

PROFESSOR JORGA IN NAGYVÁRAD

BY

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The Munich Agreement, followed by the Vienna award, which signified a denial of the *status quo* and introduced the ethnic principle as a determining factor in the reconstruction of Central Europe, gave rise to great anxiety in Rumania, where 2 million Hungarians live separated from their native country. This explains why it was considered expedient to send M. Nicholas Jorga, professor in the Bucharest University and quondam Premier, down to Nagyvárad on 1st December to attend the jubilee celebrations held to commemorate Rumania's acquisition of 102.000 square kilometres of territory from Hungary 20 years ago. M. Jorga's mission was to strengthen Rumanian national consciousness in that region.

In a speech lasting one hour and 20 minutes, which was delivered in the Nagyvárad theatre, Professor Jorga did his best to fulfil that mission. This speech was a classical illustration of the anxiety felt by the Rumanians on account of the revision movement, of their boundless prejudice against the Hungarians and of how a scientist manages to falsify facts and history. Let us examine Professor Jorga's speech as reported in detail in No. 331 of the "Universul", 4th December, 1938.

In one passage the Professor said that he had no objection to the Hungarian people, for "the Hungarians were a very worthy people, very industrious, very brave, often loyal to the State (the Rumanian State. Ed.) and content to live within the limits of their rights." After this dubious praise M. Jorga went on to pour abuse on the leaders of the Hungarian nation, whom he called "certain Budapest gentlemen who live today as their ancestors did in 1700, with the same ideas, the same feelings, the same prejudices, the same ambitions, fit for nothing but to destroy their own country as their forbears had ruined it once before, so that had the Austrians not come to drag them out of the sealed tomb into which they were cast by the Turks, Hungary would not exist today; for old Hungary was slain at the battle of Mohács, by the repre-

sentatives of the Kingdom, who failed in their duty to the nation." What a misrepresentation of historical facts! It is a misrepresentation to say that the leaders of the Hungarian nation are behind the times. In 1848 a great transformation took place in Hungary; the nation of its own accord did away with the medieval barriers that divided the nationalities into privileged and un-privileged classes, and the Parliamentary Constitution of new Hungary, which even today is the most jealously guarded treasure of the nation, was framed on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. It is a misrepresentation to allege that it was the fault of the ruling classes in Hungary that the country fell a prey to the Turks. Undoubtedly the disaster at Mohács was partly due to the disunion then prevailing, but this one battle alone was not responsible for the fate that overtook the nation. The truth is that for three centuries Hungary was left to fight unaided against greatly superior Turkish forces and was almost bled white in this heroic struggle. The vital forces of the nation were drained, but it was thanks to this gigantic effort and to these sacrifices that Western Europe was spared the horrors of a Turkish invasion and was free to develop in peace. It is also a misrepresentation to say that Hungary was delivered from the Turkish yoke by Austria. The truth is that when Hungary was almost completely exhausted by centuries of fighting and was no longer able to defend Western Europe, the latter, realizing the imminence of the danger threatening, decided to help Hungary against the Turks. This joint action then put a definitive end to Turkish expansion. Only a man wholly prejudiced against Hungary could find an excuse for abusing this country in the records of that glorious and heroic struggle. The truth was stated by the French historian Michelet, who said: "The self-sacrifice with which Hungary saved the civilization of Western Europe from the Turkish invasion is incalculable. When shall we pay our debt of gratitude to the splendid Hungarian nation, the saviours of the West?"

In another part of his speech Professor Jorga criticized "*La Hongrie et la Civilisation*", a work by George Lukács that was published in Paris, and rashly declared that Hungarian civilization was a borrowed one, a civilization adopted from foreign sources, and that it had been unable to produce anything original. It is very difficult to argue against a careless, unsubstantiated statement of this sort, but we must not omit to point out that scarcely any nation — not excepting the greatest nations of the world — has enriched civilization with more eminent intellectual leaders than Hungary. Gigantic intellects like Petőfi and Madách in poetry, Munkácsy in painting, and Bolyai, Roland Eötvös in mathematics, though typically Hungarian, shine bright among the stars of the first magnitude in the world's intellectual firmament. It cannot be denied that Hungary has borrowed from foreign civilizations, but she has also lent to them. Though always

compelled to stand sword in hand, Hungary nevertheless found time to participate in the progress of civilization. She never withdrew from the influence of Western ideas; adopting them, she enriched them with her own special values by means of a reciprocal give and take. In refutation of Professor Jorga's rash statement we might give a list of the world-famed products of Hungarian architecture, painting, sculpture, industrial art, science, literature, poetry, music and mechanical science — each a typical example of original Hungarian work. But even this would probably fail to convince the Professor, for he is so prejudiced that in his Nagyvárad speech he denied the Hungarian character of the tulip motif in the ornamentation of the Marosvásárhely concert hall, a building he himself described as beautiful, though everyone knows that the tulip is an ancient form of decoration of Turanian origin. Professor Jorga's assertion that tulips were carved on the trunks given to Saxon girls in Brassó on the occasion of their marriage, does not prove that the tulip is not a Hungarian motif, but that — as is only natural — Hungarian influences have made themselves felt among the Saxons of that region.

