

BOOKS

LUCIANO BERRA'S TRIBUTE TO THE REGENT OF HUNGARY

Luciano *Berra*, the well-known Italian publicist whose work "Victors and Vanquished" has attracted so much attention, has written a new book entitled "Armed Peace". This volume sets forth in an extremely interesting and objective manner the causes leading to the Great War of 1914—1918, what preceded it, and the serious faults of the Paris Peace Treaties.

The author of this book, written with great erudition and a profound grasp of the complicated situation, never mentions Hungary except with the warmest sympathy. In particular the pages devoted to the arresting personality of *Admiral Horthy* are of special interest.

The history of post-war Hungary — says the author — *is dominated by the figure of Nicholas Horthy, who personifies the will to re-birth of the Hungarian nation, which firmly adheres to the age-old traditions of the Magyar soil.* On 16th. November, 1919, Admiral Horthy marched into Budapest at the head of the White Army recruited in *Szeged* to deliver Hungary from Bolshevism and restore national dignity. With his advent the continuity of Hungary's thousand years of history, which had been temporarily broken, was also restored.

For twenty years Hungary lived through days of suffering, not days of joy. *When Admiral Horthy began to rule, he found a country ruined by the war and Béla Kun's Bolshevism. Hungary, surrounded by armed forces prepared to attack her, was nothing but a heap of ruins.* The strength of the nation had been paralyzed by tragic poverty; spiritual apathy prevented an energetic defence of the nation's most sacred rights against the rapacity and attacks of aliens. Everything had to be re-constructed and Hungary had to begin her life anew.

With the inspiration of genius the Regent understood that Hungary must create this new life herself, that she must find

the strength to do so in herself and the energy to cope with the tasks of the future.

Unhesitatingly he recognized two truths which on the surface seem to contradict one other, but which, reconciled, enabled the Regent to restore the disturbed equilibrium of the country. *The one was that Hungary must remain a kingdom, as created by St. Stephen, who laid down the foundations of Hungarian national life. The other was that the nation must refrain from any hazardous step, for any undertaking of that nature would unavoidably plunge the country into total ruin.* He agreed to become the ruler of a country which, though lacking a king, had not ceased to be a monarchy.

Hungary had been practically reduced to a state of bondage by Trianon. Somehow therefore international contacts had to be established that would serve as protection and aid in the strangled situation of the country. And in this respect, too. Nicholas Horthy acted according to the teachings of history.

The great secret of his success was that he lost no time in idle efforts to re-capture the past, but drew from it inspiration and guidance for the future. Though policy is never a matter of sentiment, it is impossible not to realize that the new friendship between Italy and Hungary bears the stamp of past events. It cannot be denied that even political alliances based merely on contracts have a certain force, but those that rest not only on formal treaties, but also on spiritual and ethical realities, are able to weather, surely and safely, every storm.

Two decades of history witness to the fact that Admiral Horthy's political vision has been of as great service to the interests of European civilization as it has been to his own country. *Hungary fought for her own independence, as other nations do, but she also fought to defend Western civilization.* Admiral Horthy's first action which led to the historical march from Szeged to Budapest, was undertaken on behalf of that civilization. Hungary saved herself, *but she also saved Europe from the dangerous contagions of Bolshevism.*

Special mention can hardly be avoided of the equilibrium and wisdom with which Admiral Horthy — aided by men of marked intelligence and broad vision — has shaped the policy of his country during the past trying years. *Under his guidance Hungary, without surrendering a jot of her pride, steadily re-*

trained from any hazardous undertaking, withstanding all lures and temptations. A thousand-year-old country can afford to be patient, secure in the knowledge that it need not fear being thrust aside by the lapse of time. Experience teaches that historical justice may be tardy, but it will not fail. Countries without a historical past may easily grow impatient, or allow themselves to be led astray by false pride, and thus find themselves in a very critical position, but the people the edifice of whose national life is built on the rock of its traditions, will act differently.

The valuable work done by Admiral Horthy and his immediate collaborators was characterized by adherence to two guiding principles: *on the one hand a firm determination to ensure historical continuity, on the other a real understanding of the problems — internal and foreign — of Hungarian national life.*

In the treaty of friendship signed in Rome on 5th. April 1927 by the then Hungarian Premier, Count Bethlen, are laid down the principles of the intimate links between Hungary and Italy, principles that served as a model for a similar treaty between Budapest and Berlin. We may say that the understanding between Hungary and Italy began in the years immediately following the Great War, to grow stronger as time passed. After the Peace of Trianon the Papal See and the Italian Government were the first to recognize Hungary officially. Since that time Hungary's policy has progressed in an absolutely straight direction along the line of co-operation with Italy.

As something of particular importance Luciano Berra points out that, although in the sphere of internal affairs there is not always complete agreement in Hungary's politics, *in foreign affairs and so far as the question of Hungary's major problems is concerned, national unity is perfect.*

George Lukács.