

DR. TIBOR ECKHARDT'S GREAT SPEECH BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Of the meetings of the Council of the League of Nations held on December 7th., 8th. and 10th., at which Yugoslavia's complaint relating to "the responsibility of the Hungarian authorities arising in connection with the terrorist actions initiated against Yugoslavia" was discussed, our readers have already been informed by the reports of the world press. We nevertheless consider it our duty to publish almost *in extenso* the speech made by Dr. Tibor Eckhardt, the Delegate of Hungary, for we believe that familiarity with this speech will make it easier for our readers to understand the attitude adopted by Hungary, not only in respect of the Yugoslav complaint, but also of many other problems of vital importance:

"The unfounded charges put forward by the Yugoslav Government against Hungary in its Note and in its Memorandum — of which Hungary has been the subject to-day — will be able neither to warp my judgment nor disturb my calm. I shall take good care that this is so, first from my sense of duty to the Hungarian nation, which has never lost its calm and its moderation, even when faced with systematic, and always unjustified, provocation. Next, I consider that my fundamental duty is to serve the cause of general peace, and, for that purpose, to arm myself with patience. My task is not easy, for we are concerned with a campaign which has been going on for many weeks past and which puts a severe strain upon the legitimate susceptibilities of the Hungarian people. That campaign is directed against national honour, a possession dearer to Hungary than all else. It has brought upon us unjust attacks before the League of Nations. In the last few days, moreover, it has led to persecutions of ever-increasing severity, which have aroused, not only feelings of horror among the Hungarian people, but the anxious attention of the civilised world as well.

"Notwithstanding all this, we master the bitterness by which we are filled. We have learnt to do so during the last sixteen years, and I shall observe the moderate and disciplined attitude which I owe to the traditions of the Hungarian people and to the high prestige of the League of Nations.

"I shall be guided by that conciliatory spirit the efficacy of which we have to our deep satisfaction been able to appreciate during the present session in connection with an extremely complicated problem. That means that, so far as I am concerned, I shall

refuse to follow the representatives of the Little Entente along the dangerous path they have chosen in attacking Hungary without cause and without reason.

"I wish first to make a declaration concerning the Marseilles crime. I have no need to dwell on the horror and indignation aroused in the soul of Hungary by any and every act of terrorism, whatever its origin or its victim. Even in the present atmosphere, vitiated as it is by attacks, I cannot do other than translate into words as solemn as I can summon the deep emotion felt by the Hungarian Government and the Hungarian nation at the news of the immeasurable loss sustained by Yugoslavia. In the fiery tempest of war, the Hungarian people learned to appreciate the courage and devotion of their loyal adversary. The fierce struggle we had to maintain has left no bitterness in the Hungarian soul, which is chivalrous by nature; on the contrary, the manly qualities of King Alexander imposed respect upon us. The untiring ardour with which he worked for the prosperity of his kingdom earned for him the esteem of the Hungarian people. Animated by these feelings, I say as clearly and definitely as I can that the Hungarian Government and the whole Hungarian people reprobate with indignation the outrage of Marseilles and join in the sentiments of horror and disgust which that revolting crime has called forth throughout the civilised world."

HUNGARY'S ENERGETIC AND DECIDED PROTEST

The Hungarian Delegate then described the situation of the two thousand Hungarians expelled from Yugoslavia. This part of his speech will be found in another page of the present number. Then he said:

"My first duty is to enter a firm and solemn protest against the unjustifiable charges by which an attempt is made to lay at the door of the Hungarian Government or its authorities any measure of responsibility, however small, for the ignoble crime committed at Marseilles, for which we ourselves feel the utmost horror. I protest formally against any attempt to use King Alexander's assassination for the purposes of an unworthy political intrigue directed against the honour of Hungary. For Hungary, indeed, it is not only a question of her relations with the three States of the Little Entente and of the allegations that the facts adduced in the Yugoslav request are such as to endanger good-neighbourly relations with

Hungary; what is of vital interest to Hungary and her Government is to defend the honour of the Hungarian nation against political manoeuvres which have no other object than to compromise her good reputation and moral integrity.

"From the very first day when the circumstances of the crime were still plunged in the most complete obscurity, we found with surprise the Czechoslovak papers launching against Hungary calumnies so grave that their purely fictitious character must to-day be recognised even by that Press itself. In twenty-four hours it was proved that the regicide Georgijev, then known as Kelemen, was a Hungarian. Before forty-eight hours had elapsed, an official of the Czechoslovak Legation at Budapest arrogated to himself in Hungary rights that belong to the authorities alone. From the outset it was apparent that the real object was to defame Hungary and not to discover the unbiassed truth.

