

November 20, 1989

Cable from US Embassy in Prague on Czech Demonstrations

Citation:

"Cable from US Embassy in Prague on Czech Demonstrations", November 20, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, FOIA request release.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116242>

Summary:

Cable from the US embassy in Prague reporting on their protest regarding attacks on American journalists during the November 17-19 demonstrations in Prague.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

E37
R

<<<<>>>>
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PRAGUE 08087 01 OF 02 201133Z
ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 HA-09 L-03 AMAD-01 PA-02 OCS-06
CA-02 /023 W

-----264127 201135Z DEPARTMENT OF STATE LIA/IPS/CR/IE Date: 12/23/97
O 201220Z NOV 89 () RELEASE () DECLASSIFY
() EXCISE () DECLASSIFY EO Citations _____
() DENY IN PART

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1758
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7727 FOIA Exemptions _____ TS authority to
INFO EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS IMMEDIATE PA Exemptions _____ () CLASSIFY as () S or () C Sec. _____
() DOWNGRADE TS to () S or () C

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 08087

USIA FOR EU (PENDERGRAST AND JORIA)
STATE FOR EUR/EEY, PA AND HA
DEPARTMENT PASS TO ERICA SCHLAGER - CSCE COMMISSION

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: CASC, PHUM, PREL, CZ
SUBJECT: EMBASSY PROTEST OF ATTACK ON AMERICAN
JOURNALISTS DURING NOVEMBER 17-19 DEMONSTRATIONS IN
PRAGUE

REF: PRAGUE 8082

1. AS INDICATED IN REFTEL, AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH
A DEMARCHE BY THE AMBASSADOR CONCERNING THE BRUTAL
RESPONSE BY CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE TO DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH
OCCURRED IN PRAGUE ON NOVEMBER 17, AND THEREAFTER,
EMBASSY IS SUBMITTING A NOTE OF PROTEST CONCERNING
SEVEN AMERICAN CITIZEN JOURNALISTS WHO WERE ATTACKED
BY SECURITY OFFICIALS DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS.
THE TEXT OF THE NOTE FOLLOWS BELOW IN PARA 3.

2. THE MINISTRY HAS TWICE INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT
IT CANNOT ENSURE THE SECURITY OF FOREIGNERS, NEITHER
DIPLOMATS, JOURNALISTS NOR CASUAL OBSERVERS WHO
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 PRAGUE 08087 01 OF 02 201133Z

ARE "PRESENT WITHIN THE RANGE OF UNPERMITTED
DEMONSTRATIONS". AN ORAL WARNING WAS PRESENTED TO

US AT THE MINISTRY PRIOR TO AUGUST 21 DEMONSTRATIONS THIS YEAR. A DIPLOMATIC NOTE, SIMILARLY DISCLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY, WAS SENT IN REPLY TO OUR PROTEST OF THE DETENTION OF A CNN CAMERA CREW DURING DEMONSTRATIONS ON OCTOBER 28. (A COPY OF THAT NOTE IS BEING POUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT, ATTN: EUR/EEY.) IN RAISING THE NOVEMBER 17 AND SUBSEQUENT INCIDENTS, THE EMBASSY WILL STRONGLY POINT OUT THAT THESE HAVE NOT BEEN ACCIDENTAL, BUT IN ALL CASES HAVE INVOLVED CLEAR IDENTIFICATION OF THE JOURNALISTS BEFORE THE DETENTION OR ATTACK. THEREFORE, THE GOC CANNOT DISCLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DELIBERATE ACTIONS OF ITS POLICE SECURITY PERSONNEL.

3. THE TEXT OF NOTE FOLLOWS:

THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PRESENTS ITS COMPLIMENTS TO THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC AND HAS THE HONOR TO PROTEST THE TREATMENT OF THE FOLLOWING AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO, WHILE PERFORMING THEIR NORMAL DUTIES AS ACCREDITED JOURNALISTS ON THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF NOVEMBER 17 IN AND AROUND WENCESLAS SQUARE, WERE BEATEN BY OFFICIALS OF THE SECURITY ORGANS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

MS. PAULA BUTTURINI OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN BY UNIFORMED POLICE, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A PLAINCLOTHES OFFICIAL. SHE REQUIRED EMERGENCY MEDICAL ATTENTION AT THE FRANCISCU CLINIC FOR HEAD WOUNDS, AND RECEIVED 16 STITCHES. WITH HER WAS MR. TYLER MARSHALL, OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, WHO WAS ALSO BEATEN AND UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PRAGUE 08087 01 OF 02 201133Z

TREATED AT THE FRANCISCU CLINIC.

