

# DANUBIAN REVIEW

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# LORD ROTHERMERE

BY

FRANCIS HERCZEG

**D**uring the last ten years, every time any one in Hungary spoke of "His Lordship", every one knew that *Viscount Rothermere* was the person referred to. His figure occupied a position in the spiritual world of the Hungarians of post-Trianon Hungary roughly the same as that of the look-out tower on Jánoshegy in the landscape of Budapest, which is high up among the clouds and is yet visible from every point. The sentimental ties binding His Lordship to the Hungarians were a quite exceptional phenomenon, — a private person in intimate friendship with a whole nation; this friendship being for the nation too so much a living reality that every class of the community was conscious of the duties and rights involved thereby.

*When in 1927 His Lordship demanded a place in the sun for Hungary, the mighty echo which reverberated every word written by this prince of journalists converted the sufferings of the Hungarians into a problem of international politics.* We still remember vividly the gestures of surprise, indignation and horror with which the statesmen of the Little Entente received His Lordship's statements. These statesmen had been convinced that the spoils which they had obtained at so small a cost were their indisputable possession for all time. They had firmly believed that the Hungarian people was definitively dead and buried, Trianon having rolled stones of such weight over its grave that it would never be able to rise again.

His Lordship's first article started the process of dissolution — noiseless but all the quicker in its action — which

annihilated the vitality of the Little Entente. The world began to doubt in the future of Czecho-Slovakia and Greater Rumania; indeed, even the Czecho-Slovaks and the Pan-Rumanians lost their capacity to believe in themselves. The real significance of His Lordship's attitude lay however in its effect upon the spiritual life of the Hungarians. The nation which had been veritably ostracised from the community of civilised peoples began once more to believe and hope, found itself again, recovered its former self-respect and dignity and started on the path of regeneration.

The situation was then already ripe; there was an acute tension in men's minds; the Hungarian people was saturated with suppressed energy; but a spark was needed to fire the mines. This spark was kindled in the soul of the Hungarian people by His Lordship. He demanded justice for Hungary, desiring that there should be a peaceful revision of the treaties of peace and thereby offering the world that healing balsam which might have saved the peace of Europe then tottering to its fall. What so many famous statesmen had failed to understand, His Lordship's keenness of vision enabled him to realise; and he proclaimed aloud and openly that a stabilisation of the conditions induced by the Paris Treaties of Peace must necessarily plunge Europe into a fresh welter of bloodshed. We remember that His Lordship went repeatedly to Berlin and Rome to secure mighty supporters for his campaign of peace. And he did achieve successes: the public opinion of the States which had been victorious in the first Great War ultimately came to realise that Hungary had been wronged; but unfortunately the Governments and Geneva did not possess the moral courage to take the consequences of their conviction. And the fate of Europe was accomplished. If asked in the other world to give an account of his earthly life His Lordship will be able to say, "*It was not my fault*".

And now, across the ocean, over a Continent in flames, we must bid a final farewell to the great friend of the Hungarians. During the closing months of his life he was separated from us by a world racking itself to death in a bloody war; but the gratitude of the nation and its reverence will find its way to the Man who had the courage to offer us his hand in the darkest and saddest days of Hungarian history.

*In the personality of His Lordship, which was pregnant with power and energy and life, there was always something which seemed to us superhuman — almost titanic; but in his death his figure — like that of a felled tree — looms ever larger in our eyes. We look upon him as upon a fallen hero. And he was a hero — the hero of justice and will.*

OSZK  
Országos Széchényi Könyvtár

