

"TRANSYLVANIA PARTITIONED."

BY

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In the October 1941 number of the *American Foreign Affairs* there appeared, from the pen of Professor Philip E. Mosely, of Cornell University, an article entitled "Transylvania Partitioned", which betrays a marked bias in favour of all things Rumanian, and a similarly marked antipathy towards Hungarian aims, claims and hopes. Professor Mosely has, of course, a right to his Rumanian sympathies, even in the present days of the Iron Guard spell. The object of these lines is not to criticize his attitude, but to throw some light on certain of his statements, which may perhaps lend them different interpretation from that conveyed in the article.

To both Magyar and Rumanian nationalists, writes Professor Mosely, Transylvania has long represented the keystone of national integrity, the strategic security and economic well-being of their peoples. This is true only with reservations; there is an enormous difference between the postulates of Hungarian and Rumanian national integrity.

The Hungarian idea of national integrity, that is, the instinctive conviction that Hungary proper and Transylvania belong together, is as old as the Hungarian kingdom and is not restricted to Magyar "nationals", but has been felt by every Hungarian in every age. The history of Transylvania, so far as its Hungarian character is concerned, cannot be broken up into periods of union and separation. From the foundation of the Hungarian State at the end of the ninth century until 1540 Transylvania formed an integral part of the Kingdom; from that year until 1690 the western parts of Hungary were ruled by the Habsburgs and the Danube-Tisza regions by the Turks; in the east the Transylvanian Principality was formed. But this separation was only territorial, and portended no psychological breach in Hungarian

unity. Foreign domination, Habsburg and Turkish, threatened the Hungarian nation, and during this period Transylvania was the bearer of the Hungarian national idea. To serve the interests of the entire Hungarian nation by preserving her own independence and separate existence, — this was the paradoxical aim of Transylvania's policy at this time. Not division but unity, not a permanently separate Transylvanian State, but the salvation of the unified Hungarian nation was the goal. In struggling against both Habsburgs and Turks the Princes of Transylvania were led by no separatist ambitions, but only by the hope of the ultimate reunion of dismembered Hungary, of which Transylvania was a part. This was the mission and the justification of an independent Transylvania.

The country's policy under Habsburg rule between 1690 and 1867 was merely a continuation of this attitude. The unitary conception of the Hungarian nation never suffered a break.

These facts prove that it was not "national ambition", as Professor Mosely puts it, which impelled the Hungarians to seek a reunion between Hungary and Transylvania, but a natural endeavour to restore an integrity of long standing, broken up by events beyond their control. Another error on Professor Mosely's part is his statement that the union was "at last in 1848—49 proclaimed by the revolutionary Hungarian Government." Professor Mosely evidently wishes to lay the union at the door of the revolution; the fact is that it was proclaimed in the early months of 1848, before there was any sign of a revolution, by entirely legal legislations (not by a "government") both in Hungary and in Transylvania, the enactment being sanctioned by King Ferdinand as Act VII, of 1848. That, as a result of the war of liberation against Austria, the Act was not carried into effect at the time, has nothing to do with its legality. Nor was the *de facto* restoration of the unity the outcome of the "political astuteness" of the Hungarians, but the result of the persistence, or "intransigence", if Professor Mosely prefers the term, with which they clung to their historic rights and institutions, among which they counted the union of Hungary and Transylvania.

The Rumanians, as Professor Mosely has to admit,

cannot point to a "long record of political domination over Transylvania"; that domination lasted twenty years in all, beginning in 1920 with the Treaty of Trianon and ending on August 30, 1940, with the Vienna Award.

This brings us to the vexed question of the foundations of the respective Hungarian and Rumanian claims to Transylvania. Professor Mosely writes that "since 1918 the Hungarian claim to Transylvania has perforce rested on historical, geographic, strategic and economic — but not on ethnic — arguments", while that of the Rumanians rests on ethnic grounds — no others are mentioned by Professor Mosely.

This statement is correct except for the suggestion that the ethnic argument was dropped by the Hungarians in 1918; the Hungarian claim never rested on the ethnic argument, because, since the eighteenth century, the Hungarians have always been in a minority in Transylvania.

