

POLITICAL MOSAIC

"THOUGH THE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF WAR HAS ABATED, THE NATIONALITY PROBLEM OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS AS SERIOUS AS EVER"

The unsolved nationality problem of Czecho-Slovakia, — to which we have so often directed the attention of our readers, — a few days ago very nearly led to the outbreak of war. Although the immediate danger abated at the end of the month, the situation is still as serious as ever. There can be no question of any cessation of the tension until the Czechs demobilise the troops called in for service. According to reports in the press, Mr. William Strang, head of the Central European Department of the British Foreign Office, who was recently in Czecho-Slovakia on behalf of his Government, himself established the fact that the mobilisation was "precipitate". Unfortunately, the British diplomat only spent a very short time in the Sudeta German areas; all the more reason to desire — as has been desired already on repeated occasions — that a British neutral commission should investigate on the spot the nationality problems of Czecho-Slovakia, and that the Great Powers should then exert the full pressure of their influence to persuade Czecho-Slovakia to fulfil the promise made by her delegates to the Peace Conference and re-organise the country into an "Eastern Switzerland". Those Powers should not however allow themselves to be cajoled by promises! The non-Czech nationalities of Czecho-Slovakia have already received so many promises that they have no more faith in fine words but demand decisive actions. After the bitter experiences of the past twenty years these nationalities are perfectly justified in presuming that the seemingly greater inclination of the Prague Government to offer concessions is only a manoeuvre to gain time. The publication of the draft Minority Statute promised for the end of May has again been deferred! M. Hodža's well-known tactical ability may mislead foreign countries; but the repeated postponement is not calculated to re-assure the non-Czech nationalities of the Republic or to definitively secure the peace of Central Europe. The responsibility in this latter respect now rests entirely and exclusively with the Great Powers, which should by this time be fully aware that a solution of the exceptionally grave Sudeta German question — a solution devoutly

desired by them but by no means ensured — would only be a half-result; seeing that the Magyar, Polish, Slovak and Ruthenian questions of Czecho-Slovakia are problems just as pregnant with danger unless they are solved simultaneously with the solution of the Sudeta German question.

In pursuance of the conversations that took place towards the end of April between British and French statesmen, on 7th May the British and French Ministers in Prague submitted the views of their respective Governments on the Czecho-German relations, first to M. Krofta, Czecho-Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then to Premier Hodža. The British Ambassador in Berlin also informed Field Marshal Göring on the subject. This was the first instance since the signing of the Treaty of Saint Germain that Great Britain and France, both signatories of that Treaty, had officially broached in Prague the question of the nationality policy of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. In his reply to a question Mr. Butler, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the Czecho-Slovak Government had been advised to do everything possible to reach an agreement. According to newspaper reports Lord Halifax has asked Prague to make "great, very great sacrifices".

A week after these events, at the invitation of a friend in England, Herr Henlein, leader of the Sudeta Germans, went to London, where, besides seeing Mr. Winston Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair and Mr. Nicholson, M. P. he also had a conversation with Sir Robert Vansittart, adviser on diplomatic affairs to the British Government. On his return, Herr Henlein professed himself satisfied with his visit to England.

But although it had been evident for weeks that the significance of the Czecho-Slovak nationality question extended far beyond the borders of the Republic, and that the failure to solve it was seriously menacing the peace, not only of Central Europe, but also of the whole world, the Czechs did not awake early enough to a realization of the gravity of the situation. For this no doubt the censorship of the Press was partly responsible, exerting, as it does, all its power to prevent the Czech people seeing clearly what is at stake. After the relative tranquillity of the weeks immediately following the Anschluss, the Czechs began to behave in a provocative manner towards the non-Czech nationalities.

On 1st May, in Troppau, Czech policemen maltreated ten Germans — one of them a lawyer. This affair was followed by other incidents in several other places, in Asch, Saaz, Trebnitz, Komotau, Rudersdorf, Sternberg, Modau, Strehobnitz, etc. In Falkenau Czech soldiers walking six deep forced peacefully strolling inhabitants off the pavements. In other German towns Czech soldiers on the march threatened to beat the civil population. In Prague the director of the German Students' Home was

knocked down and his clothes literally torn to rags for opening the door to admit some German students who were being mobbed in the streets. Policemen forced their way without any legal warrant into a meeting of the Trautenau Town Council. Three days before the date fixed for the municipal elections in Prague and Brünn (22nd May) riots and tumults broke out in those towns. In Brünn a mob of 4—5000 Czech kept the German House under siege. In Pozsony one of the bill-stickers of the Sudeta German Party was shot down by an unknown person.

In Slovakia and Ruthenia, too, the growing severity of the measures adopted by the police and the gendarmes weigh heavily on the population. The offices of the United Hungarian Party in Beregszász (Berehovo), Munkács (Mukačevo), and Ungvár (Užhorod) have been ransacked, and M. Korláth's (Hungarian M. P.) appeal to the Hungarians to report at the Party offices for registration confiscated. In numerous villages of Eastern Slovakia appeals to the Hungarians issued by Hungarian Deputies and Senators asking them to vote for the Hungarian Party at the communal elections have been confiscated. In several places the Party were not allowed to hold the meetings advertized for 1st May, although the Government Parties were free to celebrate this Labour holiday.

In the Slovak districts also the authorities in many places have behaved with great brutality towards the inhabitants (e. g. in Privigye, Černova, etc.).

After these preliminaries, on the night of 22nd May two Germans were shot dead in Eger. This shocking act was merely the climax of a series of provocations connived at by the political authorities; and it almost led to war. Thanks to the efforts of the British Government and the calm restraint displayed by Berlin these lines are not being written amidst the roar of cannon, with tanks ploughing up the soil of Central Europe.

