

Information on events January 13 to 15 198

[Extract]

[...] Security measures on January 15, 1989, were taken on Wenceslas and Old Town Squares, Red Army Square, in the pedestrian zone, at the Olšanské cemeteries, and in Všetaty, Mělník district. Taking part were 2200 members of the SNB [National Security Corps] (including retirees and reservists) and 1300 members of the PM [People's Militia].

In the afternoon hours there was calm in the entire monitored area and regular Sunday traffic continued on. From 12:45 to 17:25 the metro station Muzeum on lines A and C were closed (trains passed through). This measure was taken from 15:20 at the station Mustek as well on lines A and B, and from 15:25 to 15:40 at the station Hradčanská on line A.

At 12:35 movement was detected of personnel from [West German] television ARD Bringer, ORF Černý, and AFP [Agence France Press] correspondent Conrath in the direction of Wenceslas Square. The above-named were informed by the SNB that in the interest of their personal safety they would not be allowed to enter Wenceslas Square.

At 13:30 the area of Wenceslas Square was closed. At 13:45 on Mánesova Street in Prague 2 the organizers of an unauthorized gathering were detained who had had a meeting there in the apartment of Andrej Krob, from where they intended to go to Wenceslas Square. These were 25 representatives of the independent initiatives, who after leaving no. 20 Mánesova Street were taken to the MO VB [Municipal Department of Public Security] on Benediktská, and to the MO VB on Náměstí míru, where a statement was taken from them according to Art. 19 law no. 40/74, and by 21:30 they were all gradually released. They included for example Rudolf Battěk, Ladislav Lis, Eva Kantůrková, Petr Placák, Otakar Veverka, Heřman Chromý, Václav Malý, Tomáš Hradílek, Andrej Stankovič, and others. No items or ribbons were taken from them.

At 13:45 in the median belt of Wenceslas Square below the base of the statue of St. Wenceslas gathered some 300 persons, who attempted to sing the anthem and some of whom chanted "freedom". Quick and decisive steps by the security units and members of the People's Militia succeeded in pushing this group within 25 minutes into Vodičkova, Jindřišská, and Opletalova Streets. At the same time, however, groups of people were forming around the closed-off areas of Wenceslas Square, especially near Můstek. At 14:05 h Old Town Square was sealed off by the auxiliary unit of Public Security. There, too, around the gate to the streets Celetná, Železná, Melantrichova, and on Malé náměstí groups of people formed. To disperse them the security units had to be deployed, which succeeded in

dispersing some of them; the rest moved to Kaprova Street in the direction of Red Army Square. Mánes and Charles Bridges were closed, and 1st of May Bridge. With the help of water cannons these groups too were gradually dispersed, and by 16:30 the area of Old Town Square and Red Army Square were quiet. At the same time in the immediate vicinity of Wenceslas Square there were groups of people constantly moving who blocked traffic and responded to repeated calls to leave the area with defamatory shouting (phooey, Fascists, Gestapo, etc.). On the corner of Jindřišská Street and Politických vězňů, personnel from ARD filmed the intervention by the security forces, while failing to respect repeated calls to leave. An ARD cameraman and his assistant meanwhile stood on their portable luggage. Nearby them was a group of 3 persons /2 men and a woman/ who protected them and incited curious passersby to verbal and physical attacks against members of the SNB and LM [People's Militia]. Gradually a group of several dozen people formed around them who shouted and jeered at the members of the SNB and LM. A security unit was deployed against them, before which part of the crowd fled, and knocked down both personnel from ARD.

The most active participants in the unauthorized assembly refused to obey calls to leave the area, behaved aggressively, verbally attacked members of the SNB and LM and; after the intervention of the security forces they kept constantly moving, for example to the Republic Square, to the Federal Assembly, and to Čelakovský Park. A portion of them were detained, and 92 of them were taken by service vehicle outside of Prague (Mníšek, district Prague-západ). This measure was not employed against seniors, children, or handicapped persons.

By 16:00 calm and public order was restored to the area around Wenceslas square. At 18:00 units of the LM were withdrawn, and part of the SNB forces were moved to readiness areas. At 20:00 the security measures were ended. Until the morning hours security forces were on increased deployment, especially on Red Army Square, the area around Wenceslas Square, and at the Olšanské Cemeteries.

During the course of the security measures a total of 117 persons were brought in for questioning in three processing groups. Forty of them were released for insufficient evidence without charge; 22 are being processed for criminal activities (of these two in detention), 17 for misdemeanors, and 38 for offenses. The identity was checked of 422 persons, of which 403 were Czechoslovak citizens and 19 were foreigners (see appendix). At health facilities 9 persons requested medical treatment, mostly older persons who said they had suffered injuries during the intervention by the security organs against participants in the anti-social activities. [...]

The security measures taken on Wenceslas Square were very well managed organizationally. The cooperation between units of the People's Militia and their participation in the intervention itself against the participants in the anti-social activities can be evaluated as positive. Members of the PM showed readiness and initiative. It should be considered whether it would not be suitable to equip members of the PM with batons, for example, for similar actions.

It can also be evaluated positively that the main organizers of the anti-social activities were successfully isolated in time. The participants thus lacked a leading figure.

It was something of a deficiency that in the displacement and dispersal of small groups it was not possible to prevent their regrouping. Therefore it will be necessary for the next time to prepare a closed-off the area into which the crowd will be pushed, and where it will be possible to detain the most active people, and possibly transport them out of Prague. [...]