

CZECHOSLOVAKIA TODAY

by

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No doubt the readers of this booklet will already know something about the Czechoslovak Republic. The name of Czechoslovakia is known to the world not only from the history of the past decades but also through the work of her people. Goods made in Czechoslovakia have long been exported to every part of the world. Czechoslovakia has also made an outstanding contribution to world art and culture. During the Second World War, when the Nazis slaughtered the entire population of a Czech village and reduced it to ashes and rubble, they immortalised the name of Lidice, and towns and villages in several countries now bear this name. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945, Julius Fučík, one of the heroes of the anti-fascist resistance movement, became known to millions of people all the world over through his "Notes from the Gallows." Young people in nearly every country know Prague as the venue of the first World Youth Festival and the first international students' congress to be held after the end of the war.

The thousand-year-old history of the Czech and Slovak people is rich in noteworthy events but its most glorious pages are being written now. Today, for the first time, all the creative forces of the people have been given full rein. Today Czechoslovakia is experiencing a period of unprecedented development in her national economy and culture, accompanied by a substantial rise in the standard of living. The life of Czechoslovakia and, indeed, the aspect of the country itself are changing rapidly.

The aim of this booklet is, briefly, to acquaint the reader with the main features of Czechoslovakia's development today, and, at the same time, to show the sources of this development.

The peoples of Czechoslovakia are striving to foster friendly relations with all the peace-loving nations of the world. We hope that this booklet, by telling its readers about the life and aspirations of the Czechoslovak people, will help to promote the cause of drawing the peoples of the world together in the interest of ensuring lasting peace.



A GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Czechoslovak Republic is a medium-sized Central European state, with an area of 48,114 square miles and a population of 13,000,000. Its territory extends from north-east to south-west. The scenery of the country is very varied. Hills of medium height alternate with low-lying plains along the river valleys. Bohemia in the west and Moravia in the centre of the Republic are bounded by mountain ranges. Slovakia, the eastern part of Czechoslovakia, is a mountainous land, except for the Danube Plain in the south. The highest mountain range in the country is the High Tatras, forming a natural frontier between Czechoslovakia and Poland, and the highest Czechoslovak mountain is the Stalin Peak, which towers 8,737 feet above sea level.

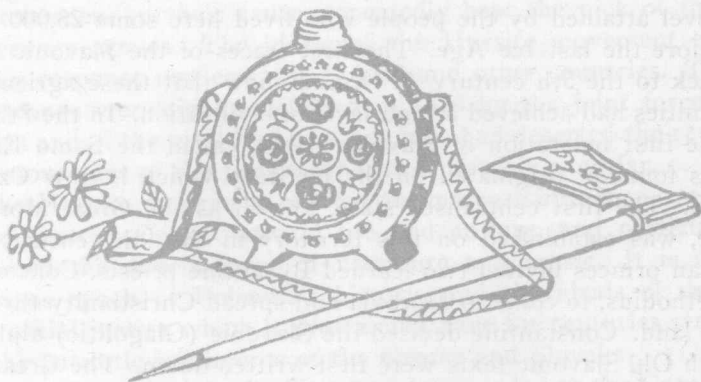
The Danube is Czechoslovakia's biggest river, and forms the country's southern boundary for a distance of 125 miles. The Elbe and the Oder, both of which rise in Czechoslovakia, are important water-ways, but soon leave Czechoslovak territory. The river Vltava flows through central Bohemia to join the Elbe. One of the most important rivers in Slovakia is the Váh, a tributary of the Danube.

Czechoslovakia lies in the temperate zone and has a fertile soil. Agriculture is highly developed, and the main crops are wheat, barley (suitable for malting), sugar-beet and hops. The warm, low-lying regions along the Danube and in southern Moravia grow fine crops of maize, water melons, tobacco and even rice. At higher altitudes the main crops are potatoes and flax. Fruit-growing is also well advanced, and some regions of the Republic produce excellent wines. Most

Czechoslovak farmers go in for animal husbandry, especially cattle-breeding.

The ancient city of Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, has a population of nearly one million. It is situated in the centre of Bohemia on the river Vltava. The second largest town is the industrial centre of Brno in Moravia, with 270,000 inhabitants. Ostrava, with over 200,000 inhabitants, is the centre of an important coal-mining region in Moravia and has an extensive metallurgical industry. The engineering town of Plzeň in western Bohemia has a population of 120,000. Bratislava on the Danube has 185,000 inhabitants and is the capital of Slovakia.

