

# HISTORIAN OR POLITICIAN?

BY

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Rumania is awakening to a consciousness of the dangers threatening her international position; but without restricting her political aspirations to the domain of realities, as she should after recovering from the intoxication of the power afforded her by the fortunate conjuncture of two decades ago. One symptom of the dramatic heat of the times, an instinctive sense of danger, is the article by Nicholas Jorga, professor and politician, entitled "*What Can Italy Say to Us?*" What we find in this article is no longer the former triumphant optimistic vigour, but rather a voice lamenting over a „*desperate, floundering world*". In the eyes of this world the State and the nation "no longer represent organic development and legal life supported by agreement... but form a shapeless conglomerate with which, just as at the time of the Vienna Award, everything may be done. It may be cut away and linked up, torn off and stuck on, without thought or feeling." "Now, perhaps, they would mutilate Rumania for the benefit of Hungary, in the same Viennese fashion. The object of the meeting between *Ciano and Csáky*" — says Jorga — "seems to have been to pave the way for Italian mediation between the Rumanian people and the Budapest land-owners."

We are bewildered! Dr. Jorga accuses the Vienna Award of soulless "tearing off" and "sticking on" and at the same time very accurately characterizes the *Edict of Trianon* by the compelling force of which a State which formed a well-nigh perfect geographical unit, whose people had been united, not for twenty years, but had been held together by the historical ties of a thousand years, was cut to pieces, truly without thought or feeling, leaving behind a rump

representing no more than one-third of its original area. Jorga jeers at the Vienna Award, which, at least, followed a fundamental principle, — the ethnical boundary —, to which it strictly adhered. The Paris Peace Conference was convened on the basis of the Wilsonian principle that: "peoples and provinces may not be pushed from one sovereignty to another like pawns in a game of chess." And what was the outcome of this Conference? Extensive areas which since time immemorial had been inhabited exclusively by Magyars were ceded to Czechia and Rumania. Professor Jorga has surely read the notes entitled "*My Diary*" of Hunter Miller, the American jurist present at the Conference, the book "*Peacemaking*" by the British diplomat Harold Nicolson, or the papers on the Paris conference written by State Secretary M. Lansing, published two years later. From their observations we may see in all its darkness the technique of this filching of Hungary's territory, of which territory an area of 103.000 sq. kilometres was ceded to Rumania alone, leaving merely 93.000 sq. kilometres to Hungary. *The Supreme Council itself thought this Rumanian greed excessive.* In his diary for 24th January, 1919, Nicolson wrote as follows: "*The Supreme Council solemnly reprimanded the small States for their greed. Their delegates were enjoined to break with their wily custom of arbitrarily occupying the areas they claimed.*" Nothing deterred them from submitting a multitude of false data. Bratianu threw dust in the eyes of the Council by stating that as against the two and a half million Rumanians only one million Magyars lived within the territory in question, and that those were "chiefly officials and soldiers." Lloyd George made a slight protest. As he said, *Rumania was demanding more now than she would have gained through the secret agreement of 1916, if she had not broken it.* Under § 5 of the secret agreement, Rumania pledged herself not to make a separate peace. The members of the Rumanian delegation, however, declared that the signing of the Bucharest peace was not sincere and that they had no intention of adhering to it.

*Who were the experts that advised these Hungarian areas to be "cut off" and ceded to other States?*

These experts were men most of whom had previously not even heard of these areas, and who had no idea of the history, geography or ethnography of the people living there. *When the experts presented the new frontier line of Hungary and Rumania, Lansing was surprised at their not following the ethnographical frontier. Tardieu admitted that 600.000 Magyars were to be ceded to Rumania, while merely 25.000 Rumanians would remain in Hungary. Upon this Lansing indignantly observed: "This frontier demarcation does not seem at all just. It seems that everywhere you have decided against the Hungarians".* It is characteristic that according to the first map drafted by the experts, *Nagykároly, Nagyvárad and Arad were left in Hungary as purely Hungarian towns. But later on, Rumanian cunning and greed devoured these towns also. "The dreadful decisions" — wrote Nicolson — "were entered in the minute book as if nothing but the results of races were being written down... These frontiers were drawn by a sense of hatred, fear and revenge."* In vain did Apponyi demand a plebiscite; *in vain did he beg the Council not to treat the Magyars like a flock of sheep while quoting the sacred principles of right and liberty;* the war-time psychosis ignored his appeal and the defence drafted by the Hungarian delegation was not even vouchsafed a hearing. The territory was simply "torn off and stuck on", as Dr. Jorga would say. *To-day the coarse, external, mechanical and false character of this ruthless procedure, its being based on misleading data, as well as its injustice, is clearly seen by Britain, America, France and Italy. It will be sufficient for me to refer to the Memoirs of Lloyd George, in which that statesmen openly admits that the Czechs and Rumanians, with their false data, completely misled the "Big Four".* On the Rumanian side, the disagreeable force of this fact is already poignantly felt by *Mr. Jorga, who would therefore refer the sinful methods of the Trianon injustice back to the Vienna Award. It sounds as if he were offended with us for Trianon.*

