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HUNGARY AND THE FRENCH PEACE SCHEME

by

Count Stephen Bethlen

At present there are two peace schemes lying on the operating table of European diplomacy — that of Germany and that of France; Great Britain having undertaken the office of mediator. When we contrast these two schemes, we are struck by the fact that the German scheme does not embrace all the European problems, confining itself to proposals for the adjustment of the relations between Germany and her neighbours on the West and the East.

The German scheme is therefore not a peace scheme of general application, seeing that its object is exclusively to bring about a state of rest in two critical zones of Europe, proposing to attain that object by having recourse to two distinct methods. It is not concerned with the other storm centres of Europe; and though one or two points in its proposals do certainly exceed the limits referred to above (as for instance in the matter of disarmament), the proposals in question do not claim to solve the questions of peace and security in principle by systematic application of the means proposed to all the States of Europe alike.

The French peace scheme, on the other hand, embraces the whole of Europe, employing the strictest logic in formulating concrete and detailed demands relating to collective security and to the system of sanctions based upon the theoretical attitude which France has adopted in these matters. The object of this scheme is to finally and definitively stabilise the situation prevailing today in Europe — both the general situation and more particularly that prevailing in the Danube Basin; the method employed is based upon the principles of political hegemony already so familiar to us all, though in many respects the new proposals actually expand those principles. Although the French scheme refrains from any positive comment on the military equality of Germany, thus apparently suggesting a tacit acquiescence, it nevertheless declares that the equality of rights proposed in the very first point is compatible with inequality in military matters; that declaration being made with the object of preventing the recurrence of demands similar to that made by Germany by letting down the "safety curtain" of collective sanctions and of a European Commission to be de-

legated by the League of Nations which would serve to control the observance of the treaties already in force.

Indeed, the French scheme goes farther still in this respect, starting an offensive to neutralise what is practically the only clause in an otherwise intolerable treaty of peace offering us some comfort, by proposing onesidedly to confiscate the possibility of revision contained in Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations — doing so by making the application of that Article dependent upon the *unanimous approval* of all Member States (a stipulation not expressed so far at all in Article 19, so that this question was at least an open one) and on the other hand by proposing that it shall be impossible for a period of twenty-five years to submit any request for a revision at all, that being an alteration *in peius* of the treaty of peace. And when I add that the scheme proposes further that in the event of any international authority (*scilicet* the League of Nations, in which France is the decisive factor) ascertaining a breach of any so-called "regional" or disarmament convention, all the Member States should immediately and autonomically put military sanctions into force, I believe that every unbiassed critic must decide that what lies hidden behind this scheme of peace is not the dawning of a better understanding, but on the contrary the open and undisguised intention to provide that the settlement of the German question — in whatever way that may be effected — shall be accompanied by measures providing that the minor allies of France in the Near East shall be enabled to continue to brutalise and terrorise their conquered neighbours. As against Germany these weapons are bound to prove feeble and ineffectual; but they would ensure the supremacy of the Little Entente over Hungary. To show that this is no exaggeration, I would refer my readers to a single instance: had these measures been in force in the days of the "Hirtenberg affair" and had the League of Nations ascertained that Hungary had committed a breach of the military provisions of the peace treaty, — and a relative majority could always be obtained for that purpose —, Hungary would legally too have been subjected to military occupation by the Little

Entente; and what *that* means, the experiences of the Rumanian occupation in 1919 has taught us to understand — an occupation the effects of which it took us ten years to live down.

The fact that the French scheme onesidedly aims at stabilising the domination of the victors over the vanquished, leaving the latter at the same time entirely helpless to defend themselves against breaches of treaties committed by the victor States, is shown even more clearly by the circumstance that, whereas in the case of any breaches of treaty against which the victorious Little Entente may think it necessary to defend itself (though we have never committed such breaches) provision is to be made immediately for the putting into force of sanctions of the most brutal character, not even the slightest protection is guaranteed Hungary or the other defeated States against breaches of treaty such as have already been so often committed by the other side at our expense — breaches of treaty obligations which are therefore not merely theoretical cases, but are on the contrary everyday occurrences.

