

CN 146

C/S - 1ST ADD - CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN CAPSULE (CN - 145) XXX THERE

WITH HITLER'S PRODDING THE SITUATION GREW STEADILY WORSE UNTIL IN MID-1938, THE GERMAN FUEHRER PREPARED FOR WAR. THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN AND THE FRENCH LEADER EDOUARD DALADIER INTERVENED, AND ON SEPTEMBER 30 WITHOUT CONSULTING THE CZECHOSLOVAKS THEY SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH HITLER FORCING PRAGUE TO SURRENDER LARGE SECTIONS OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA. POLAND AND HUNGARY ALSO PUT IN THEIR CLAIMS AND RECEIVED PARTS OF CZECHOSLOVAK TERRITORY. IN ALL CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS REDUCED BY ABOUT A THIRD: 3 1/2 MILLION PEOPLE GOING TO GERMANY, 992,000 TO HUNGARY AND 230,000 TO POLAND.

IN 1945, CZECHOSLOVAKIA COULD HAVE BEEN LIBERATED BY THE UNITED STATES AS AMERICAN TANKS UNDER GENERAL GEORGE PATTON WERE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF PRAGUE, WHERE THE PEOPLE HAD RISEN AGAINST THE NAZIS. HOWEVER, BY CHANCE, COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL JOSEF SMRKOVSKY (NOW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN) HAPPENED TO BE THE ONLY AVAILABLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FREE CZECHOSLOVAK GOVERNMENT, AND HE REFUSED TO ALLOW PATTON TO BREAK THE YALTA AGREEMENTS. AS A RESULT, FIGHTING CONTINUED FOR TWO MORE DAYS UNTIL SOVIET TANKS ENTERED THE CITY.

AFTER THE WAR THE COMMUNISTS GRADUALLY GAINED CONTROL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S POLITICAL MACHINERY, AND ORGANIZED A COUP D'ETAT IN FEBRUARY 1948 WHICH GAVE FULL CONTROL TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

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