

## **Verbundkatalog Kalliope**

### **Central Europe in Suspense.**

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Broadcast, September 12, 1938  
Lana Madesin Phillips, Associate Editor  
of Pictorial Review, and President,  
International Federation of Business  
and Professional Women.

#### CENTRAL EUROPE IN SUSPENSE

Although the subject of this broadcast was chosen some six weeks ago, while I was still in Budapest, Hungary, it might have been based upon the news reports of today. For at this moment Central Europe is taut with suspense, as the string of the longbow ere the arrow is spent. It looks, alas, as though that tense uncertainty is soon to be resolved into the more terrible certainty of war. Aghast as all must stand at the stupidity of such useless waste of human and material values, no thoughtful American who really saw Central Europe this summer, and measured its undercurrents, the intangibles, can be altogether surprised.

I have just returned from Budapest, one of the world's dream cities. We held the Congress of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women there last month and I grew to know and love it as never before. From my bedroom windows I looked upon the broad, swift-flowing Danube, not blue at all as the Viennese waltz would have you believe. And there on the other side of the river lay the old city, Pesth, its hills crowned by the Royal Palace, the Coronation Church, and the Fishermen's Bastion. Each morning with my breakfast rolls and strong black Hungarian coffee, I gazed upon the poignant beauty of that vista. Sometimes under the hot blue sky I saw the Nazi flag float by from the stern of some small steamship. And at night when the stars of the distant heavens seemed reflected in the thousands of city lights, I could hear from afar the plaintive gypsy music, to me as sad as any in all the world.

And well may it be. It is not written music, ever, but handed down in the playing from generation to generation, and embroidered with variations according to the taste and mood of the individual performer. If you observe the leader of any small gypsy orchestra, and there are dozens of them playing at the street and garden cafes of Budapest, you will notice how closely each performer lacking any musical score watches the leader as with fiddle under his chin he moves among the tables.

There is a sense of tragedy about Hungary which this music somehow expresses. And while that small country is not at the moment the center of the limelight, it is anxious.

Unless the great debacle comes, to destroy or remake the world, Hungary must, sooner or later answer to Herr Hitler, if its leaders have not already done so. Their rich wheat-fields are needed by Germany. They offer the logical passage way to the oil fields of Roumania which would meet another great German need. Many Hungarians know this. Someone said to me, "We always sigh with relief when the weekend is over. For it is then that Hitler usually moves." Just before we left Budapest, I heard, and one hears some new rumor almost every day, that in October der Fuehrer would return the recent visit of Regent Horthy and Premier Imrady. Then would come the day of fate.

The Hungarians are a proud race. Their culture stretches back for a thousand years of tumultuous history. And they still keep telling themselves, and others, that it was Hungary which saved Christianized Europe from the un-Christian invaders centuries ago.

Hungary still grieves and is resentful over its losses in the settlement after the World War. The Treaty of Trianon took away approximately three-fourths of its territory and two-thirds of its population. Czechoslovakia and Roumania each received generously of these. I have seen a map which shows how the United States might look if the same thing happened here. In it Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, New England, the entire West and many other sections fall beyond the section left as the United States. It seems no more absurd, to Hungarians, that Philadelphia, and the house where Betsy Ross made our first flag of stars and stripes should belong to another nation than that Pozsony, the ancient coronation city of Hungarian Kings and ancestral seat of the Hungarian Parliament should have been ceded to Czechoslovakia, as it was.

Hungarians do not forget. When I was in Budapest ten years ago, they talked of their unjust dismemberment and gave me a little map to illustrate their case. They still talk of it, and this summer I saw the same map at the newsstand in our hotel.

Yet they received with extreme courtesy and seemingly without bitterness the splendid delegation which came from Czechoslovakia to attend our Congress. The Czechs are also a proud, courageous race. Thinking of the awful ravages of war, I asked the distinguished leader of our delegation from Czechoslovakia what, if things came to the worst, we could do to help mitigate their suffering. "Nothing," she said, "The only time anyone can do anything is now. Bring all pressure now to protect the democratic

form of government." And throughout the week's sessions of our Congress, with many countries represented, I heard not one sentence of political venom, antagonism, or even complaint. And in our elections, members from Czechoslovakia, Italy, Great Britain, and Poland received approximately the same majorities.

But the suspense which hangs over these two countries is common to all Central Europe. Twenty-two times I have crossed the Atlantic. Europe I have seen in many moods. Peace and passivity before the great war. The slough of despond in the German countries after. Geneva entranced by dreams of disarmament. Moscow feverish under the new Soviet regime. Rome magnificent in its heritage, modern in its equipment. Paris on Bastille Day when unnumbered open palms of the Nazis stretched against the numberless clenched fists of Communists. Berlin exhausted by inflation, weary of the crown of war guilt crushed upon its stubborn brow by nations which claimed to make peace without victory. Berlin years afterward, its streets vibrant with the blood-red banners of der Fuehrer.