I would here refer to only a few cases of such treaty-breaches chosen at random. The first instance of this method of treatment was the infringement of the Armistice Agreement committed when — during the Károlyi régime — Hungary was occupied in defiance of that Agreement prior to the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace. Later on Hungary was forced — after the signing of the treaty — to surrender her King as a prisoner to her enemies and to dethrone the dynasty, — that being a grave outrage on the sovereignty of Hungary guaranteed in the Treaty of Trianon. At The Hague the Hungarian Government was forced — in defiance of the terms of the peace treaty — to reduce to 20% of their original value the claims of certain Hungarian nationals due to them under the treaty of Peace, the final decision in respect of which should have rested with an international tribunal; this meaning that the Entente Powers usurped the jurisdiction reserved for the international tribunal to which I have referred.

Daily — hourly — every minute — we hear of breaches of the minority treaties the signature of which by our neighbours was the only compensation offered us for the unprecedented and cruelly unjust territorial claims made against us. Our enemies have infringed — and are still infringing — the obligation of general disarmament undertaken as a means of justifying the onesided disarming of Hungary stipulated in the Treaty of Peace. And this game is going on day after day. Uninterruptedly.

Does the French scheme of peace contain even a gentle hint allowing of our hoping for a cessation of these treaty-breaches, — or at least an open door offering a possibility of realising that issue? Is there any passage in the French scheme providing for the enforcement of sanctions against these brutalities? Where are the provisions for retaliatory measures or for guaranteeing and ensuring the cessation of these brutalities? Not a word do we find in the scheme touching these matters; yet these breaches of treaties have already

inflicted on us losses amounting to thousands of millions — losses still being inflicted on us; losses which bring tears to the eyes of three and a half million Magyars daily, — which are plunging thousands and thousands of our racial brethren into ruin and starvation and suicide. The cup of our bitterness and sufferings is truly full to the brim; for the international organs established for our protection — the League of Nations and the international tribunals, etc. — become deaf and blind the moment they are called upon to do their duty as guardians of those of our interests which the treaties of peace entrusted to their care.

If the victors think that the application of this double standard is calculated to ensure a lasting peace in Europe, they will one day awake from this delusion and from the dream of supremacy resulting from that delusion, — and that awakening will be a very serious shock. For the employment of methods of the kind merely steepens the souls of the peoples in the poison of hatred and the lust of vengeance; and that poison will work insidiously in those souls until the occasion arises for fresh bloody conflicts which will plunge the world into the flames of a fresh devastating conflagration and may lead to the death of European culture and civilisation.

But, I would ask, can any person of common sense believe in the possibility of inventing and realising any system — however complicated and unnatural such a system may be — calculated to stabilise a situation of the kind and to maintain it by compulsion and make it perpetual? For nearly twenty years the diplomacy of Europe has been hatching and botching this system; but today it is farther off than ever from achieving its aim. The concern established by the victors — through the medium of the League of Nations — dreams complacently of some collective security to extend to the whole of Europe (to West and East alike) — a security based upon the *status quo* which it is proposed to carry into effect by means of general or regional reciprocal assistance treaties, of the collective military sanctions to be enforced against "peace-breakers", and of punitive expeditions to be carried on by a flying army acting under the League of Nations. And the victors actually believe that the defeated States will of their own accord fall into the trap thus laid for them!!! For the scheme could never be realised unless the vanquished countries and peoples were to voluntarily submit to the yoke and acquiesce in the fate foisted upon them by the treaties of peace, — or unless they were compelled by force to acquiesce!!

But, I would ask, would that make the situation any better or safer than it is today?

It is proposed that the States now scowling at one another across the frontiers in the various danger zones of Europe should conclude reciprocal assistance treaties and should mutually guarantee the frontiers running between the respective countries which were demarcated by the treaties of peace; reciprocal guarantees are expected of States the one of which desires to maintain those

frontiers at all costs, while the other would without fail have them changed. Indeed, the latter would be expected to promise armed assistance to the other Party in the event of any State proposing to encroach upon the territorial possessions of that other Party. Do the powers that be not realise that what they demand is humanly impossible? Could I be expected, in the event of any one — in my opinion — illegally stealing my watch, to hasten to the assistance of the thief if a friend of mine were to attack him for — having robbed me? Yet that is what they are really demanding of me when, to crown all, they would have me know that for twenty-years I may not attempt to recover my watch, even by appealing to the competent court of law. I am convinced that this would try the patience and long-suffering even of a saint; and the demand could be complied with only by people wishing at all costs to get rid of their own values. That is why I believe there is no nation in the world ready to accept such terms.

