

HOW MINORITIES LIVE

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

WHY DID THE HUNGARIAN MEMBERS OF THE PRAGUE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTE FOR BENEŠ?

In our last number, when reporting the election of M. Edward Beneš as President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, we concluded from a brief *communiqué* issued by the Joint Parliamentary Club of the Hungarian Parties of Czecho-Slovakia that the Hungarian votes cast in favour of Beneš did not by any means involve a vote of confidence for his previous conduct, being merely the expression of a hope that in his capacity as Head of the State M. Beneš would find means to redress the well-founded grievances of the Hungarian minority. This conclusion of ours has been confirmed by the statements made in public since the election by the leaders of the Hungarian parties.

Géza Szüllő, President of the Joint Club of the Hungarian Parties, in the December 20th issue of the "Prágai Magyar Hírlap" published a statement in which, among other things, he made the following declarations:

"This was the first occasion since the establishment of the Republic that the most erudite and eminent Czech politician — the former Czech Foreign Minister — assigned any importance to the Hungarians as a factor and thought it worth his while to inquire officially before entering on the duties of his high office what attitude the Hungarians proposed to adopt... We accepted the proffered right hand, because this was the first occasion on which the offer was not made by us — the first time the begging was not being done by us —, the unselfish champions of our unselfish cause being appealed to by one whose position is stronger than ours. In 1866 Francis Joseph sent for Francis Deák to discuss with him the question of the possibility of a compromise and settlement between Austria and Hungary. At the time Austria had been weakened by the issue of the Prussian Wars. And, inspired by the Hungarian genius, Deák did not demand more in 1866 — not wishing to take advantage of the sovereign's dilemma — than he had done before 1866. That was why they said that the Hungarians had been chivalrous. Our nationality has changed; but in soul we have remained Hungarians — a fact acknowledged also by the present President himself. For we did not demand prior to the election or during the election — nor do we demand now after the election — anything more than guarantees that in cultural and economic matters we shall receive all that is necessary to ensure our remaining without amalgamation what we have always been, — law-abiding Hungarians who however demand that the laws shall be observed."

In another passage in his statement Szüllő said as follows:

"Our attitude does not therefore mean adherence to the Government Party; only with due consideration for the highest principles of parliamentarism and in the consciousness of the guarantee given from the highest quarter we shall continue with unaltered energy to fight for the right of the national minorities, naturally on the Opposition benches."

Count John Esterházy, President of the National Christian Socialist Party, at a meeting held at Párkány on January 2nd, stressed that it was not the Hungarian Members of the National Assembly who had taken the first step. When they had been called upon to negotiate, the Joint Club had decided to inform Beneš, then Foreign Minister, of the most crying grievances and to ask for guarantees that they should be redressed.

The Joint Club — Esterházy said — had demanded the redress of the gravest Hungarian linguistic, cultural and economic grievances, — a definitive adjustment of the nationality and pension questions and a just treatment of educational and church matters; the Club had demanded that in the future the Hungarian Members should be given an opportunity to scrutinise and check the drafting of the Budget for the purpose of ascertaining whether the Hungarians were being given a share in proportion to their numbers in everything they were entitled to. Beneš, then Foreign Minister, had declared to them that he considered all the requests put before him to be fair and legitimate and assured the Members that he would do everything in his power to further their fulfilment, assuring them that he would utilise every means at his disposal to carry the reforms into effect.

"After receiving this promise" — continued Esterházy — "we legislators were unanimously of the opinion that it was our duty to our nation to take the step in question. We felt the gravity of the situation and were fully conscious that we were not entitled to deprive our electors of any possible advantages when reciprocity on our part did not involve renouncing either our Hungarian character or any of our rights, or even any deviation from our original programme. We have maintained our independence to the full in every respect; nor have we undertaken to do any log-rolling for party or for Government. We have merely availed ourselves of the influence of the supreme factor on behalf of the Hungarians, desiring to make use of the same to compel and require every factor — from Government down to the smallest official — to fully respect the rights of the Hungarians — in other words, to treat us in the same way as they treat Czechs or Slovaks.

"The Hungarian is frank and honest. We openly showed our wounds to Foreign Minister Beneš, whereupon he gave us guarantees that he would come to our aid. We are here today openly and honestly professing the same programme as before and waiting for the fulfilment of the promises made us."

Joseph Szent Ivány, leader of the Hungarian National Party, at the meeting of the Governing Council of the Party held on January 9th, expressed the hope that in his high office M. Beneš would — as no longer subject to the political restrictions of the foreign minister — heal the horrible wounds of the Hungarian nation."

From all these statements we see that the new President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic got into touch with the Hungarian Members of the National Assembly at a juncture when his election was still anything but certain. He gave guarantees and made promises to the effect that he would support the Hungarian minority — evidently in return for receiving the votes of the parliamentary representatives of that minority. We have no reason to doubt that the new Head of the Czecho-Slovak State will keep his word and feel sure that there will be no need for the Hungarians to remind him of his promise.

