

# Reading in Czechoslovakia

BY HENRY C. WOLFE

IN view of the Nazi threat to Czechoslovakia's existence, it is only natural that the Czechs should be thinking these days primarily in terms of self-preservation. Small wonder that in these days of crisis Czech literature reflects the dangers in which the Republic lives. Windows of book stores in Prague, Brunn, Bratislava, and other Czechoslovak cities display a profusion of volumes about international politics. Many of these works are in the Czech language, but a surprisingly large number are in German, French, and English. Indeed, Prague's bookstores display nearly all the recent books about Central European affairs which have been published in England and the United States. Some of these books have already been translated into German by Czech publishers, because nearly every citizen of Bohemia and Moravia knows German. But the foreign visitor who prefers to read English can find in the Prague book marts almost any new book on international affairs. That is, unless they have all been sold. A recent visit to Topic, one of the largest stores in Prague, proved that some of the recent books dealing with the *Drang nach Osten* were out of stock. The proprietor assured me that he would have more copies on hand in a few days.

But not even the sale of gas-masks and the erection of air-raid sirens on every important street corner turned the Czechs completely away from interest in literature. There is a steady demand for the works of such Czech authors as Karel Capek, Josef Knap, Frantisek Krelina, Vladislav Vancura, and Bozena Benesova. While the "Rome of the North" waited for the droning bombers of General Goering's air armada to shower death and destruction on Prague's peaceful baroque scene, Czechs were buying the folklorist and ruralist works of Knap. Or they read the visionary poetry of Jaroslav Durych or the mystical writings of Jan Cep. Those who wish to get a broad perspective of world affairs before the fateful year of 1914 are finding valuable material in "The Cultural History of Mankind," by Madame Sarecka-Radonova.

"At the Cross Roads of Europe" is an historical symposium by six authors who set out to explain the democratic philosophy of the Czechoslovak state. Karel Capek, V. Chaloupecky, J. L. Hromadka, F. Hruby, A. Prazak, and F. Peroutka are the writers who prepared this volume for the Sixteenth International Congress of the P. E. N. clubs which was held last June in Prague. In his contribution to the book Dr. Capek observes that Czechoslovakia has been rather neglected in the world press, because there is little news value in dispatches from a country where peace and democracy are the order of the day. Foreign readers, he feels, turn to news from other countries where there is more sensational material for journalism. But much has happened in Europe since Dr. Capek wrote his part of this book.

At the P. E. N. Congress held at Prague in June Dr. Kamil Krofta, the Foreign

Minister of Czechoslovakia, welcomed the two hundred delegates from more than a score of countries. These foreign visitors included such distinguished writers as Jules Romains of France and H. G. Wells of England. One significant resolution of the Congress affirmed that literature must be above politics, that it must enjoy freedom of expression, and that it must serve to promote international understanding. The resolution was ipso facto a rebuke to the totalitarian policies of the Third Reich.

But resolutions alone cannot save a country menaced by the new Brown-Shirt imperialism. The Czechs have been striving to convince the French and British that a German attack on Czechoslovakia is, in reality, an attack on all Europe. A booklet which sets out to prove this contention was recently published by the well-known Orbis company of Prague. The author is Colonel Emanuel

Moravec, Professor in the High School of War in Czechoslovakia.

Colonel Moravec claims that the fate of Europe will be decided in Czechoslovakia. He reiterates Bismarck's statement that "Whoever is master of Bohemia is master of Europe." Colonel Moravec tells us: "In 1866, it was demonstrated that whoever is master of Bohemia has also a free road to the middle Danube via the Gateway of Moravia."

Colonel Moravec says that "As soon as Czechoslovakia were overthrown the Danubian basin would become a basis for German offensives in three directions: against Italy, against the Balkans, and against Poland and Soviet Russia." In regard to France, he writes: "If Czechoslovakia should fall, France would find herself on the European periphery." As for Britain, he maintains that no nation would be affected more adversely by the disappearance of Czechoslovakia than the British Empire.

Henry C. Wolfe, author of "The German Octopus," returned on September 26 from a tour of Czechoslovakia and other countries of Central Europe.