Nations using their common sense are not in the habit of concluding reciprocal assistance — or even reciprocal security treaties — except in two cases. The first of these cases is when both nations are afraid of a third nation and are anxious to unite in defence against that nation; though two nations in opposition may also conclude such a treaty when one of them is in conflict with a third nation too and undertakes treaty obligations of the kind for the purpose of reassuring its partner and showing it that there is no danger of its joining the third Party. As for a nation voluntarily and without more ado undertaking to guarantee the territorial integrity of another nation, even though it is fully aware that that other nation has illegally deprived it of territories of vital importance to itself, — that could never happen unless the other nation agreed in advance to accept the finding of some absolutely impartial arbitrator in the matter in dispute and unless every guarantee was forthcoming to ensure that that finding would be carried into effect.

Consequently, these two stipulations of the French scheme are in contradiction; for while demanding that the nations in conflict shall reciprocally guarantee their territorial integrity, that scheme at the same time does everything it can to prevent the matter in dispute between them being adjusted peacefully by appeal to an impartial judge.

But let us take the concrete case of Hungary. That country has to face the three States of the Little Entente, which have made an alliance, not only for the purpose of joint defence against Hungary in the event of that country attempting to recover the territories taken from it, — not only for the purpose of keeping Hungary in a state of disarmed helplessness, — but also in order to be able by joint action to evade the obligations undertaken by international treaty, to exterminate with impunity the Hungarian minorities entrusted to their charge, to internationally inflict upon Hungary as much injury as possible in political, economic and moral respects, and where they believe such a procedure to be to their interest, even to

interfere in the internal affairs of Hungary. The French peace scheme, on the other hand, demands of us that we shall join Austria in guaranteeing the territorial integrity of these three countries. It proposes, further, that in the event of either of the five countries attacking any other of the five, the other four (including Hungary too) should immediately rush to the rescue of the country thus attacked; it demands also that we should respect all the one-sided and unjust military provisions of the treaties of peace, for otherwise we should expose ourselves to military sanctions being enforced against us by the whole of Europe: and finally it demands that we should for a period of twenty-five years renounce all attempts even to broach the question of a peaceful revision of the territorial provisions of the treaties. I would ask, What would such an agreement benefit or profit Hungary? How would such an agreement advance her security? And could we, in the event of our being attacked by either of the three States forming the Little Entente, reckon on the other two States for that reason declaring war on the aggressor? On the other hand, can there be the slightest doubt that the military treaties binding the States of the Little Entente would impel those two countries in defiance of all the duties devolving upon them to support — not Hungary but — their Little Entente ally?

But let us take another eventuality — one that today would seem an even more burning question. Let us suppose that a war has broken out between Germany and France, or between Germany and Russia. In the latter case — by virtue of the treaty with Russia — Czecho-Slovakia would be employed by the Russian troops and military aeroplanes respectively as a basis and would therefore declare war against Germany. In that event — either out of fear that despite our declarations to the opposite effect we might hasten to the assistance of Germany, or because of her failure to trust our declaration of neutrality, — in other words, for the purpose of protecting her back door against all emergencies —, Czecho-Slovakia would in all probability decide to occupy Hungary or at any rate certain territories of that country. Does any one believe that in that event Yugoslavia and Rumania would mobilise their armies in defence of Hungary? Would we not on the contrary have to be prepared to find those countries too mobilising against us? And indeed we should be guilty of the greatest folly if we believed that a reciprocal assistance treaty of the kind was likely to benefit us at all? And the scheme would be even less acceptable to us if it were proposed to conclude a treaty providing for the five Danubian States reciprocally guaranteeing assistance, not only in the event of attack by either of the five, but also in the event of the aggressor being a country outside the Danube Pact, for in that case Hungary would be compelled to assist Czecho-Slovakia, for instance, against attack by Germany, — or Yugoslavia against attack by Italy, — or Rumania against an attack by Russia resulting on a revival of the Bessarabian question.

