

THE MARSEILLES TRAGEDY AND THE CAMPAIGN OF CALUMNY AGAINST HUNGARY

SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE MARSEILLES OUTRAGE

The dastardly attempt at Marseilles which resulted in the death of Alexander, King of Yugoslavia, and M. Barthou, French Foreign Minister, horrified the whole of Hungary and has been condemned with profound disgust by the public opinion of the country. The "Budapesti Hirlap", the semi-official organ of the Hungarian Government, expressed the unanimous opinion of the Hungarian people in the words devoted to the memory of the great dead mourned by Yugoslavia and France:

"During the whole thousand years of the history of the Hungarian nation murder as a political weapon has always been an unknown quantity; even during the days of the darkest foreign oppression our nation resorted only to the weapons of law and justice in its defence of its cause and has always condemned the use of any forcible means in the service of politics. Now that our Yugoslav neighbours have lost their king, it is with feelings of profound respect and of horror evoked by the crime that we offer the Yugoslav nation our sympathy in its bereavement.

"M. Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, who acted as host, also fell a victim to the murderous attempt. But on hearing the news of his death, we think of him, not as the antagonist who not long ago deeply outraged the feelings of our nation, but as the man whose father's heart had been already mortally wounded by the Great War and as one of the responsible statesmen of the great French nation. The Hungarian nation lowers its colours to France with respect and sympathy and would express the conviction that the dastardly attempt will prove unable to interrupt the work that must be carried on for the maintenance and expansion of European peace by the united efforts of all the statesmen of Europe."

Notwithstanding this extremely loyal behaviour on the part alike of official circles and of society, on the present occasion too, as so often in the past, the Czech press let loose a whole flood of calumnies against Hungary and the Hungarian nation, — calumnies which were unfortunately taken over by a section of the French press too. An endeavour was made to give the name of the Marseilles murderer a Hungarian sound, until it transpired that his name was Vlada Georgiev and that he was, not a Croatian exile, but a Bulgaro-Macedonian revolutionary.

An endeavour is being made also to turn the confessions of the two Croatians arrested at Annemasse against Hungary. The fact that there are Croatian exiles living in Hungary too, has never been denied by any Hungarian. Nor was there any reason to deny the fact, seeing that the Croatian exiles have found shelter in many

European States — also in France and Czecho-Slovakia. The Yugoslavia which after the fall of Béla Kun's communistic régime offered homes to hundreds of communists compelled to flee from Hungary and more recently to the national socialists who fled from Austria after the murder of Dollfuss, is really not entitled to object to that. The Croatian camp at Jankaháza, so much spoken of in the French and Czech press, was maintained at their own cost by Croatian exiles; and in any case the camp was broken up by the Hungarian authorities last April. The organs of the administration of justice in Hungary are very carefully on the watch to prevent Hungary being made the venue of persons plotting political crimes against Yugoslavia. On the very day of the Marseilles tragedy the Curia, the Supreme Court in Hungary, passed a sentence of exemplary severity on the Croatian terrorist Permeč, confirming the sentence passed by the court of first instance, which condemned the prisoner to fifteen years' penal servitude for having sent a bomb to Yugoslavia, to the address of the President of the Belgrade Court of Cassation. The Hungarian police authorities have officially ascertained that no passport was ever issued by them to the two prisoners under examination at Annemasse. Hungary was only a transit station for the Croatian exiles, whose headquarters and propaganda offices were in Switzerland and France. So far as concerns the confessions of the two Croatians who have been arrested, the reports relating to the same must be received with the utmost reserve, if only because — as is well known — their cross-examination (owing to the fact that the competent French officials do not know Croatian) is being conducted by high Yugoslav diplomats and police officers.

Under such circumstances we must most energetically protest against the campaign of calumny instituted with a very transparent object being once more started against Hungary, and against the suggestion that our country should be arraigned before the League of Nations on the charge of regicide. The political armoury of the Hungarian nation never included murder among its weapons. While protesting most decidedly against all insinuations, we at the same time were deeply grateful for the calm and dispassionate attitude of the British press, which among other things established the fact that the Marseilles tragedy was due solely to the internal political conditions of Yugoslavia. We were also extremely grateful to that section of the French press which warned French public opinion not to lose its composure and not to be cajoled by the calumniating insinuations, for without absolutely irrefutable evidence no one was entitled to charge any people or government — whether Budapest or Berlin or Rome was in question — of so dastardly and villainous a crime as the Marseilles murder.

