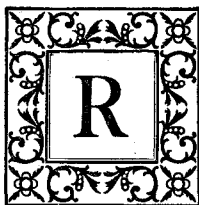


Czechoslovakia

AN EMERGING REPUBLIC

BY VIOLA I. PARADISE AND HELEN CAMPBELL

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REVOLUTIONS came thick and fast in Central Europe after the war. The one resulting in the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic was a revolution of propaganda, with its Masaryk in London, its Beneš in Paris, its money raisers in the United States, and its active demonstrations of which way the wind blew in the Czech legionaries on all fronts—all leading to the climax—that day in October, 1918, before the armistice when the Czech people notified the Austro-Hungarian Empire that they had taken the power into their own hands.

How all this came to pass has been told and retold, officially, and by admiring friends. As with our own revolution, where the bold immediate political and martial facts stand out, along with the cherry-tree episode, while the ensuing years when a nation was being built are to many almost unfamiliar, so the building years of Czechoslovakia are less widely known than her actual début as a republic.

The peoples now forming Czechoslovakia went into the war reluctantly, the Bohemians and Moravians—western Slavs—compelled to fight for their oppressors of over three centuries, the Austrians; the Slovaks and Ruthenians—eastern Slavs—for their oppressors of a thousand years, the Magyars. The real Magyars and German Austrians among them were a small minority—not enough to leaven the mass. And by virtue of her oppressed past and of her zealous and clever propaganda, Czechoslovakia wrested from the great powers recognition of her separateness as a nation, and emerged from the war—or rather from

the peace—with a mixed heritage: Czechy or Bohemia for the kernel, which previously had constituted most of the industrial part of Austria; agricultural Slovakia, geographically closely related to Hungary, but racially akin to the Czechs; industrial lower Silesia; and the gratuitous addition of Ruthenia, or Podkarpatska Rus.

Yet along with this territorial and industrial wealth fell less welcome heritages—first the inevitable minorities. About twenty-two per cent of the population is German, about five per cent Hungarian. Many of these are reluctantly citizens of the new republic, indignant and disgruntled, having been turned from the ruling class to an alien minority, seeing their former “inferiors” now in the saddle.

The early days of the republic, after the first coup, were days of hard enthusiastic work, as well as of keen statesmanship. The country moved ahead, bit by bit. Came concrete, tangible evidence of its progress—the exchange began to rise. Then, before the end of her second year, up leapt a crisis of the old political color: Charles returned to Hungary. Imagine the breathless watching of that first infant step—the mobilization of the republic’s army. Would the wheels go round? They did. Every cartwheel turned without a squeak.

An accomplishment, truly. Yet in a Europe where nothing is final, one cannot close the volume in contentment that “they lived happily ever after.” Not that war is on Czechoslovakia’s horizon. But her geographic position is not an advantageous one in to-day’s Europe. A small country, roughly 54,000 miles, about the size of Illinois, her population is over thirteen and a half millions. She has a plethora of borders, is the centre of

a ring of poverty-stricken neighbors, playing scarcely a gentle game, not heeding the ordinary rules. And so anything may happen, unless she can consolidate them

tion, is still bound to Hungary by railroad ties; Hungary has been her natural outlet. Now, however, border and customs regulations choke that outlet, and a new sys-



A Slovak village and its outlying fields, a charming landscape as well as a life-sized relief map illustrating the intensive and mediaeval agricultural system.

into something more than a group of treaty colleagues—the present Little Entente. From the domestic view, too, her position shows the ribs of the old divided Europe. Agricultural Slovakia, joined, despite the White Carpathian Mountains, to her western kin, Czechy, by the revolu-

tem must be built up to provide Slovakia with those avenues to Moravia and Bohemia which the old empire did not provide. The new republic still suffers Bohemia's famous lack of her famous coast. By treaty she must channel a way to the sea.

The very life of Czechoslovakia depends on her export trade. Though the republic is dominantly agricultural, her industries are extensive and highly developed, the number of her industrial workers—about 2,500,000—running a close second to the 3,000,000 engaged in agricultural pursuits. It is largely upon her industries and her industrial exports that her position of importance in Europe hinges.

This dependence caused a crisis in her fourth summer—a boomerang from incipient prosperity. While the currencies of her neighbors had been tumbling precipitately, that of Czechoslovakia, due to her restraint in printing paper money—for she prints even less than the amount covered by her gold reserve—and to her favorable balance of trade just attained, had been soaring; in about one year had risen from 104 crowns to the dollar to 29. This appreciation of her crown the nation first regarded with pride, which soon became surprised consternation. For prices did not enjoy a corresponding decrease. Outside countries could not afford to buy from Czechoslovakia; orders were cancelled, factories were closed down or run only part time, thousands of men were unemployed, and there was real distress in the land. To aggravate the situation, the lower currencies of Czechoslovakia's neighbors offered more tempting markets. The one advantage she was reaping from the tendency of her crown toward stabilization was an ability to buy raw materials abroad at low prices; which will decrease production costs, and at a later date give her an advantage in competition for foreign trade.

