

November 8, 1996

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY
RECORDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTS OF CONVERSATIONS AND MEETINGS
RECORDINGS OF MEETINGS CONDUCTED IN THE CABINET ROOM

TRANSCRIPTS DECLASSIFIED AND PUBLISHED IN THE
FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

TAPE SC.01

Under the provisions of Executive Order 12958 and prior executive orders governing access to classified information, historians from the Department of State researching the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series had access to unprocessed, security classified holdings of the Johnson Library.

During their research on the FRUS volume on Eastern Europe, Department of State historians had access to three recordings and transcripts of meetings conducted in the Cabinet Room during the Czech crisis in 1968. Transcripts of these three meetings were declassified and published by FRUS in 1996. Because the Library does not plan to process this collection in full at this time, we have made the recordings which correspond to the transcripts as published in the FRUS volume available for research on this tape. Copies of the FRUS transcripts are contained in this binder; the entire FRUS volume is shelved in the Reference Section of the Library's book collection.



**Foreign Relations of the
United States, 1964-1968**

Volume XVII

Eastern Europe

Editor James E. Miller
General Editor Glenn W. LaFantasie

United States Government Printing Office
Washington
1996

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Recordings and Transcripts of Meetings Conducted in the Cabinet Room

Date of Meeting: 7/27/68
Time of Meeting: 3:00-4:30P
Tape: SC.01 PNO: 1

Date	7/27/68
Time	3:00-4:30P
Length of Recording	1:53:00 TOTAL; 05:06 OPENED
Participants	LBJ, EVERETT DIRKSEN, DEAN RUSK
Transcribed (Y/N)	Y
Comments	DECLASSIFIED AND PUBLISHED IN FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, VOLUME XVII, ITEM 74; ONLY PORTIONS OF CONVERSATION RELATED TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA RELEASED TO AND OPENED BY FRUS; ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT MISDATED JULY 26, 1968
Topics	CZECHOSLOVAKIA: US-USSR POSITIONS; US-USSR RELATIONS

74. Transcript of Meeting¹

Washington, July 27, 1968, 3–4:30 p.m.

Meeting in Cabinet Room, Saturday, July 26 [27], 1968, With the President and Senator Dirksen. They Were Joined Later by Secretary Rusk From 3:00 to 4:30.²

[Here follow 28 pages of discussion of domestic politics.]

Dirksen: How the hell did the *Wall Street Journal* ever write that editorial on the subject of Czechoslovakia? To do anything there looks very dim.

Rusk: Any time you want to call me, just pick up the phone and call me because the situation changes on a daily basis. The issues between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union are really fundamental issues. The Soviets are deeply concerned about the future of the entire Communist world in Eastern Europe as a result of what is happening in Czechoslovakia. They raised the question on the monopolization of the Communist Party. The Czechs raised the question on the arrangements within the solidarity of the Warsaw Pact. They have eliminated censorship to the extent that there is more free expression now in Czechoslovakia than there has ever been present in any Communist country including Yugoslavia. I think the Soviets are concerned both on the security grounds of a country that is on their border and also borders on the west. But they're even more concerned about the possibility of contagion—how is Czechoslovakia affecting Poland, Hungary, West and East Germany and even the Soviet Union itself where they have important troubles with their young people and with their nationalities. Our people who visit the Soviet Union or live there say there's enormous apathy around Moscow. It is just like a dead lump of dough and it's stirring all through that part of the world. Matter of fact, John Foster Dulles used to talk about this possibility in '53 and '54. Now publicly we've taken the line that these charges by the Soviet Union that we are somehow concocting this thing in Czechoslovakia are false. The Soviet Union knows them to be false and that, of course, the Soviet Union knows what the American people think about an issue of this sort when it is raised anywhere in the world. We think

people ought to determine their own affairs. Privately we have been much more stiff than that with them and have specifically said so. Now look, if you're trying to build up a pretext by your charges against us for action against Czechoslovakia, cut it out because that's going to have very serious effect on our relations. They denied they're doing it which is sort of interesting, but nevertheless now on the problem that he will face down there during at least three or four days will be how to handle it in such a way not to get in the way of the Czechs, not to hurt the Czechs. Now we've been told by the Czechs this is their final remark that they consider that our public handling of this question has been about right from their point of view. If we would go on much more dramatically in supporting the Czechs this would create real problems for them in their attempt to deal with the Russians. Now there is another reason why we might want to be a little careful about this problem. The chances are that the Czechs will make some compromises here to keep the Russians off their backs. It may be we pledge fidelity to the Warsaw pact, it may be some changes in personnel, it may be the reimposition of censorship. We just don't know. But you just might want—before you lock up any comments you make about Eastern Europe, you just might want to give me or give Chip Bohlen a telephone call and see if there are any later developments that could possibly have any bearing on what you are thinking about. On the general idea of détente—this thing the so called détente—there's very little basis for any generalization on it. On the one side we have such things as the civil air agreement and the Consular Agreement, the Space Treaty and the nonproliferation treaty and the possibility of talks on the strategic offensive and defensive missiles. But on the other hand you have got Berlin and Germany and Vietnam and the Middle East so you've got many dangerous questions that have not been resolved. So one can't speak of détente, one can't speak of the opposite. It's pragmatic kind of situations. [Here follow 1-1/2 pages of discussion of domestic politics and Vietnam.]

