

CN 285

X/13 C/S -- BELGIAN GOVERNMENT CONDEMNS OCCUPATION

BRUSSELS, AUG. 21 (RFE SPECIAL/ DYBVIK) -- THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TODAY SHARPLY CONDEMNED THE SOVIET-LED OCCUPATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

A BRIEF STATEMENT READ BY RAYMOND SCHEYVEN, MINISTER OF COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, SAID :

"THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAS HEARD WITH CONSTERNATION THE ENTRANCE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA OF THE OCCUPATION TROOPS OF THE WARSAW PACT.

"ONLY YESTERDAY THE ATTENTION OF THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WAS DRAWN TO THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S GREAT PREOCCUPATION WITH THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN PRAGUE AND CERTAIN COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE.

"BELGIUM, WHICH HAS MADE PARTICULAR AND UNCEASING EFFORTS IN THE AREA OF DETENTE, CAN ONLY CONDEMN THE RETURN TO METHODS OF COERCION WHICH REVIVES THE COLD WAR AND CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED," THE STATEMENT CONCLUDED.

SCHEYVEN RECALLED THAT HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER PIERRE HARMEL HAVE MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO EASTERN EUROPE IN BELGIUM'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE BETTER EAST-WEST RELATIONS.

HE TERMED THE EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA "A SERIOUS STEP BACKWARD IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH WE HAVE TRIED TO CREATE."

(PRIME MINISTER GASTON EYSKENS WHO WAS VACATIONING ON THE BELGIAN COAST, CUT SHORT HIS HOLIDAY AND CALLED A SPECIAL CABINET SESSION FOR LATE THIS AFTERNOON TO DISCUSS THE CZECHOSLOVAK SITUATION.)

THE DUTCH CABINET MET THIS MORNING IN THE HAGUE IN SPECIAL SESSION TO REVIEW DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE, BUT THERE WAS NO RPT NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT.

JON/ O/RT

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