

Letters to The Times

Magyars Charge Injustice

Minority in Czechoslovakia, It Is Held
May Turn to Russia

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The signers of this letter are deeply alarmed over the future of the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia. All of us have always condemned the Hungarian feudal system, and some of us carried on the fight over a quarter of a century against the oppressive nationality policy of the ruling classes.

We believed, as did practically all the Liberals and Socialists, that peace was impossible so long as national minorities did not enjoy a reasonable amount of autonomy, provided they would cooperate loyally with the other nationality groups to the benefit of the common state. It is now clear that the handling of the nationality problem is a kind of thermometer for judging the health or the disease of the social organism.

In view of the doctrines laid down in the Atlantic Charter and the great nationality experiment of the Soviet Union we hoped to see a humane and tolerant policy developed for central Europe. In the case of Rumania and Yugoslavia there seems to be a new development under which the Hungarian minority has far greater freedom than in the past. Unfortunately this is not true in the case of Czechoslovakia, despite the philosophy of the President, Liberator Thomas G. Masaryk, who with admirable courage and consistency tried to eliminate all the old evidences of national and racial intolerance.

Old Policy Adopted

Although the declarations of his statesmen are to a certain extent contradictory, present-day Czechoslovakia seems intent on becoming exclusively a state for the Czechs and Slovaks. The Government intends to expel so-called "disloyal" national groups, if necessary by armed force. Hungarian public opinion has been upset by hundreds of cases of violent expulsions and expropriations. Even more so by a decree which deprives all members of the Magyar minority who were not engaged in the fight against the Nazi invaders of their Czechoslovak citizenship. Czechoslovakia today is applying to its minorities the very policy, but in a far more cruel form, against which it protested when followed by the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

In his decree of June 22 President Benes attempted to justify his new policy by stating that expropriation and expulsion will be applied only against "traitors and disloyal Germans and Hungarians." Nevertheless, Czechoslovak chauvinism interprets this phrase very widely. Thus, in the old Hungarian town of Komarom the Government closed all Hungarian grammar and high schools. Five thousand students and citizens on June 7 asked the local Red Army command to intervene against this unjust measure and the Communist party arranged demonstrations against it. As a result Colonel Huderian of the Soviet Army called a halt to the Slovak policy and announced that the schools would be reopened.

The new Czechoslovak attitude no doubt is due to the belief that the minorities helped the Nazi oppressors. But it is not true that there was a general plot of the minorities against the Czechoslovak state. The active anti-Czech elements constituted a small minority organized by the Nazis, the Hungarian feudalists and the Slovak irremediabiles. Furthermore, it is an utterly false psychology to believe that the great masses of the people could actively cooperate against the overwhelming Nazi forces. History shows abundantly that such a general heroic uprising has nowhere and never occurred.

Finally, there was a widespread conviction both in Europe and in Czechoslovakia after the treason of the western democracies that the aggression of Hitler could not be repelled and the German superstate would soon become inevitable. It is for this belief that there were a great many Quislings and collaborators also among Czechs and Slovaks themselves. This is shown by the arrest by the Czech police of two Prime Ministers in power before Munich, as well as a number of other prominent Czechoslovak officials.

We do not deny the right of the Czech or the Slovak state to expropriate or to expel those citizens who actively participated in the German aggression. Likewise the expropriation of the Hungarian estates seems to us fully legitimate.

Mass Expulsion Dangerous

But the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of minorities who for centuries have toiled in their ancestral homes not only will accentuate the economic crisis of Europe but will deepen the spirit of nationalism and revenge, making enduring peace impossible. The expelled minorities and their kindred nations will become eternal enemies of Czechoslovakia.

Indeed, the only hope for these exasperated minorities as well as for their mother countries may become the Soviet state. These minorities and nations may in desperation appeal to Marshal Stalin, saying: "Why should the antiquated system of the small nation-states be continued if it makes them prisons preventing the free development of national cultural autonomy which minorities freely enjoy in Soviet Russia?"

The signers of this statement have always been very critical of the Soviet experiment, but we confess that the present Czechoslovak policy is creating a situation which may drive persecuted nationality groups into the Soviet Union, and we would not blame the Soviet Union for accepting their appeal.

President Masaryk always denounced the idea of exchanging minorities as a Pan-German idea. Moreover, President Wilson, in his address to Congress

of Feb. 11, 1918, declared: "Peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power. * * * But every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, * * * and all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism."

It seems that the new "realistic statesmen" of Europe, fighting fascism but infected by its very principles, have returned to the "chattels and pawns theory" of international relations. This theory is antagonistic to all the principles which the best leaders of the Czechs have elaborated from Comenius to Masaryk. And we know that President Benes, in his heart, is nearer to this conception than to the ideas of Prussian Realpolitik.

Therefore, we still hope that he will restate his principles in a way which would exclude arbitrary actions. Our Hungarian people are devoid of racial and national fanaticism which the Hungarian feudal classes and adventurers invented. A Hungarian minority rightly treated would become for the Czechoslovak state not a danger spot but an asset. The more so, because with the Nazi system destroyed and Magyar feudalism utterly uprooted there would be no organizing force for the building up of a new irredenta. Peasants, workers and intellectuals progressing in their economic and cultural standards would have no reasonable cause to make plots against the Czechoslovak state which is enjoying the most powerful system of alliance with England and the Soviet Union.

Such a policy would be in complete accordance with the great idea of Comenius quoted by President Benes in a speech of 1942: "Omnia sponte fluent, absint violentia rebus." (Let everything be done by free action and without violence.)

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New York, Sept. 29, 1945.

Billions of Billions of Ergs

When It Comes to Figuring Power of
Atoms the Lay Mind Reels

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The series of articles on the atomic bomb by William L. Laurence is very fascinating. The amount of energy released by the splitting up of atoms, as described in the third article, Sept. 28, is so surprisingly large, that I was interested to check his figures. In those cases where the conditions were definitely stated so that calculations were possible, I obtained the results as given in the article, with two exceptions. One of these seems worth describing in detail.

It is stated that "one-third of a gram of water would yield enough heat to turn 1,000 tons of water into steam." It would appear that water at 100 degrees C. is converted into steam at the same temperature, so that only the latent heat of vaporization of the water is involved. The calculation is then as follows:

The ergs to evaporate one ton (2,000 pounds) of water are found by multiplying the number of grams in a ton by the latent heat of vaporization of water (538.7 gram-calories) and this by the ergs in a gram-calory (41.8 million ergs). The result is 20.43 million billion ergs to vaporize one ton of water. The atomic splitting up of one-third gram of water would yield 300 billion billion ergs, and dividing this by the energy to vaporize one ton of water, gives 14,680 tons of water turned into steam. In round numbers this is about fifteen times the 1,000 tons given in the article. It would be interesting to know the reason for this difference.

In the other instance there is also a considerable difference. The statement is made that a cup of water would operate a 100,000-kilowatt capacity station for one year. Taking the value given by the Bureau of Standards of 237 cubic centimeters to a cup, I find that the station could operate for 6.78 years. Possibly in this case the writer of the article assumed that much of the energy would be lost in the generating apparatus.

RICHARD H. MARVIN.

Halesite, N. Y., Oct. 2, 1945.

[According to Mr. Laurence, the figures on 1,000 tons of water were calculated on the basis of water at room temperature. Also the figures of 300 billion billion ergs for a third of a gram are round figures. Actually they are about 280 billion billion. The examples cited were derived from an authoritative volume on physics.—Editor, THE TIMES.]