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Transcripts of Cabinet Room Meetings. No classification marking. The source text comprises pages 28–32 of a 34-page transcript. The text printed here contains revisions that were made after the editor listened to the recording of the conversation. The recording is *ibid.*, Recording of Meeting Between President Johnson, Senator Dirksen, and Secretary Rusk, July 27, 1968, 3–4:30 p.m. [Tape FC002, Side B].

² The correct date, July 27, is from the President's Daily Diary. (*Ibid.*) The diary also indicates that Rusk joined the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

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Recordings and Transcripts of Meetings Conducted in the Cabinet Room

Date of Meeting: 7/29/68
Time of Meeting: 7:00-8:00P
Tape: SC.01 PNO: 2

Date	7/29/68
Time	7:00-8:00P
Length of Recording	0:45:00
Participants	LBJ, DEAN RUSK, CLARK CLIFFORD, TOM JOHNSON
Transcribed (Y/N)	Y
Comments	DECLASSIFIED AND PUBLISHED IN FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, VOLUME XVII, ITEM 75;
Topics	CZECHOSLOVAKIA; POSSIBLE MEETING WITH KOSYGIN ABOUT SALT, ABM AND NON-PROLIFERATION TREATIES; GLASSBORO SUMMIT; DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION; DEFENSE BUDGET; FUND-RAISER FOR WAYNE HAYS

75. Transcript of Meeting¹

Washington, July 29, 1968, 7–8 p.m.

Cabinet Room Meeting of Monday, July 29, 1968, 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. With the President, Secretary Rusk and Secretary Clifford and Tom Johnson

Clifford: You've got to look at it, too, of the possibility of there being some serious danger inherent in it. One quick reaction I would have would be that if by chance Czechoslovakia is still a pending problem, I don't believe I'd go near Kosygin during the time that Czechoslovakia is still hot. I don't. You could get caught up in that and I'm just afraid it would be difficult for you to extricate yourself. You could have a talk with Kosygin and the day you talked with him Soviet troops could move on Czechoslovakia or the day after you left, troops could move in Czechoslovakia. It would be, they'd be tied together in some way, whether that would suit Kosygin's attitude or not, I don't know. I think that we have to be careful about the reasons why the President was seeing Kosygin at this time. Is it because the President has a new plan that he is taking to Kosygin vis-à-vis Vietnam? Is there something new he wants to take to him? Is it because the President's concerned about the Middle East—some development there? Is he concerned about NATO? You know there's so much cooking right now. As far as starting off with Kosygin on a discussion of strategic limitation and ultimate reduction, I don't know. Right at this time, Mr. President, I wonder whether that's advisable. These are going to be long, difficult, exceedingly complex negotiations. Whether the President and Kosygin can do anything much at the very beginning of it, I don't know. I think that the general approach would be, well—I just wonder what they can do about it. And I think we have to be careful. The time that the President selects to see Kosygin. I would hope that there'd be a time when we didn't have a situation quite as inflammable as it is. I'm thinking of the Czechoslovakian problem. I think that's a terribly difficult problem. I know we can't get in it. I feel some concern that we can. Czechoslovakia is supposedly a free country and they can be under the heel just like Hungary was. I don't know for instance whether somebody might decide to bring this up in the Security Council in the UN—Czechoslovakia. Maybe some member of the Security Council could decide to bring it up. That would tend to exaggerate it. So, a second point I'm making is to sound a note of basic caution about going to see

Kosygin right at this time. I think it must be watched with great care. The third point I have: After Dean left Saturday afternoon, I just noted down thoughts that I had. Just in my own handwriting—I've not given them even to the girls. The third point I'd like to make has to do with the Convention. [Here follow 4 pages of discussion of the Democratic National Convention and Vietnam.]

[Clifford:] This is very prominent in my mind, as I look ahead. At this time, Mr. President, with the condition existing in Czechoslovakia, with existing in Vietnam we're waiting for the other shoe to drop over there, I can see more danger in a visit with Kosygin at this time, then I can see benefit. Now I think there will come a time when the President can see Kosygin. Right now it just seems to me that it's tempting fate too severely.

President: What time do you see that it could come?

Clifford: Well, I think there'll be a resolution of the problem in Czechoslovakia. These things don't go on indefinitely. The President is still President. Let's see, August, September, October, November, December, you're still President for six months, until the 20th of January. That's almost six months off. I don't know, it could be in a week.

President: You think it would probably be all right to have meetings in November and December?

