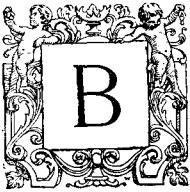


Men of Bohemia

BY OLIVE GILBREATH

[MISS GILBREATH, who will be remembered as the author of that extraordinary Russian romance, *Miss Amerikanka*, has had exceptional opportunities in Vladivostok to study the Czecho-Slovaks, as the following pages attest. In a letter to the editor Miss Gilbreath refers to her article as "an inadequate record of these unique Slavs (about whom one cannot tell the truth with any hope of being believed), but for me it is a mosaic of some fascinating contacts"—with General Paris, the French commander of the Czech forces in Siberia, Lieutenant Broz, and Admiral Knight. The author wishes to acknowledge the kind assistance of these officers in the preparation of this article.—THE EDITOR]



BOHEMIA—a multitude of suggestions, vague but vivid, rise at the sound of the word, most of them, so far as concerns actual Bohemia, illusory. Generally it suggests something delightfully wicked or artistic or unwashed, or fascinatingly freighted with the sensations of a more joyous world. To extremely few the word recalls a virile, strongly nationalistic, anciently democratic people, shaped and tempered by three hundred years of persecution, and for three hundred years opposed to the German. The typhoon of war has lifted the mists from Bohemia and blown her out into the world, no longer a legend. And yet, now more than ever, to write the tale of Bohemia is to write a legend.

Perhaps it is muddled great Russia that has thrown into relief small but incisive Bohemia. Perhaps the inchoate futility of the hundred and eighty million Slavs to the east has temporarily exaggerated the distinction of these Slavs from beyond the Carpathians, who deserted Austria for Russia and, Russia failing, cut their way across Siberia to offer their swords to France. It may be that it has invested them with a glamour which time must dim. But to the man who has seen this fragment of a nation, adrift from Europe, disentangle itself and emerge in Siberia, Bohemia, as well as Greece, has written her *Iliad*. And she still is writing it across two continents; the tale is not told in either Europe or Asia.

Book one of the Bohemian epic ended

with the extrication of the first echelons and their arrival at Vladivostok. The second has begun now with their return across Siberia, whence they came, without ammunition and artillery, with bridges blown up and tunnels wrecked, into stretches which could close over an army as a jungle closes over its dead. Aided by Bolshevik and German and Magyar prisoners of war, commanded by German officers, the Czechs are turning back to rescue their echelons trapped at the corner of Lake Baikal. Doubtless the men of other nations, under the same conditions, would perform with equal credit; valor is now a commonplace, and no nation need question the bravery or the fortitude of her sons. The quality of the Czecho-Slovaks, which has lent them a bright distinction, has been, if one may so name it, the madness of their heroism; heroism which, without support, might have been both futile and fatal, but which, enlisting—as it has largely by its gallantry—the aid of the Allies, may yet save Russia.

The hills above the harbor were rimming with green, after a weary and uncertain winter of Bolshevism, when the first contingent of Czecho-Slovaks arrived in Vladivostok. But little news had forerun their appearance and it was with near amazement that the inhabitants of the port heard the steaming of their samovars interrupted one morning by a steady tramp, tramp of troops, and, hanging out of their broad Russian windows, saw in the April sunshine not the usual band of tatterdemalions, but actual *soldiers*. From box-cars at the station they were said to be issuing, easy-

muscled men in dusty gray, with a twist of red and white in their caps, knapsacks on their backs, and turquoise eyes set in thin, tanned faces. Column after column came welling up through the Aliutskaya, pouring out on the broad Svetlanskaya which hangs above the bay, and disappearing in the direction of the hills beyond the city, where barracks for thousands of the Czar's fighting-men at this time lay tenantless. They moved with a professional stride long since become strange to Vladivostok, and as they marched they sang a chorus which sounded unfamiliar among the Vladivostok hills, more vigorous and less melancholy than the song to which a Russian marches, just as the faces of the singers differed from the faces at the windows and on the streets, by a clearer outline and a less perplexed expression. Fourteen thousand came on that and succeeding days. And forty thousand, they said, were still to follow from somewhere there across Russia and Siberia.

