

X/13 C/S - FRENCH DOWN TOOLS (RELEADS CN 52)

PARIS, AUGUST 26 (RFE SPECIAL/EDWARDS) - - - HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS THROUGHOUT FRANCE DOWNED TOOLS AND STAGED A FIVE-MINUTE STRIKE TODAY IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THE DEMONSTRATION HAD BEEN CALLED BY THE MAJOR NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS OF FRANCE.

THE COMMUNIST-LED LABOR ORGANIZATION HAD DECLINED TO JOIN THE STRIKE CALL, SAYING IN A STATEMENT THAT THE INITIATIVE WAS "INOPPORTUNE". THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY ITSELF PUBLISHED THE UNION STATEMENT WITHOUT COMMENT.

HOWEVER, THE PARTYS OWN LATEST STATEMENT, PRINTED THIS MORNING, CALLED FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE INVADING FORCES FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA, IN ORDER TO "AVOID THE WORST". THE CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF THE OCCUPYING FORCES WAS ALSO CONTAINED IN A STATEMENT FROM THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED "FRENCH PEACE MOVEMENT".

THE PARTYS STATEMENT WAS WELCOMED IN A COMMUNIQUE FROM THE NON-COMMUNIST LEFTWING ORGANIZATION, THE CONVENTION OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS, WHOSE PRESIDENT IS FRANCOIS MITTERAND, HEAD OF THE WHOLE NON-COMMUNIST LEFT IN FRANCE. IN A COMMUNIQUE, THE CONVENTION SAID THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE, BY THEIR UNANIMOUS, NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE HAD FOILED THE PLANS OF THE INVADERS AND GIVEN AN EXAMPLE TO SOCIALISTS AND DEMOCRATS AND EVERYWHERE.

MEANWHILE, THE NUMBER OF PROTESTS AND PETITIONS CONTINUES TO MOUNT IN FRANCE.

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