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OUR FRIEND IN WHOM WE MAY TRUST

BY

FRANCIS HERCZEG

Mr. Rhys J. Davies is a Member of the British House of Commons belonging to the Labour Party. He is a politician of great weight; he was Home Secretary in the first Labour Government. For years past he has co-operated enthusiastically in the work of the "Central European" Group of the House of Commons. As is well known, this group of Members of Parliament has, as a result of its study and its knowledge of the situation of the peoples of the Danube Valley, become an advocate of treaty revision; for its Members became convinced that the evils could not be redressed except by an amendment of the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Trianon.

Mr. Rhys J. Davies visits our country frequently for the purpose of increasing his knowledge of the Hungarian question. He has more than once examined the Trianon frontiers on the spot and has thoroughly studied the various minority questions and the economic and social conditions prevailing in Dismembered Hungary. Today he is one of the best-informed authorities on every phase of the Hungarian question in Europe. In Hungary he is naturally at all times a welcome visitor; he has won the respect and sympathy of all Hungarians by the charming simplicity and frankness of his manners and by the conscientiousness and manly sobriety which characterises the most eminent of British statesmen.

What has impelled us to speak of this British politician today is the circumstance that he is at present in the United States of North America on a lecturing tour. His first lecture was delivered in New York, under the auspices of the "Amerikai Magyar Népszava" and in the presence of an

English-speaking audience. The title of his lecture was: — "Hungarian and Central European Problems".

We cannot but feel touched when we read the words in which our British friend spoke of our poor, downtrodden country. "I have seen Budapest, the marvellously beautiful city of Budapest. I have seen the Margaret Island in its unsurpassed, royal pomp. Surely the Hungarian people has every right to be proud of its country".

The lecturer spoke with British frankness of the conditions brought about by the treaties of peace. "Today", he said, „the world is divided into two parts, — into countries which have everything and countries which have nothing. Hungary is one of the "have-nots"." In illustration of the misery brought about by the Treaty of Trianon he enumerated all the data showing so strikingly the ignorance and unscrupulousness of the persons who in Paris demarcated the new frontiers. He invoked as witnesses those Hungarians who are compelled to take out passports if they would cross from one side of the street to the other side, or if they would go out into their fields, — or if they would visit the churches of their towns... According to Mr. Rhys Davies, not only justice, but mere common sense too demands that absurd and disgraceful conditions of the kind should be put an end to: and surely there is no one of sound mind either in America or in Europe who could gainsay this statement. The lecturer added that he could not conceive it possible that the peoples in Central Europe would live in peace and friendship so long as masses of oppressed Hungarians were forced to live in misery in the Succession States.

It is interesting to read that Mr. Rhys J. Davies spoke very appreciatingly of the propaganda being carried on in foreign countries by Hungarian society in the interest of Hungary, — a propaganda which, as he said, "has never descended to exaggerations or extremes". He concluded his lecture with the following sincere words: — "I do not say that I accept everything told me by Hungarians; but I must in conclusion establish the fact that Hungary has justice on her side when she appeals to the tribunal of the world to endorse her demand for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon".

We have become quite accustomed already to foreigners

visiting Budapest speaking with cordial sympathy of Hungary and the Hungarians and on occasion also of the necessity of a revision. But that a British legislator should speak in public in America and give such decided expression to his sympathy for the Hungarians, is unusual and surprising and a matter of importance. The sincere indignation of Mr. Rhys Davies's words, his open and unconditional branding of the Treaty of Trianon as stupid and wicked, his manly and courageous assistance to a people whom he regards as victims of injustice, — these are fruits of the peculiar characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race. The attitude adopted here has nothing to do with any tactical considerations; it is merely the sincere and instinctive manifestation of a British mind.

To us the value of the statements made by Mr. Rhys J. Davies is enhanced by the consciousness that in entering the lists in defence of universal human justice this British politician is acting deliberately in the interests, not of Hungary, but of Great Britain. It is Britain's interest that there should be peace in Europe; and it is a *sine qua non* of peace that the principles of justice and humanity should be enforced in international politics. The demand for justice to Hungary is therefore a function of the peace policy of Great Britain; about that we have no doubt at all, nor can we doubt that British politicians will only be able to demand justice for Hungary so long as that justice does not run counter to the vital interests of the British nation.