Another subject of urgent concern to this new republic is the agricultural situation. Like every country of Central Europe, she finds the redistribution of land a trenchant domestic problem. All Central Europe has been limping along under the decaying remnants of feudalism, the desirable tracts of land in the possession of rich non-resident owners and administered by managers whose profit depends on screwing a maximum of labor out of the peasants in exchange for a minimum of subsistence. Nowhere in Europe is this old system more graphic than in Slovakia, where the whole coun-

tryside is a life-sized relief map illustrating how the land is misworked. The long, narrow strips running up the hillsides, each strip a different color, make charming landscapes for the eye and the canvas, but fail in the large-scale production of food-stuffs, fail even to feed the families who work them. The strength of the old land possession shows itself in the persistence of this wasteful system of land labor in old-world regions which are characterized by highly intensive cultivation. "Every inch is worked," the Bohemians say frequently of their land. So intimately do the fields jostle the roads and railroad tracks that at harvest time even the train passenger becomes almost a part of the field group, and sees clearly the laborious binding of the sheaves. The land-thrifty Czech speaks with distress of the waste of land in Podkarpatska Rus, where the especially evil land system leaves some stretches unused, and much for pasturage that would in Bohemia be sown.

Within seven months after the revolution, the National Assembly of the republic passed the land expropriation law and the land reform act, which prescribes the method of procedure in carrying out the redistribution. This will affect the ownership of about four and a half million hectares,* or about one-third of the country's productive area. Before the revolution 65 per cent of this land was owned by the royal family and the aristocracy. The landlords, except the imperial family and those of the aristocracy who remained citizens of Austria or Hungary after the formation of the republic, receive compensation based on the average values in 1913-1915. Several government officials told us that numbers of proprietors were well content with this expropriation, for they consider the purchase price a fair one. Their desire to sell may also be stimulated by their loss of the incredibly cheap peasant labor with which the old system enriched them.

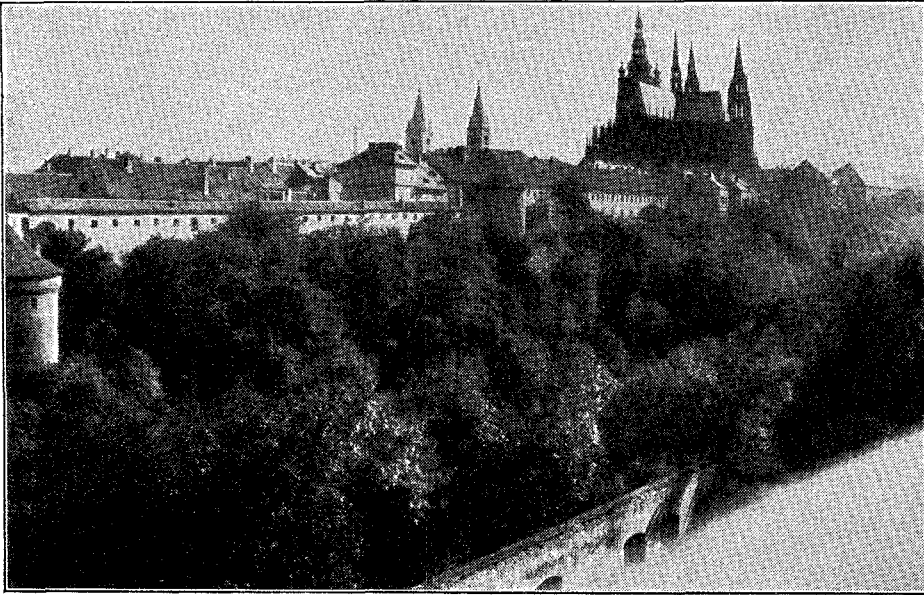
The execution of these laws is to be slow and gradual. "We wish to avoid disorder in agricultural production and the industries dependent on it that too swift a change in the age-old system might mean," said an official. Indeed, the

* 1 hectare = 2.47 acres.

changing of landownership by men is no easy matter, and suggests the difficulty of the changing of spots by leopards. Possession goes deep.

Even with the supplementary laws providing for credit grants to capital-less purchasers of land, and for renting on short lease, the unlanded peasant and agricultural laborer is now able to buy very little.

special arrangement with the landlord, for they must use his implements and horses. The strip was too small to raise a year's food for the family, and therefore, if there were any days not needed by his landlord, or on his own rented strip, the peasant might work for wages, paid on a low scale. The former proprietor of this estate was a typical absentee landlord,



Prague is not only a beautiful museum city of the past, but a busy, growing industrial city, avowedly the pride of the republic.

