

# The Storm-Centre of Reaction

**T**HE outstanding political fact in Hungary today is the imminent return of the monarchy. That, at any rate, is what the politicians, and the gentlemen of the press who play the chorus to them, tell you with surprising frankness. Yet it needs no exceptional skill to discover that the country has something very much more real to worry about than the exact academic formula of her constitution. Hungary is, for all practical purposes, a monarchy at this moment, and not a scrupulously constitutional one either. She needs a king about as badly as a starving man needs a bottle of scent.

For the cities of Hungary, with as rich an agricultural hinterland as any in Europe, are literally starving. How? Because of the Peace; because of the Rumanians; because of the government, because of the peasants, and for a number of other reasons. The Rumanians made, it seems, a very thorough job of it when they sacked the country. They carried off not merely milch-cows and medicines, hospital blankets and plumbing fixtures: they helped themselves to all the food-stuffs they could get their hands on, and as a measure of precaution purely, they took with them the next year's seed-grains as well. That is surely one of the real factors in the present pitiful condition of the people of Budapest and the other large towns. Another is the shortage of coal and wood, which makes the moving of foodstuffs an uncertain undertaking. Much more serious is the circumstance—common to many other countries in Europe now—that the city has nothing to offer in exchange for food, and the peasant rather than make a gift of his potatoes and grain to the town worker feeds them to his pigs. The pigs, at any rate, he can later turn into pork which unlike the national paper money has a value in the world-market. Against the peasant, the existing government of the country is not in the best position to take drastic measures. It was easy for Bela Kun to requisition food from the country, because his support rested on the city proletariat. The government of Count Teleki, in so far as it depends on parliamentary alignments at all, derives authority from a coalition in which the agrarians are the dominant factor. Still, even the present cabinet sees no choice ahead other than starvation of the town or coercion of the country, and Premier Teleki informs me, with a grievous mien, that requisitioning will have to be resorted to,— and soon,— come what may.

The food situation (as well as the housing and

the fuel situation) is enormously and tragically complicated by the multitude of refugees that crowd the towns. The refugee is one of the pathetic oversights of the Peace. While some half-measures, I understand, have been adopted by the arbiters of Europe's destiny for the repatriation of soldier-prisoners, the wretched civilian exile has been left to be the foot-ball of all the petty statelets of central and eastern Europe and the buffer for all their mutual animosities, ancient and modern. He took up his stick and his bundle and began walking in 1914. He has been the vanguard of all the armies of all the wars, Great and Not-So-Great, ever since. He swarms in millions, with his old men and his babies, his women-folk and his sick, into every town and village of Europe that will admit him. He has swelled the population of Budapest from 800,000 to nearly 2,000,000 souls. If he is a Christian his lot is pitiable enough, but if he is a Jew—and a very large percentage of him, of course, is Jewish—it is unspeakable. For one of the achievements of the war to save civilization has been to make millions of Jews exiles in the countries of their birth—I mean, *de facto* exiles; I know all about the special rights written into the crisp, new constitutions of the brand new republics.

The problem of the refugee is fundamentally a political one, involving as it does the technical questions of status and allegiance on the one hand, and the elementary human right of freedom of movement and residence on the other. It is a European problem, and will eventually have to be taken hold of and solved by Europe cooperatively. What aggravates it, in the meantime, in this country is the political cast of the existing régime, which is really less a government than a punitive expedition. The spirit of vengeance takes itself out on "Bolsheviks"—which means labor organizations and their leaders, non-Magyar refugees, particularly Jewish ones, Jews generally, and all those who are incautious enough to fall into the comprehensive classification of "the economically dangerous to the state."

It is nearly a fortnight now since I have seen some two hundred of these assorted victims in the Schubhaus (police lock-up), and the memory of its frightfulness is as fresh and tormenting as on the day of my visit. It was a bitter cold morning, but the gray stone jail was unheated. The uniformed official who was my guide explained that there was a fuel shortage in the city. I looked about for beds.