HUNGARIAN PREMIER ENERGETICALLY PROTESTS

Immediately before starting for Warsaw on a visit which — as is well known already — resulted in the conclusion of a cultural agreement between Poland and Hungary, Julius Gömbös, Prime Minister of Hungary, made the following statement with reference to the campaign of calumny against Hungary:

"I view the situation with absolute unconcern; and I have no qualms whatever about starting on my journey to Warsaw. There is no reason why I should have. Although the international campaign of calumny being conducted against us by a section of the press of certain countries which would fain make Hungary the scapegoat for the Marseilles tragedy, is now at its height, nevertheless I have no qualms whatever about leaving the country for a few days to pay my long-planned visit to the friendly Polish nation. For I know that what European public opinion wants to know is the truth — the whole truth and nothing but the truth: and from that Hungary has nothing to fear, — indeed, she must herself most energetically insist upon the truth being brought to light. Once the truth has been revealed, the rôle played by Hungary will be made clear and unmistakable to everyone, for it will be proved beyond a doubt that neither the Hungarian Government direct nor any Hungarian

official organs were implicated in this dastardly outrage (it would indeed be absurd to suppose that they could have been), and that there are not even any Hungarian nationals among those connected with the crime. Nor could there be, seeing that the spirit and temper at all times characterising the Hungarian people — a spirit and temper which during the whole course of Hungarian history refused to acknowledge murder as a political weapon — absolutely precludes the possibility of any Hungarian factor — whether official or private — having taken any part in the crime.

"This being the situation, Hungarian public opinion may without any misgivings whatsoever await the revelation of the real facts of the crime and all the developments that may ensue therefrom.

"The Hungarian Government is not looking on with folded arms either at the machinations of the foreign campaign of calumny being conducted against us or at the developments of the inquiries being carried on in the various countries. On the contrary, that Government has already taken the necessary steps to repudiate the unmerited and tendentious campaign of calumny and to provide for the criminal investigation being carried on with the utmost energy in Hungary too."

A MEMBER OF THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS ON YUGOSLAVIA

In a speech made at a soirée of the Manchester University Students Union Mr. Rhys Davies, M. P., spoke of the impressions obtained during his visit to Yugoslavia.

The frontiers — he said — are closed with barbed wire entrenchments. Every railway line over which King Alexander travelled was guarded by soldiers placed fifty paces from one another.

Lamentable as the Marseilles tragedy is — Mr. Rhys Davies continued — "it by no means surprises us. The responsibility does not rest solely with the revolutionary organisations, but must be shared to a large extent also by the Serbian Government and by those who after the end of the Great War made it their object to subject to foreign rule against their wishes heterogeneous races. The Serbians were

made to rule over three and a half million Croats, whom they themselves admit to be far more cultured than they are. The Serbian Government has extinguished the last sparks of the national life of the Croats, the Slovenes, the Montenegrins and the Macedonians. In default of liberty of speech the only possible answer to a tyranny of this kind is the pistol.

"The situation in Yugoslavia — said Mr. Rhys Davies in conclusion — is like what we should have here if King George V. were by edict to suspend or abolish the Irish, Welsh and Scotch nations. Belgrade has deprived the nations mentioned above of the use of their mother tongues and has excluded them from the profession of schoolmaster and teacher, as also from other branches of the public service."

MEMORANDUM ADDRESSED TO THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS BY THE CROATIANS OF AMERICA

In June, 1933, the Croatian National Council of North America — in agreement with and on behalf of more than 250,000 American citizens of Croatian origin and Croats living in the United States and in Canada, as also of other groups of Croats living in exile in other countries (South America, France, Belgium, etc.) — addressed a Memorandum to the League of Nations containing a picture of the conditions prevailing in Croatia, which render explicable even the events now engaging the attention of

Europe. We believe we shall be doing useful work if we give an abstract of the contents of that memorandum for the guidance of those who have failed to take a sufficient interest in that document and also of those who have so far not been familiar with the same.

PAS AND PRESENT

The opening passage of the Memorandum establishes the following facts: — "At the present time the only power which keeps the discordant elements

together, is the brutal force possessed and controlled by the ruling section, while the centrifugal forces consist of the desires and tendencies of most of the other sections to free themselves from persecution and exploitation by the rulers”.