"Manoeuvres like these we have witnessed from time to time in the past; their purpose was in all cases to make Hungary feel that she was disarmed, delivered bound hand and foot to the mercy of one and all.

"I shall to-morrow communicate to the Secretary-General, for the Council of the League, the Hungarian Government's Memorandum replying to the main points in the Yugoslav Government's request of November 22nd, and to those in the Yugoslav Memorandum bound up therewith.

"It is clear from our memorandum that none of the charges in the Yugoslav Government's request will bear investigation, and from our enquiries conscientiously carried out we draw the conclusion that the entire Yugoslav indictment is nothing but a house of cards. I wish, however, in view of the Yugoslav Government's allegations, to give you the real truth by word of mouth.

"Let me then remind you of the discussions in the Council on June 5th last concerning the incidents on the frontier between Hungary and Yugoslavia. The situation on the frontier between the two countries was at that time becoming intolerable. There were over thirty serious incidents in which Yugoslav frontier guards made use of their arms; as many as fifteen Hungarians, all of them innocent, found their death. Relations such as should exist between friendly neighbours were strained to the uttermost; but, instead of resorting to reprisals, the Hungarian Government brought the matter before the League of Nations with the object of restoring normal relations. That attitude produced the result for which we had hoped. Direct negotiations between Hungary and Yugoslavia, as the Yugoslav delegate has told you to-day, led to a friendly agreement on July 21st, 1934. The charges put forward by the Yugoslav Government in its communication of June 4th ceased, therefore, to be the subject of discussion between the two Governments, and the Hungarian Government did not fail to take and loyally to execute, in accordance with the spirit of the agreement, all the measures mentioned in its reply of April 26th., 1934, to the Yugoslav Government as having been either already put in hand or as being contemplated for the future.

"Here are the measures as defined in the Hungarian Government's Note of April 26th:

"1. The Hungarian Government informs the Yugoslav Government that, long before the action initiated by the latter, it had taken the necessary measures for the evacuation of Janka Puszta by the Yugoslav political refugees and *émigrés*.

"2. The Hungarian Government states in the same *note-verbale* that it is prepared to accede to the Yugoslav Government's request — namely, that it will remove from Hungary all Yugoslav *émigrés* who have abused the hospitality they enjoyed in Hungary.

"As the Yugoslav Government repeats its charges in its Note of November 22nd., and also in its last communication, the purpose of which is to support the former Note with so-called proofs, I am constrained to mention the measures taken by the Hungarian Government to give effect to its Note of April 26th., and also to take account of the Belgrade agreements by which a satisfactory settlement was found for the question of the frontier incidents.

"The most serious of the Yugoslav Government's accusations is that concerning the residence of the Yugoslav *émigrés* at Janka Puszta, their criminal activities and the supposed assistance and complicity of the Hungarian authorities.

THE TRUTH ABOUT JANKAPUSZTA

"To these charges I need merely reply by stating the following facts: Janka Puszta was never a camp. It is a small farm which was inhabited by thirty to forty Croat *émigrés*. The lease was, of course, a matter of private law and was based on a contract between private individuals. So true is this that, having decided to disperse the *émigrés* living on the farm, the Hungarian Government was only able to do so by bringing pressure to bear on the *émigrés* through the local authorities, and inducing them to leave the farm of their own accord. As a result of these measures, the winding-up of Janka Puszta began in April last. It had necessarily to be carried out by stages — first, the termination of the lease and, second, the sale of the farm products. On October 1st., 1934, the whole concern had been wound up. The departure of the Croat inmates of Janka Puszta began as soon as the Government gave its instructions. It was carried out as speedily as the possibility of finding new means of livelihood for the *émigrés* allowed. Some of them settled in other communes or farms where they succeeded in finding work. Others were deported to Nagykanizsa to look for work there. It has been proved that at least half the *émigrés* who had lived at Janka Puszta did, in actual fact, leave Hungary during the period between the spring and September of the present year. On October 1st., a new farmer was installed at Janka Puszta and the old lease was terminated for good and all.

"My conclusion from what precedes is that the Hungarian Government has completely satisfied the desiderata expressed by the Yugoslav Government. The existence of the farm of Janka Puszta therefore does not admit of a verdict against Hungary in

connection with the events of Marseilles, which we ourselves deeply deplore.

