

HUNGARY IN THE WORLD WAR

At the end of April, 1917, the king instructed Tisza to make a generous extension of electoral rights; but the Premier, unwilling to undertake such a momentous change, handed in his resignation on May 22nd, leaving immediately for the battlefield as a colonel of the Hussar reserve. His departure from the post in which he first protested against the war, and then, when it started, against unrestricted methods of butchery, while doing his best for the organization of national defense,—could not pass without consequence.

Tisza's successor, the young Morris Esterházy, could stand the terrible strain of the Premier's duties only for a short time, though his efforts were unhampered by the majority party of Tisza. As early as the spring of 1917, a so-called "Democratic Bloc for Electoral Rights" was formed from several groups of the opposition. In it were the group of William Vásonyi, the peace-favoring radicals of Oscar Jászi and the Independence Party of Count Michael Károlyi. Jászi and his friends believed that the Rumanian and other aspirations could be appeased by minority concessions and by the formation of an "Eastern Switzerland". Károlyi's followers, on the other hand, advocated gradual separation from Austria, personal union as against Dualism, and took seriously the idea that with the accentuation of democratic principles, the political sympathies of the Allied Powers might be gained.

Esterházy was followed, without any change in platform, by the aged Wekerle. The latter, like most of his contemporaries, was unable to recognize the grave dangers threatening Hungary and the serious consequences of the war situation. They could not conceive the significance either of the nationality problem or of the South Slav movement. As minister of justice, Vásonyi presented his Bill of Electoral Rights on December 21, 1917, raising the number of voters more than three-fold. The debate on this Bill lasted for months, amid growing nervousness on the part of the public. The grave economic situation and the long and exhausting war began to make their effects felt. To the American ambassador, Penfield, it seemed already in February 1917 that "the economic life in Austria-Hungary is paralyzed. . . ." with "destitution visible everywhere". Socialists organized strikes and street demonstrations. Radical changes in Russia echoed among the tired peoples of the Monarchy. In March 1917, revolution broke out in Russia, to be followed in the autumn by Bolshevism, built upon the ruins of the Tsarist Empire. The Germans, holding the central mechanism of the Central Powers within their hands, were still determined to fight for a victorious peace; but the Monarchy itself had arrived at the uttermost limits of its performing capacity.

During the negotiations carried out by President Wilson of the United States, prompted by a desire to prepare a peace based on new and righteous foundations, the wish to "emancipate" Austria from German domination was in the limelight. Colonel House, confidant of the President, in the spring of 1917 proposed to Lord

Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, that "Great Britain and the United States should stand together for a just peace—a peace fair to all, to the small as well as to the large nations of the world. Great Britain and America, I thought, were great enough to rise above party considerations".¹ House's opinion was that "on a basis of the *status quo ante* the Entente could aid Austria in emancipating herself from Prussia", and likewise he was just as much against the dismemberment of the Monarchy as the American committee sent to Europe to study conditions. "President Wilson", stated Col. House, "had two alternative policies before him. He might proclaim war to death upon the Habsburg Monarchy . . . He would thus bear assistance to a revolution that might end in the Balkanization of the Danube region, but which would, in the meantime, go far to undermine the strength of the Central Powers. Or he might proclaim the right to 'autonomy' of the subject nationalities . . . The peril of splitting up territories economically interdependent, would thus be avoided at the same time that the self-government of the nationalities was assured.—The second alternative was chosen by the President. In common with the leading statesmen of Western Europe, he believed that the political union of the Austro-Hungarian peoples was a necessity, and he seems to have felt that once freed from German domination, the Habsburg Monarchy would prove a beneficial force". As a matter of fact the President said in his ad-

¹*The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, London 1928, Vol. III, p. 41. Other passages are quoted from Vol. I, p. 157, Vol. III, pp. 244-245.

dress to the American Congress on December 4, 1917: "We do not wish in any way to impair or rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire . . . We only desire to see that their affairs are left in their own hands in all matters, great or small". Premier Lloyd George of Great Britain stated in the House of Commons on January 3, 1918, that the break-up of Austria-Hungary was no part of their war aim, yet peace may be insured only through "a genuine self-government on true democratic principles". Of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, dated January 8, 1918, Number 10 is explicit in its statement that "the peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development".

Contrary to this general principle were the nationalist aspirations which the Czechs, Serbs and Rumanians tried to formulate in such a manner that they could be included among the objectives of the war. These plans were worked on since the beginning of the war. At first the Czechs endeavored to establish, under a Russian dynasty, a Bohemian Kingdom, including the northern territories of Hungary. This Czech state would have bordered on Tsarist Russia. According to one of the memoranda submitted to the Allied and Associated Powers, "Russia's wishes and plans" were going to be of "determining influence".

