

November 18, 1989, Saturday, BC cycle

SECTION: International

LENGTH: 565 words

HEADLINE: Czech student allegedly beaten to death by troops

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia

KEYWORD: Czechoslovakia

BODY:

About 2,000 people undaunted by a bloody crackdown on demonstrators confronted riot police on Wenceslas Square Saturday, and a leading human rights activist said one student had been beaten to death by troops in Friday night's march.

Czech actors, students and musicians called for boycotts of performances and for a brief general strike to protest the police crackdown and urge the government to enact democratic reforms.

As tension in Prague mounted, Czech leaders indicated they would re-evaluate the 'Prague Spring' period of reform quashed by the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion. The announcement indicated hard-line leaders might be edging closer to the reform movement sweeping East Europe.

Nonetheless, scores of helmeted riot police entered Wenceslas Square for a second day Saturday and blocked rallygoers from trying to proceed down Narodni Street, where police Friday night forced pro-democracy protesters to run a gauntlet while they were beaten. Witnesses said at least three people were also chased and beaten by troops Saturday and then taken away in paddy wagons.

Leading human rights activist Petr Uhl said Saturday that Martin Smid, 20, a student at Charles University, was beaten to death during the Friday night march by red-bereted paratroopers of the Czech military.

Uhl said he spoke with Smid's girlfriend, who told him the paratroopers singled out Smid for unknown reasons and pushed the couple against a wall.

'Two or three (paratroopers) took him around into a dark side street and beat him with batons, then kicked him while he was on the ground,' Uhl said.

The girlfriend, who was also beaten for trying to intervene, said one of the paratroopers looked at Smid's unconscious body and said, 'It's finished for him,' Uhl said.

He said Smid's parents later got a visit from two Czech policemen who told them only that their son had died 'during unauthorized demonstrations.'

Official sources did not immediately confirm the death.

The Saturday crowd chanted "'Freedom, Freedom'" and other slogans, and then, before dispersing, called for another demonstration Monday afternoon. Other police without helmets but carrying the familiar long white truncheons began checking identity cards of passersby.

Earlier, many of the several hundred who gathered at the main square laid candles and flowers at the foot of the statue of St. Wenceslas, which carries the inscription, "'Don't let us die, nor future generations.'"

Peter Placak of the opposition group Children of Bohemia addressed the crowd, describing the "'horrifying'" events of the previous evening when police attacked demonstrators who had been chanting pro-freedom slogans.

He called for a minute of silence for those wounded Friday night when army troops in armored vehicles and police using tear gas and clubs broke up the biggest protest in 20 years.

Demonstrators, estimated at between 20,000 and 50,000, had been given permission to march if they avoided Wenceslas Square -- a favorite site of past anti-government protests. Violence erupted when some marchers disobeyed the order and headed for the square.

The official Czech news agency CTK Saturday reported 17 people were injured, including seven policemen during the Friday night rally. The report said 143 people were briefly detained, of whom 70 were expected to be held for 48 hours and at least nine formally charged.

LEVEL 1 - 44 OF 49 STORIES

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November 18, 1989, Saturday, AM cycle

LENGTH: 304 words

HEADLINE: STUDENT BEATEN TO DEATH IN PRAGUE PROTEST, DISSIDENT SAYS

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia

KEYWORD:  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA-STUDENT

BODY:

A 20-year-old student was beaten to death during Friday night's anti-government demonstration in Prague, leading human rights activist Petr Uhl said Saturday.

He said a paratrooper pulled Martin Smid from the crowd marching through central Prague near the National Theater and a group of security force officers began hitting him with clubs.

"When he fell to the ground they hit him in the face until he was no longer recognizable," Uhl said, citing a friend of Smid who was with him at the time. "Two policemen announced it to his parents and said it was an accident," Uhl said.

Police and paratroopers using clubs and tear gas smashed the Friday night demonstration by some 50,000 people, leaving blood spattered on the cobbled streets of the city.

Dissidents said more than 100 people were dragged away and at least 16 injured, some of them seriously.

The demonstration marked the suppression of protests against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia 50 years ago.

It was the biggest protest since widespread street disturbances in Prague in 1969 in the months that followed the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion that crushed the reformist drive of Alexander Dubcek.

Student Jan Opletal was shot dead at the start of the 1939 demonstrations and became a national martyr. Another student, Jan Palach, won a similar place in the Czechoslovak consciousness after he burned himself alive to protest against the invasion.

Already on Saturday night, young people began laying flowers and paying homage to Smid at the spot where he was said to have been killed.

The state news agency CTK reported that 17 people were injured in Friday's demonstration, adding that seven policemen were hurt.

Human rights sources said at least 13 people were hospitalized.

CTK said that 143 people were detained in the protest.

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The Reuter Library Report

November 18, 1989, Saturday, BC cycle

LENGTH: 770 words

HEADLINE: CZECHOSLOVAK STUDENT BEATEN TO DEATH IN PROTEST, ACTIVIST SAYS

BYLINE: By Michael Zantovsky

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Nov 18

KEYWORD:  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

BODY:

A 20-year-old Czechoslovak student died in the street after being beaten by security forces during Friday's massive anti-government demonstration, a leading human rights activist said on Saturday.

