

HOW MINORITIES LIVE

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

HOW THE CZECHS BEHAVED DURING THE CRISIS

Czecho-Slovakia was always known to international public opinion as a State that never fulfilled the obligations undertaken in her international treaties. Newspapers were always full of the various legal and other grievances of the Czecho-Slovak national minorities. But the nationalities compelled to live under Czech rule never suffered so much perhaps as in the days when commonsense should have told the Czechs to treat their minorities as well as they possibly could, in order to convince the world of the truth of the assertion, which Czech propaganda still continues to make, that the national minorities are treated nowhere so well as in Czecho-Slovakia. The international Press has dealt fully with the venom and cruelty displayed towards the Sudeten Germans and the Poles at the height of the crisis. The imprisoning, court-martialing and atrocious mishandling of these unfortunate people was practically the order of the day in the Sudeten German and Polish areas. Now that their problems have been solved, we consider it imperative to draw the attention of international public opinion to those instances of crying injustice that are typical of the sufferings of the Hungarian minority in Czecho-Slovakia during the past few weeks. When Czecho-Slovakia lost two important minorities through the instrumentality of the Munich Pact, the Czechs began to strive to intimidate the Hungarian population with all the means at their disposal, and their fury was so great that a large number of dead mark the destructive path of the Czech mercenaries and the Communist bands co-operating with them. Below we publish in chronological order some data relating to the persecution of the Hungarian minority in Czecho-Slovakia. To these data copied from unexaggerated reports published in a semi-official Hungarian daily, the "Budapesti Hirlap", we add no comment. (The dates signify the days on which the reports were received by the newspaper and cover a period from immediately before the Munich Pact to the date on which the Komárom negotiations were broken off.)

September 25. Paul Szvatkó, author of the "Prágai Magyar Hirlap's" leaders, and other prominent Hungarians arrested. — The mobilized Hungarian soldiers and the Hungarian population

of the frontier zone demonstrate in favour of restoration to Hungary. — September 28. Hungarian women forced to draw carts to the fortifications while the Czech frontier guards mock them. — Paul Szvatkő, journalist, and the leaders of the Hungarian Party under arrest released through the intervention of the United Hungarian Party. — September 29. Hungarian married women and girls forced to dig trenches. — 100 Hungarians arrested in Rimaszombat, 70 in Feled. — September 30. One hundred Hungarian citizens, including the leaders of the Hungarian Party, arrested in Pozsony, allegedly in order to insure that mobilization should proceed smoothly. — The secretaries of the Hungarian Party in Losonc and Párkány arrested. — October 1. The Hungarian population of the districts around Kassa ordered out to build fortifications; they were often dragged out of their beds at dead of night. — 14 Hungarian soldiers of Tornaalja conveyed to the German frontier and shot. — Several fresh arrests in Rimaszombat of prominent Hungarians, who are being treated as hostages. One of them is the Reformed Church pastor of the town, who is ill in bed. — October 2. Czechs close frontier and stop all telephone and telegraph communication. Rails taken up at frontier stations. The crops of Hungarian and Slovak farmers carted away. The inhabitants, especially the men, flee in large numbers. The Czechs cruelly beat the members of their families who remain behind. At the same time they tell their mobilized Hungarian soldiers that the Hungarians ill-treat and starve those who desert to Hungary. October 4. The Czechs place mines under the famous Dobsina Ice Grotto and the stalagmite cave at Baradla, to be able to blow them up if forced to surrender them. — Béla Csutor, a Hungarian farmer who had been forced not long ago to make a speech praising the "good treatment" received by the Hungarians from the Czechs, arrested. — October 5. Two leaders of the Dunaszerdahely branch of the Hungarian Party, a lawyer named Géza Szeif, and a parish priest named Gabriel Markwarth, arrested and their cars confiscated. — October 6. The Czechs force every citizen of Slovakia and Ruthenia between 14 and 30 years of age to sign a statement. The inhabitants know that these statements will be employed to falsify the figures of any census that may be taken. — October 7. The Czech legionaries flee from the Hungarian frontier zone and bands of Communists immediately begin to despoil the Hungarian villages. The cruelty of the Communists so embitters the inhabitants that in several places they set fire to, or blow up, the barracks of the customs guards and the military (e. g. at Nagy-gères and Perenye). — Ignoring the Czech terror the mobilized Slovak and Hungarian soldiers sing Hungarian songs and cheer Regent Horthy. October 8. At the demand of the Hungarian delegation the Czechs release their political prisoners of Hungarian nationality (When negotiations were broken off they were immediately arrested again.) — October 13. Order issued forbidding

