

Czechoslovak Secret Police (StB) Memorandum, “Information Regarding the Situation in the CSSR up to 20 August 1989”

20 August 1989

Information regarding the security situation in the C598oSSR up to 20 August 1989

In recent days (Friday and Saturday) the so-called protest marches, organized by the so-called Independent Peace Association, have continued in the pedestrian zones in Prague. Approximately 100 individuals attended these activities. Saturday’s marches were video-recorded by accredited employees of the British and Austrian television company “V.”

Internally, “Charter-77” has been somewhat divided over questions of policy and tactics in preparation for a confrontational rally. The older “charter-77” signatories are determined to stop any activities on 21 August while the more radically oriented youth groups are contemplating an open clash with state authority, even at the cost of provocation. They have declared they are even willing to allow themselves to be shot for their cause. Within the internal enemy groups, a strong moderate center exists which has been pushing for a peaceful demonstration in the form of a procession around the pedestrian zone.

There are confirmed efforts by employees of Western media organizations to incite [Charter 77 activists and other to give] a confrontational character to the anti-socialist rally of 21 August. To this end, they have been spending time with and emphatically [trying to] convince individual prominent “Charter-77” activists. The editors of the BBC are particularly active in doing this.

Further, information has been confirmed regarding preparations for the anti-socialist rally on 21 August, organized by activists of the so-called Independent Initiatives in certain cities in the western Bohemian, southern Bohemian, southern Moravian, northern Moravian, central Slovakian, and eastern Slovakian regions. From the perspective of the internal enemy, this has the effect of enlisting additional supporters for demonstrations in Prague and in other cities. Their common goal, among other things, is to aggravate as much as possible [attempts by] security to intervene—for instance, by organizing a scattered march through Prague. The effort of the enemy will be to draw the attention of security services away from Prague to other regions or, as the case may be, district cities.

Appreciable activity in support of the so-called Czechoslovak Independent Initiatives is being generated by Polish and Hungarian opposition groups, which are encouraging large-scale participation at the anti-socialist rally, particularly in Prague. Their intentions have been confirmed by the arrival of Polish opposition groups in Prague on 15 August, which ensures that the activated Polish groups can remain through 21 August. The delegation even visited J. HAJEK 13 who familiarized them with the “Charter-77” provision requiring signatories to distance themselves from open confrontational acts and reminded them that if they chose to remain until 21 August, they were under no circumstances to portray themselves as guests invited by “Charter-77.”

The Hungarian contingent has similarly organized the arrival of their members in Prague to participate in the anti-socialist rallies of the FIDESZ (Young Democrats' League) organization, whose activists are preparing a demonstration on August 21 in front of the Czechoslovak embassy in Budapest, where they intend to hold the protest. On 19 August, Hungarian radio broadcast an interview with a FIDESZ representative who indicated that a large number of members of the organization would be leaving for the CSSR to support activities through 21 August.

In an effort to prevent the arrival of individuals with such intentions from Poland and Hungary, the necessary precautions have been put in place at the state borders. Thus far, 15 suspicious individuals have been turned back at the rail station on the Hungarian border, of whom 14 were Hungarians and one was French. At the Polish border crossings there has thus far been a total of 13 Solidarity activists and [other] suspicious Polish citizens turned back.

In order to expose the aims of the Hungarian opposition groups to organize specific unfriendly acts on Czechoslovak territory, cooperation has been established with Consul TABA at the Hungarian embassy.

In connection with 21 August, the Polish Solidarity movement is making preparations at certain Polish-Czechoslovak border crossings, for instance, at Vysny Komarnik (district of Svidnik), Palota (district of Humenny), for a so-called quiet, passive sit-in demonstration using banners and signs with slogans. Participants are to sign a written declaration calling for mutual cooperation with the Independent Initiatives, the denouncement of international aid from Warsaw Pact troops, and a declaration of support for the anti-socialist forces in the CSSR. On 21 August at 4:00 p.m., on the town square of the Polish border town of Cieszyna, a protest demonstration has been planned, at which time a declaration from the Polish [Sejm] is to be read denouncing the entry of Polish troops into Czechoslovakia (according to Polish border guard intelligence organs, security will be intensified in the above stated areas to prevent Polish citizens from crossing illegally into Czechoslovakia).

According to routinely gathered intelligence, one may assume, as a consequence of the anti-Czechoslovak campaign in the West and the anti-government demonstrations announced in Prague, that there will be an influx of tourists from the West. Within only the past few days there has been an enormous volume of visas granted to Italian citizens (totaling more than 440), at a time when there was no reason to deny their applications.

According to intelligence gathered, members of the Italian Radical Party plan to arrive soon in Prague with the typical aim, as has been the case in the past, to elicit anti-socialist provocation through the use of banners and leaflets. This intention was even confirmed by the president of this party, STANCERI, at their rally.

In the effort to thwart these aims, the appropriate measures have been taken at border crossings as well as general security measures for the territory of Czechoslovakia. Each case of provocation by Italian or other foreigners [who have been] granted visas will be documented and will incur the appropriate legal measures.

Currently there are noteworthy efforts by certain individuals to obtain weapons and bomb-making materials. Nine cases with a total of 250 CZ parabellum 9 mm semi-automatic pistols were distributed through PZO Merkuria to Britain V. Upon carrying out an inspection of the contents of the shipment it was discovered that a total of 30 pistols had been stolen prior to distribution to Britain V. On 12 August, there was a break-in at

the —SPA [Czechoslovak People's Army] ammunition depot in the community of Cakov (district of Ceske Budejovice), from which a significant amount of plastic explosives, charges, detonators, and other bomb-making materials was taken. The perpetrators were discovered to be basic service recruits L[...] Michal (born 1969) and N[...] Milan (born 1968), both from Military Unit 4445 of Ceske Budejovice[,] and a civilian named K[...] Radek (born 1971) from Ceske Budejovice. The motive behind the act is under investigation.

Within the last two days on state territory there have been more than 150 leaflets discovered, which have made a particular call for participation in the protest rally on 21 August and the denouncement of the international assistance provided in 1968; the majority were discovered in the cities of Prague (33), Brno (26), Cesky Krumlov (20) and Gottwaldov (19). This involves only those cases discovered by NSC [National Security Committee] organs and informers; the actual number is likely much higher. During the same period, 15 opprobrious signs were discovered at public locations and promptly removed. In Brno, an unknown perpetrator made a telephone call threatening the destruction of the MC CPCz building (Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia).

Today, during the hours between 9:15 a.m. and 11:00 p.m., Mass was held at St. Vitus Cathedral. It was officiated by cleric KORINEK and was not misused for anti-socialist provocation. The departure of members of the congregation was recorded by the staffs of ARD [television] (German Federal Republic) and ABC [television] (United States of America), with the above mentioned staffs conducting no interviews with our citizens. Attendance at the first Mass celebration fluctuated around 1,300 individuals and the second around 2,000 individuals.

[Source: A. Lorenc et al., T8/91 vol. XIX., envelope 1, #79-84 (also vol. XXI, #2242-2247). Published in Czech in Organizace a Rizeni, Represe v CSSR: Operaeni Staby Generala Lorence 1988-1989, Edice Dokumentu Vol. 4/II (Úrad Dokumentace a Vysetrovani Zlocinu Komunismu 1998). Translated for CWIHP by Vance Whitby.]