Some 2,000 people, meanwhile, staged a fresh protest in Wenceslas Square on Saturday evening and in a new challenge to the Communist authorities actors and theatre staff began a week-long strike to protest against police brutality.

Petr Uhl, spokesman for the Charter 77 human rights group, said a paratrooper pulled mathematics student Martin Smid from the crowd marching through central Prague near the National Theatre on Friday night and security force officers began hitting him with truncheons.

"When he fell to the ground they hit him in the face until he was no longer recognisable," Uhl said, citing a friend of Smid who had been with the student at the time of the incident.

"Two policemen announced it to his parents and said it was an accident," Uhl added.

There was no official confirmation of the death. The state news agency CTK reported that 17 people were injured, adding that seven policemen were hurt.

Police and paratroopers using truncheons and tear gas smashed the Friday night demonstration by some 50,000 people, leaving blood spattered on the cobbled streets of the city.

Dissidents said more than 100 people were dragged away and at least 16 injured, some of them seriously.

It was the biggest protest since widespread street disturbances in Prague in 1969 on the first anniversary of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion which crushed the reformist drive of Alexander Dubcek.

The demonstration marked the suppression of protests against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia 50 years ago, during which student Jan Opletal was shot dead. Opletal became a national martyr.

Another student, Jan Palach, won a similar place in the Czechoslovak consciousness after he burned himself alive to protest against the 1968 invasion.

About 50 people, who heard reports of Smid's death on Western radio, lit candles at the statue of Catholic martyr St John of Nepomuk, near the spot where he was said to have died. Other young people began laying flowers at the spot itself.

An arts student named Jan said he thought the death would speed the collapse of the Communist authorities. "This is their end," he said.

"It is hard to believe that anyone could be so cruel," said Eva, 24, who is

studying to be a construction engineer. "I'm so angry, I don't care what happens anymore."

Over 20 theatres throughout Prague, meanwhile, went on strike, including the most prestigious, the National Theatre. Many actors and directors are privileged party members.

"There is no show tonight anywhere in Prague," the director of the Realistic Theatre, Jiri Frehar, told a packed house.

After Frehar and a young actress read statements from theatre artists and students calling for strikes, including a two-hour general strike on November 27, the 600-strong audience gave a standing ovation and sang the national anthem.

"We don't know who made the secret decision to beat the students, so we must take some decisions of our own," Frehar said.

The audience sat in shocked silence as third-year drama student Martin Polak recounted his experience from Friday night. "You could literally hear the bones cracking," he said, telling how paratroops and police attacked thousands of students.

Charter 77, meanwhile, called for the resignation of those in the Communist Party and state leadership who were "directly responsible for a brutal attack on their own citizens".

The group accused the Czechoslovak leadership of waging a war against its own citizens. In a statement made available to Reuters it expressed its support for "all peaceful acts of protest against the arbitrariness of power".

The unofficial Movement for Civil Liberties (HOS) called for the immediate resignation of the interior minister and of all those responsible for the police action.

HOS appealed to members of the Communist Party who it said had a special responsibility for what was happening. "You should not watch with indifference...an undeclared civil war led also in your name," it said in a statement.

Hitherto passive political organisations were also critical.

Stanislav Krecek, secretary of the Central Committee of the communist-controlled Czech National Front, publicly condemned Friday's crackdown.

"I cannot agree with young people in uniform beating other young people," he told a matinee audience.

The matinee was cut short when some of the leading Czech actors who were to appear there went on strike.

SUBJECT:  
DIPLOMATIC; DISORDERS, RIOTS; POPULATION; POLITICS

LEVEL 1 - 39 OF 49 STORIES

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November 19, 1989, Sunday, BC cycle

LENGTH: 744 words

HEADLINE: CZECHOSLOVAK STUDENT BEATEN TO DEATH IN PROTEST, ACTIVISTS SAY

BYLINE: By Michael Zantovsky

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia

KEYWORD:  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

BODY:

Czechoslovakia's pro-democracy movement has accused the security forces of beating a 20-year-old student to death when breaking up the largest anti-government protest in 20 years.

A spokesman for the Charter 77 human rights group said a paratrooper pulled mathematics student Martin Smid from a crowd marching through central Prague Friday night and security force officers began hitting him with truncheons.

"When he fell to the ground they hit him in the face until he was no longer recognizable," Petr Uhl added Saturday, quoting a friend of Smid who had been present during the incident.

Uhl said police told Smid's parents his death was an accident.

Students and sympathizers lit candles and placed flowers at or near the spot where, according to human rights activists, Smid died.

Police and paratroopers using truncheons and tear gas smashed the Friday night demonstration, leaving blood spattered on the cobbled streets of the city.

The march by 50,000 people was the biggest protest since widespread street disturbances in Prague in 1969 on the first anniversary of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion which crushed the reformist drive of Alexander Dubcek.

Despite the crack-down, 2,000 demonstrators staged a fresh protest in Wenceslas Square Saturday evening.