people to be on the street in the Hungarian towns of Slovakia after 8 o'clock. All cafés and restaurants must close at 7. The inhabitants of Ruthenia break out in open revolt against the cruelties of the Czech authorities. Simultaneously bands of Czech Communists disturb the peace of the inhabitants at night, October 14. Czech policemen disperse with their rubber batons and the butts of their rifles the crowds gathered to take leave of the Hungarian delegation.

Needless to say the above-enumerated data by no means exhaust the tale of cruelty repeated daily. We merely wanted to give our foreign readers an idea of what conditions in Czecho-Slovakia are like and of the treatment meted out to the minorities still remaining in the Republic. These atrocious acts are being committed at a time when the Czech wireless loudly proclaims in every language to its domestic and foreign audiences that it is a pity for the Hungarians to wish to rejoin Hungary, and a pity for the Slovaks and Ruthenians to struggle for their independence, when "their Czech fatherland insures them a better lot than any other country, or even a country of their own, could possibly offer them."

THE CZECHO-SLOVAK GOVERNMENT ARRESTED ITS OWN RUTHENIAN PRIME MINISTER

According to the special correspondent of the "Kurjer Warszawski", the Volosin Government has organized rifle corps in Ruthenia, which were named after Colonel Konovalec. (Konovalec, who was shot dead recently in Brussels by a terrorist, was the colonel who fought for Ukrainian independence.) The leaders of these war-like rifle corps are citizens of a friendly Great Power, says the Polish newspaper. They are being organized on the model of similar bodies that formerly existed in Eastern Galicia. One of M. Volosin's first acts was to dissolve all other organizations in Ruthenia.

*How M. Bródy, Ruthenian
ex-Premier was removed from office.*

The Prague correspondent of the "Stampa" tells us (31st October, 1938) "How Bródy was thrown out of the Hradsin." In this article he reports on the latest developments of the Ruthenian question.

Among other things we are told that the weakest point of the Czecho-Slovak Government's argument is that they will not hear of a plebiscite either in Slovakia or Ruthenia. Who — says this correspondent — can guarantee that the Pozsony and Ungvár Governments really represent the majority of the Slovaks and Ruthenians? Did they do so, why was Bródy thrown out of his office by Prague? Why was he arrested and Volosin, the

leader of the minority Ukrainian Party, appointed Premier in his place? The story of this sudden change of Premiers is extremely characteristic of the state of affairs.

The article contains an exact account of how Bródy was thrown out of office.

At a Cabinet Council meeting on 25th October M. Andrew Bródy declared that a plebiscite must be held in Ruthenia. On hearing this his colleagues, especially M. Tiso, tried to silence him. From the room in which the Cabinet Council meeting was being held a great din of shouting was heard, and then came silence, which was broken by the voice of General Sirovy, who said to M. Bródy: "I am sorry you are taking this attitude. You have proved yourself unworthy of your office."

"I refuse to take cognizance of your words." replied M. Bródy.

"And I, continued General Sirovy," declare that under Article 80 of the Constitution you have ceased to be a Minister without Portfolio in the Czecho-Slovak Cabinet and Prime Minister of Ruthenia."

After arresting M. Bródy the Czechs now want to imprison the leaders of his Party.

The autochthonous inhabitants of Ruthenia are in a state of great excitement because of the acts of terror perpetrated by the Czech police and gendarmes. At the end of September a warrant for the apprehension of the leaders of ex-Premier Bródy's Party and an order to arrest the secretary were issued. These facts are another illustration of how the Czechs want to establish autonomy in Ruthenia.

M. Volosin wanted to place his own Ministers under arrest.

According to the Polish "Express Telegraphic Bureau" M. Volosin asked General Sirovy for authority to arrest the Ruthenian Minister, M. Fencik on the charge of high treason. After M. Bródy, M. Fencik would be the second Ruthenian Minister to see the inside of a Czech prison.

