

C/S - SVOBODA DEMANDED DUBCEK'S RELEASE

NOTE TO EDITORS (CZECHOSLOVAK PARTICULARLY):
THE FOLLOWING STORY IS NOT RPT NOT FOR USE BY THE CZECHOSLOVAK BD.
IT IS RELEASED FOR BROADCAST BY THE FOUR OTHER BDS.

MUNICH, AUG 29 (CNR) -- WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS HAVE FILED REPORTS FROM PRAGUE TELLING HOW PRESIDENT LUDWIK SVOBODA RESOLUTELY DEMANDED THE RELEASE OF ALEXANDER DUBCEK AND OTHER CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS BEFORE HE WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH SOVIET LEADERS IN MOSCOW.

A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN PRAGUE FOR THE SWISS NEWSPAPER TRIBUNE DE LAUSANNE SAID IN TODAY'S ISSUE THAT PRESIDENT SVOBODA "SAVED THE LIVES" OF DUBCEK AND THE OTHERS BY DECLARING "I SHALL NOT NEGOTIATE WITHOUT THEM."

SIMILAR ACCOUNTS OF SVOBODA'S FIRM STAND WERE REPORTED BY REUTERS AND BY THE CORRESPONDENTS OF THE LONDON DAILY MAIL, DAILY EXPRESS AND DAILY TELEGRAPH.

ACCORDING TO THESE ACCOUNTS, DUBCEK, PREMIER CERNIK AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SMRKOVSKI, ALONG WITH PRESIDUM MEMBERS FRANTISEK KRIEGLER AND BEHUMIL SIMON-- WERE FIRST TAKEN TO A PLACE OF DETENTION IN THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS.

THE REUTER CORRESPONDENT IN PRAGUE SAID DUBCEK WAS "MANACLED" AND "BUNDLED OUT OF HIS PARTY HEADQUARTERS" LAST WEDNESDAY AND FLOWN TO THE SECRET DESTINATION IN SLOVAKIA ABOARD A MILITARY AIRCRAFT.

THE REUTERS CORRESPONDENT, TOLD HOW SOVIET SOLDIERS BURST INTO THE ROOM WHERE DUBCEK WAS TRYING TO MAKE A TELEPHONE CALL TO FIND OUT THE EXTENT OF THE INVASION.

THEY TORE THE TELEPHONE FROM THE CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY LEADER'S HANDS, RIPPED THE WIRE FROM THE WALL AND LOCKED HIM AND HIS CLOSEST FELLOW WORKERS IN A ROOM IN THE BUILDING BEFORE TAKING HIM TO THE AIRPORT. THE REUTER CORRESPONDENT SAID ON THE PLANE, DUBCEK SAT ON THE METAL DECK.

ALL REPORTS OF PRESIDENT SVOBODA'S ENCOUNTER WITH SOVIET LEADERS IN MOSCOW ARE SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME. IN TODAY'S LONDON DAILY MAIL, THEIR PRAGUE CORRESPONDENT SAID:-

"PRESIDENT SVOBODA, WHO FLEW TO MOSCOW ON FRIDAY, FACED AN ULTIMATUM FROM THE RUSSIANS: IF HE DID NOT AGREE TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY, SLOVAKIA WOULD BE CONVERTED INTO A SOVIET REPUBLIC AND THE CZECH LANDS OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA WOULD BECOME AUTONOMOUS REGIONS UNDER SOVIET CONTROL -- A SIMILAR PLAN TO HITLER'S 30 YEARS AGO.

"PRESIDENT SVOBODA REPLIED WITH AN ULTIMATUM OF HIS OWN: UNLESS DUBCEK AND THE OTHER LEADERS WERE RELEASED HE WOULD DISCUSS NOTHING," THE MAIL CORRESPONDENT ADDED.

THE SOVIET LEADERS ACCEDED TO SVOBODA'S DEMAND, AND DUBCEK AND THE OTHER CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS WERE FLOWN TO MOSCOW.

THE TRIBUNE DE LAUSANNE ACCOUNT SAID THE SOVIETS WERE ABOUT TO EXECUTE DUBCEK AND THE OTHERS.

WHEN DUBCEK, CERNIK AND SMRKOVSKY ARRIVED IN MOSCOW, THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO TAKE A DIRECT ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.

ACCORDING TO AN ACCOUNT BY THE PRAGUE CORRESPONDENT FOR THE SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG THE SOVIETS SPOKE WITH THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS "SOMETIMES SEPARATELY, SOMETIMES IN A LARGER MEETINGS."

THE SUEDEDEUTSCHE REPORT SAID THAT THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS WERE NEVER INFORMED THAT ULBRICHT, GOMULKA, ZHIVKOV AND KADAR WERE PRESENT IN MOSCOW. THE DELEGATES HAD THE FEELING, VON CONTA SAID, "THAT THEY WERE THREATENED WITH PHYSICAL LIQUIDATION."

ACCORDING TO THE SUEDEDEUTSCHE CORRESPONDENT ADDED: "WHEN DUBCEK RETURNED TO PRAGUE, A PISTOL LAY WAITING FOR HIM -- HE SHOULD TAKE HIS OWN LIFE. BUT NO RPT NOT ONE DARED TO GIVE HIM THE PISTOL."