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Foreign Affairs: Murder Will Out

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PARIS—It seems almost certain that the Czechoslovak people, gaining new strength from freedom's resurgence in their country, are about to discover that Jan Masaryk did not commit suicide on March 10, 1948, but was murdered by Stalinist secret police.

A commission of jurists is investigating the death of the great Foreign Minister who was the son of Czechoslovakia's first President and a symbol of national independence. Recrudescence of democracy, twenty years after a Communist *coup d'état* established leaden dictatorship, is determined to find out the truth.

Symbolically this is a matter of great importance. If Masaryk did not kill himself but was slain by those who killed Czechoslovak freedom, it is vitally important for the people to know as much in order to protect themselves against a repetition.

From the moment Masaryk's death was announced by a Communist regime which had just seized power, extreme skepticism greeted the official account describing how he died. It was widely recalled that murder by defenestration had been most famously enacted in

that same city of Prague in 1618, starting the Thirty Years War.

Dr. Jiri Kotlar, head of the official commission now appointed to investigate the event, if necessary even exhuming Masaryk's body, has said: "This case is twenty years old and the most diverse interests may have been involved."

The truth is crucial to any analysis of Communism in Czechoslovakia. It will remind Czechs of the real circumstances by which conspiracy seized power. There is considerable evidence that Masaryk was in fact brutally murdered.

S.D.E.C., the French intelligence service, compiled a report seventeen years ago after an intensive investigation. This was largely based on the testimony of a police doctor named Teply, one of Czechoslovakia's best known criminologists. A few months later Teply died; an official statement said he had mistakenly given himself a "wrong injection."

On March 10, 1948, Masaryk was still living in his foreign ministerial apartment at the Czernin Palace. At 5:00 A.M. Teply was summoned to the Czernin by the national security office, S.T.B., and was met by several men in S.T.B. and S.N.B. (national police) uniform. He

was taken to the courtyard and shown a body under a blanket.

Teply later reported he recognized Masaryk's face immediately. He noted the body, dressed in pajamas with different colored tops and bottoms, showed bruises, scratches and other signs of violence. He also found a 7.65 bullet wound in the back of Masaryk's neck, ringed by powder burns. The hands were marked as though by a fight; the heels were injured.

Under Teply's supervision the body was carried upstairs to Masaryk's apartment where Teply was joined by two Communist ministers, Nosek and Clementis. Nosek, in charge of state security, was a ruthless Stalinist. Clementis, also a Communist, took over the foreign ministry from Masaryk but was arrested and executed as a "Titoist" in a subsequent purge.

Evidence of a Struggle

Teply found Masaryk's apartment in total disarray, bottles broken, furniture overturned. But Nosek calmly smoothed the covering of Masaryk's bed, ordered the body laid upon it, and announced: "This is suicide." He looked sharply at Teply and added: "You haven't seen or heard a thing." Teply told confidants before his own death

that he thought: "This is an infamy, a bestial assassination."

Obviously Dr. Kotlar's investigating commission intends to establish the truth at last, twenty years after, or it would not have been appointed. The mood of the new Czechoslovakia, which is trying to prove that true freedom and real democracy can exist in a Communist society, is not that of a regime planning to whitewash its predecessor's crimes.

Murder of a Nation

If, as seems likely, the commission finds the defenestration was in fact murder, the commission will by publishing this conclusion confirm what everyone already knows: that Czechoslovakia itself was murdered at the same time. The Czechs are by instinct and tradition a free and intelligent people and, no matter what tragic experiences they have suffered in the past, they understand that those who learn nothing from history are condemned to repeat it.

Therefore, by proclaiming today the truth about this grim event they hope to insure the nation and its servants against the risk that freedom—now so painstakingly won—could at some future time again be assassinated.