

DANUBIAN REVIEW

(DANUBIAN NEWS)

A REVIEW DEVOTED TO RESEARCH INTO PROBLEMS OF THE
DANUBIAN BASIN

Editorial Board :

ELEMÉR SZUDY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dr. ANDREW FALL
MANAGING EDITOR

Vol. VI. No. 7.

DECEMBER, 1938.

The future of Ruthenia and the right of self-determination
By **Dr. ANDREW FALL**

**Minister Petrescu-Comnen's "Nationality Exchange" Scheme
and — The Facts**
By **BÉLA DE KENÉZ, LL. D.**

**Ruthenia After the Carrying into effect of the Munich
Agreement**
By **E. TARJÁN**

Hungary's New Northern Frontiers

The Re-Construction of the Czecho-Slovak State

Political Mosaic

How Minorities Live

Books

Political Economy

Price 50 Fill.

Subscription one year 6 Pengő.

THE FUTURE OF RUTHENIA AND THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

BY

Dr. ANDREW FALL

European public opinion follows with increasing interest and growing sympathy the heroic struggle of the Ruthenian people to obtain the right of self-determination expressly guaranteed them nearly twenty years ago by the drafters of the Paris Peace Treaties, which right was placed under the protection of the League of Nations.

The moment the Munich Four-Power Agreement had accepted the right of self-determination as the principle to be followed in reconstructing the arbitrarily and artificially created Czecho-Slovak Republic, the desire to escape from the Czech yoke awoke with elemental force in the oppressed and starving people of Ruthenia. They now demand the application to themselves of the principle of self-determination, which was denied to them in 1919, although it was preached by President Wilson at the end of the war as the basis of equitable peace and was accepted as such by the Entente Powers. For, at the close of the war, on 11th February, 1918, President Wilson in his third message to the United States of America set forth under four points the conditions of lasting peace. These points were:

1. The postulates of justice must be kept in view.
2. Peoples and provinces cannot be pushed arbitrarily from one State to another like chessmen on the chessboard.
3. Territorial questions must always be settled in accordance with the interests of the inhabitants concerned.

4. Nationality claims must be satisfied in the fullest measure.

In these four points President Wilson expressly advocated the right of self-determination; and this attitude of his was adopted in full by the Entente Powers.

Nevertheless, the Peace Treaties entirely ignored the principle of self-determination. For instance, the Ruthenians were detached from Hungary against their will and without even their wishes being consulted. The resolution adopted in Scranton on 12th November, 1918, by the National Council of Ruthenians in America, cannot be regarded as the expression of the will of the Ruthenian people, since it was passed, not only by Ruthenians from Hungary, but also by Ruthenians who had emigrated to America from Galicia, Bukovina and Russia. The most important of the Ruthenian National Councils existing in Ruthenia in the November of 1918 was that formed in Ungvár, the capital of the province, and this Council decided in favour of remaining in Hungary.

At the outset the Czechs had not thought of acquiring possession of Ruthenia. Beneš's sixth memorandum to the Peace Conference says: — "The Ruthenians of Hungary have never belonged to Czecho-Slovak regions and the Czecho-Slovak Republic cannot lay claim to their territory." (*Les Ruthènes de Hongrie n'ont jamais appartenu aux régions tchécoslovaques et la République tchécoslovaque n'émet pas de prétentions sur leur territoire.*)

But when Beneš saw that he could get what he wanted in Paris, he misled the Peace Conference with false statements. Thus, to gain possession of Ruthenia, he made use of the Scranton resolution, and the Czechs became masters of that province. Articles 10—13 of the treaty concluded on 10th September, 1919, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye between the Allied and Associated Powers and Czecho-Slovakia, which came into force on 6th June, 1920, deal with Ruthenia and guarantee that province the full measure of autonomy compatible with the unity of the Czecho-Slovak State.

For this autonomy, guaranteed by treaty, the Ruthenian

people have been struggling in vain for the past twenty years, for the Czechs have resorted to all sorts of 'subterfuges to avoid having to grant it.

