

January 4, 1945

**From the Diary of V. A. Zorin - Record of
Conversation with Ambassador of Czechoslovakia on
the Recognition of the Polish Interim Government**

Citation:

"From the Diary of V. A. Zorin - Record of Conversation with Ambassador of Czechoslovakia on the Recognition of the Polish Interim Government", January 4, 1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (AVP RF), f. 0138, op. 26, p. 132, d. 6, ll. 5-9. Document No. 35 in Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov (Eastern Europe in the Documents of the Russian Archives), vol. I, 1944-1948. Translated for CWIHP by Svetlana Savranskaya. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/114559>

Summary:

A diary entry of V.A. Zorin's that discusses a conversation with Czechoslovakian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Zdenek Firlinger. The two discussed the recognition of the Polish Interim Government by Czechoslovakia.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

From the Diary of Head of the IV European Department of the People's Commissariat of International Affairs of the USSR V. A. Zorin. Record of Conversation with Ambassador of Czechoslovakia Z. Firlinger on the Recognition of the Polish Interim Government by Czechoslovakia¹

January 4, 1945

SECRET

Moscow

Today at 23:00, I received Firlinger at his request. Firlinger told me that he received a telegram from Benesh, in which Benesh informed him about his conversation with Chichaev on January 1.² He also said that Benesh spoke about establishing relations with the Polish Interim Government in the spirit in which he gave his directives to Firlinger for the conversation in Narkomindel.

I asked Firlinger to specify what did Benesh have in mind speaking about the directives to Firlinger.

Firlinger reminded me of his position that he expressed on January 2.³ I told Firlinger that as far as I was informed about the President's conversation with Chichaev, Benesh's position was somewhat differed from the position that Firlinger defended in his conversation with me on January 2. I pointed out to him that Benesh did not put any preliminary conditions for the recognition of the Polish Interim Government, and that he believed that an automatic recognition of the Interim Government of the Polish Republic on the part of the Czechoslovak government was needed following its recognition by the Soviet Government. Along with the recognition, the Czechoslovak government would like to clarify a number of questions regarding the relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia, specifically the Teshin issue.⁴

Firlinger agreed that this Benesh's position differed from the one, which Benesh recommended to him in the telegram that he received before January 1. Firlinger made a conclusion that apparently Benesh had made a step forward in terms of recognition of the Polish government under the influence of the intervening events, and particularly under the influence of the fact that the PCNO was transformed into the Interim Government of Poland. However, Firlinger added that Benesh's formula regarding the parallel solution of the difficult issues between Poland and Czechoslovakia still apparently presupposes some kind of preliminary agreement between the Interim Polish Government and the Czechoslovak government on the issues of interest to Czechoslovakia.

I said that it seemed to me that Benesh's statements did not call for a necessary preliminary agreement on the points of contention, but included only an intention to discuss them in a friendly manner. Firlinger, however, defended his position and tried to prove that the Teshin issue had a big principal and practical importance for Czechoslovakia, because the annexation of the Teshin district was unquestionably a fact of Polish aggression, because the annexation of that district left Czechoslovakia without coal.

I did not argue with him on that issue.

Later in the conversation, Firlinger was repeatedly and quite insistently asking to help the Czechoslovaks to resolve the issue regarding Teshin Silesia with the Poles in a way favorable for the Czechoslovaks by some kind of Polish statement on the subject of their repudiation of the post-Munich aggression. At this point Firlinger cited his special instructions from Benesh to ask the Soviet government to help them to manage their relations with the Polish Interim Government.

Firlinger asked me what I could recommend in this sense.

I said that in my opinion, the issue of their relations with the Poles and of the resolution of the Teshin problem was a subject of negotiations between the Czechoslovaks and the Poles. I said that we were only interested in a full understanding and friendly relations between the Polish Interim Government and the Czechoslovak Government; at the same time, the issue of recognition of the Polish Interim Government on the part of the Czechoslovak Government, in my opinion, should not be linked with the resolution of any disputed issues between them.

Firlinger asked me if his trip to Lublin for a conversation with Moravski would make any sense.

I responded that it depended on what the character of the conversation would be. If the decision to recognize the Polish Interim Government by the Czechoslovak Government had already been made, and if the trip was supposed to finalize that decision, I personally would not see any grounds to oppose such a trip.