*What is the object of this "Italian mediation?"*

*Mr. Jorga "knows" what Csáky is thinking of. He is thinking of taking legal proceedings for the restoration of Transylvania. "For this minister," — he says — "as well as his chief (Paul Teleki), are both of Transylvania and entertain lasting memories of the past." Should a historian be allowed to reproach Hungarian statesmen for adhering to the past of their nation, for trying to see with the eyes of their ancestors, and for not forgetting the members so violently cut off from the *corpus mysticum* of their nation? A nation becomes a nation chiefly through its consciousness of a common historical past. "Count Csáky is especially aware" — continues the Rumanian historico-politician — "that it was one of his ancestors who put down Michael the Brave with the aid of the Austrians; such a piece of good luck, however, never occurs twice in the same family." If Mr. Jorga should desire to hold up Voivode Michael as the first Rumanian uniting factor of present day Great Rumania, he would be far from the truth. Voivode Michael was not heated by any Rumanian national aspirations; he was merely fishing in the troubled waters of Transylvania. He simply made use of the bitterness of the oppressed Szeklers: the best part of his army, the cavalry, was Szekler, his best commanders were Magyars. He wished to gain the throne of Transylvania, to exploit the Hungarian struggle against oppressing masters. He had no idea of "liberating" his Rumanian brethren. He shared the government with the Hungarian lords who joined him. He did not give the Transylvanian Rumanians the liberty he accorded to the Szeklers who supported him. In his rule there was no sign of a minority movement. He made his propositions to Parliament, and drafted his decrees, in Hungarian. He also negotiated and corresponded in the same language. His political power was based upon the Szeklers, and when the latter, joining Stephen Csáky, deserted him, his power evaporated. According to Jorga, Stephen Csáky overthrew Michael with the aid of "Austrians". But it was Voivode Michael himself that had taken an oath of allegiance to the Emperor Rudolf, and it was in his (the Emperor's) name that he dashed into*

*Transylvania with the immigrant Szeklers who had fled before the Báthory's. It was Voivode Michael himself that was always making agreements with Basta. How can the historian reproach Stephen Csáky with being the ally of Austria, seeing that in 1600, when obliged to flee from Transylvania, it was Michael that paid his respects to the Emperor Rudolf and entreated his aid?*

History as a science must instinctively possess a coefficient of national valuation; the historian, as a son of his nation, however objective he would wish to become by penetrating the souls of other nations, must naturally see the facts of the past in a more or less different colour and would reconstruct them with his own particular spiritual attitude. It often happens that facts speak to us in the same language as that in which we address them. But this elasticity has a certain limit: we cannot deny the stars in the sky, even if they are Hungarian stars.

The idea that the "Budapest landowners" are urging Italian mediation in their own interest, is also incorrect. *Mr. Jorga* has no idea of the fact *that the sentiment of Revision in Hungary is not the particular interest of a feudal social stratum (which does not exist), but is the eternal, universal demand arising from a historical community of one thousand years, the spontaneous demand of great and small, of peasant and landowner, of worker and intellectual, of the entire nation.* The Parliament of Hungary recently discussed the new radical land reform bill, the third since the great national catastrophe. This bill endeavours gradually to level the striking divergences in landownership. Is this the government which *Mr. Jorga* calls "a company of Budapest landowners?"

Not only has he no clear knowledge of the Hungarian past; he has not even a clear or exact knowledge of the present. He knows nothing of the social, economic and historical forces which on the basis of the past swell the soul of the Hungarian nation, and which uniformly and generally inspire the Magyars to every sacrifice.

