

B O O K S

Peters, Wolfgang: „Ungarns Kampf um sein Recht“ (Brunnen Verlag, Berlin, 1938: 128 pp.)

The author is a well-known German journalist who is a leading member of the editorial staff of the "Berliner Tageblatt". Last summer he spent a considerable time in Central Europe, the result of this visit appearing in the autumn in the form of the present work, which is extremely interesting and at the time created no small stir. The circumstance that the author made his investigations on the spot enhances the importance of the book; for as a consequence the conclusions drawn by him are based upon the most reliable of all sources — personal experience.

The first part of the work deals with Hungarian history and with the conception of the Holy Crown. We have not often seen a book by a foreigner giving so good and so comprehensive an interpretation of this latter theory. The description of the stirring and stormy past of the Hungarian nation is followed by an account of the depressing present. In the chapter entitled "The Bleeding Frontier" we read the following interesting passage:

"The historical achievement of Magyardom — the creation of a bulwark of defence against the East by the establishment in the Danube Basin of a great State — has on more than one occasion been acknowledged by foreigners too. Even today, at noon, the "Angelus" or midday bell is rung every day in Catholic districts by order of the Pope to commemorate the victory over the Turks achieved by John Hunyadi. Can we take umbrage at the bitterness shown by Hungarians when they remind us that this bell was rung also on the day on which the Trianon Edict was foisted on the Hungarians — the day on which Europe showed her gratitude by robbing Hungary of three-fourths of her territory?"

Very remarkable too is the manner in which the author describes Hungary's minority policy. In his opinion the "nationalities" most seriously hit were those severed from Hungary, who — in the service of foreign interests — were torn by force from

their natural surroundings and incorporated in new formations of an artificial character. Concerning their situation in pre-War Hungary the author writes as follows:

"They had become quite acclimatised and were on good terms with the Magyars. It is an irrefutable fact that in Hungary the Magyars and the Hungarian citizens belonging to other nationalities — above all the Germans — have always lived, and are still living, in a friendly and peaceful symbiosis, and that there is no sign of hatred or dissension as between the several ethnic groups.

"Historical justice demands that we should establish the fact that the Hungarian nationality policy of pre-War days, which in many points was certainly open to exception, has never at any time made any continuous effort to institute forcible oppression, for otherwise the non-Magyar nationalities of Hungary would never have been able to retain their property for centuries practically unchanged. The relation between the Magyars and the other nationalities living in the country has indeed taken a different shape due to the historical development. The non-Magyar nationalities have at all times identified themselves in sentiment with the Hungarian State idea, — with the idea of a strong united power dominating the Danube Valley under Magyar leadership, — i. e. with the sublime political conception to which St. Stephen of Hungary gave a lasting expression and which is symbolised by the theory of the Holy Crown, which despite all differences of opinion in questions of detail has bound them together in a close union."

A considerable part of the book is devoted to the Hungarian soldier and his achievements:

"The Hungarian army of the future must and will be once more strong enough to be able to successfully fulfil its historical mission, the defence of Central Europe on the heights of the Carpathians."

The most important — and the most interesting chapter is, however, that entitled "Slovaks and Ruthenians" which deals with the vital problems of the two peoples concerned. With an objectivity rarely met with Peters describes the sufferings of the Slovak people. Since the days when it was handed over to the Czechs this people's history is an unbroken record of injustices and acts of violence committed by the Prague Government. But even more noteworthy are the declarations made by the author in connection with the Ruthenian question:

"The language conditions prevailing in this district are peculiar in that, while the educated Ruthenians speak Russian, the lower classes have a peculiar dialect of their own. Now the Czechs, for political reasons, have thrown the gates wide open to admit an invasion of the language of Great-Ukraine. This inroad of a foreign idiom is opposed very energetically by the Carpatho-

Russians — first because they realise that this is a menace to their own race, and secondly also because they recognise clearly the danger of the Bolshevik propaganda which is being admitted openly and unimpeded through the channel of this "cultural policy".

As for the future of the Slovak and Ruthenian regions, those regions are not in a position today to bring about an improvement out of their own resources:

"This is true in particular of the Carpatho-Ukrainian region, which cannot possibly exist economically except by intercourse with the Hungarian Lowlands, as also of Slovakia, which is equally dependent economically upon its intercourse with the Danube Basin".

Not much need be added to the words of the author. The conclusions in keeping with justice drawn by him, combined with his acumen, made the book peculiarly worth commending to the attention of all persons anxious to study the Central European — or more particularly the Hungarian — question.

OSZK

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