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THE BOLSHEVIK PERIL IN THE DANUBE VALLEY

by

Andrew Bajcsy-Zsilinszky

When in 1933 he returned from England, where he had been delivering a series of successful lectures — in London and elsewhere — Count Bethlen said that the Hungarian question, and with it the whole problem of the Danube Valley, ought to be settled before Germany and Russia were able to exert a decisive influence on that territory. Who would have thought then that in two short years the European situation would be so radically different? Not only that Germany's and Soviet Russia's endeavours to obtain a hegemony would turn, one after the other, in the direction of this tragic area, but also that their positions would be so much stronger and their differences so much more acute? It makes our blood run cold to think of the terrible possibility that Hungary may be the battlefield on which German and Russian imperialistic aspirations will try an issue.

Who would have dreamed a few years ago that Russia would ever be a Member of the League of Nations and a decisive factor in European politics? Who could have guessed that the Soviet system would achieve in Central Europe what the Russia of the Czars failed to accomplish even at the cost of millions and millions of Russian lives, viz. that Russia would gain a footing in Central Europe and build military air-fleet bases in the Slovak territories wrested from Hungary?

No matter what the reasons were that provided the Soviet with ways and means of establishing this close political and military co-operation with Czecho-Slovakia. The bitter facts are enough at the moment. The lost opportunity of re-organizing Central Europe while the Russian might was farther from the Danube Valley, can never be recalled. But let us, and the rest of Europe, take a lesson from the facts of the case.

Compared with a few years ago the situation in Central Europe is that the Soviet's advanced military front is in Slovakia. Russia's arrow — like advance across Czecho-Slovakia has met with no opposition either on the part of official Czecho-Slovakia or of a Europe organized in the League

of Nations. On the contrary, the Russian advance is the direct and natural outcome and consequence of the Russo-Czecho-Slovak pact, which again is the fruit and consequence of the Franco-Soviet treaty. Official France has always denied that this treaty is of the nature of an alliance, and M. Laval, it is true, did slightly modify Barthou's original text; but for all that, in essentials and interpretation it is at least dangerously like a treaty of alliance. And Great Britain — alas! — has ratified it.

We understand, or believe we understand, the points of view that played a part in inducing Great Britain to sanction the revival of the old Franco-Russian alliance in a new form. When Britain ratified the Franco-Soviet treaty she was at loggerheads with Italy over the Abyssinian question, and was to an increased extent dependent on co-operation with France, that having in any case been, in principle, the unswerving policy of all British Government after the war. And surely the British view of the treaty was to a certain measure influenced by the fact that Japan's attitude towards Manchuria and her aggressive designs on China had brought to maturity the idea, or at least created the appearance, of Great Britain's and Soviet Russia's interdependence in the political and diplomatic entanglements of the Far East.

But looking at the matter with Hungarian eyes, it is hard to escape from the troubling thought that the germs and possibilities of a terrible danger to Europe have been scattered in the heart of that continent, not so much by Soviet Russia's League membership, as by the fact that the Soviet's political and diplomatic support has been allowed to play too great a rôle through the medium of the Franco-Soviet and the Czecho-Soviet pacts. It has been entirely forgotten, not only that Russia by reason of her vast extent and the fabulous prolificness of her population is an increasingly menacing world power, but also that she is the spiritual and material head and moving force of the Third International. And however

sound a political tenet it may be that the interests of foreign policy must not be subordinated to ethical views of life, we must accept the rule with reservations where the Soviet is concerned. And if there is a country whose individual historical evolution and the peculiar mental attribute of its people make it wholly incapable of forging in the fires of revolution standards of life acceptable to the nations of Europe — that country is Russia. The Russian psyche still bears the indelible stamp of Mongol rule, an anti-European something which Dostoieffsky, himself perhaps the most typical interpreter of the Russian genius, proclaimed with the fanaticism of a prophet to be Russia's mission. This anti-European spirit has been only reinforced in the Soviet system. Lenin's and Stalin's peculiar Russianized Marxism and the world-revolutionary organization of the Third International have multiplied a hundred-fold the inherited anti-European political and spiritual tendencies of the Russian psyche and Russian life on which the race has been nurtured for centuries. Who will be able in given circumstances to draw a sharp line between Russia's growing influence on Central European politics and the Bolshevik ideology which, even if at present it plays a subordinate rôle in Soviet propaganda, will naturally always be ready to awake again, more ardent than ever, and go into action?

Official French circles deny that Russian propaganda and Russian money had anything to do with the recent peculiar and alarming developments in France's domestic politics.

But to put a question: Even if Soviet propaganda had no immediate hand in the French elections and their later developments, who would venture to deny that Soviet Russia, the accepted, nay the cherished child of Geneva, the Soviet Russia which was fulsomely lauded by the late M. Barthou and which is linked to France by bonds of alliance and of other treaties concluded last year, was not able by the suggestive force of *rapprochement* and co-operation to influence the French masses without any direct interference, and thus help to advance the Communist Party? This is so obvious that I venture the opinion that unless that Soviet had been dragged into European politics, the Socialists would hardly have secured a relative majority in the Front Populaire and the French Chamber; nor would the extreme left wing and the Communists have acquired such a preponderance.