M. Jorga cast doubts on the Hungarian character of Nagyvárad. Speaking of the historical fact that the mortal remains of St. Ladislas, King of Hungary, rest in that town, he made the following mocking and irreverent remark: "It is not what you give to the soil in the way of rotten bones that makes it yours, but what you give to everybody of your creative energy." Well then, we also declare that Hungary's legitimate claim to Nagyvárad and Bihar County does not rest on the fact that the bones of the Hungarian Kings, St. Ladislas, Stephen II, Andrew II, Ladislas IV and Sigismund rest in Nagyvárad. Our claim is based on the historical fact that the area of Nagyvárad and Bihar County is part of the territory occupied by the ancient Hungarians and that it is closely connected, ethnographically and geographically, with the Great Plain of Hungary, from which no natural frontier divides it. It belongs to the coherent area of land on the western frontier of present-day Rumania on which over 400.000 Hungarians dwell.

In connection with the migration of the peoples, Professor Jorga said that the Hungarians arrived in Transylvania much later than the Rumanians. History, on the other hand, shows that Transylvania was occupied by the ancient Hungarians and that it was the Rumanians who filtered into the country later on, thanks to the good-will of the Hungarian landowners.

The Professor — having in mind no doubt the Phanariots of the Regat (Old Rumania) — declared that the Turkish rule of the sixteenth century was better than that of the Hungarian era. He also praised the Austrian era, admitting that it helped to promote the spread of the nationalities at the expense of the autochthonous Hungarian population and made it possible for the

Macedo-Rumanian merchants to build a beautiful church in Nagyvárad. He even asserts that it was not the Hungarians but the Macedo-Rumanian merchants who created flourishing economic conditions in Bihar County. But these merchants were men of Greek and Slav origin, and Rumanians. The idea that flourishing economic conditions were created by Macedo-Rumanian merchants is, in any case, a far-fetched hobby of Professor Jorga's. From it he builds up his theory of the development of Rumanian life in Bihar County, and he falsely states that Nagyvárad belonged to the Germans and the Serbs and that a large section of its inhabitants was composed of peasants from Rumanian villages. He represented Nagyvárad, which, as regards its historical past, had been one of Hungary's most important towns, as a little country place of no importance to Hungary, where a few useless Latin books were written. Nagyvárad, where there were sixteen Roman Catholic churches (including a beautiful cathedral), to say nothing of ancient Calvinist and Lutheran ones, where there was a series of cultural institutions, a Royal Academy of Law, a Roman Catholic seminary, ancient Hungarian denominational elementary and secondary schools, teachers' training colleges, a military academy, an orphanage, a printing-press (established in 1558), a theatre, etc. and where in 1777 Maria Theresa established a Greek Catholic Bishopric in addition to the ancient Roman Catholic one. Professor Jorga's disparagement was directed against the Hungarian era, which — he asserted — treated the allegedly Rumanian town of Nagyvárad with neglect! The truth, on the contrary, is that the town of St. Ladislas was practically the apple of Hungary's eye and that it was always, and still is, a Hungarian town. The statistics showing the nationality quotas of the population prove that the Magyars strongly predominated. In 1910 Nagyvárad had a population of 64.169 souls. Of these 58.421 were Magyars and only 3604 Rumanians. And if we examine the distribution of the population according to the number of members of the various eastern churches, we find that of the Greek Orthodox Church was 4649 and that of the Greek Catholic Church 3385. Taking all the Greek Catholics and all the adherents of the Greek Orthodox Church as Rumanians, the number of Rumanians in Nagyvárad in 1910 was scarcely more than 8000, as compared with a Magyar population of 55.000.

All Professor Jorga's efforts in Nagyvárad — that town of the Hungarian plain — will prove fruitless. The course of revision has begun and neither the Professor nor anybody else will be able to check it. Would it not be wiser to follow Czecho-Slovakia's example and voluntarily restore the areas inhabited by Hungarians?

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