

Albright hit with eggs while visiting the Czech Republic

BRNO, Czech Republic (AP) — Shouting "death to American imperialism," two men hurled eggs at Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Monday after she told a university audience that defense of common values sometimes requires countries to pay a financial price.



ALBRIGHT

The incident marred an otherwise warm reception here on the second day of Albright's four-day visit to the land of her birth.

After finishing a speech to an enthusiastic audience at Tomas Masaryk University in this industrial city 125 miles southeast of Prague, Albright was milling about in the crowded entrance hall as bystanders cheered.

Suddenly, two men shouted "death to American imperialism" and began hurling eggs. Albright was spattered slightly with bits of egg but most of them were intercepted by her bodyguards, said a U.S. official who asked that his name not be published.

She was rushed upstairs quickly before leaving for another appearance. Police Capt. Zdenek Lubas said several people were detained for questioning but declined to give further details.

Before the speech, Albright had met privately with about a dozen students from the Gypsy minority to discuss affirmative action and other ideas for im-

proving their conditions. She also received a gold medal Monday from the university named after a Czech president who was born near here 100 years ago.

During her speech, Albright referred to a pledge by Czech President Vaclav Havel to cancel a \$30 million sale of cooling duct parts by a Czech company to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Although Iran insist the plant is for peaceful production of electricity, the United States fears the Iranians are trying to develop a nuclear weapons program.

Noting that this former Soviet Bloc state joined NATO last year, Albright said preventing the spread of nuclear weapons was a high priority of the Western alliance.

As with any goal worth achieving, it is not without cost," Albright said, speaking in English. "To keep the best technology from falling into the wrong hands, American firms are required to forgo many potentially profitable contracts. But a similar responsibility rests upon the shoulders of all who pledged to defend the best interests of the Euro-Atlantic community."

Albright said Washington has urged all its allies to "meet that responsibility so that our common security is protected and the future safer for our children and theirs."

"We consider the campaign around Bushehr conducted by the Czech government and the local media a gift to the American minister Madeleine Albright linked to her visit," Sharif Khodai, the acting Iranian ambassador to Prague,

told the newspaper *Pravo*.

Albright laid a wreath of red roses and white irises at a statue of Masaryk, who led Czechoslovakia from 1918 until 1935 and was a close friend of President Woodrow Wilson.

Albright has urged Czechs to follow the example of Masaryk, a towering figure in Eastern European democratic history.

"He stood up for truth when others were afraid to face the truth," Albright said in Hodonin. On Sunday, she had said "Masaryk's dream was to have Europe whole and free."

U.S. officials said Albright has urged the Czechs to undertake judicial reform and encourage tolerance for the country's Gypsy minority. She has also encouraged the Czech Republic to become more involved in Western moves to bring democracy to Yugoslavia's main republic, Serbia, and to help promote ethnic stability in Kosovo, a province of Serbia.

Albright said Sunday that the people of Serbia "do not deserve" an autocratic leader like President Slobodan Milosevic.

In an interview with Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, she said the United States had been urging the Serbian opposition movement to end its divisions and prove to Serbs that "they represent an alternate choice."

Albright also said democratically minded leaders from former Soviet Bloc countries could offer advice to opposition figures in Serbia on how to unite in the face of authoritarian rule.

China increases military spending

BEIJING (AP) — Amid renewed tensions with Taiwan, China said today it will boost military spending by 12.7 percent this year.

The spending hike for the People's Liberation Army — or PLA — the world's largest military, comes on top of an increase of the same percentage in last year's budget.

In announcing his 2000 budget to the national legislature, Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng said \$14.5 billion would be spent on defense. China was expected to have an economic growth rate of 7 percent this year.

He said the new funds would mainly cover salary and allowance increases for troops, as well as expenditures for maintaining forces in Macau — the territory that Portugal handed back to China in December.

Beijing lavished double-digit spending increases on the PLA for much of the 1990s, reflecting the military's political clout and

efforts to modernize the 2.5 million strong force. China's growing military might has raised concerns among other Asian nations, some of which have territorial disputes with Beijing.

Xiang did not give a break down of the military spending, but Western analysts believe China's actual defense spending is three times higher than the published figure. Purchases of sophisticated weapons at home and abroad are not included in the official figure.

Xiang's comments expanded on an anti-corruption theme of the annual 11-day session of the National People's Congress. Overall, Xiang said, central government spending will increase by 12.3 percent to \$111.1 billion; revenue will increase by 7.9 percent to \$83.3 billion.

That will leave a record deficit of \$27.7 billion, up from the \$21.7 billion deficit Xiang said was recorded in 1999.

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RYLA SCULL/THE BATTALION

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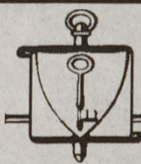
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