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Economic Highlights—

The Iron Curtain countries have totally destroyed anything even remotely resembling a free press within their own borders. Now they are trying to make certain that no news concerning them, save for official government handouts, reaches the rest of the world.

That is about the only logical deduction that can be drawn from Czechoslovakia's conviction of William N. Oatis, an American and an Associated Press correspondent, on charges of "spying out state secrets" and reporting "slanders and lies," and his sentencing to 10 years in prison.

So far as can be ascertained, Mr. Oatis' "crime" consisted of trying to do his job properly. He did what every good reporter in every free country does every day—that is, he sought and reported the news. As is customary with every press service, his superiors in the AP organization gave him assignments and he did his best to carry them out. These assignments were in no way unusual, and none of them could be considered "spying" as that word is understood in the Western world. But in the Communist world, "spying" means anything which displeases the heads of state. The laws are so drawn that anyone, citizen or foreigner, can be severely punished for saying and writing things which wouldn't cause an eyebrow to be lifted elsewhere.

Mr. Oatis' ordeal followed the usual pattern. He was held incommunicado for 70 days. He was not allowed to contact his friends or American officials. The State Department has formally charged that his so-called confession was prepared by the Czech secret police, and that he rehearsed it under police direction. This confession, the State Department added, was only "the admission of an American reporter that in the high traditions of his profession he was attempting under the most unfavorable conditions to report a true picture of conditions and events in Czechoslovakia as he saw them." It said further that Oatis' conviction "shows that the present regime in Czechoslovakia fears truth, hates liberty, and knows no justice."

The Western world has learned

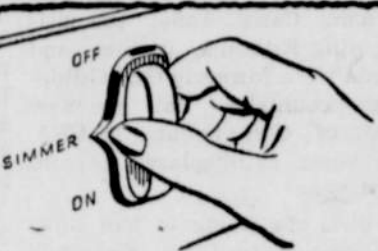
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something about how confessions of this character are obtained. The victim is subjected to merciless questioning. He is given little food. He is kept awake for days and nights on end. He is alternately threatened and cajoled. He is beaten. The whole idea is to break down the will—to bring the man to a point of mental and physical exhaustion and despair where nothing matters except to escape his tormentors. He will then sign and agree to anything. This happened to Robert Vogeler and others. It undoubtedly happened to Oatis.

What can the government do to protect our newsmen in the Communist nations? Alexander Jones, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, has suggested that, in reprisal for the treatment of Oatis, the trade privileges now given Czechoslovakia in the American zone of Germany be withdrawn.

Others think we should go much farther. As an example, the Portland Oregonian said editorially, "If the United States does not get its back up soon, these kidnappings, pseudo trials, extorted confessions and imprisonment of Americans will become chronic. Our government should give immediate study, with a view to action, of the possible effects of making the Iron Curtain a two-way barrier; that is, the withdrawal from outlaw nations of all American nationals and the complete severance of diplomatic relations plus an airtight ban on all commercial transactions between these countries and the United States." This may seem to be an extreme policy. But, in dealing with Communism, it may prove to be the only feasible one.

Mr. Munk Austin of Perthamboy, New Jersey, has been calling on old friends this week in Central Point.

Mrs. Iva Johnson of Modesto, California arrived in Central Point Sunday evening to visit her aunt, Mrs. E. E. Scott. Mrs. Johnson is spending a month vacationing in Eureka, California with friends. Later she will go to Portland and Brimberton to visit.

New Motor Vehicle Safety Responsibility Law Starts Aug. 2

(Continued from last week)

Can You Lose Your Motoring Privileges?

Yes, both your driving license and ownership registration can be suspended very quickly under this law. Within 50 days after an accident in which a person has been killed or even slightly injured, or property damage to any one person, including yourself exceeds \$100, you may furnish the secretary of state with satisfactory evidence that you have done any one of the following things:

Obtained a release from liability signed by the other parties to the accident.

Obtained a final court judgement declaring you to be not liable. Executed a duly acknowledged written agreement providing for the payment of all claims resulting from the accident, not exceeding a total of \$11,000.

Deposited with the secretary of state sufficient cash to pay damage claims resulting from the accident, as determined by the secretary, but not to exceed \$5,000 for death or injury to one person, \$10,000 for death or injury to more than one person, and \$1,000 property damage.

Should you fail to do one of these things within 50 days, 10 days thereafter the secretary of state must suspend both your driving license and ownership registration. Such suspension will remain in force until you have met one of the above requirements. In addition, you must furnish proof of future financial

responsibility for a period of three years, regardless of whether you met one of these requirements before suspension. This is known as the security action of the law. It does not apply, however, if your car was lawfully parked or was being driven without your consent at the time of the accident.

How Can You Protect Yourself?

The law provides several ways. If you filed your accident report and had in effect at the time of the accident some form of liability insurance or bond which covers damage claims up to a total of \$11,000, the security section of the law does not apply to you at all. Remember, however, that such insurance or bond must be in effect at the time of the accident and provide the following minimum coverage: \$1,000 for property damage, \$5,000 for death or injuries sustained by one person, and \$10,000 for death or injuries by more than one person in one accident.

In the case of owners or operators residing in Oregon, the insurance must be written by a company licensed to do business in this state. In the case of non-residents, it may be written by a company licensed

to do business in the state where they reside. Owners of more than 25 motor vehicles may qualify as self-insurers. Provision for furnishing the secretary of state with information that you carried insurance at the time of the accident is included in your accident report. Be sure to answer all questions accurately and fully, and thus avoid suspension of your motoring privileges by mistake.

In Conclusion

This statement is made public primarily to acquaint private passenger car owners and operators with the principal provisions of the new law that are most likely to affect them. It does not purport to set forth all statutory provisions or to discuss any of them in legal detail. Owners or operators who desire complete statutory information may obtain a copy of the law from the secretary of state.

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