

CN 140

CS - STUDENTS FORCED AWAY FROM STATUE

PRAGUE, SEPT 3 (UPI/REUTER)- PRAGUE STUDENTS WERE DRIVEN WAY FROM THE WENCESLAS MONUMENT TODAY.

THE STUDENTS, WHO HAD STOOD AT THE MONUMENT FOR MORE THAN A WEEK HOLDING ALOFT THE CZECHOSLOVAK BANNER AND A BLACK FLAG OF NATIONAL MOURNING, WERE ORDERED TO LEAVE THE STATUE SO A TEAM OF GARDENERS COULD LAY DOWN A HUGE BED OF FLOWERS.

A POLICE OFFICER OVERSEEING THE OPERATION SAID THE SOVIET OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES HAD COMPLAINED OF BEING "EMBARRASSED" BY THE STUDENTS PRESENCE AND HAD THREATENED TO CLEAR THE AREA WITH TANKS AND ARMORED CARS OF CZECH AUTHORITIES DID NOT DO IT THEMSELVES.

HE SAID THE STUDENTS HAD LEFT QUIETLY WHEN TOLD TO GO.

AS THE GARDENERS WORKED, AN ARMORED CAR FILLED WITH SOVIET SOLDIERS PULLED UP TO OBSERVE THE PROGRESS OF THE FLOWER PLANTING, THEN DROVE AWAY.

STILL HANGING FROM THE MONUMENT WAS A LONG RED, WHITE AND BLUE CZECHOSLOVAK BANNER. A SMALL SIGN IN THE MIDDLE OF IT CONTAINED THE NATIONAL MOTTO, "TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL."

BELOW, POTTED GREEN PLANTS RINGED THE MONUMENT BASE AND A FOOT OF RICH LOAM WAS LAID ON THE COBBLESTONES ALL AROUND THE BASE. IN THE LOAM THE WORKERS PLANTED HUNDREDS OF FLAMING RED CELLULOSIAS IN FULL BLOOM.

THE MONUMENT HAD BEEN A RALLYING POINT FOR THE STUDENTS ALMOST FROM THE FIRST MOMENT THE TROOPS ARRIVED ON AUG. 22. THE YOUNG PEOPLE CLIMBED ATOP THE MAIN STATUE, WHICH DEPICTS SAINT WENCESLAS MOUNTED ON A HORSE, AND JEERED THE TANKS AS THEY ROARED PAST.

(MORED JON/L 1925/68 HB

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