Later, when Russia's luck faded on the battlefields

¹*The Slavonic Review*, London, 1925, pp. 619-20.—R. W. Smedley, *President Masaryk*, *Contemporary Review*, 1930, p. 286.

and the execution of the Russophile plan did not appear feasible, the leading Czech émigrés, Masaryk and Beneš, went over to what was considered popular among the Western democracies and, having dropped the idea of a Monarchy, they contrived to prepare the way for the establishment of a Czechoslovak republic. They formed a National Committee and through their friends, the "experts" on the problems of the Monarchy, they were successful in making an impression on the public opinion and governments of the Allied Powers. This was evident from the reply of January 12, 1917, made to the peace offer of the Central Powers. Since even the highest circles had hardly any definite knowledge about conditions in East-Central Europe, the émigrés furnished the most convenient and even the exclusive source for the necessary historical and political information.

These nationalist aspirations, the nature and development of which in East-Central Europe have been touched upon in previous chapters, had to be presented in a form which seemed to suit the political interests and way of thinking of the Western powers. This was served, primarily, by the argument that only through the fulfilment of these very aspirations could democracy be established in Carpathian Europe. Simplified, this sounds rather naïve now, i.e., while the nationalisms of certain peoples are, *a priori*, in their very nature, "democratic", another nationalism, that of the Hungarians, for instance, was, *a priori*, "feudal". But those English experts who for a number of years had looked upon the social problems of Carpathian Europe from a certain angle, were of the opinion that their task was an easy one, namely, that of choosing between Good and Evil. On the other hand, they were favorably impressed by the conceptions of Masaryk, who presented his doctrines in a way which appealed to their interest.

Another widespread argument tried to prove that only the fulfilment of Czech and other Slav desires could stand in the way of Germanic penetration toward the east, the *Drang nach Osten*. As Ernest Denis wrote, the French intended to "build a Slavic wall from the Baltic to the Adriatic, that will place an invincible barrier against the Germanic thrust". This, he continued, necessitated the formation of a single state by the Czechs and Slovaks, to be joined to the new South Slav state by a corridor through Hungarian territory.¹ The same writer viewed Rumania from a different point of view for the simple reason that said country at the time had not yet joined the Allies. He stated that Transylvania was geographically, too, a part of Hungary and its transfer to Rumania would be merely "changing from one oppressor to another".

Beneš's work demanded the destruction of Austria-Hungary, similarly suggesting the future Czechoslovakia, in alliance with Russian and Greater Serbia as a barrier against German expansion.² According to Beneš, such an arrangement "would complete the encirclement of Germany", though the Western powers steadfastly

repudiated any charge of encirclement laid against them.

No one checked up, of course, as to whether any of these arguments, based on war psychology, were really true principles, on which a lasting, stable and just order was to be built in this part of Europe. All these plans involved Slavs in general, avoiding the mention of deep antagonisms between certain Slavic peoples, like the Russians and Poles, for instance. Since the Monarchy stood in the way of these young nationalistic schemes, they tried hard to convince all concerned that there was no more need for the Monarchy, since they would be able to take its place and fulfil just as well all the rôle played by her in the European Balance of Power. One of the often applied arguments presumed that without destruction of the Monarchy, Germany could not be defeated. The English historian, Seton-Watson, one of the influential experts on the subject, realized that in case the Monarchy disintegrated, Austria would, unavoidably, join Germany. Yet he, too, was of the opinion that "Germany can only be defeated, if we are prepared to back the Slavs".³

Against the Habsburg Monarchy, the "living anachronism", it was not difficult to find arguments. This had already been done by Kossuth with unparalleled conviction and logic a generation before, in England and America as well. Whatever rightful criticism could be used, from a modern point of view, against this state

¹ E. W. Seton-Watson, *Germany, Slav and Magyar*, London, 1916, pp. 174 and 177.

organism, appears even today much more vivid in Kossuth's original words, than in all the later propaganda pamphleteering taken together, which, with a few exceptions, is monotonous repetition. It was not given to Kossuth to place his talents as a statesman and his plans as an émigré at the disposal of a reorganization that follows a world conflict. In Kossuth's time, the Western powers were unwavering in their decision to uphold Austria as an important factor in the European balance, despite the most bitter protests of Hungarians. "Austria" said Lord Palmerston in the Lower House on July 21, 1849, "is a most important element in the balance of European power . . . The political independence and liberties of Europe are bound up, in my opinion, with the maintenance and integrity of Austria as a great European power; and therefore anything which tends by direct or even remote contingency to weaken and to cripple Austria, but still more to reduce her from the position of a first-rate power to that of a secondary state, must be a great calamity to Europe and one which every Englishman ought to deprecate and try to prevent". Thus the Hungarians were forced to accept the inevitable, and, in view of the possibilities, to make a Compromise with Austria in 1867. But not so Kossuth, who never accepted the Compromise and wished to establish a Danubian Federation. Twenty years after the great émigré's death, the First World War broke out, at the end of which the Allied Powers, having forgotten their own arguments of old, and Palmerston's words, consented to the dismemberment of the Monarchy.

