

AN ARBITRARY AND ONE-SIDED FRONTIER ADJUSTMENT

by

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Ever since the Paris peace treaties have felt the ravages of time and the mistaken work of the treaty-drafters has been so badly mauled by the *faits accomplis* created by the action of Germany and Austria, the politicians and press of the Little Entente have been treating Hungary to a veritable drumfire of hostility and hatred. This concentric attack is aimed, not only against our demand for equality in respect of armaments, but also — perhaps primarily — against the revision endeavours of which M. Titulescu and his friends are constantly telling us that they mean warr. This open threat is supported by the thesis — already so hackneyed and trite — of the inviolability of treaties; a thesis put forward by persons who seem to forget that they were the first to infringe the treaties by ignoring the provisions which they found to be disagreeable — a procedure just as antagonistic to the spirit and letter of the treaties as the action of Austria and Germany in one-sidedly deciding to enforce equality in respect of armaments which they attack so bitterly, or as the occupation by German troops of the neutral Rhine zone.

One of the articles published in our April number gave a summary of the various breaches of treaty committed against Hungary during the fifteen years that have passed since the conclusion of the Armistice. For that reason we shall confine ourselves on the present occasion to giving an account of a case in which *individual action resulted in a frontier adjustment in favour of one of the Succession States which, though only trifling in dimensions, was in effect an arbitrary amendment of the frontiers demarcated by the Treaty of Trianon.*

This partial readjustment of the frontier was effected on the confines of Szabadka on August 21st., 1921, — i. e. 14 months after the signature of the Treaty of Trianon — on the initiative of *Paja Dobanovatzki*, the Sheriff of Szabadka, by Serbian troops under the command of the Serbian General *Milosav Damianovitch*. The story of this frontier-readjustment by force of arms was told by General *Damianovitch* himself in a letter dated October 24th., 1930, which he wrote to *Marko Protitch*, Greek Oriental Priest living in Szabad-

ka, who then published the letter (which is a document of historical importance) with some comments of his own in a book of his which appeared at the end of 1930 with the title "*Zlatni dani Subotice*" ("The Golden Days of Szabadka").

This frontier-readjustment — or rather this demarcation and military fortification of a new frontier line deviating from that determined by the decision of the Peace Conference and the provision of the Treaty of Trianon — was effected under the direction of Brigadier-General *Damianovitch*, in the following manner: —

The *Serbian troops* occupying the line of demarcation drawn in the district between the Danube and the Tisza to the right of Baja and the villages of Csávoly and Mélykut and passing through Tompa, across the Tompa pasture-lands and the Dobó heathland as far as Rőszke, on August 21st., 1921, received orders to withdraw to the frontier line demarcated in the Treaty of Trianon. The section of this frontier line in the part of which lying north-west and north from Szabadka and north-east in the direction of Horgos the frontier readjustment referred to was effected, is described as follows in the Treaty of Trianon (Part II., Article 27): — "*a line to be fixed on the ground passing south of Kun-Baja, cutting the Szabadka—Bácsalmás railway about 1½ kilometres east of Csikéria station, cutting the Szabadka—Kiskunhalas railway about 3 kilometres south of Kelebia station, and passing south of Horgos and its station, and south of Rőszke-szentmihálytelek.*"

The tracing on the ground of the frontier line thus determined is provided for in Article 29 (Part II.) of the Treaty of Trianon, which runs as follows: — "*Boundary Commissions... will have to trace these frontiers on the ground... They shall have the power, not only of fixing those portions which are defined as a line to be fixed upon the ground, but also, where a request to that effect is made by one of the States concerned, and the Commission is satisfied that it is desirable to do so, of revising portions defined by administrative boundaries; ... They shall endeavour in both cases to follow as nearly as possible the descriptions given in the Treaties, taking into ac-*

count as far as possible administrative boundaries and local economic interests. The decisions of the Commissions will be taken by a majority and shall be binding on the parties concerned."

The above-quoted provisions of the Treaty of Trianon therefore would have enabled the Yugoslav State to apply to the Boundary Commission in question for any slight readjustment of frontiers it might have regarded necessary. According to Article 43 of the Treaty the Boundary Commission consisted of seven members, five of whom were nominated by the Allied and Associated Powers, one being nominated by the Serb-Croat-Slovene State and one by Hungary.

