

INTOLERABLE SITUATION OF MAGYAR MINORITIES REVEALED TO LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The event at the sitting of the Sixth (Political) Committee of the General Assembly of the League of Nations next in importance to the presentation of the proposal of Poland — subsequently withdrawn — relating to the generalisation of minority protection, was the speech of Tibor Eckhardt, the Hungarian Delegate, and the long debate which followed.

After establishing the fact that under Article 3 of the Covenant of the League of Nations the minority question is within the competency of the Assembly too and that the protection of minorities is the duty of the League, *Eckhardt* emphasised that under Articles 44 and 47 of the Treaty of Trianon Hungary may claim a peculiar right in respect of the protection of Magyar minorities living in the Succession States. When Hungary was summoned to sign the Treaty of Trianon, she did so only in view of the solemn and formal promise contained in the Covering Letter of M. Millerand, President of the Peace Conference, annexed to the text of the Treaty which was signed by him on behalf of the Allied and Associated Powers. The text of this promise runs as follows: — "As to the isles of Magyar population passing under another sovereignty, the Treaties for the protection of minorities already signed by Roumania and the Serbo-Croat-Slovene State and ratified by Czecho-Slovakia guarantee their entire safeguarding."

The Hungarian Delegate thanked the organs of the League for continuing under circumstances of constantly increasing difficulty to serve the idea of minority protection with the greatest goodwill and the most generous intentions. The situation, on the other hand, still continued to be exceptionally difficult. He had no wish to make the competent organs of the League responsible; but there could be no doubt that today the "fox intellect" so severely censured by Carlyle was once more gaining the upper hand.

In his opinion the President of the Council, Benesh, in his opening speech had forgotten the biggest liability item of the League's balance-sheet — the decadence of minority protection — and had failed to draw the attention of the Assembly to the situation of unrest arising therefrom. The gravest symptom of this situation recently in evidence was that the "sacrosanct" provisions of the minority treaties were being more and more completely neglected and ignored. There were States, such as Switzerland and Luxemburg, in which, though those States were not bound by any treaties, perfect equality of rights prevailed. And there were other States which had undertaken solemnly to control the protection of minorities in order to secure considerable areas of territory and were nevertheless systematically oppressing their minorities and making the guarantee of the League absolutely illusory.

It was particularly in Central Europe that the protection of minorities showed a rapid and continuous decadence. This was the case in Rumania, where more than 50% of the Hungarian inhabitants severed from their mother country are living in an intolerable situation. Every article of the Paris Minority Treaties had been infringed,

and the treaties had been converted into "scraps of paper". In support of this statement the Hungarian Delegate quoted all the articles of the treaties in turn, contrasting the provisions of the same with the procedure adopted by the Rumanian authorities.

In this connection Eckhardt called the attention of the Committee also to the general situation prevailing in the Danube Valley, describing the same as follows: — "The economic and political dislocation is being aggravated by a continually increasing flood of complaints lodged by the minorities. The ruined peasantry, the Churches and religious orders illegally deprived of their property, the thousands of schoolchildren with no schools to attend, the civil servants driven from their posts — the complaints of all these elements are constantly increasing in number and volume and are making themselves heard beyond the frontiers; they alarm us and make our hearts ache."

The Rumanian Foreign Minister had suggested the remedying of the situation by a "spiritualisation of the frontiers"; in reply the Hungarian Delegate would urge that the first step in this direction must be taken by the Rumanian Foreign Minister. The beginning must be made with the "spiritualisation" of the inner barriers existing between the Rumanian nationals belonging to the various nationalities living in his country. All that Hungary demanded of her neighbours was a loyal application of the minority treaties; but that depended upon Rumania; and only Rumania could take the initiative.

"The sublime idea of nationalism can never provoke oppression; and a civilised nation can never become the prison of its minorities. A civilised nation represents the element of organisation for the whole world; its duty is to enrich the human community by its own special contributions, the values latent in it, and its individual qualities. A sublime nationalism — which is far from restricting itself to oppressing other peoples or national minorities — shows a respect for the individual values of every other nation equivalent in measure to its self-respect. This constructive nationalism finds the "reality" of its aims, not in the oppression of others, but in a complete and far-reaching development of its own creative forces. These are the principles underlying the national policy of Hungary; consequently it is not only her right, but also her duty, to require the application of these principles in the treatment of all Hungarians, wherever they may happen to be living."

