

# DANUBIAN REVIEW

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# WHAT THE ENEMIES OF SUBCARPATHIA AND THE RUTHENIAN PEOPLE DREAM OF

BY

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In the March of 1936, the 18th year of the former Czechoslovak Republic's existence, a sort of almanach, 330 pages in volume and illustrated with photographs, was edited by *Jaroslav Zatloukai*. Its title was "Podkarpatské Rus"; it was published by the club of the Pozsony "friends" of that area, and it dealt with the economic, cultural and political problems of Subcarpathia. Articles written by Czech and Ruthenian men of note in politics and public life were scattered through the book, on the 9th page of which the editor put the following question: — "Have we done and are we doing everything for Subcarpathia that this neglected but important part of our country expects and deserves?" He then went on to answer it in the following sentences: — "By no means. We ought to do much more systematic work, we must become better acquainted with Ruthenian conditions, and Czechoslovak public opinion must show much greater interest in them than heretofore. We have devoted very little attention to Ruthenian literature and art. We have — very wrongly — neglected Subcarpathia in that respect. We ought to foster Ruthenian literature and art, encourage the production of native works of art and do many other things for that province. *In the interests of the security of the State we would need to show a greater measure of goodwill and political honesty.* With goodwill that manifests itself in work and deeds, we ought to bridge the gulf that yawns between the eastern and western parts of this country." Farther on the editor writes of Hungarian, Polish and German propaganda in Subcarpathia, and finally comforts himself and his readers with the following words about the detested but ever-present idea of revision: — "Our enemies abroad should not forget what was said by Alexei

Tolstoi on one occasion, — that the Soviet respected her Czecho-Slovak allies and was determined to strike with all the terrible force of her 175 million subjects, should any attack be made by an enemy on the independence of the Czecho-Slovak Republic."

Today it is interesting to read this frank confession made by a Czecho-Slovak patriot about Subcarpathia and the Ruthenian people, particularly in view of the fact that those Czecho-Slovak patriots *were much too late with their unprejudiced ideas*, and never succeeded in bridging the gulf that yawned between Prague and Ungvár. *That gulf was widened by the behaviour of the more shortsighted among them.* Even in the last year of the Republic's existence, for instance, both the writers and readers of the "Podkarpatské Hlasy" of Ungvár, a Czech daily newspaper, were guilty of repeatedly deriding, disparaging and slandering the Ruthenian people. The gulf was bound to grow wider in any case. Two peoples arbitrarily forced to live in one Republic within wholly impossible frontiers, and forced to do so although all the geographical factors, historical traditions and psychological differences were against this union, would never have been able to co-operate in a brotherly spirit or join hands in the work of state-building. The Czecho-Slovak plans were bound to prove a failure, *even although the Czechs were prepared, should the security of the Republic demand it, to allow the Soviet to take possession of Subcarpathia, if by doing so they could save their own skins.* The Czecho-Slovak hope that the terrible fist of a nation 175 million strong would strike down on those who attempted to bring about the dissolution of the Republic, proved an empty illusion. For now, three years after the collapse of Czecho-Slovakia, her protector himself is on his back, with both shoulders on the ground, struck down by the relentless hand of historical justice. The armies of the Axis Powers, together with our own heroic army, are now, in spite of all the struggles of the Soviet colossus, enforcing that justice a thousand kilometres distant from the frontiers of St. Stephen's Realm.

But the Czecho-Slovak "patriots" who, headed by Beneš, saved their own skins by flight to a foreign country, cannot

resign themselves to the vanishing of their illusions. They are again making propaganda abroad, as they did decades ago, and are *foolish enough to believe that they can revive their Republic, which was a puny nursling from the moment of its birth, in its original form.*

In particular their National Council has cast its net to take the Ruthenians of America in its toils, and by fishing in troubled waters hopes to make a good catch. It is but natural that here and there their efforts should meet with success.

In the person of Ivan Ladisinszky, a man from the Eperjes district, Beneš has found a willing tool for his "redivivus" propaganda, an instrument wherewith to begin his little game among the Ruthenians in overseas countries. The dollars belonging to the Prague Treasury which "Papa Beneš" managed to send abroad roll into the pockets of Ladisinszky and his associates, and immediately there is formed under his leadership a society calling itself the "Union of Carpatho-Russians of America" the aim of which is to re-attach Subcarpathia to a Czecho-Slovak Republic which they hope will arise from the dead at the peace negotiations following the close of the present war.