Hungary on the other hand would never have the remotest chance of receiving any return from the Little Entente; for she has no conflict with either Italy or Germany or Russia — or, I venture to say, with any other country except only the Little Entente States: nor has she any reason to fear being attacked by any other country.

We would be building on sand also if we were to rely for our security, not on reciprocal assistance treaties, but on the proposed League of Nations military sanctions which the French peace scheme desires to make obligatory as against any Party branded as aggressive or against Parties guilty of breaches of the military provisions of the treaties. In my opinion every Hungarian statesman proposing to base the security of Hungary on agreements of the kind ought to be put in prison. As against Hungary these "sanctions" would be very effectual, of course; but they would be impossible of execution the moment it was a question of enforcing them in the interests of Hungary against one of her Little Entente neighbours. In this connection it will suffice to refer our readers to the veritably tragi-comic diplomatic episodes of the past year, — Great Britain and France alternately using the "sanctions" slogan and then the next moment changing places and eating their words, expressing convictions diametrically opposed to those which the moment before had seemed inevitably necessary to the peace of the world. Yet in these cases the Party opposing the idea of sanctions was not bound to the State against which the sanctions were aimed by any ties so close as those which for instance unite the members of the French Block.

Although in international questions the public opinion of the world is rather primitively naive, nevertheless perhaps its naiveté does not go so far as to allow of its believing, particularly at the present juncture, that the League of Nations "sanctions" are the only philosopher's stone calculated to check the war passions of the peoples and ensure peace.

And indeed the peace scheme submitted to the League of Nations by France would not offer the vanquished small nations any security and would therefore be of no value whatsoever to those nations. To them it is quite clear that the only object of the scheme — an object which scarcely any attempt has been made to disguise — is to reinforce the countries already allied with France by compelling the European States which have so far been neutral (and indeed the defeated countries too) to support the "sanctions" policy, employing them for the purpose of tightening their own bonds and of securing their helplessness and of guaranteeing eternally the maintenance of the inequalities, injustices and shocking territorial provisions of the Paris treaties of peace. The drafters of the scheme are concentrating their endeavours on bringing into being an absurdly complicated and intricate political, legal and military apparatus which shall on paper be under the control of the League of Nations, though its secret "scene-shifters" will be exclusively those

States which as allies of France have so far too dominated the vanquished countries of Central Europe. Is there, I would ask, any trace in this peace scheme of goodwill or fairness or understanding? Does it betray the slightest token of any honest desire of peace? This scheme is on the contrary the direct and logical continuation of the ruthless post-War supremacy policy, — Clemenceau being followed by Poincaré, whose policy — after the short intermezzo when Briand was in power — was continued by Barthou. The present French Government would seem to be following in Barthou's wake, taking over the undisguised "alliance formula" which proposed to divide Europe openly into two hostile camps and presenting it to Europe in the form of this League of Nations medley, though in the interests of its friends in the Little Entente outdoing even Barthou in the endeavour to frustrate a revision of the treaties of peace.

There can be no doubt that this scheme will not be realised — that it will share the fate of all the previous schemes that also attempted to disguise the real character of their peace policy aiming at the maintenance of the present state of things by a lot of talk about "collective security", — this latter formula being offered as a bait to catch the vanquished. The scheme will come to nothing, because most of the peoples of Europe are sick and tired of the policy which has plunged Europe into crisis after crisis. Nor could it be expected to succeed, seeing that it is solely in the interests of those who are the onesided usufructuaries of the present situation and runs contrary to the interests of most other States. It cannot go through, because the public opinion of all other countries except only the usufructuaries of the peace treaties is beginning to see more and more clearly that Europe will have to enter an entirely different path if she would bring into being a definite and lasting peace. And that other path is simply the abolition of all inequalities, the elimination of all injustices, together with a peaceful revision and the serious reconciliation that must follow in the wake of such a revision.

Unfortunately the official Governments, for the most, part still persist in their former policy. It is true, indeed, that we are beginning to hear statements made by distinguished statesmen to the effect that the world is dynamic and not static, and that treaties are not eternal or unalterable; though at the same time unheard-of exertions are being made in practice, to make the worst and most intolerable treaties in history perpetual and to evade the necessity of changing or amending them.