The Russian, like the Irish, has only one permanently assured quality, a divine discontent. Whatever is, he is against it. True to his nature, the Russian, with the arrival of the Czecho-Slovaks, began immediately to ferment. Meetings assembled at every street corner. Whoever praises free speech has not lived in Russia, and whoever has seen Russia fallen on her evil days shudders at the sound of *meeting*. The conservatives said little, they had withdrawn from life; but the peasants' and workmen's newspapers were openly hostile. The Czecho-Slovaks were mercenaries of capital, they asserted, tools of French and British imperialists, and therefore enemies of Russia. Ostensibly they had come to sail for France, but their real object was "with unclean and unhappy hands to overthrow the power of the Soviet in Siberia." The Czecho-Slovaks, to be sure, had seized the Admiralty for headquarters and begun to diminish the number of the Red Guard at the barracks, but otherwise they were unobtrusive figures on the streets—unobtrusive but not obscure. The Central Soviet in Moscow had granted them permission to occupy the barracks, contradicted at every step, but still once granted; and there in the barracks they

proposed to wait while every day they prayed fervently one prayer, "*Ships to carry us to France.*"

The Bolshevik words whirled and turned in the air like the prelude of a snow-storm, but they fell upon deaf ears out at the barracks. It was good to stretch one's legs in the spring sunshine after three months of frozen steppe, and the beaver discharged from the box-car was already busily hauling red earth and pebbles for a bit of landscape gardening. Men of all nations have moved to war with greater cultural impedimenta in other ages, but Bohemia, uprooted, wherever she has drifted has retained her civilization. A pause in soldiering, and the Czech orientates himself in the affairs of life with deft swiftness. Men came and went to classes so eagerly at the old Russian barracks, with its texts of admonition to love the Czar and pour out blood for the Holy Mother, that it took on the air of a university. A convalescent lying in the sunshine meant a reading man. No one can quite explain how French horns and trap-drums came through the *mêlée* of Siberia, but they came, and the Czech orchestra nearly established Bohemia in the heart of her reluctant hosts. But the real *début* of the Czecho-Slovak was his field sports. Up to this time the suave mid-European had been a quiet, potential figure on the streets, gaining daily in interest, but those present that day saw the hills lined with clear-skinned athletic men reminiscent of the Olympic games at Stockholm, and never forgot. As for the Anglo-Saxons, the spectacle of a thousand bodies in tricot, beautifully accurate and harmonious in movement, reduced them—after a badly ventilated winter of the Golden Horn and the Vladivostok opera—almost to tears. It was an exhibition peculiarly impressive, after the Russian *débâcle*. In a word, for the non-Bolshevik and the foreigner, at any rate, the Czecho-Slovak became the man of the hour, invested with the glamour of a hero for two reasons: he was the safest assurance against the predatory Red Guard and he was also the symbol of an order somewhere there in the world not entirely disrupted, the one point of civilization in a sea of hopeless disintegration. Only those who have experi-

enced Russia through her chaos can comprehend how faint and far grow the impressions of a world which, while not sane, has yet traces of sanity, and how greatly to be treasured any sign thereof. Only those who have endured a Bolshevik régime, seen the pavements falling to pieces, the plumbing decaying, washed and collared people disappearing from the streets while *tovarishchi* "joy ride," with gasolene a dollar a gallon, and have occasionally contributed when funds ran low, realize the sentiment inspired by the presence on the street of this suggestive stranger.

The reader, doubtless, is already putting his finger on the spot in the map of north Austria-Hungary from which had drifted this figure that took possession not only of the barracks, but also of the imagination of Vladivostok; doubtless recognizes him as one of the twelve million Slavs built against their will by Germany, together with thirty-six other nationalities, into a barrier against the Turk, and oppressed in the north by the Austrians, as the Jugo-Slavs in the south have been oppressed by the Magyars. Perhaps he is acquainted with his past and sees in him not so much the casual flotsam of war, as a man with a singularly clear purpose which has severed him from Europe and led, rather than cast him, here into the East. Perhaps he can recount the oppression of Bohemia. Poland has a history no more cruel. If Bohemia has failed to lift up her voice in the wailing-place of nations and trouble Heaven, it is for the grimmest of grim reasons. She has been headless. With all her woes, dismembered though she was, Poland still had her spokesmen, but Bohemia was left in the condition in which a people tells no tales. It was three hundred years ago that this nation, which had early developed a brotherhood and which holds to-day John Huss for her hero, put her head into the lion's mouth by inviting a Hapsburg to her throne. Instead of reconciling the varied elements of the nobility, as Bohemia had hoped, the Hapsburg filled the important posts in the government with Spanish and German favorites and answered the protests of the Bohemian nobles by executing them in the great square of Prague and stringing the

