

# WHAT THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT IS DOING IN THE REINCORPORATED DISTRICTS OF SOUTHERN HUNGARY

BY

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Scarcely had the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary returned to the mother country, — scarcely had the wounds healed which the senseless war of unorganised resistance had inflicted upon this ancient Hungarian territory —, when the Hungarian Government began the work of making the inhabitants of this region forget all the bad memories of twenty years of foreign occupation and of curing the wounds resulting from the few days' hostilities. For twenty years this land — perhaps the richest soil in Europe — was a neglected colony. For twenty years the Yugoslavs insisted upon regarding this land as nothing but a colony yielding grain which was to provide the aggrandised country with food; but they did not bother their heads very much about the life of the people living in this region — about its way of thinking, its development or its manner of worshipping its God. During the last twenty years the world has heard nothing but complaints from this rich region. *The Magyar schools were closed, the Magyar priests degraded to the level of Balkanism.* Strangers visiting the districts of Southern Hungary which had just been liberated, saw neglected towns and dirty streets and (only a short time has passed since the re-incorporation) may catch sight of the masses of unemployed whom even this wealthy land was unable to provide for owing to the bad organisation and the policy of oppression with the help of which the Serbians desired to keep in the position of subordinate colonists many hundreds of thousands inhabiting this region.

Hardly had the Hungarian National Defence soldiers crossed the old frontier — the bullets of the Tchetniks were still whistling above their heads —, when *the work of organisation was begun for the purpose of raising the standard of life of the people of this region and of bringing back the wellbeing which had been the lot of the inhabitants for a thousand years.* The first thing to be done was to organise public administration and the postal service and to restore the public order which had been subverted when the Serbian army was mobilised. The Government also adjusted the most important problem of economic life — the question of means of payment. In the weeks immediately following the re-incorporation the *National Bank of Hungary* paid out some 200,000,000 pengő in exchange for dinar notes which had become practically worthless. The banks of the southern districts were connected up with the economic life of the mother country; the bad or neglected roads were repaired, as were also the means of communication: for one of the most important factors of a country's prosperity — and this is particularly true of this expressly agrarian region — is a healthy credit system and good roads. Now the building of roads and bridges is being effected at a very rapid rate; and there is every hope that in a very short time communications will rise to the level of the mother country.

For twenty years the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary were the granary of the unproductive parts of the Yugoslav Kingdom. Now, as a result of the war, this region has lost those markets, it having therefore become necessary to organize the marketing of its produce in the mother country. Today fruit and vegetables from the "Bácska" district may be seen in the markets of all towns in the mother country; and every day innumerable wagon-loads of agrarian produce leave the southern region to find purchasers in the re-discovered natural markets.

The spring of this year wrought great havoc everywhere in the valley of the Danube; and many thousand yokes of land were devastated by inundations and by subsoil water. In their anxiety to safeguard their territories in Old Serbia the Serbians failed to drain off the subsoil water dangerously making headway in the "Bácska" district. *The Hungarian*

*Government made it its first business to cut a channel fifty kilometres long to carry away the subsoil water, the result being that several thousand yokes of land were saved from the devastation of the water. But, apart from draining off the subsoil water for the purpose of removing the obstacles in the way of production, the Government also — in order to ensure the work of cultivation — settled agricultural labourers to replace the *dobrovolyatz* inhabitants who had never taken root in this region and had fled. The definitive adjustment of the land question is now in progress. The small estates which for lack of the necessary capital are unable to carry on intensive agriculture are being provided with credit by the Government through the medium of the re-organised banks operating there. To the small peasants who were excluded from the benefits of the Yugoslav land reform the Government desires to allot 150,000 yokes. This distribution of land has already begun. In addition the persons repatriated from Old Serbia are to receive 53,000 yokes.*

*Notwithstanding its great richness the land of the "Bácska" is unable to provide for the surplus number of agrarian labourers, so that the superfluous hands can only earn a living in industrial establishments. The Serbians transferred the industrial establishments of Southern Hungary to Old Serbia, the object in view being to compel the inhabitants of the former region to emigrate and thereby hasten the serbisation of this ancient Hungarian territory, where the great majority of the inhabitants are still Magyars. The Hungarian Government is greatly concerned to re-create these industrial establishments, partly in order to give the superfluous hands a means of earning their living, partly to enable the region so rich in agrarian products to itself provide for the industrial manufacture of those products.*

In the field of social and workers protection the workers insurance measures and the social insurance system neglected by the Serbians have been readjusted. Wages have been adjusted and prices fixed. The Government has endeavoured to create opportunities of labour, not only for the persons living there, but also for the some 500 Magyar families repatriated from Belgrade. This action for the placing of labour has been so successful that today it may be said that



there are no unemployed in the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary. In the field of social policy great importance attaches also to the measures taken by Government for the relief of the poor and disabled, as also to the numerous actions for providing summer holidays. Today there is hardly any poor child in Southern Hungary in need of such holidays who has not felt the blessings of this action.

The European war is causing serious difficulties in all countries alike in respect of the supply of raw materials. In Southern Hungary too, as in the mother country, provision had to be made for the fair distribution of imported raw materials in order to prevent any one suffering from a shortage. The supply of fuel has been organised in a manner enabling every person and every undertaking in Southern Hungary to obtain the fuel required. The Government is providing also for the procural of the raw materials (blue vitriol, artificial fertilisers, etc.) indispensable to agrarian cultivation.

The Government has its work cut out to provide for the repair and improvement of the towns in Southern Hungary neglected during the days of Serbian rule. In the districts of Southern Hungary now re-incorporated no care was bestowed on any of the Magyar towns with the single exception of Ujvidék. The town of *Szabadka*, for instance, — a town with 100,000 inhabitants — was thrust so completely into the background during the days of Serbian occupation that it looks for all the world like a neglected village. The Hungarian Government has already begun the work of repair and improvement of the towns, not only at *Szabadka*, but also at *Zenta* and *Zombor*. The streets are being paved and the towns provided with drainage, actions being also organised for the building of modern houses.

In the economic field the Hungarian Government has begun the work of re-organising the life of Southern Hungary with such intensity — being supported in this work very effectively by the inhabitants themselves —, that the old wellbeing of the "Bácska" district so familiar to us from the happy days prior to the first Great War will very shortly return.

*In the field of cultural policy the social organisations re-opened their activity immediately after the reincorporation. The re-activation of the ex-servicemen's union and of the Baross Association are signs of the revival of the organisation of social life in the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary. Hungarian theatres are opening and very successfully spreading Magyar culture again. Theatrical companies from the mother country are touring the provinces, where the inhabitants welcome them with the most cordial affection. Writers, artists and musicians from the mother country are appearing before Southern Hungary audiences to show what the dismembered mother country has been able to create during the past twenty years.*

School matters are also being adjusted, and from September on (the beginning of the new school-year) re-organised schools will welcome pupils in order to once more raise the culture of the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary to the level on which it stood prior to the days of Serbian occupation. *The Hungarian Government is hastening with all the means at its disposal to the assistance of the re-incorporated districts of Southern Hungary, that life in that region may once more flourish and that region become the flower-garden, not of Hungary only, but of the whole Continent of Europe.*