

X/13 C/S - ISRAELI, CZECHOSLOVAK STUDENT VISITORS REACTIONS

TEL AVIV, AUGUST 24 (RFE SPECIAL/ZOLLER) ISRAELI INFORMATION MINISTER ISRAEL GALILI SAYS THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK DEVELOPMENTS ARE NOT CONFINED TO THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, BUT ARE AN EVENT OF BROAD INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WHICH MIGHT ALSO HAVE AN ECHO IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

MR. GALILI SAID IT WAS NO WONDER, THAT ISRAELIS WERE AROUSED AT THE NEWS. THEY HAD A PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE FATE OF ANY NATION STRUGGLING FOR ITS INDEPENDANCE, EXISTENCE AND FREEDOM, IN THE FACE OF VIOLENT INTERVENTION BY NEIGHBOURS MANY TIMES BIGGER THAN ITSELF AND IN THE FACE OF THE IMPOSITION OF A REGIME AND SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE.

SCORES OF STUDENTS GATHERED IN FRONT OF THE RUMANIAN EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV (THE ONLY REMAINING EASTERN REPRESENTATION) CARRYING SIGNS IN HEBREW, CZECH, RUMANIAN AND RUSSIAN.

THE RUMANIAN CULTURAL ATTACHE SPOKE TO THE STUDENTS AND SAID THAT HE WAS PROUD THAT HIS COUNTRY WAS SUPPORTING THE CZECH STRUGGLE. HE WAS ALSO PROUD HE SAID THAT ISRAEL WAS SUPPORTING RUMANIA'S STRUGGLE TO RETAIN HER INDEPENDANCE AND THAT ISRAEL'S YOUTHS WERE SHOWING SOLIDARITY WITH BOTH STRUGGLES.

TATIANA STEPANKOWA, A CZECH RADIO COMMENTATOR NOW IN ISRAEL, SAID:- "WHEN IT IS ALL OVER, I SHALL GO BACK TO MY COUNTRY, BUT ONLY IF I KNOW THAT I WILL NOT BE ARRESTED. WHEN I HEARD THE NEWS, I THOUGHT SOMEBODY WAS JOKING. I JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. THE MOST DIE-HARD PESSIMISTS AMONG US PREDICTED THAT THE WORST WOULD MEAN MORE RUSSIAN PRESSURE. BUT NOT THIS."

A SPONTANEOUS MEETING WITH CZECHOSLOVAK YOUTH NOW IN ISRAEL WAS HELD AT KFAR MASARYK, A KIBBUTZ FOUNDED BY IMMIGRANTS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA. SPEAKING TO THE YOUNGSTERS, MOST OF THEM DISMAYED AND IN TEARS, THE SECRETARY OF THE SETTLEMENT, AKIBA NIR, SAID "WHEN MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, WE FOUGHT FOR OUR LIBERTY AND FUTURE, WE RECEIVED MANY LETTERS FROM OUR FRIENDS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ASKING "WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP YOU IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES."

"NOW THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO ASK YOU, TO ASK THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE, WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP, AND TO PROMISE THAT EACH REQUEST WILL BE FULLFILLED."

"WE ARE SURE THAT AFTER THE DARK NIGHT, WHICH BEGINS NOW IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, A BRIGHT MORNING SUN WILL COME UP ONCE MORE IN THE FUTURE".

MOST OF THE YOUNG CZECHOSLOVAKS AT KFAR MASARYK, WHO CAME HERE FOR ONLY A FEW WEEKS, SAID, THAT THEY WOULD GO HOME, "BECAUSE THAT IS OUR HOMELAND AND WE HAVE TO DO OUR BEST THERE". THEY SAID THAT THEY WERE AFRAID FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

THE ISRAELI LABOUR PARTY EXPRESSED THE HORROR AND SHOCK OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND ALL OTHER FREE PEOPLES AT THE ARMED INVASION BY THE USSR AND ITS SATELLITES OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THE STATEMENT COMPARED THE ACT TO THE NAZI INVASION OF 1938.

THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE MAKI C.P. REGISTERED ITS ANGER AT THE INVASION. MAKI IS ALSO HELD AN OPEN AIR PROTEST RALLY IN TEL AVIV.

THE RAKACH (NEW COMMUNIST PARTY) BUREAU HAS NOT PUBLISHED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT BUT A PARTY SPOKESMAN SAID "THIS DOES NOT INDICATE ANY CONFUSION. OUR STAND IS CLEAR."

"THE WARSAW PACT ARMIES MOVED AGAINST COUNTER-REVOLUTION AT THE REQUEST OF THE CZECH LEADERS...IT WAS CERTAINLY NO IMPERIALIST INVASION, OR CONQUEST." BMCG/LA 0820/68/mzw C2