bridges with their heads. For many years after that red day in the square of Prague, Bohemia lay quiescent and inert. But her fiber was too vigorous to perish and she began to stir again, especially under the influence of that great stimulus to liberty, the French Revolution. As she strengthened, her racial spirit reasserted itself until, at last, in spite of three hundred years of Austrian attempts to strangle her, she has again found her voice.

But it is no longer the voice of aristocrats, but of the masses themselves. During these three hundred years of gathering energy Bohemia has had no aristocracy. But, like orphan children, working together, playing together, suffering together, the Bohemians have developed—uniquely for Europe—into a homogeneous people among whom no great social chasms exist. And now, in the twentieth century, they have made themselves heard. "National aspiration," historians call it; the right to be Bohemian and not German; more definitely, the right to withdraw from the wall and form the four principalities of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovatch, Silesia into a kingdom as the center of a federation of Slav states. In all this shifting of aims and chaos of values little Bohemia's ideals of old and her steadfast purpose flame with torchlike beauty. And yet, but for the war, how long would her voice have remained silenced within that German ring, her light hidden?

In no other possible epoch could her rights have been so perfectly comprehended, for men now suddenly perceive the truth, that the foe which the Allies struggle to conquer has been Bohemia's immemorial enemy, and the object of the greater group of nations in the world—to break the domination of the German—obscure Bohemia has been about, unheard, for three hundred years.

The attempts to strangle this vivid people offer an interesting study in scientific methods. The suppression of the national language and the limitation of schools are commonplaces in the history of all oppressed peoples. These Bohemia has also suffered, but the further methods visited upon the "bread-takers from the mouths of the Germans"

have been more ingenious. How many travelers from Berlin to Vienna know also Prague? The *portier* buys the traveler's ticket and arranges for his luggage, but the route is not by Prague. Why, the traveler hardly knows; a railway map makes it clear that by a clever manipulation of railways, of which the war has proved the German to be the past master, the Bohemian capital has been shunted. Prague lies geographically on the highroad, but by juggling with iron and steel it is rendered difficult of access and isolated. And Prague is not the only thing Bohemian that has been shunted; Bohemian literature and Bohemian music have also been set aside. Why do we hear no more musically of the country that has given us Smetana, Dvorák, Kubelik, Destinn? Singers and violinists are heralded to us as Austrian. Why has the command of the Czech forces in Siberia fallen to a former colonel in the Russian army, picked up at the crisis in a freight depot at Kiev? Because, unless the Czech would trim his sails to Austrian winds the higher posts of the army, as well as of the clergy and the official world, have been closed to him. Out of all the superb military material, not one Czech officer had had sufficient training for the high command. Ambition is spelled in ciphers for the Czech in Austria. For the last three hundred years Bohemia has been fencing, guarding, parrying, thrusting, against the German Goliath. And it has not broken or dulled her spirit or her effectiveness, as it might that of less mettlesome men, but rather hardened, sharpened her into that rapier force to which no other Slav in the world has attained and which she probably would not have become without her Teuton protagonist. "*Slava bogu!*" a Czech staff-officer was heard to exclaim, even after the uprooting from Austria into Russia and from Russia into Siberia. "We have not lain off alone like great Russia—dinner and sleep!" And a world of significance lay in his exclamation. Bohemian spirit has been largely wrought from her struggle. Of all that dreaming multitudinous world, lying both in thought and space between Occident and Orient, the Czech is the unique product, more cultured than the Ser-

bian, more Spartan than the Pole, and less miasmatic than the Russian. He is one thing more—in this hour of despair over Russia, the best pledge for the future of the Slavic people.

