

## COUNT CSÁKY'S EXPOSÉ

### FOREIGN MINISTER EXPLAINS WHY HUNGARY LEFT LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Count Stephen Csáky, Hungarian Foreign Minister, has submitted exposés similar in tenor to the Foreign Affairs Committees of both Houses of Parliament. The text of his exposé to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Deputies ran as follows:

"Everyone knows that I have sent a telegram to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations intimating the decision of the Hungarian Government to suspend immediately all co-operation with the League as a political body, and to resign membership as soon as the period of two years' notice stipulated in the Covenant expires. Although it is scarcely necessary to enter into a lengthy explanation of the Government's decision, I think it may prove useful, if only for the purpose of establishing the facts, to examine in retrospect the links between Hungary and the League on the one hand, and, on the other, to outline the circumstances that have been a source of anxiety to almost every Hungarian Government, and which have now led to the decision that we must leave the League. It cannot be denied that from the very outset the League of Nations failed to fulfil the hopes reposed in its activity. The League, (and in particular the forces patent and latent actuating the various departments and grouped around them), has, during all its activity hitherto, been in the service of political trends diametrically opposed to Hungary's aims in the sphere of international politics.

"These forces, which in the 'twenties so cleverly managed to subordinate the real aim of the League of Nations (viz, the maintenance of international peace) to the post-War psychology of the victorious States, and make

the League serve the cult of the status quo created by the Paris Peace Treaties, were just as clever in recent years in exploiting the League as an instrument of propaganda for the so-called "anti-Fascist and anti-National Socialist ideology". Naturally these phenomena gravely affected the universality of the League. From the beginning the United States of America, disappointed, held aloof from the League, and other greater or smaller Powers did not hesitate to turn their backs on it as soon as it was evident that the Geneva institution was incapable of fulfilling its original purpose. Great Britain was the staunchest supporter of the League, yet her Prime Minister frankly stated in the House of Commons that it would be a delusion for the minor States to suppose that the League of Nations would defend their security.

"Again, the League did not take seriously its rôle as protector of the minorities placed under its charge and failed to supervise the enforcement of the Minority Treaties. This is shown by the fact that of the 881 petitions filed up to the middle of 1938, 392 were immediately rejected by the Secretariat because of technical flaws, and of the remaining 489 only 6 have been laid before the Council. (Three of the six treated of Hungarian matters: one dealt with the question of the settlers in the Banate and the other two with that of the so-called "Csik Private Property.")

"The League of Nations was also guilty of gross neglect in connection with the institution of international arbitration. The idea of compulsory arbitration was sabotaged, and the procedure of asking the legal opinion of the Permanent Court of International Arbitration at the Hague was rendered ineffective by the practice of making an application for a legal opinion conditional on the approval of the States concerned. The motion suggesting a change of this procedure submitted by the so-called Oslo Bloc of States (Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland) has gone astray in the labyrinth of Committees. Nor did the League perform its duty in cases where its task as prescribed by international treaty would have been to ensure the undisturbed functioning of an international court of justice. In our case, for instance, influenced by political considerations, the League

neglected to perform its duty of nominating an arbitrator, although, for similar reasons, it hastened to send out a supplementary arbitrator at the request of other States.

"The League of Nations has — to the detriment of Hungary as well as of the rest of the disarmed States — failed to enforce the provisions of the Covenant relating to disarmament. The idea of universal disarmament was sacrificed to the chimera of collective security, and a race in armaments set in which we could not afford to watch with folded arms. Here I may mention that the League of Nations never reached the point of being able to consider impartially the inclusion in the Council, the Secretariat, and various Committees of any of the States regarded with disfavour by the "Geneva ideology". Hungary, for instance, has never been assigned the rôle in these departments to which by virtue of her political and cultural weight she would have been entitled. I have already implied that the most serious obstacle to co-operation between Hungary and the League was of a political nature, and this explains why our contacts were abortive from the very outset."

*The Endeavour of the League to Perpetuate the Injustices of the Peace Treaties.*

"Owing to its preoccupation with Article 10 of the Covenant, as a safeguard of the territorial status quo, and with the idea of security based on sanctions laid down in that Article, the League neglected other provisions of the Covenant — above all Article 19 — calculated to act as a corrective to Article 10, i. e. to the rigidity of the territorial and political status quo, which would have made possible a peaceful change in conditions threatening international peace. The men responsible for Hungary's foreign policy realized from the beginning that Geneva's attitude towards the Covenant and its cardinally erroneous interpretation thereof were an endeavour to petrify by forcible means the situation created by the Peace Treaties. As a result of this endeavour, when the final text of the Covenant was being drafted, and later on in its application, those of its provisions which would have ensured in every field the possibility of peaceful evolution



among the Member States were thrust into the background in favour of the petrification of the status quo. This was classically expressed in 1929 by Count Albert Apponyi at the tenth General Assembly of the League. With prophetic inspiration he predicted the inevitable consequences if the League of Nations continued to adhere to the policy previously pursued.

"There are situations" — said Count Apponyi — "which with the changing times cease to be just, and there are others which never were just. If the League of Nations desires to maintain these situations permanently, it will find itself at variance with the laws of nature. In that case, not only will it cease to serve the lofty aims of peace and justice for which its standard was raised, but it will also expose itself to the danger of being swept away by the forces of nature which progress irresistibly along the path of development marked out for them."

