

# HEATH HEARS SOFIA PLANS NEW TRIAL

## U. S. Envoy, on Way Home, Says Purge of Followers of Dimitrov Continues

By **M. S. HANDLER**

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**BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Feb. 25**—United States Minister Donald R. Heath, who passed through Belgrade today en route to Washington after the rupture of diplomatic relations with the Bulgarian Government, reported it was currently believed in Sofia that Anton Yugov, former member of the Politburo and Minister of the Interior under the late Premier Georgi Dimitrov, was under house arrest and that another trial of Mr. Dimitrov's Communist followers was in preparation.

Mr. Heath, who was accompanied by his legation staff and their dependents, arrived in Belgrade after an uneventful crossing of the frontier into Yugoslavia. The Simplon Express, to which special legation coaches were attached, paused for an hour before resuming the trip to Trieste.

United States Ambassador George V. Allen, Counselor Robert Borden Reams and all the service attachés of the United States Embassy in Belgrade, with their wives, met the train at the railroad station.

The United States repatriates from Sofia included two private citizens. One was Miss Mary Haskell, 81, sister of H. J. Haskell, editor of The Kansas City Star. Miss Haskell had spent almost sixty years in Bulgaria as a lay missionary and teacher. The other was John Parker, 60, factory worker from Detroit, who had returned to his native Bulgaria four months ago for a visit and then found that he could not leave the country. There are thirty-five cases involving United States citizens in Bulgaria who are still unable to obtain the proper documents to leave the country.

### Says Purge Is Continuing

Mr. Heath said that the purge of Mr. Dimitrov's Communist party followers was still continuing at a strong pace. In addition to the current report of the house arrest of Mr. Yugov there were reports involving the probable forthcoming arrest of Dobri Terpeshev, former member of the Bulgarian Politburo and wartime resistance leader, who had been assigned to a minor Cabinet post by Vulko Chervenkov, new Premier, in his recently reconstructed Government. Mr. Yugov was named Minister of Industry and Mines ad interim, a post that is believed to confirm his doom in view of the collapse of the industrial expansion program under his predecessors.

Mr. Heath said that the national economy of Bulgaria had reached its lowest point under the present regime. He explained that drastic declines were succeeded in brief intervals by minor recoveries, but that on the whole the economic situation in the country had never been worse than at present.

The transport of the baggage and personal belongings of the legation staff to the Sofia railroad station was accompanied by several unpleasant incidents. One embassy clerk was halted three times at pistol point by police on his trips to the station. The departure of Mr. Heath and his staff was uneventful except for heavy details of police that invaded the station platforms and prevented anyone but members of the diplomatic corps from approaching the Americans. The frontier was crossed without any difficulty.

Mr. Heath said he had the impression that the Bulgarian Government did not want the break of diplomatic relations to come when it did; in fact, the Bulgarian Government had tried to trick the United States Government by delaying publication of Washington's announcement of the rupture, to gain time to stage another trial in an effort to implicate Mr. Heath's staff in espionage charges.

### Campaign Comes to Climax

In a prepared statement, Mr. Heath said that the Bulgarian Government's act in declaring him persona non grata had brought to a climax the campaign of "calculated insult and vilification" of the United States that had begun with the withdrawal of the Allied Control Commission in October, 1947.

The Minister described the recent trial of the late Traicho Kostov, former Vice Premier who was put to death, and the current trial as "contrived trials which serve as a basis of request for the recall of diplomats." The Kostov trial, he said, did not even bear a "semblance of credibility."

"Without going into the details regarding 'proving' espionage by the American Mission, I wish to point out one basic factor," Mr. Heath added. "All 'spies' allegedly doing 'illegal' work for the legation—the [Protestant] pastors, the Kostov group and now these unfortunate ex-employees of the legation—even if the 'confessions' extorted from them were true, did not provide the American Mission with one scrap of information which was not published or easily observable at the time of which the American Mission, as a member of the Allied Control Commission, did not have access through the Bulgarian Government itself.

"The American and British Missions must have been stupid indeed to set up espionage networks of 'spies' for gathering information that anyone in those missions could get merely by reading, observation or by calling the appropriate Bulgarian agency."

Mr. Heath said that the so-called evidence in the trials was built on lies and obtained by coercion and that the courts themselves were prejudiced and unscrupulous.