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FORM N SERVICE DESPATCH		863.411/3-2652 XR 749.00

FROM : Embassy, Vienna #1549
 TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. March 26, 1952
 REF : 751973

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SUBJECT PERIPHERAL: Activities of Czech and Slovak Refugee Political Groups in Austria.

The results of a brief survey made last year on the activities of Czechoslovak refugees in Austria differ somewhat from one carried out this year. In the more recent study a noticeable decline in political activities was evident. More than likely, this is due to emigration of some of the more active leaders and to the marked deterioration in the living conditions of the refugee in Austria during the past year which, in turn, has forced the existing organizations to occupy themselves almost entirely with welfare problems.

At present the only two active groups are the Czechoslovak and the Slovak Committees. Functioning as an integral, but rather independent section of the latter, is the Slovak Liberation Committee (SOV). Of the two the SOV seems to be the more active politically.

CZECHOSLOVAK COMMITTEE

The (Czechoslovak Committee) which includes some Slovaks also, claims some six hundred active members in Austria. Meetings of the Central Committee are held every Thursday in Salzburg. Politically the group stands for a free Czechoslovakia modeled after the ideals of Masaryk. Due to the shortage of funds no publications are possible. The representatives with whom we spoke informed us that the Committee's main purpose is to furnish food and clothing to the most needy members. At the present time the only financial aid is coming from the American Fund for Czech refugees, Inc., which has promised to furnish \$200 per month for the operation of a kitchen. The Committee expects to feed about sixty of the most needy refugees with the money.

Difficulties are encountered from time to time in bringing welfare shipments into Austria. For instance, during our interview, (SUREK) the president of the Central Committee, complained that a shipment of clothing, food, and books (650 kilograms) which had been forwarded from England had been refused admittance to the country unless a customs fee was paid. The Committee had refused to pay and, at the time of the interview, the boxes were still at the railway station accumulating storage charges.

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The following rather detailed narrative is thought to constitute an eloquent portrayal of the instability with which the group has been afflicted during the past year. (2)

The organization has recently been in a state of flux because of suspicions which a large number of the members hold toward certain of the leaders. A resume of the quarrels follows.

Administratively the Committee is divided into the following six districts:

- Kraj Viden (District Vienna) with headquarters in Vienna.
- Kraj Oberosterreich (District Upper Austria) with headquarters in Linz.
- Kraj Salzburg (District Salzburg) with headquarters in Salzburg.
- Kraj Anglicka Zona (District British Zone) with headquarters in Graz.
- Kraj Innsbruck (District Innsbruck) with headquarters in Innsbruck.
- Kraj Voralberg (District Voralberg) with headquarters in Voralberg.

Each district maintains an office for the purpose of registering CSR refugees entering its territory. The district is controlled by a committee whose members are elected on the basis of one member for every twenty-five refugees registered in the district. Each district is further authorized to send delegates to the Central Committee on the basis of one delegate for every fifty CSR refugees registered.

An election of officers to the Central Committee was held in February 1951 in Innsbruck, at which time the following people were chosen: (Dr. Stefan FABRY) Chairman; (Vaclav CYMBAL,) deputy chairman; (Frantisek VEJROSTA) secretary; (Oldrich PELTAN,) treasurer; and (Father (fnu) BURIAN,) social secretary. This group was to remain in office until the next scheduled election on November 4, 1951.

At the time of this election a large number of refugees wanted to transfer the Central Committee from Innsbruck to Salzburg, because the latter city housed the IRO Headquarters and charitable organizations sponsored by the west. The largest number of CSR refugees in Austria was located in Salzburg, and new arrivals eventually ended up there. (This has now been changed; they are sent to Wels because of the lack of housing in Salzburg.)

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District elections were also held in February 1951 in Salzburg. Those elected to the District Committee were: (Father Josef PITRUN) Chairman; (Josef MIKSIK) secretary; (Frantisek ZACHAR); (Rudolf BRINEK); (Alois VASICKA) (Resettlement Advisor); (Jaroslava POUL); (Zdenek KRAJCA); and (Josef JELIC). ③

In June 1951 a group of refugees, following a plan instigated by Josef MIKSIK then Salzburg District Committee Secretary, succeeded in removing Father Josef PITRUN. The remaining committee members thereupon resigned and were replaced by (Zdenek JAKUBICEK) (Chairman); (Josef MIKSIK) secretary; (Josef ANTALOVSKY); (Jan CLICH); (Miroslav FARKOS); (Josef POUL); (Frantisek SEMRAD); and (Frantisek BALAZ).