Clifford: It wouldn't bother me a bit. It wouldn't bother me a bit. You're going right on being President and you're not bothering with politics. The fact that there's some new man or something, that wouldn't bother me a particle. I think in maybe a week, it could be a week. Czechoslovakia would be resolved one way or another. It could be two weeks, or three weeks, but I think it's going to be resolved that this thing has gotten so acute now, so inflammatory, that I think they're going to lance this abscess one way or another and I think it will be out of the way. Now, I think that we will all learn during the month of August whether there's going to be another series of attacks from the enemy in Vietnam. Maybe it will come and maybe it won't, and I think we get that out of the way so that that doesn't get too involved in it. It wouldn't disturb me at all if the talks on strategic weapons control were to start at some other level. It's going to go on for some time. I don't know that it has too much significance in having it started by Kosygin and the President and I'm not even sure that it's particularly valuable to just confine it to that at the starting. I think that the President when he goes to see, or arranges to see Kosygin under the proper circumstances in which Kosygin's comfortable, I would hope the two of you would be able to sit down and cover the entire mosaic of our problems. An announcement could be made ahead of time to that effect and something after it that could come out. Right now I believe that if I were Kosygin with this real nose bleed on my hands with

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Transcripts of Cabinet Room Meetings. No classification marking. The text printed here contains revisions that were made after the editor listened to the recording of the conversation. The recording is *ibid.*, Recording of a Meeting Between President Johnson, Secretary Rusk, and Secretary Clifford, July 29, 1968, 7–8 p.m. [Tape FC001. Side A1.]

Czechoslovakia I think almost the last person I would want to see right now would be President Johnson.

President: Yes, I think there is something to that. I'm not necessarily trying to help him though.

Rusk: Well, Mr. President, I'd like to comment very briefly.

President: I agree. Let me comment on what Clark is saying. I think there is no reason why we have to act until the Czechoslovakia situation is cleared. As I indicated, that's number one. I don't know how. If it's two weeks, that's another matter. I would expect maybe it wouldn't be that long. I don't know. I can't tell. But I don't think it's essential. We don't say that I don't think that the President and Kosygin sit down together. We have though for four years urged this step upon them and we finally got them to agree now that there will be a meeting within a month or a month and a half. I would like to forthrightly respond to that and accept it and give him my views of what ought to happen. And I think there may be some merit in the four days of the Convention there waiting until it's over with, I don't care. And it may be that he won't want to start at this level. I'd rather think he wouldn't. Although I would like to because I would think that that would be the way. But if not, if you want to modify that part of it if that is a—, then you might say, or at the Foreign Minister level. One or the other of us ought to start it off. And I'm willing to rewrite the letter and use his phrase—not ours.

Rusk: Month, month and a half.

President: Yes, and I'm willing to and also add that if this doesn't suit you, that we'd be glad for the Foreign Ministers to start it off. We do think it is of sufficient importance. The very first proposal that we made to the Soviet Union we insisted on time and date and place and subject. There is so much that is pending that needs the attention of both countries. What I'm terribly afraid of is—I'm afraid that by our sitting with our hands in our pockets, just merrily, merrily going along, just reacting to all of their initiatives and their propaganda and their party line that we just finally catch ourselves just signing on which we have been doing most of the time and I think we're likely to be doing it again. I think we'll be having a Council meeting here in a week or so and everybody will pretty well agree in general that we ought to cut out something else we're doing in deference to these folks. That is what I am fearful of.

Rusk: Well, I agree with Clark. I think you do, too, about the possible connection between this Czechoslovakia business. I think, myself, that the chances are—

President: We won't have waited today if it hadn't agreed on that.

Rusk: That's right. That's right. I think we're likely to see here some sort of answer on the Czech business before then.

President: I think so.

Rusk: We did put in this draft: "If the general situation permits," a phrase that would cover the Czech business in our minds that if things really start in Czechoslovakia we'd just ourselves pull back even if Kosygin accepted this.

President: That is what that was intended to do. But I don't think that we even need to dispatch the letter until we see a little clearer than we do now.

Rusk: That's right.

President: I said that last weekend and I didn't ask for this meeting today.

Rusk: I asked for it. Now on this other—what would such a meeting be about. I think that we can make it pretty clear that it is about offensive and defensive missiles. That is a question which everybody knows the President's worked on very hard and worked on it personally. He tried very hard at Glassboro to get these talks started. He's also worked hard on the non-proliferation treaty which has in it an obligation on the part of the nuclear powers to get going and negotiate in good faith the elimination of the arms race. So from that point of view it seems to me that it would militate in favor of the President's launching these discussions. There's another factor and that is that, Clark, you may not like this one particularly. I think if the President initiated the discussions, this would be a sign to what General Eisenhower called the military industrial complex that Goddamn it, getting an agreement to limit offensive and defensive missiles is the national policy of the United States. We want people to think about how you do it and not think about how you'll avoid doing it. Looking ahead you look at these tens of billions that are going down this rat hole if we don't find an answer to this, you see. So there's an internal commitment involving the President's study. Now the danger is—the court of last resort getting it into session and Kosygin could turn up there with demands on Berlin or something—after all Khrushchev did drop the Berlin crisis in President Kennedy's lap when they met in Vienna. This did not happen in Glassboro partly because Kosygin was over here in the United Nations on a Middle East where, frying some fishes on his own at that time. And therefore, this was not racked up. There's little danger. I think it is not as great now as it might have been earlier if nothing had happened. So this is why—subject to Czechoslovakia—I myself come down on the balanced judgment that there would be real merit in the two meetings if it could be done under the appropriate circumstances.