It is characteristic of Ladisinszky and his associates, (men who, in point of fact, have no connection with Subcarpathia, but are determined to play a role in its affairs) that they have no pity to waste on the some 200.000 Ruthenians left outside Hungary. *Instead of concerning themselves with the impossible political, cultural and economic conditions under which those people live, they confine their activities to the self-appointed task of representing the Subcarpathian areas restored by virtue of ancient right to the Crown of St. Stephen.* Among their small number of adherents they are spreading false information about those areas, when they would do better to hasten to the aid of their sorely oppressed Ruthenian kindred in the countries adjoining Hungary.

There they might learn how those 200.000 Ruthenian brethren of theirs are living their own "racial and cultural life", and see for themselves how ardently, with heart and



soul, they long to join their kindred within the confines of St. Stephen's Realm. *Instead, by means of lying pamphlets couched in impossibly bad Ruthenian, Ladisinszky and his friends are trying to poison the minds of the Ruthenians at home and abroad against Hungary and the St. Stephen principle.* Their spiritual guide and master in this work is a certain Emmanuel Handelsman, a former agrarian politician who hates the Magyars and who with propaganda money received from Beneš managed to escape from Ungvár to America.

Ladisinszky & Handelsman, this "*nobile par fratrum*" with the American business spirit, are lauding Czecho-Slovak democracy to the same Ruthenians of America who at the time of its "flowering" were so disgusted with certain manifestations of the "brotherly love" existing between the Czecho-Slovaks and the rest of the Slavs that they adopted an attitude so decidedly antagonistic to the Czecho-Slovak Government that *their Press organs were put on the black list and not allowed into the Republic.*

In one of the Ladisinszky-Handelsman pamphlets we read that "hundreds of thousands of Czecho-Slovaks are ready to sacrifice their lives for their country" (including naturally Subcarpathia, for it was *their* "country" through twenty bitter years and not the country of the Ruthenians). Well, this statement is such a good joke that all we can do is to laugh at it. That same pamphlet also states that during the Czecho-Slovak era there were 7 Ruthenian chief magistrates in Subcarpathia, whereas now there are none. The truth, on the contrary, is that *as soon as civil administration was introduced, the Hungarian Minister for the Interior immediately appointed 9 Ruthenian chief magistrates and 2 other Ruthenian agents, most of them young men who, with one single exception, continue to hold these posts.* And need we mention the number of other administrative officials appointed the great majority of whom are either Ruthenians or of Ruthenian extraction?

The pamphlet contains utterly false data about education in Subcarpathia. Without repeating them, we shall merely note that teaching is going on in 2175 elementary classes and that the 119.420 elementary school children are

distributed in 1171 classrooms. As regards nationality, the distribution of these school children is as follows: *Ruthenians 97.074, Jews 13.165, Slovaks 4415, Magyars 3007 and Germans 1759. The teaching staffs consist of 2027 elementary school teachers and 75 matrons.* The slight shortage of teachers still existing will be eliminated in the shortest possible time.

The Ruthenian secondary schools at Ungvár, Munkács and Huszt continue to function. Together they represent 50 classes. This year 1943 pupils were registered, of whom (deducting the 195 who attend the eight-class Magyar grammar-school at Huszt) 1746 are students of the Ruthenian secondary schools. In the Ruthenian secondary schools at Munkács the first class for girls was opened this year and 51 pupils were enrolled in it. The Ministry of Education is preparing to take further welcome steps to do away with the pernicious co-educational system of the Czecho-Slovak régime. In the Ruthenian secondary schools mentioned above the staffs of teachers consist of 3 headmasters and 87 teachers. The only Ruthenian secondary school closed was the grammar-school at Beregszász, which was a typical creation of Czecho-Slovak Slav nationalism and an anomaly in a purely Magyar town and district. Subcarpathia also possesses one women and two men teachers' training colleges (at Munkács and Ungvár), where all the classes are taught in Ruthenian. The number of students attending them is about 360. There is therefore no sign of any educational retrogression since the restoration of this area.

The 2621 pupils attending the 12 board-schools situated in Subcarpathia are taught by 118 teachers. Of the total number of classes 40, with 1610 pupils, are Ruthenian. A few board-schools had to be closed, because they merely added to the number of the half-educated proletariat in Subcarpathia, for whom no Government would have been able to provide a livelihood. Today Ruthenian parents are beginning to realize that the vocation of these schools is to prepare the children for further education in practical subjects (economy, industry and trade) and not to produce a semi-educated class incapable of making good in life.

