

BENEŠ AND THE SOVIET UNION. THEIR RELATIONSHIP SINCE 1935

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One of the long-standing legends in Czechoslovak history relates how brave President Beneš was treacherously betrayed by the West at Munich in 1938. Sticking to this now would mean neglecting the essence of Beneš's double-faced policy of alliances. Lately, Harry Hanak of London School of Slavonic Studies has been providing new evidence showing that the Czech politician leaned towards Russia at an earlier date. Vojtěch Mastny corroborates this view by testifying that long before Stalin became „bündnisfähig“ for the West, Czechoslovakia had begun to seek a special relationship with Moscow.

This paper takes the story farther back than Mastny (who refers to the beginning of the Second World War). By linking the two visits Beneš paid to Moskow in 1935 and 1943 new light is shed on the Czechoslovak „renversement des alliances“. By taking the detour via Moscow in 1945 again the President-in-Exile symbolically stressed his own and his country's moving away from a West that had once let him down. He was determined to prevent a repetition of particular but in no way unexpected disappointment.