The Ruthenians do not want the Volosin Government.

According to a report from Ungvár published in the "Dobry Wieczor" of 31st October, 1938, the Ruthenians do not want the Volosin Government. A sign of this is that they smashed all the windows of M. Bachinski's house. The stones which were thrown into the Minister's house were wrapped in paper, and on each paper was written in Ruthenian: "Wretched traitor! Servant of Prague!" When M. Bachinski went to the Ministry he was accompanied by four gendarmes on bicycles.

Slovaks remove Prof. Seaton Watson's memorial tablet.

Pozsony, November 3. One after another, the souvenirs of the Masaryk-Beneš era in Slovakia are being removed by the Hlinka Guards. Recently the memorial tablet erected in Rozsahegy in honour of Professor Seaton Watson (who as Scotus Viator was in the service of Czech propaganda) was removed at the express instructions of Mayor Mederly, and now the statue of Liberty set up in the main square of that town to commemorate Slovakia's incorporation with Bohemia has shared the same fate. A statue of Andrew Hlinka is to take its place. In Liszkófalú, a place near Rózsahégy, the tablet marking the house where Lawrence Srobár, first Slovak Minister, was born has also been removed.

UNBRIDLED CZECH TERROR

It is typical of the nervousness of the Czech frontier guards that on October 15th they turned their rifles and machine-guns on a Hungarian sentry who was patrolling the frontier in County Gömör. The Hungarian sentry took shelter in time and escaped without hurt. He did not fire back. Rifle firing took place between a detachment of gendarmes and the insurgents at a place between Ungvár and Munkács, as well as in several villages to the north of the latter town. Several officers and men of the gendarmery were killed. A large number of tanks were despatched to Ungvár, Munkács and Beregszász for distribution as necessity arose. Armed cars are patrolling the highroads in pursuit of the insurgents, who flee to the hills after a skirmish, but without success.

On 15th October the Hungarian Telephonic News and Broadcasting Co. reported that in order to quell the revolt described as a "trifling incident" the Czechs were obliged to concentrate a large number of rapidly moving units — armed, cars, armed trains, considerable forces of the gendarmery and several battalions of soldiers — in the affected areas. The Czech wireless stations broadcast reports of some of the acts of terror under the title of "The Voice of the Army", describing them as trifling incidents, but at the same time stating that a regular battle had been fought near Munkács with a larger contingent of insurgents. That battle, reliable reports of which were brought across the frontier by refugees from Munkács, could scarcely be described as a "frontier incident", seeing that it lasted several hours and that the Czechs sent three tanks to support the gendarmes and the regular troops. Besides this Munkács is at least twenty-five miles distant from the Hungarian frontier as the crow flies. A fierce battle lasting for hours to which — according to the refugees — only nightfall put an end and from which, after darkness had set in, the Czechs, and not the insurgents, who also suffered

severe losses, were forced to retreat because they were threatened in the rear by another rebel force, could hardly be called an incident.

RIOTS IN RUTHENIA AND SLOVAKIA CAUSED BY THE INTOLERABLE ACTS OF TERROR OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK AUTHORITIES EGGED ON BY THE GOVERNMENT.

On 14-th October, when the shilly-shallying of the Czecho-Slovak delegation and the absurd nature of their proposals made continuation of the Komárom negotiations impossible, the Czecho-Slovak Government changed its tactics and made no further attempt to disguise the rage felt by the Czechs, which hitherto had been more or less concealed. The Czech authorities embarked openly on a campaign of terror and in Ruthenia resorted to the most energetic acts of repression against the Hungarians and those of the Ruthenians and Slovaks who were friends of the former. Namely, some time before this the population of those provinces had made demonstrations in favour of Hungary, which, however, were of an entirely peaceful nature and nowhere overstepped legitimate bounds. They were encouraged to do so by the fact that though the Sudeten Germans and the Teschen Poles had given much freer reign to the manifestation of their sentiments in similar circumstances, the Czechs had taken no steps against them out of consideration for the two Great Powers.