Czechoslovakia is rich in mineral resources, and this explains why her industries began to develop at a comparatively early period. The mining of coal and lignite, iron and other metal ores is well advanced. Czechoslovakia also possesses large deposits of graphite, kaolin and other industrially valuable minerals. Bohemia's position across the ancient trade routes running from east to west, and from south to north, favoured the economic and cultural development of the country from the earliest times.





A GLIMPSE INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S PAST

Numerous archaeological discoveries show that the lands of present-day Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakia have been inhabited since prehistoric times. In 1924 the discovery of the remains of a settlement of mammoth-hunting people near Věstonice in southern Moravia aroused world-wide interest, when a fire-clay statuette representing a woman, and later an image of a human face, carved in mammoth tusk, were unearthed. These finds testify to the high cultural level attained by the people who lived here some 25,000 years ago, before the last Ice Age. The first traces of the Slavonic tribes date back to the 5th century A. D. and show that these agricultural communities had achieved a high level of civilisation. In the 7th century the first federation of Slavonic tribes, called the Samo Empire after its founder, originated on the territory which is now Czechoslovakia. The first centralised state, known as the Great Moravian Empire, was established on this territory in the 9th century. The Moravian princes invited two learned Byzantine priests, Constantine and Methodius, to come to Moravia and spread Christianity throughout the land. Constantine devised the Slavonic (Glagolitic) alphabet, in which Old Slavonic texts were first written down. The Great Moravian Empire was able to resist the attacks of the Frankish (German) kings, but it finally crumbled under repeated invasions by nomadic Hungarian tribes in the 10th century. Thereafter, for a thousand years, until 1918, Slovakia was torn away from Bohemia and Moravia. But the cultural ties between the Czech Lands and Slovakia survived the division.

In the 10th century the centre of gravity of the development of the Czech state shifted to Bohemia, where a principality arose, ruled by the Přemyslide dynasty. This state grew powerful, especially during the 13th century, owing to the development of the towns with their crafts and trade, and it became one of the strongest countries in Europe. For a time the Czech kings ruled over Austria, Poland and Hungary. In the reign of the Luxemburg dynasty, which succeeded the Přemyslides, Czech kings were, as a rule, elected German emperors. In 1348, the Emperor Charles IV founded in Prague the first university in Central Europe.

The general crisis of feudalism found particularly strong expression in Bohemia at the beginning of the 15th century. A powerful anti-feudal movement of the people arose, known as the Hussite movement after the religious and social reformer, Jan Hus, who was condemned to be burnt at the stake by the Church Council at Constance in 1415. The town and country poor, the less prosperous burghers and the lesser nobility were the main prop and active force of the movement. Their aim was to achieve freedom from oppression and exploitation by the wealthy aristocracy, and particularly by the most powerful of all the feudal landowners—the Church. Despite their far smaller numbers, the revolutionary armies, under the brilliant leadership of Jan Žižka and Prokop the Great, fired with faith in the righteousness of their cause, repeatedly beat the pick of the feudal mercenary armies. The ideals of the Hussite movement evoked a strong response in Germany, Poland and other countries. The Hussite troops were finally defeated in 1434 by the joint forces of the nobles and of the wealthy burghers, who had deserted the revolutionary movement of the people for fear of its going too far.

The Hussite movement exerted an immense influence over the development of Czech national life and culture, and particularly influenced the development of literature and music. It is the most glorious epoch of Bohemia's history, and the ideals of democracy and social justice which it proclaimed have for centuries strengthened the patriotic sentiments of the Czechs and Slovaks.

In the 16th century, the Hapsburgs succeeded to the Czech throne. Following the defeat of a rebellion of the Czech aristocracy and towns at the Battle on the White Mountain in 1620, the Hapsburgs became almost undisputed masters of the country. They confiscated most of the land and shared it out among foreign nobles, Germanised the towns, and forced the non-Catholic section of the population to emi-

grate. Among the emigrants was one of the greatest Czech scholars, Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius), the founder of modern pedagogy. This period of Czech history is referred to as Dark Times. It was marked by an unprecedented oppression of the peasantry, whose frequent armed rebellions were ruthlessly put down and drowned in blood. In Slovakia, too, the common people groaned under foreign rule and their national culture was smothered.