*He who knows of the twenty years of suffering borne by the Magyars of Transylvania, of their being deprived of natural human rights, of their deliberate impoverishment,*

must really believe Jorga to be cynical when he asks: "*Shall we grant concessions to the Magyar minority? They have their own schools, they have their daily papers, they have all sorts of independent organizations, there is not one Magyar who is imprisoned for being a Hungarian.*" *If the Hungarian minority lives in such idyllic circumstances, why was the minority agreement not incorporated as a fundamental law in the Rumanian Constitution, in pursuance of the pledge given by the Vajda Government on 9th December, 1919, in Paris? The agreement was signed on that date because Wilson declared that the vast areas would only be ceded to them in exchange for the Minority Agreement. If Rumania does not observe this minority agreement, her right to this territory is rendered questionable. As for Rumania, she has always stressed with grave solemnity the sanctity of the peace treaties when it was to her advantage to do so. But she has ignored them whenever they saddled her with obligations concerning the rights of the Hungarians. She has made a multitude of laws which are an absolute defiance of the minority rights established in the Paris treaties, and has done so on the principle that the law of the State takes precedence of international agreements. One of these measures was the law regulating Rumanian citizenship passed in 1924; another is that dealing with public administration passed in 1929, which judged the minority denominations from a quite different standpoint from that employed in regard to the state religion. Equally notorious are the agrarian law, and the elementary education law passed in 1924 in the time of Tatarescu which established the culture zones. Perhaps the Magyar minority ought to be happy because the Rumanian State confiscated the National Theatre at Kolozsvár, the entire property of the Teachers' home, the estates of the Roman Catholic Church of an aggregate area of 23.000 cadastral yokes and the landed property belonging to the Protestant Church totalling over 24.000 cadastral yokes, from which these Churches had maintained their schools, and laid hands on the school buildings of the Piarists, Minorites and Premonstratensians? In Szekler-land, where the quota of the Magyar inhabitants amounts to 90—95%, the Rumanian State has set up Rumanian schools,*

although there are old minority denominational schools there. *In the purely Magyar villages, under the cultural zone law, the Magyar children are being instructed by entirely foreign teachers from the Regat, who do not speak a word of Hungarian, and who receive from the State supplements representing 50% of their salaries and 10 hectares of land per head for their pains. In the 49 towns of Transylvania, chiefly inhabited by Magyars, there were 68.000 Magyar children of schooling age in the year 1932—1933. Of these the Rumanian State allowed no more than 24% (i. e. 16.000), to attend the denominational schools, while for the remaining 52.000, only 11 Magyar schools remained. This means that 50.000 children were obliged to attend Rumanian schools or stay at home.* Rumanian infant schools have been thrust upon the purely Magyar Szekler towns. In Csik county, which is 90% Magyar, 63 State infant schools have been set up in which the infants are tormented by Rumanian teachers who cannot speak a word of Hungarian. *The language of the apprentice schools is Rumanian only, though of the apprentices 40% are Magyar.* According to Professor Jorga the Magyar Minority has "all sorts of independent organizations". Nevertheless, *the 1928 religion law placed the minority churches under police control and supervision* and established in advance the questions they might discuss at their meetings and subjected to State sanction the purely internal affairs of the minority Churches, while the Rumanian Greek Catholic and Greek Oriental religions were not made subject to this restriction.

*The Rumanian politician will not hear of territorial concessions, because, according to Jorga: "our people are in the majority along the frontiers. In the interior the Szeklers alone form a compact block, but this part cannot be territorially separated and does not adjoin Hungary". Are there no Magyars living in a great connected block just across the Hungaro-Rumanian frontier? The demarcation of a frontier line so wantonly unjust from an ethnographical standpoint made a stir even at the peace conference. The ignorance of this excellent Rumanian savant with regard to the past*

of the great Hungarian towns which fell into Rumania's lap, is astounding: "The towns" — he says — "are not Hungarian national creations. Nagyvárad developed out of a Habsburg town, so did Temesvár, while Arad grew out of a Rumanian and a Serb village." The eyes of the historian are dimmed by the spectacles of the politician. Nagyvárad and Temesvár developed out of Habsburg towns? The former, *the proud city of St. László (Ladislás), a town established and converted into an episcopal see in the eleventh century by this great Hungarian King* because the roads to the plains met there! The Árpáds (not the Habsburgs) built a fortress there; the church of the Blessed Virgin holds the remains of four Hungarian kings. From the end of the fourteenth century St. László's equestrian statue, the splendid work of the Kolozsváry brothers, stood there, besides several other royal statues, all of which were taken to Constantinople by the Turks. *Under the Princes of Transylvania it was a purely Magyar city whose school produced Peter Pázmány.* Is Arad not a Hungarian national creation, but a development from a Rumano-Serb village? *Arad is an ancient Hungarian settlement and received its name from Orod, one of St. Stephen's warriors. Béla the Blind held his Parliament there.* It was destroyed by the Turk, and not until the end of the seventeenth century did General Mercy cause Serbs to settle there, making the town one of the centres of the frontier marches. Neither did Temesvár develop out of a "Habsburg fortress", for under the House of Árpád it was the seat of a castellan and it also played a great role under the Anjous and the Hunyadis.