History heard from the lips of men may not take on a proper perspective, but it is a fascinating occupation, piecing together folk-drama from a wandering nation. Whether one gathers the tale from the staff-officers at the hospitals or the stations, from a Fra Angelico angel in the guise of a Sister of Mercy, or from a young lieutenant wounded at Bakhmach and transported ten thousand miles overland, there gradually accumulates, as could never accumulate from the pages of history, the sense of a personality joyous and unwearied which expresses itself in a variety of forms, but, with amazing constancy, primarily in a love of country. For Bohemia, inextricably bound up with love of country, like a twin memory, is the consciousness of ancient wrongs endured from the German, and hatred—a clean-cutting hatred of which the Russian Slav is incapable until his nature is less a flux of impulses and more definitely informed by principle. Here is a vigorous, energetic personality robbed of superficiality. As always behind the Russian lies the shadow of his vast unhappy land, so beyond these other determined, clear-eyed Slavs lies also tragedy, but of another type; not the hopeless despair of Russia's black millions, but the tragedy of a land, loved as only a people of vivid nationality can love, lost once through a misadventure. "You can love only a country little and persecuted, as we love Bohemia," the Czech will tell you. It is not the emotion of a day, but of centuries—centuries of sorrow.

None of the colors in the Bohemian mosaic are pale. The nearer colors of the days in Austria at the beginning of the war, picked up from the young cavalry staff-officers waiting to join their regiments up on the Manchurian plain, are almost barbaric in their vigor. Their voices do not rise, but the blood races close beneath their skin as they talk of the taking of Czech leaders; of the arrest of Olga Masaryk, a case so flagrant that it brought a protest from the women of

America; of soldiers marching rebelliously toward the Carpathians and singing:

“A red flag flies in the air;
We are marching to Russia,
But we don't know why—”

and cut down with machine-guns if they did not march; of the sullen mutterings of the populace driven to celebrate the German victories; of hints of revolution both at home and at the front; of the desertion of regiments; of the tragedy of Kiev when nine men who read a pamphlet dropped by an airman flying over the city, promising freedom from the Czar to the Bohemian Slavs, were shot.

From staff-officers and from lean-muscled soldiers, the gigantic canvas of war *without* peace grew. Individually or by regiments, as soon as the opportunity offered, the Bohemians went over to the side of the Russians. One served four months in the Austrian trenches, another a year, one escaped at the end of eight days. Shuttled back and forth over Russia, sleeping on stone floors, eating sometimes (if the guard did not abscond with the funds, which he did two days out of three), bathing in wintry rivers, if at all, with never a change of clothing; their life in Russia is the old story not of Russian malice, but of Russian unpreparedness. The German prisoners often declared themselves Czech in order to receive better treatment, but the Russians could not be said in any case to have added to the luster of their hospitality.

From the fall of the old régime a new period dates for the Czechs. Prison doors swung open for the Slav as well as for the criminal, releasing them from prison, but not from suspicion. The one dirigible force for order east of the Carpathians was liberated, but they were still to eat bitter bread, for Czech regiments were forbidden, and at last, when they were formed, aeroplanes hovered over them lest they betray the country to which they had deserted. It is one of the little ironies of war of which this land of “unlimited impossibilities” is incredibly full. And more than ironical was that spectacular advance under Kerensky during the spring of 1917 from

which the Allies entertained hope for a day that “Russia had still kick left in her,” for the regiments which broke the German lines then and sent the enemy across the marshes were not Russians, but the suspected Czechs.

New blood temporarily stiffened the Russian army, but nothing could save it after the dismissal of discipline. It was fast breaking up, and as it crumpled the recruits from across the mountains separated themselves from the Russian soldiers and traveled south to assemble under their national leader, Professor Masaryk.

Doubtless when the men from Bohemia chose Kiev for their concentration they did not see in it one of the bloodiest scenes of the Bolshevik mania in south Russia. But such it proved to be. For a week in the early winter of 1918 the Bolsheviks bombarded it heavily, wrecking the quaint city gates and littering the streets with dumps of dead, and then they joined the Germans to march against it. The trans-Carpathian Slavs found themselves in the anomalous position of defending the rich old Russian capital against itself. And they did fight for Kiev until it was not a question of flight, but of direction and of how soon the Germans would envelop them from the north. Then they abandoned Kiev and began the hegira across Siberia.

Perhaps some day a complete account of this flight of an army across the waveless plains of south Russia and of Siberia will be rendered, and we shall understand. At present there are as many versions of the trek as there were travelers, and it is only fragmentarily—as it were, by flashes of lightning—that one sees the echelons struggling across the winter wilderness. On any question the French point of view is interesting. As General Paris, now representing France with the Czech army, told the tale in a candle-light drawing-room, terms stripped, it seemed a chapter from Cæsar's Gallic chronicles rather than that of a modern general.