Clifford: I find no disagreement with that, Dean, I think that President Kennedy's meeting in Vienna with Khrushchev was a calamity.

Rusk: It was.

Clifford: Boy, it was a real zero from President Kennedy's standpoint.

Clifford: Now I think conditions have changed. I think that the Soviets have shown an inclination to find some basis of cooperation with us. That's a very interesting sentence in the last letter of Kosygin that we will both find as we get into this that a savings can be effected to a very substantial degree.

Rusk: I would be for the President having a chance to talk with him very informally without pretending that the main subject is about Vietnam and about the Middle East.

Clifford: I would have no difficulty with that.

President: You know originally I thought we ought to say there and I took it out.

Rusk: Yes.

President: This is not the only subject.

Rusk: This refers now to—it will also give us a chance to discuss quietly and informally some of the problems or tensions that you referred to.

President: That just polished up, the very [inaudible] the three matters that we wanted to talk about and that also left us a getting out place even on Czechoslovakia or any other developments after it was set. And I don't think I would want to specify that I would not want to attend a meeting. Now, I don't see that this would do the damage to the Democratic Party that Clark does. I have a different viewpoint. I think it's the best thing that we could do for the Democratic Party, whoever is nominated at that time. I don't think we necessarily need to go at that specific moment, but I think most of them will be pretty glad that we're having a meeting. I would just leave it more in his hands on the month to month and a half basis.

Rusk: All right.

President: But I think we could do that after we see the situation.

Rusk: I would agree, too, that it would be of great benefit to the Democratic Party if it didn't take place on those very days that they were having their Convention.

President: Well their Convention is going to have all the television every hour. This meeting is not going to be taking much of it. And I would doubt that he would set the meeting. I would just leave it and say anytime within the month or month and half he mentioned, it would be agreeable with us. I'd be pretty agreeable to hear suggestions.

Rusk: All right.

Clifford: Does he have in mind that the President would like to start it off, personally with Kosygin because he said nothing about that in his last reply. And the President I think said nothing about that in this one. Does he?

President: Yes.

Rusk: Yes.

Clifford: Oh, I see. I didn't notice it.

President: He understood at Glassboro that we were pressing on this very hard, a little history would help us. Khrushchev wrote to me in December '63 a rather broad long letter and we responded January the 16th, '64 in which we discussed the perils of armament in the world and the two powers poised at each other and how much it would cost us and how much good could be done if we could only approach this problem of disarmament and particularly if we could have some agreement that would bring about the non-proliferation treaty. That was number one on the list and we listed a series of reductions in our armed strength and in our future investments in armaments. And we stuck it right up to him and said that we very much want to do this and then we followed that with a series of specific moves where we reduced our atomic reactors and asked him to do likewise and he held off to the last moment until ours was announced. I was actually at the microphone speaking when he notified us that he would issue an announcement at the same time. We suggested 2 o'clock on Tuesday. I started speaking at one forty-five and we hadn't heard from him and about one fifty-five they brought us a note that he was going to announce it at 2 o'clock, right at the last minute. He went out and our people, we pursued this up until we went in there with our bombing in '65 and things kind of tapered off. At Glassboro it heated up again, very strong. And we took the initiative and just almost wrestled him to have a meeting and said anytime, anywhere we'll send our men to Moscow or we'll meet in Geneva or we'll come back to Glassboro. We'll do anything, but this we must do. We thought we got a tentative, implied acceptance then and we thought it would be rather soon. He got back and subsequently came along and implied it again. What did he say in that language we got back? We announced it the day Bobby Kennedy made a speech and we didn't call him up to find out he was going to speak the same day or not so they charged us with bad motives. You remember that don't you.

Rusk: Yes, I remember it.

President: There was some indication that they would meet with us again but they never would set a date. So we have kept shoving 'em all during that period. Now we've come along and Kosygin has said yes a month or six weeks. Now if we don't want to talk or if we are hesitant to talk or if we want to just let it go through the regular channels of Bill Foster at Geneva. That's one thing. That's now my view. It hasn't been for four years and I think this is most important we could ever do.

Rusk: Mr. President, I tried to get Kosygin to accept McNamara in Moscow the following Wednesday after Glassboro. Well, they gave us that story—can't come then. Well then name a date. Pressed them very hard on this.

