

# KOSSUTH'S WAR IN "THE TIMES"

by

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**T**he Hungarian War of Independence of 1848—1849, and first of all the figure of Louis Kossuth, was well known to English public opinion. His first visit to Great Britain in 1851, aroused great enthusiasm from Southampton to Glasgow everywhere.

Hungary was almost an unknown country to the average Englishman until 1848. British travellers had crossed the country, mostly on their way to the East. The descriptions of their journeys were published in more than one book. This however, was too little to reach the general public.

But the "Hungarian War", as "The Times" usually called the struggle of the Hungarians against their Hapsburg oppressors, soon became known to every newspaper reader in England. The Hungarian revolution was not an isolated affair, but a part of the various revolutionary movements and of the awakening national consciousness, meaning a serious threat, moreover a deadly blow to the balance of power set up by the clever, but too rigid and narrow minded policy of Meternich.

The leading British newspapers of the time, like "The Morning Post" or Palmerston's daily paper, "The Globe", all had given detailed accounts of the events in Hungary. But, having an excellent index, it is most convenient to read the contemporary volumes of "The Times", if somebody wishes to know the original reports both of the war itself, and Kossuth's first visit to England in 1851. And, of course, that great British newspaper, one of the proud national institutions of the English people, excelled in impartiality and truthfulness nearly ninety years ago as much as it does to-day.

The first news of the "Hungarian War" were sad, and did not promise much success or hope to the Hungarian cause. Open breach between the Vienna court and the Hungarian Parliament did not follow the first outbursts of revolutionary feeling in the spring till late in the summer of 1848. The tactics of Vienna was to rouse the nationalities against the Budapest Government, the Rumanians in Transylvania, and the Serbs and the Croats in the south. The Croatian general, Jellasich was marching victoriously with his troops towards Budapest in October of the same

year when "The Times" published its first leading article on the Hungarian War, on October 6th. It attacked the narrow-minded and unwise policy of Vienna, handing over the Magyars, that vigorous and magnificent race, to the all-devouring appetite of the Slavs.

Things did not change for the better during the unusually cold winter. Both armies had suffered cruelly. Pickets were found often dead, frozen to the bone in the Siberian weather of the winter nights. Meanwhile the troops of Prince Windischgraetz, the commanding general of the Austrian army, were approaching the capital. Another long leading article in the Dec. 28th number, anticipating the fall of Pest and Buda, which actually followed a few days later, compared the catastrophic defeat of the Hungarians to the battles of Mohács in 1526 and of Győr when Napoleon routed the insurgent army of the Hungarian nobles and gentry in 1815.

The first news of Hungarian successes against the Austrians arrived in London in the first days of March. It was almost unbelievable, and, of course, the official news service of the Austrians simply denied everything for weeks. Towards the end of the month, however, it was clear to everybody that the Austrian army had a series of grave defeats and the successes of the Hungarians were greater than even their friends ever dared to hope. The title of the leading article in the March 3rd number was: "The Hungarian Successes". The article pointed out that the Hungarians showed greater military strength and a braver national spirit than Europe had expected from them. They achieved quite extraordinary and unexpected results which will surely be followed with incalculable political consequences.

Later on we can read many reports of the Hungarian victories. One of the most interesting and most detailed is the description of the battle of Vác, published in the Apr. 14th number of the paper.

The hopes of the Hungarians to regain their liberty were soon shattered. On May 10th we can read the first of the many leading articles on the intervention of the Russians on behalf of Austria. The article reproved Austria, because, after letting the French loose on the Italians who were fighting for their liberty, now she had called upon

the Russians to crush the Hungarians. The Russian intervention against Hungary was now the most interesting subject not only to "The Times", but probably everywhere in Europe.

In its May 20th number the paper published a long and original report of the dethronement of the Hapsburgs, declared by the Hungarian Parliament in Debrecen on Apr. 14th. "The Times" had readily agreed with the Hungarians that for them this was the most natural thing to do. The June 1st number published the report of the reconquest of Buda from the Austrians which took place on May 21st. This time it was evident in England too that the Hungarians had not the slightest chance of victory against the united forces of the Austrians and Russians.