“Flight, yes, but which direction? The west was closed. South toward the Black Sea or west over the Urals and across Siberia? We held a conference; it lasted hours in a peasant's smoky little hut. I feared treachery from the

Magyar prisoners, but we decided to hazard Siberia. What else was there to do? Sixty trains were commandeered. The engines the men themselves put together as the Germans were closing in from the north. For eight days we had only a pound of bread a day. No more was possible; we were in too great danger. The first regiments got away with not too much difficulty, but every day the escape became more arduous as the Germans came nearer. The staff itself made off only in time, traveling in carts, walking. Sometimes the peasants in a village would drag us into a crowded inn to explain ourselves; it is a wonder that they did not kill us and end their suspicions. Penza and Bakhmach were the crucial places. The first trains passed Penza without trouble, but we knew that we should have to fight the Germans there and at Bakhmach. . . . I remember the first meeting with the Germans at Bakhmach. Our men were guarding a road down which came a big motor flying the Russian flag. The men stopped the motor and out stepped German officers, a tall blond colonel first. They were all shot. It was hard fighting at Bakhmach to shield the trains pulling out, and some were entangled there for three months. The Bolsheviks showed their usual bad faith. The Central Soviet had given us permission to pass, but Lenine and Trotzky soon began telegraphing the local soviets to put every hindrance in our way, to shunt us and divide us and hold the trains.

"And then came the order to disarm. To disarm! . . . You can understand that for the soldier that was a tense moment—to give up his guns, and to the Russians! Only thirty rifles were allowed to eight hundred men. We did surrender, however, except for a few hidden—you know. At one place where the guns of one of our regiments were to be turned over to the Russians, they had only to come, sign each his name, and take away a rifle. You can imagine it did not take our soldiers long to discover that. They cut the colors from their caps. Each man marched up to the officer, signed his name 'Ivan Feodorovitch,' 'Piotr Stepanovitch,' and took his rifle back again. . . . The advance regiments had no difficulty except to get trains. At

Irkutsk, Professor Masaryk, chief of the National Council, started for Washington, and I came on ahead to arrange for transports to France. We came through without mishap, but the regiments following were not so lucky. It was the 26th that fought first at Irkutsk. When the train pulled into the station they were ordered to surrender all arms. The officers said it was necessary, but the men asked for fifteen minutes to decide. After five minutes, machine-guns were turned on them by orders *given in German*. The men dropped to the floor of the car like bats. Some of them crept off the train and along the ground. They killed the machine-gunners with bombs and stones and bare hands, and took the guns. In three seconds the guns were in their hands, and in fifteen minutes the whole station. They came through in safety. It was the first. From that time every regiment has had a fight at Irkutsk. Fourteen thousand came through—forty thousand are still out there somewhere. We left the sanitar train with guarantees, but we don't know. . . . There has been no news. . . . Nobody knows. . . ."

"Nobody knows." These two words explain the return of the Czechs and begin the second book of the Bohemian epic.

The second book of the Bohemian epic—the opening page the clearing of Vladivostok. One reason for the return of the Czechs has been named; there was another. On guard one morning before dawn, British marines found the Bolsheviks exporting munitions to the Germans; the marines spoke no Russian, but they argued with English rifles. This was a prelude to the ultimatum to the Soviet and led to the action which overthrew the Bolsheviks, gave the most important port in the east into the hands of the Allies, and started the Czechs on their Siberian career.

The Soviet was surrounded and arrested on the morning of the 29th. By noon Bolsheviks were at a premium on the streets. At the big white staff headquarters across from the station, however, the Red Guard had concentrated for the main effort. Through a gray rain soldiers were marching in from the barracks, many without rifles, but each with a hand-grenade shining in his

