

P R E S S C O M M E N T S

on

Diplomacy in a Whirlpool

by

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"The author gives a moving picture of the struggle of the wretched non-Communists in Hungary to save their country's liberty in the face of the assaults on it from their Communist colleagues, supported by and working hand in glove with the Soviet authorities, and the impotence, indifference, and stupidity of the Western Powers. These chapters contain a good deal which will be new to most readers and valuable to future historians."

Carlyle Aylmar Macartney
in "International Affairs"

"A well-documented study of Hungarian foreign policy since 1918, with special emphasis on the period beginning with 1938."

The American Political Science Review

"Drawing on his manifold experiences as a lawyer, scholar and diplomat and on an unusual wealth of historical evidence, the author succeeds in furnishing the reader with a rare and penetrating insight into the Nazi and Soviet techniques of domination. The book, however, is much more than a mere blending of personal narrative and historical documentation. The three decades of late Hungarian experience which in an entertaining but yet scholarly style unfold before the reader's eyes, acquire a deeper meaning in the overall perspective of what he calls "the positive and negative teaching of history."

If the historian is called to perform the somewhat unpleasant task of passing judgment on the policies that shaped the events leading eventually to Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, he surely must go beyond the accounts of Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. The vacuum of power" was created by the "victorious Allies" in 1919. Their "lack of foresight" paved the way for "Hitler's aggressive policy" and "eventually opened wide the door for Russian penetration.

The new political regimes established along the Danube at the end of the First World War proved to be "a weak super-structure, without solid foundation and could not fill either the political or the economic place of the Monarchy in the international community." From this negative lesson, the author brings out a positive suggestion which might offer "a solution for the future" in a much troubled part of East-Central Europe. He feels that the "advantages of a great political and economic unit combined with the benefits of democratic equality, extended to all nationalities, might open the door for better developments after the ordeal of the present period.

In the light of the foregoing general interpretations the story of the desperate attempts of the Hungarian people and government to preserve the

independence of that country against the overwhelming pressure of Nazi and Soviet power clearly emerges. Yet, the author feels justified to sound a warning to wishful thinkers that the "time factor" is "all-important because the spirit of resistance cannot be maintained for an indefinite period."

Stephen Gorove
"Current History"

"Having traced the development of Hungarian politics through the climatic developments of the Second World War, Kertesz offers two significant chapters on "Soviet and Western Politics" and "Hungary a Republic". The latter is particularly important in presenting a minute analysis of Communist infiltration techniques. Dr. Kertesz gives here an excellent account of the myth of hopeful expectations concerning a tolerable Russian behavior vis-a-vis the peoples of Danubian Europe.

Hungarian intellectuals were especially responsible for nursing the optimistic illusion of a limited and moderate form of Communism for their country. The author's description of Hungary as a Republic offers a valuable counterpart to the general surveys of Eastern Europe recently published by Hugh Seton-Watson. It indicates the transitional steps and techniques employed to break down the resistance of an unwilling satellite, refashioning it into a willing vassal state and eventually into the image of the people's republic."

Andrew Gyorgy
"The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science"

"Hungary put out feelers to the Allies that resulted in a secret understanding formalized in September 1943. All these contacts were confined to the West, despite repeated hints that according to arrangements among the Great Powers, Hungary was assigned to the Soviet sphere of operations. This fact was brought home only when the Russian armies were poised on the borders of the country."

"United States Quarterly Book Review".

"The Danubian region of Eastern Europe -- Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia -- has been a critical zone in the history of the Western world's struggle for political security and cultural integrity, bordered as it is by the Carpathian Mountains, nature's barrier between the West and Russia. In this book, Dr. Kertesz analyzes the geographic, political, economic and ethnographic factors in the history of this region, and their relation to the security of Western Europe. It is a region whose history symbolized the basic problem in the international community today: here culturally -- yet politically divided and bitterly hostile to each other.

One of the most valuable qualities of Dr. Kertesz's study is his analysis and description of the plight of satellite diplomacy -- the day by day efforts and maneuvers of Hungarian statesmen, faced with overwhelming external power realities, trying to maintain Hungary's independence, and at the same time to preserve her life. Thus, with the rise of Nazi belligerence, we see the valiant but unsuccessful attempts of Hungarian diplomats to maintain a status of non-belligerency, and yet secure some freedom of action. Her free will to act was gradually limited by forces outside her control. Hungary's policies were formulated on a tightrope, requiring an acrobate diplomatique.

Despite this, Hungary attempted to reduce her participation in the war, resisted Nazi anti-semitism, and sabotaged her own program of economic and military aid to Germany. But when Hitler invited the Hungarian Prime Minister and Military Staff to Berlin in March, 1944, for a weekend conference, not much could be done to stop the trains of Nazi tanks and troops rolling at that very moment across Hungary's borders to occupy her.

The tragedy of modern Hungary was symbolized by the events of the last days of Nazi occupation. The Red Army was advancing toward Budapest; the Nazi troops were destroying the already rubble-scarred city as they withdrew. Here was Hungary caught between two overwhelming outside forces -- two barbarian worlds, "engulfed in the flood of invading armies and cast into the Danubian whirlpool.

