

loaf of Szolnok bread, which he pronounced, and I believe he was right too, to be the very best in Hungary. It is true, all this might be nothing but the effect of good-nature: and yet, reader, had you seen the real kindness with which it was done, the interest the good man took in our journey, the sentiments he expressed in favour of our native

land; had you received all this attention from an individual you never saw before, and whom in all human probability you would never see to yourself you owed it, — you must be differently constructed from me if you did not find yourself a happier man than when you entered Szolnok." (Vol. I. p. 533—34.)

(To be continued.)

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA — THE BULWARK OF THE MOSUL PETROLEUM FIELDS?

by

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The Czech Colonel Emmanuel Moravec, a member of the teaching staff of the Prague Military College, has written a monograph entitled "*The Strategic Importance of Czecho-Slovakia for Western Europe*" which has been published in English and French by the Prague "Orbis" Press. The real object of this work is to convince the Great Powers of Europe how vitally important it is to them that Czecho-Slovakia should not be crushed by the Third German Empire.

We shall deal with this propaganda pamphlet quite objectively: but we cannot pass over in silence the suggestions — absolutely wrong from a military point of view — which are liable to mislead the uninitiated reader.

The fundamental idea behind Mr. Moravec's monograph is the following: —

The Germans are endeavouring to expand their sphere of influence along the "*Eurasian transversal*" from *Hamburg through Prague, Budapest, Constantinople and Mosul to Bushire* on the *Persian Gulf*. The German advance is flanked by Poland and Italy, which must also be overcome by the Germans, if only because in the opinion of Chancellor Hitler the Adriatic and even the Ukraine are objectives of German aspirations. The above-mentioned "*transversal*" must be set over against the strategic front consisting of the line from *Genoa via Prague to Warsaw* which cuts that transversal horizontally. Czecho-Slovakia is the country most immediately exposed to attack from Germany; that country being an advance outpost of the Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance under the protection of which her allies can comfortably make their preparations. The German penetration is a danger, not only to the countries mentioned above, but also to Russia (whose interests are threatened in the Ukraine and in the Caucasus) and Great Britain (whose occupation of Mosul would be endangered). France is not immediately concerned; the only point touching her interests being the penetration into Syria of the "*Eurasian line*": though of course the mere strengthening of Germany's position would involve a menace to France's interests. Moreover, neither

Great Britain nor France could possibly tolerate the appearance of the Germans in the Mediterranean. Consequently, France too must join the *Genoa—Prague—Warsaw* line, unless she wishes to share the fate of Spain and be relegated politically to the peripheries of Europe. Should Prague be struck out of the *Paris—Genoa—Prague—Warsaw* line, — so Mr. Moravec tells us, — the only possible strategic front would be *Paris—Genoa—Sulina—Warsaw*. In the author's opinion not one of the Great Powers enumerated above could afford to dispense with the existence of Czecho-Slovakia. Bismarck himself declared long ago that "the Power having dominion over Bohemia must dominate the whole of Europe". It is therefore quite comprehensible that the Germans should speak of Czecho-Slovakia as "a thorn thrust deep into Germany's flesh".

INNER MILITARY WEAKNESS OF CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

The above summary of the leading ideas of the pamphlet is extremely condensed and concise: the main point is reached by the author after a long and exhaustive historical and geographical introduction written with the object of throwing into relief the European importance of Bohemia in the light of centuries of history. Later on Mr. Moravec endeavours with the help of lengthy arguments in the course of which he keeps on repeating himself to persuade the reader to endorse his views. I shall deal below — where such a proceeding is necessary — with those views of the author not comprised in the above summary.

However, by way of introduction we too — following the cue given us by Mr. Moravec — would deal with the ethnographical and geographical significance of Czecho-Slovakia; that being a matter of importance strategically the study of which must considerably lessen the military value of that State.

According to the author Czecho-Slovakia contains more than 15 million inhabitants — that number including 11 million Czecho-Slovaks and Ruthenians. This statement is enough in itself to give rise to erroneous conclusions. The Czech

official Census does not take the Czechs and Slovaks separately, but on the basis of the familiar "Czecho-Slovak Ethnic Unity" fiction classes them under the same head as "Czecho-Slovaks". But, after separating the Czechs and Slovaks even the 1930 Czecho-Slovak Census shows the following composition by nationalities of the total number of Czecho-Slovak inhabitants.