belt. A pallid fact on paper, hand-grenades, but they held a world of significance. The Allies had landed a patrol, but their attitude was tentative, to the immense grief of the marines. The hand-grenades meant that as the Czechs had fought their way through Siberia bare-handed, so they were taking Vladivostok and starting to the rescue of their echelons without rifles and ammunition, and also without artillery. A few Russian officers had joined them, one man in a uniform, with a civilian's hat, pumping a Lewis gun, and another, balanced on the station roof, sharpshooting, with the hat of reviving self-respect. In the main, however, it was conceded to be a Czech affair, and Vladivostok watched the professional despatch with feelings as varied as its politics. While the shops in the rear were being cleared of Bolsheviks the soldiers in gray occupied the station across the great square from the staff building. Since there was no artillery, the object was to drive the Red Guard away from the windows, so that the doors could be destroyed with hand-grenades. A face at a window and a puff of flame streaked the ominously empty square. The Lewis gun sputtered industriously. A few furtive figures tried to escape from the *krepost*, to be potted on the wet cobblestones. Once the Czechs, running across the cleared space at the sign of a white flag, were met by a treacherous bomb. Within half an hour of the time set by the officers, a grenade blew in the door and the building was rushed. A few German officers captured were marched away under British guard. Rumor pointed to a pool of blood where a deserting Czech tried to beat his brains out on the pavement; two were killed with rifle-burrs. No one who saw the Czecho-Slovaks cut down their deserters can ever forget the ruthless rage of these trans-Carpathian Slavs. It was the most amazing feature of an amazing day. If a consensus of impressions could have been made they would probably have agreed that little "dove blood of the Slav" flamed in these Bohemian veins, and that there would be interesting news from the north.

By the time the long Siberian twilight closed down on the memorable Saturday,

Vladivostok was non-Bolshevik. To what it was a prelude one could but wonder as one watched the soup-kitchens clattering into the great square. Soldiers squatted here and there in the fading light, tired groups. The crowd had begun to move vaguely, the dusk dimming the bright colors of their blouses and kerchiefs. The Golden Horn took down its shutters and Vladivostok went home to dinner. At the station a different scene was being enacted. Box-cars stood on the tracks, swallowing men into their interiors, as they had stood once before emitting them; row after row crawled into the lantern-lighted cars, piling up on bare planks. By the time the Russians had settled comfortably to the gaieties of "Mlle. Houp-la," the Bohemian echelons were already moving out to the north.

Within twenty-four hours the guns captured in the Vladivostok arsenal, lacking certain small but important parts while in the hands of the Bolsheviks, owing to Japanese forethought, were on the road. But in the mean time, immediate action being imperative to prevent a concentration at Nikolsk, the Czechs made their first attack without artillery. And a costly attack it was, a part of their mad heroism. Had lack of equipment held them, however, the wind and the rain of a season ago would now be whitening their bones on the plains of Russia and Siberia. They take it as a matter of course that they must capture as they go, wrest from the enemy himself the material to defeat him.

Issues, at present, are shaping rapidly in the east. The calendar travels a week overnight. Since the Czechs vanished into the north many events have occurred. The lost sanitar train has arrived from Habarovsk. The echelons have disentangled themselves, have taken Irkutsk and moved two days farther east to the corner of Lake Baikal. The scant news which comes by messenger indicates that the situation there at Baikal has developed seriously. Four thousand men are trapped without ammunition; food is to be had only from Irkutsk; railway tunnels along the road are blown in. Apparently the echelons have reached a position from which they are unable to advance, else they would

move to a station two days east, where telegraphic communication might be established with Peking. But winter has advanced until it is only a few weeks away.

The Allies have come, too, since the Czechs departed, and not too soon if the echelons are not to perish. Vladivostok now takes on the atmosphere of a populous and militant Port Said. Troops are constantly departing for the front; French *casquettes* drink coffee in the little gardens; British officers are stiffly hunting the baths; "The Dollar Princess" ("*po Russki*") plays nightly to rows of American khaki. A British transport is here from Hong-kong, a French ship from Saigon. The Japanese are here with white gloves and limousines and more troops than they care to confess. The Americans are here, not pretty, but serviceable, with mules and prairie-schooners. The railway engineers who have been playing pinochle in Nagasaki until, to quote them, they are "as jumpy as old maids," are here, living on Kerensky gold, imploring work. The Salvation Army is here. All the materials for a campaign are here in embryo, and much more will follow. From the size of the shadows, the events started by the Czecho-Slovaks are big ones. "The Queen of the East" promises to fulfil her name. The trans-Siberian—that thin line of communication between east and west, whose traffic, pouring Siberia's myriads of troops into Europe and feebly emitting *émigrés*, chronicles the history of Russia—will again see moving into Siberia the paraphernalia of war, men in khaki with modern guns, as during the first year of the conflict it saw millions of clumping gray figures with black bread under their arms, and shaggy little ponies, streaming along its length to fight for the White Czar.