And yet during the eighteen years which have elapsed since their conclusion many changes have been made in the treaties of peace, — though not by way of agreements or as the result of friendly negotiations, but *via facti*, — by *faits accomplis* (forces majeures) which the victors found themselves utterly unable to repudiate unless they were ready to go to war. So there are precedents. Though the success achieved was obtained by

force and by a onesided, arbitrary repudiation of obligations.

I would ask the lords and masters of Europe whether this is a wise or clever or even prudent policy? Or whether on the contrary it is not a direct challenge to rebel — a direct way

of proving that whereas nothing can be obtained by peaceful means, there is much to be gained by arbitrary force? Is it not a direct moral endorsement of the principle of self-help and of "taking the law into one's own hands" against which we are now hearing such vociferous outcries?

BRITISH PROFESSORS AND TERRITORIAL REVISION

by

Béla de Póka-Pivny, LL. D.

International life is devoting more and more attention to the question of "revision". Mankind realises that *the Paris peace-treaties are bad*.

All classes of society alike also realise that the seventeen years which have passed since the treaties were drafted *have already invalidated numerous provisions of those treaties*. And society everywhere feels that the most important part of the work is yet to be done — viz. the work of *territorial revision*.

Public opinion wishes *to see clearly* in the problem of territorial revision. Those co-operating to that end deserve gratitude. Those who aim at obscuring the problem and at retarding its just solution, are undertaking a serious responsibility in the eyes of history.

Below will be found two studies on the question to which we have added comments of our own.

I.

An exceptionally valuable article was published by Professor Arnold J. Toynbee in the February—March number of "*International Affairs*", with the title "*Peaceful Change or War? The Next Stage in the International Crisis*". The article is essentially a recapitulation of an address given by the professor before the *Royal Institute for Foreign Affairs* (Chatham House) at the end of last year.

The essay is quite comprehensive and exhaustive and both politically and scientifically stands on a very high level. It might serve as a classical example of how to study objectively — with due regard alike for the political and legal factors and for all those historical and moral moments which must be taken into account — a problem which moves on absolutely new ground.

The subject of the article is the possibility of a *peaceful amendment* of the peace treaties of 1919. The writer — apart from coming to the conclusion that the unsatisfied "have nots" or Powers not obtaining what they want will sooner or later attain their objects — *advises Great Britain herself to set a good example* and accept the proposal made by the Labour Party Member Mr. Lansbury, to the effect that Great Britain should surrender certain of her colonies, seeing that otherwise any

practical pacifism is inconceivable. The article is based upon the *dual conception* recently in evidence in the foreign policy of Britain which postulates that no collective security is conceivable in the evolution of life without periodical amendments of the peace treaties.

Professor Toynbee explains how ticklish a matter it is to renounce territories at all. He then enumerates in succession the overseas colonies which are either claimed or menaced and the "irredenta" territories in Europe, proceeding to deal with cases in the past of the surrender of territories involving the payment of material compensation. Yet these cases cannot be regarded as precedents. Despite the difficulties and the lack of familiar ways and means, a solution must be found, for otherwise — continues Toynbee, inspired by the practical principles of a higher pacifism — there cannot be any spiritual peace.

The writer then enumerates the dissatisfied countries — Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and Lithuania in Europe. He then adds:

"In order to limit the scope of our survey, we may venture, at the risk of being thought cynical, to ignore, for the moment, the grievances of the smaller countries, and this on two grounds: in the first place because they lack the strength to bring about violent changes by their own unaided efforts and in the second place because their claims are likely to stand or fall with those of their greater companions in discontent. If the claims of Germany and Italy are satisfied either peacefully or by force, the claims of Hungary and Bulgaria have a fair prospect of being satisfied simultaneously by whichever of the two methods it may be".

This is a very serious warning not to be ignored by those who keep imposing intolerably heavy burdens of taxation on their nationals for the purpose of being able by force of arms to defend against revision the territories unlawfully acquired by them.

Speaking of the "irredenta" territories, Professor Toynbee takes the several countries in succession. *Italy* has no more "irredenta" claims on her neighbours promising any important or positive results. In respect of *Germany* however the