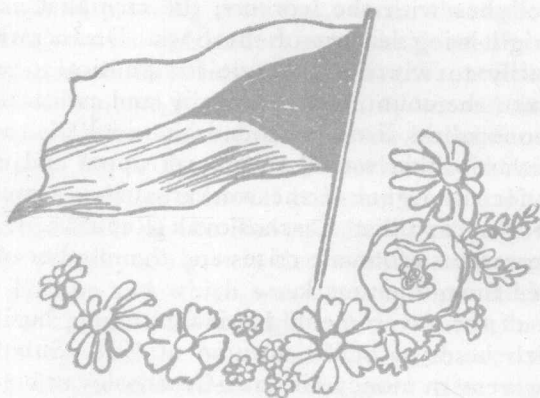
The renaissance of national life in the Czech Lands, known as the National Awakening, dates back to the second half of the 18th century, when manufacture began to develop rapidly and the Czech people migrated from the countryside to the towns, endeavouring to better their social standing. The beginning of the 19th century in the Czech Lands and in Slovakia saw a new upsurge of the national consciousness of the people, characterised by the spreading and purification of the Czech language. The National Awakening was the work of thousands of patriotic men and women throughout the land who took as their models and leaders men like Josef Dobrovský and Josef Jungmann, two outstanding philologists, František Palacký, a distinguished historian, and Karel Havlíček, editor and satirical poet. In Slovakia, Ľudevít Štúr laid the foundations of the Slovak literary language. The poet Jan Kollár and the historian Pavel Šafařík led the Czech and Slovak people to national consciousness and taught them that they were members of the Slavonic family of nations. In 1848 the masses of the people took part in the revolutionary struggle which swept through Europe and which was directed against the survivals of feudalism. Even though this struggle ended in defeat for the people as a result of betrayal by the bourgeois leaders, the revolution stimulated political life in the country and gave new vigour to the national aspirations of the Czechs and Slovaks. As a result of the growing economic strength of the Czech nation, national culture developed vigorously throughout the 19th century. Some of the greatest figures of this period were Božena Němcová, a woman novelist, the composers Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, Jan Neruda, poet and author, Alois Jirásek, author of historical novels, the painters Josef Mánes and Mikoláš Aleš, the sculptor J. V. Myslbek and the Slovak poet Pavel Hviezdoslav. Among the men of science, two at least must be mentioned here: Jan Evangelista Purkyně, the great physiologist, who gained world-wide renown, and the inventor František Křižík. The works of the greatest representatives of Czech and Slovak culture were always available to the people, and breathed the

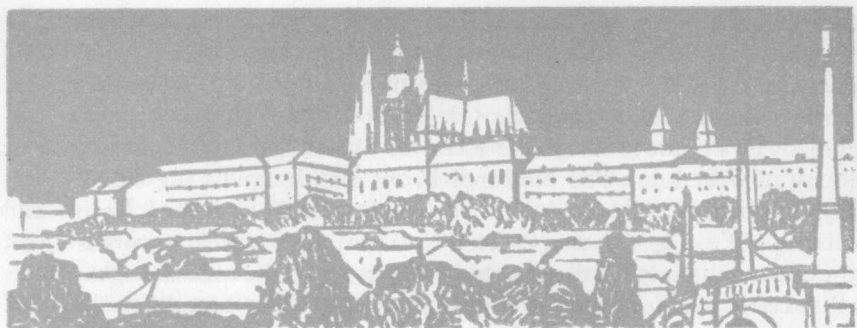
spirit of democracy. The Czech bourgeoisie, who had already begun to achieve economic equality with the German bourgeoisie, grew rich on the extensive market provided for Czech-made goods by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and gave up the fight for national freedom and independence. But by this time the consciousness of the rising working class had developed to such an extent that the workers became the main driving force of the national and democratic struggle of the people. In 1878, the first working-class political party was founded in Bohemia—the Social Democratic Party.

During the First World War, the Czech and Slovak people firmly opposed the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in 1918, following the example set by the Russian Revolution, the working people led the movement to enforce the popular demand for the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak Republic. But this republic did not become a socialist state, as the people desired. After some sharp clashes with the workers, the capitalist class, with the help of the right-wing leaders of the Social-Democratic Party, was able temporarily to win the struggle for political power, and proceeded to make the country economically and politically dependent on foreign monopolies. From its foundation in 1921, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia waged an uninterrupted and uncompromising struggle for the rights of the workers and peasants throughout the years of the capitalist Czechoslovak Republic. Czechoslovakia suffered from serious economic crises and the number of unemployed nearly reached the million mark.