Czechs	7,446.632	50.6%
Slovaks	2,309.972	15.7%
Germans	3,318.445	22.5%
Magyars	719.569	4.9%
Ruthenians	568.941	3.8%
Jews	204.779	1.4%
Poles	100.322	0.7%
Rumanians	14.170	0.1%
Others	46.706	0.3%
	14,729.536	100.0%

Splendidly equipped as it may be technically,

adjoining Poland 750 kilometres, — that being a total length of 3000 kilometres exclusive of minor indentations. *The frontier of Czecho-Slovakia is therefore almost as long as the Hamburg—Mosul section of the "Eurasian transversal" referred to by Mr. Moravec (3200 kilometres). The strategist whose business it is to defend this frontier-line will find himself in a terrible dilemma.*

Mr. Moravec speaks of the Czech Basin as being from the point of view of military geography a bulwark surrounded by the masses of the Sudeta hills exercising a flanking effect in all directions alike which already in the Middle Ages acted as a breakwater dividing the advance of the Germanic tribes towards the East and stemming the western advance of the Mongols and held its own also against the attacks of the Ottomans. Of this latter circumstance we have no knowledge; for it was Hungary in particular that defended Europe



Ethnical map of Czecho-Slovakia.

the Czech army — as a consequence of the ethnical divergences and of the hatred felt so generally for the oppressors — is divided against itself, the real Czechs (by race) representing not even 1/3 of the total strength of that army.

Another point militating against the practical value of the Czech army is the *exceptionally long frontier line due to the extraordinary shape of the Republic*. The total length of the tongue of land from the eastern corner of the State to its western outskirts (to the town of Eger) is 940 kilometres. For the sake of comparison we may note that the distance from Eger to London is only 860 kilometres.

The length of the Czecho-Slovak frontier on the side facing Germany is 1100 kilometres, that on the side facing Austria being 400, that adjoining Hungary 600, that adjoining Rumania 150 and that

against the Turks: and it was not until after great losses had been inflicted on the Hungarians that the Turks were able to advance farther west, — though not as far as Bohemia, only as far as Vienna, where in 1683 the struggle was decided in favour of Christendom by the efforts of the Polish King John Sobieski.

In the past Bohemia's position as bulwark may have been a factor: but today — with the present system of roads and means of warfare — *even the Czech-Moravian-Silesian mother country would be simply helpless in the event of German attack*. In the north-east the highest peak of the Sudeta hills — the Schneekoppe — rises to a height of 1603 metres in the Schneegebirge; in the north-west, in the Erzgebirge, the Keilberg is 1244 metres in height; in the south-west the highest peak of the Bohemian Wold — the Gross Arber

— rises to a height of 1458 metres, — but in German territory. But the spurs of all these ranges become fiat on the frontier line; while in the east Moravia provides an open gate. However, a German attack would be decisively furthered also by the large number of roads, there being *more than 170 roads suitable for carriage traffic interesting the frontier (1100 kilometres long) between Bohemia and Germany.*

How much easier it is to hinder the advance of Germany in the direction of the Adriatic, the main ridge of the Alps — which rises to a height of 3797 metres (Gross Glockner) — facing the invader for a distance of 530 kilometres, from the Swiss frontier to Semmering, there being only 11 carriage roads intersecting the whole length.

The defencelessness of the Czech frontier is increased by the fact that the German frontier on three sides outflanks and encircles the Czech and Silesian boundaries. No doubt the German attack would be started without warning and simultaneously from all sides with armies supplied with motor equipment and with an air fleet. German bomb-throwing planes of medium size with a speed of 300 kilometres per hour could reach Prague (80 kilometres from the frontier) in 16, Pilsen, the chief war industry centre of the country (55 kilometres) in 11, Olmütz (60 kilometres) in 12 and even Brünn (100 kilometres) in 20 minutes. The German army reaching Olmütz and Brünn, two important industrial centres and road junctions, would be able to cut off the Czech armies just beginning to mobilise which had been intimidated by the aerial attacks and the motor equipment of the Germans from Slovakia the Upper Hungary of pre-War days. The mother-countries — Bohemia and Moravia — would undoubtedly soon be driven to their knees; while a section of the German forces would turn eastwards in the direction of Slovakia, rapidly occupying that province and thus anticipating the intervention of the two other Little Entente States and of Soviet Russia.

The only serious obstacle to the advance of the motor-equipped German corps crossing the Czech-Silesian frontier would be *the Czech fortresses flanking the boundary.* The Czechs have actually begun to fortify their frontiers. But it is a question whether the German Empire — if it really proposes to attack — will be kind enough to wait until the building of the Czech frontier fortresses has advanced sufficiently to impede the rapidity of its military movements? Military logic would certainly repudiate such a suggestion; so it follows that the Czecho-Slovak Republic would not be able to resist a German attack started in good time except for a few days; a fact which must be taken into account by all the States to which Mr. Moravec has sent out his message of distress.

