

BOOKS

Czech Propaganda Falsehoods.

The "*Református Élet*" (*Reformed Church Life*), an important Protestant society, has published an interesting pamphlet entitled "*Czechs and Hungarians before the Tribunal of Protestantism.*" The intention of this pamphlet, which has appeared in English, French, German and Dutch, is to open the eyes of international Protestant public opinion to the falsehood of the Czech assertion that with the collapse of the Czecho-Slovak State the last outpost of Protestant democracy in Central Europe has fallen. With the skill of an historian the author marshals a wealth of authentic data to prove how utterly unfounded that thesis is. We are told in the pamphlet that in the last few decades before the Battle of the White Mount, which in 1620 dealt an annihilating blow to Czech independence, Protestantism flourished in Bohemia. In 1609 the Hungarian Protestant Estates, which with the Palatine, George *Thurzó*, as their leader, were fighting against the Turks and also defending Hungary's independence and religious liberty against the Habsburgs, made an alliance with the Austrian and Czech Protestant Estates for the benefit of the latter two and in 1610 forced the monarch to issue decrees guaranteeing religious liberty and religious peace. In those days Hungarian Protestantism was the ally and supporter of Czech Protestantism; in point of fact Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, sent troops to aid the Czechs at the Battle of the White Mount. When, after the defeat of the Czechs, Bohemia lost her independence, the Czech Protestants began to be ruthlessly persecuted by the Habsburgs. In Bohemia the Counter-Reformation was wholly triumphant; the Czech nobility became the most devoted and loyal servants of the Austrian dynasty. Bohemia was swallowed whole by the Habsburg Empire and the leaders of Czech Protestantism were forced to take refuge abroad, chiefly in Hungary. Masaryk's assertion that the Czech Hussites were the fore-runners of Protestantism and that the Hussite movement made the Czechs doughty champions of the Gospel and steeled their souls to resistance against the Germans and the

Habsburgs, is entirely at variance with the teachings of history. Huss was not a religious but a national and social reformer; Protestantism was not the offspring of the Hussite movement; the Czechs did not resist the Habsburgs and the Germans, on the contrary they surrendered on every point to their new masters. When the Hungarian war of independence ended in disaster, the Habsburgs inundated Hungary with a flood of Czech officials, and later on the joint departments of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were overrun by Czechs. It was Masaryk who stimulated the Czechs to new efforts and awoke in them a spirit of national consciousness, but the foundation of their political power was Free Masonry and not Protestantism. It is therefore sheer nonsense to say that the artificial Czecho-Slovak Republic was the last stronghold of Protestantism in Central Europe.

The national minorities persecuted by the Czechs bear witness that the late Republic was not even a bulwark of democracy. Hungarian Protestants feel pity — says the pamphlet — for the Czechs in as far as the loss of their independence is concerned, but protest against the false propaganda that would make out that the Czecho-Slovak Republic was the last bulwark of Protestantism and democracy in Central Europe.

by George Lukács.