Some of these I may see again. But one thing I shall see no more -- the old Vienna with its laughter and gaiety, its courtesy and beautiful culture. And one thing I have felt for the first time this year -- the strange mystic fear, a thick suspense which like Egypt's plague of locuses had settled down the valley of the Danube and had eaten the hope, the moral courage, the heart and soul of mankind.

We felt this as a group of American professional women on our way to hold a Congress of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women in Budapest. In our purses were the most internationally valid passports and money in the world, those of the United States and Great Britain. These are accepted with a validity granted no others. We had no secret mission. We were just harmless, club women, too harmless I often think, on our way to pass resolutions, listen to Congress speeches and to increase international understanding and goodwill.

But the uncertainty and confusion. In Vienna, seven times were we cut off in one telephone call to a travel bureau. It took us perhaps two hours to find out whether or not we could take our suitcases with us on a limited train between Vienna and Budapest. Each of the three English speaking employees at the railway station, there primarily to answer questions for English speaking tourists, gave us a different answer to the same question.

And the suspicion. We stopped to have lunch at a small hotel, which I had visited long ago. We had invited as our guest an old Viennese friend of Jewish blood. As we sat enjoying our cold cuts and salad in the garden the waiter wanted to know from what country we came and if we would stay some days in Vienna. When someone replied that we were leaving for Budapest in a few hours, he said, "But there is no night train and so you will spend the night in Vienna?" And playing along the ivy covered wall was the dancing reflection which in my experience only sunlight reflected from a mirror gives.

And the fear. If you talk with a Jewish person in Vienna, he is apt before he speaks to look over his shoulder or to move a little closer. We were six in our party. And when it came time to say goodby to our Jewish friend who had accompanied us to the station, we were literally afraid to say goodby to her lest in some strange unaccountable way we thus made her conspicuous and subjected to further danger or indignities. And so although some of us had known and loved her for many years, only one slipped quietly back to kiss her cheek in farewell — perhaps forever.

I sat at dinner with one of the leading business men of Budapest and his charming wife. They talked of their two children, a girl of eighteen, a boy of twenty, one then in Geneva, the other in Paris. They were afraid to have them return home even for a visit, for fear they would not be permitted to leave again. Our conversation was almost altogether about the future of that girl and boy. Where could they find professional opportunities? What country would accept them gladly? And at last a British friend who was with us said, "But what of your own future? You say nothing of that." And the mother, whose eyes were starred with emotion said, "Oh, we think not of that. We have the memory of twenty-five years of happiness to sustain us." There was a gallant Jewish gentleman who would not quit his post while there was yet time because it was beneath his high standard of business ethics.

And the stories one hears. One of our Federation members, who would be known to many of you, occupied a seat in a compartment shared by a young American boy on the journey from Vienna to Budapest. That lad had stopped in Vienna to have dinner with a Viennese boy whom he had, in traveling, met last year. While dining, the American boy was arrested, placed in jail, not permitted to telephone his Consul, kept there over the weekend and

turned loose. He still did not know for what he was imprisoned. He did not know whether the boy with whom he dined was Jewish. A well-known American man in Budapest was called upon to decide whether a Hungarian wishing to emigrate to America had sufficient financial resources for his legal entry here. The Hungarian insisted that he had but he was always mysterious as to their exact form. Finally one day he appeared carrying a suitcase, closed the door, looked all around fearfully. The suitcase was filled with jewelry of all descriptions. And in the midst of brooches, bracelets, and rings was a black greasy frying pan. My friend said, "The jewelry looks all right but may I ask you a question? Why the frying pan?" And the Hungarian said, "I will show you." He took a penknife and scratched it. Underneath its soot and grease it was made of solid gold. "You see," he said, "I will throw this in with my household belongings and perhaps I can in this way get it out of the country." The Budapest press reported the arrest of a man as he crossed the border in his automobile with bumpers underneath their conventional finish made of solid gold. The discovery meant confiscation and probably the concentration camp for him.

I have cited these instances as indicative of the colorful yet disintegrating psychological atmosphere which this summer hung over Central Europe. "Nothing will happen," we heard often, "Until after the summer. Europe wants and needs the tourist trade. But when the green leaves turn to red and gold and the money spending vacationers have turned their faces toward home, look out!" Where will the trouble be? "No one knows. It may of course be Czechoslovakia, although the courageous attitude of the Czechs standing toe to toe with a much larger nation has had a tremendous moral effect. It may be into Hungary or it may be across Hungary to the oil fields of Roumania. It may be Denmark, or even Holland. No one knows. But the peril will spread and in its wake ride death and destruction and despair."

Well, summer is over. Even as I speak, the answer to that question seems about to be given. Whether or not there are further delays, one thing seems certain. Central Europe cannot continue indefinitely in its present demoralization and suspense. Changes will, must come. Even though Germany could be satisfied over the Sudeten, that will not resolve all questions or allay all suspense, economic maladjustment, racial persecution,

uncertainty, anxiety, fear will yet remain.

Let us of America be humbly grateful that our own lives have fallen in such favoring circumstances, and resolve, by example rather than by admonition to bring hope and courage to less fortunate nations.