This was however not the solution adopted by the Serbians; on the contrary, they took a rapid decision and, having recourse to force of arms and anticipating the decision of the respective Boundary Commission, which did not arrive in Szabadka until April 7th, 1922, created a *fait accompli* by the arbitrary partial readjustment of the frontier effected on the confines of Szabadka.

When, on August 21st, 1921, Dobanovatzki, Serbian Sheriff of Szabadka, received official intimation that the Serbian troops were to retire from the line of demarcation fixed much farther north to the frontier line fixed in the Treaty of Peace, he immediately gave orders to the effect that all the live stock in the territory to be evacuated was to be driven to Szabadka, the other movables (timber, equipment of schools, furniture of foresters' and rangers' houses etc.) to be conveyed to the territory lying within the frontier line in the 2000 carts requisitioned in Szabadka and the adjoining farmsteads. The same procedure — really nothing more or less than pillaging — in defiance of the provisions of international law was followed by the Serbians when evacuating the Baja triangle too, whence they removed everything removable, inflicting upon the inhabitants losses amounting in value to about 2.5—3 million gold crowns for which no compensation was ever offered.

After having issued this first order, Dobanovatzki called upon General Damianovitch, telling him that the Serbian inhabitants of the territory to be evacuated, *fearing the vengeance of the Hungarians (sic!)*, were preparing to flee and expected the Serbian authorities to afford them protection and assistance. The two men then went to the spot and decided "to undertake the role of the Peace Conference and to demarcate the new northern frontier of the Serb-Croat-Slovene State on our own responsibility, to save the hinterland of Szabadka and Kelebia... the inhabitants of which, as a selfconscious part of our people, had for centuries preserved their names and maintained their claim to the territory in the north" (sic!). In this connection we would note by the way that of the total number of the inhabitants (roughly 10,000) of the extensive groups of farmsteads known by the names of Kelebia and Felsőkelebia 8000 were Hungarians and only 2000 Germans, Bunyevatz and Serbians. The latter were living in compact masses (150—200 souls) only in the so-called "Serb alley" belonging to

Felsőkelebia, — that being apparently the "self-conscious group" of Serbians which had to be saved at all costs from further slavery under the Hungarian yoke" by an arbitrary readjustment of the frontier.

In the territory in question, with the assistance of the Serbian inhabitants, the same day they demarcated "the new frontier ensuring the security and undisturbed work of Szabadka" which in this section alone extended the area of Szabadka and of the S. H. S. State respectively determined in the Treaty of Trianon by a strip of territory 8 kilometres long and 1.7—3 kilometres broad — i. e. some 16—18 square kilometres in area. When after having done their work the two men returned to the town, General Damianovitch called upon Lieut.-General Pavlovitch, commander of the Szabadka garrison, to whom he made a report of the happenings and suggested that for the better safeguarding of the more favourable new frontier just demarcated the Serbian troops which were to retire the following day (August 20th.) should be reinforced by detachments from the Szabadka garrison. "For to surrender Kelebia would mean to deprive our country of an excellent outpost of defence against the enemy".

So Brigadier-General Damianovitch himself felt the insufficiency of the ethnical and economic arguments adduced in support of the territorial claim and for that reason hastened to supplement the same by putting forward the all-important argument of military and strategical interests. It was under the pressure of the weight of this argument that Lieut.-General Pavlovitch consented to the suggestion, giving Damianovitch instructions to ask for two mounted companies from General Dragutin Okanovitch, commander of the cavalry division.

These were the events that preceded the measures taken the following day (August 20th.) for the military occupation of the territory within the new frontier line fixed the previous day and for the definitive seizure of the same.

Next morning, at 7 a. m., General Damianovitch drove with Sheriff Domanovatzki to the "Zorka" chemical factory in Kelebia, where the two mounted companies placed under his command were waiting for him. As soon as they reached the northern fringe of the "Serbian alley" of Kelebia, they found a full-strength company of Hungarian soldiers detached for the purpose of occupying the Trianon frontier line under the command of a captain whose name is not given by Damianovitch.¹

Damianovitch sent for this captain and with the help of Sheriff Dobanovatzki, who knew Hungarian perfectly well, as interpreter informed him that all further advance had to be suspended, seeing that this strip of territory formed part of the line which was to be occupied by the Serbian troops. The captain protested against the action of the Serbian general and, showing on the map in

¹ According to Dr. John Völgyi, former Chief Clerk of Szabadka, who was an eyewitness of all the events, the commander of the company of Hungarian soldiers was Captain Ary.