The semi-official organ of the Quai d'Orsay, the "Le Temps" on June 15th published an interesting and frank leader entitled "Le Mirage de la constitution Soviétique". This article treats of the internal evolution of Soviet Russia and the relation of the U. S. S. R. to bourgeois Europe, that is to say to the world of the middle classes everywhere. It says that the return of Stalin's system to one of "a perfect democracy" is a mirage. The

article, which was written to dispel false illusion, ends with the words: — "*Le fond demeure tel que Lénine l'a établi: la Russie soviétique reste un État soi-disant prolétarien dont toutes les forces tendent à consolider ce qui fut acquis par le bouleversement de 1917, et qui entièrement soumis à la III. Internationale communiste, trouve toujours sa raison d'être dans l'effort soutenu pour préparer et organiser la révolution universelle.*"

It is no light matter when the semi-official organ of France ruled by the Socialists feels impelled to warn the French nation against the illusions inspired in the masses by the so-called new Soviet Constitution. And it may also be considered an important and striking circumstance to find, in the first month of the Blum régime, the semi-official press declaring that Stalin is faithful to Lenin's policy, and that the new Constitution has not abandoned the old Bolshevik aim, preparation for and the organisation of a world revolution.

In these circumstances it may safely be said that all the countries and nations that cling to their western pattern of civilization are in the same boat. All are permanently threatened by the sword of Damocles of the possibility of a Bolshevik world revolution. Quite recently Mr. Lloyd George wrote that ninety millions of China's inhabitants are under Bolshevik rule. The Nanking Central Government has never been able to obtain the mastery over masses of that dimension. Mr. Lloyd George goes farther and prophesies that if Chang-Kai-Chek is not able to pay the armies of the Nanking Government because of the depredations of bands of Japanese smugglers and the losses they are causing to China's public finances, Bolshevism must inevitably spread in the territories administered by the Nanking régime. This prophecy is to be taken seriously, for once already Russia nearly succeeded in bolshevikizing the whole of China. The country was saved from that disaster by the efforts of this very Chang-Kai-Chek, his companions and soldiers. And even if Japan's expansion in Asia is not desired by Britain and is indeed very dangerous for the British Empire, neither is it desirable that Soviet Russia should lay hands on China. British public opinion, and that of Europe too, must remember well the dangerously widespread Bolshevik agitation of 1926 which led to the first and hitherto only general strike in world history, which was fraught with such peril for Great Britain that only the matchless courage, presence of mind, and ready action of her inhabitants were able with the greatest effort to save the country from an internal social collapse.

Since then, of course, the Soviet has suffered a few reverses. Her agents had to clear out of England, she had to abandon her great gains in China; and in recent years the German-Soviet



From „L'Europe Menacée. L'Armée Soviétique en Slovaquie. Appel du Conseil Slovaque à la Société des Nations et au monde civilisé. Genève 1936.”

friendship which for so long seemed to rest on stable foundations, has gone to pieces. On the other hand, Russia has continued to arm, and is probably thoroughly armed by now. The Soviet has become a Member of the League of Nations, and a Member whose influence is formidable. She has concluded treaties amounting to alliances with France and Czecho-Slovakia, and if appearances are not deceptive, a similar Russo-Rumanian pact is under way. And all this has been done with Great Britain's knowledge and consent!

Where will this lead if the Third German Empire continues to grow, stronger politically? Then France and England will forget the danger of Bolshevism and remember only the aid that the Soviet represents.

Not long ago Dr. Jehlička, President of the Slovak National Council, submitted to the League of Nations a well-documented memorandum about the Bolshevik peril in general and the fact in particular that Slovakia which was wrested from Hungary has now become not only the political, but also the military base of the Soviet's aggressive expansion towards the west. With a whole series of irrefutable facts Dr. Jehlička proves that the Czecho-Slovak Government, with the name of Europe on their lips and boasting of their European spirit, have lent themselves to the reckless and fatal undertaking of introducing into Central Europe a Russia Asiatic to the core. By allowing the construction of Soviet air-fleet and military bases in Slovakia it has given a foothold to that Bolshevism which the semi-official organ of the French Government itself accuses of organizing and making preparation for a world revolution.

In the present welter of confusion and uncertainty nothing would be more reassuring to the countries honestly desirous of peace — amongst others to Hungary — than if Britain and Italy made friends again. The independence of the Danube Valley must be maintained at all costs, but it cannot be maintained without Great Britain's ef-

fective co-operation. Whether that co-operation is to be direct or indirect, what matters to Hungary and the rest of the countries loving liberty and prepared to defend western civilization, is that Great Britain's will and arm shall be one of the principal factors in European evolution, and that a reorganization of the Danube Valley shall not take place without Britain's love of justice and her efforts to maintain equilibrium having free scope. We Hungarians may await future developments with hope, or at least with well-founded confidence, if we know that Great Britain will not withdraw her arm from the Danube Valley, the interests of which are not so far removed from British interests as at the first glance they may seem to be. Through the Danube Valley Russia can make her way to the Mediterranean and upset its equilibrium, which is of such great importance to the British Empire. The Mediterranean is Britain's assured route to India and its equilibrium might be established more firmly than ever, were Italy and Britain to become friendly again.

We in Hungary were particularly gratified when Sir Austen Chamberlain visited Budapest and Vienna, regarding his sojourn here as a sign of Britain's lively interest in the Danube problems. We should like to think that that interest will not fag. It is quite certain that Hungary could participate much more actively in the re-organisation of Central Europe were she convinced that Britain did not propose to announce again her indifference to the problems of the Danube Valley. Needless to say, it is impossible to imagine that the Soviet's expansion in Central Europe can be checked, that is to say gradually and steadily pushed back, without Great Britain's help. When friendly relation and co-operation between Great Britain and Italy are restored we are convinced that the spiritual and international foundations will be laid of a Europe in which justice and humaneness will prevail more than they do now.

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