

# CURRENT MAGAZINES

## THE FUTURE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czechoslovakia Now at Fateful Crossroads—Prof. James A. Roy, in *Saturday Night*.

Czechoslovakia's Rebirth—Mr. J. Alvarez del Vayo, in the *Nation*.

Oppression in the Sudetenland—Mr. F. A. Vogt, in *American Mercury*.

Transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia—Mr. A. Merisner, in the *Fortnightly*.

Memorandum of Czechoslovakia—Gracchus, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

IS it possible that the people whose nationhood was re-established by Masaryk is to have it destroyed again by Stalin? The *Battle of the White Mountain*, early in the Thirty Years War, inflicted a blow from which Bohemia took more than three centuries to recover. How long will it take to recover, if it accepts, not when crushed by the arms of a Count Tilly, but beguiled by the diplomacy of a Molotov, the status of "Soviet satellite"? For comment on this problem, a Czech might with advantage consult any friend of several races fixed by geography at a place dangerously near to Russia. He might enquire from a Ukrainian, a Pole, a Lett, an Esthonian or a Lithuanian.

But why should this ever be a question of more than speculative or academic interest? Is there any thought at Prague of compromising Czechoslovakian sovereignty? I trust there is not, and shall refuse to expect any such development until there are signs far more convincing in their sinister suggestiveness than any to be yet seen. Still, there are undoubtedly groups and tendencies within Czechoslovakia that friends of freedom would rather not observe.

### I

Here is a passage from the report of an interview which Professor J. A. Roy, of Queen's University, lately had with President Benes in Prague. It was shortly after the general election of a few months ago, on whose result the Czech National Committee in London said that the Czech leader had "sold his country to the U.S.S.R." The largest single group in the new Legislature was Communist, and hence a Communist was invited to form the new government. President Benes, naturally, scouts the charge that this meant a sale to Russia. His talk with Professor Roy, however, as reported in *Saturday Night*, had a few disturbing paragraphs. For example:

Think of our political and geographical situation! We are in the middle of Europe; we have no outlet to the sea, no ports. We can never again depend on France if we should find ourselves in trouble. It is unlikely that England could help us. It is very doubtful if there will again be a President of the United States who would be willing to send millions of Americans to fight in Europe.

What enemy does he dread? He made this perfectly clear:

And just across our frontier, remember, there are seventy or eighty millions of Germans who hate us now worse than ever before. To-day they can do nothing, but they have not changed as a nation, and in twenty years' time—who knows? They might then be in a position to make great trouble for us.

So what is to be done about it? While non-committal to this Canadian interviewer, President Benes said enough to be suggestive:

We are living in a world of realities, and have to guide our actions accordingly. And we, Czechs, can afford to take no chances. We *are* taking no chances.

To eliminate all risk is an attractive policy, for a nation as for an individual. But such comprehensive insurance is not obtainable. "To live dangerously", as Nietzsche said, is in a measure the condition of living to any real purpose. In Czechoslovakia's case, there is reason to apprehend that the risks she now proposes to run may prove graver than those she is taking pains to escape.

One understands only too well the mood of distrust to which she was driven by her experience with "western democracies" eight years ago. The new nation, whose policies T. G. Masaryk inspired, had staked all upon his doctrine of democracy. Czechoslovakia, alone among "the Succession States" created by the European settlement after the First World War, was continuing faithful to those generous methods of government which it had been the dream of the founders of the great League—Woodrow Wilson, Viscount Cecil, General Smuts—to establish for Slav peoples at length set free from Teutonic tyranny. When one thinks of Poland's relapse to the despotism first of Pilsudski and later of Pilsudski's under-study, Colonel Beck, or of the hideous spectacle in Yugoslavia where King Alexander had extinguished the very appearance of freedom and Belgrade even before Berlin was under a terrorist gang, one recalls the splendid isolation of the regime of Dr. Edouard Benes. One remembers, too, in sharp contrast, that other



Succession State, Rumania, so gross a caricature of what the authors of its vast expansion and its new opportunity intended it after 1919 to achieve. Alone in the so-called "Little Entente" did Czechoslovakia remain, after twenty years trial, steadfast in the democratic faith and practice which elsewhere had disappeared. One of the last French Foreign Ministers, who toured Europe in the cause of that international system known as "the League", brought back a report that in Prague alone among capitals had he been received with genuine enthusiasm and a readiness to co-operate.

