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The Future—as Benes Sees It

By ERIKA MANN

Daughter of the famous German novelist, Thomas Mann, and wife of the British poet, W. H. Auden, Erika Mann is in exile from her native Germany. She formerly appeared on the stage in Berlin, Munich and Hamburg and also wrote successful plays. She is co-author of the books, "Escape to Life" and "The Other Germany," and by herself wrote "The Light On Down."

SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND THE telephone rang. President Benes. I was told, had altered his plans and was not coming to London. Would I mind a visit with him somewhere in England?

I did not mind. The peaceful loveliness of the park landscape through which I travelled would have deserved my undivided attention, but my mind kept travelling backwards into the past. I had been in France during the tragic days of "Munich" and I had heard President Benes announce his resignation. Grouped around the radio at the house of a Czech patriot, we listened to his brief farewell, and none of us said a word, even when he had ended. As the Czech national anthem resounded, we remained silent. Quietly—and hardly ashamed of each other—we cried. That was on October 3, 1938.

On March 15, 1939—the day Hitler's hordes marched into Prague—I went to see Dr. Benes in Chicago. And though this occasion was hardly less and less surprising than the previous one, I found him composed and even confident.

"This," I remember him saying: "Is the last crisis they'll get away with. One step further and they'll be punished for all they've done."

When I saw him next his prediction had begun to materialize. It is true that at the height of the London blitz it wasn't exactly the Germans who were taking the punishment, still war was being waged against them and it was their planes which were being shot down—some on the ground, some in the air. While bombs were falling all about us, he spoke to me of the coming victory of democracy. He also talked about the Soviet Union. "She will be with us," he said. "In the end she will be fighting on our side."

Less than a year later, the highly improbable had occurred. Russia had been invaded and she was fighting on our side. But

the Germans were at the gates of Moscow and matters looked far from rosy.

Once again I went to see Dr. Benes. "Do not fear," he said. "The Russians are stronger than you think." The train stopped. This was my station. The president had sent his car.

Strange, I thought, as we drove through the sleepy village and down a winding country road, that I should always see him at such dramatic moments. What may he have to say, at this crucial juncture?

Know They Are Lost

THIS is what he said: "The Germans are lost and they know it. Even their latest delirium—the robot—is proof of this. In the spring of 1918, they furnished us with a similar sign of their despair. Remember the big Bertha, the mammoth gun, which was to destroy Paris? Well, it didn't. But a few months later the Germans had lost the war. There will be an all-embracing Russian offensive. We shall close in on them from all sides. They'll ask for an armistice before we've reached Gorky many prayers. As our troops advance and our raids on German cities continue, the home front will begin to crumble. Nevertheless, it will be the army—the high command—who will call a halt. In other words, there won't be a German defeat, caused by a German revolution, but a German 'revolution' caused by a German defeat. Just how honest this revolution will be remains to be seen. The situation is bound to be chaotic. There will be much bloodshed among the Germans themselves. It may even be that here and there fighting will break out between the regular army and the armed Gestapo, some of whom may want to go on with the war. This doesn't mean that we will permit the regular army to keep their arms. The Allies—of this I feel confident—will insist on unconditional surrender in the fullest meaning of the term."

He paused. Even while I was taking notes I felt his bright gray eyes fixed on me. "What," I asked, "do you think is the German situation?" He shrugged. "To begin with," he said, "you can't estimate a nation from without. Education must come from within and can only come with experience. We shall have to furnish the German nation with adequate experience. Even so, however, we shouldn't expect them to change overnight. True revolutions don't occur that way. The French revolution had been brewing for a century before it



Member of the Czechoslovak infantry in England.

finally broke out. A similar period of time may have to pass before Germany will be really and wholly revolutionized—or re-educated—if you prefer to call it so. Meanwhile, she'll have to be watched by a new, more powerful and more determined system of collective security, or a new

kind of a League of Nations. "With its seat in Geneva?" "I doubt it, or rather I hope that the locality will be another. We'll have to return to many of

the ideas of Geneva, where much important work has been done in the past. Yet the old league failed where we hope to succeed and we had better take up our task in surroundings untarnished by failure."

"And how," I inserted, "do you visualize the relationship between big and small powers within this new world organization?"

