

GLORY IN DEFEAT

BY

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The Finnish-Russian war is over; the war is over, and the defeat of Suomi is shedding a halo of glory over the European firmament — a glory like that of the wondrous Aurora Borealis. There can be no questioning that in this war there was only one victor — the vanquished Party. Previously too we knew that the Finns were an eminent people which trains its sons to will-power and selflessness; that these sons of a great people at international sport gatherings have displayed splendid achievements that have taken the world by surprise and dazzled mankind at large. In the future the Finnish flag, which has so often flown high aloft on the flagstaves of Olympic stadions, will for ever wave high above the heads of the peoples. To Suomi in the future is due a place in the front rank of humanity.

Some foreign newspaper or other has written something to the effect that *“reality has proved stronger than the heroism of a small people displayed on a badly chosen occasion.”* This way of thinking is by no means unknown to us. An intellect bred in the atmosphere of a Great Power is inclined to base the future of mankind upon the statistics relating to the number of divisions. We however are well aware that world history is not a simple arithmetical equation, moral forces playing in its development a far greater role than physical forces.

We Hungarians have learned from the story of our own people that there are defeats which are more desirable than certain victories. For centuries Hungary had to fight for her life between two World Powers, not being able with the scanty physical means at her disposal to rout either decisively; but in the end she came off better than either of the Powers which had overcome her. The marvellous survival of our nation was due, not to victories on the battlefield, but to the

fact that a Nicholas Zrinyi was able to vindicate his honour even in defeat. Nicholas Zrinyi, Prince Rákóczi, the thirteen Martyr Generals done to death in Arad in 1849, and all the innumerable heroes whose defeat shed a halo of glory round their head, though they were beaten on the battlefield, enhanced the authority of their nation, securing it friends and giving it an object in life and vital energy.

Without the events of 1848 and the surrender at Világos in 1849, the country would probably have lost its way and fallen into the swamp of the squabbles of squirearchy and of an inferiority complex. Experience shows that a defeat not involving any breach of honour is able to let loose vital energies calculated to ensure the survival of a nation for centuries. As Nietsche says, peoples find it harder to accept victory than to accept defeat.

The future will show that the real victors of the War in the North are the Finns, the vanquished being the other peoples of Europe. Without exception! Above all Soviet Russia might be said to have won an annihilating victory — annihilating to herself. Rarely has the prestige of a militarist Great Power been so seriously damaged. There can be no doubt that in the future Russia will not be so desirable as an ally or so formidable as an enemy as she was prior to the Finnish war. It is questionable whether the value represented by the conquered Finnish territories is sufficient to counterbalance so serious a moral reverse!

We Hungarians certainly feel the greatest esteem and sympathy for Suomi's two other neighbours, Sweden and Norway; and that is what makes us regret profoundly that the war should have made these two nations realise so terribly their incapacity. It will take them a long time to recover from the havoc wrought by neutrality. In all probability they will very soon conclude a military alliance with Finland; and one day maybe — at a distance from the Mannerheim Line — they will have to fight the fight they have just shrunk from under far less favourable conditions.

The French Press with impressive sincerity establishes the fact that the Treaty of Moscow has put the seal on the terrible moral reverse suffered by the Western Powers. The Paris papers are bitterly reproaching the diplomacy of the

Allies for all that has happened in the Finnish affair, — and still more for what did not happen. What these papers cast in the teeth of that diplomacy is inactivity and indolence, a lack of enterprise, an absence of the courage to take the initiative, prattle and talk and hair-splitting.

For the moment Europe is in a state of humiliation. All peoples alike are dimly sensible that what has been lost near Viipuri and on the shores of Lake Ladoga is invaluable. But the greatest loss of all is that suffered by diplomacy, which has been stripped naked by the Treaty of Moscow. And in reality what has happened? Europe's smallest child was attacked by a mighty giant; and from the very first moment the whole world realised fully that the child must be assisted without fail and without delay: this refrain was repeated week after week with such tragicomic zeal by the diplomatic chorus that in the end it assumed the guise of a parody. In the literary cafés of every big European city bets were made that the assistance promised the Finns would never materialise and that the helpers would keep on holding council and meditating until it would be too late.

We must make up our minds to reconcile ourselves to the fact that European politics has lost the very capacity of acting logically and with common sense. Diplomacy has somehow got entangled in some stereotype bureaucratic makeshift the chief *motifs* of which are cunctatorism and malevolence. We are not in the least inclined to believe that the Finnish war has enabled any one to secure diplomatic laurels. Certainly not; only Decay and Negation are likely to profit by that war.

And to us the future of the peoples of Europe would indeed seem dark and gloomy and hopeless if there were no such people among them as the Finns.