The Hungarian claim rests, first of all, on the historic fact that ever since the conquest of the country at the end of the ninth century Transylvania was always, uninterruptedly, Hungarian. Her history was made by Hungarians, her culture was evolved by them. Her constitutional structure, which was one of the most peculiar in Europe, was built up on the conception of the first King of Hungary, St. Stephen, and rested on the equality of the three free "nations" in the land: the Magyars as the original occupants of the country, the Székelys as the autochthonous inhabitants descended from Attila's Huns, and the Saxons who had been invited by the Kings of Hungary in the twelfth century to colonize the uninhabited waste lands. In the early centuries when this organizations came into being the Rumanians were nowhere. They made their appearance later as bond serfs and peasants, playing no part in the country's history until the eighteenth century when, under the influence of the nationalistic ebullitions of western peoples, they began to demand first equality, then autonomy, and finally separation.

While the Hungarian claims rested primarily on historical and traditional grounds, those of the Rumanians were based on ethnic arguments.

It is an undeniable fact that the Rumanians were in a

majority in the transferred territories. Professor Mosely writes that in 1910 the percentage of the Rumanian inhabitants in these districts was 55. We do not know whence he took these figures, for the Hungarian census of 1910, the only one available for that year, puts the percentage at 53.81. According to Professor Mosely, this percentage, 55 or 53, increased by 1930 to 57.6 (according to the official Rumanian census of that year to 58.3). These figures show a majority of three or four per cent. on the side of the Rumanians; on this slight majority the Rumanian claims were based, and it was deemed sufficient to justify the transfer of Transylvania from Hungary to Rumania. When, in 1918, the Rumanians, assembled in Gyulafehérvár, declared for the union, they were careful to invite no Magyars or Saxons to the assembly, lest they should be outvoted.

Professor Mosely regards the increase of the Rumanian inhabitants between 1910 and 1930 from 53 per cent. to 57 per cent., and the decrease of the Magyars from 31.8 to 26.7 per cent. (he does not quote the latter figures) as a natural phenomenon. This is a delusion; the decrease in the number of Magyar inhabitants is the result of artificial causes. One of these was the wholesale expulsion of Magyars — approximately about 200,000 — during the first years of the Rumanian domination. Another was that, whereas under Hungarian rule most of the Jews of the country (73 per cent.) declared themselves to be Hungarians of the Jewish faith, the Rumanian administration refused to accept this and forced them to describe themselves as either belonging to a Jewish minority or as Rumanians, notwithstanding the fact that in both cases their native language was Hungarian. A further reason was that a few thousand Magyars, because they happened to be members of one of the two Rumanian Churches, the Greek Orthodox or the Uniate, were registered as being Rumanians by race.

Professor Mosely quotes some statistical figures in connection with another question. „During the long period of Hungarian rule“, he writes, “the Rumanians came to resent with increasing bitterness the numerous barriers placed in the way of their progress, showed a Rumanian literacy of only 27.9 per cent., compared with 59.9 for the Magyars, the Ru-

manians saw in these figures an argument for demanding their national and social emancipation rather than a proof of inherent Magyar superiority".

This is a most curious statement.

It should be known that elementary education in Transylvania was primarily in the hands of the various Churches; the children learned to read and write in the denominational schools. There was nothing to prevent the Rumanian Churches from maintaining elementary schools and attending to the instruction of the children in their fold to the same extent as did the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches. If they failed to do so, it was no one's fault but their own.

The suggestion that the Transylvanian Rumanians demanded secession from Hungary because they hoped to find in the Rumanian Kingdom, in Wallachia and Moldavia, the cultural advantages which they lacked here, is ludicrous on the face of it. The Rumanian population of the old Kingdom was on an even lower cultural level than that of Transylvania.

We may perhaps be allowed to add a few figures to those of Professor Mosely.

In 1910 in the border county of Háromszék 60 per cent. of the Magyar inhabitants and 38.2 per cent. of the Rumanians could read and write; in the adjoining Rumanian county of Buzeu only 18.7 per cent. were in that position. In the Transylvanian county of Brassó 75.3 per cent. of the Magyars, 83.6 of the Saxons and 56.5 of the Rumanians were literate; in Prahova, on the other side of the border, only 23.3. In the Transylvanian county of Hunyad, which had a strong Rumanian majority, 68.8 per cent. of the Magyars and 20.2 of the Rumanians were literate, while in the contiguous Rumanian county of Gorj only 17.6 could read and write. It would seem from these figures that the Transylvanian Rumanians had little cause to reproach the Hungarian administration and but a scanty prospect of having their cultural level raised by transference to the kingdom.

One omission in Professor Mosely's article in connection with the Rumanian claims is significant.

Rumanian historians have for some time past stubbornly upheld a fabulous story according to which the present-day Rumanians are of Roman origin, being descended from those Roman soldiers and civilians who settled in Transylvania in the second and third centuries of the Christian era, when that country was a Roman colony; thus, it has been maintained, they are an autochthonous race in Transylvania and possess a primordial right to the country.