Although (Vaclav CYMBAL) deputy chairman of the Central Committee and chairman in the absence of Dr. FABRY, approved the new committee in Salzburg, the majority of the CSR refugees in Salzburg refused to recognize it and demanded that an election be held not later than September 2.

At this time CYMBAL and MIKSIK, realizing that matters were getting out of hand, scheduled an election for the period October 5 to 7 and submitted their list of candidates. MIKSIK was again listed as secretary. When the contemplated election and the list of candidates were announced, a group of two hundred CSR refugees headed by (VAVROUCH) (SIMACEK), (PREMIL), (DITTRICH), and (HASON) denounced CYMBAL and MIKSIK and threatened to form an opposition committee and remove MIKSIK from the Salzburg District Committee.

On October 6, 1951, Vaclav CYMBAL arrived in Salzburg and approached the leaders of the contemplated opposition committee stating that he had been misinformed by MIKSIK and that he (CYMBAL) was willing to negotiate an agreement. On October 7, Frantisek PREMIL and Frantisek SIMACEK, delegated to represent the opposition, met with CYMBAL. As a result of this meeting CYMBAL agreed to call off the election scheduled by MIKSIK, immediately release MIKSIK, and to transfer the Central Committee to Salzburg. CYMBAL further agreed to a general election, which was to be held on October 13.

On this date a general meeting took place to select fifteen delegates, who in turn were to elect the new Salzburg District Committee. On October 15 the delegates convened and elected the following refugees: VAVROUCH, Chairman; (FREUNDENFELD), deputy chairman; (SUREK), second deputy chairman; (ANTL) treasurer; (DITTRICH) secretary; (HASON), social secretary; (PREMIL), refugee consultive board; (ZACHAR); (LETRICHOVA), and (ZODER). In addition, the following delegates were appointed to represent Salzburg at the coming election for the Central Committee: VAVROUCH, DITTRICH, ANTL, SUREK, and Frantisek PREMIL.

On November 4 a meeting of the delegates from the six districts took place. The agenda included a report by Vaclav CYMBAL on the past activities of the Central Committee, a discussion and vote as to

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whether the headquarters of the Central Committee should remain in Innsbruck or be transferred to Salzburg, and a vote for members of the Central Committee. After CYMBAL finished his report, he requested a vote of confidence but was turned down by a large majority, whereupon he quit the meeting and left for Innsbruck. The transfer of Central Committee Headquarters to Salzburg was agreed upon by a majority vote. Those members elected to office were: VAVROUCH, chairman; ANTL, deputy chairman and treasurer; DITTRICH, secretary; SUREK; and ZACHAR.

On November 16 (General Frantisek DASTICH) Frankfurt representative of the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia, arrived in Salzburg and agreed that the elections had been held in a legal manner. He promised financial support for the new Central Committee according to the provisions set forth by the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia. DASTICH advanced the secretary five hundred Schillings to cover expenses and then departed for Innsbruck, where he was to liquidate the former Central Committee and instruct CYMBAL to transfer the records to Salzburg.

Members of the Salzburg group a short time later accused DASTICH of having spent two days drinking with CYMBAL in Innsbruck, of having stated that CYMBAL had been correct in his actions and that the Central Committee in Salzburg had acted in an illegal manner. It was not long before a decrease in the number of food parcels and funds from the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia was noticed. Consequently the members jumped to the conclusion that CYMBAL was confiscating the gifts and distributing them to his supporters.

It is now alleged by many refugees that the Council for a Free Czechoslovakia in Washington was receiving considerable opposition to its policies in Austria, and in an effort to lessen or eliminate this opposition, attempted to place individuals in key positions on the Central Committee and the six District Committees in Austria who would support and enforce its policies. General Frantisek DASTICH, Vaclav CYMBAL and Josef MIKSIK were supposedly such people.

Refugees further allege that CYMBAL and his accomplices embezzled ten thousand Schillings during a six-month period. The embezzlements imputed to CYMBAL were made public in a pamphlet published by (Frantisek VECROSTA) then secretary of the Central Committee in Innsbruck. CYMBAL and MIKSIK were said to have embezzled eight hundred dollars in U.S. currency which had been donated by organizations in Washington, D.C. for the construction of barracks for new refugees from Czechoslovakia. In addition to the above, the refugees accuse CYMBAL, MIKSIK, and other members of their group of having embezzled an estimated ten thousand Schillings monthly. A few intimate, but without proof, that General DASTICH was also involved and that the amounts embezzled greatly exceed these estimates.

