


When the Czechs spit in Russia's face

In a [telephone call](#) at 11:22pm on Aug. 20, 1968, U.S. Pres. Lyndon Baines Johnson told the Republican Party's candidate for president, Richard Nixon, that he had been informed by Soviet Amb. Anatoly Dobrynin at 8pm that night that the Soviets, Poles, East Germans and others were invading Czechoslovakia and that it wasn't a matter that affected U.S. national security. Johnson said he informed Dobrynin that the U.S. was not the cause of what the Czechs were doing. "We were not instigating it or inspiring it," according to Johnson, "and [Dobrynin] said, yes, he understood that." Nixon responded that he had spoken before that with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and that Rusk didn't really believe the Soviets could let the Czech behavior go by. "Yes, that's right," Johnson said. "We had been concerned about that. We didn't think that a big fella can sit there and let a little fella spit in his face and slap him. He might clean it off and walk away but he won't forget it... The press, I guess, kept showing the freedom, and they thought Dubček could control them and quiet them down, and they didn't do it, so I guess they just decided to act."

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