

CN 157

C/S -1ST ADD SVOBODA VERSUS THE KREMLIN (CN 156) XXX BRATISLAVA

UPI QUOTED DIPLOMATS AS SAYING THAT THE SOVIETS CONDUCTED THEIR TALKS WITH SVOBODA WITH THE "UTMOST BRUTALITY" .

HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KEPT FOR NEARLY FIVE DAYS IN ISOLATION IN MOSCOW EXCEPT FOR FREQUENT THREATENING MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, UPI'S INFORMANTS SAID.

THE UPI REPORT SAID THAT THE SOVIET LEADERS PROPOSED THAT SVOBODA SHOULD TAKE OVER THE PREMIERSHIP OF A NEW "WORKER-PEASANT" GOVERNMENT, BUT HE REFUSED IMMEDIAELY. THE RUSSIANS THEN PROPOSED THAT FORMER CZECHOSLOVAK PREMIER LENART SHOULD BE APPOINTED FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PARTY. UPI'S SOURCE SAYS THAT LENART REFUSED THIS SEPARATELY AND PRESIDENT SVOBODA ALSO REJECTED THE IDEA.

REUTERS SAID THAT AT THIS STAGE OF THE TALKS SVOBODA REPLIED TO THE SOVIET ULTIMATUM WITH ONE OF HIS OWN. HE SAID THAT UNLESS DUBCEK AND THE OTHER LEADERS ARRESTED BY THE RUSSIANS WERE RELEASED HE WOULD DISCUSS NOTHING.

BOTH UPI AND REUTER AGREE IN THEIR ACCOUNTS THAT WHEN THE RUSSIANS FOUND THEY COULD NOT ALTER HIS STAND THEY AGREED T BRING THE ARRESTED LEADERS TO MOSCOW.

SUMMING UP THE PRESIDENT'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, REUTERS PRAGUE CORRESPONDENT QUOTES HIS SOURCES S SAYING: "THE PRESIDENT NEVER LOST HIS IRON NERVE."

BG/BMCG/HI

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