

# Soviet Double-Cross Of Czechs Revealed

Stalin's Pledge to Respect Democracy  
Made to Benes at Kremlin Meeting

Hal Lehrman, wartime chief of the OWI, in Turkey, later served in eastern Europe for 18 months as correspondent for American and British newspapers. His current book, "Russia's Europe," is a vivid, personal account of the Soviet grasp for power over half a continent from Czechoslovakia to the Black Sea. Starting his tour of duty as a pro-Soviet liberal, Lehrman tells in his book how Russian totalitarianism and Communist suppression of liberty in the satellite states compelled him, in order to remain a liberal, to become anti-Soviet.

By HAL LEHRMAN, Written for NEA Service  
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Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia through police terrorism and threat of a general strike was a flagrant double-cross by Soviet Generalissimo Josef Stalin.

A wartime secret pledge by Stalin guaranteed that Czechoslovak independence, democracy, and ties with the West would be scrupulously respected by the USSR and Czechoslovakia's Communist Party.

It can now be revealed that the Soviet dictator gave his solemn guarantee in person to Edward Benes during a private Kremlin meeting with the Czechoslovak President.

At that very moment, Czechoslovak volunteers, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the Red Army, were smashing forward against Mr. Lehrman the Germans on the Eastern Front toward Vienna and Berlin.

Fifteen months later, this writer heard the story from the lips of Benes himself. Czechoslovakia's venerable chief executive told it to me in a two-hour interview I had with him in Prague's Hradcany Castle—palace of the old Bohemian kings.

Benes told me that if anything ever happened like the events which materialized this week, "I would resign and the nation would support me."

At that time—June, 1946—disclosure of the Stalin-Benes conversation might have caused serious difficulties between Prague and Moscow.

CZECHOSLOVAK Communists, though the largest single party in the country, were behaving most democratically. They were waving the national flag, observing all the parliamentary forms and "loyally" co-operating with the non-Communist parties in the coalition government.

Russia seemed to be following a strictly hands-off policy toward internal Czechoslovak affairs.

Publication of Stalin's promise at that juncture might have been reasonably taken in Moscow as an unjustified provocation.

Today, however, the danger of "embarrassing" President Benes is unhappily over. The Communists are in the saddle after a virtual coup d'état, master-minded on the spot by Valerian A. Zorin, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, who arrived suddenly in Prague just before the current crisis flared up.

THERE IS nothing further to be gained by concealing the story of another broken Soviet promise. Now it can be told.

The Kremlin interview took place in March, 1945. The Germans were still in Prague. Benes was flying from London to head a provisional government set up in the Slovak town of Kosice, in an already liberated eastern portion of his country.

Troubled about Czechoslovakia's future as a neighbor of the Soviets, Benes went far out of his way to stop off in Moscow for a conference with Stalin. The conversation, as recounted to me by the President while we sat in his spacious, crystal-chandeliered Hradcany office, went as follows:

"Mr. Stalin," President Benes said, "I have complete confidence in the government of the USSR. We have signed an agreement for nonintervention in domestic affairs, and I know you will keep it. But I am worried about our Communists."

"Do you think I should speak to them?" Mr. Stalin asked.

"No," replied Mr. Benes, "that would be an intervention in our domestic affairs. I can only tell you there is no party in Czechoslovakia which could be used against the Soviet Union. We have no choice. Some day Germany may rise again. Germany is our mortal enemy. Our Communists have no need to fear any party will ever go against Russia. We shall remain your friends, because we know that if not we shall be destroyed by Germany."

HOWEVER, BENES told the Soviet Premier, Czechoslovakia must be allowed to shape her future in her own democratic manner, unhampered by Communist revolutionary tactics or Russian pressure.

"A free Czechoslovakia," he assured Stalin, "will be more reliable for your security than a Communist Czechoslovakia, because all the people will support it. And a free Czechoslovakia means one which retains her historical ties with western civilization. We cannot change from one day or one century to another."

Stalin listened gravely to all this and then said with firmness:

"Mr. President, I agree with you completely. Please believe that we have no intention of interfering. We respect your complete independence. We shall honor your good relations with our western allies. I agree with you also about the Communists. We shall not ask them to commit any stupidities."

The Soviet leader had been as good as his word up to that point. Benes told me with satisfaction: No "stupidities" were committed. After a decent interval following the German collapse, the Russian Army retired from Czechoslovak soil.

The Communists kept faithfully to a bargain with three other anti-Nazi parties for a limited nationalization of only the larger industrial establishments, and for free elections. They put away



## Stalin's Offer Finding Favor Among Finns

### 2 Parties Join Reds Backing Acceptance

HELSINKI, Mar. 2 (UP)—The Social Democratic and Agrarian Parties indicated today that their parliamentary delegations favored negotiating with Russia, a twin decision which, with the already declared Communists, apparently gave the Soviet proposal a majority in parliament.

The chairman of the Social Democratic and Agrarian groups made it clear at a press conference that they expected to support the Soviet request for negotiating a pact.

