

Letters to The Times

Czechoslovakia's Minorities

Explanation Made by Ambassador as to the Position of His Country

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

With regard to your editorial of Jan. 21 entitled "Czechoslovakia's Minorities," which was evidently inspired by two dispatches of your correspondent, Albion Ross, from Bratislava which were published on Jan. 19 and 20, I wish to make a few comments.

It is true that Czechoslovakia was until 1938 "an island of liberal democracy in Central Europe," and that applied especially to her policy toward the minorities. The manner in which the German and Hungarian minorities repaid our tolerance in the critical days and the fact that these minorities were pretexts for Munich and the settlement of Vienna is still fresh in our memory. These minorities have proved by their conduct that they had no "loyalty in their hearts" toward the nation and the state which gave them freedom, the like of which no other minorities had had even in the old democratic states.

The Czechoslovak statesmen, whose humanism and faithfulness to the ideals of T. G. Masaryk cannot be doubted in the slightest way, after sad and painful experience have decided that they will remove the danger threatening the life of the Czech and Slovak nations, which is also a threat to the peace in that part of the world. The suffering of the Czech nation, brought about to a great extent by the disloyal German minority, which was a willing tool in the hands of Hitler, was so great that the victorious Allies recognized the right of Czechoslovakia to transfer the greater part of this minority to the state which the Germans of Czechoslovakia had by conviction served.

The problem of the Hungarian minority was not decided in that way, although this minority did contribute greatly to the sufferings of the Slovaks and had been used by the Fascist and revisionist governments of Budapest since the foundation of Czechoslovakia as a tool against the democratic and liberal Czechoslovakia.

Tried Friendly Agreement

The Czechoslovak Government endeavored to reach a solution of the problem of the Hungarian minority through a friendly agreement with Hungary. However, the Hungarian Government was willing to agree only on a partial solution of this problem, e. g., the mutual exchange of population. In Hungary 100,000 Slovaks had applied for transfer to Czechoslovakia, but the Hungarian members of the mixed committee are still obstructing the carrying out of the agreement and trying to influence the Slovaks who volunteered for transfer to Czechoslovakia to cancel their applications. The Agreement of Feb. 27, 1946, is still far from being realized.

It was certainly an unusual coincidence that the articles of Albion Ross were published the day after your paper printed the text of the Peace Treaty with Hungary. I think that anyone who reads the preamble and the political clauses, namely Article 5, of this treaty carefully can understand the problem of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia more clearly than your correspondent, although he is in Bratislava.

Provision of Article

Article 5 of the Hungarian Peace Treaty provides that Hungary should enter negotiations with Czechoslovakia with a view toward solving the problem of the Hungarian minority. So far Hungary has taken no steps toward reaching such an agreement and has rejected all Czechoslovak proposals. In addition, Hungary has launched a campaign against Czechoslovakia, spreading untruthful reports concerning the treatment of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia.

The mobilization of labor in Czechoslovakia decreed by the President of the Republic in 1945 cannot be interpreted as a transfer or expulsion of the Hungarians, as it is inaccurately described by your correspondent. This is a general measure applying to everyone, and the Hungarians are not an exception. Even Mr. Ross admits that under this decree 180,000 Slovaks are already working in the Czecho lands and that the Hungarians mobilized for the work number so far only 16,500. Your correspondent must acknowledge that the labor mobilization is being done in a humane way; that the transportation is adequate (the use of the UNRRA trucks to which he takes exception is only serving the purpose of helping to transfer the household possessions of the Hungarians safely and comfortably to heated railroad cars); that there are physicians and social welfare representatives present.

Property Not Confiscated

May I correct the statement of your correspondent that "compensation for the little land, which some of the families had, was not planned." A delegation of the Czechoslovak Government, consisting of three members, sent to southern Slovakia, investigated the exaggerated propaganda of the Hungarian press of the treatment of the Hungarians. This delegation reported, among other things, that "the property was not confiscated anywhere. The national administrators were appointed only because the Hungarian landowners neglected to work the lands and were sabotaging the measures inaugurated by the Czechoslovak Government which aimed at increasing the yield of the lands. To prevent the acts of sabotage, the properties were temporarily placed under the control of reliable persons."

Czechoslovakia desires a friendly understanding with her neighbors, and this applies also to the problem of the Hungarian minority. The Peace Treaty requires such an agreement. The history of Czechoslovakia and her record is a sufficient guarantee that Czecho-

slovakia will never be disloyal to her humanitarian ideals.

Now when the Peace Treaty fixing permanently the boundaries between Czechoslovakia and Hungary is being signed, Hungary should finally terminate her irredentist propaganda calling for the transfer of the population and the land as well.

Dr. JURAJ SLAVIK,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Washington, Jan. 22, 1947.