TEACHING OF HUNGARIAN, ONLY RECENTLY PERMITTED ALREADY ABOLISHED

In September 1935 the Ruthenian board school in Nagyszöllös introduced Hungarian, provisionally as a voluntary subject. Practically all the pupils, to the number of about 400, attended the Hungarian classes. Shortly before Christmas these classes were closed arbitrarily. The children's parents were thunderstruck when they heard the news. According to information that has meanwhile leaked out, the closing of the Hungarian classes was ordered by the School Inspector's Office in Nagyszöllös. Parents have appealed to the Chief School Inspector's Office in Ungvár to re-open the Hungarian classes. Now that under the influence of Benes's election a faint breath of understanding seems to have wafted from the Hradsin towards the Hungarian minority, it is doubly disconcerting to find the welcome measure adopted in September so swiftly rescinded.

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R U M A N I A

COUNT BETHLEN ON THE SUFFERINGS OF HUNGARIANS OF TRANSYLVANIA

Count Stephen Bethlen, former Prime Minister of Hungary, who is closely connected with Transylvania and the Hungarians of that province by the ties of centuries of family history, in the New Year number of the "8 Órai Ujság" made the following statement respecting the complaints which are unceasingly making their way over the frontier from Transylvania into Dismembered Hungary:

"Sad news keep coming to us from the territories severed from Hungary, and in particular from Transylvania, where the work of destroying Magyar culture and the endeavour to deprive the Hungarian minority of the means of subsistence *has assumed unparalleled dimensions* throwing into insignificance even the previous records of the past fifteen years. Day after day we read the sorrowful news of the dismissal without pensions of Hungarian public servants — railwaymen, postmen, elementary school teachers and other persons in the employ of the State — and of town and municipality employees living in that province; day after day we are compelled to watch the advance of the endeavour to substitute persons who are Rumanians by birth for the Hungarian officials and workers employed in the economic life of the country, in commercial, industrial, mining and lumbering undertakings alike. We may also read perhaps that Hungarian craftsmen will shortly be forbidden to employ even Hungarian apprentices or of the rumanisation being carried or forcibly everywhere, in and out of the schools.

"And now the authorities do not shrink even from conversion by force; for we read that they are making the Magyars and Széklers of Transylvania embrace the Orthodox faith. These methods exceed all conceivable measure and are such as have never so far been heard of in civilised countries. And when we add that the statements made by the official representatives of the Hungarians — statements made in an objective tone and confined practically to a mere enumeration of the facts — are received in the Ru-

manian Parliament brutally and coarsely, being answered by vulgar vituperation on the part of the majority, who might be expected to at least show that they were aware of what they owed the minorities under the minority treaties concluded under international guarantee, and also what Rumania owes the League of Nations, — I must confess that this situation is the bitterest wound inflicted on the Hungarian nation, and must affirm that the chief task revolving on the public opinion and the foreign policy of Hungary and on the Hungarian Government is to leave no stone unturned to put an end once for all to these anomalies and to stop the superfluous loss of blood suffered in consequence by the Hungarian nation as a whole.

"So far the Hungarian minority of Transylvania has itself from time to time filed complaints with the League of Nations. The anomalies referred to above made that minority act cautiously and timidly, using a *sordino*; for it had to fear — and will in the future have all the more reason to fear — the enforcement of retaliatory measures. I am afraid that the Hungarian minority of Transylvania will in the future be even less inclined to risk the dangers accompanying a direct application to Geneva. Today the attention of Geneva is entirely absorbed by the Italian-Abyssinian conflict. But some day or other that will be over too.

"The Hungarian Government must take the first opportunity which appears suitable to inform the civilised world of the monstrous measure of oppression and persecution which is the order of the day in Transylvania."

WHAT RUMANIA HAS DONE FOR RUMANIANS AND GERMANS RESPECTIVELY IN THE PAST TWO-YEARS

In the course of the debate on Parliament's address to the King's speech, Dr. Hans Otto Roth, leader of the German Parliamentary Group in Rumania, on December 12th gave an account of the grievances of the German minority. "In the past two years, he said, the situation of the Germans in Rumania has become so grave, that they are now faced with the task of fighting a life and death fight." — On December 29th, the German paper "Banater Deutsche Zeitung", published in Temesvár, discussed the results of the two years' work of M. Tatarescu's Cabinet. "We are now in a state of distress and want", it says. In the year 1934—35 the Rumanian Government, according to M. Tatarescu's own words, established 1400 new Rumanian schools, appointed 10,000 Rumanian teachers, and built 77 new hospitals; it spent 128 million lei for the building of new Apprentice Homes and 60 millions for other Rumanian purposes; it also built 593 new Rumanian churches. What did it do during the same period for the Germans in Rumania?"

