

Budapest's Fake Mission

BY IGNAC SCHULTZ

IGNAC SCHULTZ, former leader of the Hungarian minority in the Czechoslovak Parliament, fled from the Nazis through France, Norway, and Russia, and finally arrived in the United States.

A COMFORTABLE suite in the Hotel Marguery in New York City is the present headquarters of a Hungarian member of Parliament, Tibor de Eckhardt, whose mission in this country deserves more publicity than it has hitherto received. For his job is to arrange insurance against an Axis defeat for the feudal coterie which rules Hungary by the grace of Hitler.

The Budapest government has for a long time been playing the jackal to the German tiger and has been rewarded by choice morsels from the tiger's kills—portions of Czecho-Slovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. But it is by no means confident that Germany will finally win the war, and it wishes to arrange matters so that, if the tiger is destroyed, the jackal will not be forced to disgorge its gains. Meanwhile, of course, it proposes to go on serving the tiger, who after all may still prove the victor.

Mr. de Eckhardt reached this country by a roundabout route through Athens, Egypt, and South Africa. Officially he was not sent by the Hungarian government; he was merely given a passport and a permit to leave the country—precious papers not obtainable by persons who have incurred the disapproval of the authorities. Moreover, in all Nazi-dominated countries these matters are subject to the control of the Gestapo, which surely would have vetoed Mr. Eckhardt's exit visa had it regarded either him or his mission as opposed to German interests.

Yet in America Mr. de Eckhardt poses as an anti-Nazi and explains his objective as the formation of a united front of all people of Hungarian nationality or origin to rally support for an independent and democratic Hun-

gary. In this connection he is endeavoring to obtain the blessing of influential Americans, as well as the support of the leading Hungarian organizations in this country. According to the *Amerikai Magyar Nepszava*, a New York Hungarian-language daily which gives rather cautious support to the Budapest regime, he is being received in high American political and diplomatic circles. And it is known that he has twice conferred with Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles.

If Admiral Horthy's government is really restive under the Nazi yoke, as is sometimes asserted by poorly informed Magyarophiles, and wishes to make connections with the democratic countries, why did it choose this particular emissary? Let us examine Tibor de Eckhardt's claims to represent democratic opinion in Hungary in the light of his record. When still a very young man he became a leader of the "Awakening Magyars" and the "Race Defenders"—secret societies directly responsible for the white terror which ravaged Hungary after the collapse of Bela Kun's short-lived Bolshevik revolution. They were not merely anti-Communist but anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and fiercely chauvinistic. They were responsible for the murder of thousands, for the imprisonment of tens of thousands, of men and women. Their methods of terror and torture provided a model for the later activities of Mussolini's Blackshirts and Hitler's storm troopers.

It ought not to be forgotten that Hungary was the first fascist state in Europe. Some time before the March on Rome, years before the Reichstag fire, gentlemen like Tibor de Eckhardt were infecting Hungary with a disease destined to wreck the weakened constitutions of a dozen European states. Eckhardt and his associates have never expressed any remorse for their part in the birth of fascism.

After the white terror a new oligarchy was established in Hungary, half feudal, half fascist. As a reward for his services Eckhardt, who is related to the family of Admiral Horthy, was appointed chief of the press department of the Foreign Office. Later he performed similar functions in the Prime Minister's office. Some of his activities during this period went far outside the boundaries of legitimate propaganda. The Prague press



accused him of organizing armed bands in Slovakia with a view to undermining the stability of the new Czechoslovak state. It has also been alleged that he organized the manufacture and distribution of counterfeit Czechoslovak currency. This charge has not been proved, but the counterfeiting became public when one of his woman friends was arrested with the goods on her.

Eckhardt resigned his government post because he was denied cabinet office. He took refuge in domestic politics, gaining control of the *Kisgazda*, or Small Farmers' Party, which up to then had exercised a conservative but moderating influence in the Hungarian Parliament. In his hands this became another counterfeit, for while it continued to appear before the world as a peasant organization, it in fact represented the interests of the middle-sized estates and proved subservient to whatever ministry was in office. Actually a real peasant party cannot be formed in Hungary because the landless laborers who form half the population have only a theoretical right to vote.

There are differences between Eckhardt's *Kisgazda* Party and the great landlords who hold supreme power in Hungary, but they agree about the necessity of holding down the rural proletariat and maintaining the supply of cheap labor. In some respects the owners of the smaller estates are even more reactionary than the great feudal lords, who are often less narrow intellectually and less nationalistic in outlook. For instance, Tibor de Eckhardt, an anti-Nazi in New York, voted enthusiastically in the Hungarian Chamber of Deputies for the new anti-Semitic laws which have been drawn up on the Nürnberg model. It was the aristocratic members of the upper house, many of whom have intermarried with Jewish families, who opposed this legislation.

In 1934 Eckhardt reappeared in the fields of diplomacy when he went to Geneva to represent Hungary at the League of Nations. The Budapest government was at that time in a tight spot. On October 9, 1934, King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister, Barthou, had been assassinated in Marseilles by Croat gangsters. Hungary, Italy, and Germany were all involved. The guns and bombs used for the murders came from Germany and Italy, the assassins had been

trained in Italy and Hungary, and it was from the Hungarian city of Nagy Kanisza that they set out on their mission provided with regular Hungarian passports issued to false names by the Budapest state police. Not long before, King Alexander had been openly condemned to death in the pages of the official organ of the Croat terrorists, a paper published in Berlin and edited by one Gerhardt Rather, who also held an important position in the office of Alfred Rosenberg, the philosopher and "foreign minister" of the Nazi Party.



Tibor de Eckhardt

Eckhardt did a good job at Geneva in covering up the responsibility of the Hungarian government. He was openly supported by the Italians and secretly by Laval, then Premier of France and already the recipient of personal favors from Mussolini. Yugoslavia was unable to obtain satisfaction, and fascism proved triumphantly that it could get away with international as well as domestic murder. It was a landmark on the road to Munich and the invasion of Poland.

Since that day Tibor de Eckhardt has been a consistent proponent of Nazi policies in his own country. But Budapest is a long way off, and the American public is not well informed about Hungarian politics. This has encouraged him to come here, posing as a democrat and anti-fascist, seeking to put out an anchor to windward for himself and the Hungarian reactionaries whom he represents. If he is able to rope in the Magyar societies in America and to sell himself to the State Department as a liberal patriot representing all the opposition elements in Hungary, then should America enter the war he might be able to get recognition as head of a government in exile and obtain control of the frozen Hungarian



funds in this country. In any case he would have put himself in a favorable position for a place at the eventual peace conference, where he could plead that Hungary had been a victim of *force majeure* and attempt to save its governing class from suffering their just deserts.

But surely America will not fall for this confidence trick; surely it will not betray the oppressed and struggling democrats of Hungary, who have their genuine representatives in America. Mr. de Eckhardt should be recognized for what he is—a fascist agent. Serious negotiations with him would be a "stab in the back" for all those who look westward for deliverance.