

MASARYK'S DEATH DESCRIBED BY TWO

Witnesses' Articles Dispute
Prague's Suicide Version

By HENRY KAMM

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PRAGUE, April 7—Witnesses are raising their voices to dispute the official account that Jan Masaryk committed suicide by jumping from a window.

Czechoslovak newspapers have displayed articles on the subject since an open letter in the publication Student last week broke the 20-year-old taboo on public discussion of the Foreign Minister's mysterious death.

The publication of the letter was followed by an official announcement that there would be an investigation of the death of Dr. Masaryk, who had opposed his nation's total entry into the Soviet sphere.

First-person accounts of the events of the night of March 9-10, 1948, now appearing in newspapers, will have to be considered in such an inquiry.

Two of the reports appeared today. One was an interview with a former driver of the State Security Services, who said he had inspected Dr. Masaryk's body and helped to carry it from the courtyard of the Foreign Ministry to Dr. Masaryk's bedroom. The other was an account by a Foreign Ministry employe who was on duty at the time.

Unusual Commotion

The employe, Pavel Straka, said Dr. Masaryk entered the ministry between 8:30 and 9 P.M. and went to his apartment to work. At 11, Mr. Straka heard a commotion in the hall and the noise of cars on usually quiet Loretta Square outside.

The telephone went dead, and Mr. Straka found that his door had been locked from the outside. Fifteen minutes later all was quiet again, but the door remained locked. At 2 A.M. the sound of cars resumed on the square, the telephone came alive again and the door was unlocked.

Mr. Straka rushed to the porter and found him frightened and refusing to talk. Finally, the porter told Mr. Straka to look into the courtyard. Mr. Straka says that he found Dr. Masaryk's body lying under the window of the flat but that, looking up, he saw that the bedroom window was closed.

According to the Bratislava newspaper Smena, where the article was published, Mr. Straka is convinced that the Foreign Minister did not commit suicide. He says that out of fear he refrained in the past from offering his account, but that the morning after the event he gave a hint of his suspicions to a friend of the Masaryk family.

Mr. Straka called Olga Scheinflugova, the widow of the writer Karel Capek, a friend of the Masaryks, and told her to listen to the radio for a surprising announcement and not to believe any talk of suicide.

Investigation Urged

Mlada Fronta, a Prague Smena article and said that Miss Scheinflugova, an actress, corroborated Mr. Straka's youth newspaper, reprinted the account. Mlada Fronta added:

"Let us hope that we will not have to wait too long for the results of an objective investigation."

Mr. Straka was accused of treason in 1949, at a time when non-Communist officials all over Czechoslovakia were purged. He spent 12 years in prison and now works in a brewery in Slovakia.

The former driver was identified only as B. J. He told the newspaper Svobodne Slovo that on the night of Dr. Masaryk's death, around 4 A.M., he was told to drive to Cernin Palace, the Foreign Ministry. He says that he entered the courtyard, where the porter showed him a body covered by a blanket.

Imprisoned 2 Years

While a physician examined the body, B. J. noted that the soles of the feet were injured. When he helped to put the body on a stretcher, he noted no other injuries, nor did he see blood anywhere.

B. J., too, was arrested in 1949 and imprisoned for two years without explanation. Svobodne Slovo said that the man, now a taxi driver, had kept his secret for 20 years and was now willing to talk to the authorities.

The newspaper added: "we are convinced that today he has no longer any reason to fear. Today there no longer exists any reason why a witness of a historical event should disappear without trace."

Open discussion of the widely held suspicion that Dr. Masaryk was murdered has gone further than Czechoslovaks expected even after three months of talking about subjects that for 20 years were closed off by a wall of fear and terror.

The subject is especially delicate because the Communists' prestige might suffer if it were proved that they had murdered the son of Thomas G. Masaryk, the founder of the country.