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Impressions Of Hungary

How Country And People Appeared To A Visitor

(By Member of "Cork Examiner" Staff)

ACCORDING to the touring schedule and the railways timetable we were due to arrive in Budapest at 9 p.m., but in the summer and early autumn of the year of grace 1934 European timetables were inclined to go wrong, and the further east one went the more uncertain they became. The Czech passport officials booked us out, and while we were moving through "no man's land" at the frontier, word was passed along that the Hungarian police requested the passengers not to leave their coaches while the train was stationary. We were told they had been warned that some gangsters were reported to be escaping through Czechoslovakia. The authorities at the Hungarian frontier station took right good care that no one ever stepped down to that part of the permanent way between rails designated as "platform." On each side of the train uniformed men armed with rifles stood at intervals of three or four yards. It looked a strange reception for some hundred British, American, South African, Australian and Irish nationals of many avocations, who were induced by a Hungarian travel organisation to visit that country.

First came the passport control officials who carefully scrutinised all passports and stamped them with the usual rubber stamp. I had an Irish passport—one of two in the whole party. The official recognised it as "Ereesh" which I thought complimentary to Ireland. But that did not prevent him or a fellow officer collecting it with other non-British passports and retaining it for the greater part of a week during which I was unable to cash my traveller's cheque for pengos (pronounced pango). An Irish friend, however, held a British passport and could get pengos for British pounds and we managed to get along. Incidentally, the Americans, South Africans and Australians were charged a visa fee equivalent to five shillings while the Irish passport was accorded free entry.

The passport control officers having done their duty, the Customs men came along. They glanced at the luggage on the racks and passed on. These were followed by police who looked into each compartment, but were seemingly satisfied that we were not, and did not harbour, gangsters.

At long last the train steamed out of the frontier station, and we arrived in Budapest at 1.30 a.m. instead of 9 p.m.

What of the gangsters? We heard no more about them. But 1934 was a year crowded with major excitements in Europe. In Germany the Nazis were consolidating their power. Some weeks before my tour the high lights and secret police of the movement "liquidated" three or four hundred of doubtful brethren. The exact number was never divulged, but the belief held that the victims of the putsch were more numerous than Hitler admitted.

From Cologne up the Rhineland we had been travelling in the wake of the Fuehrer. Cologne, Bonn, Coblenz, Mainz and all the smaller towns and villages were heavily beflagged. We bypassed him somewhere between Frankfurt and Nuremberg, where they were erecting a huge grandstand for a Nazi rally.

Nazis, with the utmost callousness, murdered Chancellor Dollfus in Vienna shortly before we set out from London and there was grave talk of postponing or abandoning our tour.

Within a matter of days after I got back to Cork the King of Yugoslavia was assassinated at Marseilles

in France, and the Yugoslav Government accused Hungary of allowing a "camp" of plotters and assassins to remain on her side of the frontier, after Yugoslavia had reported and complained about it. The case went to the League of Nations and there were recriminations and counter-recriminations. I often wondered whether our hold-up at the Czech-Hungarian frontier had a connection with the affair.

In passing, it may be stated that we had some excitement in Ireland that year. The Blueshirts were disturbing the dreams of Mr. de Valera's Government. It was the year of the Marsh's Yard incident. Somewhere in the course of the journey to Hungary, I became acquainted with three American ladies who arrived in Cork on the morning of Marsh's Yard. They said they were strolling along the South Mall when they saw

Paris were not strong enough or united enough to rectify. Feeling against the Czechs was only second to that against the Rumanians. The Yugoslavs were not loved either.

As to the then Government we were told (what we already knew) that the system was monarchical, with a Regent until such time as they could have a King. They were in no hurry to make the change for Admiral Horthy, the Regent, was a very good head of the State. When the time came to appoint a King they would probably appoint Archduke Otto of Hapsburg. Again they were in no hurry to make a change. The urgent matter was a revision of the treaty of the Trianon.

To enforce the argument of the flower garden map, post-card vendors had a post-card showing a map of

of the party paid tribute of candles to St. Stephen. Many of the others followed our example in their own way. There were many worshippers in the church.

One of the disadvantages of an organised tour, however well done, is that you see only what is shown to you, and after a few days you tire of it. One of the tiring features of it is the endless silly questions asked by so many of your fellow travellers, which they could easily find in the guide book. I detached myself from the crowd and went about on my own. It was not very easy to pick up information—there was a language difficulty. In the shops there was always some one who spoke enough English to sell you something. They spoke some French also. As for Magyar, the national language, it defies the Westerner.

When at last I retrieved my passport and went to the bank to get some pengos, I found the manager a very affable gentleman who spoke English fluently. He was interested in the Irish formula over the signature of Mr. Patrick Gilligan, and I had to explain the make up of our system of Government. He compared the English and French formula on the passport but could find no resemblance anywhere to the Irish. He decided that Irish was a very difficult language. I said it was hardly as difficult as Magyar. He agreed that Magyar was difficult because of the great number of Turkish words incorporated in it.

