

November 20, 1989

Cable from US Embassy in Prague on Czech Demonstrations

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Summary:

Cable from the US embassy in Prague reporting on the establishment of a new organization for Czech independents, the "Civic Forum," and the publication of a list of demands.

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BRUSSELS FOR USEC - AMBASSADOR NILES
DEPARTMENT PASS TO ERIKA SCHLAGER CSCE COMMISSION
USIA FOR EU (OLASON, PENDERGRAST, JORIA); INFO DD
(KNOPP), C(PISTOR)

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PHUM, CZ
SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK INDEPENDENTS ESTABLISH NEW
ORGANIZATION AND LIST AGENDA OF DEMANDS.

1(U)INDEPENDENT ELEMENTS OVER THE WEEKEND ESTABLISHED
AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE "CIVIC FORUM." THE FORUM
HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 20 IN THE APARTMENT
OF VACLAV HAVEL (AND IN HAVEL'S PRESENCE). IT REPORTEDLY
ANNOUNCED A FOUR-POINT AGENDA, DEMANDING:

- REEVALUATION OF 1968;
- RESIGNATION OF ALL 1968 ERA FIGURES IN THE REGIME;

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-- A COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES OF POLICE
BRUTALITY (NOT APPARENTLY LIMITED TO SUPPRESSION OF THE
NOVEMBER 17 DEMONSTRATIONS);

-- FREEING OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS.

2. (U) THE FORUM CALLED FOR A GENERAL STRIKE FOR NOVEMBER 27, BUT TOOK NO POSITION ON HOLDING THREATENED DEMONSTRATIONS TODAY (NOVEMBER 20).

3. (LOU) ACCORDING TO OUR CONTACT, HAVEL SAID THAT THE FORUM HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED BY THIRTEEN SIGNATORIES, "BUT POLITICIANS ALL OVER TOWN ARE SHOVING MEMBERSHIP CARDS UP THEIR SLEEVES TO BE READY WHEN THE SITUATION CHANGES." AS AN EXAMPLE, HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT SOCIALIST PARTY HEAD JAN SKODA, THOUGH NOT A SIGNATORY, HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE FOUNDING AND GIVEN THE GROUP HIS VERBAL APPROVAL. IN THE SAME CATEGORY WAS BOHUMIL SVOBODA OF THE REFORM GROUP WITHIN THE PEOPLE'S PARTY. HAVEL ALSO REPORTEDLY INDICATED THAT THE GROUP WAS PREPARED TO WORK WITH ANYONE, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE REGIME, EXCEPT THOSE INVOLVED IN THE POST-1968 "NORMALIZATION."
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