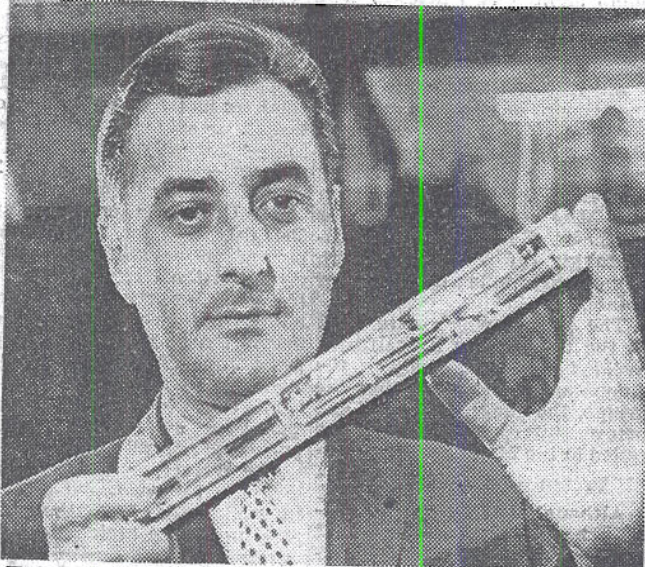
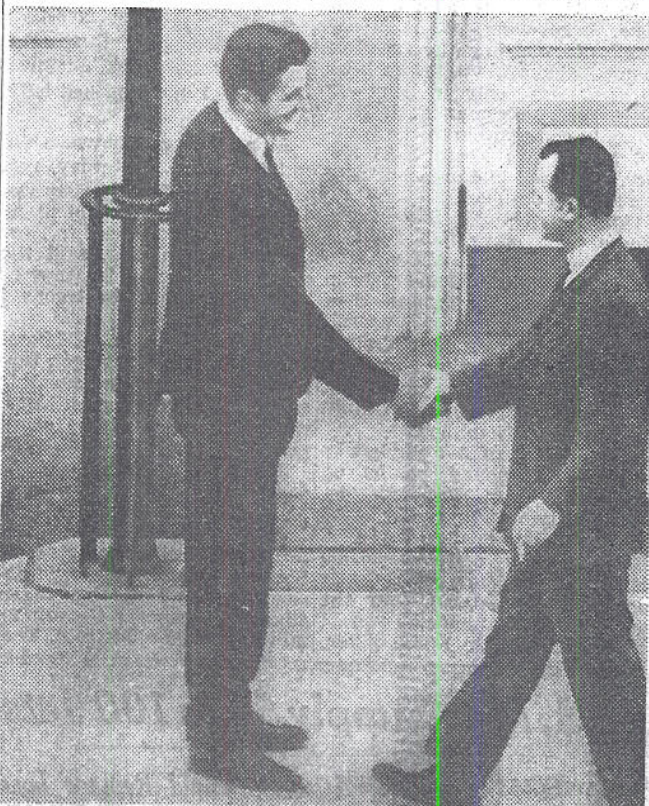


# U. S. Foils Czech Bugging Plot



Frank J. Mrkva, State Department employe, shows electronic listening device given to him by Czech diplomat. It was to be placed in office of department's Director of Eastern European Affairs. Mr. Mrkva gave device to F.B.I.



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Picture released by the State Department shows Mr. Mrkva, at left, meeting Jiri Opatrny, the Czech attaché who gave him the listening device, on a Washington street.

## 2 Diplomats Duped in Plan to Listen In at State Department

By JOHN W. FINNEY  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13 — Two Czechoslovak diplomats made an attempt to plant an electronic listening device in the State Department but were foiled by a department employe, it was disclosed today.

In a carefully conceived espionage scheme that began in 1961, the Czech diplomats, seeking to use the State Department employe as an intermediary, planned to place a listening device in the office of a high department official with the ultimate objective of "bugging" the office of Under Secretary of State George W. Ball.

The bugging attempt was thwarted by the employe, Frank John Mrkva, 38 years old, who for more than five years pretended to cooperate in the Czech espionage activities.

The State Department today told the Czech Embassy that Jiri Opatrny, an attaché in the embassy who the department said delivered the listening device to Mr. Mrkva on May 29, was being ordered to leave the United States within three days.

Zdenek Pisk, a former second secretary in the embassy, who the department said made the initial contact with Mr. Mrkva in 1961, left the United States in 1963. He recently returned as first secretary of the Czech United Nations mission in New York City. The State Department said Secretary General Thant was being "informed of his previous activities."

The State Department described Mr. Mrkva as a "double agent," but strictly speaking he does not fit into that category. In espionage terms, a double

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agent is a spy performing services for two countries, with neither country knowing of his services for the other. In espionage jargon Mr. Mrkva would be known as a "plant" or "undercover agent."

Mr. Mrkva's secret role, kept concealed even from his wife, came to an end today when the State Department disclosed how the attaché in the Czech Embassy had given him a miniature remotely controlled listening device to be placed under a bookcase in the office of Raymond Lisle, director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs.