But the faith which continued to burn with a steady flame in the hearts of Czechoslovakian patriots, long after it had grown faint or been extinguished elsewhere, could not be expected to survive the events of the years 1931 to 1939. Beginning with Japan's raid on Manchuria, and persisting through the Abyssinian affair, the Spanish affair, the Japanese onslaught on North China, until it reached its unendurable crisis for them in Hitler's proclamation of a "Protectorate over Bohemia and Moravia", the Powers which conferred annually with a show of seriousness at Geneva were seen to be either unwilling or unable to do anything for the safeguarding of a weaker State on which a stronger had designs. If all belief in the collective security of which the League was a symbol so collapsed for the Czechoslovakia of 1939 that appeals to rally to that other version of the same which is known as "UNO" fall at Prague now on unreceptive ears, if Czechs recall the proverb "When a partner deceives you once, it may be his fault, but when he deceives you a second time, it is your fault", can we blame those for whom disillusionment took so long, but was in the end so tragic? I quote from an article which appeared in *THE DALHOUSIE REVIEW* three months before that fateful "Munich Agreement," of September, 1938, by which Czech faith in the western democracies was at length shattered. It was an article written in deep and, alas, prescient concern about what lay ahead. The writer had in mind those press organs which had been ridiculing the Czech case and extolling dictatorship. He wondered if the editors had any appreciation of the risks they were running:

Certain newspapers, during these crucial weeks, in London and in Paris, took the enormous responsibility of representing (i) that Great Britain would not under any circumstances fight for the Czechs; (ii) that in all probability France would not fight for them; and (iii) that the resistance threatened from Prague was "bluff," sure either to be abandoned on challenge or to be quickly and properly overcome.

Those newspapers, it cannot be denied, were correct in their forecast. How far they contributed to influence British and French policy, so as to lead to the fulfilment of their own prediction, it is impossible to say. But beyond a doubt they had their share in stirring public support for the wretched policy to which Neville Chamberlain and Paul Daladier, "appeasing" Hitler and Mussolini, set their seal of approval at Munich. One does not willingly return to such shameful memories, but in order to understand why Czechoslovakian leadership now inclines so strongly to some association other than that with British and French democracy, one must look back upon the stages by which so robust a faith was made to wither.

Yet however natural—indeed inevitable—the distrust of London and Paris which such experience created in Prague, what hope is there for Czechoslovakia's future in taking her place with Poland and Yugoslavia "behind the iron curtain"? Mr. Churchill's discernment in 1938 was abundantly confirmed by events. The phrase in which he sums up the situation now is laden with a stern suggestiveness, like that of his language then.

Despite the sudden increase of strength in the Czechoslovak Communist Party which the recent election showed, the country is no more Communist than is France in its fundamental disposition. Like France, indeed, it has for a time become so unsettled by misfortune as to entertain the cynical idea that there is something to be said for almost any new venture in government. In such mood of frantic change, steps may be taken on which it will be very hard to go back, and rumor has it that the cautious Dr. Benes has already gone dangerously far along the Moscow-indicated route. Already in Conferences the Czechoslovak representative is being counted as at least always a probable supporter of Soviet policies against those urged by Great Britain and the United States. The press recorded applause by the Czechoslovak delegates at the recent Paris Conference, when Mr. Molotov described the British-American project of free navigation on the Danube as one for the economic enslavement of Central European peoples by "imperialist" Powers. It brought a retort in suspension of a \$50,000,000 loan from the United States to Czechoslovakia, with the caustic comment by Mr. Byrnes that if such loans meant economic enslavement, they could not be too quickly stopped, and that since the Czechoslovaks were themselves making a loan to Rumania, it was fair to assume they no longer needed American aid!



## II

It is time for very plain speaking on what may quite easily—and very soon—reach a development that is irremediable.

Nothing could be plainer than the division of Powers in UNO into two contrasted *blocs*, pursuing policies contradictory of each other. Every time we hear again the familiar cant phrase about attainment of "better understanding between the U.S.S.R. and the democracies," we might with advantage recall a memory of 1938. In his New Year statement, reviewing the achievements of 1937, Neville Chamberlain then said, with an obvious touch of pride, that he and his colleagues had fought consistently against the proposal to divide democracies and dictatorships into hostile camps! We know what was the upshot of this (no doubt well-meant, but amazingly stupid) resolve to see things not as they are, but as one would prefer that they should be. Think of persisting, as late as the close of 1937, in the assumption that dictatorships and democracies had fundamentally the same purpose, when German and Italian, Japanese and Spanish developments had rendered such illusion no longer charitable, because simply ridiculous.

In the antagonism of the two *blocs* now so plainly dividing UNO, there is (at least as yet) no such menace of war as that which impended from the strain of 1938. But the radical character of the contrast, beyond the capacity of any adjustment to overcome except temporarily and by a disguise laden with peril, is as plain now as it was then. Mr. Molotov's recent speech, to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, showed how for him at least there can be no suggestion of compromise. Mr. Byrnes and Mr. Bevin, without being so rude, had been equally explicit. It is not too much to say that at Conference after Conference the two sides have accused each other of a deliberate purpose to thwart the Charter which they professedly seek to carry out, and of using the pretence of loyalty to the United Nations organization as cloak for a project of world domination not unlike Hitler's. I shall not spend time and space on arguing which (if either) of the sides in this controversy is right. My immediate concern is with the attitude which Czechoslovakia means to adopt, and which her behavior lately at Conferences seems to imply. Whether her delegates in Paris did actually applaud when Mr. Molotov poured out his favorite abusive language about "economic enslavement" and "dollar diplomacy", became matter of vehement dispute

as soon as Mr. Byrnes began to speak of cancelling the American credits granted to Czechoslovakia. But it is of little moment to determine whether that particular gesture of offensiveness was made or not. If it was, it was but one of a series; if it was not, the general tenor of Czechoslovak support for the Soviet *bloc* was quite sufficiently impressive apart from it. What is of enormous importance is that the Czechoslovak people should be made to realize in time the probable result for the sovereign rights of their Republic if they take definitely the side to which their leaders seem to have been inclining. Truly (to adapt a biblical phrase) the little finger of the Soviet Union may for them prove thicker than Austria-Hungary's loins!

### III

Mr. John Foster Dullus contributed some months ago to *Life* two articles which every Czech patriot should read.

No one else, surely, on this continent is now discussing world affairs with quite the same title to be heard. To his unchallenged eminence in the field of international law, Mr. Dullus has added the intimate knowledge of recent developments which he acquired as confidential adviser to President after President of the United States, and as representative of his country at every recent important Conference. His articles in *Life* set forth the conclusions to which he has been driven, and which he judges it his duty to disclose now without reserve, upon the foreign policy which the Soviet Union is pursuing. When I say they should be read by every Czech patriot, I mean that for every Czech who has been told by Dr. Benes and by Mr. Jan Masaryk of the guarantee the present *entente* with the Soviet Union gives Czechoslovakia against "taking risks," here is a picture he cannot examine too soon, or with too much care, of the fate to which this very *entente* may be conducting her.

"Imperialism" and "imperialist" are words of bitter reproach against Great Britain and the United States, constantly to be heard on the Moscow radio or to be read in Moscow newspapers. But, in the sense in which they are genuinely reproachful, their most obvious application now is to the U.S.S.R. Within a generation, Russia has annexed territory inhabited by twenty-five million people, and has established indirect but decisive dominance over a hundred million more. To every competent observer on the spot, nothing could be more ridiculous than the



description of her system as a Union of Socialist Republics, implying that such "republics" are autonomous, that they have come together by their own free choice, and that any one of them could, if it chose, assert itself against the centralized power with at least the same degree of independence as belongs to "State rights" in the American Union. Equally difficult is it to keep one's gravity when one is told of a system "the most democratic in the world," under which there is no free press, no free controversy before a general election, no presenting of rival issues to voters, no opportunity of voting otherwise than on an "official" list of candidates.

Here is a passage in which Mr. Dullus sums up the general conclusion for which, in the body of his articles, he has supplied detailed evidence:

"The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is world-wide in scope. Its goal is to have governments everywhere which accept the basic doctrines of the Soviet Communist Party and which suppress political and religious thinking which runs counter to those doctrines. Thereby the Soviet Union would achieve world-wide harmony—a *Pax Sovietica*.

"We saw that Soviet leaders seek to achieve their peace by (1) a gradual expansion of the Soviet Union itself—the Inner Zone; (ii) the pressure of force in surrounding areas—the Middle Zone—which are subject to the controlling influence of Soviet land power; and (iii) in the Outer Zone, the political organization of mass discontent."

Mr. Attlee, I observe, has made his own, expressing it in his own language but intending precisely the same sense, what Mr. Dullus had written months before about the curious Russian use of certain familiar political terms. One cannot understand properly a speech by Mr. Molotov unless one keeps in mind, as a sort of glossary of terms, this explanation. I give it in the very words of Mr. Dullus:

It is necessary to understand the meaning which Soviet speakers and writers give to the words "democracy," "fascist," and "friendly." Failure to understand that explains why we so often agree with what Soviet leaders say and then find it difficult to reconcile their acts with what we thought they meant. Thus Soviet leaders say that the goal of their foreign policy is to have everywhere *democratic* governments which will be friendly and which will eradicate *fascist* thinking. That seems to be reasonable and nothing to which we could properly take exception—until we realize that:

"Democracy" in Russian, means the Soviet type of proletariat dictatorship.

"Fascist," in Russian, is a word of reproach applied to all non-Soviet faiths.

"Friendly," in Russian, is a word of approval for those who profess belief in Soviet ideals and who prove their sincerity by working to promote them.