The policy of the government, dominated by big business, resulted in the Munich betrayal in the autumn of 1938. Submitting to the wishes of the western monopolies and Czechoslovak big business, the government ceded the border regions, with their splendid fortifications, to Hitler. By this action, which was contrary to the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, the way was paved for the complete occupation of the country by Nazi Germany on March 15th, 1939. In 1938, the Czechoslovak Government had declined the offer of the Soviet Union, in fulfilment of her treaty obligations, to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. But the people never accepted this capitulation. Throughout the years of the occupation they fought the Nazis in every possible way, in spite of increasing terror. The leading force of the resistance movement was the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which alone had consistently upheld the defence of the integrity and independence of the Republic, and urged united and

active opposition to fascism. The resistance reached its highest points in the Slovak National Uprising in 1944 and in the historic days of May 1945, when the people of Prague rose against the Nazis. The Soviet Union gave all manner of aid to the resistance movement and assisted in the formation of a Czechoslovak Army Corps on Soviet soil. The men of this Corps fought shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Army men to the borders of Czechoslovakia and helped to liberate their homeland. The people of Czechoslovakia will never forget that it was the Soviet Army which saved them from their mortal plight. With deep love and respect they tend the graves of the thousands of Soviet soldiers who laid down their lives to make Czechoslovakia a free country.





THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

In May 1945, after centuries of struggle for freedom and national independence, the peoples of Czechoslovakia, as a result of the defeat of German fascism and the liberation of their country by the Soviet Army, were able to decide their own future. They decided for a new and—from the point of view of history—a more advanced form of society—a people's democratic republic. In 1945 all the revived political parties accepted the Košice Government Programme. The realisation of this programme was a necessary prerequisite for Czechoslovakia's advance to socialism. The new state confiscated the property of Nazi collaborators and other enemies of the state, and nationalised the most important branches of the national economy: coal-mining, the iron and steel industry, big industrial plants, sources of power, mineral wealth, banks and insurance companies. Nationalisation was later extended to cover further industrial enterprises and wholesale and foreign trade. All agricultural land was taken over by those who work on it. In February, 1948, hoping to repeat their success of 1920, and supported by foreign imperialists, the reactionary elements in the country attempted a putsch, aimed at overthrowing the popular government. But this attempt ended in a crushing defeat for reaction by the masses of workers and peasants. The people of Czechoslovakia set about the task of building socialism with increased determination. On May 9th, 1948, on Liberation Day, the National Assembly adopted a new constitution, laying down the basic principles of the people's democratic state.

The political expression of the unity of the Czechoslovak people is

the National Front. The leading force of the National Front is the Communist Party, which had already become the strongest political party in the 1946 parliamentary elections. The other political parties of the National Front are the Czechoslovak Socialist Party, the Czechoslovak People's Party, the Party of Slovak Revival and the Slovak Party of Freedom. The National Front also includes the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, the Czechoslovak Union of Youth and other public organisations. The National Front is an expression of the firm alliance of the working class with the peasants, and this alliance, supported by the working intelligentsia, forms the basis of the strength and unity of the people's democratic republic. The confidence of the people in the policy of the National Front is shown by the results of the elections to the National Committees (the local government bodies) held on May 16th, 1954, when the candidates nominated by the National Front polled 93.6% of all the votes cast. In the parliamentary elections held in November 1954 the candidates nominated by the National Front polled 97.9 % of all the votes.

The Czechoslovak electoral laws are based on the consistent application of the principles of universal, equal, and direct suffrage, by secret ballot. All citizens of 18 years or over, irrespective of sex, nationality, religious belief, property, education or origin, have the right to vote. Every citizen of 21 years of age or over may stand as a candidate. The only people disqualified from voting, or from standing as candidates, are persons of unsound mind and those whom a Court of Law has deprived of their civil rights for serious criminal offences.

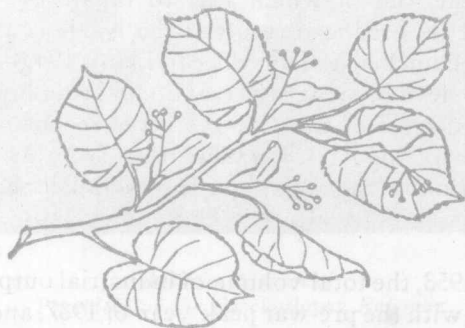
The people's democratic Republic has permanently settled the question of Czech-Slovak relations, on the basis of complete equality of status between both nations. Slovakia has her own legislature—the Slovak National Council—with legislative power pertaining to national and regional matters. The Slovak Board of Commissioners wields all governmental and executive power in Slovakia, with the exception of matters concerning national defence, foreign policy and foreign trade. These bodies are the representatives of Slovak autonomy in the unified state of the Czechs and Slovaks. Citizens of other nationalities—Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians and Gipsies—have full rights as citizens.