This is the so-called theory of "Daco-Roman continuity".

It was invented at the beginning of the nineteenth century and has been refuted not only by Hungarian but also by French and German historians; the Rumanians have clung to it nevertheless and have used it as a strong argument to support their claim on Transylvania. Not until the union was effected did Rumanian historians decide to drop it. It is not without interest to note that it played no part at the Peace Conference and that Professor Mosely has likewise refrained from mentioning it.

One of the arguments used by the Rumanians at the Peace Conference was the fact that a few weeks after they had proclaimed the union the Saxons of Transylvania had lent it their adherence.

This "small but not unimportant element" in Transylvanian life, the Saxon people, were invited by the Kings of Hungary in the twelfth century to people the deserted regions of the country. They enjoyed an extensive autonomy, the so-called *Universitas Saxonum*, were granted many rights and privileges, and formed one of the three free "nations" of Transylvania. Their sane common sense and high level of culture made them a strong pillar of the Hungarian State, which on its side formed a solid basis for their cultural and historical progress. Bishop Teutsch, wrote "Should Hungary be ruined we should be annihilated, both as a people and a Church; should our country be torn away from Hungary, our history of many centuries would be wiped out as well as our future."

Yet a few weeks after the Rumanian assembly in Gyulafehérvár the Saxons accepted, to quote Professor Mosely's words "with as good grace as possible the change of

sovereignty by voting for union with Rumania." After a few years of Rumanian domination, however, the same Bishop Teutsch wrote as follows:

"... The decision was not easy, because the whole past of the Saxon people and the roots of all their institutions lay in Old Hungary. The annexation of Transylvania by Rumania meant breaking with the Occident and an approach to the Orient, which harbours great dangers for their civilization.

"Nevertheless they could do no other than they did; they had to make the Madgyes declaration, although they knew that they would alienate the Hungarians — and although their souls were filled with anguish. The reasons for their feeling thus were clear: they felt that the change would mean, not the end of Hungarian feudalism and the substitution, in its place, of general freedom and equality, but only the transformation of the former servants into present-day rulers."

This hardly sounds as though the Saxons had been very eager to join the Rumanians in 1919, nor that they were very happy under their rule.

Less precipitate than the Saxons were another German-speaking people of the transferred territories, the Swabians of the Banat. In July 1919, before they had made their declaration of adherence, Herr H. Anwender, who later became a member of the Rumanian Parliament, wrote: „The Swabians are still hesitating, although, after the Saxon and Serb declarations, their continued clinging to Hungary is both hopeless and vain." But this attitude was nature, he added, for of all the minority peoples of Hungary "the Germans had been the least desirous of a shifting of the frontiers."

It was not till August 14, seven months later, that they recognized the annexation of the Banat by Rumania.

This reluctance will be understood the more readily if it is remembered that the Transylvanian Rumanians themselves were not over keen to be attached to the kingdom. Both at the preliminary discussions which took place in Arad and at the Gyulafehérvár Assembly the leaders hesitated for a considerable time before they could decide whether union with a Balkan State such as Rumania was desirable. Their reluctance found expression in the famous Resolution of Gyulafehérvár, which stipulated, not only administrative autonomy for

Transylvania but also the introduction of a "pure democratic government" in Rumania, which was lacking in that country.

It would lead us too far to enumerate all the points in Professor Mosely's article which would be seen in a different light if they were divested of their Rumanophile make-up. But we find it impossible to pass over in silence one remark which we cannot but think was written with the deliberate intention of hurting Hungarian susceptibilities. "The jubilation", writes Professor Mosely, "with which the Hungarians have now accepted the partition of Transylvania and the recovery of half its area makes it clear that they do not take too seriously their own arguments regarding the 'natural unity' of the region, but are delighted to have secured a large territorial increase which ethnic claims alone could not justify."

We said above that the Hungarian claims to Transylvania have never been and are not at present based on ethnic arguments but primarily on historic ones. The recovery of half of Transylvania was received with jubilation because nearly one million Hungarians were freed by it from an odious and oppressive foreign yoke and reattached to their motherland. This could not but be cause for great satisfaction, the outward signs of which Professor Mosely saw and noted. What other feelings and hopes lie buried in our hearts he cannot see. We are in the midst of a terrific struggle, but we have never wished to realize our claims by armed force, and we are content that the first step has been taken in the right direction.

Convinced as we are of the righteousness of our cause, we are prepared to wait, and are not impressed by Professor Mosely's threat that the Vienna Award may prove to have been but a stopgap if Britain wins the war.