The history of the Croatian people and the Croatian State is very plastically epitomised as follows: — “For twelve centuries the Croatian people lived in its own national State. This State was in the beginning entirely independent; but after 1102 its independence of action was slightly restricted by the personal union with Hungary and later also by its becoming incorporated in the Habsburg dominions. During this whole period, however, Croatia preserved her individuality and her national diversity, as also her independence in internal affairs. In their struggle against the hegemony policy of Hungary and the centralistic endeavours of Vienna resulting in a curtailment of their national rights and privileges, the Croats took advantage of the development brought about by the Great War, which once more made their country entirely independent. This reacquired independence was however unfortunately of very short duration. As a consequence of treachery and deceit the Croatian people was betrayed into the suffocating clutches of Belgrade, whose first step after seizing the power was to abolish the independent State existence of Croatia and to annihilate the individuality of the Croatian nation. Croatia has been wiped off the map of Europe; her inhabitants have been converted into a subject people and her territory into a field of exploitation by the ruling class of Serbia”.

UNION NOT ACKNOWLEDGED BY MAJORITY OF CROATS

The Memorandum continues: — “The union of Croatia with the Kingdom of Serbia was concluded, on the Croatian side, by politicians who had absolutely no authorisation for such an act. The method of the union and even its earliest results were entirely adverse to the wishes and expectations of the Croats. For these reasons the act of the union was never ratified by the Croatian people, but was, on the contrary, overwhelmingly rejected by them, not only at the elections for the Constituent Assembly in 1920, but also at every other opportunity which they had before and since that time”.

“For immediately after the Proclamation of December 1, 1918,” — says the Memorandum — “Croatia was overrun by detachments of the Serbian army and gendarmerie, and a rule of terror and intimidation was introduced. The favorite means of this terror was and is the beating and flogging of the Croatian peasants and the incarceration of their leaders. The immediate motive for these atrocities was the fact that the Croatian people — in contrast with the majority of their politicians, members of the National Council SHS. — had a better sense of realities and of their national rights and declined to accept the arrangement of December 1. as final or legally binding . . .

“In November, 1920, at the elections for the Constituent Assembly, Croats reiterated this stand. More than three-fourths of all the Croatian votes were cast for parties — primarily the Croatian

Peasant Party — whose programmes included the non-recognition of the legality of the said act. This position, as all the later parliamentary elections showed, was never changed by the Croatian people”.

THE CONSTITUTION OF VIDOVAN

The Memorandum then gives the following description of the activity of the Constituent Assembly: — “However, when the Constituent Assembly was finally convened, more than two years later — the intervening time was utilized by the ruling clique to engineer the elections to its own advantage — the new Constitution was not adopted by a majority of two-thirds, but by a simple majority, only 223 out of 419 members having voted for its adoption. Out of 91 Croatian representatives only 11 voted for the new Constitution, while 51 members of the Croatian Peasant Party, faithful to the principle of non-recognition of the original act of the union, never took their seats in the Assembly.

“Eleven out of ninety-one, a little more than 12%!!! Yet in November and December, 1918, no cry was heard oftener than the assertion that there would be no “majorization” in the Constituent Assembly of either of the uniting peoples, — i. e. that no Constitution would be adopted unless it received the support of the majority of each, the Slovenian, the Serbian and the Croatian representation”.

EQUALITY OF RIGHTS

The Croatian Memorandum then tells us how the principle of equality of rights was carried out in practice: — “The Serbian ruling clique and the Serbian politicians had plenty of their own henchmen to place in the government service, and the question of qualifications was not considered one of importance. There were many instances of former clerks with only a couple of years of public school education displacing law-school graduates with 15 or 20 years of experience in the important office of district commissioner. Army, finances, railroads, public instruction, diplomatic corps and foreign service — all these departments of government were filled with Serbs, protégés of the Serbian politicians, and in none of these departments was there ever much of a chance for a Croat, unless, of course, he was willing to become useful, not to the people, but to the camarilla.

“In the Austro-Hungarian army there were always from ten to twenty commanding generals who were Croats. In Yugoslavia, which was supposed to be “their own” country to the Croats, there were at one time more than 80 generals, and not one of them was a Croat, although there still lived several of the former Austro-Hungarian high officers of Croatian nationality who had rendered, during the critical period of October and November, 1918, a great service to the cause of liberty of all the South-Slavic peoples”.

CROATIAN STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Under the heading “*Central European Conspiracy*” the Memorandum describes the struggle for liberty of the Croatian nation: — “The Croatian Opposition

was becoming ever stronger. The ruling clique of Belgrade felt itself really endangered, and particularly so when, through the efforts of Croatian deputies, one of their own number — R. Pashitch, the son of the former veteran Premier — had been publicly convicted for corruption, shady dealings, and misappropriation of public property. Then for the first time rumors of an impending suspension of the parliamentary principle began to circulate in Belgrade coffee-houses and newspaper offices.