But against the peace-abiding inhabitants of Slovakia and Ruthenia the Czech Government acted with the greatest brutality. The loyal and legitimate manifestation of their feelings was made the excuse. That the situation became aggravated was due to the intentionally provocative behaviour of the Czechs, and not to inspiration from without. The inhabitants, made desperate by repression, the numerous deserters from the army and the refugees who had been driven out of the country earlier and who had begun to drift back, tried to defend themselves against these acts of terror at the risk of their lives. And even when these phenomena assumed dangerous dimensions, the Czech Government, to prevent the fact leaking out that they were no longer masters of the situation, tried to make foreign countries believe it was only a question of minor incidents. To further this purpose they muzzled the Press there, so that the only information that comes through are the absolutely reliable and substantiated statements of refugees fleeing cross the Czecho-Slovak frontier. That the situation is extremely grave is best proved by the fact that the Provincial Governor of Slovakia, on 13-th October, placed three frontier zones in Slovakia under a state of siege, which was followed by similar measures in the three frontier zones of Ruthenia on 15th October.

REFUTATION OF THE FIGURES OF THE
CZECHO-SLOVAK CENSUS

Czech statisticians lament that the population is steadily decreasing in the Czech districts and even — according to Professor Chura — in the Slovak areas too, while in Bohemia proper the decline is positively alarming. In view of this it is very strange that official statistics establish a rapid increase of the Slav population in the Hungarian districts and a similarly rapid decrease of the Hungarian elements, and this, although the birth and death figures among the Hungarian are much more favourable than among the Slavs. For this reason no one will seriously believe that it is the result of natural causes that the Czecho-Slovak population increased between the two last censuses by 350 per cent. in the Feled Prefecture, by 320 per cent. in the Zseliz Prefecture, by nearly 400 per cent. in the Tornalja Prefecture, by almost 100 per cent. in the Szepes Prefecture and by wellnigh 100 per cent. in the Galánta Prefecture, while during the same time the number of Hungarians declined from 8100 to 3500 in the Kassa Prefecture, from 9000 to 3530 in the Terebes Prefecture, from 20.600 to 16.700 in the Szepes Prefecture, from 8000 to 6000 in the Rimaszombat Prefecture, from 15.700 to 12.000 in the Léva Prefecture, and from 29.000 to 25.000 in the Feled Prefecture. This is stated in spite of the fact that the natural increase of the population in those districts presents a perfectly satisfactory picture. In 1921 the census showed 472 Czecho-Slovaks and 2958 Hungarians in Galánta, but according to the 1930 Census the number of Czecho-Slovaks had increased to 1471, while the Hungarian population had decreased to 1670.

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RUMANIA

BIRTH REGISTERS IN SZÉKLERLAND FALSIFIED TO
DETRIMENT OF ROMAN CATHOLIC HUNGARIANS

In three villages of County Csik (Gyimesbükk, Gyimesfelsőlak and Gyimesközéplak) the parish clerk registers new-born Roman Catholic children — especially if any of their ancestors were of another religion or had Rumanian-sounding names — as Greek Catholics and Rumanianizes their names. In Gyimesbükk alone 22 abuses of this kind occurred in the past year ("Magyar Lapok," Sept. 10.). This is how the "principles governing the activity of the Minority Commission" laid down in the Cabinet Council resolution of 4th August are being put in practice, which resolution announces that "family names are always to be written in their original form" (§. 19).

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RUMANIAN SCHOOL ESTABLISHED IN CONFISCATED
BUILDINGS OF HUNGARIAN SCHOOL

In the last school-year the buildings of the Roman Catholic elementary school in Gyergyóditró (attended by several hundred children and with a staff of seven teachers) were confiscated and a Rumanian school opened in them this September. The Church authorities would like to provide for the Catholic children left without a school and the teachers deprived of their livelihood by establishing a Roman Catholic school in the concert hall belonging to the church. They have asked the Minister's permission to do so. The rights of a public school have not yet been restored to the Hungarian gymnasium in Temesvár, the only Hungarian secondary school in the Banate. ("Brassói Lapok," August 4. and 21.)