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On December 9, 1951, another meeting of the Salzburg District Committee was held and the following members were elected to the Executive Committee: (PRIML) President; (LESKOVSKY) vice-president; (OTYPKA) cashier; (HYPSKY) secretary, and (HASON) social secretary.

On December 30 delegates from the six districts convened and chose as officers of the Central Committee: (SUREK) president; (KODER) (JOUZA) (SVETINSKY) and (ZACHAR) General DASTICH, who was present at this meeting, received a cool reception from the assembled delegates and was questioned at length concerning his connections with CYMBAL.

(CYMBAL, PELTAN, and (NEUBAUER) had in the meantime been arrested by the Austrian police and were imprisoned in Innsbruck as a result of charges of embezzlement placed by the following: (Dr. VAVROUCH,) (SUREK, (TICHACEK) and (SVETINSKY.)

General DASTICH is alleged to have visited Innsbruck in order to attempt to effect CYMBAL's release.

We feel that a great deal of this dissension stems mainly from the extremely poor living conditions facing the refugees. The noticeable lowering of morale between our two surveys and the present political apathy is undoubtedly connected with the food problem.

THE SLOVAK COMMITTEE

The Slovak Committee, although divided within by a difference of views, has not been faced with the administrative problems which beset the Czechoslovak Committee. (Father Karel SUMICHRAST) the leader of the group said there are about six hundred members in Austria at the present time. Of this number, about one hundred and eighty are in Salzburg. He pointed out that the Committee attempts to keep the activities of the group apolitical, but the majority of the members were inclined to side with the views of SIDOR. (Sidor stands for an independent Slovakia controlled by the Catholic Church. Durcansky is also for an independent State with close cooperation with the Vatican, but with no political powers in the hands of the church. (SUMICHRAST's) opinion is that the latter prefers to operate undercover and by means of deceit.) The priest was rather reluctant to discuss the Durcansky outfit at all, apparently because he was well aware of the latter's alleged fascist tendencies.

Sumichrast stressed the ever-increasing demoralizing conditions under which the new refugees are forced to live and the ever-dwindling resources available to the Committee. Funds are received from the National Catholic Welfare Committee and the Association of Slovak Catholics in America. When a particularly needy case turns up, it is referred to one of these groups with an urgent appeal for additional aid. There are monthly deliveries of clothes and food. TB patients are given rations at regular intervals. Funds so received amount to about six thousand schillings per month.

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Sumichrast said that the new Slovak refugees express themselves strongly for an independent Slovak state, because, according to him, the more sincere communists today in the CSR are Czechs. Prior to 1950 he said the refugees had been indifferent when asked about an independent Slovakia.

The Committee's representative in Linz is (Father FABERA.)

THE SLOVAK LIBERATION COMMITTEE (SOV)

The representative of the SOV in Austria is (Anton MALY,) formerly manager of an electrical power plant in Bratislava. He arrived in Austria in April 1945 and since that time has lived in Aurolsmunster near Ried. According to him, out of the six hundred Slovak refugees in Austria at the present time four hundred and eighty are members of the Slovak Liberation Committee (SOV), headed by Dr. Ferdinand DURCAN-SKY with headquarters in Argentina. The organization claims six thousand members in the various western countries, two thousand of which are in Germany. The greatest portion of those in Austria are located either in Salzburg or Linz.

The following members are in charge of the various areas:
(Linz: (LUKAC); Salzburg: (WALKO); Kufstein: (LONGUAR); Innsbruck: (BARTEK);
Ried: (WAKOWINSKI); Graz: (POLVORA).)

Maly's interpretation of the political platform of the SOV is as follows: "An independent Slovakia within the framework of a European federation. The establishment of a good neighbor policy with the CSR, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and other European countries. A democratic constitution guaranteeing full rights to minority groups. Political and religious freedom. The re-establishment of an agrarian economic system in which only those industries are supported which can compete in the international market. We are opposed to the present concentration on industrialization to the neglect of agricultural activities."

A copy of the SOV's monthly publication (Obzor) is attached. It is mimeographed in Innsbruck and includes news items obtained from a Slovak resistance group with which the SOV allegedly maintains liaison. Its circulation runs between six hundred and one thousand copies per month. The chief newspaper of the SOV is the (Slovenska Republika) published in Buenos Aires by a former president of a cultural organization in Slovakia, (Dr. St. MEZAK.) In Munich the group also issues a pamphlet (Informations Dienst Des Slowakischen Befreiungskomites.) It is mainly circulated among the VOLKSDEUTSCHE groups from Slovakia and Hungary, whom the SOV is attempting to attract into its camp.