President: Now, it's been a year, during that time he's put off and put off during that year. During that time I've had to go up with my budget and I've had to put the ABM in the budget to stick it, to hold firm and not weaken with everybody wanting to shimmy a little bit. And then when he got up, a lot want to run away from it after it gets up there, as you've observed with Symington, and so forth, the fight that went on in the Senate. And now he's still holding back one Goddamn year and not doing anything and finally when the Senate vote gets out of the way and it looks like we are going ahead, and we hold out the hand of peace here but the hand of strength here so we're going to go on, we don't want to do this we'd like to save this 50 billion that the two of us are spending, but he's just got no sense at all. We'll go on. We are not going to let you destroy us. We're not going to let you be defended and us not defended. Then he comes up and says I'll see you in a month or month and a half. That's where we are. Then we say well we can't do it because we've got a Convention. That doesn't appeal to me. I'd go right back to him and say that you suggest a month or a month and a half and to me that is agreeable and a month or a month and a half is agreeable and we would suggest it on this level and if you're not satisfied, if you don't want to do it on that level, well then I'll arrange for the Foreign Ministers to meet.

Rusk: All right.

President: And then I'd let him say if he picks August 25th I wouldn't be worried. I don't think he will, but I'm sure that we can so arrange the agenda that we could get our man nominated and the American people would have all the Democratic Convention that they want. I think they will have. I think it will be the thing that is uppermost. We talked a lot with these folks. You have met with Gromyko a good many times. I have met with Gromyko and with Kosygin and it hasn't turned the world upside down. We know, just like Averell and Vance meeting with them over there, what I'm really worried about is they're more in command of our forces that I am. That's what really troubles me. These damned cables coming in like that. Because I read this record and I see these pictures and I see Javits get up and I see Morgan get up and I see all of them get up and I see the *New York Times* editorial and it just fits in to this whole damn facet. If I hadn't been watching it for four or five years I wouldn't be worried about it but it's not accidental. And I don't want to get hung on the rack. I just don't want to get caught on it.

Rusk: All right.

President: I want to make it so firm and loud I don't want my people to serve that up to me and then have Goldberg come along here and saying well as you know I felt this way.

Rusk: They can well concentrate on trying to get another private meeting, get an answer from Hanoi.

President: I think we'd better show them that it's just a few speeches and pressure are not going to do it. They are beginning to think we're jelly and we'll do it and I don't understand why he sent this wire after we told him how we felt about it.

Rusk: The trouble is that negotiators habitually—

President: It's not negotiations, hell—

Rusk: Get action to take the next step. That's one of the problems about American negotiators they're always in a little bit more of a hurry than the other side. I think they also—Averell is making some judgments about politics here at home.

President: A good deal and it looks like a good deal of it in Vietnam—the battle strategy too.

Rusk: Mr. President, on the longer range negotiations for this thing I'd just like to put it in the back of your mind. I think Clark and I would agree that the two chief people from our respective departments might be Brown. He's very knowledgeable in this field.

Clifford: Harold.

Rusk: Harold Brown and Butch Fisher he's with ACDA. I think we also feel there ought to be a principal negotiator on top of them. Maybe in the State Department. A man from the Defense Department would be the principal negotiator on disarmament I think it would be a mistake and the Pentagon would feel it even more strongly than I for ACDA to be the number one fellow on this particular subject. Now one possibility would be to bring Tommy Thompson out of Moscow for these talks in Geneva and let him be there for three or four weeks for the first round. And then they're bound to close off the talks for awhile and study each other's position in more detail. Tommy is not doing a great deal in Moscow these days and he would be in a position to follow up. So he would be one possibility. Another possibility would be that is after the Foreign Ministers review would get through with it, another possibility would be Chet Bowen [*Chip Bohlen*]. I think in terms of negotiations and this kind of thing. Tommy Thompson would be, in some respect, a more competent negotiator because he's very familiar with all of these matters having worked with the Pentagon for years in that Deputy job over in my shop. I just wanted to mention that to you, because other names may occur to you to head up the delegations but we would suggest a head of the delegation plus Brown and Fisher and their respective staffs.

Clifford: We have to bring the Joint Chiefs along on this one, as you would know, they'd be very important and our record must be absolutely clear. They feel the responsibility, of course, as we all do, protecting the security of this country. They, I was telling Dean Saturday afternoon they paw the air when Bill Foster's name is mentioned. They think Bill is very soft and very fuzzy-headed. Now, Dean said, very frankly, well,

anybody could be head of ACDA would be viewed in that light by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

President: Just one second. [The President left the room.]

Rusk: My guess is the Russians will bite at the Foreign Ministers level like a [inaudible].

Clifford: You mean the ACDA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff problem?

Rusk: No, I said if we go back to the Russians to say, Kosygin himself, if not the Foreign Minister, I think the Russians will bite at a Foreign Ministers meeting like a shot.

Clifford: [whispering]: I don't think Kosygin will see the President now with all his difficulties.

