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"MAGYARISATION BY FORCE"*

by

Francis Herczeg

Dr. Demeter Kirilovitch, professor in the University of Belgrade, has published — at Ujvidék — a book entitled "Magyarisation in Pre-War Hungary". The writer admits that he was inspired to write the book by the revisionist movement in Hungary. He would like to challenge the movement himself — he says — and therefore undertakes to prove the thesis that the Hungarian Governments of pre-War days "suppressed and rendered impossible the culture of the non-Magyar nationalities to an extent so far without a parallel in any civilised State in the world".

Though we consider it futile today — when an epidemic of political cholera is devastating the Danube Valley — to treat of the pimple alleged to have disfigured the nose of a long-departed acquaintance, nevertheless, seeing that from his thesis Dr. Kirilovitch draws certain conclusions relative to the idea of revision, we cannot afford to pass the book over in silence.

The proofs submitted to the tribunal of public opinion by the writer are by no means re-assuring in character, for they are the speeches of politicians of Serb nationality delivered long ago in the Hungarian Houses of Deputies and the articles of journalists of Serb nationality living in Hungary. The witnesses cannot be described as being unbiassed, — not even Oscar Jászi, also cited by the book, seeing that he has ceased to be a Hungarian and has been disowned by his former compatriots. It is not quite clear what effects the writer expects these bits of "evidence" to produce; but when we read them we could not help saying with a sigh of relief: — "Heavens, how freely people in pre-War Hungary must have been able to express their opinions if it was possible to speak and say such things!!"

For, had Polit and Miletitch been Croatians and had spoken in that spirit in the Belgrade Skupstina, most likely they would have met the fate of Radic and his fellows. And what about their papers, the "Zastava" and the "Branik"?! When Magyar infant schools were set up in South Hungary, this

is what the "Zastava" wrote: — "During fairs the parents are compelled to protect their children against wandering gypsies; now they have to protect them against the authorities. Far better that they should play in the dust and remain ignorant than that they should acquire fundamental knowledge in Magyar!!" It is true, indeed, that for writing this article the author was sentenced to eight days' confinement (a penalty still touching the heart of Dr. Kirilovitch); but the "Zastava" was able to continue writing and agitating undisturbed: and it is probably still alive. But I wonder whether the Belgrade professor has ever thought what would be the fate of the Magyar journalist and Magyar paper in the Vojvodina that presumed to criticise the educational policy of the Yugoslav Government in such a tone?

The book numbering 150 pages has only one really palpable charge to bring against the educational policy of the Hungary of pre-War days, — viz. that the teaching of Magyar was made compulsory in the "nationality" schools. Let there be no mistake about it: not that the Hungarians magyarised these schools; only that a place was claimed also for the State language in the syllabus drafted in a foreign tongue. The writer bitterly complains that "under the 1879 Education Act the Magyar language was made an obligatory subject also in those schools in which it had previously not been taught, while no one could be a teacher in those schools who had not qualified as teacher of the Magyar language". And with a posthumous complaint of the kind the writer would fain arouse the conscience of humanity in a period when every State in Europe with a medley of tongues most energetically insists upon the teaching of the State language.

The writer is exasperated by the tone in which Kálmán Tisza, then Prime Minister of Hungary, spoke in justification of this measure as against the attacks of Polit, a Deputy of Serb nationality. What Tisza said was: — "Since we are living in Hungary, whether the honourable Member likes it or not, — and since in Hungary there can only be one official language, the Magyar —, every citizen must be afforded an opportunity to acquire a knowledge of that language already in the elementary school". — And, in God's name, what else could he have said?!