In those critical hours the Czecho-Slovak military Command mobilized two classes of reservists, in order — so runs the official statement — “to teach them the use of the weapons newly introduced and to maintain peace, order and security”. We however, have perfectly reliable information that not only the two youngest classes of reservists were called up, but also numerous older “reliable” elements, and that the “National Guard”, a Communistic organization, was held in readiness too. The reservists were not allowed time even to take leave of their families or to attend to their most pressing private affairs; they were practically dragged out of their beds in the dead of night and rushed to barracks. Those who had an inkling of what was on foot ran away from home and had to be rounded up in the fields or elsewhere. At the same time the motor-cars of the “untrustworthy” elements were requisitioned. Their owners were given bills for sums much less than the actual value of the cars.

The frontiers have been barricaded with all sorts of obstacles, so that Czecho-Slovakia looks like a besieged fortress.

Although Hungary viewed these preparations without making any movement, the officers of the Czech troops drawn up in the Hungarian towns of the Republic have been heard to declare aloud that the first battle would be fought in Váci-utca, Budapest. In certain Hungarian towns of Czecho-Slovakia the army has taken over the municipal administration. Military postal service has been introduced in Eastern Slovakia and Ruthenia. All signs go to show that the Czechs in reality wish to provoke a war in the hope that Great Britain and France will be persuaded to join. Undoubtedly they would never be so bold were they not being egged on by Moscow.

The Eger victims had not yet been laid in their graves (on which two German officers placed wreaths from Herr Hitler) when the report spread that Herr Eichholtz, Sudeta German Deputy, had been insulted in Brüx for using the Nazi salute. Incidents followed in rapid succession on the Czecho-German frontier. No reports of them or of the clashes between the population and the authorities were allowed to appear in the Press. The leading nationality papers, the "Die Zeit" of the Sudeta Germans, the "Prágai Magyar Hírlap", the organ of the United Hungarian Party, and the "Slovák", the mouthpiece of the Slovak Autonomists, were confiscated day after day. On 21st May the "Die Zeit" appeared with no fewer than 21 blank spaces.

On 23rd May Premier Hodža at last met Herr Henlein, with whom, on the ground that Henlein was not a member of the Czecho-Slovak Parliament, he had previously refused to negotiate. The essential points of the Sudeta German problem were not discussed at this meeting, Henlein first demanding a revocation of the military measures.

In his speech of 1st May Henlein had in any case reiterated his Carlsbad "ultimatum". Very eloquent testimony of the mood of the Sudeta German Party was the statement read out at the May 12th session of the Czecho-Slovak Parliament by Herr Kundt, Chairman of the Parliamentary Club of the Sudeta German Party:

"The system" — so ran the statement — "which has led to an overcrowding of our jails has not yet, so far as we can see, been changed by any regulations. Counsels for the defence enjoying the confidence of the Sudeta Germans have not yet been appointed in cases of prosecution as provided in § 6 of the Defence of the Republic Act. No reparation has been made so far for the social disabilities and defamation of their character as citizens suffered by German State employees and teachers, merely because they belonged to the old German National Party or the German National Socialist Labour Party. In fact, by ministerial decree a further attempt is being made to apply

disciplinary measures to and throw into disrepute German public officials. The Czech President of the Troppau District Court, Dr. Reinelt, for instance, has ordered an examination into the affairs of a German official of the Court, whose only offence had been the flying of the Sudeta German Party flag together with the Czecho-Slovak colours on his house on 1st May — an act allowed by the laws of the land".

That Henlein's Party is steadily growing in strength is best proved by the fact that the number of its registered members exceeds one million. Recently the delegate of the organization of German judges took an oath of allegiance to Henlein on behalf of the organization. The Government has been forced to permit the Sudeta German Party to organize a uniformed body-guard called "Frei Schutz-dienst" (F. S.)

The camp of the United Hungarian Party is also growing stronger in numbers daily. According to a statement made by its Chairman, M. Andrew Jaross, the memorandum submitted to the Premier more than a month ago by the Party contained, besides numerous minor points, a demand for full equality and autonomy or every non-Czech nationality in the Czecho-Slovak Republic as well as territorial self-government for Slovakia and Ruthenia. In M. Jaross' opinion this programme cannot be carried out except by amending the Constitution, and that must be preceded by an internal readjustment restoring the Hungarian character of the Hungarian ethnic areas.

At a meeting of the Parliamentary Club of the Party held in Pozsony (Bratislava) on 17th May, after stating that the administrative authorities and the army, acting contrary to Czecho-Slovakia's international undertakings, were illegally throwing obstacles in the way of the expansion of the Hungarian Party, confiscating the official bills and correspondence of the Party and ransacking the homes of the leaders of its organizations, while the Administration continued its efforts to denationalize the Hungarians, M. Jaross demanded the cessation of these endeavours on the part of the educational authorities and the repeal of those laws under which Hungarian public officials had lost their posts and pensions.

In an appeal to the Government the United Hungarian Party demands the revocation of Decree No. 39/1919 issued nearly twenty years ago by the once omnipotent Ministry for Slovakia; consequently it demands an official authorisation of the free use of the Hungarian national colours, red-white-and-green, in every field of public life.

At a meeting held in Pozsony on 9th May the Executive Committee of the Slovak Autonomist (Hlinka) Party, the body representing the national aims of the Slovaks, appealed to the Slovaks to unite in a struggle for a happier future for Slovakia.

At the May 12th session of Parliament M. Haššaik (Slovak People's Party) urged that the Slovaks should be represented in due proportion on the staffs of officers and generals in the Czecho-Slovak army, and that separate Slovak regiments should be organised and a Slovak military academy established.