Rusk: Because I don't see much of a meeting between the two after November with the President-elect in the wings. I think it ought to be before November. I think so too, I think it should be before November. The problems the Russians have seem to be Peking with Kosygin and the President meeting and all.

Clifford: I think they're awfully sensitive about this too. And of course, they'll get a hell of a lot of blast right now. Apparently, the President wants to start, however. Does he? Does he want to start?

Rusk: Yeah.

Clifford: Then, what is this alternative? What would the Foreign Ministers meet about. Just meet together to plan an agenda for the two?

Rusk: Well, to deal with that, we would try to agree on some general principles. [The President re-entered the room.] And we would make a proposal that we're working on now. We'll have it up to the President shortly after April—August 7th we hope.

Clifford: Just to finish this other point, if the President were to designate Bill Foster to be the chief negotiator then I think that he would be waited upon by Wheeler and the rest of the Joint Chiefs and I think they say we can't go along with it and there's no use taking on that kind of fight at the beginning I think. I believe they'd feel better about Butch Fisher than they feel about Bill Foster. I think they feel that Butch is a little harder nosed than Bill is. At the same time if you were to suggest that Butch Fisher was to be the chief negotiator I think that they'd be over here within the hour saying let us tell you why this must not be. Wheeler felt so strongly about it he called and made an appointment with me. He came and talked to me about it. Told about all the experiences that they had had with ACDA and it's one of those situations in which men get locked into a state of mind after a certain number of years. Now whether there's justification for it or not, I think it's beside the question. If it's a state of mind, it's one that we don't have to take on.

[Here follow 6 pages of discussion on Congressional relations and defense-related issues.]

LYNDON B. JOHNSON LIBRARY
Recordings and Transcripts of Meetings Conducted in the Cabinet Room

Date of Meeting: **8/20/68**
Time of Meeting: **8:17-8:42P**
Tape: **SC.01** PNO: **3**

Date	8/20/68
Time	8:17-8:42P
Length of Recording	0:29:00
Participants	LBJ, ANATOLY DOBRYNIN, WALT ROSTOW
Transcribed (Y/N)	Y
Comments	DECLASSIFIED AND PUBLISHED IN FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, VOLUME XVII, ITEM 80; 0:48 SANITIZED ACCORDING TO DONOR'S DEED OF GIFT
Topics	CZECHOSLOVAKIA: USSR POSITION, USSR MESSAGE TO THE US, US POSITION; SALT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT PROCEDURES; GLASSBORO CONFERENCE; TEXAS; ANECDOTES

80. Summary of Meeting¹

Washington, August 20, 1968, 8:15–8:42 p.m.

Summary of Meeting in Cabinet Room, Tuesday, August 20, 1968 With the President, Soviet Ambassador Anatoli F. Dobrynin and Walt Rostow, 8:15 p.m. to 8:42 p.m.

The President started off the meeting by asking Ambassador Dobrynin how he had been and asked about Mr. Kosygin. He then told him that he had night before last seen a color movie at the ranch which was very good. The movie was one taken at Glassboro when the President met with Kosygin.

Mr. Dobrynin said that he would have liked to have seen it and the President told him that it was good of both Kosygin and of him. The President said it was particularly good when he was talking to the crowd which had assembled outside the house.

Mr. Dobrynin said it was probably the students.

The President said: "And you could have thought he was a . . ." Mr. Rostow spoke up and said "A campaigner."

The President said: "Well, you would have thought he could be a County Judge of New Jersey, or President of the United States or anybody." Mr. Dobrynin laughed at this statement by the President. The President said it was colorful because the children were in red, blue, and green—different colors. Mr. Dobrynin asked the President if he had ever seen a Youth Parade (he was not sure what the name was) and he said it was a pageant and very colorful and a huge gathering. He said it was an interesting thing to see.

The President told Walt Rostow that Dean Rusk was going to be on television at 9 o'clock and that he ought to watch it.

The President said he had just been down to have his hair cut because he did not have a barber at the ranch, to which Mr. Dobrynin said "Why not?" They both laughed. Mr. Dobrynin then asked the President if he would be at the ranch long. The President had told him he was leaving in the morning for the ranch. He said he would be there unless President Eisenhower died. He said he would have to be there the second day and possibly the third—it's a six day affair. He said on the fifth day, however, they would take him out to Kansas and the President said he did not know whether he would go out there or not. The President said that President Eisenhower had had another attack that day.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "He still has a strong heart because so many heart attacks, and he still survives. It's unbelievable."

The President told Mr. Dobrynin that he (the President) had had one heart attack and he almost did not make it. He said his blood pressure went to zero at once and they counted him out. He said they just thought he was gone.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "This is very dangerous . . . in the old country they used to give some stimulant or something. Otherwise they couldn't do anything. There was no surgery, anything specific. They couldn't do it—especially not at his age. And today, even in my own country, now we have very nice surgeons—but . . . until now there wasn't a single operation."