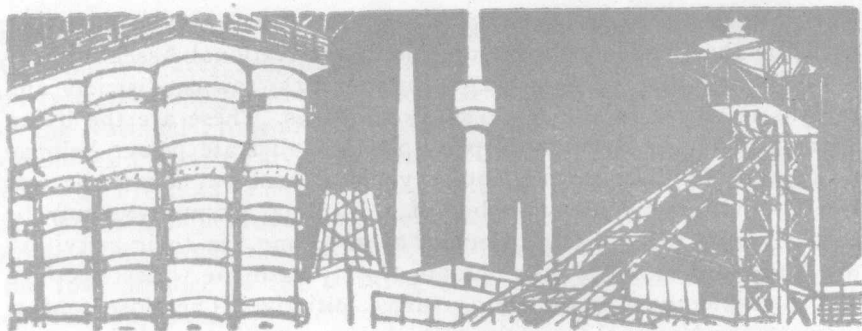
The supreme organ of legislative power over the whole country is the one-chamber National Assembly, which is elected for a period of 6 years. The head of the state is the President, who is elected by the

National Assembly for a period of 7 years. The Government, nominated by the President, is responsible to the National Assembly.

Local authority in the village communities, towns, districts and regions is vested in the National Committees. These are the living expression of the democratic principle that all state power belongs to the people. The people not only elect them but also supervise their activities and any member of a National Committee may be recalled from office by his electors at any time. In their activities, the National Committees co-operate closely with the widest sections of the people and rely on their creative initiative. The close contact between the National Committees and the people is one of the essential conditions for the successful functioning of these bodies and is provided for by law.

The people's democratic government has major responsibilities in the organisation of the national economy and in the field of culture and education. The main form of ownership in the country's economy is socialist ownership. The means of production are either national property or are owned by co-operative or communal enterprises. Private ownership of the means of production exists on a large scale only in agriculture. The development of the national economy is guided by a state plan, the purpose of which is to put into practice the fundamental law of socialism—the maximum fulfilment of the material and cultural needs of all sections of the population through the continuous growth of the productivity of labour on the basis of higher techniques. In Czechoslovakia there are no unearned incomes, and people are rewarded on the socialist principle, according to the quantity and quality of their work.





THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK ECONOMY

Under capitalism Czechoslovak industry developed very unevenly. Light industry predominated, which was dependent on the import of raw materials and machinery from abroad and on the sale of its products in foreign markets. Engineering was intentionally made dependent on foreign monopolies, and certain types of machinery were not produced at home. Industry was unevenly distributed over the territory of the country. While there were some highly industrialised districts, in many regions there were no industries at all. Industrial development in Slovakia was restricted by Czech big business and Slovakia was kept at the level of a backward agricultural country. The structure of Czechoslovak industry could not, therefore, meet the requirements of a socialist economy.

Immediately after the fulfilment of the Two-Year-Plan for the years 1947—9, the aim of which was to repair the damage which the economy had suffered as a result of the Nazi occupation and war, the government launched the Five-Year-Plan (1949—53) for the reconstruction and development of the national economy along socialist lines. The main targets of the plan were the reconstruction and further development of industry (particularly of the heavy industries), the industrialisation of Slovakia, and the establishment of firm foundations for socialist agriculture. These targets were successfully achieved.