Mr. Moravec has however forgotten to mention these geographical and military considerations, having instead attributed to his native land a strategic importance which it certainly does not possess.

It is true, of course, that Bohemia is an advance outpost of her allies — as she is also, by

the way, of the Soviet conception —; but this outpost cannot protect her allies and cannot indeed retreat in good time in their direction, seeing that the invader would very soon have her trapped.

LOOSENESS OF MILITARY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BOHEMIA AND HER ALLIES

Mr. Moravec's arguments respecting the importance of Bohemia would to some extent hold water if the Danube Basin were not suffering from the unfortunate situation created by the Peace Edict of Trianon — if the Danube Basin were still dominated by the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, — or even if there were a Monarchy of the kind slightly smaller in size, with Galicia, Bukovina, the Italian frontier territories and the purely Serbian districts of Bosnia separated from it. In a smaller Monarchy of this kind the leading role in the Middle Danube Basin would be in the hands of the Hungarians, as it was in the brilliant periods of their history.

In that event there would be a united State organisation to stand as sentinel; and even if it proved necessary to abandon Bohemia provisionally, a strategic line capable of being defended could be formed on the northern slopes of the Alps and on the ridges of the Western Carpathians. Though, on the other hand, in the face of a State organisation of the kind it is not very probable that there would have been any talk today of any German military expansion. In pre-War days too the German policy aiming at penetration as far as Bagdad was to have been an economic — not a military — expansion passing through friendly countries.

In its present peculiar and defenceless form Czecho-Slovakia is *completely isolated from her allies.* The only one of those allies whose territory touches hers is Rumania, there being a short joint frontier line 150 kilometres long crossed today by only a single railway line.

The other two Little Entente States would not be able to offer Bohemia any effectual assistance *unless they were to occupy Austria and Hungary,* using those countries to pass through. And an occupation of the kind is indeed proposed in the secret military treaty between the Little Entente States, — a fact *indirectly acknowledged by Mr. Moravec,* in that part of his work in which he declares Hungary to be the ally of the German Empire.

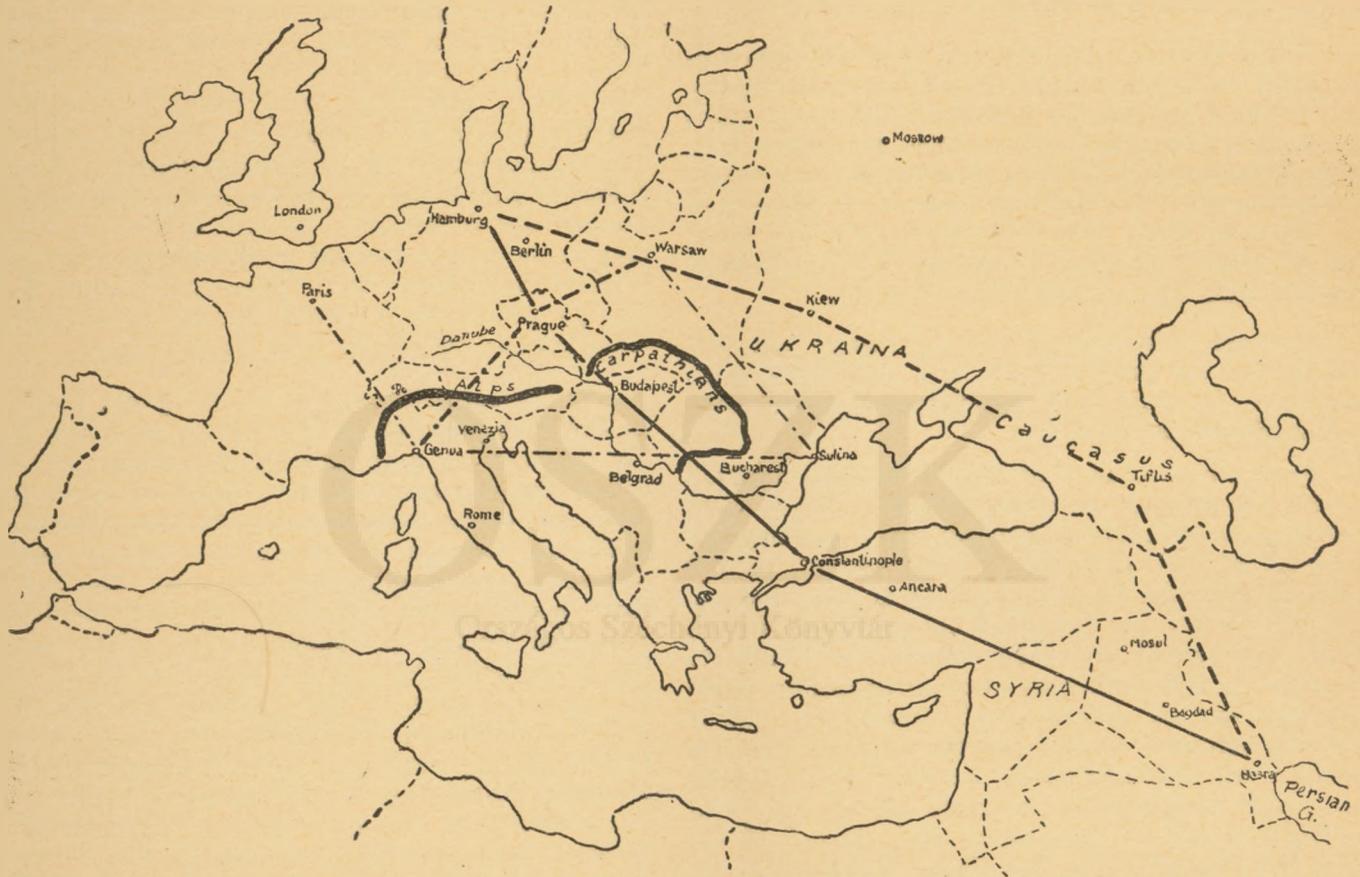
On behalf of the public opinion of Hungary we must protest, not only against the idea of occupation by the Little Entente, but also against Europe being told that we are Germany's allies.