² E. Denis, *La Guerre*, Paris, 1915.

³ E. Beneš, *Détachés: l'Autriche-Hongrie*, Paris, 1916. [English ed. London, 1917.]

Colin McEvedy:

THE PENGUIN ATLAS OF MEDIAEVAL HISTORY

RUPERT HART-DAVIS AND CROWELL-COLLIER (U.S.) - PAGE 78:

The Latin speaking Wallachians and Moldavians, inhabiting modern Rumania, are first mentioned at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Their later claim to be descendants of the Roman colonists planted there in the second century A.D. seems tendentious and improbable, for the Romans' withdrawal from Rumania (270) and the appearance of the Vlach states are separated by a millennium in which the country was the property of Slav and nomad and which is devoid of all evidence of Roman survival.

Almost certainly the Vlachs came from the western Balkans and only migrated into Rumania as the nomads abandoned it in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.





30 JUNE, 1988. 1 Pennington Street, London, E19XN

ROMANIAN HORROR STORIES

The Hungarian newspapers are reporting the expulsion by Romania of Hungarian consular officials from the city of Kolozsvár - which according to the Romanian newspapers does not exist. They call it Cluj. The more traditional German newspapers, for their part, still refer to it as Klausenburg.

This trinity of names reflects the ethnic composition of the province of Transylvania. Until 1919 it was one of the "lands of the Crown of St. Stephen", founder of the Kingdom of Hungary. With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the previous year, it was annexed by Romania. Partially recovered by Hungary in alliance with Hitler, it was lost again in 1945.

The majority of the population is Romanian, and their proportion has been increasing as West Germany has gradually brought out, and bought out, the previously large German speaking community. Now the Hungarian minority of almost two million is also under threat, as Romania's "Conductor" (Leader), President Ceausescu, pursues his vision of an ethnically and ideologically "pure" Romania under the hereditary rule of the Ceausescu dynasty. The fictional home of horror stories is full of real ones.

The furious reaction of ordinary Hungarians, with an increasing amount of sympathy from their Government, has turned the policies of the Romanian Government in Transylvania into an international issue. The key issue is the extraordinary plan to demolish up to 8,000 Romanian villages so that the inhabitants can be concentrated into new concrete industrial complexes. If President Ceausescu pushes ahead, almost two thirds of all villages across the whole of Romania will ultimately be affected. Their houses, churches and graveyards will be smashed into the mud by bulldozers. All links with the past will be broken.

Massive concentrations of concrete hutches will be the breeding places for the New Romanian.

That President Ceausescu is deadly serious about this can already be seen in the capitals Bucharest. Vast swathes of the old city, with its unique mixture of Ottoman and European architecture, are being demolished to make way for ceremonial avenues and squares where the regimented masses can demonstrate their love for their Leader before concrete monuments.

In a bow to world opinion, a few famous churches are being moved bodily out of the way, but many others have already been destroyed. The Romanian Orthodox Church's declared approval for this and the other policies of the Romanian State may be explicable in terms of that tradition of subordination to monarchical power. It remains however one of the most shameful instances of dereliction of duty in the history of Orthodox Christianity. The Orthodox bishops may well be rejoicing in the prospect of a Romania purged of "impure" Hungarians and Germans, Catholics, Protestants and Uniates. They may hope to provide the religious element in President Ceausescu's paradise. Much more likely Ceausescu and his kind will continue to treat them with contempt.

The official defenders of the destruction of Bucharest compare it brazenly to the reconstruction of Paris by Napoleon III's Prefect, Hausmann. Hausmann, for all his faults, did express the justified confidence and pride of a dynamic new era, which was bringing many benefits to the world. Ceausescu's Stalinism has been repudiated by every other communist State, with the inglorious exception of Albanians. His shivering, hungry subjects know very well what it has brought to Romania.



**MIGRATIONS OF THE VLACH-RUMANIANS
WITH KNOWN DATES OF THEIR STAYS IN VARIOUS TERRITORIES**

S. Török:
TELEPÜLÉSTÖRTÉNETI TANULMÁNYOK
STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF SETTLEMENTS
(Literary Guild, 1973)