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MANAGEMENT OF HUNGARIAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
SENT TO PRISON FOR HANGING PETŐFI'S AND KÖLCSEY'S
PORTRAITS ON THE WALL

Mention has already been made in this paper of the attempt to denationalize the more than a hundred-year-old Hungarian "Citizens Circle" of Szatmár (Satu-mare). The method employed was that about 600 Rumanians applied for membership. The management rejected their application, Thereupon a commission from the authorities appeared in the premises of the club to examine its attitude towards "the official language and the Rumanian State." The commission found fault with the circumstance that the portraits of Francis Kölcsey — the author of the Hungarian National Anthem now just a century old, — who was once president of the club, and of Alexander Petőfi, the great Hungarian poet, hung on the same wall with the portrait of the King of Rumania and that there were also inscriptions in Hungarian on that wall. The military courts pronounced a sentence of one month's jail on Dr. Joseph Tót, president of the club, imposed a fine of 2000 lei on its legal adviser Dr. Stephen Mák, and suspended its activities for 6 months ("Magyar Kisebbség," Sept. 1.).

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SENTENCES INFLICTED ON HUNGARIANS BY MILITARY
COURTS

Because of a Hungarian flag that had been forgotten in the attic of the St. Erzsébet Home for the Aged in Kolozsvár, the concierge, Martin Szabó, was fined 2000 lei by the military courts. („Magyar Kisebbség”, Sept. 1.) The Rev. Ernest Gál a Unitarian

pastor, was arrested and brought before the military courts because on the occasion of a domiciliary visit the gendarmes found an old magazine and some old maps in his possession („Magyar Ujság," Augt. 21). *Because of an article that appeared in the "Székely Nép,"* a Hungarian weekly published in Transylvania, Dr. Gabriel Kabai, a lawyer of Sepsiszentgyörgy, as responsible editor, and M. Gaspar Tamás, journalist, as editor, were sentenced by the Brassó military courts to 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of 1000 lei and 2 years' imprisonment and a fine of 5000 lei respectively ("Keleti Ujság," Sept. 3.).

REAL VALUE OF NEW EDUCATIONAL DECREE

Before schools opened the Ministry of Education issued a decree to school-inspectors' offices which, among other facilities, allows parents to send their children to minority schools, irrespective of their creed or the denomination to which those schools belong, the only criterion to be the mother-tongue of the pupils. With this the decree would seem to do away with the system of name-analysis. But this is only a sham, for the last section of § 4 stipulates that pupils whose ethnic origin is undoubtedly Rumanian must attend State schools. This stipulation offers a wide scope for further name-analysis and coercion. When the registration was over a flood of complaints poured in to the Church authorities maintaining the Roman Catholic and Protestant denominational schools, stating that in certain places the directors of the State schools ignored the decree and — particularly in the Székler districts — prevented the Hungarian children from registering at denominational schools. In this way very little improvement is noticeable. ("Magyar Ujság," Sept. 14.)

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HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATIONS SUSPENDED FOR BEING ENGAGED IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The club of the Merchants' Society in Székelyudvarhely has been closed by the police on the ground that of late it had been pursuing activities serving cultural aims ("Brassói Lapok," Aug. 3.) The activities of the Temesvár Hungarian Choir and Hungarian Women's Association have been suspended because their premises were said to be those of the Hungarian Party, which was dissolved with all the rest of the political parties. In Kolozsvár (Cluj) it is forbidden to print posters advertizing films in Hungarian, and Hungarian captions are also forbidden. ("Ellenzék," Sept. 16.) The Rumanian Football Association has resolved to effect a gradual and systematic Rumanianization of all sporting

associations. By 1940 only 5, by 1941 only 4 and by 1942 only 3 minority players may figure in representative teams. ("Románia," Augt. 1.)

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MORE LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS FOR MINORITY EMPLOYEES

At the State Tobacco Refinery of Sepsiszentgyörgy, 80% of the 700 workers are Hungarians. The directors of the Tobacco Monopoly now endeavour to decrease this percentage by ordering the minority employees to pass further language tests. This new regulation is all the more surprising as the workers of the refinery are not allowed to speak to each other. ("Népujság", September 18). The minority employees of the Electricity Works of Kolozsvár (Cluj) were again ordered to pass a language test. ("Brassói Lapok", September 10). — Several minority officials at the Prefecture of the County of Kolozs (Cluj) also had to pass an examination in Rumanian. ("Estilap", September 21). — 200 minority railway employees at Kolozsvár (Cluj) were again examined in their knowledge of Rumanian. ("Ellenzék", September 10). — At Nagyvárad (Oradea Mare), about 100 railway men received similar orders. ("Keleti Ujság", September 18). — At Arad, too, minority railway employees had to be examined in Rumanian. ("Hirlap", September 17). — The number of railway employees who failed in the language tests is 4—5%, while another 5—6% were transferred to the Old Kingdom (the "Regat") on account of insufficient knowledge of Rumanian. Those railway employees who were dismissed have recently started a legal action for the remittance of their pensions. ("Magyar Ujság", September 23).

