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YUGOSLAVS CRITICAL OF MOSCOW-IMPOSED SETTLEMENT - AND CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Summary: Yugoslav Communists and non-Communists are united in their resolute opposition to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and its four East European satellites. They consider the August 27 agreement between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders a "compromise" which cannot last for long. As far as the Soviet Bloc criticism of the Yugoslav attitude toward Czechoslovakia's occupation is concerned, the Yugoslavs say they do not intend to change their views because what has happened in Czechoslovakia amounts to aggression against a sovereign state and peaceful socialist nation.

In contrast to the satisfied reaction of all of the five Warsaw Pact countries to the August 27 agreement between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslav Communists are skeptical as to the effectiveness of the "compromise." Today's Borba said that the Moscow agreement could not have a lasting character.¹ It was "reached under very unfavorable conditions and circumstances for Czechoslovak representatives whose country, without provocation, is forcibly occupied," the Yugoslav daily said.²

1 Tanjug, in English, 27 August 1968.

2 The world renowned Yugoslav expert on international law, Professor Milan Bartos stated the day before the Moscow agreement was signed: "For jurists it is of the utmost importance whether such an agreement represents the free will of both parties; whether the final effect of the agreement would not negate the right of Czechoslovakia to be sovereign and equal; and whether it has preserved its national integrity. According to the UN Charter all nations possess these essential rights which no country can give up." (Politika, Belgrade, 27 August 1968).

Yugoslav newspapers are full of comments on the illegal and "shameless" occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Russians and their four East European satellites. The papers sharply reply to the criticism published in the Soviet Union, Hungary, East Germany, Poland and Bulgaria of Yugoslavia's defense of Czechoslovakia. Writing under the title "Without Mask," the Borba commentator Predrag Vukovic said that "the invasion of foreign troops of another country can be called nothing but aggression and occupation; by all means it is not any brotherly help or brotherly kiss."3 Said Vukovic:

The [Czechoslovak] spitting on the participants in the raid can neither be turned into a jubilant welcome nor can bodies crushed to powder while trying to stop with their bare chests the steel treads of the tanks be turned into an evidence of friendship.

Vukovic further said that every criticism of Yugoslavia and her attitude spread by Pravda, Izvestia or TASS is received by the Yugoslavs as yet another piece of evidence that the "adventure" and "the policy of impermissible interference in other countries' affairs would be continued." Nobody has the right to smear socialism," Vukovic exclaimed. And if it is being claimed in the five Warsaw Pact countries that the soldiers who were sent to occupy Czechoslovakia have continued the "act of liberation" started by their fathers 23 years ago, then one must resolutely reject any such type of "offending one's own people." The Warsaw Pact soldiers invaded Czechoslovakia not to liberate people but rather "to secure power for defeated bureaucratic counter-revolutionaries." Said Vukovic: "It is two different things to bring liberation and to suffocate liberty!"

Two well-known Yugoslav scholars and artists have also resolutely condemned the aggression against Czechoslovakia. Professor Viktor Novak said:

The aggressive occupation of Czechoslovakia has shocked 20 million Yugoslavs, both Communists and non-Communists. The monstrous trampling down of a peaceful socialist country has been

Aleksandar Petrovic, film director, said:

Not to be today on the side of the Czechs and Slovaks would mean helping slavery and misfortune. To be with the Czechoslovak people, means to defend one's own integrity. A big game is now being played. At stake are freedom and tyranny. I am convinced that humanity will follow the road of freedom.⁵

Sead Saracevic commented in the August 28 edition of Vejnsnik u srijedu that the guns of the five Warsaw Pact countries have been directed against the liberalization rather than any counter-revolution or against "any West German Blitzkrieg planned against Czechoslovakia and the GDR." Consequently, "if the guns have been directed against the internal development in Czechoslovakia, then one may assume that the target of these guns might become internal processes in other socialist countries."⁶

It does not matter, Saracevic said, whether Poles or Hungarians believe in the accusations made by Izvestia, because in these countries too "there has been uncomfortable excitement coupled with suspicion and lack of confidence toward the role played by their soldiers" in Czechoslovakia. These people are informed about the Czechoslovak events "by a uniform agitprop machinery whose reports are being spread by a uniform press and radio," the latter even being jammed in order to prevent people from hearing what has been happening in the world.

Slobodan Stankovic

5 Ibid.

6 Vjesnik u srijedu, Zagreb, 28 August 1968.