"When, therefore, after the failure to apply sanctions to Italy, the idea of Covenant reform was first broached at an extraordinary Assembly of the League in 1936, Hungary's delegate was not striking out in a new direction when he pointed out that the chief task of reform should be to reconcile the provisions of the Covenant aiming at a maintenance of the status quo with those the purpose of which was to preserve international peace by the application of preventive measures (appeasement, arbitration, treaty revision, etc.). The principle underlying the speeches of the Hungarian delegates to the General Assemblies of 1936 and 1937 was the same. In their speeches they set forth more particularly the technical means by which the desired end might be achieved, namely, a more effective and practical application of three Articles: Article 11, dealing with appeasement; Article 13, providing for arbitration and, above all, Article 19, which allows of a peaceful revision of the Peace Treaties.

"Great as was the Hungarian Government's satisfaction to see its point of view shared by other well-meaning States, in particular by the Oslo Bloc, the aims of which were similar to its own, it was keenly disappointed to perceive that there was no hope of inducing the Committee of Twenty-eight delegated to draft the proposed revised text of the Covenant

to adopt these useful suggestions. In point of fact the fruitless activity, extending over a period of two years, of that Committee was one of the most lamentable chapters in the history of the League. In this case, too, those latent forces that were always on their guard when it came to a question of the League, in pursuance of its real vocation, ensuring the peaceful development of certain Member States by composing their differences, instead of acting as their advocate, prevented the Committee from doing any successful work.

"Although the Committee delegated rapporteurs to deal with every point at issue, their reports on certain questions — characteristically on Article 19 — were not ready in two years time. And it is probable that even the reports submitted were not gone into by the Committee. In these circumstances it was manifest at the General Assembly in 1938 that the idea of Covenant reform had ended in smoke. It was patent from the speeches delivered in the Assembly that an overwhelming majority of the Member States were unwilling to apply the provisions of the Covenant dealing with sanctions. And now, since in spite of all Hungary's suggestions and warnings, nothing has been done to develop the possibilities of maintaining peace by preventive measures, it would seem that either path is equally closed to the League of Nations.

#### *The Unduly Unilateral Policy of the League.*

"Speaking in the League Council last May Mr. Edwards, Chile's Delegate, described the political spirit of the League as follows: Since its establishment 42 matters of a political nature had been submitted to the League by its Members. Of these only 11 had been dealt with on their merits, but as those 11 referred solely to the liquidation of the War, the League had dealt with them merely as the successor of the Entente Council of Four. As for the remaining 31 cases, some of them had been settled by direct negotiation between the Parties concerned, some had been relegated to other international tribunals, some had led to the countries in question abandoning the League; and the rest — a no mean number — had never been settled at all. The time is over when certain peoples, in order to rise above

the level of subordinate nations, were forced to beg admittance to, or remain members of, a society that was furthering the interests of other, more fortunate, States. Nevertheless it is undoubtedly true that, so long as she was a Member of the League, Hungary was formally bound to fulfil certain international obligations the fulfilment of which the Powers directing the League were fully entitled to demand of her. One cannot avoid feeling that, with certain exceptions, the States belonging to the League are very much alike from a political point of view, and that the appeal, based on some of the paragraphs of the Covenant, likely to be addressed to us would serve an easily predictable aim, which aim would not be in conformity with the fundamental principles of Hungary's foreign policy. I assert that many other small and medium-sized States feel uncomfortable today in the League of Nations, and for the same reasons as we ourselves did, namely, because of the unduly unilateral policy pursued by the League. And I ask you, Gentlemen of the Committee, what could Hungary, acting correctly, have done so long as she was formally bound by law to the League, if the latter, through the medium of its Secretariat, its Council or its General Assembly, had appealed to this country on certain matters of major importance? Is it out of the question to suggest that we might have found ourselves ranged against our own interests and those of our friends, when we might, and should, hold aloof from the dispute. While the tie binding us to the League existed, I for my part should never have dared to refuse to fulfil the implied obligations; for I know that one of the greatest assets of a small or medium-sized nation is its absolute reliability, its faithful performance of promises.

"Who would venture to say that, today of all times, we might not be confronted by a serious dilemma? I am fully conscious of the fact that an attempt is about to be made to build up a new system of security in defence of the present status quo outside the framework of the League of Nations, since to do so within it has not proved practicable. Nor do I forget that some States would fain employ certain departments of the League as stepping-stones for the furtherance of new political aims. In my humble opinion, the most



elementary form of prudence makes it imperative for us, in these times when everything is in a state of flux, to spare no effort to preserve our freedom of action on every side.

"We are determined to stand on our own feet; therefore, for the moment, we can make no promises to do this or that or to refrain from doing this or that. And if we have reserved the right to form our own decisions in the case of our friends, then it is but logical to refuse to be bound in any direction by a rump League of Nations, or rather by those who are the moving power behind it. There was a time when every State so to say feverishly sought allies. But even then we endeavoured to preserve our liberty to form our own decisions. Now it seems as if other countries, too, would gladly free themselves from obligations undertaken long ago, perhaps without a due understanding of what they implied. The path and aims of Hungary's foreign policy are determined by her geographical and ethnographical position, by historical tradition and the carefully weighed forces latent in the Hungarian nation. These aims will be realized when and as our desire for peace and our reason dictate. I would stress the point that our resignation of League membership was due solely to our own initiative and made after prolonged deliberation. It did not ensue because we had given, or wished to give, other pledges, but merely in order to more fully ensure the nation's right of self-determination in the days of struggle to come. This step will perhaps give other nations cause to think whether political co-operation with the League today is not identical with taking sides."

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