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE FASHION IN SHROUDS Margery Allingham (Doubleday, Doran: \$2.)	Murders of knight and extra-marital sweetie in super-posh London circles involve Albert Campion in platinum web of silken deviltry.	Runs gamut of colorful scenes—from swank gown shops to noisome dives—with scintillating talk, expert sleuthing, and explosive finish.	Campion in excelsis!
A BLUNT INSTRUMENT Georgette Heyer (Crime Club: \$2.)	Philandering Britisher brutally bopped. Amiable Insp. Hannasyde and mixed-pickle assistants run ragged by antics of suspects.	Double fracture of mystery story ethics only goes to show that if you're good you can get away with—murder.	Brilliant
THE CROOKED HINGE John Dickson Carr (Harpers: \$2.)	Arrival of claimant for English estate followed pronto by death of incumbent. Dr. Fell, fortunately near by, spots uncanny killer.	Witchcraft, a malevolent automaton, and an inexplicable killing seen by several at close range keep brain buzzing and hackles rising.	Dash out and get it
THE CHRISTMAS TREE MURDERS Joel Y. Dane (Crime Club: \$2.)	Strange demise of unimportant strike-picket starts big-time crime a-moverin' and drives Sergeant Cass Harty almost plumb nuts.	"Class-angle" of crimes capitally handled. Weapon a new one and Harty is tough, relentless, and a pleasure to follow.	Good
THE FOUR OF HEARTS Ellery Queen (Stokes: \$2.)	Honeymooning Hollywood luminaries drink poisoned cocktails in airplane and Ellery Queen does some acute deducing.	Intricate plot and torrid action, with surprising and thrilling finish, ride over Hollywood patter at its lush-est.	Excellent
THE KILLER Carolyn Wells (Lippincott: \$2.)	Rich Vermonter summons far-flung siblings to apportion his wealth. Sib, secretary, and donor, die—with Fleming Stone on spot.	Multiplicity of nieces, nephews, etc., confuses plot—author, too—but tale has typical Wellsian finish, suspense, and ebullency.	Wells No. 48
TERROR BY NIGHT Lee Crosby (Dutton: \$2.)	Prehistoric monster on rampage kills two in American college town. Amateur sleuth Hazard scents modern motives behind antediluvian di- does.	Well concocted and super-goose-pimply mixture of mystery and terror, with almost unbelievable truth revealed by clever investigator.	Worthwhile

## Streamlined Jungles

SKY ROAMING ABOVE TWO CONTINENTS. By Harry A. Franck. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by LOUIS J. HALLE, JR.

GLOBAL-TROTTERING vagabonds may take notice, with the issuance of this volume, that Harry Franck, the dean of them all, has signalled the close of an era by abandoning saddle and shoe-leather for airplane passage. Of course, some may say that he is merely growing old and less willing to give up his comforts than formerly, but there is more to it than that. Where, a few years ago in Latin America, he found only jungle trails, today he finds, beside airplanes, highways, speeding automobiles, gas-stations, and motorcycle police. The one short muleback journey which is recorded in this, the twentieth volume of his travels, was undertaken over the protests of a Honduran taxi-driver who had muscled in on what was until recently exclusively mule territory. Civilized standards, and with them civilized standardization, have been spreading at an accelerating pace over most of the primitive world, and even in the American tropics the pedestrian is on his way out. Consequently, while Veteran Franck keeps his usual cheerful manner, there is an undertone of wistfulness in his latest narrative. His observation that "when all the world becomes but a replica of home, travel will be a vain occupation" sounds like the prelude to a swan-song, or an addendum to Ecclesiastes.

This volume, instead of blazing a new way through the wilderness for armchair adventurers, like its predecessors, blazes an already well beaten track for the airplane tourists who are swarming into the Caribbean area in increasing numbers. It is, essentially, a guide-book, reminding the traveler of what he has seen or introducing him to what he is about to see. Such informal and personal narrative-guides to Middle America, the Spanish Main, and the West Indies have lately been appearing in numbers, but this is superior to the run of them because it is written by a man whose previous experience has given him a proper perspective and taught him to detach the significant detail from the mass of his impressions. Stopping over at Mexico City, he has to grub in the outskirts for evidences of the ancient Indian life, but he finds them. In Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the other Central American Republics his observation is trained especially on the distinctive national temperaments, which persist despite the steam-roller. In each country he notes, however, the social upheaval that is modifying the manners and usages inherited from feudal Spain, replacing them with the freedom, equality, and informality of post-war America. This is the book for all those who contemplate taking the increasingly popular *grand tour* of the Caribbean, and for all those who have taken it and failed to keep diaries. The lone vagabond, having helped to pave the way, now joins the multitudes over the old trails.

Mr. Halle is the author of "Trans-Caribbean" and "Birds against Men."

A novel of family life, at its most important moment, by the author of "National Velvet"



## Enid Bagnold

This is a story of the great adventure of bringing another human being into life. The moment William Lyon Phelps read the book, he telegraphed the publishers: "A very remarkable novel with original and profound thought . . . grace and beauty of style . . . full of vitality . . . a first-rate story of irresistible appeal to intelligent readers.

"It has depth and simplicity and tranquility on the edge of the volcano of life." — Rachel Field

"It touches the core of the miracle." — Louise Redfield Peattie

"She tells a story as no other woman writer of our time." — Charles A. Wagner, *Mirror*

"The children are, like those of 'National Velvet,' convincing and different." — Blanche Colton Williams

"She succeeds in reminding the reader of experiences emotional and important which have become encrusted with the later experiences of living." — Helen Hull

# The Door of Life

Just out!...\$2.50 at all bookstores  
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