"Diplomacy under the Red Star" continued the pattern. After the armistice agreement, Hungary was in the hands of the Allied Control Commission, dominated almost completely by the Soviet Command. This marked the gradual withdrawal of Western influence from the Danube. All Hungarian government actions and policy had to be cleared through the ACC. In these pages, Dr. Kertesz analyzes penetratingly the pattern of Communist infiltration, and gradual domination of a satellite. Although non-Communist factions ostensibly controlled the government, the Interior Ministry was in the hands of the Communists -- thus organizing the political police practically as a branch of the party.

Under these conditions, the efforts of Hungarian diplomats to determine and implement policy were continually frustrated. In these days, and in all the great issues which had determined the "burial of Hungary's hopes", the important forces were those beyond her control; her geographic position; the occupying Nazi and Soviet armies; Soviet leadership; and the lack of Western assertiveness.

This book is more than a study of the fate of modern Hungary; it is also a study of the political events shaping international affairs since 1919, and the failure of Western diplomacy to secure peace in the world. In the history of Hungary can be seen the fatal effects of the mistakes of Versailles -- the dissolution of unity and the Trianon Treaty, with its resented geographical, economic and ethnographical provisions.

Between the two wars, the judgment of western diplomats also erred often. Dr. Kertesz analyzes the psychological and power forces which were factors in the policies of the West during the Second World War -- the failure to realize that "principles alone, without the support of adequate military strength and political determination, could not operate in the vacuum created by the collapse of Hitler's Europe." These pages reveal over and over again that just as the balance-of-power concept has proved inadequate as an instrument of diplomacy in the past, so, bi-polar politics is likewise a perilous basis for conducting international relations today."

Joseph E. Imbriaco
"The Juggler of Notre Dame"

"Most critics of Hungary are likely to pass judgment on the evidence of her final status as the satellite of the Third Reich during World War II, and afterward that of Moscow. Too little consideration is given to the circumstances which created, and almost none to the underlying currents which tried to prevent the development of that situation.

Professor Kertesz, besides examining the propositions, which were above and beyond the power of Hungary, lays equal stress on those Hungarian forces, official and unofficial, which worked against this humiliating captivity, and on those which for some reason or other furthered the cause of the two subsequent suzerains. He furnished the reader with proof that the vast majority of Hungary sided with the opposing currents. This non-ideologist country par excellence, alien in its nationality to both the Germans and Slavic (Russian) people, did not want either of the two successive orders forced upon her by two gigantic neighbors.

The most impressive parts of the author's narrative are, however, those pertaining to the role of the West in the Hungarian story. This appeared before and during World War II in almost complete negativism toward Hungarian overtures and actions, even in instances where suspicion and antagonism were not justified, and afterward in a dumbfounding indifference and impotence in the face of Soviet atrocities and encroachments. No appraisal of the Hungarian tragedy is complete if the expose of the guilt of the totalitarian conquerors and that of their internal supporters is not accompanied with the presentation of the moral obligation, if not responsibility, of the Western democracies. This is exactly what the author moderately, but lucidly enough, does supplement in his sober "case history of totalitarian conquest."

G. C. Paikert

"The American Slavic and East European Review"

"Tells the brave efforts and the final failure of this valiant attempt to keep Hungary west of the Iron Curtain. Dr. Kertesz, now professor of political science at Notre Dame, gives an outline of Hungarian history prior to World War II and recites in absorbing and exciting detail the ominous parade of events which in turn placed Hungary under the yokes of Nazism and Communism. This unhappy record of past errors and mistakes may serve in some small way as one of the guidebooks for future diplomatic efforts."

"The Catholic Telegraph-Register"

"Following her dismemberment after World War I, Hungary, weakened and isolated, temporarily became a Soviet Republic but was eventually liberated by Admiral Horthy, the last Commander of the Austro-Hungarian Fleet, who as Regent of a Kingdom without a King, maintained Hungary's independence till 1943."

A. E. Sokol

"Naval Institute Proceedings"

"In fulfilling the terms of the armistice agreement (in 1945)", writes Professor Stephen Kertesz in DIPLOMACY IN A WHIRLPOOL, "the Russians appointed a Commission to establish a list of Fascist books. The Commission was dominated by Soviet Communists and determined the Fascist character of the publications according to Communist wishes. All individuals, libraries and public institutions were obliged to surrender the books on the list for destruction...In the catalogue of the Library of the Hungarian National Museum, the Soviet Commission was looking for the word HORTHY and asked for all the books catalogued under that or similar headings....Thus they destroyed all the books on HORTICULTURE, some of them published as far back as the 17th century. They claimed that all such words spread propaganda for HORTHY...In this case the Minister of Public Instruction personally intervened, but without any result. Intervention in such a case was considered pro-Fascist action."

Bernardine Kielty

"Book-of-the-Month"