How the law is working at present can be seen in a sample estate of 1,100 hectares taken over by the state from one proprietor in Slovakia. This has not yet been completely distributed, for poor local harvests have made buying impossible. Meanwhile, the state is working the unsold land. The village in which the peasants live who worked on this old estate under the old system contained about thirty-eight families. Each rented a strip of land from the owner, paying for his rent a stipulated number of days' labor on the landlord's land—usually a hundred days' work for the land, and fifty days' for the cottage in the village, though some shrewder peasant might make a better bargain, and some weaker a worse. In the days that were left in the year the family worked their little rented strip by

lived away from Slovakia, and rented the estate to a manager, who paid his rent out of the proceeds of 240 hectares, and, therefore, had the clear profit from the remaining 860.

Because there is so little land to be divided in this particular unit, portions are sold only to those who already own some land, so that instead of selling to an unlanded family a piece too small to support them, the state sells a small landowner enough to increase his holding to an amount large enough to provide him a living. Ten hectares is the minimum on which a family can live, and the government aims to have the smallest holdings built up to this size. One keen observer of the refashionings in Central Europe, in speaking of the different attempts at land reform, said: "The great change that will

come about from this distribution of land to the agricultural producer is that more food will be eaten, and less sold."

Yet, although Czechoslovakia has on her hands this complex problem of land reform, despite the heritages of war, despite the infectious economic diseases rag-

so many cities of Europe, not a museum city of the past, but a living city, industrial, growing, creating things—alive; by no means luxurious, but the pride of the republic. The new government retains the good old custom of assisting children from all parts of the nation—even from



A main street in Slovakia.

ing among her close neighbors, one has the strong feeling that the country is on the up-curve, that she is in the way of establishing herself securely. Perhaps the enthusiasm of the people in their new freedom, the psychology of an active patriotism, the many new undertakings of the government for the welfare of its people, create this conviction. It follows you out into the remotest parts of the republic, as well as in the cities.

Czechoslovakia has several beautiful cities, her chief treasure Prague, on its shining hills, with its intellectual life, its opera, its ancient university, its lovely bridges, its many noble old buildings, its flavor of centuries of history; yet, unlike

the remote tip of her new Ruthenia—to make a journey to the capital. Almost any summer day you may see groups of country children being taken about Prague by teachers or officials, seeing its glories and learning its history on the spot.

Very different indeed from anything we have in the United States is the village life of Czechoslovakia. With us nearly all the culture—the theatres, music, civic movements—is centred in the cities. An ambitious American small-town boy goes, as a matter of course, to the city. But in Czechoslovakia the cities, although they are centres of culture, have not, so to speak, cornered the nation's culture. Smaller cities, especially in Bohemia and

Moravia, have their own opera companies and their theatrical companies, which make frequent trips to the outlying villages.

People belong to their villages here in a way that scarcely exists in the United States. A man who has gone away to a university or abroad for his education, returns in most cases, as a matter of course, to his village and makes his life in it. He is psychologically rooted there. This is true in all parts of the republic for the "upper classes"—excepting always the absentee landlord; and for most of the peasants, except those who have been goaded by poverty to emigrate. It seldom occurs to a peasant, dissatisfied with conditions in his native village, to try other similar districts or to go to the cities. In the case of the Slovak or Ruthenian peasant who emigrates to America, it is usually with the ambition to return with money enough to buy land.

And village life is much fuller than the life on our main streets. As in most of Europe, the farmers do not live on isolated farms cut off by bad roads and weather from their neighbors, but after their work in the fields come back into town and have a real community life there—social, political meetings, dance and song festivals, Sokol entertainments, outings. In one village of only 1,200 inhabitants—

a village consisting of a single street and down near the railroad station a malt factory, owned co-operatively by the farmers in the village—was a community building erected a year ago with public funds—800,000 crowns. It had a theatre, lecture-rooms, a well-equipped gymnasium, baths, a large garden, an athletic field, an excellent coffee-house and restaurant, and a number of rooms in which visitors to the village could be accommodated—the whole building modern and attractive. The day we visited this village, a play for children was being given in the theatre, preparations for a Sokol lecture in the evening were being made, in the coffee-house men were reading papers from all over the country, or were playing billiards or chess. The opera from the nearest city was to come the next evening.

This plump little Moravian village was perhaps more prosperous than the average; yet, though such modern and complete community houses are not common, nearly every village has some public centre—usually with the activities of the Sokol or a similar organization for its kernel.

