

August 22, 1968
Report on the Polish Second Army, August 22, 1968
at 7:00 AM

Citation:

"Report on the Polish Second Army, August 22, 1968 at 7:00 AM", August 22, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Institute of National Remembrance or Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, IPN BU 02958/ 8. Translated for CWIHP from the original Polish by Jaroslaw Garlinski. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110639>

Summary:

Report states that Polish Second Army divisions are in good spirits and believe their mission to intervene in Czechoslovakia is a just cause. Report states that despite the good will of Polish soldiers, they face hostility from the Czech army and citizens alike. Report then states what actions should be undertaken.

Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

Translation - English

REPORT Second Polish Army 22.08.1968 7 o'clock Morale amongst the troops on exercise is very good. The men are convinced that they have entered Czechoslovakia in a good cause. An example of this was provided by the troops stationed in Jaromer (from 24th Tank Regiment) who firmly opposed efforts to get them to disobey orders. These efforts were made by the assistant regimental commander for political affairs of a Czechoslovak People's Army chemical regiment. □The Czechoslovak people usually greet our willingness to come to the assistance of an endangered fraternal nation and our troops' friendliness with indifference and even hostility, waving their fists, spitting in the direction of our troops and so on. There is no sign of healthy forces even amongst the provincial party authorities in Hradec Králové. [previous sentence is underlined by hand] The chairman of the local provincial council, together with three members of the Provincial Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party arrived on 21.08.1968 at HQ of 11th Armored Division about 11 am and stated simply that, while he would be calling upon the population to stay calm and be prudent for fear of spilling blood, he also strongly disapproved of our forces' incursion into Czechoslovakia. When Lieutenant Colonel Gorzala insisted that the local radio station desist from broadcasting rumors about our forces, as had taken place on 21.08, [first part of the sentence is underlined by hand] when it had been announced that our forces had shot two people, the chairman stated that it had been an error and that they had meant Russians and not Poles. Two tank companies from the 10th Armored Division were stopped in the town of Šumperk by a group of about 200 people. The group included women, as well as man of all ages. The crowd made comments such as 'We did not invite you here', 'Warsaw is over there' (pointing in the appropriate direction), 'We do not need you', 'Poles go hol' [sic] [presumably 'Poles go home'. Translator's Note.] and so on. A man walked up to the troops and stated 'I have been a communist for 25 years, I believed in the Soviet Union, but now I no longer believe in it.' [the previous two sentences are underlined by hand. Translator's Note.] There have also been incidents in which troops have been offered fruit, but hostility has been shown towards the officers. In the border area on 21.08 a group of about one hundred Czechoslovak young people (girls and boys) approached the border zone in the town of Slone carrying a banner with the sign 'We support Dubcek and Svoboda' while behaving provocatively. □The Adjutant of Szklarska Poreba Battalion of the Frontier Defense Force, Major Fornal [added by hand], present at a National Security Corps post in the town of Harrachov, testified that the attitude of the staff there towards our soldiers was hostile and that they deplored the current situation. One of the staff at the Czechoslovak post told Major Fornal that the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany would assume their defense. □The commander of a Frontier Defense Force watchtower in the town of Przesieka, Second Lieutenant Torek, reported that yesterday morning the manager of the Wojnska Buda Czechoslovak hostel, a Major in the reserves, arrived at the watchtower and in the name of higher authority (whom he did not name) lodged a protest against the 'occupation of his country'. It has also been established that Czechoslovak railway workers at the Zawidów station refused to handle a train coming from Poland. In the Liberec area in the town of Harrachov meetings have been organized at workplaces to criticize the incursion of our and allied forces onto Czechoslovak territory. Commanders of our units are encountering supply problems (especially with water) and are considering digging field wells for their own use. Planned actions: □1. Conveying to the soldiers thanks for their positive demeanor on behalf of the commander of Silesian Military District. □2. Distributing amongst company commanders a leaflet explaining the problem of the threat to socialism in Czechoslovakia as well as the problem of the security of our borders. This is a specially prepared document carrying political news. □3. A visit is planned for the operations group of the Silesian Military District's Political Department to units operating in Czechoslovakia with a view to carrying out specific party-political work. □4. Military HQs to be brought to full operational efficiency. Information from a conversation with General Sawczuk at 7 o'clock □In the town of Hradec Králové the provincial authorities refused to co-operate with the Polish commander. The chairman of the Hradec Králové provincial council stated that while he would be calling upon the population to stay calm to avoid bloodshed, he was completely opposed to our incursion and refused to co-operate in any way. In town the water was also turned off at the airfield where our and a Soviet garrison are stationed. In the town of Šumperk the county authorities refused to co-operate and took no action when the townspeople organized passive resistance by setting up so-called 'living walls' in front of our columns. In the town of Trutnov the

county authorities also refused to work with our commander. This information is incomplete. The matter is to be clarified by General Sawczuk who is leaving by helicopter for the CSSR on 22.08 at 8 o'clock. The radio station at Podziebrady turned out to be 5 km north-west from Mielnik. A deployed combat team found and neutralized it. A battalion of engineers of the Czechoslovak People's Army is stationed not far from the radio station and was at the time completely drunk and thus in no fit state to intervene. During broadcasting hours 6 people were found to be on-site. This radio station is a permanent facility located in a two-story building with a tall radio mast. The drunk soldiers from the previously-referenced Czechoslovak People's Army battalion stated that the Americans would be coming to help them in a few days and that they would then deal with us. In making for Hradec Králové General Sawczuk and Lieutenant Colonel Sokól are making it their main priority to establish contact and co-operation with the local authorities, as well as to start up the radio station there for the needs of our leadership to be able to influence the local population. Information from a conversation with General Czapla on 22.08 at 7 o'clock Regarding relations with garrison and unit commanders of the Czechoslovak People's Army, General Czapla stated that the latter are on the whole following directives from the Minister of Defense, General Drzur, not to mount opposition. There are, however, instances of military units trying to resist, for example: yesterday in the Trutnov garrison attempts were made to call out the units stationed there. The attempt failed; in the town of Hradec Králové in the afternoon several dozen officers of the Czechoslovak People's Army reached our units and units of the Soviet Army with printed leaflets calling for our forces to withdraw. This should be seen as an isolated initiative on the part of these officers. At this time Second Polish Army HQ has no further examples. However, it is believed that the Czechoslovak Ministry of Defense is making efforts to keep its forces under control. Received by Lieutenant Colonel Kwiatek

Translated thanks to a generous contribution from John A. Adams and the John A. Adams Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis at the Virginia Military Institute.