The majority of the Hungarian nation cherishes feelings of friendship for the German people despite the fact that in the course of its long history it has shed more blood than any of Little Entente States in struggles to maintain its independence against the menace of German imperialism. During the Great War Hungary proved true to her traditions and remained loyal to her allies, — a loyalty which proved fatal to her. But today, notwithstanding our feelings or friendship for the German people, we are not Germany's allies.

But the Great Powers to which Mr. Moravec appeals for help certainly know by now that *neither Yugoslavia nor Rumania has the slightest intention of going to war with Germany*. They would willingly occupy Hungary if doing so involved no risk to them; but they would not go farther. And the latest events in international politics show that the two southern States look askance at the friendship between Bohemia and Soviet Russia.

Let us, however, suppose for the sake of argument that Hungary would be willing to help Bohemia against Germany and to send her armies to the slopes of the Western Carpathians. We

could be used for the transport of armies: when Titulescu was still in power, negotiations were carried on respecting the construction of a direct railway line between Russia and Bohemia, for the shortest railway line in existence today follows a very circuitous route from Mogilev via Czernovitz, Beszterce and Szatmárnémeti, the continuation of the same running in the immediate vicinity of the Hungarian frontier. It would appear that today the only assistance that could be relied on is that of the Russian air fleet, for the use of which several bases have been constructed within the territory of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. But it is doubtful whether, if Bohemia were to fall to pieces



Eurasian transversal.

would ask Mr. Moravec whether Bohemia would accept this Hungarian assistance? Probably not: for it is quite comprehensible that Bohemia should suspect us of insincerity in making our offer and of wishing to obtain easy possession of the Upper Hungary which was ours for over a thousand years.

This way of thinking also reveals the tragic situation created in Europe by the Treaty of Trianon. The cryingly unjust settlement made here in the valley of the Danube has created conditions in which the Hungarians are being hunted to death and regarded as bitter enemies by their neighbours.

But Bohemia has not been fortunate in the choice of friends. *The value of the military assistance of Soviet Russia is very problematical*. The two countries have no common frontiers; and Poland would never allow Russian soldiers to pass through her territory. Indeed, since the fall of Titulescu it is very doubtful whether Rumania

shortly, the Russian air fleet would risk a conflict with the Germans.

The assistance of France — in the event of its remaining isolated — *is not valued very highly by Mr. Moravec himself*, — even in the event of the support of Warsaw; for he believes that there is no possibility of any joint military operations on the part of Paris and Warsaw. The most convenient line of communication is, he thinks, that running from Paris via Genoa and Prague to Warsaw. Mr. Moravec apparently does not expect much from any French assistance on the outer line owing to the German forts in the Rhine district.

It is quite comprehensible that the Czech strategist, not trusting in the effectiveness of the assistance of the allies so far supporting Bohemia, should appeal for help to other friends, trying to frighten them into agreement by phantoms of insatiable German imperialism.