He said that in the beginning the influence exercised by the three or four big powers would inevitably be decisive. Gradually, however, the little ones, too, would have their say, just as they, too, would have their duties to perform. To safeguard the peace and frustrate aggression, even in its earliest stages, would be a paramount task of all concerned.

"How about France?" I asked. "Do you believe in her renaissance?" He was going to play a leading part on the continent? Have you ever met De Gaulle? Do you...?"

He smiled. "Yes," he said, "I believe in France. She will have her place among the great powers. Also, I believe that at this moment Gen. De Gaulle is truly a representative of her

people. He is an excellent soldier and an ardent and uncompromising patriot. The past four years have furnished him with plenty of political experience. He and other French leaders are fully conscious of the meaning of France's terrible crisis in 1938-39 and they know what France will have to do in order to return to the position to which her great history entitles her. I talked to a number of them in Algiers, on my way back from Russia."

"Russia," I said. Then, realizing that I had interrupted the president, I cut myself short.

"The Soviet Union," he said swiftly, "is our friend. She always has been. And our treaty with her forms the very basis of our post-war security. Communism, as it is by the British-Soviet treaty, it also provides for a very close and very friendly co-operation with Great Britain. Mutually, it pledges the U.S.S.R. and the C.S.R. to a full joint defence against Germany and her associates, should she ever renew her criminal policy of 'Drang Nach Osten' for her so-called Lebensraum. We shall see, after the war, what economic co-operation will be possible between our two countries, in order to give us sufficient economic independence from Germany. And last, but not least, its clauses concerning our sovereignty are highly reassuring. Either state will refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other."

"Interference," I said, "is a flexible notion. You're convinced—are you—that your grand friend will in no way—either indirectly in cultural or religious matters—infringe upon your sovereignty?"

He nodded fervently. "Convinced," he said. "We'll be as independent of any great power as any state of our size, economic structure and geographical position can henceforth be. We are approaching the era of international co-operation and international co-operation means international interdependence. But I believe that spiritually we'll be more free and independent than ever before."

"And politically? And economically?"

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"There will be great changes, none of which, however, will be at the expense of our national independence. Politically we are planning for greater decentralization of the whole country. While the central government in Prague will, of course, continue to exercise its influence, the four lands which make up the C.S.R.—Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia—will enjoy, according to my view, a considerable measure of self-government. The people at home must decide all that themselves. The four provinces would have, according to this plan, their own diets in their respective capitals and local affairs would be dealt with there."

"And when, do you think, will the new national government be ready for action?"

To Punish Quislings

AS soon as the country is liberated, a revolutionary national assembly will constitute itself. And as soon as conditions permit—which I trust will be the case six months after the signing of the armistice—we'll have a regular parliament representing our whole national home front, except of course our quislings, whom we shall make atone for all their errors, crimes and treacheries."

"Aren't there a number of them in Sudetenland and even in Slovakia?"

"In Sudetenland, yes. There, I hope to see a mass evacuation of the guilty into Germany. As to Slovakia, it is different. Our Fascist sympathizers there fell victims to Fascist propaganda—not only Germans, but Italian and Hungarian as well. But Fascist reality should have cured many of them. I have reason to believe that it actually has cured them and I don't doubt that after the punishment of the quislings, Slovakia will be an equal, loyal and constructive part of a strong and united C.S.R. All that again will be decided by the people at home."

"And what, apart from the anti-Fascist housecleaning you mentioned, are the revolutionary measures you anticipate?"

"They will be mainly of an economic character. A new social-economic system, as well as the case in all central European countries, will lead to what may become a more progressive and more democratic stage of these countries. Czechoslovakia will be surely one of

the most developed. Not a Soviet state, mind you; private property will continue to be recognized. Besides, we shall have state property and co-operative property. A national planning board will perhaps be established and a new land-reform prepared. Broadly speaking, what we are going to have is a kind of democratically planned economy. But again, it will be our people at home who must decide all that themselves."

"Two more questions," I said, viewing the attractive cake and sandwich landscape on the tea-table before me. There was a Czech cook in the house whose offerings were nothing to be looked at. "How," I proceeded, "do you explain the presence in the German army of a number of Czech soldiers? We have captured some of them, you know."

