

HUNGARIAN-YUGOSLAV CONNECTIONS

BY

IMRE PROKOPY

Visit to Belgrade of Valentine Hóman, Hungarian Minister of Education.

On his way back from Sofia, Valentine Hóman, Minister of Education, broke his journey at Belgrade, where he spent two days — a circumstance which provided an opportunity for a manifestation of the friendship existing between Yugoslavia and Hungary. At the dinner given on February 22nd by the Yugoslav Minister of Education, Mino Krek, a Slovene, the Yugoslav Minister made a speech in which *inter alia* he said that the Yugoslav people had most cordially welcomed the agreement concluded between the two countries and that *a rapprochement between the two was inconceivable without a strengthening of the cultural connections*. The two peoples must live in friendship, if only in order to be able to keep aloof from the war and to build up a brighter future for both nations by giving one another reciprocal assistance. In his reply Hóman declared that such a friendly intercourse and co-operation was bound to benefit both nations; for the force of the given geographical and historical circumstances made the peoples of the Danube Basin and the Balkans respectively interdependent... "Our endeavours to further a reciprocal exchange of cultural values have in recent years been crowned with particularly fine results; and for that reason I hope that this initiative will be followed by other measures."

Of extreme interest and particularly worth noting in its bearing on the further development of the cultural co-operation between the two countries, was the statement made by Minister Hóman on February 23rd., on the occasion of his visit to the Belgrade University, to the effect that the Hungarians should acquire a more intimate knowledge of

Yugoslav culture by learning the Yugoslav languages and the Yugoslav *savants* should on their part widen their knowledge of Hungarian culture by learning Hungarian, studies in those languages being carried on for the purpose of making the intellectual co-operation more thorough.

Some Practical Results of the Cultural Co-operation.

It was in keeping with the objects proposed by Minister *Hóman* and in the spirit of the Treaty of Friendship that the concerts, literary and scientific lectures given in the first half of March and arranged for the purpose of enhancing the cultural co-operation in Budapest and Belgrade respectively, were received. This series of cultural manifestations began when the Hungarian Foreign Minister, *M. de Bárdossy*, acting on behalf and in the name of *Dr. Hóman*, Hungarian Minister of Education, presented as a gift to the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, *M. Tsintsar-Markovitch*, who had come to Budapest to ratify the Treaty of Friendship, *de luxe* editions of the *Hungarian translations* of works of *three Yugoslav writers* — the *Serb Zrjanski*, the *Croat Kolar* and the *Slovene Zankar*. A few days later, early in March, *Djurdja Halpar-Leppée*, Member of the Zagreb Opera, scored a great success when she sang in the Budapest Opera. On March 2nd. the concert of the *Zagreb Choral Society "Zvonimir"*, which was founded in 1906, was heartily received by the Budapest public; while on March 3rd. the world-famed alienist *Dr. Ladislav Benedek*, professor in the Budapest University, was enthusiastically received when he lectured before the scientific world of Belgrade. A few days later, on March 9th., the Budapest *Goethe* and *La Fontaine Societies* arranged a joint Yugoslav *matinée*, with *Dr. George Lukács*, a former Minister of Education, in the chair; while on March 11th. the *Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra* gave a concert in the Budapest Opera under the direction of their eminent conductor, *Lovro Matačić*. And finally, on March 8th. in Belgrade and on March 10th. at Ujvidék four Hungarian writers — *John Bókay*, *Joseph Nyirő*, *Lawrence Szabó* and *Zoltán Csuka* — gave recitals from their own works; and in both places they received a

very cordial reception, not only from the public interested in literature, but also from official circles. And the very latest manifestation of this co-operation, which is ever increasing in intensity, was the Serbian translation of the novel "Two Prisoners" by Louis Zilahy published in Belgrade on March 14th.

Minority Affairs.

In the atmosphere cleared by the reactions of the Treaty of Friendship — with the authorities also showing a change for the better in their attitude — the work of organising the *Magyar Cultural Union* is already making very rapid progress. According to the announcement made at the constituent assembly of the *Kula branch* (on March 9th.) by *Gyula Krámer*, President of the Union, so far the work of organising *103 branches* is in full swing, *120 Magyar societies having joined the Union as Members*. Seeing that the organisation of the branches is being carried out on the widest possible folkic basis, every Magyar living in each of the villages or towns being as far as possible induced to become Member of the Union, there is every prospect that before very long the great majority of the Magyars living in the Voivodina will have been incorporated as Members of the *Magyar Cultural Union* and that the great majority of the Magyars living in the Croatian Banate will have been incorporated in the *Magyar Cultural Community* of that region. And that the work of organisation of the Union is being carried on in a spirit of understanding, of open-mindedness and of conciliation, may be seen from the speech made at the Kula meeting referred to above by President Krámer: — "We desire to strengthen our harmonious co-operation with the other nationalities and ethnic groups living here. The Serbs, Magyars and Germans have always lived in peaceful symbiosis in this village; and the Union is anxious to loyally cherish this tradition of two centuries in the future too." This attitude offers a sharp contrast to the way of thinking and manner of acting of those intolerant and malicious nationality elements which quite recently did their best to upset the peaceful symbiosis

of the nationalities by arbitrarily banning Magyar dances and Magyar songs and by economically boycotting the Magyars.