Mr. Mrkva, who was promised \$1,000 for installation of the device, immediately turned it over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

While there have been numerous Communist attempts, some successful, to place listening devices in American Embassies in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries, the Czech scheme was the first publicly disclosed attempt to penetrate the State Department with electronic espionage.

In announcing the attempt at a news conference, the State Department displayed the electronic listening device.

### Started by Remote Control

It was contained in a rectangular wooden case 13 inches long, 1 1/4 inches wide and one-half inch thick. In shape and in color, the case resembled a wooded block such as might be used for support under a bookcase.

On the side of the electronic device case was an opening for a small microphone, capable of picking up all conversations in a room. The device, basically a miniature radio transmitter, could be turned on by remote control with an electronic signal.

The case apparently was built in Czechoslovakia to conform to the appearance of the bookcases distributed to United States Government offices by the General Services Administration. But there was one "made in U. S. A." touch: power for the device was supplied by seven American-built dry-cell batteries.

On the ground of security, State Department officials declined to describe the capabilities of the device, except to say that it was "very effective." Presumably it could transmit its very-high-frequency radio signals to the Czech Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue, about a half mile north of the State Department building.

Disclosure of the Czech espionage effort came one day after the F.B.I. arrested William Henry Whalen, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, on charges of conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet



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**CZECH DIPLOMATS NAMED IN PLOT:** Jiri Opatrny, left, and Zdenek Pisk. Mr. Opatrny, who gave listening device to Frank J. Mrkva, has been ordered to leave U.S. within three days. Mr. Pisk, who made first contact with Mr. Mrkva, is with Czech Mission to the U. N.

Union. The two announcements, however, were not related in their timing, officials said.

The Czech espionage attempt was active up until the middle of last week, and only when it became apparent to the Czech agents that the attempt had failed did the State Department and the F.B.I. decide to disclose it.

#### Czech Overtures

As described by the department, here is how the espionage attempt developed:

Mr. Pisk became acquainted in 1961 with Mr. Mrkva, a Czech-speaking employe in the Passport Office whose duties included messenger runs to the Czech Embassy with visa applications.

At Mr. Pisk's initiative, Mr. Mrkva was invited to embassy social functions. Mr. Mrkva immediately notified State Department officials, and throughout his contact with the Czech

agents he acted with the full knowledge and guidance of the department and F.B.I.

The first move to enlist Mr. Mrkva in the espionage scheme came on Nov. 30, 1961, when Mr. Pisk invited him to dinner at a restaurant. Mr. Pisk asked about Mr. Mrkva's family, background, relatives in Czechoslovakia and duties at the State Department.

The Czech agents indicated a knowledge of Mr. Mrkva's mortgage payments and the fact that a daughter needed an operation.

The "carrot before the donkey," Mr. Mrkva observed at the news conference, was the promise of money. The initial Czech offer for information was \$100. Gradually the price was raised, and offers were made to assume the mortgage payments or pay for the operation.

#### Turned Over Phone Book

From November, 1961, to last week, Mr. Mrkva had 48 meetings—11 with Mr. Pisk and 37 with Mr. Opatrny after he took over upon Mr. Pisk's departure in May, 1963.

The Czechs paid Mr. Mrkva a total of \$3,440—all of which was immediately turned over to the F.B.I.

In return for the money, Mr. Mrkva supplied such generally available and unclassified documents as the State Department telephone book, press releases and administrative reports.

The Czechs became more specific in their demands, asking for a blank United States passport of a new series, for information on the rooms of department officers dealing with Czechoslovakia, and particularly for information about the offices of the director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs and the conference room he used.

The Czech interest in placing

listening devices was revealed by Mr. Opatrny in May, 1965.

Mr. Mrkva provided, the following December, a General Services Administration catalog of Government furniture, which was to be used in designing a device that could be placed unobtrusively.

When Mr. Opatrny delivered the device to Mr. Mrkva on May 29, he instructed that it be placed in the base of a bookcase in Mr. Lisle's office. Immediately after entering the State Department building, Mr. Mrkva turned the device over to waiting F. B. I. agents.

On June 9 Mr. Opatrny told Mr. Mrkva he could not understand why the device was not working, since it had operated successfully for 20 minutes after Mr. Mrkva had left it in the State Department.

Mr. Mrkva replied that he had dropped the device, probably making it inoperable. Mr. Opatrny asked that the device be returned so it could be sent to Prague for repair.

Mr. Mrkva said "several heated discussions" followed over whether the device had been installed.

Mr. Opatrny had promised \$1,000 for installation of the device but refused to make full payment until the device was returned. Instead, Mr. Mrkva was given \$500.

Mr. Mrkva used the excuse of bad faith as justification for not carrying out instructions to return the device.

The reason for the Czech interest in reclaiming the device became evident at their final meeting last Wednesday. Mr. Opatrny told Mr. Mrkva they should continue to work closely together because there were other offices, such as that of Under Secretary Ball, in which the Czechs wanted to place listening devices.