"The resistance of the Croats, however, was still increasing. Using the Belgrade parliament as the medium through which they could be most easily heard, Croatian leaders were raising a cry of protest, which was becoming ever louder. The ruling camarilla was in a tight corner, but it was still far from being ready to give way to the will of the people. Instead, it decided: — "Parliamentarism must go, but, before this can be done effectively, Croatian leaders must first be put away . . . where they could hold no speeches and write no articles for the papers . . . Punisha Rachitch . . . on June 20 asked to be recognised by the speaker. Afterwards he seemed to change his mind. But at the direct urging by the speaker — also, of course, a member of the parliamentary majority — he went to the rostrum and, immediately upon arriving there, he produced a revolver, which he leisurely proceeded to empty into a group of Croatian leaders. Result of the shooting: — two Croatian deputies dead, three wounded, one of the wounded being the chief of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stephen Radić, who died from the consequences of the shooting a few weeks later".

LAMENTABLE PRICE OF "LIBERATION" CONCLUSIONS

Under this heading the Memorandum contains the following statements: — "Taxes paid by Croats were, and still are, from three to six times as great as the taxes paid by the inhabitants of Serbia with the same income and property . . . Due to such economic policies of the Serbian Government, Croatia, once a remarkably prosperous country, is today on the verge of economic ruin . . . Many Croatian cultural institutions and organisations were forcibly dissolved and their funds confiscated by the government. The standards of teaching in the public schools were deliberately lowered, a

great many of the high schools altogether abolished, and the standards of the University of Zagreb impaired by the refusal or restriction of necessary budgetary credits. Several of the most prominent professors of the University were dismissed, some because of their political convictions, some again simply in order to injure the cultural prestige of the Croatian nation in general and of its main university in particular . . . These were some of the means by which Belgrade hoped to equalize the cultural standing of Serbia with that of Croatia, whose civilisation is several centuries in advance of the Serbian."

The administration introduced by the Serbians is characterised by the Croats as follows: — "This apparatus was, moreover, filled with personnel — appointed for political reasons, as previously mentioned — so incompetent and so corrupt that in a short time a terrific chaos became supreme in all the branches of public life. Croatia, whose administrative machinery before the union was excellent, felt the change to the new system of inefficiency, incompetence and plunder-by-bribery most strongly".

Horrifying are the statements describing the tortures to which the Croats were subjected: — "A merchant, Javor by name, was hanged by one arm, while burning candles were applied to his naked body . . . In less than two years eight Croatian patriots lost their lives in the Zagreb penitentiary alone . . . Croatian intellectuals seemed to be especially obnoxious to the dictatorial government of Belgrade. One of them, the University Professor Milan Šufflay, whose inborn astuteness had prevented Serbian agents from bringing him to jail by the favorite method of the frame-up, was finally murdered by professional assassins hired for that purpose by the agents of the Government, members of the Zagreb police force. The same method was used in the fortunately unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Croatian leader, Dr. Mile Budak. Doctor Budak escaped death only because of his strong constitution; but, as a consequence of the terrible beating he received in that assault, he had to spend many months in bed, recuperating from the wounds and from the shock to his nerves. The latest victim is Jos. Predaveć, the representative of the Croatian Peasant Party, who was murdered."

SERAING RESOLUTION OF CROATIAN UNION

Nothing throws a more striking light upon the background of the Marseilles attempt than the resolution passed at Seraing by the Croatian Union, which was made public in the April 16th. issue of the "Nezavisna Hrvatska Država". The text of this resolution runs as follows:

The Seraing Croatian Union, on April 1st., 1934, in the presence of all Members of that Union then in the territory of Belgium, passed the following resolution:

1. The dark day of December, 1918, is the cause of the treachery and deceit practised towards the Croatian people, which by command of Alexander Karageorgevitch has been made subject to Serbia.

2. Treachery and deceit have been practised because no one is entitled to deprive a people of its sovereignty without it having previously voted on the subject and exercised freely its right of self-determination.

3. For all this the responsibility rests with Alexander Karageorgevitch, who set foot in Croatia by force and is torturing and crucifying that country.

4. Alexander shall answer with his life for the martyr deaths of Stephen Raditch, Paul Raditch, D. Basharitchek, Milan Shufflay, Rozitch, Ch. Hranilovitch, Sholdin and numerous other Croatian leaders.

