

July 11, 1947

Notes by I.V. Stalin Regarding President Edvard Beneš's Memorandum on Czechoslovak Foreign Policy

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Summary:

Stalin's notes regarding a memorandum from President of Czechoslovakia Edvard Beneš on Czechoslovak Foreign Policy. Stalin states that the Soviet Union is in favor of Czechoslovakia signing a treaty with France, although he is concerned that the proposed treaty does not specify mutual support against aggression from Germany.

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I.V. Stalin's Notes regarding E. Beneš's Memorandum on Czechoslovak Foreign Policy[1]

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SECRET

We could see from the President's memo that the President saw the position of the Soviet Union regarding the mutual assistance treaty between Czechoslovakia and France as a negative position. I do not agree with such an interpretation of the Soviet position, and I believe it is necessary to state that the Soviet Union is in favor of signing the treaty on mutual assistance between Czechoslovakia and France. Such a treaty would be favorable for Czechoslovakia, and what is favorable for Czechoslovakia, should be considered favorable for the Soviet Union as well.

At the same time, the Soviet government believes that the treaty between Czechoslovakia and France could not be worse or weaker than the treaties that have already been signed by Czechoslovakia with the USSR, Poland and Yugoslavia. The main points of those treaties are, first of all, mutual support against aggression from Germany and its allies, and, secondly, immediate assistance against an aggression being prepared and aggression already begun. The French are excluding both of these points, and thus they are trying to weaken those positions of Czechoslovakia, already gained in treaties with a whole number of states. The Soviet government believes that the Czechoslovak government should not agree to this weakening of the Czechoslovak position, and should demand a treaty from France, which would not be worse than the treaties with the USSR, Yugoslavia and Poland. It is not clear why the French exclude the formula about the allies of Germany in the case of aggression. Is it not true that the German allies would represent the same threat for Czechoslovakia as Germany itself would? It is not clear either why the French exclude the point of automatic assistance in case of aggression on the part of Germany and its allies. Russia could overlook the point of automatic assistance, because it has a large territory, and in the worst case it could temporarily retreat by one or two hundred kilometers while waiting for assistance on the part of its allies. However, Czechoslovakia, as a small country, cannot overlook the point of immediate automatic assistance, because it would be sufficient for the enemy to descend 40 kilometers from the border mountains and Czechoslovakia would be on the edge of defeat. The French have let Czechoslovakia down before in terms of providing immediate assistance. We cannot allow Czechoslovakia to forget this lesson.

In addition, we have to keep in mind that if the Czechoslovak government agrees to weaken its position in the treaty with France, then the Czechoslovak allies -- the USSR, Yugoslavia and Poland -- could find themselves in an unfavorable situation in comparison to France. In such a case, we should not exclude the possibility that they would look at the French precedent.

[1] Copies sent to I. Stalin, V. Molotov, L. Beria, A. Zhdanov, G. Malenkov, A. Mikoyan, N. Voznesensky. The document bears a note: "USSR Attache in Prague Comrade Bodrov was instructed to hand this document to Beneš." Memorandum of President of the Czechoslovak Republic E. Beneš was received via Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia Mr. K. Gottwald.