Prague Imprisons U. S. Aide And Ousts Attache as Spies

By The Associated Press.

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia, Oct. 21—Czechoslovakia jailed a United States Embassy clerk today and demanded the immediate recall of an Embassy attaché on charges that they were running a spy ring “directed against the security” of this Communist-led nation.

Isaac Patch, the attaché, told reporters the “charges are absolutely baseless.” Other officials described them as “entirely without foundation.” The arrested American is Samuel Melyn, a clerk in the office of the Embassy’s Military Attaché.

The Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry said in a sharply worded note that it had indisputable proof of the charges, based on confessions of Czech members of the alleged ring, all under arrest.

In all, the Foreign Ministry named five employees of the Embassy, three of them now on assignment outside Czechoslovakia, as the brains behind the purported group. The note said the ring had been organized in March, 1948, one month after the Communists took over the Government.

Informed Western sources speculated the motive behind the Czechoslovak action was revenge for the United States State Department’s support of Yugoslavia for a seat on the United Nations Security Council sought by Czechoslovakia. Yugoslavia defeated Czechoslovakia in the General Assembly voting yesterday, 39-19. The official Prague reaction was that the outcome represented an engineered “American provocation.”

Mr. Melyn was arrested by the security police at 1 P. M., about two hours after the Czechoslovak

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note was handed to James K. Penfield, United States chargé d'affaires.

Mr. Patch, a 37-year-old career diplomat of 31 Eastern Point Road, Gloucester, Mass., was ordered to leave the country within twenty-four hours. Mr. Penfield said the Czechs had refused an official request that he be granted more time.

In addition to espionage, the Government accused the Americans of forming a "terroristic organization" to help "traitors and reactionaries" flee the country.

Woman Also Denounced

It named Miss Louise Schiffner of Lancaster, Pa., former third secretary of the Embassy, who is now assigned to Palermo, Sicily, Walter Birge of St. Louis, Mo., former second secretary, and Spencer Taggart, a former employee of the Embassy, as other ring leaders. Meanwhile, it was reliably reported that thirty-seven Czechs were being tried for treason at the Pankrac political prison, on the outskirts of Prague. It could not be determined whether the defendants were connected with the purported spy ring.

It was also announced in the Government Gazette that nine more directors of Czechoslovakia's nationalized industries had been deposed in a spreading purge of "unreliables." This brought to twenty-nine the total of executive relocations announced in two days. Six of the latest ousters were in the "Svit" enterprises in Gottwald, the former Bata shoe factories.

The Gazette also announced another twenty-eight small businesses had been confiscated and nationalized. Several other private businesses were more "legitimized" because, the Gazette said, "there is no further reason for their existence."

Hotels Closing Reported

The Gazette announced the closing of the Hotel Libuse in Prague for "harboring foreigners." No details were given.

The Embassy case "is further proof of the interference of the American imperialists with the peaceful building of the people's democratic state," the Foreign Ministry declared in a statement to the controlled Czechoslovak press.

"The American espionage ring set all its powers for division of the peaceful growth of Czechoslovakia," it added. "In this case, it misused privileges that are granted the United States Embassy in Prague and its employees to inspire our class enemies to form illegal organizations."

The note charged that Mr. Birge had organized the ring, working with groups headed by Maj. Jaromir Nechansky and another named Velelas Wahl.

"Birge gave instructions to leaders of this group in espionage work and accepted espionage information from them at various meetings," the note said.

Later Mr. Taggart and Miss Schiffner joined the ring and headed it in turn, the note said, and the leadership then went to Moryn and Patch. Mr. Patch came to Prague in February after having served in Moscow and Dairen, Manchuria.

The Government said the Americans had supplied the Czechs with radio sets for sending information to the United States; that Mr. Moryn personally had delivered four in his own motor car last autumn.

"These transmitters were of American make and of the most perfect type," it said.

The whole ring was declared to have worked with the "Council of Free Czechoslovakia," which has headquarters in London.