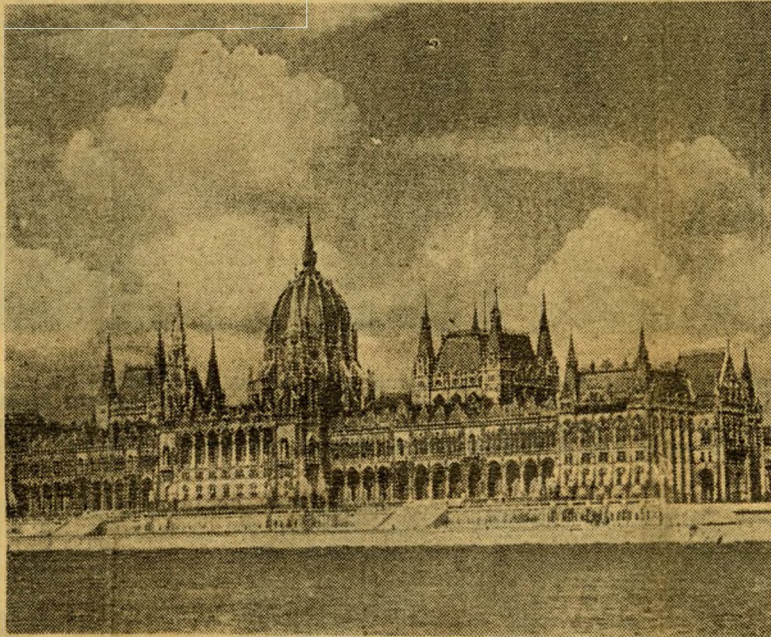
THE HUNGARIAN CREED

Great attention was paid to education in post-war Hungary, and little was left undone to inculcate a strong Hungarian nationalism. Before work started for the school day the children in all the schools recited the Hungarian Creed. This ran:

"I believe in God,
I believe in Eternal justice,
I believe in the resurrection of Hungary."

Most of our party were favourably impressed by the Hungarians. They struck us as a virile people who got a raw deal at the Peace Conference. The Horthy regime was the answer to the attempt of a Communist to set up a Communist State on the Russian pattern. Hungary progressed under that regime and if any one told us that within fourteen years Communists would be able to seize control we would not believe him. Had the Allies not exasperated the Hungarians by the wholesale expropriation of so much territory, and had they permitted the return of the Emperor Karl, history might remain to be written differently. At the same time had Hungary been willing to join the proposed Danubian pact any time from 1935 to 1938, the Nazis might well have hesitated to browbeat Czechoslovakia and in effect invade it after the Munich "agreement."

D. J. R.



The Hungarian Parliament Buildings

some men running and police running after them. After lunch they considered Cork and Ireland too hot for peaceful travellers and cleared off by the afternoon mail train for London. There they booked for the Hungarian tour. To them the uncertainties of Europe were of less consequence than those of Ireland. There is no accounting for tastes.

MANY INSPECTIONS

The various State functionaries having carried out their respective duties, we had a visit from the railway-checkers who punched or extracted the appropriate coupons. The nine o'clock at which we should be in Budapest came and went without a movement by the train. Still another police official in uniform attended by two or three men in plain clothes had a look into the compartments. But the train did not start.

There was a refreshment buffet across the rails, but as no passenger was allowed to leave the coaches, it seemed useless. However, the sources of wayfarer strategy were not exhausted. By shouting, waving arms and sign language the attention of the cafe man was attracted. He was made to understand that thirsty people wanted beer, lemonade or other refreshments. He understood their need and brought over bottles of drinkable stuffs. Trade relations were established. He negotiated various currencies and I do not believe he fleeced the foreigner. He must have blessed the gangsters who were responsible for the hold up.

FORMS OF PROPAGANDA

I found Budapest quite a pleasant place, full of varied interests. The historian saw where the line was drawn which held back the Turkish hordes who threatened to submerge all Europe. The architecture showed Western and Eastern influences. On the left bank of the Danube stood houses built by the Turks. They may be there to-day if Russia's bombs did not demolish them. You could hear classic, operatic or gipsy music on every hand. The State and municipal authorities were hospitable. At the time they were very much out to cultivate the goodwill and friendship of Britain and America. Their cherished grievance was the Treaty of the Trianon, which awarded much of Hungary's best provinces to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania. I know not how often the hated treaty was dragged into informal conversations and at speeches. A delightful young lady who spoke perfect English and French as well as German and Magyar was assigned as guide to the group with which I travelled. Her one object in life seemed to be to convince us that the Trianon treaty was the root of all Hungary's illnesses and discontents. Hungary could not be free and could not thrive until the treaty was re-

pre-war Hungary. When you pushed a tab at the side the lost provinces moved outward, leaving post-Trianon Hungary. Most of the visitors bought these cards at one pengo each—about ninepence at the rate of exchange current.

We visited St. Stephen's Cathedral, where the Kings of Hungary were crowned for hundreds of years. Emperors of Austria had to come to Budapest to be crowned Kings of Hungary and swear to uphold the Hungarian Constitution.

We saw the hand of St. Stephen enshrined on the High Altar. Led by a Scot from Edinburgh the Catholics

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The guards at the Government Buildings wore mourning and did their sentry-go at funeral pace. Statues to Hungary's great men were numerous—executed in concrete because of the country's poverty. All was put right when Hungary regained her provinces and recovered from the war.

We were received at the Parliament buildings, a magnificent structure. The constitution was explained to us as based on the British constitution. The first house was widely elective, the second was constituted on a somewhat representative basis, not quite hereditary, but the great landowners were represented by a limited number of landowners. Other important interests were also represented. We were invited to take seats in both Chambers and addresses of welcome were delivered.

Attention was directed to the flowers in Parliament Square. One large bed of flowers, larger than the average suburban garden in Cork, was designed as a map of pre-war Hungary. The various lost provinces were indicated by different coloured flowers. Post Trianon Hungary was shown in the centre. Grievances were entertained against Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The first got away with the valuable province of Transylvania, which she appropriated without any justification when Hungary was exhausted, a wrong which the peace-makers at