To the great delight of the Magyars of Yugoslavia the organising movement has been joined also by *four villages dating back to the days of the Magyar Conquest of Hungary* situated in the former *County of Szerém — Haraszti* (Hrastin), where the branch of the Union was established already towards the end of February, *Szentlászló* (Laslovo), *Kórógy* and *Magyarrétfalu* (Retfala), — the inhabitants of which speak a "*dialect preserving many valuable and interesting archaisms*" that in the late eighties of last century was made the subject of special study by two eminent Hungarian linguists, *Gabriel Szarvas* and *Joseph Balassa*, while the records of their ancient folk music and their folk-songs were recently collected by *Dr. Louis Kiss*, the famous teacher of music and conductor.

The work of organisation — encouraged by the German example, though on a more modest scale — has already been extended also to the sport formations, the object in view being to ensure that at last it shall be possible *to establish sport clubs containing exclusively Magyar members and functioning under Magyar direction*. For the present, all that has been done is the resolution passed by the conference convened by the *Szabadka* (Subotica) "Sport" Football Club which met on March 9th. and which was attended by representatives of 10 clubs, the said resolution declaring that it was considered necessary that a separate Magyar Cup contest should be organised within the framework of the Serbian Football Association through the agency of a Sports Committee to be established within the Magyar Cultural Union, that the statutes of the *Magyar Cup* should be submitted for approval through the channel of the Serbian Football Association, and that the other sport clubs to be duly established should be called upon to take part.

The influence of the modern age is reflected also in the circumstance that quite recently the *Magyar Women's Charity Guild* at *Óbecse* (Stari beceji) arranged courses for training in the care of children, 48 of those attending the courses having successfully passed their exams. This

circumstance is mentioned as a sign of the changed conditions merely because previously the Magyar national minority had not been allowed to arrange even purely hygienic and social courses of the kind.

The improvement in the situation is shown also by the fact that *His Majesty King Peter II.* himself undertook to stand sponsor to the twelfth child of an Ujvidék commercial traveller, *Louis Mokus*, of Magyar nationality, sending the happy parents by his deputy, Colonel *Franjo Capici*, 2000 dinars in cash, as well as a gold cross with a chain and a gold medal. The Magyars of Yugoslavia received this noble gesture of the king — for which there had not been any precedent in the past — with sincere gratitude.

As the examples cited above show, in the field of cultural and club life the situation of the Magyar minority — as the consequence of a far more understanding policy on the part of the Government — has improved very considerably as compared with the past. But in the *political field and in matters of self-government there are still many legitimate wishes remaining unfulfilled*; and in this respect the official circles have not yet got beyond the making of promises. In the Danube Banate, for instance, at the moment *the Magyars have only 2 representatives on the Banate Council*, a body containing 48 officially appointed Members ("Napló", March 1st.), though their quota of the population (which according to the official statistics is 18—29%) would entitle them to not less than 16 seats. The slighting and remarkably demonstrative treatment meted out to the Magyars when organising the local government bodies is referred to also by the "Zentai Híradó"; for *the number of seats on the officially appointed representative council of the town of Zenta allotted to the Magyars was only 16*, though the quota of the population claimed by the Magyars there (87—90%) would entitle them to at least 39 seats. This grievance is further aggravated by the circumstance that these 16 town councillors too were appointed, not on the recommendation of the local Magyar organisations, but by nomination of the authorities, the result being that these councillors cannot be regarded either as the true representatives of one or other of the classes of society or branches

of occupation or indeed of the Magyar inhabitants as a whole.

There is an exactly similar situation in evidence also *in the field of education*, — a subject to which we shall return and with which we propose to deal exhaustively in our next number. For the moment, taking the words partly as an encouraging foretoken, we shall confine ourselves to noting the statement made in the middle of February by *Dr. Branko Kijurina*, Ban of the Danube Banate, on the occasion of his visit to the villages in the hundreds of Kula, Hodság and Apatin, — to the effect that the Government had decided "to grant without reserve to the ethnic groups all the rights due to them, doing so in order to ensure the peaceful symbiosis of the nationality in question and the Slavs." We trust that this promise will soon become a fact. —

OSZK

Nemzeti Széchenyi Könyvtár