HUNTING FOR NEW ALLIES

Mr. Moravec gives his pamphlet a military disguise, though it is nothing more or less than the typical propaganda instrument so admirably exploited when the Czecho-Slovak State was established. He gives his fancy free scope and plays tricks with fascinating strategic bubbles. Of course imagination is needed when considering strategic questions; but real factors and forces and geographical conditions must be taken into account as they really are and not in shapes deformed by fantasy.

The German plans of conquest are unknown to us; but a distinction must be made between expansion by military force and endeavours to secure economic and political influence.

Great as is the national self-consciousness and the sense of power of the Third German Empire, we cannot conceive the possibility of the leaders of the German people wishing at the same time to push forward to Venice, passing via the valley of the Danube, the Balkans and Asia Minor and via Warsaw, Kiev and Tiflis to the Persian Gulf, and to risk a conflict with the Western Great Powers, with France and Great Britain.

We are not counsel for Germany; but any scheme on the part of Germany would be mere madness. A little less intimidation would have produced greater results.

Moravec's opinion of the "German danger" is that, *the moment Bohemia falls a victim to German aggression, there will be no more checking the advance of the German "steam roller" to the Adriatic and the Persian Gulf.* It is true, indeed, that the author has found an intermediate station in the symbolical line from Genoa via Sulina to Warsaw — a point highly incomprehensible strategically. In the question of detail the author actually ventures to express the opinion that the distance of 200 kilometres between the Brenner Pass and Venice is no obstacle at all, for that difficulty could be overcome and Italy cut off from the Balkans in a few days. What a pity he does not tell us how many days the Germans would take to reach the Persian Gulf!

Mr. Moravec employs the advance made by the Central Powers during the Great War as proof of the danger latent in the "transversal" from Hamburg to Bashire and of the reality of the endeavour to reach the Caucasus. Yet it must not be forgotten that the said "transversal" passes almost exclusively through territory belonging to the Central Powers of the War, while the advance in the direction of the Caucasus was made necessary on the occasion of the peace negotiations by the propagandistic indecision of the leaders of the Russian Soviet.

The author endeavours to enlist the sympathy of the Western Powers for his country also by *putting forward as an argument the disloyalty shown during the Great War by the Slav and Latin peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.* He believes that if these peoples had not shown resistance the Monarchy would have been able to

begin the War not with 50 divisions only, the result being that the Central Powers would very soon have proved victorious. The truth in this matter is that in 1914 the army of the Monarchy was in a sadly neglected state, the lack of trained soldiers and of war material making the establishment of more divisions impossible. That was not however by any means the only reason why the Central Powers lost the War, — though that is a question with which we cannot deal here.

But Mr. Moravec's quest of new allies is purposeless, for the real situation is as follows: —

Unless Germany is prepared to acquiesce in 3½ million Germans living in the immediate vicinity of her frontiers being subjected for all time to the yoke of the small Czech people and in Bolshevik Russia in time securing fortified military basis wedged deep into the body of the Empire, she will be compelled very shortly to crush the military power of Bohemia. As already explained, the establishment of a Russian military basis in Bohemia has many obstacles today; but with the fluctuations in evidence in international politics it may in the future become possible, when the Czech frontier fortresses have been built and if the foreign policy of Rumania shows a renewed inclination for friendship with Soviet Russia.

If the political aims of Germany are restricted to the incorporation of the Germans living along the frontier, — and if, after defeating the Czech army, the German military forces were to retire from the other territories of the Republic, — no State in Europe is likely to regard such a procedure as endangering its vital interests. In that case Italy is not likely to fear the loss of Venice or Poland to tremble for her safety; indeed, the latter would have every reason to feel gratified at the annexation to their mother country of the Polish inhabitants of Silesia and at the peoples inhabiting the territory formerly known as Upper Hungary being free to express their wishes, — at the restoration of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier and at the averting of the danger of Poland being flanked on the South by the military forces of the Russian Soviet.

Still less is *Great Britain* likely to be intimidated or to fear that the Germans will seize the petroleum wells of Mosul, which are today threatened primarily by the armies of Soviet Russia lying at a distance of only 360 kilometres beside a railway line: how vain in this connection is the bizarre statement of Mr. Moravec to the effect that it is easier to advance by the Orient Express than by the much shorter Tiflis caravan route.



His attempt to make tiny Czecho-Slovakia figure as the bulwark, not of Europe only, but of Western Asia too, will ensure Mr. Moravec more smiles than serious understanding; his hand is too weak for the task he has undertaken, endeavouring with the help of artificial arguments to save an intolerable situation.