What is the meaning of the Allies in Russia? No one can say with assurance. The Czechs have constantly and consistently affirmed that they have no wish to fight the Russian people, and they have, with the utmost caution, kept free from entangling alliances. The Allies have been equally definite, in their separate proclamations, declaring their intentions not to interfere in Russian

internal affairs. Both by Czech and Allies, Russia has been handled with velvet gloves—assured of her territorial integrity, of her inalienable right to choose her manners and her morals, of her liberty, the color and stripe of her destiny. She has been promised everything—money, food, shoes, even commissions! She has been as delicately flattered as a woman; humored, clothed, and fed like an orphaned child; coddled like a sick man; wept with over her past; exalted for her virtues; promised a future; cursed for her sins; distrusted; pitied and held in contempt; supported; speculated upon; believed in with little visible reason, as no other nation in the world. And how will she respond?

The landing of the first troops evoked a storm of words and pamphlets; "the bourgeoisie had betrayed Russia, sold her to the foreigner." A student at the Far East Institute began an oration: "To-day England lands troops; war has begun with England."

To-day the Russian is a little tired. "What is to be done?" he asks. The stamp of the old régime is still upon him. But the mood of to-morrow?

As this leaves Vladivostok the opening of the Siberian railway to Irkutsk is practically accomplished, and if to Irkutsk, then to the Urals, since the Siberian government holds the line from Irkutsk westward. The optimist seems to have seen the situation more clearly than the pessimist. There will certainly be a strong movement to reach the Czechs in Russia fighting about Vologda and toward Archangel. And of all this two months ago there was not a sign or a vestige. To contrast the Bolshevik days with all this movement of war for saving Siberia is to have an admiration, which can hardly be exaggerated, for that disciplined, determined band who less than five months ago emerged from the steppe. What will yet be in Siberia no one knows. But whatever it is, the Czecho-Slovaks have been the motive power.

With every nation exhibiting unexpected excellencies, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define the qualities of any people, but one may always inquire into the springs of men's actions;

enthusiasms, philosophy, necessity, will, or some deeper mystery. At the present moment, when the world is disappointed in Russia, it is well to remember that the Czech is by blood a Slav, an inheritance written in his mobile face, in his eyes softening under the spell of his folk-music as he marches away to war with a boutonniere in the top of his bayonet. General Diterichs describes him, "hot-boiling, passionate," and with it tender and imaginative. That sympathy, that poignant sensibility, that immense naturalness which are Russian and which, with generations of discipline, will make him the towering figure of the world when the lesser races with the superficial knowingness have passed—all these are the fundamental qualities of the Czech. His other qualities are the result of discipline.

If you ask the Czech himself, he will tell you that the secret of his life is perhaps what President Wilson calls *enthusiasm*. He calls it love—love of country, which lays down life without question or stint; love of beauty, without which he considers life stupid, neither to be lived through with joy nor departed from with dignity. In this esthetic apprehension which we call by the thin and unsatisfactory word "taste" the Czech is like the French—surely he must be likened sooner or later to the French!—bearing the mark of a race old in living, rich in tradition, discerning in its appreciations. He is, too, a lover of love, worshipping women; a lover of life, more joyous than the Russian, less light-minded than the Gaul. A lover not of the form, but of the substance. Life is short; youth is short. It is to laugh, to work, to weep, to think, to love, to be aware of that complex and ever-changing stream of consciousness. When a Czech dies, somehow one feels that one may say of him what may not be said of every man, "He is dead, but *he has lived*."

If you ask the American he will tell you that the Czech's secret is "Allied ideals with Teuton training." It is his

efficiency that endears him to the American, especially if he is recuperating from the Russian army. The reputation is wide-spread. In Austria the Czech is known as the cleverest hand-worker, the most capable servant. In Vladivostok the Czech doctors are the most efficient; at another spot, Czech engineers repaired in three days the bridges which, experts said, would require three weeks. How tell the tale of the Czechs without its seeming a legend? This practical ability is, doubtless, the result of contact with the German, the result of a struggle to exist, and it is an immeasurable asset in personality. To try to fit him with a phrase, the Czech is a man not lifted from the Slav dream, but rescued from the miasma of sickly thinking and, under the more intensive civilization of the west, trained to act. His philosophy is practical. What can be done he does. If nothing may be done, he accepts the inevitable, even death. And this is not weakness, but strength, part of his constructive interpretation of life.