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YUGOSLAVIA

M. KOROSHETZ'S MISTAKE

In his speech delivered on 11th September at Muraszombat (Murska Subota), M. Koroshetz, Minister of the Interior, amongst other things said that there were only 7.607 Hungarians living in the Mura district (Prekomurje), whereas even according to the figures of the 1921 census the number of Hungarians in that region was 14.429. "These Hungarians" — said the Minister — "are not oppressed by us." He then went on to speak of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes living in Hungary, "who are constituent elements of the whole Yugoslav nation." According to M. Koroshetz, the number of Serbs in Hungary is 6.078, that of the Bonyevatz and Sokatz peoples, whom he described as Croats, 150.312, and that of

the Slovenes 6.057, a total of 162.477 souls. But according to the Hungarian census of 1930, the figures are: Serbs 7.031, Croats 27.683, Bonyevatz, Sokatz and Vend peoples (but not Slovenes) 20.564, that is to say 55.278 Southern Slavs. This is only one-third of the number stated by M. Koroshetz. — y —

OPENING OF THE HUNGARIAN SECTION OF THE STATE TEACHERS' TRAINING CENTRE AT BELGRADE.

M. Imre Várady, a former Hungarian member of the Skupstina, and M. János Vámos, a retired school-master from Zenta, appeared before M. Branko Magarashevitch, the minister of Education, and — reminding him of his formed promise — asked him to arrange for the opening of the first class of the Hungarian section of the State Teachers' Training Centre at Belgrade. This time the Minister has kept his word and instructed — in an order issued under no. 15.564/L. — the director of the above mentioned school to open the first class of the parallel Hungarian section. The first class which has now been opened, together with the second class, has only 41 pupils in all. On this basis we may count that — after the opening of the other three classes of the school — not more than 20 or 25 Hungarian teachers will receive certificates every year; if, then, we consider the shortage of Hungarian teachers in Yugoslavia it appears that it would take at least 40—45 years before the necessary number of Hungarian teachers — about 900 or 950 — can be qualified. So that if the Government really intends a radical reform of Hungarian minority education and seriously considers the question of establishing so called parallel Hungarian sections in all those parishes where this is prescribed by law, it can only be done by a more extensive organisation of the training of Hungarian teachers; this regulation must be undertaken by legislation with due regard to the lawful claims of the Hungarian minority.

MEMBERS OF REFORMED CHURCH IN THE BACSKA NOT ALLOWED TO ATTEND CALVINIST MASS MEETING IN DEBRECEN

Hungarian Calvinists from all the five continents in the last week of August held a mass meeting in Debrecen, where they organized the World Alliance of Hungarian Calvinists. From Yugoslavia only the Hungarian Calvinists of the Banate were able to be present; permission to attend was withheld from the Hungarian Protestants of the Bácska, although some of the Hungarian villages of that part, from whence hundreds intended to go to the meeting, are Hungarian settlements from the Nagy-kunság (Great

Plain of Hungary). Such for instance are Rácskossuthfalva (Stara Moravica), Bácsfeketehegy (Feketic), Pacér and Piros.

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NAME-ANALYSIS STILL IN FORCE

On 2nd September M. Branko Magarashevitch, Minister of Education saw two leaders of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia, Dr. Imre Várady, former M. P. and M. John Vámos, retired professor, of Zenta, who in the course of their representations complained of the system of name analysis and the serious abuses perpetrated at the time of school registrations. These grievances were again put before the Minister on 27th September by Dr. Leo Deák, former member of the Provincial Diet and M. John Vámos, who begged the Minister to fulfil his old promise to cancel name analysis and enforce all the relevant provisions. The Minister of Education again promised to redress the grievances referred to.

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OSZK

Országos Széchényi Könyvtár