

CENTRAL EUROPEAN BLOC AND ITS REALISATION

BY

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Perhaps — now that Czecho-Slovakia has suffered the changes through which it has passed recently — we may expect the truth to dawn upon those people in Poland who have dreamed of a political friendship between Poland and Bohemia. There have been dreamers in Poland who have thought that the Czechs — although during the period when their policy played a leading role in Central Europe they never counted on the friendship of Poland — now that they have suffered changes and their policy has proved an utter failure, would approach Poland in a spirit of penitence and humility. These dreamers believed that after what had happened Bohemia would also join the Central European Bloc.

Although the conception is a very sound one, — chiefly because it would strengthen Poland's position in Central Europe —, nevertheless the idea of Bohemia or Czecho-Moravia respectively joining the Bloc is a mere dream. A cursory glance at the map of the Czecho-Moravia of today will suffice to convince every one that those countries are surrounded on three sides by Germany and that the only

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possible channel of communication with Poland and Slovakia is a very narrow strip of territory.

The Czecho-Moravia of today looks as if it were merely waiting for Germany to swallow it definitively. But, even if that were not the case, is there any Polish politician of any account who would wish to spoil the relations between Poland and the German Empire for the sake of saving the Czechs? Thank Heaven, however, the Czechs are far more practical-minded in this matter than their alleged Polish patrons. For weeks past the Polish Press has been discussing the question of a Czech-Polish compromise, doing so in the name of Slav brotherhood; and notwithstanding, the Czechs are very cool and reserved in their answers, unequivocally giving us to understand that they are not prepared to join any bloc antagonistic to Germany. Since M. Chvalkovszky's visit to Berlin the Czech people, which has never been remarkable for its romanticism or its chivalrous sentiments, — though in return it is blessed with a strong sense of business —, has not hesitated to acknowledge its complete dependence upon Germany... "Business is the main thing"... Those fully familiar with the mental structure of the Czechs, were not in the least surprised at that. A year ago Monsignor Jehlicska, — one of the men most familiar with the Czech people — speaking to me of the Polish Czechophile and other persons grouped round the "Kurjera Warszawski" made the following statement: — "These gentlemen are very mistaken in their opinion of the Czechs. Even in the event of their being reduced to the last extremity, the Czechs would rather subject themselves to German hegemony than join hands in friendship with the Poles. Their antipathy to the Poles is much greater than their dislike of the Germans, — though they do not dare to confess it; and in addition they are shrewd enough to calculate that they could do much better business under German direction than in the event of their joining hands with the Poles." These words so full of bitter irony have proved true; it is therefore high time for our political dreamers at long last to leave out of account Czecho-Moravia if they have serious ambitions in respect of the establishment of a Central European Bloc from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

It is another question whether it would be quite opportune to include Slovakia and Carpatho-Russia in the Bloc. I am thankful to say that our Foreign Ministry has recently been doing everything in its power to ensure that Carpatho-Russia shall, while retaining its autonomy, be incorporated in Hungary, thereby building the first connecting bridge between Hungary and Poland. Unfortunately Slovakia, that ill-starred country the fate of which is in the hands of Tiso and his "parochial" policy, and which is completely misled by the apparent endeavour of the People's Party to secure autonomy, — Slovakia has not yet accepted the idea of an alliance with Hungary. Yet the Slovaks might really take a lesson from their neighbours, the practical-minded Czechs, who have shown that it is possible without incurring any disadvantage to conclude an alliance with the enemy of yesterday. There can be no doubt that in the event of Slovakia separating entirely from Bohemia the Slovaks will also very soon realise that it is much more to their advantage — though at the outset perhaps only economically — to make an alliance with the Crown of St. Stephen. And until they arrive at the conviction there is no reason whatsoever why an independent Slovakia should not join the proposed Central European Bloc. In the event of even the loosest connection being maintained with Bohemia, however, that would be quite impossible. At the present moment there does not appear to be any likelihood of our being able to persuade Yugoslavia — and still less Rumania — to join the Central European Bloc. The obstacle in the way of that issue is the perfectly legitimate revision movement prevailing in Hungary. Hungary's claims against Yugoslavia are indeed not very serious ones, the only area involved being Szabadka and environs. It is very likely that by means of proper negotiations these two Parties, Hungary and Yugoslavia, would be able to come to a compromise in the matter.

But what about Rumania?

We are Rumania's allies; it is therefore our duty to offer Rumania our good wishes. But we must confess that post-war territorial greed was a great mistake. Just glance at the map of Transylvania and the Banate. Are these two provinces really ethnically Rumanian? In Transylvania itself the quota of Rumanians is only 50%; the rest of the popula-

tion consisting for the most part of Magyars, with a sprinkling of Saxons. It is manifest that it is in the interest of Rumania to endeavour to solve the problem of Transylvania and the Banate today, under auspicious circumstances, by amicable agreement with Hungary. The Poles — Rumania's allies and Hungary's friends — fervently desire such an issue. It was for that purpose that Colonel Beck attempted to intervene with King Charles. Rumour has it that Poland's intervention did not have any palpable results. The annexation of Carpatho-Russia to Hungary and the rapprochement between Rumania and Hungary was — we are told — made conditional on Hungary's recognising the permanent character of Rumania's present frontiers! It goes without saying that the Hungarians would be lunatics to give Rumania the guarantee demanded; for to do so would be equivalent to renouncing once for all their territorial claims against Rumania and to abandoning the two and a half million Magyars who are longing eigerly to be liberated from the Rumanian yoke. No Hungarian Foreign Office would ever dare to undertake to give such a guarantee even against the re-incorporation in Hungary of Carpatho-Russia, — if only because it is well known that Carpatho-Russia is an ineffably poor region which Hungary even in pre-war times was compelled to support economically. Every Hungarian desires a common Polish-Hungarian frontier and is anxious to join the Polish Bloc; but certainly not at the cost of renouncing the claim to a reparation of the injustice committed by Rumania. So, for the moment the only Central European Bloc likely to come into existence would be one including only Poland, Slovakia, Carpatho-Russia and Hungary. Poland must leave no stone unturned and throw her whole weight into the balance in order to bring that bloc into existence; and in particular she must endeavour to prevail upon Rumania not to oppose the incorporation in Hungary of Carpatho-Russia.