"To the Hungarian Government's knowledge, no State took measures of equal severity against the Yugoslav *émigrés* before the assassination of King Alexander at Marseilles. It is therefore manifest that to accuse any Hungarian authority of assistance or complicity in connection with the farm of Janka Pusztá is purely gratuitous. On the contrary, by taking the measures I have mentioned, the Hungarian Government gave the clearest proof of its goodwill — a goodwill that has always existed — and of its efforts to prevent any incidents likely to disturb relations of good neighbourliness and good understanding between Hungary and Yugoslavia.

SIX CHARGES — SIX ANSWERS

"What, in the face of this attitude, are the charges made by the Yugoslav Government in its request of November 22nd? I may sum them up under six heads.

"1. The Hungarian Government is charged with organising and training on Hungarian territory the Yugoslav *émigrés* for the perpetration of terrorist outrages. To that charge my reply will be brief and categorical. Never has any Hungarian civil or military authority been engaged in training or organising Croat refugees living either at Janka Pusztá or elsewhere.

"2. The second charge is that the Hungarian authorities aided the Yugoslav refugees to procure arms, ammunition and explosives. To that I reply that the Croat refugees never received any arms or ammunition, either at Janka Pusztá or elsewhere, from the Hungarian civil or military authorities, and that they have never had a chance of procuring such arms in Hungary. Again, no Croat *émigré* has ever been able to procure explosives in Hungary by legal means.

"3. The third charge is that Hungary afforded the Yugoslav *émigrés* material assistance. That is entirely baseless. The Hungarian civil and military authorities have never supplied the Croat *émigrés* with any material resources. Apart from a general accusation, the Yugoslav memorandum contains no concrete evidence of any kind concerning these imaginary subsidies. It is not, therefore, possible for me to consider such charges in detail.

"I would emphasise the point that the accusation regarding the silver coins said to have been struck by the Hungarian State Mint for the members of the Ustaša is a fantastic invention.

"4. The Hungarian authorities are accused of having issued passports to the Yugoslav terrorists. In this connection, I am in a position to state that the official enquiry, opened in Hungary after the Marseilles outrage, has already established decisively that the Croatian refugees did not, and would not have been able to, obtain Hungarian passports lawfully.

"5. The fifth accusation in the Yugoslav request is that, in preparing for and even in perpetrating their terrorist acts, the Yugoslav refugees were in touch with the Hungarian civil and military authorities.

I make the most formal protest against the Yugoslav Government's statements imputing to Hungarian official persons, or Hungarian army officers, any rôle, or even any intention whatsoever which could render them materially or morally responsible either for preparing the outrage, or for any kind of terrorist activity, or for this odious plot, or which could even cast the slightest moral reflection on them.

"6. The Yugoslav Government also claims — this is the sixth accusation — that the question which arises is that of drilling and training professional criminals, and that it is necessary also to consider the facilities and protection afforded to the criminals on Hungarian territory. In this respect, attention should be drawn to the fact that, of the many outrages committed in Yugoslavia during the past five years, the Yugoslav Memorandum mentions only twenty, perpetrated by Croats against the Yugoslav State on Yugoslav territory. In most of these cases, the Yugoslav Government itself does not trace any connection with Hungary, and in the few cases in which they applied to the Hungarian Government, either for information or to request it to take certain measures, the Hungarian Government has never failed to comply with the Yugoslav requests.

"I cannot, nevertheless, pass over in silence the fact that, in some cases in which the Yugoslav Government asked us to take preventive measures, mainly to prevent the unlawful crossing of the frontier by Croat refugees, the Hungarian Government's efforts were hampered by the attitude of the Yugoslav frontier guards, who not only refused to co-operate in any way with the Hungarian authorities, but themselves facilitated the clandestine crossing of the frontier.

"The foregoing clearly shows that the right of asylum accorded by Hungary to the Yugoslav refugees did not exceed the limits of this right as generally understood in all States — namely, that the presence of persons seeking refuge from political persecution should be tolerated. There is no doubt that, after the suppression of the Stamboulinisky peasant movement, there was as much Bulgarian immigration into Yugoslav territory and also Ukrainian immigration into Czechoslovakia as Croatian immigration into Hungary.

HUNGARY'S RESPONSIBILITY

Eckhardt then proceeded to give a summary of the exchange of Notes between Hungary and Yugoslavia between 1931 and November, 1934, emphasising particularly that the Hungarian Government had never failed to communicate to the competent Hungarian authorities the desires of the Yugoslav Government respecting the struggle against the terrorists and to inform Belgrade of the answers of those authorities. In 1931 the Hungarian Government had taken the initiative; whereas the Yugoslav Government had not considered it necessary to meet the wishes of Hungary respecting the placing at the disposal of the Hungarian authorities of the information in the possession of the Yugoslav authorities. After a few observations on the evidence of Mihalus, the Czech confidential agent, to which we shall return later, the Hungarian Delegate continued as follows:

"In short, the Yugoslav Government's communication which followed the submission of the Note dated November 22nd from M. Yevtitch, Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs, summarises, in its Chapter X, the alleged responsibility of the Hungarian authorities for terrorist action directed against Yugoslavia in the form of three points:

"1. The choice of the criminals (it is alleged) was made on Hungarian territory from among terrorists long and carefully trained in special camps for the perpetration of acts of this nature.