The Sokol is a characteristic Czech organization of sixty years' standing, which makes physical and mental education the basis of its nationalist plan. It



The Slovaks express their artistry in the simple things used commonly; for instance, the hand-woven linen squares in which the baby is carried to church.

conducts gymnasium classes, theatricals, lectures, and forms a sort of peoples' university. The activities of the Sokol and of the two parallel organizations—one socialist, the other catholic—were no negligible factors in the success of the Czechoslovakia revolution, indeed are accredited with giving the youth of Bohemia, who started into the war with the Austrian army, the discipline and belief in their ultimate independence which made possible the formation of the Czech legions which later fought with the allies.

Of course, as foreign visitors we were given the opportunity of meeting the most interesting people in these villages, and so perhaps we have a tendency to overrate the intelligence and culture of persons presented to us as average citizens. Yet in the essays we made quite unattended into villages selected by chance, we were constantly surprised at the broad range of interests. Once we called on the parents of an immigrant we had known in America. They lived in a village of about 2,000 inhabitants eighteen miles from the railroad. Our host, the village tinsmith, over seventy years old, was widely read and well informed. He discussed the events of the day with a background of wide knowledge, gained not only from newspapers, but from other reading. The Near East question, the personalities of Kemal, of Lloyd George, of Bonar Law, the new American tariff, the geysers in Yosemite Park—these things he discussed with the same vivid realness with which he spoke of the local crops.

We asked this man, as we did many others: "What differences are there in the life here in this village now, from before the republic?" His answer is typical of many: "Now we have our freedom. The schools are in our own language, we are no longer a subject race. But as for any other differences, it is too soon to ask. Living is harder now, the prices are terribly high. My wife, old as she is, must do all her own housework. Before the war we could afford to have the washing and scrubbing done. But a monarchy instead of a republic wouldn't make things any better. It's the war. Now we have our freedom to ease our poverty. In ten years there will be other, more definite things to tell about why life is better in a republic."

He went on to speak of President Masaryk and the deep devotion which the people feel for him. "Even the minorities can't help respecting him. You know, our president has no party of his own, but all parties co-operate with him. That's a recognition of his greatness. He will surely make a plan to straighten things out."

The Slovak villages present a different appearance from those in Bohemia and Moravia, and have a scainter intellectual life. The Slovaks are more Slavic than the Czechs, not having the Teutonic admixture. They are more picturesque, and express a real peasant culture. The thick plaster houses washed with blue kalsomine, the exterior walls decorated in quaint designs, the thatched roofs, yellow corn hanging from the eaves, the well-shaped water-jars on racks before the doors, the houses and school and church often grouped around the village green, snowy geese strutting arrogantly about, women and children gaily and colorfully dressed in unbelievable wide skirts and wide white sleeves and high boots and kerchiefed heads. Perhaps you arrive early Sunday morning. Outside nearly every house the tall boots are being polished for church, children are being dressed. Yet you are cordially invited in, and you find the kitchen spotless and gay, its walls painted with old bright Slovak designs, perhaps the whole upper third of one wall covered with many-colored pottery, more pottery on the rafters. Then you are invited into the living-room, used also as a bedroom, and you may be shown the very best costumes, reserved for great feast-days and weddings; and perhaps the sleeves which the daughter of the family is embroidering for her bridegroom's wedding costume, and that added pride—the great feather beds in varicolored ticks, piled up on a painted chest.

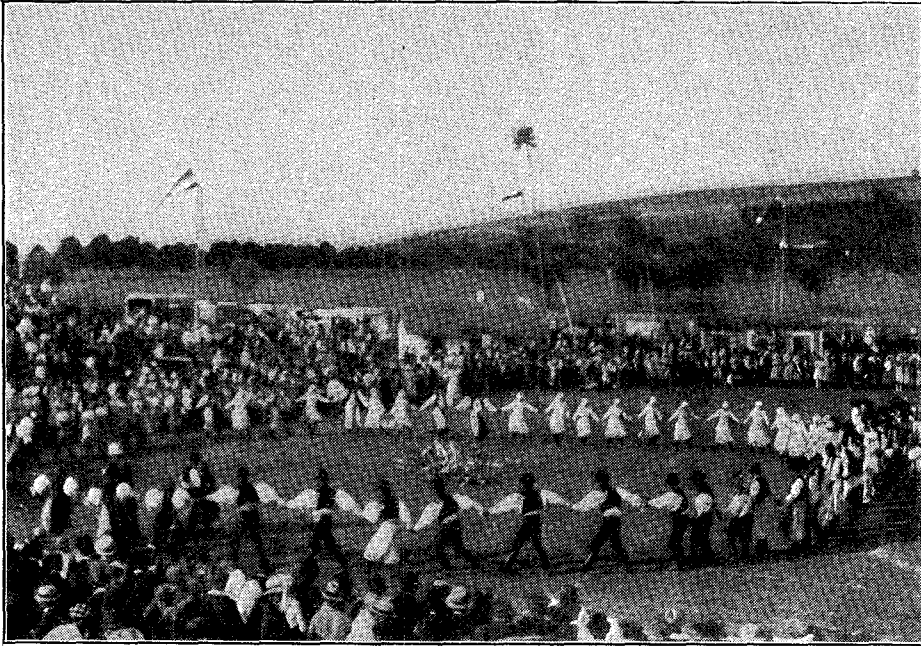
Now that Slovakia is part of the republic, the life of the villages is being broadened, not only through the schools that have been opened, but through the introduction of the Sokol and other activities. A red-cheeked peasant woman in one Slovak village spoke with enthusiasm about the difference between life now and under Magyar rule. "Then our language was forbidden, there were no schools in the Slovak language for our children, our