Several iron cots bare of all covering were stacked up in the middle of the space. My informant, anticipating a question, volunteered the already well-known fact that the Rumanians had sacked Budapest the year before and had carried off everything. But who were these people, and why were they here? Well, they were alien refugees. They did not belong here. Hungary had enough to do to feed her own poor. The government had warned them that they must leave the country. They had not heeded the warning, and they were merely being detained on their way to internment camps or to deportation. A little girl of seven or eight with a tiny baby in her arms was studying me curiously. I asked her a question in German. She seemed not to understand. I addressed another child—there were between a dozen and a score of them. None of them knew German. Then I made a startling discovery. Seventy-five per cent of the prisoners spoke no other language than Hungarian. The so-called alien refugees were Jewish peasant folk from the lost provinces of Hungary. The majority of them had fled into Budapest when the Russians invaded Hungary in the early days of the war; some of them been living here for twenty years. They had fled for shelter to the capital of their own country in 1914; in 1920 the treaty of peace by a stroke of the pen had converted them into Czechoslovaks, Jugoslavs and Rumanians; and now the government of the only country they have ever known sends gendarmes in the grim hours between midnight and dawn to drag them from their beds like common criminals to the Schubhaus.

Sooner or later the decent opinion of mankind will have to bestir itself about a situation like this which reduces human beings to the level of stray cats and dogs. In justice to Hungary it should be said that what I have just described is not a peculiarly Hungarian condition. It is one of the symptoms of the disease which is eating at the vitals of European society. Philanthropy will not cure such a malady. Yet without the palliative charity (unhappily inadequate) of the Jewish relief societies of America the life of these unfortunates would be intolerable and of very short duration.

The status of the Jews in Hungary is one of the symptoms of the political and economic maladjustment of the country. I believe indeed that the status of minorities in general and the Jews in particular in any country is as accurate a gauge of its forward-going development as can be found. That is why I have paused so long on the subject in a general political article. The heartening promise for the future of Hungary is that anti-semitism has no roots whatever in the mentality of the masses, any more, I am fairly convinced, than monarchy

has. Both are confined to small cliques of aristocrats and business-men with an axe to grind, who leave the dirty work to as degenerate-looking a lot of officers as could be collected in Europe.

Interested parties in Budapest, in speaking of the certain restoration of the monarchy, invite your attention to the fact that here are no republicans about. I believe they are right. But when they go on to tell you that, with the exception of the socialists ("whom the Bolshevist adventure has discredited forever") all the political parties are monarchist, I am sure they are wrong. Hungary will doubtless have her king, maybe ere this article is in print. But it will not be because of the ardent wishes of the populace. The populace wants bread and fuel and houses, and, above all things, peace. That is the great tragedy of the defeated countries of central Europe, as well as of some that escaped listing as defeated, that the masses of the people have become politically indifferent. And it is this political indifferentism that I define as reaction. They will accept royalty, or bourgeois democracy, or Bolshevism—anything, so long as it comes without uproar. Perhaps, after all, they will prefer monarchy, since that is the least likely to incur the displeasure of the republican west.

Behind the monarchical mummerly there is a lively Schauspiel playing, which has real plot and movement and more than a dash of the good old technique. The other day I was talking to Count Apponyi and I happened casually to ask him who were the claimants to the throne. He straightened up rather dramatically and said: "The crowned king of Hungary lives. The throne has never been vacant." Well, that was impressive. Sentimental, perhaps, but grand. A little later, by way of illustrating the absurdity of the Peace of Trianon, the Count told me this: "My own estate is now in what is called Czechoslovakia. The government there does not allow me to go and see it. Neither do they allow my caretaker to come and see me here. I must meet him in Vienna when I want news of the place." The two observations, coming thus within a few moments of one another, have a symbolic affinity to each other, though I am quite certain Count Apponyi never thought of it.