The expressions by the chairman did not, however, represent formal party action, which must be taken as soon as possible. Each party has 48 seats in the 200-seat parliament, while the Communist-dominated democratic union has 50 seats.

The foreign affairs committee of the cabinet earlier advocated accepting the overture by Premier Josef Stalin.

### Czech Red Denies Benes Has Resigned His Post

PRAGUE, Mar. 2 (UP)—A report published abroad that President Edward Benes had resigned was denied officially by the Ministry of Information today.

A member of the President's secretariat at the Benes summer home in Sezimovo Usti told the United Press by telephone that he could "neither confirm nor deny" it.

A Ministry of Information spokesman said there was "no official report on this, and we regard the news as fantastic."

The spokesman at Sezimovo Usti said that only the President's office in Prague could confirm or deny the report. An official at that office said:

"Nothing is known to us personally, but no responsible official will be available until tomorrow."

### 5-Power Arms Pact Predicted for Europe

LONDON, Mar. 2 (UP)—Diplomatic quarters predicted today that Great Britain, France and the Benelux countries would sign a military and economic alliance within two weeks.

Five-power treaty talks will open in Brussels Thursday. Reports from the Benelux countries—Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg—indicated that a general agreement in principle already had been reached.

### Mac Silent on Return

TOKYO, Mar. 2 (UP)—Major Gen. Claire L. Chennault is prepared to return to Washington to testify on China before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, but Gen. Douglas MacArthur apparently has not yet decided, it was reported today.

### States Card Party

A card party will be held at 8 p.m. Saturday by the Lyndhurst Auxiliary, OES, in the Wayne Park Garage, 4808 W. Washington St. Mrs. Sarah Weakley is chairman.

WE'VE WRITTEN a story plot but can't write dialog. I have 25,000 words describing the plot. It has 15 characters and there's a mystery in it, but the story has a religious background. How can I get a story writer?

READER.

Write National Writers' Club, Denver (2), Colo., and Oshkosh Grumet Co., 505 5th Ave., New York City.

### Li: With In-Laws Presents Problem

AM I EITHER GOING to move or my husband can live with his mother and I'll go live with mine. I'm 24 and have a daughter, 5. We've lived with my mother-in-law the seven years we've been married except for three years I spent with my folks while he was in service.

When first married we talked of moving to ourselves. His mother cried and threw a fit and my husband wouldn't move but fixed the house so we could have our own rooms. She isn't alone; his sister is divorced and lives with her mother. His mother doesn't need our help as she has rent from three houses and my husband sent her \$25 a month the three years he was in service, when I needed the money. She isn't ill and always is taking trips.

Our rooms are small and the baby is getting too big for her bed—there isn't room for a larger bed. My husband agrees that he need more room but won't move. I've rented two houses and he wouldn't have them.

Am I being unreasonable to say I won't stay here another summer?

MRS. C.

Your views are sensible, but I wonder about your approach. Convince your husband, by expressing your love for him, that

he will be okayed.

DR. CONDON

Dr. Condon, a former Princeton professor who observes his 46th birthday today, said his entire career has demonstrated that he

though he has never attended a meeting or paid any dues.

privacy is the issue—not your dislike for his mother. Urge him to tell her firmly that he realizes you need a larger place, privacy, and his entire salary. His mother will take it better from him than from you.

Try to be friendly with your mother-in-law and forget that money your husband sent her. Maybe he owed her money—maybe he was trying to atone for unhappiness that he brought her. Anyway, it made him feel good to send it. Many homesick GIs, remembering past thoughtlessness, cleared their consciences in the same way.

LET MRS. MANNERS and readers of the column share your problems and answer your questions. Write in care of The Times, 214 W. Maryland St.

## U. S. Atom Expert Called Loyal by His Superiors

Dr. E. U. Condon Cleared of Charges Of Consorting With Russian Spies

WASHINGTON, Mar. 2 (UP)—Dr. Edward U. Condon's government superiors today cleared the atomic scientist of charges of a congressional investigation.

Two congressional committees showed interest in the accusations made against Dr. Condon by a House Un-American Activities subcommittee last night. The three-man group urged that he be fired from his job as director of the National Bureau of Standards.

The Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee was to take up the charges at a meeting this morning, and the full House Un-American Activities Committee planned to consider them later this week.

DR. CONDON

Dr. Condon was named director of the Bureau of Standards in 1945 by Harry Wallace, then Commerce Secretary. In that post he is in charge of top-secret scientific research for the armed forces. He has been identified with developments in radar, rockets and the atom bomb.

The un-American Activities Subcommittee said that under Dr. Condon, the Bureau of Standards "has become the target of espionage agents" of numerous foreign powers.

While not charging Dr. Condon with being a Communist, the subcommittee said he has associated, either knowingly or unknowingly, with American Communists and alleged Russian agents.

THE HOUSE group said Dr. Condon, the Bureau of Standards "has become the target of espionage agents" of numerous foreign powers.

Dr. Condon confined fire to the northeast, intense heat will set beams and leave like straws. A tank carried flames into the factory but destruction kept it from heavy damages.

O. J. Strayer, president of the American Association of Metal Manufacturers, said that the plant will be closed for a week.

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