The Slovaks, by the way, are eagerly awaiting the arrival in Slovakia of the original Pittsburgh Convention, which is being brought over from America by a delegation of the American Slovak League and is to be exhibited formally in Pozsony about the beginning of June. In this way the Slovaks wish to prove to the whole world that the covenant which guarantees to Slovakia full autonomy in the spheres of legislature, administration and jurisdiction was signed by no less a person than the late President Masaryk himself. In his statement to the representatives of the Czech Coalition Press, Premier Hodža was compelled to admit that the Pittsburgh Convention was morally binding on Prague. Hitherto this fact had been consistently denied and various specious arguments had been urged to enable the Czechs to shirk their bargain. It took Prague exactly twenty years to admit the moral validity at least of that treaty.

In spite of this admission the censor did not allow the Press to publish the statement issued on 3rd April by the Executive Committee of the American Slovak Catholic Alliance in which the fact was established that for twenty years the Prague Government had refused to grant to the Slovak people even the minimum rights guaranteed in the Pittsburgh Convention. Until such time as that treaty has been incorporated in the Czecho-Slovak Constitution the American Slovak League insist on the organization of a provincial Board of Education in Slovakia, Slovak lectures at the present purely Czech University of Pozsony, the abolition of the censorship, a gradual recall of the Czech officials employed in Slovakia, an equitable number of posts for Slovaks in the diplomatic service and the military Command, and the restoration of the industries taken away from Slovaks.

At their meeting in Teschen on 9th May the Poles, too, drafted their autonomist programme. They insist that the wishes of the Polish population shall be the immediate and determining factor when vacancies are to be filled in the Polish areas, and demand the right to supervise the activities of all societies and organizations functioning there. Furthermore they demand cultural autonomy and the right to exercise a direct influence on the economic policy of those areas, control all facilities of labour there and enjoy their due share of the sums paid by those territories to the State.

Under the influence of the events of the past few weeks the process of concentration has accelerated among the Ruthenian autonomists. The Ruthenian Autonomist Farmers' Alliance (Sojuz) has united with the Russian Autonomist National Party (Fencik

Party) under the name of the "Russian National Autonomist Block".

The situation in Czecho-Slovakia, so far as nationality policy is concerned, reminds us vividly today of the conditions obtaining in Austria in the summer of 1918. Each of the nationalities is organizing busily and demanding its rights. But Prague, like the Vienna of that period, pursues a policy of procrastination. Prague seems to be waiting for some miracle to save Czecho-Slovakia from having to revise her Constitution radically, as Great Britain and France wish her to do. The long-promised Minority Charter has not yet been made public. Premier Hodža has not acquainted Henlein even with its outlines. Parliament was adjourned at the end of May on the understanding that in any case the Charter would not be presented before the 15th of June. Hodža — it would appear — forgets that in these critical times nothing could be more dangerous than this shilly-shallying.

Results of Municipal Elections

The first stage of the municipal elections, held on May 22-nd in an atmosphere of extremely high tension, produced a majority of 90% in the German districts for the Henlein Party. Even the "Prager Presse", the Government's semi-official organs, admits that the Sudeten German Party has secured all those votes which it could expect after the so-called "activist" parties had ceased to be independent, and in some places it had even succeeded in exceeding that number. In Slovakia, the United Hungarian Party has made a marked advance. It is particularly noteworthy that in the town of Nyitra, where the Hungarian population had suffered so severely from the oppression of the Czechoslovak system that it hardly dared to move, the Hungarian Party obtained 2698 votes, which shows a remarkable improvement since 1931, when it did not secure more than 1653 votes. The Zipser German Party, which is in alliance with the United Hungarian Party, safely stood its ground at Gölnicbánya, one of the most typically German towns of Slovakia; this shows that the Zipser Germans incline towards Hungary and towards Germany. Hlinka's autonomist Slovak Party has become considerably stronger in the Slovak areas; in some important places (such as Nagyszombat, Nyitra, Pöstyén, etc.) it has more than doubled its former number of votes. Fearing that the Ruthenians would turn against them in the same way as the other minorities have done, the Government has decided to postpone the municipal elections in Ruthenia originally fixed for June 12, on the pretext that that date is the Greek Catholic Whitsuntide. As if they had only just discovered this coincidence! Those Czech parties which sympathise with National Socialism in Germany have lost ground in the elections. The Communists, on the other hand, have made considerable headway. In Prague

the Henlein Party was the only German party to secure votes; it will henceforth have three seats on the municipal council of the Czechoslovak capital.

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DRAFT AUTONOMY SCHEME OF HLINKA PARTY

At a solemn assembly of the Slovak People's Party held in Pozsony on June 4th — in the presence of the delegation of American Slovaks who had brought to Slovakia the original text of the Pittsburg Convention — the draft Act relating to the revision of the Czecho-Slovak Constitution submitted by Father Andrew Hlinka and his adherents was passed unanimously. The most important provisions contained in Part II. of the said draft Act are as follows: —

Slovakia shall be an autonomous (selfgoverning) part of the Republic (§ 1). In the territory of Slovakia the Slovak language shall be the official language and also the language of instruction, without prejudice, however, to the linguistic rights guaranteed in the Treaty of Saint Germain (§ 2). In respect of the territory of Slovakia a separate right of domicile (*pertinenzs*) shall be established (§ 3). The sphere of authority of the Czecho-Slovak National Assembly shall extend to 1. *constitutional matters* (legislation); 2. *foreign affairs* (the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace), with the exception of international treaties or affairs coming within the jurisdiction of the provincial Diet; 3. *national defence*, — though persons domiciled within the territory of Slovakia shall be attached to formations stationed within that territory subordinate to the provincial Command; 4. *political nationality*, immigration and emigration, passports, currency, weights and measures; 6. *customs* administration; 7. *railway, water and air communications*; 8. *postal*, telegraph and telephone services; 9. *public debts*, negotiation and employment of State loans; 10. *taxes*, supplementary taxes and dues appropriated for expenditure connected with "common" affairs; 11. *monopolies* (régies) and State undertakings (§ 4). In all other matters the legislative power shall be exercised by the provincial Diet (§ 9). To the sphere of authority of the provincial Government shall belong also the matters enumerated in points 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 above, in so far as they concern Slovakia. The provincial Government shall be responsible to the provincial Diet (§ 15). The Central Government shall not be authorised to take any decisions, unless it includes also a Minister representing the Deputies being Members of the National Assembly who have been elected in Slovakia (§ 12). The employees of the Central Government functioning in Slovakia shall be appointed from among persons domiciled in the said province (§ 13). Slovakia shall be ensured a proportional representation in all "common" (central) institutions, boards, councils, committees, as also in all those international organisations, unions, councils, boards and committees in (or on)