At the conference held in Munich on 29th September of the current year the four leading Great Powers of Europe adopted the principle of self-determination, and on the basis thereof decided on the liberation of the nationalities in Czecho-Slovakia. In accordance with this principle Germany obtained the Sudeten German districts and Poland the areas with a Polish majority, while on the strength of the Vienna Italo-German arbitral award Hungary has received the predominantly Hungarian territories. The Great Powers, however, forgot to provide the population of Ruthenia with an opportunity of expressing their will freely.

The Prague Government again refused to entertain the idea of a just solution of the question of Ruthenian autonomy. Without consulting the Ruthenian people, it appointed Ignatius Párkány Governor of that Province, and to throw dust in the eyes of the world, quickly formed a Ruthenian Government with Andrew Bródy, a Member of Parliament, as Premier. This took place on 10th October.

The Ruthenians immediately realized that the Government's intention was merely to mislead foreign opinion and to make the world believe that the Ruthenians were now free and independent. Remembering the lessons of the past, they clearly understood that the Ruthenian Government appointed by Prague was only of ephemeral significance and had no practical value whatsoever. They did not believe in this pseudo-freedom, and immediately inaugurated a struggle for independence. Ruthenia became the scene of bloody battles — a second Macedonia. As a result of the pressure brought to bear on their Government by the people, the former, on 22nd October, discussed the question of Ruthenia's final frontiers, and on the same day 386 Ruthenian villages lodged a petition with the Great Powers, asking to be allowed to decide the question of their independence and choose for themselves the State to which they wish to belong.

The Prague Government was anything but pleased to see this serious attempt on the part of the Ruthenians to achieve independence, and on 26th October Premier Andrew Bródy was deprived of his office and August Volosin appointed Premier instead. The appointment of the latter was made by telephone.

On 27th October the Prague Government, flouting the principle of self-determination, arrested Andrew Bródy, who 17 days earlier had been appointed Premier by that same Government and whose only crime was that he had demanded self-determination for his people. On 29th October Andrew Bródy was taken to Prague, where he was thrown into prison. This real leader of the Ruthenian people is still a prisoner in a Prague gaol.

The appointment of Premier Volosin was another outrage on the principles adopted by the Munich Four-Power Conference, for Volosin has always been a leader of the panslav and Bolshevik trend and an enemy of Ruthenian interests.

The European Great Powers — in the first place Germany and Italy, the champions of self-determination — cannot stand by with folded arms and see the Ruthenian movement for independence being strangled by Prague. Both Herr Hitler, Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, and Signor Mussolini, Italy's Prime Minister, have on more than one occasion spoken in favour of the principle of self-determination, and for this very reason the people of Ruthenia look to these two powerful statesmen to support them in their struggle for independence.

For twenty years the Ruthenians have suffered economic, cultural and political oppression at the hands of the Czechs. They were forced to allow Ruthenia to be turned into an air-force basis for Bolshevik Russia. Against the interests of the Ruthenians the Prague Government has always encouraged Czech and Ukrainian culture. In the field of politics the Ruthenian people have not been allowed to assert themselves. And the measure of the economic destitution to which they have been reduced may be gathered from the appalling picture

of Ruthenian poverty painted by M. Ulman, the Ruthenian director of the Czecho-Slovak Red Cross, in his report of 30th September, 1932, which we published in the November issue of this paper. This report gives a full description of the economic oppression of the Ruthenians.

The peace of Europe demands that the Ruthenians should at last be allowed to enjoy liberty and to forge the economic links without which their prosperity is inconceivable. Their only possibility of development lies in their attachment, with full independence guaranteed, to Hungary. Even from the report of the Czech Red Cross director, M. Ulman, it may be gathered that the Hungarian nation did everything possible to ameliorate conditions in Ruthenia. The forest area of that province and the Great Plain of Hungary complemented each other from an economic point of view. The people of Ruthenia were always able to earn a livelihood in the Great Plain, and the Lowlands were supplied with timber from the mountainous regions.

The people of Ruthenia long for peace after twenty years of suffering. One after another the villages of Ruthenia announce their desire to separate from Czecho-Slovakia, and they expect support in their just struggle from Germany and Italy. Neither those two countries nor the rest of Europe can deny the people of Ruthenia the right to make their own choice in accordance with the principle of self-determination.

— y —