In a further challenge to the Communist authorities, actors and theater staff

began a week-long strike to protest against police brutality.

Czechoslovakia's leading opposition figure, banned playwright Vaclav Havel, said the reported killing of Smid bore "terrible testimony" to the hardline Communist leaders' refusal to open a dialogue with their critics.

The Czechoslovak leadership condoned the Chinese Communist crackdown in June on a student pro-democracy movement which left hundreds, perhaps thousands, dead.

There was no official confirmation of Smid's death. The state news agency CTK reported that 17 people were injured, adding that seven policemen were hurt.

"This is a complete lie," Uhl said of the CTK report. He said he knew of at least 50 injured treated in three Prague hospitals, some of whom were still there.

Hospital staff said they had been instructed to give no information on patients.

Friday's demonstration was called to mark the death of another student, Jan Opletal, who became a national martyr after being shot dead during the suppression of demonstrations against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia 50 years ago.

Another student, Jan Palach, won a similar place in the Czechoslovak consciousness after he burned himself to death to protest against the 1968 Soviet-led invasion.

About 50 people, who heard reports of Smid's death on Western radio, lit candles at the statue of Catholic martyr St. John of Nepomuk, near the spot where the student was said to have died. Other young people put flowers at the spot itself.

An arts student named Jan said he thought the death would speed the collapse of the Communist authorities. "This is their end," he said.

Havel, commenting on the Smid incident, told Reuters: "For 15 years I appealed to the government in courtrooms, in statements, in interviews to start a dialogue with society ...

"For 15 years I spoke to deaf ears ... It is a terrible testimony to the authorities that human blood had to be spilled before our appeals have been heard."

Eva, a 24 year old studying to be a construction engineer, said she found it hard to believe anyone could be as cruel as the security forces. "I'm so angry, I don't care what happens anymore."

Over 20 theaters throughout Prague, meanwhile, went on strike, including the most prestigious, the National Theater. Many actors and directors are privileged party members.

"There is no show tonight anywhere in Prague," the director of the Realistic Theater, Jiri Frehar, told a packed house which observed a moment of silence in Smid's memory.

After Frehar and a young actress read statements from theater artists and students calling for strikes, including a two-hour general strike Nov. 27, the 600-strong audience gave a standing ovation and sang the national anthem.

"We don't know who made the secret decision to beat the students, so we must take some decisions of our own," Frehar said.

The audience sat in shocked silence as third-year drama student Martin Polak recounted his experience of Friday night. "You could literally hear the bones cracking," he said, telling how paratroops and police attacked thousands of students.

LEVEL 1 - 36 OF 49 STORIES

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November 19, 1989, Sunday, AM cycle

LENGTH: 458 words

HEADLINE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA DENIES ANY DEATH IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTEST

BYLINE: By Michael Zantovsky

DATELINE: PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia

KEYWORD:  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA-STUDENT

BODY:

A government spokesman denied Sunday that anyone had died in Friday's pro-democracy demonstration in Prague, the largest anti-government gathering in more than 20 years.

"According to my news nobody has died. That can be excluded," spokesman Marcel Jansen told Reuters when asked if any of the demonstrators had died.

Human rights activists have said that Martin Smid, a 20-year-old mathematics student, was beaten to death by security forces in the protest.

However, Czechoslovak radio quoted Minister of Education Jan Synkova as saying that a Martin Smid from the faculty of mathematics and physics at Charles University had taken part in the rally but he was not wounded and was in good health.

As Jansen made his statement, police detained a woman who had witnessed Smid's beating by security forces, according to Petr Uhl, a member of the



Charter 77 human rights movement.

The Charter activist said a paratrooper pulled Smid from a crowd marching through central Prague and security force officers began hitting him with truncheons.

"When he fell to the ground they hit him in the face until he was no longer recognizable," Uhl added Saturday, quoting the woman, whom he identified as Drahomira Draska.

Uhl said police told Smid's parents his death was an accident.

Draska was detained with Uhl's wife, Anna Sabatova, and another woman who took part in the protest, Miroslava Litomiska, according to Uhl.

"The explanation of this enigmatic affair is now in the hands of the police," he told Reuters.

Police and paratroopers using truncheons and tear gas smashed the Friday night demonstration, leaving blood spattered on the cobbled streets of the city.

The official state news agency CTK reported that 17 people were injured, adding that seven policemen were hurt.

Hospital staff said they had been instructed to give no information on patients.

The march by 50,000 people was the biggest protest since widespread street disturbances in Prague in 1969 marking the first anniversary of the Soviet-led invasion which crushed the reformist drive of Alexander Dubcek.

Despite Friday's crack-down, 2,000 demonstrators staged a fresh protest in Wenceslas Square Saturday evening.

In a further challenge to the Communist authorities, actors and theater staff began a week-long strike to protest against police brutality.

Friday's demonstration was called to mark the death of another student, Jan Opletal, who became a national martyr after being shot dead during the suppression of demonstrations against the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia 50 years ago.

Another student, Jan Palach, won a similar place in the Czechoslovak consciousness after he burned himself alive to protest against the 1968 Soviet-led invasion.