Dr. Kirilovitch establishes the fact that at the period in question there were 3343 schools in the country in which the language of instruction was

* Foreign Minister Titulescu of Roumania, when he arrived in Pozsony in order to confer with Foreign Minister Benes of Czecho-Slovakia, on March 27th replied to one of the greetings about the "suppression he was subject to in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy". The above article which was written by Francis Herczeg, the great Hungarian writer and Associate President of the Hungarian Academy of Science, before the Titulescu interview, bears of special significance on the matter.

not Magyar. And he admits that in the Serbian denominational schools — "which were saved at the cost of great sacrifices" — the children were brought up in a "national" spirit (i. e. in a Serbian national and anti-Magyar spirit). So this is the oppression so far unparalleled in any civilised State in the world!!

Strange must be the structure of the brain of a professor of history who when writing such things down does not for a single moment think of the war of extermination waged by the Belgrade Government against the Magyar schools and other cultural institutions in the South. How true of him what the Saviour said to the Pharisees: — "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!" Our writer would swallow even the biggest dromedary without blinking, provided it were only bred by the Yugoslav Ministry of Education.

While engaged in "showing up" the injustices committed by the Hungarian Government, he says: — "It was the conviction of the Serbs that no people can preserve its national consciousness unless it lives in an independent political and administrative territory where it controls its own destiny. That is why they desired that Hungary should be a federative State, or — if that was not feasible — that sheriffships should be created in the districts inhabited by minorities and be ordered to suit the wishes of the non-Magyar nationalities".

That the conservative Hungarian Kingdom was not in any hurry to effect so far-reaching a transformation of its ancient Constitution merely to

please the Serbian immigrants, is quite comprehensible in the light of folk-psychology. But in any case the problem has long been out-of-date. On the other hand, however, there is nothing out-of-date about asking Dr. Kirilovitch what he has to say to the new Yugoslav State fighting against the idea of a federative State by the employment of a dictatorship, of State Protection Acts and of summary tribunals, — though a federative State would surely be so logical and so beneficial an arrangement in the case of a country composed of nine different nationalities? Would not Dr. Kirilovitch be merely doing his duty as a patriot if he were to write another book to propagate the idea of the establishment of Magyar and Swabian sheriffships in the South (in the districts of what was formerly Southern Hungary) to be ordered to suit the wishes of the respective minorities?

We do not expect any answer; for we know that peoples possessing a superheated national feeling are liable to see themselves only and are not inclined to take cognizance of the existence of other peoples. We know also that even professors of history who abandon themselves to politics forget the lessons of history. We should however be delighted if Dr. Kirilovitch's book achieved universal popularity, for its data — collected by the author at the cost of enormous labour and displaying at least as much malice-serve as a veritable certificate of good conduct on the part of pre-War Hungary, — a circumstance of which we might well be proud if we were inclined to be vain.

THE BROKEN CHESSBOARD

by

Ladislav Lakatos

No treaties are valid for ever. They come into being, and in time are discarded. Take, for instance, the Treaty of Westphalia, perhaps the greatest masterpiece of diplomacy known in modern times, which in 1648 concluded the Thirty Years' War and which is generally considered to have laid the foundation upon which Europe's new diplomatic configuration was erected. This treaty bore the brilliant stamp of Cardinal Mazarin, a man of no mean genius, who in it secured the triumph of all that his dead master, Richelieu, had fought and struggled for (better said, got others to fight and struggle for) in the Thirty Years' War. And yet, where are the boundaries of that period? With the exception of a few historians where is the well-educated man or woman who, at a moment's notice, could draw a map of the Europe created by the Peace of Westphalia? Nothing is left of it. As nothing

is left of the Europe created by the Peace of Utrecht which concluded the war of the Spanish Succession.

Treaties are not valid for ever. On the contrary, peace treaties are usually very short-lived. Take, for instance the Peace of Frankfurt, which was concluded in 1871 between the Germany of Bismarck and the third French Republic, and which tore away the whole of Alsace and half of Lotharing from France. The generations before the world war were accustomed to think of that peace treaty as something immutable and fixed like the laws governing the liquidity of water and the speed at which light and sound travel. And yet, forty-three years saw the end of it. — of something so firmly rooted in people's consciousness. The treaty was honoured only for forty-three years, and, let it be said, even at that, it was one of the most durable treaties known in the world's history.