The President said this was going to open up all new, different and complex problems.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "This is the point."

The President then offered Mr. Dobrynin a Fresca and asked him if he had ever drunk this drink. Mr. Dobrynin said: "No, is it a strong one?"

The President told him that it contained no alcohol and had no calories and Mr. Dobrynin wanted to know how he did it. The President said he had to lose some weight and that he had lost about seven or eight pounds.

Mr. Dobrynin said:

"Now, Mr. President, I have an urgent instruction from my government to tell you about serious business. I will read it."

The President asked him to read a little louder—that he was a little hard of hearing but was so vain he would not wear a hearing aid.

Mr. Dobrynin went on to say:

"Kosygin asked me personally to visit you and to say the following on behalf of my government. I will read this; what I am instructed to say:

"The Government of the Soviet Union considers it necessary to inform, personally, President Johnson about the following. In connection with the further aggravation of the situation which was created by a conspiracy of the external and internal forces of aggression against the existing social order in Czechoslovakia and against the statehood established by the constitution of that government, the government of Czechoslovakia Socialist Republic approached the allied states, the Soviet Union among them, with a request of rendering direct assistance, including the assistance of military forces.

"The Soviet Government repeatedly stated that the events in Czechoslovakia and around it involve vital interests of the Soviet Union and of a number of other states tied by appropriate treaty obligations, and that the threat to the Socialist order in Czechoslovakia constitutes at the same time a threat to the foundations of European peace and world security. In

¹ Source: Johnson Library, Recordings and Transcripts, Transcripts of Cabinet Room Meetings. No classification marking. The text printed here contains revisions that were made after the editor listened to the recording of the conversation. The recording is *ibid.*, Recording of Meeting Between President Johnson, Ambassador Dobrynin, and Walt Rostow, August 20, 1968, 8:17–8:42 p.m. [Tape FC002, Side A].

view of this, the Soviet Government and the Governments of the allied countries have taken a joint decision to satisfy the request of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic rendering necessary assistance to the Czechoslovak people. Accordingly, the Soviet military units received orders to enter the territory of Czechoslovakia. Of course, they will be withdrawn without delay from the territory of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as soon as the present threat to the security is eliminated and they come to the conclusion that there is no need in further presence of the allied forces. We would like President Johnson to know that our steps, which are being taken upon the request of the Czechoslovak Government are dictated fully by the concern to strengthen peace and in no degree do they involve state interests of the United States or any other state. We proceed from the fact that the current events should not harm the Soviet-American relations to the development of which the Soviet Government as before attaches great importance.' This is what I was asked to tell you."

The President said:

"I would like to take it and read it and study it and I appreciate very much your bringing it to me and I will review it in the morning with Secretary Rusk and we will be back in touch with you."

Mr. Dobrynin thanked the President.

The President then asked if it were in English and Mr. Dobrynin said it was not, but that he could tell him afterwards if he would like it. The President said that frankly he had missed a word or two here and there. He asked Mr. Rostow how he would summarize it and Mr. Rostow said:

"As I understand it, the Soviet Government informs you, Mr. President, that they and other states have taken a collective decision at the request of the Government of Czechoslovakia to introduce military forces into Czechoslovakia because of a threat defined by the Czech Government; that those forces will remain until the threat to the Czech Government has passed, and be withdrawn. It is the hope of the Soviet Government that this will not interfere with US-Soviet relations and that there is no threat to the United States or to the interests of peace in Europe. In fact, it is stated that these moves should stabilize the peace in Europe."

The President replied:

"Our position with regard to the problem that exists in Czechoslovakia is as represented by Secretary Rusk and I trust that you understand that the position that he explained in detail to you is my view, and the views of this Government, and is the honest and absolutely correct attitude that we have taken. Although I have seen a good many other interpretations and predictions and evaluations, Secretary Rusk, at my instruction,

asked you to come in to see him and told you frankly and honestly, looking directly in your eyes, what our position was and you can rely on it.²

"I didn't hear the conversation between you and Secretary Rusk but I have such confidence in him that I know he related to you what I asked him to and I don't want there to be any doubt about our attitude."

Mr. Dobrynin said: "No. This message refers to you. I know what you told him to say and it is very clear."

The President asked Mr. Dobrynin what had been done about his announcement and he said they had had no word yet.³

The President went on to say:

"Well, I have all these problems about all these folks I have got to talk to beforehand. And I thought I would have them at breakfast at 8:00 o'clock and we'd stay from 8 to 10 at breakfast and I would do it so they wouldn't shout to high heaven that I gave them no information."

Mr. Rostow said that it had been our understanding that the joint announcement would be made at 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The President continued:

"There are four changes. I had to sit down with various people and assure them at 10:00—they would all be in the same room at 10:00 o'clock—but at 10:00, the Soviet Union will say this and we will say this. And I gathered from the announcement that I received that—I think your expression of it when I got off the airplane last night in Detroit—it said that it is acceptable, or there is no objection in Moscow if the American side desires it—if the American side desires it—and announce in the nearest time—I don't know what that means—in the nearest time about the coming visit. Now the language that they suggested, I understand that you and Secretary Rusk had a little adjustment, just a little leeway, about the same thing."

