

COUNT APPONYI, PEACE ANGEL

President of National Slavonic Society
Doubts His Sincerity in His Mission.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

The world's peace movement takes every now and then a paradoxical turn. One of these turns is Count Apponyi's appearance in this country as a propagator of universal peace. At home Count Apponyi is a representative of a race and a caste which, while reaching for greater liberties and privileges for itself, has been guilty of the most brutal oppression of other races and classes inhabiting the ancient Kingdom of Hungary. Personally, Count Apponyi is no doubt an amiable gentleman and a plausible talker, but in one who is hailed as an apostle of peace we have a right to expect some measure of consistency with the high ideals which he advocates. Certainly those who are true believers in universal peace will admit that true peace among nations cannot come without justice and toleration; and, again, that no movement involving the application of the highest moral principles can be advanced except by true and sincere believers in those principles.

Now, is Count Apponyi a true and sincere believer in those lofty principles the practical application of which will bring to us universal peace? Has he ever protested against the persistent persecutions practiced by the Hungarian Government against the Slovaks and other races? Has he ever raised his voice against the brutal oppression and exploitation of the laboring classes which is causing a depopulation of a country which is rich in natural resources? It was he who, as Minister of Education, passed the infamous educational law forcing the majority of people inhabiting Hungary to study of the Magyar language, to the neglect of all other instruction. Count Apponyi was also a member of the so-called "Coalition Cabinet," which passed the barbarous flogging bench act, by which workmen under 18 and all members of workmen's families who are under age are subject to "domestic discipline" by the employer, (in other words, may be flogged for certain offenses.) No wonder that the Magyar Socialists of Chicago were anxious to mob the Count!

At the door of Count Apponyi is laid also the affair of Czernova. In this Slovak village the church erected by the people's own money was to be consecrated. The Government ordered that the ceremony be performed in the Magyar language and in the presence of gendarmes and county officials. The people objected to the language, which they could not understand. Unarmed and unprepared for any hostile act, the people congregated in front of the church and protested against the consecration by shouting, "We don't want you." Thereupon the gendarmes, without any warning, began to fire into the crowd. Nine persons were killed on the spot, including two women; three more succumbed in the course of the day; twelve were seriously wounded, and of their number three died subsequently. Among the slain was a woman far advanced with a child, who in her dying agony gave birth to an infant. Another was a girl of 16, who tried to seize a gendarme's rifle and was shot down in the attempt. The number of persons slightly wounded exceeded sixty.

In his several addresses before American audiences Count Apponyi referred to the killing of the innocent and helpless Slovak women and children of Czernova as "a regrettable incident" for which he was in no way responsible. Had this bloody tragedy not been recorded in the great work of Seton-Watson, "Racial Problems in Hungary," Apponyi would have undoubtedly denied the occurrence of this human butchery under the auspices of the Hungarian Government. But under the circumstances the next best thing he could do was to wash his hands of all responsibility in that "deplorable incident." He, as Minister of Ecclesiastical and Educational Affairs, refused to prosecute the murderers when complaints were lodged with him by the widowers, widows, and orphans of the murdered; and when the Slovak Deputies interpellated him in Parliament on this affair, his only answer was, "There is now peace at Czernova!"

To-day he says, "The incident is deplorable, but I am not responsible," but does he cite anything in support of this statement?

Count Apponyi was a Cabinet Minister when the Government opposed the Emperor's bill giving every citizen the right to vote.

We could quote columns upon columns about persecution of non-Magyar people from writers like Prof. Sergi of Rome, R. H. Seton-Watson, Geoffrey Drage, Louis Leger, Emily G. Balch, and others, but suffice it to say that from 1886 to 1908 there were 938 political trials against non-Magyars, who were sent to jail for 232 years, 6 months, and 2 days and paid 148,323 crowns in fines, and this in spite of the fact that Hungary is supposed to have the freedom of press. But according to Apponyi, "The laws are merely an instrument for concealing the arbitrary action of the Government." (Quoting from Count Apponyi's speech in Budapest, Oct. 25, 1896.)

In conclusion, let us quote from an article of Björnstjerne Björnson, in which he gave reasons for not participating in the Peace Congress at Munich in 1901, to wit: "The Magyars are most zealous when it pertains to the work of peace. Generally they are most zealous when it concerns humanity and legal consciousness. But at home they are oppressing three millions of Slovaks. They are prohibiting them to speak in the language of their soul; they are villifying their love for their historic traditions. They are closing their museums, they are confiscating the instrumentalities whereby they can remain in communion with the life of their forefathers. In Parliament they insult them by calling them "swine," they throw them down the stairways, they spit at them in the newspapers. The man who in his office of Minister of Education is directing this villification is simultaneously a champion of Christianity. His name is Count Apponyi, and at all peace conferences, of all those present, he does the most talking."

Surely Count Apponyi does not practice at home what he preaches here, and world's peace cannot expect much from a man of his type.

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