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Calories Scant, But Czechs Are Their Own Rulers Again.

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Calories Scant, But Czechs 23 Are Their Own Rulers Again

The Stars and Stripes Rome

By Cpl. KLAUS MANN
Staff Correspondent

May 31

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia, May 29 (Delayed)—Talks with many Czechs, from Dr. Eduard Benes on down, convince me that there is here a combination of qualities frequently regarded as contradictory.

The Czechs are determined, civilized, courageous and resolute, yet sensitive and refined; down-to-earth, yet high-minded and reflective. Most of the Government ministers and other officials might be called "activ-
+ istic" intellectuals.

These officials live at the Alcron Hotel, an extraordinary place. The Germans had picked it for their HQ, for it was Prague's most fashionable place, and since they left it has become the meeting-place and temporary home of the new Administration. Then there are distinguished guests: high-ranking Czech and Russian officers; liberal writers whom Fascism drove out of this country and who have now returned; Czech pilots in the dapper uniform of the RAF; diplomats, and newspaper correspondents.

BIRDSEED DIET

The meals are curious at the Alcron. Three times a day, all the important-looking gentlemen with their (more or less) attractive ladies, assemble in the hotel restaurant—the typical, pompous dining-room of a typical, pompous, European hotel of the "palace" class.

Dignified, perfectly trained waiters welcome the diners. The guests take their places at gleaming, chic tables. A waiter—black coat-tails, white tie and all—arrives from the kitchen to set before the guest—what?

It is a cup of lukewarm coffee-substitute, with neither cream nor sugar, two slices of incredibly poor black bread, and an iota of highly dubious jam. If you offered the same, with or without the trimmings, to any GI outfit, mutiny would break out next morning.

MORE OF THE SAME

Lunches and dinners are of the same caliber—and one comes to long for a solid, delicious serving of spam and powdered eggs.

But nobody minds; people have other interests at the Alcron. So many things to decide, so many problems to tackle. They have their own country free again—and they are free to plan, free to work.

Nor is this dynamic, enterprising spirit confined to the Alcron. The average man in the streets of Prague shows the same expression of keenness and energy. Coming as I did, from gloomy, paralyzed Germany, I enjoyed every minute in Czechoslovakia as if it had been a tonic bath.

Yes, it was good to be in another country.