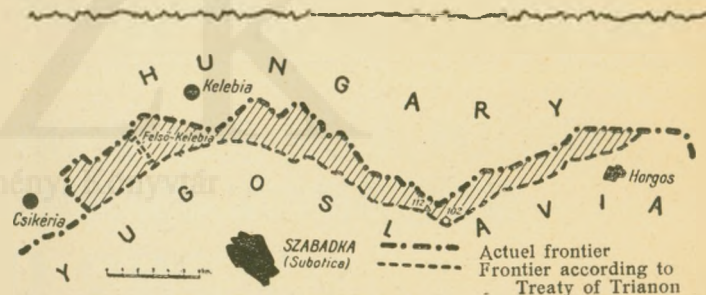
his possession the exact line which under the Treaty of Trianon he had been ordered to occupy, declared that he would certainly carry out the order he had received. Damianovitch hereupon suggested that the captain should settle the question by a friendly agreement, particularly seeing that *this was the frontier line which would in any case be eventually fixed as definitive by the Boundary Commission*. The captain however insisted on carrying his orders into effect. In the meantime the Hungarian company had deployed into line and begun to advance; but only a few minutes later *the Serbian cavalry arrived too*, the Hungarian company being in consequence compelled to immediately cease advancing. What happened then, is told by General Damianovitch in the letter referred to in terms belying the courtesy due even to an enemy: — "The captain became as white as a linen rag (*sic!!*) and stammered that he "was compelled to yield to force but would protest in Paris!!" Hereupon we declared that they might protest in Paris as much as they liked, but in the meantime, until the decision of Paris arrived, we had to loyally demarcate the frontier line lest unfamiliarity with the same should lead to hostilities between the troops facing one another. And the captain eventually admitted that there was every reason for a loyal agreement, particularly as in any case the line demarcated was not definitive in character, — the real motive being however that we were far stronger from the military point of view and he could not know what was behind the mounted company. As soon as we succeeded — through the captain yielding — in averting the danger of a conflict, we felt justified in taking every possible measure for the protection of our interests... We then suggested to the captain that the work of exactly fixing the frontier line could be done jointly; to which he agreed".

From the description given by Damianovitch too the fact may be established that the Hungarian captain merely yielded to force and, reserving all rights in due form, only took part in the work of fixing the frontier line because *he was assured that it was only a question of the fixing of a temporary frontier*.

The fixing of the frontier line — designated by the Serbs for the purpose of misleading the Hungarians as merely provisional — was effected the same day on the section stretching to the west of the Szabadka—Kelebia railway line as far as Csikéria on the Szabadka—Baja line; *the frontier line one-sidedly demarcated the previous day being, to use Damianovitch's words, "pushed farther outwards to the advantage of the Serbs."*

The following day (August 21st) the work of fixing the frontier line was continued on the section stretching to the east of the Szabadka—Kelebia railway line as far as Horgos. On this section the Serbian troops first occupied the so-called Körös-line, from which two weak Hungarian detachments were — by the method which had proved so effective the previous day — compelled by the superior odds of the Serbs to retire. "By

the occupation of this line" — wrote Damianovitch — "*we secured for Szabadka all that could possibly be taken from the Hungarians*". Then came the turn of the so-called "hajdujárasi dülök" (Hajdú Hundred Balks). Here the two Hungarian detachments occupying the points marked 102 and Δ 112 on the Austro-Hungarian military maps were compelled to evacuate the position occupied by them on the Trianon frontier by the Serbian infantry battalion present there having by order of Damianovitch simply outflanked the Hungarian position and having then occupied the new frontier line fixed by Damianovitch situated behind that position. On this occasion too the withdrawal of the Hungarians was preceded by "negotiations" (*sic!!*) which were however unsuccessful because the Hungarian commander — a first lieutenant — referring to the orders he had received refused to comply with the demand made by the Serbs that he should evacuate his positions. The situation, which as a consequence of the defiance of the Hungarian lieutenant had become critical, was again saved by the appearance of Serbian cavalry; for — as Damianovitch wrote in terms of scornful contempt of his opponent which are anything but chivalrous — "when the first lieutenant saw the mounted squadron, he grew pale and trembled so much that he was unable to mark any single place on the map in his hand and in his alarm was unable to utter a sound... It was to this well-



considered procedure alone that we owed the removal without striking a blow of the last Hungarian detachments which had penetrated far into the confines of Szabadka."

