

CZECHOSLOVAKIA FIGHTS ON!

(Contributed by the Czecho-Slovak Club)

TWENTY-THREE years ago — October 28, 1918—the Czechoslovak nation proclaimed its independence. To-day the people of Czechoslovakia are fighting again for independence and freedom. Again they will win the struggle.

Life in Czechoslovakia before the occupation by the Germans was that of a free nation in a free country. The democratic system was not new to the people. Throughout the centuries of their long history the Czechoslovak people were striving to obtain more happiness for a greater number of people. This is the Czechoslovak conception of democracy.

Another is that a nation lives through its children. So Czechoslovakia started to build hundreds of new and beautiful schools as soon as it was free. The children in these schools were taught to hate nobody and to love their country and their freedom. To make those young citizens truly happy they had to live in happy families, which means in a wider sense a sound economic life.

So this in turn meant a modern network of communications. Under the Austro-Hungarian rule this, like everything else, was neglected. The Czechoslovak State had to build and modernise thousands of miles of roads, railways, and canals for shipping. Airlines started to spread all over the country to connect it with its neighbours.

The Land Problem

While these steps were being taken another big problem had to be solved without creating disturbances in the economic life. Belonging to a subdued nation, the farmers in Czechoslovakia did not possess enough land of their own. They were therefore compelled to work for the foreign landlords who lived mag-



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nificently in Vienna or Budapest from the work and labour of the Czechoslovak farmers. This state of affairs had to be altered, and that was done by the "Land Reform Act." This Act was a typical example of democratic Czechoslovak legislation in comparison with laws issued under the "New Order" now in force since the German occupation. The Act abolished injustices, and in less than ten years transformed a semi-feudal country into a country possessing a class of small peasants. Half a million families obtained a plot of land of greater or smaller extent. The communes acquired land which permitted them to develop freely. The State nationalised the great forests that bordered the frontiers. But in spite of all that the former land owner still retained sufficient land to live in comfort.

ERIC GILL

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religion first. He would say, and does say in effect, that unless you put religion first, you get nowhere with your art and your politics: until you have answered the first question — "What is the chief end of man?"—your art and your politics flounder for want of direction. But then the phrase "art, religion, and politics" is even more fundamentally misleading when one is talking about Gill. These anaemic abstractions and generalisations may serve as counters among the rest of us. Gill, one may say, poured into them his own life-blood. Nor, again, were politics and art and religion three worlds of discourse, separate or separable, competing for his attention and allegiance. This, I take it, is the central and most stimulating thing about Gill, that in an age of specialists, in which one man says "I am an artist, and politics are not my

affair," and another man says "I am a socialist and art and religion are not my affairs. I want to make this world a better place, and chance the next," and another says "I am a teacher of religion, and religion is above politics"—in the midst of these one-eyed specialists Gill appears as a full man, or man with all his wits about him, and those wits brought to bear harmoniously on the whole of life. Yes, he is an "integralist." He has got things into focus and related them in his life and work, into a single and beautiful whole.

This integrity, or wholeness, or sanity, or whatever we like to call it, did not come to Eric Gill as a gift or a birth-right. He paid for it in the coin of his adventurous spirit, and he reached it as the goal of his adventures. He has written a true and manly book, but above all and best of all, a book of encouragement for spiritual adventurers who are in search of their own lost integrity.

(Eric Gill died almost immediately after the completion of his autobiography).

Let us turn our attention now to the cultural life in Czechoslovakia. Although it was a comparatively small country it possessed a literary production which brought it to the level of the largest countries in the world. The opera and the theatres supported by the State had international fame. Czechoslovak music was well known all over the world, as well as the names of Smetana, Dvorak, and many others.

Universities and technical schools were centres of research equal to the best in Europe. The first university in Central Europe was founded in the year 1348 in the Czechoslovak capital of Praha (Prague). The Republic saw also to physical education of the citizens.

Life in Czechoslovakia was, as it appeared to visitors, happy. Everybody lived according to individual taste and possibilities. No State authorities could force the citizens to belong to a certain political party or to think according to a plan worked out by a Gestapo.

But the prosperity and the principles of the country were not tolerable for Czechoslovakia's totalitarian neighbour Germany. They knew very well over the frontier that as long as Czechoslovakia existed the way to dominate Europe or the world was barred. An artificial political crisis was therefore created, and in Munich the world was made to believe that, by sacrificing Czechoslovakia, peace would be secured. Germany gave the usual guarantees and Hitler his word of honour that no further demands would be put forward.

The consequence of that "word of honour" was, as in so many cases before

BOTH the National Broadcasting Service and the Commercial Broadcasting Service will pay a tribute to Czechoslovakia on Tuesday, October 28, which is the national day of the Czechs. The programme which 2YA will present includes part of a speech broadcast from the BBC by Dr. Ladislav Feierabend, Czech Minister of State in London, and the story of President Masaryk's journeyings around Europe prior to the setting up of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Station 2ZB has a programme of Czech recordings interspersed with a reminder of the significance of the anniversary, descriptions of social and economic life in the republic during its 20 years' existence, and an account of the changes which have taken place since its inclusion in Hitler's Reich. There are over 200 Czechs in New Zealand, and their club in Wellington will celebrate the national day with a function at which addresses will be given by E. J. Hyams, honorary Consul for Czechoslovakia, and Dr. K. A. Wodzicki, Consul-General for Poland in New Zealand.

and after, that the German army occupied a defenceless Czechoslovakia. That happened on March 15, 1939. But although it has been occupied Czechoslovakia has not been conquered. The fight will go on. There will again be a free Czechoslovakia in a free world.



No man would like to think that his widow, some day, might be forced to ask others for help.

To provide security, to ensure safe and efficient handling of his family's inheritance is every man's clear-cut and simple duty.

Nor is it a difficult one. The Public Trust Office will be pleased to explain to you what steps you should take—to make or revise a will, and to appoint an executor or trustee.

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