The restoration of the monarchy, to the unsentimental, does not mean the return of the king merely. It means the reconstitution of the empire,—with this one difference, however, that from now on Hungary is to be the principal state and Budapest the imperial capital. To be sure, this is only one of a dozen schemes, one wilder than the other, that are whispered and laughed at and taken seriously, in a country whose politicians are really concerned with nothing else than the liberation of the

lost provinces. But this one is by far the grandest and the most plausible of them all. With Austria now gone white, with Czechoslovakia in constant turmoil, with Rumania corrupt and inefficient, the plan is really promising. Besides, the present arrangements really are economically impossible. Finally and chiefly, France is said to be not unfriendly. No one makes a secret of the opinion that the Disarmament Commission which arrived last week will disarm nobody,—not if the French prevail. The final battle with Bolshevism will come in the spring, and Hungary will be needed to save Poland and democracy. Hungary is more than willing. She is the only country that is willing. She was ready to step in, as is well known, last summer, when much to her disgust the Poles extricated themselves unaided. But in order to help she must have power and resources and moral encouragement. A Roland for an Oliver.

In the meantime light is breaking within the country. In spite of the continuing censorship of the press and the mails, in spite of the continued reign of Horthy's black detachments, in spite of the timidity of liberals and radicals, I believe the power of the terror is waning. The streets are safer at night than they were a week ago, and the censor talks apologetically and calls himself by new names. What has been needed for the past year is that one courageous man should speak out. Last Thursday week Deputy Ruppert supplied that need. In a historic speech in parliament, which he well knew might cost him his life, he boldly reviewed the career of the dictatorship, and in the name of the nation demanded an end to existing abuses. The newspapers carried his utterances in full. The country experienced a thrill. It was but a beginning. Perhaps others will follow.

MILES EVERETT ROSS.

Budapest, Hungary.

### When Autumn's Fruit

When Autumn's fruit is packed and stored,  
And barns are full of corn and grain;  
When leaves come tumbling down to earth,  
Shot down by wind or drops of rain:  
Then up the road we'll whistling go,  
And, with a heart that's merry,  
We'll rob the squirrel of a nut,  
Or blackbird of a berry.

When Winter's bare and cold for all,  
Save lovers with their spawnly eyes;  
And, like a horse that fleas annoy,  
We stamp, to make our spirits rise:  
Then out of doors we'll whistling go,  
And, with a heart that's merry,  
We'll feed—while richer squirrels sleep—  
The birds that have no berry.

W. H. DAVIES.

## Women in Industry

A REPORT issued not long ago by the new Women's Bureau in the Federal Department of Labor, and called *The New Position of Women in American Industry*, does really prove that this position is new. The survey on which the report is based was made by the Y. W. C. A. on the understanding that the Women's Bureau would publish the results. The object of the survey was to find out "not only what women in industry in the United States did for the World War but also what the World War did for women in industry."

During the war women had a chance to show what they could do in new and untried occupations. This amazingly complete report, which contains the results of questionnaires in many groups of industries, and specific and unperfunctory testimony from employers, and which records failures as carefully as successes, shows that in the nation as a whole women did their new work exceedingly well. So well—and here we come upon the most important of the facts which the report establishes—that their success has permanently widened the field of women in industry. Industries which formerly employed men chiefly or exclusively are now employing one woman to every nine men. Women have kept their places especially in the machine shop and the tool room. After the armistice there was of course a large general reduction in the number of women workers; but the Women's Bureau shows that in the metal trades, nine months after the armistice, the proportion of women was 191 per thousand workers, as against 178 per thousand just after the second draft. The Bureau cites facts like this as evidence that women workers have made good.

Such detailed proof of success, with all the failures recorded and none evaded, ought to result in giving women workers everywhere in the country a correspondingly greater freedom of choice of occupation. Baseless traditions and prejudices ought not to be rehabilitated. Facts and nothing else should be appealed to in determining which occupations are and which are not "suitable" for women. It is worse than idle to tell a worn-out waitress, who has recovered health and spirits during the war while driving a mail car, that the waitress job is more "suitable."

This insistence on greater freedom of choice for women workers comes at the right moment. Haven't we all taken to thinking of the women-in-industry movement as too exclusively an affair of protective legislation by states, of laws for eight hour days and a minimum wage and the abolition of night work? The Women's Bureau has urged