which Czecho-Slovakia is represented (§ 14). A separate Supreme Tribunal and a separate Administrative Tribunal shall be organised for Slovakia (§§ 16—7). The costs of the "common" administrative are to be covered out of the receipts of customs, monopolies and "common" State undertaking; should these receipts prove insufficient for the purpose, Slovakia shall contribute to such expenditure a proportionate quota of her tax receipts. Slovakia shall contribute to the interest and sinking fund services of the State debts only in respect of such debts as have been appropriated in her interest too (§ 19). The financial losses suffered by Slovakia as a consequence of the unequitable character of the Government's tariff policy and of her not having received the quotas of funds, endowments, subsidies and public contracts due to her shall be distributed over a period of twenty years, the annual quotas to be regarded in the light of contributions of her part to the "common" expenditure of the Republic (§ 21).

The Whitsuntide meeting of the Party was an impressive demonstration of some hundred thousand persons to demand the carrying into effect of the Pittsburg Convention and the incorporation in law of the autonomy therein guaranteed.

THE RUTHENIANS DEMAND THE SAME KIND OF AUTONOMY AS THAT ENJOYED BY THE FINNS IN PRE-WAR RUSSIA

Like the Slovaks, the Ruthenians have also had a visit from their racial brethren in America, — in the form of a delegation led by Dr. Gerovszky. In connection with this visit, on May 10th the Ruthenian Central Little Russian National Council held a solemn assembly at Ungvár (Užhorod) at which the granting to Ruthenia of the autonomy guaranteed that province under the Treaty of Saint Germain was urged, not only by the Opposition Deputy Bródy, but also by Senator Bacsinszky, a Member of the Government Party, both speakers alike stressing that Law 172 of 1937, — which, as is well known, "expanded" the sphere of authority of the Governor of Ruthenia in a manner leaving him just as much a mere official dependent of Prague as ever — had failed to satisfy Ruthenia. Mr. Gerovszky declared that after his return to the United States of North America he would convene the Ruthenian Congress to meet at Pittsburg and would see that a resolution was passed defining the manner of assistance to be rendered. When he abused the former Hungarian régime, M. Zsidovszky, a speaker belonging to the Czech Agrarian Party, was hissed by the crowd; and in answer to a wish expressed by that speaker to the effect that the American delegation should make a statement of its experiences before a select committee, M. Gerovszky replied that that was to be left for America. No doubt the reason why he refused to express any opinion was that his experiences in Ruthenia are so damning in character that he did

not find it expedient — in view of the nature of the "freedom of speech" in force in Czecho-Slovakia — to express the same in Czecho-Slovak territory.

After the assembly a delegation of the Little Russian National Council submitted to Premier Hodža the resolution passed by the same, which demands that Ruthenia shall be granted the same kind of autonomy as that enjoyed by Finland in pre-War Russia. According to reports published in the papers, however, the Prime Minister declared that the proposed scheme was unacceptable and called upon the delegation to alaborate a new one.

BRITISH OPINIONS ON THE CZECH QUESTION

The Times, June 3:

"Czechoslovakia, where the final instalment of regional elections will be held on Sunday week, still offers the most urgent problem to European diplomacy, and the letters which continue to reach this office bear witness to the interest taken in its solution by British public opinion. One which was published yesterday from the Dean of St. Paul's was typical of many, and an effective expression of the view that the Germans of Czechoslovakia ought to be allowed, by plebiscite or otherwise, to decide their own future — even if it should mean their secession from Czechoslovakia to the Reich. With this view the majority of Englishmen probably agree.

"...For all these reasons it is easily intelligible that the Czech Government might not willingly agree to a plebiscite likely to result in a demand for the transfer of the Sudetens and the loss of their territory for the Republic. Nevertheless, if they could see their way to it, and to granting a similar choice to the other minorities, Hungarian and Polish, the rulers of Czechoslovakia might in the long run be the gainers in having a homogeneous and contented people, still more numerous than the populations of Belgium or Holland, and twice as numerous as those of Denmark or Switzerland. If it was an injustice that these minorities should have been included in the new Republic, that injustice would be removed; and the neighbouring States which take a racial interest in their kinsmen would have to look after them themselves and would lose any sort of claim to interfere in the affairs of Czechoslovakia. It would be a drastic remedy for the present unrest, but something drastic may be needed."

Lord Rothermere:

(Daily Mail, May 13.)

"The British Government should exercise great discretion in any conversations with French Ministers. These gentlemen are the prisoners of their own follies. They know well that the Franco-Czecho-Slovakian alliance is dangerous to their country and thoroughly unpopular in France itself, but they cannot see their way to go back on their word.

"A large party in the French Parliament demands the denunciation of that treaty. At least half the French Press is dead against it.

"In high French military circles it is stated that if an attempt were made to mobilise the Army in defence of Czecho-Slovakia a very large proportion of reservists would not respond to the call.

"Except among Socialist and Communist quarters in France, Prague, the capital of Czecho-Slovakia, is regarded as an outpost of Moscow, and the influence of these two extreme political parties is rapidly declining...