No mention is made, naturally, in that tissue of lies of

the 200 Czech elementary schools and the superfluous number of secondary schools established in Subcarpathia by the Czech educational authorities; nor is anything said about the fact that during the three years that have elapsed since that region was restored the Hungarian Ministry of Education has opened ten times as many Ruthenian elementary schools there — and this despite war conditions — than the Czechs did in the course of twenty years of peace.

The assertion contained in the pamphlet that only one-third of the members of both Houses of Parliament for Subcarpathia are Ruthenians, is also a falsehood, for after the death of two and the resignation of a third *the number of Ruthenian members of the Lower House is eight, and only the ninth member for Subcarpathia is of Magyar nationality. In the Upper House all the three members for Subcarpathia are Ruthenians.*

Ladisinszky and Handelsman shed crocodile tears over the three former Ruthenian "governors" (Zsalkovics, Beszkid and Hrabár), forgetting to say that with the best will in the world they were but spiritless puppets in the hands of the Czech centralistic administration.

They also deplore the flight from Subcarpathia to Slovakia and Russia of 1400 (?) teachers and their supporters. It is indeed true that the Ukrainian emigrants and their friends fled from the area restored to the thousand-year-old Realm of St. Stephen. They were literally swept off its soil as traitors and enemies of the Ruthenian people after their welcome restoration to Hungary.

Those who feel drawn towards the regions beyond the Carpathians may now safely betake themselves there. The monster of Bolshevism has sacrificed hecatombs of Ukrainians and Russians to further its own vile plans, so that there is room and to spare for men in the Ukraine. Let those who are itching for something to do hasten — if they are the idealists they pretend to be — to the aid of their Ruthenian kindred in the regions beyond the Carpathians.

In conclusion the pamphlet declares that "by law Subcarpathia still belongs to the Czecho-Slovak Republic..." Our answer is that according to the "law" of robbery Sub-



carpathia belonged to Czecho-Slovak Republic for twenty miserable years. Today, however, thanks to Providence and the logic of historical justice, it does not; and the brave Hungarian army will see to it that no band of gangsters ever sets foot in Subcarpathia again. *In this task the Hungarian soldiers will be assisted by their Ruthenian comrades, the descendants of men who for a thousand years loyally and heroically helped to defend their beloved Hungarian fatherland against all aggression.*

The best answer to Ladisinszky's and Handelsman's ridiculous and feeble arguments was given by a meeting of the Subcarpathian Advisory Board held on 29th October last, at which the following resolution was passed: —

"On behalf of the Ruthenian people, we the members of the Subcarpathian Advisory Board unanimously and wholly repudiate the aims and endeavours of Beneš's Czecho-Slovak propaganda loudly proclaimed, especially among the Ruthenians of America, but also in other foreign countries, *as we resolutely oppose the idea that the areas of Subcarpathia should ever again be separated from the Holy Crown of Hungary.*

"During the two decades of Czecho-Slovak oppression the Ruthenians of Subcarpathia had ample time and opportunity to discover the real meaning of Beneš's "Slav Brotherhood" and see what a terrible curse it was to them. For this reason they will have none of that false, so-called "Brotherhood". They wholly reject it as the greatest menace to the interests of the Ruthenian people.

"On the question of Czecho-Slovak oppression the Ruthenians of America for two decades held the same views as ourselves. The Subcarpathian Advisory Board therefore hopes and believes that their leaders and all the sober elements among them will not let themselves be deluded by Beneš's propaganda.

"As against all this propaganda and calumnies, *the Subcarpathian Advisory Board is convinced that the religious, cultural, economic, social and racial interests of the Ruthenian people are protected in the thousand-year-old Realm of St. Stephen.* On behalf of the Ruthenian people the Board expresses entire confidence in the Royal Hungarian



Government and in the person of the Governor appointed by the Regent."

This resolution, of which the above is a literal translation, was signed by Alexander Ilniczky, Adviser in Chief and Chairman of the Board, and by the following members thereof: John Rabár sen., Dr. Julius Marina, Michael Demkó, Dr. Peter Hepka, Julius Földesi, Alexander Csuha, Dr. Anthony Stéfán, John Retyiznek and Ladislas Balog. Copies were sent to the leaders of the Ruthenian societies and the Ruthenian newspapers in America.

In the resolution passed at *Szerednye* by the members of the Ruthenian youth society named after *John Kurtyák*, the vain, illusory aims of Beneš's propaganda and the vile calumnies spread by it were condemned in a similar fashion, and Ruthenian public opinion in America was informed of the fact.

These resolutions were undoubtedly conceived in the soul of the Ruthenian people. They were called into being by a serious and scrupulous study of the latter's vital interests and by the faithful watchfulness that stands guard over them.

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár