

B O O K S

"The ways of Czecho-Slovakia and its Magyar Minority", by Ödön Tarján.

The author, who is an expert on the question of Czecho-Slovak magyars and their economic position in the dismembered territories as well as their general political situation, gives us a vivid picture of conditions existing there and the lot they are thrown into — as he himself is. The book, carries on its front page a map, showing that the most western town of Czecho-Slovakia, Eger, is 860 kilometers in aerial length from London, but 940 kilometers from Körösmező (Jasina) which is the most eastern frontier station. This proves the unnatural status of Czecho-Slovakia's frontiers. The Danube-basin question being of up-to-date importance impels us to quote from this book, citing his final conclusions.

"The shrill loud-speakers of Czecho-Slovak propaganda, broadcasting pleasant tales about the scrupulous observance of minority rights and the true democratic spirit of Czecho-Slovakia, have the sole object of drowning the S. O. S. cries of the suffering minorities and those of the starving "liberated" Slovaks.

Democracy and humanism are but shop window, objects morality and civilization stage screens hiding from the eyes a gigantic business concern engaged in unscrupulous jobbing under State patronage, and dividing the population into top-dogs and under-dogs, into exploited and exploiters

The whole building reminds one of a structure hastily erected for the purposes of a show, not meant, however, to last for a longer period. It has a pleasant, dignified appearance if viewed at a distance; on closer scrutiny, however, it reveals its secret of having been constructed of woodwork and paperpulp instead of steel, brick and marble

The question emerges: what does it all mean? Is it reasonable to suppose that MM. Masaryk, Beneš and the other State founders labour under the delusion of having erected a lasting edifice? It is perfectly inconceivable that the blunders committed should have so long remained hidden to them. And should they even be inclined to overlook the wrongs inflicted on large masses of the population, they could not possibly ignore or abide by the alarming problems they are faced with in public finance and economics. They are bound to realise that the maintenance of production is possible on such a reduced scale only within the present confines of Czecho-Slovakia; that social upheavals of unpredictable consequences must be reckoned with. The impending catastrophe could but be averted by taking swift and broad-minded decisions: the Prague rulers do not appear, however, to possess the courage shoulder the grave though inevitable responsibilities.

The economic crisis has deepened the wounds inflicted on Slovakia and Ruthenia by the Peace Treaty, and it is now evident that the Prague Government is unable to heal them. A few years ago the hope could still be entertained that Slovakia and Ruthenia might safeguard their interests by acquiring a substantial autonomy within the limits of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. The progress of pauperisation experienced since, and the hair-brained policy of achieving economic selfsupply stubbornly pursued by Prague, have

demonstrated that symbiosis with the Czech countries could never vouchsafe to the Carpathian provinces a healthy development of their economic resources. It is sufficient to remember the data supplied above regarding goods-traffic between the Eastern and Western parts of the country, to dispel any doubt in this respect.

What however, could justify the control by Prague of territories the economic prosperity of which depends on another country considered and treated as an arch-enemy, and attacked by all possible, openly brandished and hidden, weapons by the Czecho-Slovak State?

Economic cooperation with Hungary is a vital necessity for Czecho-Slovakia. It will not be accomplished, however, on a proper scale before solving political differences separating these countries from one another. The way of reconciliation must needs cross hotly debated territory surrounding the conspicuous landmark of Treaty Revision. The Hungarian demand for Revision is bitterly opposed by the Czecho-Slovak Government. This stubborn resistance is not, however, rooted in the peoples' real interests, their future well-being depending entirely on an early solution of existing difficulties. Czecho-Slovakia herself is faced with an appalling financial and economic situation. She has failed to win the friendship of any of her immediate neighbours. Masaryk's State needs, more urgently than any other, peace and the possibilities of a quiet evolution. These she cannot find so long as she persists in her present constitution. The Little Entente is but a scare-crow set up to intimidate Hungary, an empty life-belt without a subsistence of its own. A positive reality, on the other hand, is the fateful interdependence of all peoples living in the Danube basin, especially that of immediate neighbours. Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary might rely too on the common interest of setting a limit to German expansion. Prague has certainly no time to lose: she cannot afford to let things come to a head. She might not survive a serious test. Especially since Poland has loosened the ties binding her to France and her Allies, Czecho-Slovakia must realise the urgent necessity of coming to terms with Hungary. This necessity tends to become the paramount problem of Czecho-Slovak foreign policy. The differences still barring the way to such a "rapprochement" are the fruits of a misdirected policy conceived in a spirit of perverted pride which has no echo in the hearts of the people. A policy seeking to establish justice and equality among the peoples would also succeed in solving the problem of the Magyar minorities, by reducing their number, in the spirit of President Masaryk's teachings, through restoring them as far as possible to their mother country, to the lowest possible figure. For the thesis once announced by Professor Masaryk — as he then was — retains its full validity in the State headed by himself, too: "Political independence is indispensable to a people which is cultured and aware of its dignity; a people politically unfree will be oppressed economically and socially exploited even in States risen to the summit of cultural evolution."