The explanation was simple. In accordance with the Munich agreement, some one and a quarter million Czechs and Slovaks had been surrendered to the Germans and Hungarians. Of these, some 60,000 to 80,000 Czechs may be now in the German army. After the occupation of Prague, others had been taken to Germany as slave laborers and were later incorporated into the organization Todt, which not only built but later was forced partly to defend the west wall. My final question concerned the food situation in the C.S.R. and the present state of health of the Czech people.

"Happily," I was told, "conditions, though serious, are far from desperate. Since they wanted our workers to work, the Germans never quite dared to starve them. Nor did they feel like deporting large numbers of them to Germany, where they might have proved exceedingly troublesome. Thus our birth rate has remained satisfactory, and there's been hardly any increase in either infant or general mortality."

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Benes Expresses Warm Gratitude to Canada Because 'She Alone Never Recognized Munich'

By PHILIP LANGLEY

LONDON EDUARD BENES, president of Czechoslovakia, has two characteristic features that linger photographically in the memory of those who have the great privilege of a talk with him. The first is a gesture of emphasis. He uses his whole upper body. His shoulders and arms stiffened straight down in a curiously violent downward show. To conclude a sentence he wishes to drive home, he raises his shoulders and thrusts down with his whole body. This gesture gives a pile-driver quality to the otherwise gentle and academic speech of a man who started life as a professor, but who was snatched, before he was 30, into the vortex of the greatest political whirlwind in history and who has lived tirelessly, dangerously and often desperately in the core of that whirlwind.

The other Benes gesture is the reverse of the pile-driver. Suddenly in his conversation, the Czech president coming unawares, as it were, to some phrase or thought of special penetration or sympathy—and those two are his great gifts—will halt, dead silent, and look intently at you, at the same time cocking his head to one side. It is the mannerism you will note in little boys when they are at the question-asking age. It is incredibly endearing. He is 60 now and gray from long years of ceaseless struggle, a little worn from the long roads of exile he has trodden in the two wars. But when he suddenly stops speaking, leaving his phrase hanging in the air and cocks his head to one side and looks intently into your face, you have the impression of something lovable and unpolished, like a boy.

In the blighted years since and including the last war, political leaders in all our countries have come and gone, some who understood and many who failed to understand. In Dr. Benes we have a leader of his people, who in 1915 went into exile for all and precisely the same great principles for which 30 years later he now stands, honored, really loved and respected by all freedom-loving people everywhere. When I say he is honored among foreign affairs people here, there is an eerie recognition of Dr. Benes' uneasy gift of prophecy.

It is on record that at the time of Munich he foretold both the French and the British exactly what was to follow in Europe. In 1940, when he had fled from his native land and was a professor at a Chicago university, though tirelessly still the head of his nation's independence underground, he had a visit with President Roosevelt and, item by item, detailed Germany's moves, including the probable date of German armored breakthrough into France, and the Russian's turning on on Russia. Back in those far, muddled days of 1940, Dr. Benes

prophesied to Roosevelt that before two years were out both Russia and the U.S. would be at war with Germany.

Today he is recognized as the president of his republic still in German hands. He has had the joy of seeing one nation after another, Russia, Britain and the U.S., formally recognize his exiled government to the fullest degree of ambassadorial and official status as a de facto government. He told me warmly:

"You know, Canada alone is the only country that never ceased to recognize us as the government of Czechoslovakia. Canada never recognized Munich."

"How long will it be," I asked Dr. Benes, "before all the misunderstandings and the carefolds nurtured and fostered hatreds among the people of Europe can be washed away so that we can have a united states or a commonwealth or a Soviet republic of Europe?"

"Sixty years," said Dr. Benes calmly. "Three generations of young people reaching the age of 21 after the other. It is my deep conviction that we dem-

ocratic nations must stand together for 60 years until all our Russia and the U.S. could be healed in Europe and a united states of Europe soundly set up."

For an instant, 60 years seemed to me a dreadfully long time. But the Czech president was standing there with his head cocked slightly to one side in that characteristic attitude of watching something new or strange penetrate the mind of his hearer. And then I thought that this man, a professor and a scholar, had given 30 years of his life, fully and passionately, to that very Europe, the way a father gives his life in love to his children. And I thought, why that is only twice what this one, a gray man has given. He put out his hand and said softly: "Give my love to Canada."

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KILLS
THERE IS ONLY ONE
FLY-TOX
INSECTS PERISH AT ITS TOUCH

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COULD
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