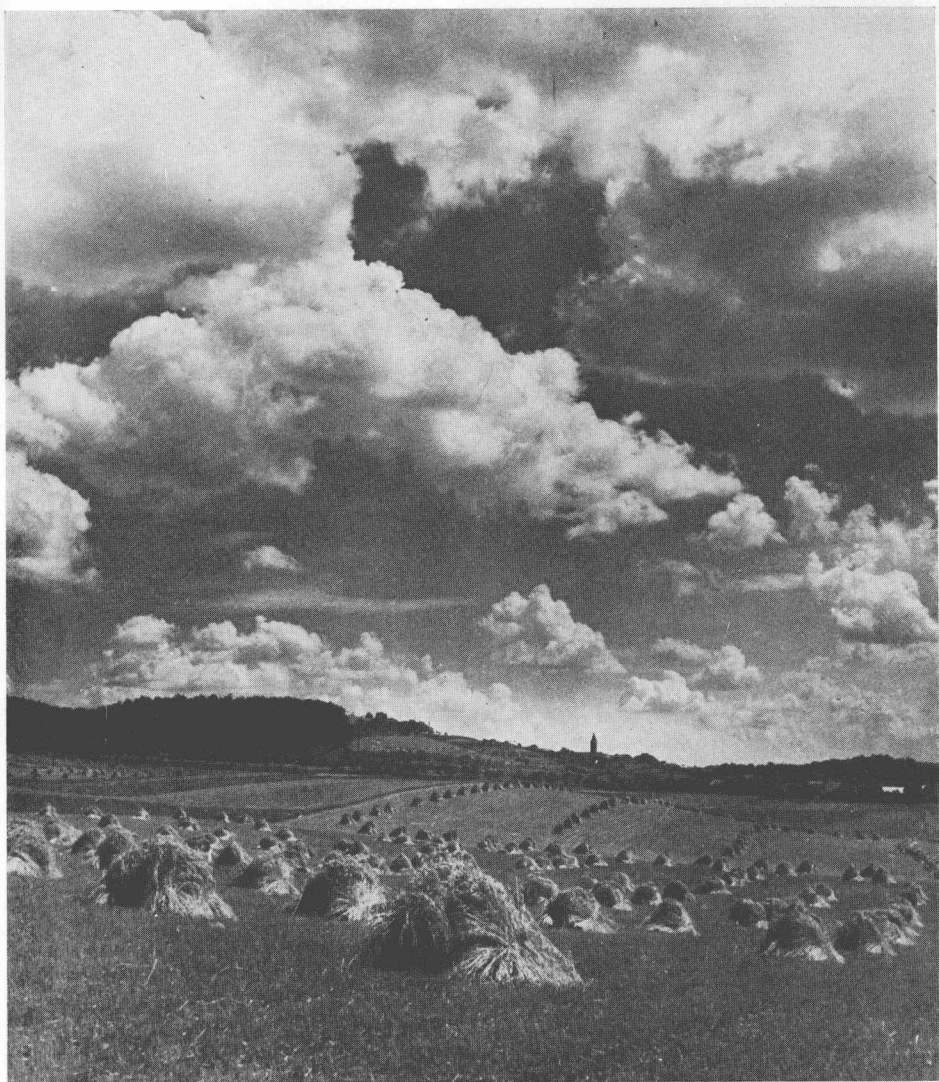
By the end of 1953, the total volume of industrial output had risen by 119 % compared with the pre-war peak year of 1937, and had increased



*Antonín Zápotocký,
President of the Czechoslovak Republic*





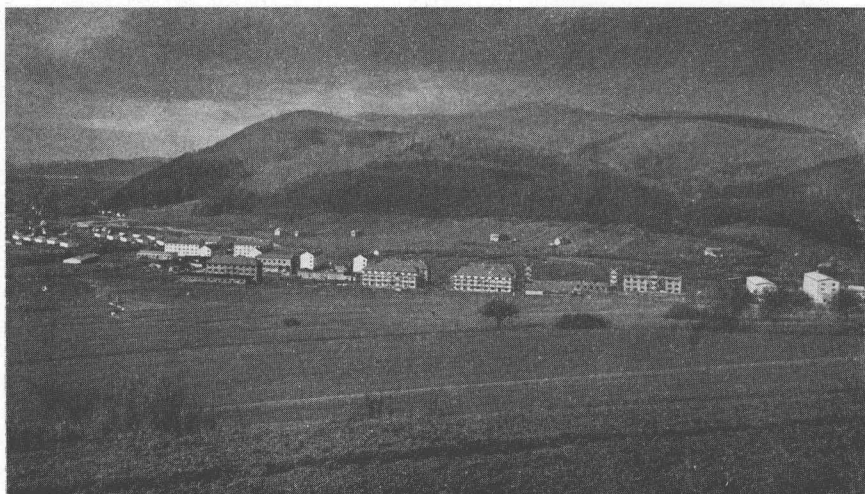


*The soil of Czechoslovakia is fertile and belongs today—for the first time
in history—to the Czech and Slovak working people*

← *The Prague Castle, a symbol of the glorious traditions of the Czech people, today
the residence of the President of the Republic*



The ancient town of Banská Bystrica was the centre of the Slovak national rising against Hitler fascism in 1944. In the foreground: a monument erected in memory of the Soviet Army men who laid down their lives in the liberation of Slovakia



All over Slovakia, even in the most remote districts, new factories, roads, railways and entire towns are being built. In the picture: Snina in eastern Slovakia