1. The Government grant (roughly 5 million lei) given to German schools in former years has been completely cancelled, and the contribution of counties and parishes to the expenses of denominational schools, which should amount to 9 or 10 million lei, has been reduced to 2 millions. — 2. The Government grant given to the German Episcopacy in Temesvár has been reduced by 50% in the Budget for 1935—36, while the loss of the Rumanian clergy is not more than 8—25%. — 3. The upper classes of German Government schools were completely rumanised in 1934; moreover, in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and to some

extent in the Banate too, even the lower classes have been denationalised. In 58 parishes of Bessarabia there is not one single German teacher to be found. — 4. More than 500 German officials have lost their posts, owing to the results of language tests. — 5. The new Administration Bill threatens the use of German in political life. — 6. The year 1935 witnessed the completion of the denationalisation of German towns. — 7. The new Trade Bill will have a detrimental effect on the future of German trade. The economic life and the very existence of the Germans is threatened by the "numerus Wallachicus".

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HUNGARIAN PLAY BANNED

The Hungarian musical comedy, "The Umbrella King", which scored such a great success in Vienna and Budapest, has been banned in Transylvania by the Chief-Inspector of Theatres. The reason given was that some of the scenes contained insulting references to the Kings of France. M. Emile Isacu, Chief-Inspector of Theatres, also rebuked the theatre managers for having forgotten the important fact that Rumania was an ally of France. Here let it suffice to say that neither writers nor the authors of musical comedy librettos have the right to sit in judgment upon Louis Philip, the umbrella king. That task devolves upon history, and it was the French people themselves who in the Revolution of February 1848 deprived him of his throne. ("Erdélyi Hirlap", Jan. 9)

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YUGOSLAVIA

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE VOIVODINA

An article by Dr. Radivoj Simonovitch, a physician in the city of Zombor and one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Pan-Slav idea in the Voivodina before the War, has been published in the "Voivodianin", a paper issued by the Opposition parties. This article was suggested by the Ban's recent order to change the name of the city of Zombor to „Brankovičevo". The author describes the position of the Voivodina and of Zombor under the Hungarian régime. He informs the reader of the autonomous constitution of the Serb Church in pre-War Hungary,

which entitled the Serbs to make their own arrangements at Sremski Kralovac concerning religious and educational affairs and to dispose freely of their enormous church funds. For what purpose have these enormous funds now been appropriated? — he asks. Who is in charge of the funds in the 16 Pravoslav monasteries of the "liberated" territory? As far back as 120 years ago the city of Zombor had a training college for teachers where the most reliable Serb patriots and teachers were trained not only for the Voivodina but also for the whole of the Serb nation. The citizens of Zombor were once wealthy, brave, and proud, now they are poor and miserable. The Hungarians granted them a huge amount of landed property for military services, and as a royal free city Zombor was exempted from the payment of feudal fees and taxes. Now the citizens of Zombor, and the population of the Voivodina in general, have to pay three times as much in taxes as the Croatians, and twice as much as the Slovenes, so that Zombor is now a miserable big village. The Hungarians allowed the citizens of Zombor to arrange processions at the time of the elections and vote for any party they chose, either Government or Opposition, and sing their own national songs and play their own national music on these occasions. Now they have to vote for the Government candidate, whosoever he may be, and they proceed to the polling boxes in silence and with a feeling of humiliation in their hearts. In former days they often had Serb prefects and sub-prefects; now the county office and the revenue office have both been removed from Zombor to another place; even the provincial bank has been removed from there, although it had a huge building in Zombor, while in the place to which it has been removed a new building had to be erected at a cost of more than 120 million dinars. Every part of the country has its own people in the leading county positions, yet the Voivodina has not received any benefit from the Government so far, not even so much as to have one of its own men appointed to the office of Ban. This is the reason why the citizens of Zombor do not wish to become the citizens of "Brankovičevo"!

All the above statements made by the author with reference to the city of Zombor may be applied to the other towns and villages of the Voivodina, with the exception, perhaps, of Novisad (Ujvidék), capital of the Danube Banate. If the Serbs of the Voivodina are compelled to go so far in their complaints, we may well form an opinion of the state of the Hungarian, German, and Bunievatz minorities in the occupied territories.

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POLITICAL ECONOMY

THE ECONOMIC LITTLE ENTENTE IN PRACTICE

The new system of payment recently introduced in Rumania has led to a considerable decrease in Czecho-Slovak exports to Rumania. It is reported from Bucharest that the Rumanian Government is not disposed to allow the importation of goods over the value of 160 million Crowns this year, as against 220 millions last year. Within these limits the orders of the State will amount to 100 million Crowns, while the Rumanian oil industry will order tubes for 30

million Crowns, so that the other importers will have to be satisfied with the remaining 40 million Crowns.

This low contingent is, of course, not enough to satisfy the demands of the Rumanian market, yet the Government is not willing to extend the line of 40 millions; accordingly — as we are informed from Bucharest — the importers have been warned to relinquish the hope that the line will be extended and therefore to try to satisfy their demands from other markets than Czecho-Slovakia.

The final blow to Czecho-Slovak exports to Rumania has been dealt by the fact that the Rumanian