

DANUBIAN REVIEW

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A REVIEW DEVOTED TO RESEARCH INTO PROBLEMS OF THE
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HUNGARY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

BY
ELEMÉR SZUDY

To administer a State, to govern a country, is perhaps a much more difficult and complicated task today than ever before in history.

In these extraordinary times Hungary, luckily, has a definite aim in view towards which she must progress: the establishment of peace with justice; and the methods and means that she must employ in the work of European reconstruction are clear and obvious: she must remain loyal to her friends and pursue a policy that leaves her free to make her own decisions.

These, in essence, were the principles to which Count Csáky, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, referred in his exposé of 13th April, in which he announced the reasons why Hungary had decided to abandon the League of Nations. This decision did not come as a surprise. Ever since 1920, when Count Paul Teleki, during his first Premiership, was called upon to ratify the Peace Treaty of Trianon, the idea had permanently exercised the succeeding Hungarian Governments, and more than once the Government in office was on the point of adopting this decision and turning its back on Geneva. Had Hungary's policy been dominated by sentiment, this would have taken place long ago; but calm deliberation is at least as important as sentiment in the shaping of a nation's course, and till now reason dictated that we must wait in patience and restraint for the psychological moment. And that that moment had now arrived, that the problem of Hungary's farewell to Geneva had grown ripe for solution, was proved by the fact that the Powers who created the League of Nations, and are consequently prejudiced in its favour, accepted Hungary's decision with under-

standing and resignation. They had to recognize that this gesture on Hungary's part was not merely one of offended dignity, a natural manifestation of national pride demanding satisfaction for two decades of humiliation, but also the logical consequence of Hungary's determination to be free of obligations, to shape her own foreign policy in the future. This was expressed by Count Csáky when he said that Hungary wanted to stand on her own feet, could therefore give no promises to anybody to do this or that or abstain from doing it. And if we reserved the right of free decision where our friends were concerned, it was but logical to refuse to be bound in any direction by a rump League of Nations or those whom it represented.

This was a frank statement, the honest word of an honest nation. And surely nothing else was expected from us by those whose ethical standard is similar to our own. So long as we, as a member of the League, demanded the protection of the several millions of Hungarians living as minorities in the Succession States, the powers in Geneva were either unable or unwilling to listen to us. Now that we have thrown off the fettering bonds of League membership, we stand a much better chance of asserting our wishes. There is a prospect of reaching a friendly understanding with Yugoslavia soon, and Rumania will also be compelled to come to terms with Hungary. On the whole a considerable lessening of the tension between Hungary and Rumania is observable, and it was due mainly to Count Csáky's well-known announcement that Rumania ordered the demobilization of several reserve classes. Hungary has no intention of attacking Rumania, although Rumanian propaganda would fain have the world believe otherwise. It is, however, but natural and legitimate that the lives and prosperity of the two million Hungarians in Transylvania are dear to Hungary and that their protection is one of the main tasks of Hungarian foreign policy, in which we refuse to yield an inch. This naturally involves the principle that we cannot regard the unjust territorial provisions of the Peace Treaties as immutable, particularly as international public opinion recognizes the possibility of change by way of peaceful negotiation.

On 19th April important statements were made in the foreign Affairs debate in the British House of Lords. These statements signify a radical change in the policy pursued in connection with the matter of international politics by the Western Powers. In the course of the debate prominent men in British public life, such as Lord Ponsonby and Lord Cecil, voiced an emphatic demand that Great Britain's new policy should not mean the protection and stabilization of the status quo, but that she should seek and find means of redressing as soon as possible the grave injustices of the Peace Treaties and of repairing the obvious mistakes by peaceful agreement. Amongst other things Lord Cecil very correctly pointed out that any British foreign policy would be wrong that had any aim other than preventing aggression; a policy of that kind would justly be in danger of being accused of trying to stabilize present conditions which in many respects were in need of revision. The noble Lord then said that there was as much need of an organization to ensure a peaceful change as of the organization of collective security. Lord Halifax said that as regards the machinery for peaceful change, no one would agree more wholeheartedly than he did with the noble Viscount that there might be a key, could they but find it successfully, to meet most of their difficulties. But it was a great deal easier to state the objective than it was to find the means of achieving it.

Praiseworthy though the statements made by the noble Lords were, the process described by them as desirable does not, unfortunately, proceed forward so rapidly as the peace of the world would require. At present the Powers are divided into two camps: the camp of the countries representing dynamic forces and that of the static Powers who stubbornly adhere to the past and to the "results" achieved by Versailles. The two opposing parties have not yet been able to find a point of approach that would lead to universal justice and general reparation, and President Roosevelt's message has done nothing to further this desirable end. Mr. Roosevelt's message, namely, was chiefly concerned with preventing an approaching catastrophe and neglected to point out in a precise manner the way to a peaceful and just reconciliation. It would have met with

greater success, had Mr. Roosevelt marked out the path to a solution along the lines of an elimination of the injustices of the Peace Treaties; every State would then have welcomed his message with acclamation.

Count Csáky defined Hungary's attitude in the statement he made to the Stefani Bureau while in Rome. The Foreign Minister recalled the terrible mutilation suffered by Hungary under the Trianon Treaty, wounds that were bleeding still, and in particular declared that we should never be able to forget Wilson's famous 14 points, for all that followed was in fact due to them.

Greater weight and importance was lent to Hungary's decision, the ethical justness of which cannot be questioned, by the circumstances amidst which it was taken. It took place at a time when the Hungarian Premier and his Foreign Minister were the guests of Italy in Rome. The European significance of that visit may be gathered from the comments of the British and French Press, and we may safely say that in importance and content the conversations between the Italian and the Hungarian statesmen went far beyond the mere formalities attending a visit of courtesy.

That the tension of the past twenty years in the Danube Valley has in greater part ceased, is primarily due to Italo-Hungarian co-operation, to the friendly support of the Duce who knew no obstacles and whose support was as operative and effective in Munich as it was in connection with the problem of Ruthenia's restoration to Hungary, and which to Hungary's benefit, led in the regions concerned to the re-establishment of the fundamental principles of justice which Italy, so long and so steadfastly, had demanded on behalf of a friendly nation. All this is of permanent value, and has a traditional perspective, from the point of view of the future reconstruction of Central Europe.

Naturally, for this reconstruction the co-operation of the other Axis Power, of Germany, is also indispensably important. The visit of the Hungarian statesmen to Berlin about a week after their return from Rome is a further proof of this. Coupled with the Duce's revisionist policy the dynamic force of the German Reich was the powerful impetus which created a new situation in the Danube Valley

and made it possible for Hungary to obtain redress for certain of her grievances. For this we owed a debt of gratitude, and the visits to Rome and Berlin were made in payment of that debt. We do not believe that the Western Powers can take this amiss. For the past twenty years we have never ceased to present the justice of our case to them, and of late public opinion in those countries has shown much more understanding than formerly for the problems of Hungary's future. We feel convinced that the interest manifested in Hungary will prove a very useful investment when it comes to the point of a general appeasement, and that the time will come, perhaps in the near future, when what today is merely sympathy will assume a more concrete form. This would be to the interests of all the nations that are sincerely desirous of a just peace. And the fact that today the world seems divided into two hostile camps will not prove an obstacle to just peace, which is the most elementary law of life, for those who are determined to pursue a suprematic policy will at length be compelled to realize that the sound instincts of the peoples are seeking with elementary force for a way out of the present chaos, and this is a process that no wiles of diplomacy will be able to check.

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