SOV activities are extremely limited in Austria, and according to MALY are supported by a monthly fee of five schillings which is charged every member. For this the member receives Obzor without charge. In this manner the group collects about thirteen hundred schillings per month.

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According to MALY, the SOV maintains close liaison with the (ABN)
(Anti-Bolshevist Block of Nations) in Munich

Here in Austria the local groups meet monthly in the various cities mentioned above. The district leaders convene every three months.

MALY was questioned on the (White Legion) an undercover organization which operated a small radio station which formerly broadcast clandestinely to Slovakia from the Ried area of Austria (American Zone). The programs presented the views of Durcansky and attempted to arouse in the listeners the desire for an independent Slovakia. Some support for the station probably came from certain government agencies and perhaps from the Vatican. The station was manned by (Josef VICEN), (Johann STOWASSER), (Vojtech KARAS), (Karol MURGAS), and (Milan MACKO). MALY said he knew very little about the station, and had nothing to do with it, since he thought it was no longer functioning. The station ceased activities about a year ago as the result of a USFA investigation. At about the same time refugees brought word that several White Legion members had been arrested in Slovakia and that the organization's activities there had been effectively stopped. MALY did admit that a small radio station now operates for Durcansky under the name of "The Voice of the Slovak Republic", but he declined to reveal any additional information without the prior approval of Durcansky. He added that pertinent information on its activities is known to the American authorities in Frankfurt.

Since it had been reported that Durcansky had made attempts to get more support from the Vatican, we asked Malý who was in charge of the organization in Rome. He said that the SOV's representative there is a certain (Dr. ZELENKA) who is presently employed as a librarian in the Vatican library.

MALY stated that KRAJCOVIC, the leader of the National Committee for the Liberation of Slovakia in Washington, was attempting to bring the SOV into his organization, but he could offer no details on the progress of the negotiations.

A rather interesting letter was sent last year by MALY to (Major General ALABANCA) in Munich in which the former stated that the SOV could supply the ABN (Anti-Bolshevist Block of Nations) with two regiments of Slovak soldiers. One regiment could be formed at any time in Europe; the remainder of the men were to be found in the United States, Canada, and Argentina. MALY further informed the General that their units were ready to fight against the communists for the re-establishment of the Slovak Republic, but only on European soil. He then offered certain suggestions for the establishment of an ABN army. The letter has been reproduced in its entirety as an enclosure to this despatch.

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In order to give a clearer picture of the SOV's platform we have enclosed a copy of a letter which Durcansky sent to Dr. Adenauer last year. Although it does not touch directly on the activities of the Austrian branch, we have decided to include it for the extra light it sheds on the organization's activities. In the letter Durcansky places the guilt for the expulsion of the German elements from Slovakia on the Czechs and demands that those responsible for the atrocities committed against the Germans and the Slovaks and who after February 1948 fled to the West be brought before a court and punished. He then says the SOV feels that as soon as the communists are defeated, all people who were expelled should have the privilege of returning to Slovakia as citizens with full rights.

In the proclamation attached to the letter, Durcansky accuses the Czechs of employing immoral and undemocratic methods in maintaining their hold over the Slovaks and of selling themselves out to the Russians. He then states that the Slovaks will fight the attempts of certain political groups and international institutions who, although proclaiming democratic principles, are supporting the establishment of another Czechoslovakia after the defeat of the present regime.

It is believed that MALY did not give a complete picture of the SOV's activities in Austria during the interview out of fear that the American authorities would disapprove of its concentration on its struggle for an independent Slovakia. The Embassy, however, will continue its efforts to follow the SOV's local undercover activities.

In conclusion, one can say that the Czech and Slovak refugees in Austria are faced with the problem of devoting most of their time to welfare activities, and that until the living conditions are improved, little attention will be paid to political operations. Perhaps this situation will be corrected in the near future in the event that MSA funds are used for refugee maintenance.

Action Requested: Department please pass copies to peripheral posts.

Walter Dowling
Walter Dowling
Acting High Commissioner

- Enclosures: 1. Letter from Maly to Alabanda
2. Letter from Durcansky to Adenauer
3. Copy of Obzor (with original copy only)

Copy to Amembassy, Prague

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