A bizarre mixture of historian and politician emerges from the pathos with which Mr. Jorga declares his passionate attachment to the Italian people in connection with the meeting at Venice. He praises Mussolini as a cautious statesman who gives full consideration to the sentiments of his people: "He will not send Italian aeroplanes to the Carpathians to destroy a Latin people that have remained in the East as Rome's outpost." These words echo the great Rumanian historical fiction, — *the theory of Daco-Roman continuity, — which traces the present political relations and aspirations of the Rumanians back to ancient times and*

*the Middle Ages, though archaeology, history and philology have long ago dispelled the dream based on this imaginary theory.*

*The Rumanians in Dacia-Transylvania are neither ethnically nor territorially the depositaries of Roman continuity.*

The ancient home of the Rumanian herdsman is the Balkan peninsula, and his language and racial connection with the Arumans, Maglenites and Istro-Wallachs still living there is demonstrable. As herdsmen the Rumanians were not bound to one place, but wandered about in nomadic groups. The Romans withdrew their legions from Dacia, leaving no descendants behind. In these legions only the officers were chiefly from Italy, the rank and file being recruited "*ex tota urbe Romana.*" *The Rumanian herdsmen did not begin to filter into Transylvania until after the twelfth century.* Does the Latinity of the Balkan herdsman turn the Rumanian now into the "outpost" of Rome? *Their idea of Roman origin is not a Rumanian popular tradition, but the creation of their humanists and of the patriotic imagination of Greek-Catholic Rumanian priests studying in Rome and dreaming at the foot of Trajan's column, — a fiction now hardened into a national dogma.*

Could anything be more flattering to a people — especially today — than to be related to the great triumphant Italian people, to be the "eastern outpost" of Rome?

As a politician, in the difficult position of his nation, Mr. Jorga superciliously tries to play off this historical fiction against the Hungarians. "Italy" — he says — "has only one role to play, and that is to bring to reality those who have lost their sense of reality, to reprimand, with Roman wisdom, those who never had anything to do with Italy or with our Holy Rome." Hungary has never had any connection with Italy? In what part of the Balkan mountains were the Rumanian herdsmen wandering with their herds *at the beginning of the eleventh century, when St. Gellert and the other Italian priests were spreading with definite success Roman Christian culture among the Magyars, and St. Stephen requested a crown, not from the Emperor of*

*Byzantium, but from the Pope of Rome? Is Pannonhalma not a symbol of the spiritual connection between Italian and Hungarian? The successor of the first Hungarian King was Peter, who had been brought up in Venice. Were not Charles Robert and Louis the Great, those powerful champions of Hungarian culture and policy, Italian Angevins? And is not the renaissance culture of Matthias Hunyadi most closely bound to Italy? What concrete historical connection ever bound the Wallachs to Italy? What turned the *Urbs mundi* into the Holy Rome of the Eastern Orthodox Rumanians?*

And why must this Rome reprimand the Hungarian Foreign Minister in Venice, and train him to a sense of reality? Mr. Jorga always perverts historical reality to suit present-day Rumanian political pretensions; and he also surveys the reality of the present, not through a straight mirror, but through a distorting one whose angle of flexure is for him once again decided by a one-sided policy to the disadvantage of the Hungarians.

Mr. Jorga may rest assured that we do not need to be taught his sense of reality. We ruin no nations; we never interfere with the justice of others, we simply demand what is ours. But there is one more question: Who will protect the Western civilization of Transylvania, if it is subjected to a *new barbarous attack from the East? It is not a mere chance that Voivode Michael's attribute, the Rumanian "viteasul", is the Hungarian word "vitéz" (brave), for the Rumanians had no original word to express that quality. They were obliged to borrow one from the Hungarians. Nevertheless it is just this word that most deservingly unites history and politics.*