"It is, however, irrefutably proved that the Marseilles crime was not organised in Hungary and that the assassin, Vlado Georgiejev, has never been in Hungary and has not had any relations with Hungary. It is also an indisputable and undoubted fact that the crime was not hatched in Hungary and that no preparatory act in connection with the crime was accomplished in Hungary even by the regicide's accomplices. On the contrary, it should be remembered that the criminal act was prepared by a secret terrorist association existing in Yugoslavia and that the conception, preparation and consummation of the assassination occurred outside Hungary. King Alexander was, indeed, as far as we know, sentenced to death by the resolution of the International Organisation of Croat Refugees — a resolution adopted outside the frontiers of Hungary. The Croat newspaper *Nezavisna Hrvatska Drzava* published the whole text, and a little later the newspaper *La Macédoine* did the same. On the strength of this news, the whole Press throughout the world commented on the sentence. At several Croat meetings held in America, the King's death was announced. Subsequently, the International Organisation of Croat Refugees instructed the Ustaša to carry out this decision.

"It follows, therefore, from what I have just said, that Hungary was the scene of neither the conception, nor the preparation, nor the execution of the crime, and that, as no act connected with the Marseilles crime was committed in her territory, she has not the slightest responsibility for this crime.

"2. The second point, from which the Yugoslav Memorandum endeavours to deduce Hungary's responsibility, may be summed up in the affirmation that the criminals were allowed freely to leave Hungarian territory, in possession of Hungarian passports.

"I have already had occasion to mention the steps taken by the Hungarian Government to evacuate the farm of Janka Pusztá and also to cause the Croat *émigrés* to leave Hungarian territory. In taking these steps, the Hungarian Government desired to prove that, in view of the results to which the Belgrade negotiations of July last had led, it was actuated by the most cordial spirit of conciliation towards Yugoslavia, and that it was acting in accordance with the wishes of the Yugoslav Government itself.

"In fact, the Hungarian Government has always endeavoured to establish neighbourly relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary, and its intentions are the same to-day.

"As far back as 1926, the Hungarian Government

proposed to the then Yugoslav Government the conclusion of a treaty of friendship, conciliation and arbitration between the Kingdoms of Hungary and Yugoslavia. The Hungarian Government's draft contained a clause of non-aggression; the particular article read as follows:

"The Contracting Parties undertake mutually to refrain from attack or invasion and declare that they will in no case resort to war . . ."

"It was on October 20th., 1926, that M. Hory, then Hungarian Minister at Belgrade, handed this draft treaty to the Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Nincic. I regret to have to say that the Hungarian Government's proposal was not favourably received by the Yugoslav Government.

"To revert to the second point from which Yugoslavia endeavours to deduce Hungary's responsibility, I desire to state that it is following on the measures taken by the Hungarian authorities that the three Croat *émigrés*, at present under arrest in France for participation in the Marseilles outrage, left Hungary with the other political *émigrés*. With regard to passports, I would merely refer to what I said just now — namely, that the official enquiry opened in Hungary after the Marseilles outrage has already conclusively proved that the Croat *émigrés* did not obtain and could not have obtained Hungarian passports by legal means.

"3. All this shows how unfounded the assertion of the Yugoslav Government is, that the Marseilles crime appeared to be the culmination of the terrorist action inspired and abetted for years on Hungarian territory.

"The truth is the exact contrary, and I feel it my duty to tell you that the Marseilles crime is merely a symptom of that bitter revolutionary frame of mind to which the Yugoslav regime has given birth. It is, therefore, in the domestic circumstances of Yugoslavia that the true causes of that horrible crime are to be sought.

"I may sum up by stating that I deny the unfounded charges brought by the Governments of the Little Entente, and denounce their action as an attack upon Hungary's moral integrity, and a political manoeuvre which I can leave, with a good conscience, to the judgment of the Council of the League.

In most cases recorded in history it has been the Anglo Saxon spirit which has endeavoured to preserve the dignity of justice and to defend the moral order against outrage. And the Danube problem — with the Hungarian question as its focus — is just as much a question of morality and legal order as it is of economics.