The final scene of this arbitrary frontier-readjustment was that in the Pap — or Fekete — homestead² situated in the Szeged corner of Csongrád County, then under occupation by a small Hungarian detachment under the command of a first lieutenant which had advanced from the Dobó homestead lying on the former line of demarcation. Here too the Hungarian commander was forced to retire by an outflanking movement and by the unexpected arrival of cavalry.

The "heroic deed" referred to above was the last scene in the one-sided frontier-readjustment action in defiance of international law and treaties alike initiated by Sheriff Dobanovatzki and supported by military forces under the command of three Serbian generals which the author of the book, *Protitch*, in the intoxication of success, speaks of as "*the d'Annunziad of Kelebia*"; evidently re-

² Damianovitch did not remember exactly at which of the two homesteads the events described happened.

ferring to d'Annunzio's surprise attack upon Fiume.

On the following day, August 22nd, *the British Colonel Gosse protested against the arbitrary action of Damianovitch.* The protest was answered by Lieut.-General Pavlovitch sending Colonel Gosse to General Vashitch, commander of the Ujvidék army corps, — that being really equivalent to sending him on a wild-goose chase. For having taken this step Colonel Gosse is called "friend of the Hungarians" by Damianovitch; evidently because he was apparently unable to conceive it possible that anyone should protest against these excesses and brutal breaches of treaties purely out of conviction and in the name of conscience, decency, truth and law.

And in any case the veto filed by Colonel Gosse had just as little effect as had the protest of the Hungarian Government. In the atmosphere of unbounded hatred and insatiable vindictiveness then prevailing, Hungary — always treated as a scapegoat — never had a chance of having her wishes, however modest and trifling they might be, considered at all; she always met with rigid repudiation, as is proved by the perfunctory inquiry, discussions and findings of the Boundary

Commission at Szabadka on April 7th, 1922, and later on the spot, which at all points ratified the one-sided, arbitrary frontier-readjustment referred to above, thereby allotting to the Serb-Croat-Slovene State an area of more than 10,000 cadastral yokes — at least 60 square kilometres — of territory which was Hungary's by right also under the Treaty of Trianon.

In conclusion, as for the vituperations of Damianovitch, the Hungarian officers concerned — and indeed Hungarian soldiers generally — need no apologist. The glorious history of a thousand years of brilliant achievements in the face of innumerable vicissitudes and blows of Fate speaks in their favour; and therefore these attempts at belittling depreciation throw aspersion, not on the Hungarian soldiers, but on those who have not shrunk from uttering them. During the Great War the Serbians too had opportunities galore to experience the heroic bravery of the Hungarian soldier, as also to witness his manly character and his noble way of thinking — a way of thinking that found expression also in his readiness at all times to acknowledge the sterling military qualities of the Serbian people, never descending to a use of the weapons of revilement and reproach.

NICOLAUS DE HUNGARIA WAS FIRST STUDENT KNOWN BY NAME AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

by

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The Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University has published in the "University Gazette" the official organ of the University, a list of the names of those who are to receive a doctor's degree. The first name on the list is that of His Eminence Cardinal Justinian Serédi, Primate of Hungary. At the same time the degree of Honorary Doctor was conferred on Mr. Eden, British Foreign Secretary, General Chatwood, former Commander-in-Chief of the British army in India and Mr. Gilbert Murray, professor of the Oxford University and a famous linguist. His Eminence Cardinal Serédi received his degree on 24th, June amidst traditional Oxford ceremonies. The University orator,

Mr. Cyril Bailey, set forth the Prince Primate's merits in an eloquent Latin speech. "I think" — he said — "that nobody is more worthy to receive the degree of Doctor of Laws than Cardinal Serédi who has made a study of the sources of ecclesiastical law from the Synod of Nicea to the present day, and has published the fruits of his researches in seven volumes. Oxford is particularly happy to welcome His Eminence, as the Prince Primate of Hungary, Archbishop of Esztergom, and President of the Budapest University, at the tricentenary jubilee of which the representatives of the Oxford University were present last year." We