customs were despised. The Magyars in the village laughed at our clothes, and at our embroideries. Now the government at Prague is actually encouraging us to be Slovaks."

It is true that the government is fostering every expression of peasant culture. One instance of this is its subsidy to an an-

which the republic is initiating goes an appreciation of the picturesqueness which such reforms may alter.

"It is a great problem with us now," said Doctor Alice Masaryk, who is head of the Red Cross, "how to retain the beauty and quaintness of these villages, and at the same time to make life more



Twenty thousand peasants participated in this festival, now encouraged by the republic, at Uherske Hradiste, Moravia.

cient festival held yearly at Uherske Hradiste in Moravia, but to which this year about 20,000 peasants, most of them Slovaks, were enabled to come from all parts of Slovakia and participate, each in the costume of his village. Though it was a definitely government-encouraged affair, the peasants threw themselves into it with all their spontaneity. There were jolly processions, village by village; marriage festivals typical of different villages—but always with a giant stork prancing about—with rude bumpkin fun as well as exquisite dancing.

The government is also encouraging the peasant pottery, peasant embroideries, and other hand-work, by assisting in the organization and sale of such native arts and industries. It is indeed excellent that along with the sanitary reforms

comfortable and sanitary for the people. We are trying not to let too much beauty be sacrificed to sanitation. But, of course, health comes first."

Difficult as the reorganization of Slovakia seems now to be, it is not in this piece of work that the value of the Czechoslovak Republic as a force in the basic rebuilding of Europe is to be assayed. Czechoslovakia has a veritable acid test, Podkarpatska Rus, or Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia as we know it. What the republic does in Bohemia or Moravia politically or economically, is no proof of her regenerating abilities, for as part of the Austrian Empire she was by necessity politically sophisticated, gaining her crumbs by strategy, and economically dominant, having some 85 per cent of the empire's industries. With these in-

heritances there is no reason why she cannot make something of herself as a nation. Even her controversies with her racial minorities are matters between groups of equal political development, but it is quite a different task to reorganize and administer such a territory as Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia containing a typical oppressed nationality of the old school, subject to Hungary for a thousand years of neglect and to the oppression of the Russian Empire before that. Because of the multiple partitions in this general neighborhood, Ruthenia is now a curiously unattached district. Racially Russian, Ukrainian rather than Great Russian, it is at present not contiguous to any Russian territory and would be only if Eastern Galicia, in which the people are also Ruthenian, becomes a part of Russia. The Ruthenians are without racial or political cohesion, without expressed aspirations; enslaved by a land system that starves them however hard they work and by its companion, acute alcoholism; without an effective tool—not a keen plough nor a mile of well-placed track.

Nevertheless, the Ruthenians were not thoughtlessly parcelled out in Paris to the Czechoslovak Republic, but entered it under as freely expressed a choice as was possible for an unorganized group. A great number of Ruthenian emigrants have gone to the United States from this territory, some 400,000, because of their economic misery. When the fate of their home country, as part of collapsed Hungary, was to be decided at the Peace Conference, it was these Ruthenians in America who took the initiative about the disposition instead of the population still at home and at that time suffering keenly from their exposure to active warfare when the armies crossed and recrossed their fields and villages. A plebiscite was held in the Ruthenian centres in the United States and of the total number of Ruthenians 67 per cent voted for the union of their homeland with Czechoslovakia and only 1 per cent for reunion with Hungary. Following this action the faint political organizations that the Ruthenians had in their three largest towns expressed themselves by resolution in favor of this union, and in consequence the Peace Conference joined Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to the republic, constituting it

as an autonomous unit within the state, providing for self-government through a diet of its own. So the republic, scarcely a year old, was given the unenviable task of administering this neglected territory, unenviable except for the possible valuable results of a successful piece of rebuilding, for the development of Podkarpatska Rus will be a determining factor in Czechoslovakia's relations with Russia when Russia is again hobnobbing over her frontier with her now scandalized, aloof neighbors. Many Czechs express the belief that Ruthenia will then revert to Russia.