"Hungary is again on tip-toe. The trouble in Czecho-Slovakia is providing her, at long last, with an opportunity to recover that part of that land which has a majority of Hungarians.

"For 19 years the Government at Budapest has been supremely prudent, but it seems now that a moment has arrived when a spice of audacity should have play. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune", says Shakespeare.

"With the aid of her good friends Italy and Germany Hungary can at last achieve justice, a justice which Britain, at least, will gladly see accorded to the one belligerent enemy State which in the last war did not intern British subjects...

"There is no more stirring incident in the whole history of Europe than that which occurred when the Empress Maria-Theresa, harassed and hounded by her enemies, rallied the Hungarians to her aid. In her darkest despair that great and gallant woman achieved a remarkable reversal of her fortunes. In two stirring sentences a modern historian, Professor Fisher, has described it: "In the hour of her tribulation Maria-Theresa threw herself upon the loyalty of her Hungarian subjects and found in that chivalrous and warlike aristocracy a fiery response. The Bavarians were driven out of Munich, the French out of Prague."

"The appeal of the Empress to the people and nobles was made in 1741 at the old town of Pressburg. For hundreds of years the name of that ancient capital of Hungary has been sacred in the legends of the Hungarians.

"It is almost incredible that this historic town should have been ceded to Czecho-Slovakia, but so it was. Immediately the Czechs obtained possession they had the effrontery to change its name to Bratislava.

"Could wanton insult and outrage be carried farther?

"Ten or eleven years ago a British officer who had served on the Central Commission on Territorial Questions at the Peace Conference said that the Commissioners were responsible for the inclusion of Pressburg in Czecho-Slovakia.

"I said it was a damned shame.

"His excuse was that the Commission had been told to hurry,

that haste was supremely important. The Commission, in fact, had no time for proper examination and consideration.

"It was thus that one of the gravest injustices in history was perpetrated.

"If peace is to have a chance, the sooner the Czecho-Slovakian problem is settled the better. It is at present a canker in the heart of Europe, poisoning the relationships between half its peoples."

Mr. J. Boyd-Carpenter:

(The Times, May 4.)

"May I be allowed, through your columns, to emphasize the importance of the question raised by "Observer" in your issue of to day's date. Behind all the formulas — "British interest in Central Europe" — and the rest, lies the stern question as to whether this country should in the last resort fight for the maintenance of the integrity of Czechoslovakia.

"The arguments in favour of our doing so are two. First, that Czechoslovakia is such a "good thing" that we are under some kind of moral obligation to fight to preserve it. To which the answer is that in the first place the rights and wrongs of Czechoslovakia and her minorities are sufficiently complex to make moral judgments impossible, and in the second place that the idea of this country crusading in support of good causes everywhere has become so clearly impossible that even the Labour Party is beginning to have doubts about it.

"The second argument in favour of armed intervention in support of Czechoslovakia is based on the ground that such intervention is necessary in the interest of our own defence, in order to prevent Germany from growing too strong. But this is simply our old friend the preventive war, draped and disguised in the glowing vestments of the defence of small nations. In common fairness, its advocates should put it forward naked if not unashamed; they should proclaim that their policy is to pick a quarrel with Germany with the object of fighting her here and now. Such attitude not only reflects grave doubt as to our capacity to put through, given time, an effective rearmament programme, but also is apparently based on the imbecile conclusion that the certainty of a world cataclysm now is a lesser evil than the uncertain possibility of one in the future.

"The conclusion that Czechoslovakia is not worth the subjection of this country to the dangers of a European war may or may not be valid; but I have not yet seen it refuted. And if it is to be acted upon, ought we not to make this clear beyond question to all the world, in fairness in particular to France, so that she may realize that if she fights on this issue she fights alone, and to Czechoslovakia, lest she cherish illusions of the kind which led Abyssinia to disaster. The present uncertainty as to our attitude in a not impossible contingency may well simul-

taneously encourage Germany to attack and France and Czechoslovakia to resist."

W. R. Matthews:
(The Times, 2 June)

"I take it to be evident that the overwhelming majority of the Sudeten Germans wish to be incorporated in the Reich and that geography does not forbid this. I want to know on what moral grounds could we base a refusal to support a plébiscite to determine the future of these people.

"It might, I suppose, be said that they do not know what is best for them, or that they have been carried away by propaganda, or that they hold a most unreasonable political theory — in short all the common arguments against democracy might be used. Or again it might be said that their separation from Czechoslovakia would weaken that country and disturb the balance of power. I do not see how this could be urged with any show of reason, because it is difficult to think that the inclusion of several million people who are opposed to the State of which they are nominal members can be anything but a source of weakness.

"But, whatever be the value of these considerations, none of them can claim to be a principle of justice. I suppose that the British Empire has now adopted the view that it is both wrong and unwise to coerce a people into remaining within a State system against their will. Does not this apply elsewhere? It would indeed be a tragic irony if, having fought one war, as we are assured, for the principle of self-determination, we found ourselves involved in another to prevent its application."

Particulars of Ill-considered and Anti-constitutional Mobilization.

In a question to the Prague Government, Count John Esterházy, Acting Chairman of the United Hungarian Party of Czechoslovakia, threw an interesting light on certain particulars unknown abroad of the Czech mobilization that took place on the night of 20th May. The gist of his question was as follows:

In the middle of the night of 20th May gendarmes and other administrative organs in Slovakia and Ruthenia dragged reservists and the militia of different classes out of their beds and carried them off to the barracks, saying that mobilization was on foot. In some places they did not give the reservists time even to take a little food with them. They were conveyed to the garrisons by car.