His work in America has undoubtedly entitled Mr. Rhys J. Davies to the gratitude of the Hungarian nation. And the attitude adopted by him may teach the world various lessons. In the first place, it shows beyond a doubt that, though many things may be said about our revision movement, there is no truth in the rumour with which the Little Entente press loves to cajole its readers to the effect that the will for revision of the Hungarian people is on the wane. But we Hungarians too may learn from this attitude, — we may learn that the future of our country cannot be ensured unless the spirit of which Mr. Rhys J. Davies is a warm-hearted and eloquent representative gains the upper hand in international life. We should regard it as an incalculable catastrophe if we ever again came into serious conflict with

the people whose sons have the courage so honestly and so manfully to enter the lists in the cause of justice for a small nation living so far off.

*

Mr. Rhys J. Davies, British Labour Party M. P., was on a lecturing tour in the United States a few weeks ago. One of his lectures, which was delivered in New York in the White Hall of the Roman Catholic parish named after St. Stephen at the invitation of the "Amerikai Magyar Népszava", was attended by a large audience, who warmly applauded the speaker. Below will be found a summary of Mr. Rhys J. Davies' lecture as reported in the "Amerikai Magyar Népszava".

"I have seen Budapest — he said at the beginning his lecture — wonderful Budapest. I have seen the Margaret Island unsurpassable in the majesty of its beauty. I have been in Budapest lately, and if there is a nation on earth which may be proud of its country, it is the Hungarian nation."

Then Mr. Rhys Davies went on to say that he was the son of a little nation. He was born in Wales. For sixteen years he had been serving his constituency as a Labour Member of the British Parliament, and during that time he had had many opportunities of studying officially Central European and Balkan problems. Two things drew him to Hungary. First, he was a musician himself; he loved Hungarian music and considered Francis Liszt the greatest of musical geniuses. Then there was the great problem of the Hungarians, revision. He had begun to take an interest in that problem on the occasion of his first visit to Hungary when he saw for himself how things stood. When he saw with his own eyes what had become of the Hungarian nation after the Peace Treaties, he was filled with amazement.

The world war had been followed everywhere by unjust Peace Treaties. The Treaty of Versailles was unjust and had prepared the way for the Nazi régime. Hitler would never have acquired control had he not been helped by the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles.

But what had happened to unfortunate Hungary? A nation of twenty-one million souls had dwindled down to one of eight million. What would the United States do, were the Japanese to seize California, Arizona and Oregon and Brazil took possession of Florida and Georgia?

A fresh war would be no solution. Wars never solve anything, for when the victor oppresses the vanquished he sows the seed of yet another war. This was evident not only in Central Europe but all the world over. Today the world was divided into two categories: the countries that had all they wanted and those who had nothing. Hungary belonged to the latter.

OUR FRIEND IN WHOM WE MAY TRUST

In his opinion the peace of Central Europe would never be guaranteed until serious frontier readjustments had been effected. Once he had stood on the roof of the cathedral in Esztergom gazing at the wonderful panorama stretching out below him. At his feet lay a town the inhabitants of which could only cross from street to street with passports. Was it commonsense when a man required a passport to attend church in his native town? He had seen peasants who had to show their passports before they were allowed to cross to their little bits of land which were no more than a stone's throw from their tiny dwellings. Not justice alone, but also commonsense and humanity demanded the rectification of those impossible conditions.

Mr. Rhys Davies could not imagine peace in Europe so long as millions of Hungarian were living under oppression in Yugoslavia, CzechoSlovakia and Rumania.

In the course of his lecture Mr. Rhys Davies spoke with appreciation of Hungarian propaganda, which never went to extremes. This did not mean to say that he accepted and approved of everything told him by the Hungarians, but his final conclusion was that Hungary was entitled to lay claim before the judgment-seat of the nations to a revision of the Treaty of Trianon.

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OSZK
Országos Széchényi Könyvtár