The autonomy stipulated by the Treaty of St. Germain had, at the end of 1922, not been put into effect, and the reasons given by the republic to the League of Nations in answer to a protest sent by a political group of Hungarians in September, 1921, explain the difficulties of organization excellently. "Autonomy can be put into effect only by degrees," the republic contends, "for the country is lacking in the elements which are indispensable for self-government." Her plan for remedying this lack emphasizes education and land reform, the latter because 90 per cent of the Ruthenians hold their tiny strips of land on lease from land-powerful Magyar owners who are literally their overlords. Elections under such circumstances would mean re-established political control of the illiterate peasant by the Magyar minority. Meanwhile the interests of the population are being protected by an indirectly elected governing council, advisory to the provisional governor appointed in Prague.

The other remedy is the growing educational system, planned not only to give Ruthenia the educated class which it lacks, but to educate the masses themselves. The Czechs are almost worshippers of literacy, and in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia the standard is one of the highest in the world. It is inevitable that their aim in Slovakia and Podkarpatska Rus should be for a quick literacy, as they realize the disadvantage in having the nation divided into two distinct groups on the basis of education, the literate west and the illiterate east. Unlike us in the United States, they realize that the way to eliminate illiteracy is to face the fact that it exists, measure it,

district it, and then attack it from as many angles as possible, not only through the children of school age, but through any group that can be reached officially by the state. For instance, the republic has an educational system in its conscript army. Of the boys who come from backward districts not one is allowed to leave the army until he is literate. We met a Ruthe-

man, an illiterate farm laborer of twenty-seven, had gone through four classes in this evening school and was attending a commercial school in a near-by city.

The introduction of a school system into Podkarpatska Rus is not an A B C matter, but involves complications and dearths, especially of teachers and buildings. In 1914 there were, in Ruthenia,



This hillside, with its narrow strips, shows how urgently needed is the land reform which Czechoslovakia is gradually putting into effect.

nian youth of twenty who had just come home the previous day from his army service, and was to begin work at once in the local office of the government railroads. This boy grew up in a village which had no school; at fifteen he was taken into the Hungarian army; fought for four years, and, at the inclusion of Ruthenia in the republic, was just at the age for army service for his new government. His only education was received during this military training. That he came out prepared to do office work is partly due to the boy's bent for it, but at least he had his chance for clerical training in those two years. We visited one school in a small town where the addition of a lamp to the schoolroom made an evening school for adults possible, and twenty-two were in the class, some of them women. One

only eighteen schools using the language of the people. These disappeared during the second year of the war, and later all teaching was suspended. Many of the schoolhouses were destroyed during the fighting, and at the final collapse of Hungary, the withdrawing troops carried off whatever school equipment was left in the few undamaged schools. But more important a lack is that of teachers. Only a few Ruthenians are equipped to teach, and the training of others is difficult because the language of the territory presents a controversial divergence. The Czech school authorities, surveying this difficulty, find that Ukrainian and a local dialect called Carpathian Russian are the most widely used. Educated Ruthenian "intelligentsia," however, disagree as to the written language, and use Russian,

Ukrainian, or Carpathian Russian quite without regard to which of the three they speak. A temporary decision has been made by the school authorities in conference with philologists, but the final decision about the language of the schools is reserved for the diet. To increase the difficulties, the population has not accepted schools as the Slovaks did, joyfully, as a right of which they had been deprived for a thousand years, but in some districts as an instrument of refined torture, so integral a part is child labor of the wretched land system and illiteracy of the normal life. That this attitude is changing is gratifying to the friends of the district, as the educational plan has for its aim the preparation of the people for self-government.

Ruthenia is a many-sided task of organization, a devastated area on which no tourist sympathy has been lavished, still suffering from war bruises and those acute war sequels, epidemics. One chore is the building up of a government medical service, hospitals in a few large centres and travelling hospital units for the villages beyond the hospital radius. Three of these motor hospitals were part of our

United States army equipment, given to Czechoslovakia for this work after the war.

The Czechs, though Slavs, come into Ruthenia as an alien power and must create a new relationship between them as a governing class and the Ruthenians as the governed, because their predecessors the Hungarians left a deep-rooted record of class and racial exploitation. Few of the common people understand the change in administration and will appreciate it only if it results in a greater comfort of living. Podkarpatska Rus is indeed an acid test. To be in power in a backward country used to domineering officials and not to domineer, demands restraint seldom exercised in history. The republic seems to realize that much depends on the type of official who is exposed to this temptation. For instance, the notaries, whose duties are of importance to the masses, are being changed in personnel from the former source of exploitation to a source of responsibility and understanding. In general, the administrative force is intelligent about conditions, and in some cases of an exceptionally high grade. One of the principal organizers of the administration, a man of ability and personality, might be



The villages of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, newly added to the republic, are full of the dangerous picturesqueness of poverty.