The situation was summed up in the leading article of the July 2nd number. The title of the article was: The Hungarian War. The writer of this article inveighed in unusually strong words against the Austrian government, calling its policy stupid and reckless. It was an unpardonable folly on the part of Austria — we can read in the article — to bring the Russians against the Hungarians, who never were a rebellious mob, but one of the oldest and noblest nations of Europe. On their part it was a rightful and just act, and by no means a rebellion, when they wanted to defend their seven hundred years old constitution.

The Hungarians had shown, not only in this last war, but many times before, that they were the bravest soldiers of Europe. Lastly the writer drew an historical parallel, expressing his opinion that differences between Austrians and Hungarians never ought to have gone further than those between the English and the Scots before the Union.

The final tragedy of the Hungarian army was not long in coming. The date of the surrender at Világos, a small country town, not far from the border of Transylvania, was the 13th of August. The revenge of Austria was bloody and inhumane. The news of the first executions reached London as early as the first days of September. The blackest day was the 6th of October when 13 generals of the Magyar army were executed, shot or hanged, in the fortress of Arad.

Another bloody deed was on the same day the execution of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Louis Batthyány. The news of the execution reached London ten days later. On the following day, Oct. 17th, "The Times" published a long leading article containing the main facts about Count Batthyány's death. The execution of the Hungarian Prime Minister in the opinion not only of "The Times", but of the whole British people was hardly less than a cold blooded murder. Count Batthyány was the very type of a correct constitutional statesman. The standpoint the unfortunate Prime Minister had taken when the mob of Pest had murdered Count Lamberg, an Austrian high official in the first days of the soon suppressed revolutionary movement in the spring of 1848, and also in the matter of the dethronement of the Hapsburg dynasty, was as correct as possible. The main charge the prosecution had brought against

him, viz. that he had recalled the Hungarian regiments garrisoned in the North Italian provinces of the Monarchy, — argued the article of "The Times" — was neither *lesé-majesté*, even less high treason, but the most natural patriotic act of a constitutional and responsible statesman. Lastly the article quoted a few analogical cases in history, concluding that the execution of Count Batthyány was at least such a base and vicious act as had been the execution of Count Egmont by the Duke of Alba.

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Hungary and her tragic fate was soon forgotten. The memory of journalists was not long and lasting, even 90 years ago. English people became interested in other things. Prince Albert was busy to realize the greatest idea of his life: the Great Exhibition which was opened amid great festivities in Kensington Gardens in May, 1851.

In the autumn of the same year a solitary fugitive, as the article of the Encyclopaedia Britannica calls him, Louis Kossuth landed in Southampton. An American man-of-war brought him from Asia Minor, whither he had fled after the capitulation of Világos.

Before his arrival in England he landed for a short time at Marseilles where he received an enthusiastic welcome from the people, but the authorities refused to allow him to cross France.

His ship, the "Madrid" landed at Southampton on the 24th of October. The reporter of "The Times" went on board of the steamer with Mr. Andrews, the Mayor of Southampton, Mr. Cobden, the chief organizer of Kossuth's visit, and Mr. Crosley, the American consul in Southampton.

Kossuth stood bareheaded on the deck on the arrival of the deputation. Mr. Andrews greeted him as "the Champion of Liberty". Kossuth's answer was very short, a few words only, said with embarrassed pathos: Ah! now I feel I am free! I am free when I touch your soil!

The reporter gave a detailed account of the whole scene. He described with unusual vividness. Kossuth's outward appearance: "He stands five feet eight inches in height; his stature is lean and he has a rather delicately built body. His face is oval, with large greyish blue eyes recalling the eyes of O'Connell. His forehead is high and broad with deep wrinkles. His lips are covered with thick mustache, but only when he is not speaking." Lastly the reporter mentioned that the well known portraits of the Hungarian patriot bore very little resemblance to their original. Generally speaking the reporter saw in Kossuth the man of thoughts rather than of acts. His features reminded one more of a theoretical enthusiast than of a great political leader.

For three weeks after his arrival Kossuth was the object of extraordinary enthusiasm, equalled only by that with which Garibaldi was received ten years later. Addresses were presented to him at Southampton, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh. He was officially entertained by the Lord Mayor of London. At each

place he pleaded the cause of his unhappy country.