The official statement issued by the Ministry of National Defence to the effect that one reservist and one militia class had been called up under the Army Act for special manoeuvres, to be trained in the use of the new arms, was not in accordance

with facts. The Army Act unambiguously provided that when new arms were introduced only one class of the reserve militia might be called up, whereas in this case men belonging to different classes, from the age of 23 to 50, were mobilized. Had the sole object of this mobilization been training — as was stated in the official announcement — why were the men who had taken part in the manoeuvres lasting from the middle of April till the middle of May called up again? It could not have been necessary to train them afresh ten days after they had been demobilized. On this point, therefore, the official statement did not tell the truth. Nor did it say which class it was, the calling up of which was deemed so urgent. Suppression of the facts made Parliamentary control impossible.

There was no question of special manoeuvres; it was one of partial mobilization. This was proved by the fact that certain regiments in full war equipment were despatched on 21st May and the succeeding days from their regular garrisons with orders to lay mines under bridges and crossings, barricade roads, etc., as though the existence or the security of the Republic were threatened by some danger. Now, neither the military Command nor the Ministry of National Defence had the right to order a partial mobilization. In time of peace only the President of the Republic could do so — after consultation with his Ministers — and even he could not call up more than the five youngest classes. No such order had been signed up to date by the President. Since the calling up of more than five classes exceeded the authority even of the President, the men responsible for that illegal measure would have to be brought to book and made to answer in the Courts of Justice for having disturbed the internal and external peace of the Republic.

Troops were posted in all directions along the frontier — in Slovakia and Ruthenia on a line several hundreds of kilometres long. Yet nothing had been done by the adjacent countries to warrant the reinforcement of the Czecho-Slovak frontiers. Neither Hungary nor Poland had taken steps of any sort on their own frontiers.

Premier Hodža was constantly asserting his desire to come to an agreement with Czecho-Slovakia's neighbours. But these measures were diametrically opposed to his words, and were by no means calculated to place relations between Czecho-Slovakia and her neighbours on a more amicable footing. According to appearances the Premier would fain use the Czech army and gendarmerie as a means to coerce the Danube States to club together in friendly co-operation.

The partial mobilization cost millions. The Government had no funds to cover the extra costs and new burdens could not be imposed upon the population simply because the Ministry of Defence had had a nightmare...

Count Esterházy next pointed out that the Government was making a military use of the settlers who at the time of the land reform had been arbitrarily planted in the Hungarian districts. Those settlers were conveyed on the night of 19th May, in motor-cars requisitioned for the purpose, to the Danube frontier, where they were supplied with uniforms and arms and sent to do military duty along the Danube, digging trenches, etc. etc. and hindering the land-owners of those parts in their work in the fields and forests.

This proved definitely that the settlers were a disguised military formation and that the object of the Government in carrying out the land reform was to maintain a certain number of men in the frontier districts in readiness for military purposes. That being so, the Government should have done it openly, instead of making gifts to settlers of land belonging to the autochthonous Hungarian population. The Hungarian Members of the Czecho-Slovak Parliament regarded as a grievance the fact that the land distributed in the Hungarian districts had not been given to the Hungarian peasants with a just title to it, but had been allotted to the members of disguised military formations; and they also protested against the roads being made impassable in certain places. The troops had no right to do that in the case of simple manoeuvres, and it was no wonder that it had given rise to unrest within and without the borders of the Republic and had increased the atmosphere of tension in which the nationalities of Czecho-Slovakia were living. The present illegal situation would have to be abolished immediately.

An extremely important fact that emerges from one of the questions put is that days before 20th May the Czecho-Slovak Public Security Offices received orders to be in readiness. In the evening of 20th May the different garrisons were officially notified that several classes would be called up during the night.

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MAJOR PROCTER M. P.: "THE HUNGARIAN QUESTION CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE SUDETA GERMAN PROBLEM"

Major Henry Procter, M. P. (Conservative Party), who revisited Hungary recently, has made a statement to the London correspondent of the "Pesti Hirlap". He said that he had acquainted the British circles concerned with the results of his observations in Hungary. According to Major Procter the interest shown in Great Britain for Hungary was of the keenest. The opinion was growing daily stronger that the British Government would be guilty of a grave error if it treated the Sudeta German problem and that of the Hungarian minority as separate questions. For years British public opinion had been unanimously urging a

readjustment of the wrongs done to Hungary, and now political circles, as well as public opinion, strongly desired the elimination of the injustices of the Trianon Treaty. In co-operation with the other European Powers the British Government had prepared a careful plan for the solution of the Danube Valley problems and very shortly the nations concerned would enter into direct negotiations. The essentials of that plan were laid on such firm foundations that everybody was justified in confidently expecting the economic and political reconciliation of the countries of Central Europe.

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CATHOLICS FROM EVERY PART OF THE WORLD MEET IN MASSES IN HUNGARY — THE BULWARK OF DEFENCE OF CHRISTIAN EUROPE

During the week from May 24th. to May 29th., the whole Hungarian nation, all denominations alike, from the Regent and his Consort to the simplest citizen, left no stone unturned to enhance the splendour and the solemnity of the Thirty-Fourth Eucharistic Congress, as the scene of which Pope Pius XI. had chosen Budapest, the beautiful Capital of Hungary. Fourteen cardinals, thirty-two archbishops and one hundred and ninety-seven bishops were present at the Congress to represent the Catholic society of the world. Pope Pius XI. delegated his Secretary-of-State, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, to attend the Congress in the character of *legatus a latere*. The opening ceremony of the Congress, the mass-communion celebrated on Ascension Day, the procession of boats the same evening on the Danube, the mass celebrated in the open air by the Papal Legate and the closing procession, offered a pomp of colour and a richness of display that will never be forgotten by those who were present at these impressive ceremonies. The Hungarian nation feels a debt of gratitude to Pope Pius XI. for his gift of this unique experience; and our ears will long ring with the echo of the splendid words of appreciation with which the Pope and his Legate honoured the Hungarian nation and praised the efforts made by that nation in defence of Christian civilisation.