Firlinger added that during such a trip it would be necessary to discuss the issues that concern the Czechs, in particular about the Polish position on the Teshin issue. Then Firlinger asked me whether he should meet with Olshevski once more and inform him about the progress that we noted in Benesh's position on the issue of the recognition of the Polish Interim Government. I responded that he should make the decision himself, but that I personally thought that there should be close contact between friends, especially when they are on the eve on such important decisions that concern both sides. Firlinger said that he would visit Olshevski tomorrow to inform him about the news on the issue of recognition.

Then Firlinger said, citing the telegram that he received from Benesh, that Benesh intended to prepare for the move to the liberated territory in the next one or two months, and to stop in Moscow on his way in order to reach an agreement on a number of issues. I noted that according to our information, Benesh spoke about moving in the next month and even more specifically pointed to the end of January. Firlinger suggested that Benesh probably was receiving more and more information about current developments recently and has probably decided to speed up his return to the country.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this conversation is that Benesh is trying to maneuver on the issue of recognition of the Polish Interim Government, taking into account not only the internal political position of his government, but also the internal political struggle among the Czechoslovak emigration in London. Apparently, in the official instructions that he gives Firlinger, and which naturally become known to a considerable number of members of the Czechoslovak government, Benesh takes a more reserved position. However, in conversations with Chichaev, Benesh is trying to show that he intends to be in line with us on this issue, and is ready to recognize the Polish Interim Government without any kind of preliminary conditions. On the other hand, the transformation of the PCNO into the Interim Government apparently made a certain impression on Benesh. Our pressure regarding this issue, especially in combination with the recognition of the Polish government by our side, could apparently push Benesh and the Czechoslovak government toward a more decisive step in the same direction.

At the end of our conversation, I passed to Firlinger the telegram, which we received from General Svoboda about the serious illness of professor Needla's son. Firlinger said that this information would be very hard for Needla's family to receive, and that he would try to prepare the family for this information.

Head of the IV European Department
of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs

V.ZORIN.

1. The document was distributed to V. Molotov, A. Vyshinsky, V. Dekanozov, and to the files

2. The Soviet side, extremely interested in international recognition of the friendly Polish Interim Government, was engaged in active diplomatic work to that purpose, and was trying to make the Czechoslovak government recognize the Polish government even before the opening of the Yalta conference of the heads of great powers. As Chichaev reported from London. Benesh assured him on January 1, 1945 that "when the Soviet Union recognizes that government, he will automatically have to consider this question. Because it has been announced about the creation of the Polish government in Lublin, the Czechoslovak government, of course, will recognize it as the official government. But Czechoslovakia has its own questions and problems with Poland. Therefore, along with recognizing the Lublin government, Benesh would like to settle some of the political issues with the Poles. For example the issue of the Polish position on the Munich agreement ... " (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 06, finding aid 7 IT 51. file 823. pp. 7-8).

3. On January 2, 1945 Z. Firlinger informed V. Zorin that E. Benesh proposed that before recognizing the Polish government, they should exchange representatives, and find out, "what was its position regarding the post-Munich territorial changes, in particular, to the seizure by Poland of the Teshin Silesia from Czechoslovakia." According to Z. Firlinger, E. Benesh suggested that he should find out the position of the Soviet government regarding this position of the Czechoslovak side (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 0138, finding aid 26 n 132, file 6, p. 1).

4. In the Fall of 1938, capitalizing on the partition of Czechoslovakia, which was carried out by Hitler on the basis of the agreement with the Western powers in Munich in September 1938, Poland forced the Czechoslovak government to give its consent to the annexation of Zaolsie --part of the Teshin Silesia, which was partially populated by Poles -- by Poland. As a result, more than 80% of the territory of the Teshin Silesia became a part of Poland. In a telephone conversation on January 2, 1945, Charge d'affairs of the Polish government Yu. Olshansky told V. Zorin that he had a meeting with Z. Firlinger, and that the latter informed him that the government of Czechoslovakia would have liked "if the Polish government stated that it did not recognize the Munich decisions and the subsequent territorial changes, including those regarding the Teshin Silesia, before the Czechoslovak government would take any steps in its relations with the Interim Polish Government" (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 0122, finding aid 27 n 195, file 6, p. 2). On January 23, 1945, during a reception at V. Molotov's, Polish Prime Minister E. Osubka-Moravsky summarized the Polish approach to the Teshin problem in the following way: "In order to find a just solution to the problem of the Teshin Silesia, we should hold a plebiscite; however, the issue of the territorial division of the Teshin Silesia between the Poles and the Czechs should be settled depending on the ratio of the Polish and the Czech population in that region" (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Fond 07, finding aid 10 II 22, file 311, p. 3)