This Ruthenian village, with its braided fences and characteristic well-sweeps, has progressed from thatched to shingled roofs, but not yet to chimneys.

doing much more comfortable work in Bohemia, but chooses this task, realizing the importance of getting the Ruthenians started off toward efficient autonomy with some useful tools, and having an unassumed appreciation for them as individuals. Of course, most of the officials are there involuntarily, but even so, the spirit is a friendly one. We saw in an eastern town in front of the Greek Uniate Church a Czech army officer repainting and lettering the weather-beaten crucifix. He explained that he was having a holiday, that he was painting quite unofficially, only because he happened to know how and thought the freshening up ought to be done for the approaching mass that brought many hill peasants down to that church.

The land is all that the name implies, a land of beauty on the southern slopes of the Carpathians, high, piled-up snowy mountains; small sharp mountains abrupt from the plain, made to order for the castles that once crowned them, unruined; rolling wooded mountains, frothing with waterfalls. In this land of beauty, pastoral, agrarian, the fold on fold of misery is unexpected. Even the mountain people have lost their share of the proverbial

highland pride and have also succumbed to disintegrating despair.

The Ruthenian villages are full of that dangerous picturesqueness of poverty, that quaintness which is sung about but means discomfort, lack of air, light, individual privacy, and space to store supplies. Whether the village is in the floor of a valley or on a hillside there are the regular rows of oblong, plastered log houses with abrupt thatched roofs. Each house faces a neighbor, its narrow end to the street; occasionally there is the house of a returned emigrant, with shingled or even tin roof and a tiny porch. There are fences of braided twigs; tall, gaunt well-sweeps dominate the sky-line like dead forests; mirroring the village life is the inevitable duck pond. Strange even to the western Slav are the wooden churches, crude, natural-colored, primitive as some of the childlike sacred paintings on some of their porches; the bulky bell-towers often standing separate, brown and simple as Giotto's is pink and elaborate. Every inch of the crowded village is used for supplementary farm operations; at harvest time drying corn hangs across the fronts of the houses; flax is piled against the walls, standing high enough to reach

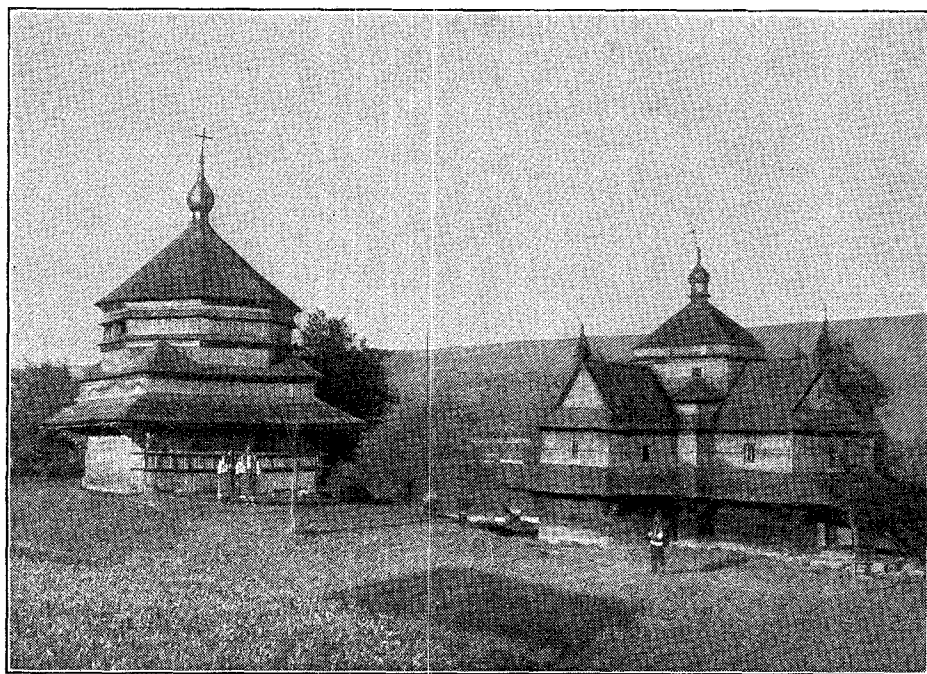
the low eaves of the roofs; inside the houses—dark, floorless, bare—great piles of corn to be shucked take up the whole ground space. At other times the entire family may spread itself out informally into the village lanes preparing the flax for spinning.

