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PRESS RELEASE

It is now ten years since the Czechoslovak Government crisis of February 1948. This crisis was settled in a constitutional and parliamentary way and made it clear once and for all that the policy of building a socialist Czechoslovakia was to be carried out.

The Czechoslovak Embassy in London is issuing the following brief survey of the background to the events of that time in the hope that it will help towards a proper understanding of them. The Embassy believes that such an understanding is of importance for relations between our two countries.

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The political weakness of the pre-war regime in Czechoslovakia and the policy of appeasement of German fascism pursued by the Western powers led via Munich to the swallowing up of Czechoslovakia by Germany. The 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution, Article 3, paragraph 1, reads: "The territory of the Czechoslovak Republic

form a unified and indivisible whole, the borders of which may be changed only by constitutional law". Article 33 further stipulates: "Changes in this Consitution and its separate parts require a three-fifths majority of all members of Paliament". Contrary to these provisions in Constitution, and without the agreement of Parliament, the Czechoslovak Government of the time accepted the Munich Agreement which led to the loss of a considerable part of the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic and subsequently to the extinction of Czechoslovak independence.

In the struggle against the German occupation ^{was} unity between the Czech and Slovak people spontaneously created. This unity later found expression in the "National Front of Czechs and Slovaks".

In 1945 there were seven political parties in the Czechoslovak Republic. These parties agreed on a common governmental programme, the so-called Košice Government Programme.

In the autumn of 1945 all the allied troops on Czechoslovak territory, that is, Soviet and American, left the country. Parliamentary elections took place on May 26th 1946 with the following results:

Communist Party	2.695,227	114 seats	38 %
Social-Democrat Party	855.538	37 "	12,33 %
Slovak Freedom Party	60.200	3 "	1 %
Slovak Party of Work	50.214	2 "	0.67 %
National Socialist Party	1.298.980	55 "	18.33 %
People's Party	1.111.009	46 "	15.34 %
Slovak Democratic Party	999.557	43 "	14.33 %

On the basis of these results the President of the Republic, Dr. Eduard Beneš, called on the Chairman of the largest party, the Communist Party, to form a new Government. All the political parties were again represented in the Government. This had the effect of emphasising the continuity of the Government's policy /in the spirit of the Košice Programme/. An official British parliamentary delegation was present at the debate in Parliament when the new Government's programme was accepted. One of the Communist members of the Czechoslovak Parliament, in welcoming the British parliamentary delegation, emphasised that the visit would greatly assist the development of friendly relations between the Czechoslovak National Assembly and the House of Parliament in Britain.

Subsequently the leaders of some of the political parties began to abandon the accepted Government programme. This caused serious differences to arise in the Government and also between the leaders and the

rank and file of the non-Communist Parties. The main differences were over questions of further nationalisation /the nationalisation of the basic industries had taken place in 1945/ and the implementation of the land reform.

The workers demanded further nationalisation and the peasants and farmers demanded the carrying out of the land reform. Both these demands were opposed by representatives of some of the political parties, in particular the National Socialist and People's Party. In their efforts to prevent further Socialist development in Czechoslovakia 12 ministers out of the 26 ministers in the Government handed in their resignations.

In accordance with Article 70 of the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, Dr. Eduard Beneš accepted the resignations of these ministers on February 25th 1948 and completed the Government by appointing the new ministers as follows:

Prime Minister	Mr. Klement Gottwald	/Communist Party/
Deputy Prime Minister	Mr. Viliam Široký	/Communist Party/
Deputy Prime Minister	Mr. B. Laušman	/Social-Democrat/
Deputy Prime Minister	Mr. A. Zápotocký	/President of the Czechoslovak T.U.C.- Communist/
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Dr. h.c. Jan Masaryk	/None-party/
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Dr. V. Clementis	/Communist Party/
Minister of Defence	General L. Svoboda	/None-party/
Minister of Foreign Trade	Dr. A. Gregor	/Communist Party/
Minister of Interior	Mr. V. Nosek	/Communist Party/
Minister of Finance	Dr. Jaromír Dolanský	/Communist Party/
Minister of Education	Prof. Dr. Z. Nejedlý	/Communist Party/
Minister of Justice	Dr. A. Čepička	/Communist Party/
Minister of Information	Mr. V. Kopecký	/Communist Party/
Minister of Industry	Mr. Zdeněk Fierlinger	/Social Democrat/

Minister of Agriculture	Mr. J. Ďuriš	/Communist Party/
Minister of Trade	Mr. F. Krajčír	/Communist Party/
Minister of Transport	Mr. A. Petr	/People's Party/
Minister of Communications	Dr. A. Neuman	/National Socialist/
Minister of Work and Social Care	Mr. E. Erban	/Social Democrat/
Minister of Health	P. J. Plojhar	/People's Party/
Minister of Food	Ing. L. Jankovcová	/Social Democrat/
Minister of Construction	Ing. Dr. E. Šlechta	/National Socialist/
Minister of Unification	Dr. V. Šrobár	/Slovak Democratic Party/
State Secretary, Ministry of Defence	Dr. Jan Ševčík	/Slovak Democratic Party/

In accordance with Articles 75 and 77 of the Constitution the new Government was duly presented, with its programme, before the National Assembly which had been elected in 1946 by secret, direct and equal ballot.

Article 75 of the Constitution states: "The Government is responsible to the House of Deputies who can declare their lack of confidence in it. Such a decision must be supported by more than half the deputies, by more than half the total number of votes, and voting by name". 250 deputies voted for the Government programme out of total of 500. Some of the deputies who thus freely participated in this debate, and gave their vote for the Government, subsequently went abroad and began propagating the idea that the Government had come to power by force.

The facts regarding the events of February 1948 make it plain that these events took place without any violence or bloodshed. The Government programme had the full support of the workers and peasants. The policy of the

Government was supported by more than two million trade unionists and the majority of the peasants and farmers. Proof of this was to be seen in the General Strike which took place at 12 noon on February 24th at all factories and offices throughout the Czechoslovak Republic.

One of those taking part in this token strike in support of the Government's policy was the then Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, who in answer to a question from a French journalist replied: "I always go with the people".

After February 1948, the carrying out of the Government programme of 1946 could be completed, particularly those parts of it which had been held up by the resigning ministers: the passing of the new Constitution, the introduction of agricultural reforms and the National Insurance scheme.

The development of Czechoslovakia since 1948 has shown that the Government crisis, which was provoked by the opponents of Socialism was settled in the interest of the working people of Czechoslovakia. In proof of this we give the following facts:

Even before the second world war Czechoslovakia was known as a country with an advanced industry. From 1948 to 1957 industrial production went up by 268 % an average of 16 % annually. Under the Constitution, and thanks to the fact that the economy is planned, anybody who wants to work in Czechoslovakia is sure of employment. There has been no unemployment since the end of the war. The social insurance is demonstrably the best in the world. All medical treatment and medicines are completely free. Hospital and sanitorium treatment is also free. /In Czechoslovakia there is one doctor to every 684 persons, in Britain one to every 1.858 persons/ During sickness and employed person receives up to 90 % of the earnings he had before he fell ill for a period of up to one year. Old age and invalid pensions are also high. Prices are continually falling. Rents are low and in the majority of cases represent less than 10 % of income. Real wages by 1956 were 30.8 % higher than in 1937. The Number of students attending the universities and technical colleges in Czechoslovakia during 1957 was 77.697, which in proportion to the population is twice as many as in Britain /in Britain 195 per 1.000 inhabitants, in Czechoslovakia 370 per 1.000/. Average food consumption in Czechoslovakia per head is almost the same as in Great Britain.