5. Alexander is responsible for all the lies spread

in foreign countries stating that "all is well" in Croatia, though as a matter of fact Croatian blood has been flowing — and is still flowing — in streams.

6. Alexander is responsible for the deaths of Oreb, Begovitch and others, seeing that he allowed them to be condemned to death.

7. Alexander is responsible for still allowing the propagation by the "Avala" Agency of the lies declaring that the Croatian people has acquiesced in the condemnation to death of Oreb and his fellows and that the Croatians of Zagreb have protested against the action of the Croatian insurgents and their leaders.

In view of all these facts we hereby sentence to death Alexander Karageorgevitch and the whole Belgrade Government. This sentence must be execu-

ted within the shortest time by the Croatian insurgents. For this purpose we address to Dr. Ante Pavelitch — the leader of the insurgents — the following summons:

"We request our Leader to immediately enjoin that the insurgent groups, in addition to complying with other orders, shall execute the above sentence.

"We desire revenge! We desire war! A war to the knife! We desire revolution! If we fail once, we shall try again a hundred times; and Croatia and the whole Croatian people shall create an independent Croatian State!

"The revolution shall come, even if the whole of Europe should shake in its very foundations! We offer the last drop of our blood; but we cannot wait any longer."

ANTI-HUNGARIAN PROPAGANDA

The past few months have seen a very considerable increase in anti-Hungarian literature: if we may so call the large number of books, pamphlets and articles which have appeared in magazines and dailies, practically all over the Continent and England.

The writers' connections or the sources of their information can invariably be traced back to Little Entente official circles; and it seems likely that the recrudescence of anti-Hungarian propaganda is due to the fact that the leaders of the Little Entente are getting nervous. And yet they by no means necessarily represent the feelings and wishes of the majority of the people whom they govern and most certainly do not represent it when they claim that the Hungarian demands for a revision of the Trianon Treaty, however peacefully that may be attempted, means war.

But why should the Little Entente Leaders get nervous at Hungary's peaceful attempts at revision — which after all is Hungary's full right even under the terms of the Trianon Treaty, the strict adherence to which is the supreme claim of the Little Entente?

Do they doubt the honesty of the Hungarian policy of peaceful arguments for revision? Are they in their tremendous supremacy of numbers and technical war preparedness afraid of disarmed Hungary? Of secret armaments which, even if they were true, could not for 24 hours save Hungary from destruction?

We much rather believe that they are afraid of the sound, honourable and therefore convincing argumentation of Hungarian revisionism and now attempt to drown it under an avalanche of apparently scientific historic and economic argumentation and of false sentimentalism in favour of the so much needed world peace.

They know that if they now crush the awakening world conscience as to the true causes of continued disturbance in Central and Eastern Europe they may succeed in prolonging for decades the present unwholesome situation and put the blame for it upon Hungary or at the best upon a "scourge of God" and thus may continue to rejoice in their doubtful victory.

Hungary unhappily has not the resources of the three combined Little Entente States and cannot publish or distribute in millions of copies a rejoinder to all falsehoods broadcast about her; and even when she tries to do so, she is hindered by the malvolence of many powerful interests.

The danger of arguments of hatred was again visible recently, when Prague attempted to make a scapegoat out of Hungary and accused this country of responsibility for the murder of King Alexander and Barthou at Marseilles. It is claimed that Hungary has given refuge to Croatian immigrants and fantastic conclusions are drawn therefrom, forgetting that the same conclusion could justly be drawn from the fact that Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland have also given refuge to Croatian and Macedonian refugees, that Germany is claimed to have financed the Nazi movement against Austria, and that the Yugoslav government gave a refuge to Nazis when they fled from Austria after the wanton murder of Chancellor Dollfuss. Does not the fact that there were so many Croatian and Macedonian refugees in practically all European countries, prove that something may be wrong in Yugoslavia, that they are by no means, now, the happy and liberated brethren.

In spite of all difficulties which the diffusion of true facts about Hungary and the fate of Hungarian minorities in the Little Entente States encounters, all Hungarians rest their hope in the wisdom and love of justice of the Western Powers.

They hope that a time will soon come when no onesided statement of the Little Entente will find a hearing, when it will become public knowledge that the Little Entente States grossly violate Treaty obligations internationally binding upon them and incidentally binding upon the great powers which were a party to these treaties.

The Little Entente likes to forget that international treaties stand above State laws and it is no breach to the Sovereignty of a State if, by its free and sovereign will, it accepts international obligations.