There are numberless pictures; maybe the people on the roads, crowds of them in homespun and sheepskin returning from the market next after harvest with their precious exchanges in live stock, tools, or furniture; or at mass on a church holiday where the news of the countryside is gazetted, peasants in their embroidered best, gay in color and decorative design but bulky in line and texture. Always the groups are so mediaeval in atmosphere and detail that they seem rather to be an historical pageant than the living out of that disappointing truth that into the mediaeval backwaters the modern world spreads its poverty faster than its enrichments.

Mankind is familiar with primitive agriculture, partly from intimate personal experience, partly because the shepherd, the goose-girl, the sower, play such frequent rôles in literature and painting. Primitive mining is not so well known.

But it happens that, deep in southeastern Ruthenia, there is a government-owned salt-mine of such beauty and splendor as to deserve immortalization in art. It is worked now, perhaps much as in the days when the Romans mined this same deposit, by hand—without machinery. So vast are the great white corridors under the earth that the laborious chiselling of the workers seems to make scarcely any sound, just as the lights by which they work look more like fireflies, as one descends the deep shaft, than like lanterns. For over a hundred years salt has been hewn from solid salt, until now the mine is a place of vast white spaces; superb heights; square harmonious arches, many of them 300 feet high; of shadowy severe grandeur that belittles the magnificence of even the most beautifully austere cathedrals—all the hand-work of men, their slow arduous toil, sculpturing out the salt, inch by inch.

So must the Czechoslovak Republic chisel out the buried potentialities of her unformed portions. With that accomplished, she can pour her full energies into the task of welding together for greater strength her three distinct parts.



Strange even to the western Slavs are the wooden churches of Podkarpatska Rus, with their bulky bell-towers standing separate.

As It Was Ordained

BY FRED C. SMALE

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. H.

The Roses fade, the Night descends,
Death plies his dart.
Our lips are stilled, the Chapter ends,
And we depart.
Yet once again the Flower shall live,
To deck the urn,
And when the gods permission give,
Will we return.

—*The Long Tryst.*

BY roads that wound between banks and hedges of vivid green, Robert Lynn and Theodore Hartley came to Stoke Averell that afternoon in late May. Nestling amid orchards from which the blossoms had scarcely fallen, its cottage gardens gay with scented stocks and red valerian, the village lay in a flood of sunshine July-like in its intensity. The two young men paused awhile to rest on a low lichen-covered wall, for they had walked far that day, and the Devon roads are not easy ones.

"I suppose there is a decent inn somewhere?" said Hartley. "Tea will be acceptable, to say nothing of a wash and brush up. We are like a couple of millers."

"There is an inn farther down," replied Lynn absently. "Near the church."

Hartley stared at his companion.

"How the deuce do you know that?" he asked. "You have never been here before."

Robert Lynn shrugged his broad shoulders, but remained silent. Though ordinarily the liveliest of company, he had grown strangely reticent during the latter part of their journey. Receiving no answer to his question, Hartley grunted and made no further remark.

For some time the pair sat in silence. A little farther down the hill a woman, curious to observe the strangers, peered around a golden pillar of genista which blazed at the porch and then withdrew again. Presently a bell clanged out harshly. Lynn started and passed his hand

across his forehead with a puzzled frown. Hartley rose.

"Five o'clock," said he curtly, for he somewhat resented the other's silent mood. "We have been dreaming here long enough."

Lynn also rose, though with less alacrity.

"Dreaming," said he heavily. "Aye, dreaming!"

Hartley looked at him curiously. Lynn's jet-black hair was tumbled over his forehead and his eyes looked cloudy and troubled.

"What's wrong, old man? You seem to have gone dazed in the last hour or so. Touch of sun?"

Robert Lynn laughed constrainedly.

"Sun!" he repeated. "In an English May, and I born in Florida! Hardly that. But I do feel a bit queer; I don't know why. Been smoking too much, perhaps. Then, after a pause, he continued hesitatingly: "It's a crazy notion, of course, but this place affects me oddly. I seem—to—have been—"

His voice trailed off into a weak murmur, and he suddenly lurched sideways against the low wall. Hartley sprang forward and caught his companion by the arm.

"Steady, Bob!" he exclaimed sharply. "What is it?"

Lynn stood gasping for some moments, his face deathly white and little beads of perspiration on his forehead. Hartley recalled afterward that his eyes were fixed and had an expression of being veiled over in some mysterious manner. He seemed quite self-possessed, however, and suffered Hartley to lead him down the hill.

"Let us—go—to the—inn," said Lynn jerkily. "Better—presently."

"Are you sure you can walk so far?" queried Hartley. "Why not go into one