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GENEVA RESULTS

by

Elemér Szudy

On his return from Geneva, in answer to a question addressed to him by a journalist as to the impressions he had gained during the discussions before the League of Nations, the Hungarian Foreign Minister remarked, briefly but pregnantly, that "those days would furnish material for a romance".

And indeed, when we recall the debates carried on in a feverish, superheated atmosphere — the secret conventicles in lobbies and hotels, the intrigues and frantic exertions — which in the maelstrom of the League of Nations surged round the Yugoslav-Hungarian conflict, we cannot help feeling as if these events and the changing moods accompanying them had left the frame of reality and had become a rapid succession of instantaneous projections on the screen of memory. Now that the days of anxious excitement are over and we are in a position to record the decided moral and political success scored by Hungary, we cannot but utter a sigh of relief, for enormous values had been at stake. And indeed — to quote the words of M. Laval, French Foreign Minister — "we were within an inch of war"; we were within an ace of having the soil of Europe once more drenched with the human blood shed by the conflict of passions.

It is peace — the peace of Europe — that rises triumphant out of the din and the war-laden fumes of the Geneva controversy; it is the peace of humanity that has been saved, not only by the resolute determination and solidarity of the Western Powers, but also by the loyalty and the generosity of the Hungarian people. The attainment of this result was due primarily to the generosity of the Hungarian people; and that in itself is sufficient ground and reason to enter a considerable item in our favour on the assets side of the moral balance-sheet. It is moreover beyond doubt that our national honour and our moral integrity has passed through the ordeal intact and without a stain; for the resolution taken does not impute any responsibility to Hungary or the Hungarian Government, while the allusion to possible omissions on the part of individual Hungarian authorities is after all only an extremely vague

reference expressed in a conditional form and leaving the question of responsibility open. The investigation of the question is in any case regarded and declared by the resolution to be Hungary's own affair, so that the convention does not infringe our State sovereignty.

However, the most important item to the credit of Hungary in the moral balance-sheet is the fact that she battled for peace, our efforts to that end being seconded also by those of our friends who today are most in our thoughts. With the events already at a certain distance the fact may be established that from the very first moment until the very last the spirit of Mussolini dominated the discussions; and the great man living in the Palazzo Venezia at the foot of the Capitol proved a worthy apostle of the Pax Romana idea represented by him in harmony with the traditions of his Latin blood and the programme inspired by his gigantic mind. The attitude adopted by him proved a factor of unshakable and unalterable decisiveness in the discussions; and never before had we realised to such an extent and so direct the influence attaching to every impulse of his genius in the chaos of international disputes — an influence and an authority backed by the power of a nation of forty-two million souls welded into a single unit. The delegate sent to represent the new Italian Kingdom in the international Senate at Geneva pleaded our cause with the logic of Roman law and the strength inherent in the Pax Romana idea. His presence contributed very largely to eliminate our sense of desolation and to support the idea which was the real object of the charges brought by the Little Entente — the idea of revision. The drafters of the charges would fain have quenched the ever increasing brilliance of this dazzling ideal by bespattering it with the blood shed at Marseilles. The representative of Italy however found a way to divert the attacks from this question and from the object which has so far employed only ideal moral, legal and political means applied in a spirit of unadulterated purity of purpose.

The fact must also be established that in the struggle to maintain peace Great Britain too was impelled to abandon her attitude of isolation and to utilise her whole power and authority to preserve peace and advocate the cause of a country in Central Europe which has been torn to pieces. The fact must

be established that the sympathy of the public opinion and the political world of Great Britain — a sympathy which is ever on the increase — exercised a favourable influence upon the attitude of the British Foreign Secretary and produced effects the beneficial influence of which made itself felt in Geneva in the most critical hours of the controversy.

Nor must we forget that other friend of ours who espoused our cause with the whole authority of her position as a Power and as a State that has renewed its historical status, dealing with the question at issue and displaying an attitude perhaps even more openly in our favour than any other Member — we mean Poland. There was a period when we were the only people in Europe to advocate the cause of dismembered Poland; and the Polish people would seem not to have forgotten the days when Hungary was the only place of refuge for its persecuted leaders.

This is the moral balance-sheet of the events in Geneva. In drawing up the political balance-sheet the chief point to be emphasised — as explained above — is that our antagonists failed to attain the object they had in view, — that they failed to compromise the idea of revision and the movement towards a peaceful revision, thus failing to politically force Hungary to her knees. Yet — though not openly confessed — this was the central object of their endeavours. That this was the case, was shown by the whole character and tone of the speeches made in Geneva by the Little Entente; particularly by the tone and manner in which the question was dealt with by the intellectual leader of the whole campsign, Beneš. He was the attorney of the whole manoeuvre, — the stage manager and the initiator of the press campaign which was started with the object of sullyng the national honour and moral integrity of Hungary in the eyes of the public opinion, of the world. It is to be hoped, however, that the Geneva campaign — the manoeuvre initiated by Beneš in connection with the Marseilles attempt for the purpose of humiliating and punishing the Hungarian people — was the last desperate effort of this Prague policy. And the failure of this scheme involved also a decline of the Little Entente dictatorship which has for fifteen years weighed heavily on Central Europe, — though chiefly and primarily on Hungary —, without ever finding anything to counterbalance it in Geneva. On the present occasion this dictatorship was outvoted; and the outlines of the European forces opposed to it were thrown into relief. It would seem as if the only thing wanted to enable this anti-Entente to display its whole weight and its solidarity was an open attack upon Hungary. There can be no doubt that the Hungarian

cause and Hungary were for weeks in the focus of world interest. In every corner of Europe it had to be acknowledged that despite our territorial dismemberment we are still an important factor in the European balance of power, — that without us or against us that balance of power cannot be maintained, — and that our salvation and our recovery are *sine qua nons* of a better future for Europe. The days in Geneva afforded a splendid opportunity for the irresistible might of historical justice to plead before the League of Nations for the cause of revision, and for the Italian-Hungarian demonstration to make everyone feel the omnipresence of that idea — an idea in which lies the root and remedy of all the troubles and evils, not of Hungary only, but of the whole of Europe.

This mighty revelation was the greatest and most productive political asset in the balance-sheet of Geneva.

We would in conclusion refer to the words of the Rumanian Foreign Minister, M. Titulescu, in which he offered Hungary "the right hand of peace". The Minister once more indulged in his favourite phrases and spoke of the "spiritualisation" and "devaluation" of frontiers. Hackneyed phrases which ring familiar to our ears; colourless and vague: we feel that there is nothing behind them, and that they are mere empty unsubstantial forms. But why not „devalue” frontiers?! Nowhere would such an issue be welcomed more cordially and with greater pleasure than in Hungary; for the Hungarian revision policy has surely not been really doing anything else for the past fifteen years but endeavouring to remove the obstacles impeding the realisation of that issue. But for the achievement of that end it is not enough that one of the parties should show benevolence and make efforts; what is wanted first of all is that the Hungarian minorities living under a foreign rule — of whom some four millions are in the territories severed from Hungary — should at last be granted the rights and liberties ensured them under the minority treaties and due to them as elementary human rights. Should we perceive any gratifying improvement in this respect, — should we find that M. Titulescu's symbolical "right hand of peace" brings with it, not only words, but deeds too —, we shall believe and feel convinced that the desire to "devalue" is a serious and sincere one and not merely a *ballon d'essai* suitable perhaps for a moment to cajole international public opinion but representing no value whatsoever for those who are familiar with the real situation.

And why not "spiritualise" the frontiers? though we must first have human rights and equality as citizens for the Hungarian minorities!!