MR. PAUL CONOVER OF CABLE NEWS NETWORK WAS ACCOSTED BY THREE PLAINCLOTHES OFFICIALS. HE WAS SHOVED AND STRUCK REPEATEDLY WITH NIGHTSTICKS. THE OFFICIALS DEMANDED THAT HE SURRENDER HIS VIDEO TAPE, WHICH HE DID. THEY THEN SEIZED HIS CAMERA WHICH WAS CARRIED OFF BY UNIFORMED PERSONNEL. THE EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THE IMMEDIATE RETURN OF THE SONA BETA CAMCORDER, VALUED AT THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (DOLS 30,000), TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CABLE NEWS NETWORK. IN ADDITION MR. CONOVER'S SOVIET PRESS CREDENTIALS WERE DESTROYED.

MR. JOHN KAUFMAN, OF THE BOSTON GLOBE, WAS SIMILARLY

ACCOSTED, BOTH BEATEN AND MACED BY SECURITY OFFICIALS.

MR. ANDREW ALEXANDER AND MR. MICHAEL SCHWARZ
OF COX NEWSPAPERS WERE ALSO ATTACKED. MR. SCHWARZ'
PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT WAS SMASHED.

MR. TIM ORTMAN OF THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY
(NBC) WAS BEATEN WITH NIGHTSTICKS AND SUFFERED A
CONCUSSION AND LEG INJURIES AND WAS TAKEN TO WEST
GERMANY FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. HIS CAMERA EQUIPMENT
WAS DESTROYED.

THE ABOVE INCIDENTS ALL INVOLVED AMERICAN CITIZENS.
THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF NUMEROUS OTHER INCIDENTS
INVOLVING ACCREDITED JOURNALISTS OF BOTH CZECHOSLOVAK
AND FOREIGN NATIONALITIES WHO WERE BRUTALLY TREATED
DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES. WITH REFERENCE
TO THE MINISTRY'S NOTE NO. 317.572/89 CONCERNING THE

UNCLASSIFIED

NNNN

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PRAGUE 08087 02 OF 02 201133Z
ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 HA-09 L-03 AMAD-01 PA-02 OCS-06
CA-02 /023 W

-----264115 201208Z /10 38

O 201220Z NOV 89
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1759
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7728
INFO EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 PRAGUE 08087

USIA FOR EU (PENDERGRAST AND JORIA)
STATE FOR EUR/EEY, PA AND HA
DEPARTMENT PASS TO ERICA SCHLAGER - CSCE COMMISSION

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PHUM, PREL, CZ
SUBJECT: EMBASSY PROTEST OF ATTACK ON AMERICAN

MINISTRY'S INABILITY TO ENSURE THE SECURITY OF
JOURNALISTS WITHIN THE RANGE OF UNPERMITTED
DEMONSTRATIONS, THE EMBASSY MUST EMPHASIZE THAT ALL
ATTACKS WERE MADE BY CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE OFFICIALS. IN
ALL CASES THE JOURNALISTS IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES CLEARLY
AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY BEATEN. IN PARTICULAR CAMERAMEN
AND THEIR EQUIPMENT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR
ATTACK.

IN KEEPING WITH THE AGREEMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE
ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, AS WELL AS
INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED STANDARDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS,
THE EMBASSY WISHES TO CONVEY ITS STRONGEST PROTEST
AGAINST SUCH DELIBERATE INTERFERENCE WITH THE
LEGITIMATE CONDUCT OF INFORMATION MEDIA ACTIVITIES
AND PHYSICAL ABUSE OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN NORMAL PRESS
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 PRAGUE 08087 02 OF 02 201133Z

BUSINESS.

THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THE MINISTRY'S
EARLIEST REPLY. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE, END TEXT.
BLACK

88779