At the close of his speech Eckhardt declared that his object was not to create antagonisms, but to contribute to remedy the trouble and to determine its sources. Hungary did not ask for anything she was not ready spontaneously to grant to others. She did not demand new rights, only the carrying into practice of the moral laws binding on every human being. It was the intolerable character of the situation that had impelled the Hungarian Government to realise that it was incumbent upon it — from both the national and the humanitarian point of view — to ensure an effectual protection of the Magyar minorities. That Government was firmly resolved

to continue on the path of international law; and for that purpose it would in the future use every means ensured it under the Covenant and the Treaty of Trianon.

In answer to the replies of Antoniadé, Fotitch and Benesh *Eckhardt* expressed his gratitude to Baron Aloisi and to Mr. Eden, whose speech made during the debate on the generalisation motion of Poland had in his opinion once more shown that the great British nation was a disinterested champion of all just causes. The breach of *all* the provisions of a treaty placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations — he continued — was without doubt a matter to be included in the general discussion of the minority question. The "*droit de regard*" to which Hungary is entitled under Articles 44 and 47 of the Treaty of Trianon does not mean that Hungary desires to interfere direct in the work of controlling the protection accorded the Magyar minorities; it means that, as acknowledged in the treaties, it is the peculiar interest of Hungary that she should be able to control through the League of Nations the manner in which this protection is effected in practice. As against Antoniadé, the speaker showed that the fact that the Magyar minority living in Rumania has submitted only a few memorandums — and Hungary not a single memorandum — does not by any means involve the tacit acknowledgment of the satisfactory character of the present

state of things; for the reason why Hungary had so far abstained from doing so was that she did not desire to add to the sufferings of our racial brethren. The Hungarian Delegate was of the opinion that an honourable and loyal settlement of the problem was not only desirable for the purpose of doing justice to the cause of the Magyar minorities, but also a *sine qua non* of peace. "Can we ever achieve a solution of the Danube problem" — he asked — "in this atmosphere — I might even say, climate — in which we are living and which is heavy from all the clouds overhanging the illstarred Danube Valley?" *Eckhardt* finally accepted Benesh's proposal based on the principles of reciprocity, equality and relativity and declared that he would be delighted if an arrangement could be brought about on that basis between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia and the other two States of the Little Entente respectively. In respect of procedure he suggested that both sides should request the Council of the League to delegate a commission of enquiry (*commission d'enquete*) to study the situation of minorities on the spot in all four countries and to present to the Council a report on the matter which should enable the Council to take such measures as it considered useful and necessary for the purpose of bringing about an adjustment of the minority question of Danubian Europe satisfactory to all parties alike.

HUNGARIAN PROTESTANTS AND ENGLAND IN THE SIXTEENTH, SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

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by
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The Reformation impelled the Hungarian Calvinists to take an interest in England, which had become Protestant too.

As early as the sixteenth century we find a record of a theologian who in the course of his journey visited England too. It is recorded by Peter Bod that in 1571 *Matthew Skaritz*a travelled to distant "England and her most famous towns". However, it was not until the third decennium of the seventeenth century that our Protestant theologians began systematically to frequent the universities of England. The political connections between Transylvania and England strengthened the ties brought into being by the community of religious interests. And our students had no difficulty in making their way from Holland to England. It would appear that the habit of doing so first became fashionable early in the seventeenth century.

Paul Medgyesi and *John Tolnai de Dal* were the founders of the Puritan movement in Hungary; they had become acquainted with the movement in England. Since the days of that movement it has

been a tradition that our Protestant theologians should study in England. *Medgyesi, Susan* (*Zsuzsanna*) *Lorántffy's* chaplain-in-ordinary, fought by word and in writing for the presbyterian or rather puritan ideas; he translated several English theological works into Hungarian, and by his personal influence was able to revive the movement when its powerful enemies were about to completely suppress it.

However, the work done by *John Tolnai de Dal* was more important still. On February 9th., 1638, he and nine other Hungarians — who with the exception of *John Molnár* had all reached England by way of Holland — made a formal contract for the propagation of puritan ideas. For the introduction and popularisation of the new ideas no one did so much as *Tolnai*, who during his stay in England, which lasted several years, thoroughly imbibed the puritan spirit. And after his return, in the teeth of the opposition of the ecclesiastical and secular powers, he propagated these ideas in Transylvania and in Hungary proper. Prince *George Rákóczi I*