with that. Now, we're on full intelligence and policy alert during the night...I'm at home at the moment, but have arrangements to go back any time.

So, I would suggest that the President, in the absence of some new development in the situation, get some sleep and we'll be in touch with him if we need to.

Goodbye....