

**INDEPENDENT BOHEMIA,
AN ACCOUNT OF
THE CZECHO-SLOVAK
STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY**

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Independent Bohemia, an account of the Czecho-Slovak struggle for liberty by Vladimir Nosek

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VLADIMIR NOSEK

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BY

VLADIMIR NOSEK

Secretary to the
Czecho-Slovak Legation in
LONDON



-1918-

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PREFACE

IN the following pages I have attempted to outline the story of our movement for independence. The manuscript of this book was completed over four months ago. Since then many important changes have occurred in the international situation. Chapters in which we dealt with the then still existing Dual Monarchy must of course be read in the past tense, since Austria exists no more. And again, many things which we anticipated and hoped for in the future have already become accomplished facts. However, I trust that the story itself has not only lost none of its value thereby, but has acquired an additional interest from a historical point of view. Our aim of national independence, only quite recently declared by our adversaries to be "an empty dream of moon-struck idealists," has become to-day not only a practical proposition, but an accomplished fact. We have our own army, which is by no means the smallest Allied army, and we also have our own Provisional Government in Paris, recognised not only by the Allies and by all Czecho-Slovaks abroad, but even by Czech leaders in Bohemia, with whom we have since the beginning of the war worked in complete harmony and understanding. The organisation of our independent State is rapidly proceeding. Austria-Hungary,

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exhausted economically and bankrupt politically, has fallen to pieces by the free-will of her own subject peoples, who, in anticipation of their early victory, broke their fetters and openly renounced their allegiance to the hated Habsburg and Hohenzollern rule, even before Austria had actually surrendered to the Allies.

Events have moved rapidly in Austria, especially since the momentous British declaration of August 9, 1918, recognising the Czecho-Slovaks—those resident in the Allied countries as much as those in Bohemia—as an Allied nation, and the Czecho-Slovak National Council—in Paris as well as in Prague—as the Provisional Government of Bohemia. British statesmen already then foresaw the coming collapse of Austria and acted accordingly. It is also no more a secret today that because of the promulgation of the British and United States declarations our Council was able to conclude special conventions with all the Allied Governments during September last, whereby all the powers exercised by a real government have been granted to it.

In the meantime Germany had been losing more and more control over her allies, being herself hard pressed on the Western front, and the consequence of this was a growing boldness on the part of the Austrian Slavs. On October 2 deputy Staněk declared in the name of the whole Czech deputation that the National Council in Paris were their true spokesmen and representatives with whom Austria would have to negotiate. Soon afterwards the Austrian Poles went to Warsaw, where they formed a new all-Polish Government, and

the Southern Slavs entrusted the government of their territories to their National Council in Zagreb. Similar councils were formed also by the Ruthenes and Rumanians. On October 14 the Czecho-Slovak National Council in Paris constituted itself as a Government of which the Council in Prague acts as an integral part. The latter took over the reins of government in Bohemia a fortnight later. On October 19 the Czecho-Slovak Council issued a Declaration of Independence which we publish in the Appendix, and from which it will be seen that Bohemia will be progressive and democratic both in her domestic and foreign policy. A glorious future is no doubt awaiting her. She will be specially able to render an immense service to the League of Nations as a bulwark of peace and conciliation among the various peoples of Central Europe.

The break-up of Austria will, of course, affect enormously the constitution of the future Europe, and in our last chapter we have tried to give an outline of these impending changes of conditions and international relations. The break-up of Austria was bound to come sooner or later, whether some misinformed critics or prejudiced pro-Austrian politicians liked it or not. We ourselves were always convinced, and we declared openly, that Austria could not survive this war, because she was at war with the majority of her own subjects, who wished for nothing more than for her destruction. Unfortunately the fact that the sympathies of the thirty million of Austrian Slavs and Latins were on the side of the Entente, constituting such an incontestable moral

asset for the Allies as it does, has not always been fully appreciated by Allied public opinion. We ourselves, however, never doubted for a moment that the Allied cause would ultimately triumph and that we would achieve our independence, because we knew that in struggling for this aim we were only carrying out the unanimous will of our whole nation. Without waiting for any pledges, without regard as to which side would be victorious, our nation has from the beginning staked its all on the Allied victory and has contributed with all its powers to hasten it. Despite all adverse circumstances, our people, at first completely at the mercy of their enemies, ruthlessly persecuted and tortured by them, nevertheless remained firm and resolute. Their attitude was most outspoken and courageous at all times, and they have also rendered the Allies active assistance, which is being duly appreciated by them. It is chiefly due to the efforts of the subject peoples themselves, of whom the Czechs have certainly been the most outspoken, that the collapse of Austria has occurred, which finally sealed the fate of Kaiserism and of the Pan-German plans of Mitteleuropa.

To-day our hopes for a better future are at last being fulfilled as a result of the Allies' complete victory, assuring the creation of a new and just international order. Our much-afflicted yet undaunted people already consider themselves as independent. The Peace Conference, at which the Czecho-Slovak Government will be represented, will only confirm the existence of an independent Czecho-Slovak State.

In conclusion, we should like to express our deep

gratitude to all our English friends for their valuable assistance in our struggle for the realisation of our ideals. We especially wish to thank once more the British Government for the generous step taken by them in recognising us as an Allied and belligerent nation. It was chiefly because of this recognition and of the gallant deeds of our army that we achieved all our subsequent diplomatic and political successes. We may assure Great Britain that the Czecho-Slovaks will never forget what they owe to her, and that they will endeavour to do their best to merit the trust so generously placed in them.

VLADIMIR NOSEK.

9, GROSVENOR PLACE, LONDON,
November, 1918.