

CIV 353

X/13 CURT - CONGRESSMEN BACK PRESIDENT

(USEFUL)

PZ12 WASHINGTON, AUG. 21 (RFE SPECIAL/HILL) THE FIRST REACTION FROM LEADERS OF CONGRESS HAS BEEN TO BACK PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S EFFORTS TO BRING THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

AMBASSADOR GEORGE BALL, WHO ATTENDED A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL HERE LATE TUESDAY EVENING, WAS IN NEW YORK WEDNESDAY CONSULTING WITH THE AMBASSADORS OF OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL. BALL RECEIVED HIS INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT BEFORE LEAVING HERE LAST NIGHT.

REP. GERALD FORD, THE REPUBLICAN LEADER IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CALLED THE INVASION "A CLEAR VIOLATION OF CZECH SOVEREIGNTY." HE SAID:

"IT HAS AGAIN BEEN MADE CLEAR THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS AN IMPERIALISTIC POWER WHICH LOOKS UPON ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS AS ITS COLONIES. THE UNITED STATES SHOULD MOVE WITH EXTREME CAUTION IN THIS SITUATION, BUT CERTAINLY IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO DEMAND AN IMMEDIATE EXPLANATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION IN THE WORLD FORUM OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

SENATOR CLAIRBORNE PELL, WHO WAS IN PRAGUE LAST MONTH, SAID THE MATTER SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL. "I BELIEVE THIS WAS A TRAGIC AND STUPID STEP ON THE PART OF THE SOVIETS," PELL SAID, "FOR THEY ARE SIMPLY PUTTING THE COLD WAR WHICH WAS THAWING BACK IN THE DEEP FREEZE."

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD, WHO RETURNED SUNDAY FROM A TRIP TO MOSCOW AND PRAGUE, SAID THE INVASION HAD CAUGHT HIM BY SURPRISE. HE THOUGHT THERE WAS NOTHING THE U S COULD DO UNILATERALLY, AND EXPRESSED FEARS THAT AN ANTI-MISSILE RACE WOULD NOW BE MORE LIKELY.

THE ADMINISTRATION ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SURPRISE. WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY GEORGE CHRISTIAN SAID THE FIRST PRESIDENT JOHNSON HEARD OF THE INVASION WAS WHEN SOVIET AMBASSADOR ANATOLY DOBRYNIN CALLED ON HIM TUESDAY EVENING.

CHRISTIAN DECLINED TO DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENED AT THE JOHNSON--DOBRYNIN MEETING, WHICH HE SAID LASTED NEARLY AN HOUR. HE SAID THE AMBASSADOR GAVE THE PRESIDENT A "MESSAGE". STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ROBERT MCCLOSKEY, SAID IT WAS AN UNSIGNED "AIDE MEMOIRE."

BOTH SPOKESMEN WERE RELUCTANT TO GO BEYOND THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENT. CHRISTIAN WOULD NOT SAY WHETHER THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ANY HIGHER SOVIET OFFICIAL THAN DOBRYNIN.

HE SAID THE "HOT LINE" TELETYPE CIRCUIT BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW HAD NOT BEEN USED.

HE WOULD NOT COMMENT WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE U S HAD RECEIVED ANY COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRAGUE GOVERNMENT. THIS APPEARS UNLIKELY, BECAUSE MCCLOSKEY SAID THE ONLY MEETING HAD BEEN ONE AT THREE O'CLOCK WEDNESDAY MORNING WHEN AMBASSADOR KAREL DUDA WAS CALLED IN BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN LEDDY. - OFFICIALS SAID THE AMBASSADOR APPEARED "UNINFORMED", PRESUMABLY MEANING HE HAD HAD NO WORD FROM HIS GOVERNMENT.

(PTO)

15