

CN 356

X/13 CS - THE BORDER SCENE

KLEIN HAUGSDORF, AUG 22 (RFE SPECIAL, WILLIAMS TORMAY) - DUSK DESCENDS ON THE BORDER VILLAGE OF KLEIN HAUGSDORF AND THE AIR GROWS COLD. IT IS A RAINY SUMMER HERE IN LOWER AUSTRIA, AS IN MOST OF CENTRAL EUROPE.

THE SWALLOWS ARE OUT IN FORCE, SKIMMING DOWN THE STREET, AND JINKING BETWEEN THE LOW WHITEWASHED HOUSES IN PURSUIT OF THEIR EVENING MEAL OF INSECTS. BUT THE COLD AND THE LACK OF ANYTHING HAPPENING HAS THINNED THE RANKS OF THE CURIOUS.

A FEW LOCAL PEOPLE STILL STAND BEHIND THE RED AND WHITE STRIPED POLE GAZING ACROSS AT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND CHATTING WITH THE AUSTRIAN BORDER GUARDS, BUT THERE IS NOTHING TO SEE.

A CZECHOSLOVAK GUARD, SUB-MACHINE GUN SLUNG ACROSS HIS BACK, PACES UP AND DOWN SOME 40 METERS AWAY, OBVIOUSLY AS BORED AS HIS AUSTRIAN COLLEAGUES.

HALF A KILOMETER AWAY, AT THE TOP OF A RISE, THE BARBED WIRE FENCE BUILT TO STOP ESCAPERS CAN BE SEEN WITH ITS MENACING MACHINE GUN TOWER.

AT THE CZECHOSLOVAK BORDER POST, SOME 50 METERS AWAY, A GROUP OF UNIFORMED CZECHOSLOVAKS STAND AROUND A CAR INVOLVED IN SOME KIND OF NEGOTIATION. WE DISCOVER WHAT IT IS WHEN THE CAR DRIVES THROUGH TO THE AUSTRIAN SIDE. IN IT ARE TWO SWISS JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE TRIED IN VAIN TO ENTER CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

AUSTRIAN BORDER GUARDS SAID THE CZECHOSLOVAKS WERE NOT LETTING ANY JOURNALISTS IN, A STORY WE HAD ALREADY HEARD AT OTHER CROSSING POINTS.

OTHERWISE, THE AUSTRIANS, SAID, TRAFFIC ACROSS THE BORDER AT KLEIN HAUGSDORF WAS NORMAL.

THEY SAID 70 PEOPLE, INCLUDING CZECHOSLOVAKS, HAD CROSSED INTO AUSTRIA AT KLEIN HAUGSDORF ON THURSDAY, WHILE 100, INCLUDING SOME NON-CZECHOSLOVAKS, HAD CROSSED IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

THE AUSTRIAN BORDER OFFICIALS SAID THE REGULAR BUS SERVICES FROM AUSTRIA INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA THROUGH KLEIN HAUGSDORF-VIENNA, PRAGUE, BRATISLAVA - STOPPED RUNNING YESTERDAY.

A CZECHOSLOVAK WHO CROSSED INTO AUSTRIA THIS EVENING SAID HE HAD BEEN TRYING TO DRIVE FROM PRAGUE TO SWEDEN BUT HAD BEEN TURNED BACK AT THE CZECHOSLOVAK-EAST GERMAN BORDER. HE SAID HE WAS NOW TRYING TO REACH SWEDEN THROUGH AUSTRIA AND WEST GERMANY.

AS AT OTHER CROSSING POINTS, THERE WAS NO SIGN OF SOVIET OR OTHER WARSAW PACT TROOPS. AUSTRIAN BORDER OFFICIALS SAID TRAVELLERS COMING OUT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAD TOLD THEM THERE

WERE SOVIET TROOPS IN ZNOJMO, SOME 12 KILOMETERS INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA FROM THE BORDER AT KLEIN HAUGSDORF.

TWO AUSTRIANS, WHO ENTERED CZECHOSLOVAKIA YESTERDAY TO FETCH RELATIVES VISITING NEAR THE CZECHOSLOVAK-POLISH BORDER, RETURNED TODAY SAYING THAT THEY ENCOUNTERED FEW TANKS ON THE ROADS TODAY AS COMPARED TO YESTERDAY. THE TANKS WERE NOW IN POSITIONS OFF THE ROADS. THEY SAID.

AUSTRIAN POLICE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING TO REPORT FROM THE AUSTRO-CZECHOSLOVAK BORDER IN THIS AREA. THEY SAID THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF ESCAPES OR ATTEMPTED ESCAPES OR INCIDENTS OF ANY KIND.

THE ONLY MOVEMENT IS AT THE CROSSING POINT, WHERE EXITS AND ENTRANCES ARE PROCEEDING IN THE USUAL MANNER.

END FOS / HI / 2152/68 AUG 22.

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