Mr. Dobrynin replied:

"Yes, but you see, Mr. President, sometimes when you make . . . in my impression, the text the Secretary gave me yesterday at midnight, there is no difference really. But the question is, when does the United States, or the President of the United States, Mr. Johnson, wish to continue . . ."

The President said "what we propose is to announce at 10:00 o'clock our time and whatever time it is there—6:00 o'clock their time. Look, while we're at it, I would like to touch a base or two, you see. And in order to touch a base, I have to get people to come in 35 miles to Washington. And I thought I'd do it at the breakfast table, and over breakfast I would say: This is what is going to be said when we finish the breakfast."

² Apparently a reference to the Rusk-Dobrynin meeting of July 22; see Document 70.

³ Reference is to a joint announcement of a visit by President Johnson to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Rostow pointed out that there were two issues that the Presidency would have to set. "The President's suggestion was, raised the question—would things move quicker if we accepted your language. But my guess is you have two issues that have to go to higher authority: One, the exact time of the announcement, and two, the exact language. So that any check-back, there had to be a check-back with Moscow on the time, Mr. President."

Mr. Dobrynin said: "So I will try, Mr. President, to get back tomorrow morning."

The President told him there was no rush, for him to go on and do the best he could.

The President then directed his remarks to Mr. Rostow and said they ought to get their drinks down—that he didn't mind, but he just did not want them to think they all were in there drunk. The President went on to say that Mr. Rayburn used to say that he would never take a drink before the House adjourned in the afternoon because if they had a big fight or something and they had a roll call and he had to get up in the chair, he said just as sure as he did, he would trip his toe and someone would say he is drunk again. They all laughed and the President asked Mr. Dobrynin if he knew Mr. Rayburn and he said, yes, for a long time.

The President said that Mr. Rayburn and his father were deskmates in the Legislature before the President was born.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "That would be in Texas? Now I see."

The President continued:

"The old Capitol that was built was the original Capitol that was destroyed when we were a Republic. You see we were a Republic, an Independent State, before we came in to the Union in 1845. We won our independence in 1856 from Mexico, and from 1836 until 1845, a nine year period, we were an independent Republic."

Mr. Dobrynin asked why it called Lone Star.

The President pointed out that that's the flag—that we had a lone star flag and that we were known as the Lone Star State.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "Did you know the song the Yellow Rose of Texas?"

The President said:

"Yes, that was during the Civil War. One of the better Commanders, the Hood Brigade. My grandfather was a member of it, and they went into battle with the flag flying and the boys singing the Yellow Rose of Texas. It's a good marching hymn. It gets you excited, and so on and so forth."

Mr. Dobrynin asked if we had an official state song or flower. The President replied that we have the bluebonnet as our state flower but he did not know what our state song was. Mr. Rostow laughingly said that if the President didn't know, he certainly didn't.

The President asked Mr. Dobrynin if it was his impression that this meeting be around the first of the month and he replied that was his understanding—the first of the month—the first three days—between the first and the tenth of October.

The President said he had a grandson or a granddaughter that was expected during that period.

Mr. Dobrynin said:

"Ah, you will bring her along . . . But you see, in your case, in America when somebody is born here, he automatically becomes an American citizen. In our case it is not so."

[Here follow comments by the President on his family.]

The President then switched to a more serious note and said there were many subjects that needed to be discussed and that he thought they were very free to do that now and that he thought their meeting in Glassboro was good. He said he enjoyed it very much. He thought it was good for our people and for their people also.

He went on to say:

"I thought the reception they gave Mr. Kosygin was really unusual. Ten years ago you wouldn't have thought that could happen." "I was here ten years ago" Dobrynin said, "so I know how the situation was."

Mr. Dobrynin went on to say:

"For him it was a caution he had no chance to see more than New York and New Jersey. He is very connected with the university. He would like to see for himself, because he is the head of the whole economy of the Soviet Union . . . All the responsibility of dealing with those buildings, dams, those huge dams, factories . . . He said—in New York I would like to see both bad and good sides."

The President said—"We have many misfortunes and lots have problems, but one of the fortunate things that's happened to both countries is that we have been blessed with good men like Thompson in Moscow who tells us what it is without prejudice or without any hatred or without any ambition or personal attempt to satisfy me or our Government. I want you to do the same thing with your people. It would be good for this country and for your country too, if we had men of quality like you and Thompson."

Mr. Dobrynin thanked the President very much.

The President went on to say: "Yes, one Ambassador sometimes can change the fate of the world. And a lot of times Tommy Thompson says to me—well, just a minute."

The President asked Mr. Dobrynin to let us know about the other thing because he wanted to have the breakfast date.

Mr. Dobrynin said: "Thank you very much, and good luck."