One hesitates to say that he is a democrat, after the banality of Russia. But Bohemian democracy bears no taint; it has been a natural growth, the evolution of a people deprived of their aristocracy; a "beautiful democracy," to use a term of the Czechs themselves, in which a man does not deny the genuine differences of ability and training, but scorns to recognize the artificial distinctions of privilege. Democracies are not always charming in their terms; their people are so often uncouth and ignorantly groping, attaching a false connotation, that one forgets that an enlightened democracy is really one of the beautiful things in the world. The Czechs recall the fact that it is. France, England, America—one expects them to be great, but there is new inspiration in finding an ancient beauty in this little and hitherto obscure people, thanks to the typhoon of war which has lifted the mists and blown Bohemia into the world—an actuality.

Called to Service

BY CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE



ALMOST at the moment when the impulse assailed Henderson to break from rapid strides into a trot he came to an abrupt halt. In spite of the gathering dusk, he felt sure that the open road was no place for him. Besides, the rain, coming down with pitiless monotony, was steadily foundering him as an angry, gray sea might founder some worm-eaten hulk. He had been so long a stranger to the elements that he was confused and frightened by them. He knew now the cruelty of forcing freedom upon a caged bird, and for a moment there came over him a sick desire to retrace his steps. Had he been sure that he could slip back within the prison walls as unmarked as he had walked out, he would have decided to return. But such a feat was impossible, more impossible, if anything, than the one he had just accomplished. To sweep arrogantly by the guards in the jaunty cap and swaggering ulster of a prison director was one thing; to creep back a drowned rat of a man was quite another.

Even with the icy-cold reality of rain pelting him clean of illusion, Henderson had a vague hope that he was dreaming. With only a scant six months between himself and legitimate freedom, what had urged him to this stupendous piece of folly? What malicious and evil angel had dared him to tempt chance so futilely, so magnificently? *Magnificently*—the thought subconsciously stiffened his drooping courage. He, Colin Henderson, to have carried through successfully so madcap an adventure! It was inconceivable! An hour ago the harsh corridors of San Quentin were echoing his footfalls with a crushing hollowness that he had long since ceased to resent; now he stood upon the wind-bitten marshes of Marin County, for the moment free, a harried creature, sagging beneath the

unaccustomed weight of a dripping ulster, dragging, through an ooze of tenacious mud, feet that for four spiritless years had known only the insinuating smoothness of stone courtyards. There was a tang of spring in the air, despite the rain-raked dusk, the same restless tang that for the past week had scaled the prison walls and crept fleet-footed down uncarpeted corridors into every gaunt cell. Could it be possible that this intoxicating presence from the open highway had fanned with its perfumed breath the feeble flame of Colin Henderson's racial courage until it leaped up to answer opportunity? Was there an affinity between this restless urge sweeping across the California moorland and the selfsame gray-cloaked fragrance hurtling over the moors and fens that lawlessly sheltered the race whence Colin Henderson sprang? Did the skirling pipes of adventure prick Scotch blood the world over at the appointed season? Was it something that defied flat gaol walls and beguiled even the wan-cheeked impotence of a prison trusty? These thoughts stirred vaguely in the mind of Colin Henderson as he brought his fingers up toward his rain-soaked cap. He took the covering from his head and wrung it dry between his pallid hands. The rain continued to mock him and the wind railed at his dripping hair. Standing thus upon the naked rim of the marsh, he might have been Lear's fool intent on wresting a bitter jest from the elements.

He returned the squeezed cap to his head and pushed on. Behind him the lights of San Quentin blossomed through the gathering gloom with a cold flame. Even in the kindly twilight, veiled by slanting rain, these lights were of a violet-blue harshness.

The storm continued with an almost systematic fury. The wind was rising steadily, tearing across the open country in a vicious, impotent rage. Colin Henderson was cold and miserable and at