We are grateful to the Pope for the admiration conjured up by his memories of Budapest and for having prayed to God to grant the Hungarian nation the blessings of the peace which that nation deserves. We are grateful to Cardinal Pacelli for having opened the Congress in Hungarian and for having, in these stirring days of storm and stress, spoken with respect and confidence of the eloquent testimony of the pages of history written by the Hungarian people in that tragic period in which that people acted as the bulwark of defence of Christian Europe. We are thankful to him for his words of praise: "Heroic and glorious is the history told by the lofty fortress-hill of Buda, as it seems

to chant the anthem of revival, enthusiasm and brotherly union. It was here that the gallantry of the Hungarian armies fighting in defence of Christian culture broke the impact of the invading infidel hosts . . ."

Long will ring in our ears also the words spoken by Cardinal Pacelli at the dinner given in his honour by the Regent and his Consort: "One of the frescoes decorating the walls of the second room of the Apostolic Library in the Vatican — that called after Pope Paul — records the memory of the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus who established in Buda a magnificent and wealthy library (*"bibliothecam magnificam et locupletem Budae instruit"*) and at the same time expresses gratitude and appreciation of Hungary in the words of a eulogy strikingly resembling in its terms one of the fine inscriptions to be found in the lobby of the Vatican devoted to cartography — *"Ungaria fertilitate, aurifera copia, virum fortitudine, a christianis regibus . . . perpetua successione possesso . . ."* I beg all present here tonight to join me in the wish that comes from my heart — a wish that is at the same time a prayer — that the chivalrous and gallant Hungarian people, which has proved undaunted and triumphant even in the days of the severest ordeals, may advance with self-conscious perseverance, on the path of justice and peace and in a spirit of co-operation and understanding, towards a brighter future, achieving prosperity and thereby benefiting the whole Christian world!"

The Eucharistic Congress was the overture of the celebrations by which during the coming three months Hungary is to commemorate the greatness of her first apostolic king, St. Stephen, on the occasion of the nine-hundredth anniversary of his death. It was in view of these celebrations that Pope Pius XI. selected Budapest as the scene of the Congress. The St. Stephen celebrations began on May 30th., when the sacred relic so highly prized by Hungarian Catholics, the Right Hand of the first Apostolic King of the country, was displayed in a brilliant procession through the streets of Budapest to the hundreds of thousands of worshippers who had thronged to the Capital from all parts of the country, and was then conveyed in state to Esztergom and to Székesfehérvár, the whilom residences of the Hungarian kings of the House of Árpád. The presence of the Papal Legate and the bishops who had taken part in the Eucharistic Congress enhanced the splendour and the dignity of the triumphal progress of the Holy Right Hand.

Epilogue

Visitors to the Congress returning to Transylvania via Lökös-háza were searched ruthlessly by the Rumanians. They were not only divested of the shoes and clothes they had bought in Hungary but were also deprived of the Congress souvenirs and flowers

they had brought with them from Hungary. Some of the passengers were handed over by the police to the Public Prosecutor.

RECONSTRUCTION OF HUNGARIAN CABINET

On May 13 the Regent of Hungary entrusted M. Béla Imrédy, Minister of Economic Affairs, with the task of reconstructing the Cabinet. The reconstruction was necessitated by the resignation of the former Premier, M. Kálmán Darányi, who, having accomplished the realisation of his great scheme of reforms in State administration, offered to make way for M. Imrédy, the foremost financial capacity of the country, who was also responsible for the drafting of the great five years' investment scheme of Government. Among those members of the former Cabinet who have kept their seats in the new Cabinet are M. Kánya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Reményi-Schneller, Minister of Finance, M. Bornemisza, Minister of Industry, M. Hóman, previously Minister of Education and now Minister without portfolio, and M. Mikecz, Minister of Justice. New members of the Cabinet are: Count Paul Teleki, former Premier, now Minister of Education, M. Keresztes-Fischer, formerly Minister of the Interior and President of the Central Corporation of Hungarian Banks, who is once more Minister of the Interior, M. Sztranyavszky, former President of the House of Deputies, Minister of Agriculture, and General Eugene Rätz, previously Chief of the General Staff, as Minister of National Defence. M. Imrédy, the new Premier, delivered his *exposé* in the House on May 14, emphasizing the fact that the Government's general attitude in matters of foreign policy would remain the same as before. This statement is sufficiently corroborated by the fact that M. Kánya, who has conducted Hungary's foreign affairs for the last five years, has retained his seat in the new Cabinet.

The new Government made its *début* at the session of Parliament on May 14th.; on this occasion Premier Imrédy made a long speech in which he dealt also with the international political situation, and *inter alia* made the following declarations:

In the first place he established the fact that there had been no change in the direction of the foreign policy of Hungary, which could still be most aptly characterised or described as an "active peace policy" the object of which was to foster and strengthen the cordial relations with our old and well-tried friends and at the same time to endeavour to improve the relations with countries our relations with which could for the present hardly be described as friendly. The Premier spoke of Italy as that Great Power which had been the first in the years of mourning for the Edict of Trianon to realise the historical mission of the Hungarian nation, and declared that the Rome Protocols were still in force unaltered as between Hungary and Italy and were functioning

unchanged. Hungary's friendship for Germany remained as firm as ever under the changed conditions and would develop further. Dr. Imrédy then stressed that Hungary and Poland were united by the ancient traditions of a friendship founded upon the cordial and sincere fellow-feeling of the two peoples, — a friendship which the recent visit to Poland of the Regent of Hungary had further strengthened, the brilliant reception given to His Highness and the spontaneous enthusiasm of the Polish people having reflected externally too the depth of the common sentiments binding the two nations together.

At the same time the Premier was pleased to be able to establish the fact that Great Britain was showing an ever-increasing interest in and understanding for the questions connected with the solution of the problem of Central Europe and with the future destiny of that region, noting also that of late France too — or at least a very considerable section of French public opinion — had begun to more thoroughly appreciate the essential points of that problem.