Speaking English he displayed an eloquence and command of the language scarcely excelled by the greatest orators in their own tongue. The agitation had no immediate effect, but the indignation he aroused against Russian policy had much to do with the strong anti-Russian feeling which made the Crimean War possible (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

The date of his departure for New York was fixed for Nov. 20th. The shipping company offered a free passage to Kossuth, his family, and the few friends who accompanied him on his voyage. The attentive reporter of "The Times" was again on the spot. The evening was dull and chilly, and the sea more than choppy. The prospects for an ocean voyage with the clumsy paddle steamers of the early fifties were anything, but pleasant.

Kossuth was smoking his cigar nervously. He

had not slept the night before. Every feature of his face and the broken light of his wonderful eyes betrayed his great physical and spiritual exhaustion. It was a quarter past nine when the shot of the signal given from the "Humboldt" was heard. The steamer was waiting for her passengers in the Solway, and Kossuth and his travelling companions had to go aboard with a tender.

The "Humboldt" had a difficult voyage and arrived in New York on the 6th of December only. "The Times" published in its Dec. 22th number the article of "The New York Tribune", describing the arrival and the enthusiastic reception of Kossuth.

From the United States he returned to England again, and lived in London as a political exile, for the following eight years. In 1859 he left England for Italy where he remained, mostly in Turin, until his death on the 20th of March 1894. —y—

## P O L I T I C A L M O S A I C

### ORDER IN COUNCIL OF HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT CONCERNING TEACHING CHILDREN BELONGING TO MINORITIES

While in Rumania, Yugoslavia and Czecho-Slovakia the situation of the minorities — and in particular of the Magyar minorities — shows a constant deterioration both legally and in fact, the Order in Council No. 11000/M. E. ex 1935 issued by the Hungarian Government on December 23rd, 1935, is a further proof of the understanding displayed by that Government in respect of the affairs of the linguistic minorities living in Hungary.

The above Order carries into effect the provision contained in § 18 of Order in Council No. 4800/M. E. ex 1923, invalidating Ordinance No. 110,478/VIII./V. K. M. ex 1923 issued by the Hungarian Minister of Education. Under the said § 18 in all State and parish or municipal elementary schools in places where the number of pupils of schooling age belonging to any one linguistic minority is not less than forty or where the persons belonging to the linguistic minority in question represent a majority of the inhabitants, if so desired by the local school or local government authorities or by the parents or guardians respectively of 40 children of schooling age belonging to the linguistic minority, the mother tongue of the respective minority shall be employed either exclusively or in part as the language of instruction in a corresponding number of classes. Ordinance No. 110,478 ex 1923 differentiated three types of schools, — A) those in which the Hungarian language is taught, as an ordinary subject, the language of instruction for all other subjects being the mother tongue of the respective minority; B), those in which the minority language (mother tongue) is employed for grammar, reading, writing, composition, orthography exercises, as also for the teaching of natural science and agricultural knowledge (natural history, physics, economics, husbandry, housekeeping, hygiene), and of

drawing and sewing (embroidery), Hungarian being used for the teaching of geography, Hungarian history and gymnastics (physical training), and Hungarian and the mother tongue for the teaching of arithmetic and singing; C) those in which the minority language (mother tongue) is taught as an ordinary subject, the language of instruction for the other subjects being Hungarian.

By abolishing the differentiation between these three types — the last of which, the C) type, had proved peculiarly objectionable to the minorities —, the new Order in Council has introduced a new system, under which the pupil's mother tongue is to be used as the language of instruction for the teaching of religion and ethics, the mother tongue (grammar, reading and writing exercises, useful knowledge concerning the pupil's home and his native country, composition, singing), arithmetic, natural science and economics (accounting, measures, natural history, chemistry, economics, housekeeping, hygiene, drawing and sewing and embroidery), Hungarian to be used as the language of instruction in Hungarian (language), in subjects of national import (geography, history, civil rights and duties-civics) and in physical training. So Type C) has been abolished.

Another noteworthy innovation is the provision that in Classes IV., V. and VI. the knowledge acquired of geography, history and civics is to be repeated and the pupils examined in their native tongues, the result being that the pupils ultimately receive instruction in their own mother tongues too in all theoretical subjects, excepting naturally the State language.

In addition, the Order in Council contains the provision that in those villages (parishes) too in which the number of pupils belonging to the re-