Five months have elapsed since Mr. Dullus issued this warning, in his articles of June 3 and June 10, published by *Life*. Will anyone dispute the statement that since then, at Conference after Conference, the Soviet representatives have continuously exemplified just the policies which he attributed to them?

The question, then, which should engage the most earnest thought at Prague is the question in which of the "zones" of Soviet control, Inner, Middle or Outer, is Czechoslovakia willing to run such extreme risk of being included? Will she be annexed, as a Soviet Dominion, with only the innocuous and compliant Rumania intervening to prevent her being incorporated territorially? Will she take direction on her foreign policies from Moscow, as such direction is now taken everywhere in the Balkans with the solitary exception of Greece? Or will she await, with but little opportunity to protest (because of the Soviet-Czechoslovak *entente*) the organizing of Communist sedition in her territory, camouflaged (like the movement in Azerbaijan) as an "independence movement"?

#### IV

Rumor has followed rumor, keeping the Czechoslovak authorities busy at denial after denial of their country's drift into subservience to the Soviet Union. For at least a year, ever since the "Czech Government-in-Exile" went back to Prague and resumed the control wrested from it in 1938, a Socialist current previously unknown in its policies has been apparent. It decreed public ownership of commercial banks, of insurance companies, and of numerous industries by long tradition in private hands. Coal mines, for example, were taken over by the State; also defence industries, glass and porcelain manufacture, cement and textiles, shoes, steel plants. This meant the nationalizing of about 70 per cent of Czech industry. Mr. Maurice reported at the time that Czechoslovakia



was becoming, after Russia, the most Socialistic country in the world.

But so far such intensified Socialism fell far short of the Communism which is now alleged to be making such headway at Prague. In other countries too, conspicuously in the United States under F. D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" and in Great Britain under the Labour Government led by Mr. Attlee, Socialist changes have gone far. It is a report of very different character which tells that "the Communists, and indirectly the Soviet Union, are taking over the Czechoslovak army." Of course fierce denial of this has come promptly from Prague. The rumor was rich with detail; about members of the old Czech army of the First World War leaving the service now because of such change in its control; about a new practice under which a Czech officer must make a declaration of his political views before he can be promoted; about a record card kept for each officer with "notation of his party membership." There is a story, too, about anti-Communist newspapers being put on the army "black list", and about the Czech army including Soviet officers who are not Czechoslovak citizens at all. Whether such reports are true or false (and they are vehemently declared false at Prague), it has a most disturbing effect that they should be in such wide circulation. The parallel of other countries at once comes to mind. Czechoslovakia would be by no means the first to be brought thus, step by step, under Communist control, as one key position after another is secured by Soviet agents.

There is plainly a current of strong protest within the country against so many incidents by which suspicion is stirred. For example, the twenty-eighth anniversary of the declaration of Czechoslovak independence lately came round. A year ago, when this was celebrated, there were such street decorations that Prague was described as looking like "a little Moscow." But this time in Marienbad the Soviet flag and the picture of Marshal Stalin were removed by a group of soldiers who had fought in the war whose victory was being commemorated. Likewise the picture of the Czechoslovak Premier, who chances now to be a Communist, was removed from display. The Communist Minister of the Interior had three men arrested for this, but there is much comment on his action in thus treating as "Fascist" those who had merely insisted on fidelity to the agreement that on the national holiday the national colours alone should be shown.

Czechoslovakia is indeed at the parting of the ways, and

the direction she takes will make a vast difference to her development. It is altogether unworthy of the men with the T. G. Masaryk tradition in their charge to countenance—not to say exploit—familiar nonsense about getting to understand the Soviet Union, about the compatibility of Communism with freedom and democracy, or about the need to guard against the “imperialist aggressiveness” of Great Britain and the United States. How the shade of “the Liberator-President” might be thought to view a development such as this at Prague, one may more easily imagine than describe. The thought would occur to him, as he not only conceived but at times expressed it when forces such as are now at work made some tentative ventures in his own time, that what he had done might prove to have been in vain. However hard the pressure from Moscow, and however disappointing has at times been the attitude of their western allies, the Czechoslovaks are still expected, by those who in past dark days have been their friends, to be worthier of the Masaryk heritage.

Hazlitt once spoke of “subsidiary aids to an imperfect virtue.” Perhaps aid of this kind, to those whose fibre has weakened a little, may prove forthcoming. I note a recent despatch of interest from Prague:

In general, however, the tendency to handle more and more things with gloves is growing. The immediate concrete lesson in the suspension of the United States credits and now the British War Loan crisis here is that the Western Powers also must not be offended. A diplomatic observer of the First Bank remarked that the Czechoslovak Government had now changed from a one-inch tight rope to a one-quarter-inch tight rope.

Such balancing must be difficult. But perhaps what is called “dollar diplomacy” may prove to have incidental consequences in a sphere more elevated than that of dollars.

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