Dr. Imrédy referred also to the negotiations begun already last year between Hungary on the one side and Yugoslavia, Rumania and Czecho-Slovakia on the other for the purpose of normalising the mutual relations between the four countries and in particular of bringing about an improvement in the lot of the Hungarian minorities subjected to the rule of the Little Entente States. He believed that Hungary had at all times shown the greatest and most consistent patience. Although these negotiations had — for reasons beyond the control of Hungary — been repeatedly deferred, he had not abandoned the hope that by dint of the strenuous and unflagging efforts continued over a considerable period it would eventually prove nevertheless possible to create in the Danube Basin conditions which would provisionally facilitate the normal symbiosis of the peoples living together in that Basin and would in the end prove calculated to ensure the friendly co-operation feasible under the given circumstances.

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The New York Times on the New Prime Minister.

We publish below a few passages from an article from the pen of Anne O'Hara McCormick entitled "Imrédy, Hungary's New Premier, Picked to Meet Crisis" which appeared in the May 16th issue of the "New York Times": —

"In international banking circles Imrédy is rated as one of the best financial brains of Europe. In his smaller field he is said to be a match for Schacht. But he is more than a financier. By the League commissioners who worked with him in pulling Hungary out of the red, he is credited with a Savonarola-like character, devout, dedicated, without self-interest or personal

ambition, absolutely fearless in doing what he conceives to be right.

"No one can talk to Mr. Imrédy about the problems of his country in relation to the impinging problems of Central Europe without being impressed by an unusual combination of strong national feeling and capacity to see Hungary as part of a whole picture. This man will never surrender the independence of his country. He is so keenly alive to the danger of economic dependence on Germany that he insists on selling wheat at a loss in England in order to keep alternative markets open. But he will mix subtlety with resolution in the tortuous course Hungary has to steer between independence and vassalage.

"The choice of Mr. Imrédy to head a new government is a portent. It means that a strong regime is needed to combat Nazi agitation and counteract the appeal of National Socialism among the landless peasants and the dissatisfied youth of the emerging middle class...

"The most tragic international consequence of the new dictatorships is that they cannot be fought, at least by weaker nations, except with their own weapons. Hungary has neither the will nor the choice to defy her most powerful neighbor and war ally. She must be on good terms with Germany and also with Italy, as the first supporter of her revisionist claims, and to this extent she swings with the axis. Mr. Imrédy announces a five-point reconstruction plan, labor camps, public works, a workers' recreation movement, rearmament. Evidently he means to build up national resistance by inoculation.

"But there is no doubt that the purpose of all this is to save Hungary's independence..."

SITUATION IN RUMANIA

In a statement to the "Journal de Geneve", M. Petrescu-Comnen, Foreign Minister, gave his opinion of Rumania's internal political situation as follows: "Rumania has been exposed to the influence of the Extreme Right and Left wings of international politics, and after many experiments the country has been saved, from what might have been a fatal danger, by the King. The operation was no easy one, but now Rumania is progressing on the path of material and moral reinforcement". This over-optimistic statement of the Foreign Minister omits to mention that Rumania is still under the rule of a military dictatorship which curtails the rights and liberties of the inhabitants and in particular of the minorities.

The Government continues its struggle against the Iron Guards, which began with the arrest of Zeleu Codreanu and other leaders of that movement. On 22nd April the Cabinet Council decreed the final dissolution of the "Everything For The Country" (Totul pentru Tara) Party, the "Archangel Michael Group" and

the Iron Guards, as well as the detention of all persons engaged in prohibited activities. Foreign opinion is divided as to what the results of this decree may be. The German Press ("Berliner Börsen Zeitung", May 9) does not believe this to mean the end of the Iron Guards movement. It points out that in reality the question is one of a clash between two anti-democratic movements of the Right wing, both relying on the principle of dictatorship. On the one side stands King Carol, on the other the Codreanu movement. The French and English Press on the other hand have expressed appreciation of the measure adopted.

Codreanu Sentenced

On May 26th. the military tribunal sitting in Bucharest passed the following sentences on Corneliu Codreanu, leader of the Iron Guards: ten years' hard labour for high treason, five years' imprisonment for insurrection, three years' civil disability, and eight years' penal servitude for his attempt to subvert the social order of the country. The sentence inflicted on the accused is the severest known to the new penal code — ten years' hard labour and three years' civil disability. — y —

YUGOSLAV MINISTER OF TRANSPORT IN HUNGARY

M. Mehmed Spoha, the Yugoslav Minister of Transport, arrived in Budapest on May 4. The Minister inspected, among other things, the Budapest Fair and the railway motor carriages which are being made for Yugoslavia by the State Iron Works in Diósgyőr. M. Géza Bornemissza, Hungarian Minister of Commerce and Industry, gave a dinner in honour of his Yugoslav colleague, who spent a whole week in Hungary. — y —

PRINCIPAL OF MEADVILLE DIVINITY COLLEGE — HONORARY DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED

On May 9-th the Faculty of Philosophy of the Francis Joseph University of Szeged conferred the title of Honorary Doctor of Philosophy upon the Rev. Sydney Bruce Snow, President of Meadville Divinity College, who has played an eminent part in rescuing the scholastic funds of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania. In his reply the new Doctor pointed out that his action in defence of the interests of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania eighteen years ago was only his duty as a champion of justice and humanity. — y —

PALACE TO BE BUILT BY THE "SOKOL" IN MEMORY OF SARAJEVO ASSASSIN

The official State organization, the "Sokol", decided recently to erect new headquarters in Bosanko Grahovo. The building is to bear the name of Principe Gavrilo. This new case of the glorification of political murder may be allowed to pass without further comment. — y —