

POLAND'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN A COMMON FRONTIER WITH HUNGARY

BY

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The Munich Pact has thrown into prominence the question of a Polish-Hungarian frontier, which as one of the most important factors of peace and equilibrium in Central Europe must be established speedily and once and for all. On 13th October the semi-official Polish newspaper, the "Gazeta Polska" set forth the Polish point of view as follows:

"Hungary's demands that the principle of self-determination be enforced must result in the restoration of Ruthenia to that country. This solution, which is made imperative by the geographical factors, is the only just, wise, rational and logical one. It would bring with it a particularly important political development: *a common Polish-Hungarian frontier*, and would thus lay the foundations of a new order of peace and equilibrium in Central Europe. This solution would affect the vital interests both of Poland and Hungary and would also serve Rumania's ultimate interests, for it would preclude the possibility of Czecho-Russian philandering in the future". In the evening on Thursday, 14th October, the Youth Group of the Party of National Unity distributed leaflets in Warsaw with the following text:

"The will of the nation must triumph. We Poles do not want a plebiscite. A plebiscite would be a waste of energy; it would demoralize the population and end in bargaining and a compromise. The Polish nation demands the immediate attachment to Poland of all the Polish areas under the Czech yoke . . . *We also demand a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. The century-old wishes of the two sister nations must be fulfilled. We fight for the Poland of the Jagellos and the Chobris.* The frontiers of Poland will be drawn by Poland

herself as a Great Power and will not be the object of international haggling. Long live the great and powerful Polish nation! Long live the Polish army! Long live Commander-in-Chief Marshall Rydz-Smigly!"

The statement made in the "Pesti Hirlap" of 14th October by M. Joseph Bobkowski, Poland's Deputy Minister of Air Affairs, is worthy of special attention. M. Bobkowski says that it is the desire of every Pole to see the links of friendship with Hungary strengthened. The very school-children in Poland talk about a common Polish-Hungarian frontier.

"I have often told people in Poland — says M. Bobkowski — that the Hungarians are all heart and that their friendship is a treasure that is worth any sacrifice. For these reasons I should like to see a common Polish-Hungarian frontier; I should be happy to think that the people of the two countries were able to meet each other more frequently and had better opportunities of warming to each other. We are firm in our hope that in a short time the people of Hungary and Poland will be able to meet on a common frontier."

The question of a common frontier became an item of Poland's official programme when Colonel Beck, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, suddenly left for Rumania by aeroplane on 18th October. Before he started, Colonel Beck had a long conversation with M. Andrew Hory, Hungarian Minister in Warsaw. The object of the Polish Foreign Minister's visit to Rumania was to convince Rumanian political circles of the necessity for a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. Notes were also sent by him to Paris, Rome and Berlin, in which it was duly emphasized that *the Polish Government considered the question of creating a common Polish-Hungarian frontier to be the pivotal problem of the whole conflict.*

Colonel Beck first had a long conversation with M. Comen, Rumanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and then was received in audience by King Carol on his yacht *Luccatelu!* on 19th October. The King had namely been sojourning in Galatz for the Rumanian manoeuvres. The official communiqué issued states that Colonel Beck's conversations with Rumanian statesmen were of a friendly nature and dealt with the international questions affecting both countries.

When Colonel Beck returned to Warsaw, the "Kurjer Poranny", a newspaper closely connected with the Government, on 19th October, emphasized the point that it was Poland's desire that the Hungarians and Slovaks should be on good terms. Consolidation demanded the co-operation of all the countries concerned, especially on the question of Ruthenia, which affected not only Hungary and Poland, but also Rumania. Colonel Beck's visit to Bucharest was a sign of harmonious co-operation between Poland and Rumania.

In Warsaw, on 18th October, the representatives of 17 conservative papers and papers with leanings towards the "right," which are pro-Hungarian in their sympathies, held a spirited meeting and formed a committee to work for a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. The committee despatched a large delegation to the Polish Foreign Office to tell the Minister that public opinion demanded energetic measures in the interest of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. The leader of the delegation, M. Julian Babinsky, voiced the anxiety of the population caused by the situation that had arisen out of the question of a common frontier, and emphatically declared that the question was one of Poland's most vital problems which would have to be solved *even if the price was mobilization*. In conclusion the delegation assured the Minister that the Government could count on the nation to support this policy with heart and soul. The committee also informed the Hungarian Legation in Warsaw that the Poles were ready to shed their blood in order to assist Hungary.

About the same date M. Sidor, a leader of the Slovaks, in a statement to the Polish Press emphasized the point that the plan of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier could not be realized unless there was concord between the Hungarians and the Slovaks.

Meanwhile a series of demonstrations in favour of a common frontier took place in various towns throughout Poland. In Warsaw, Lemberg, Cracow, etc. eager crowds manifested their sympathies for Hungary and loudly demanded the establishment of a common frontier by any means necessary.

On 20th October there was a great demonstration in Budapest in favour of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier. The crowds of demonstrators kept shouting: "A common

Polish-Hungarian frontier! A common Hungarian-Polish frontier!" The leaders of the Polish nation were also loudly cheered: Shouts of "Long live Moscicki! Long live Rydz-Smigly!" were to be heard every second minute, and sustained cheering greeted the name of Colonel Beck, who at that time was in Rumania discussing the question of a common frontier. All the speakers at the meeting urged the necessity of that frontier and when they had had their say, the crowds marched to the Polish Legation, where they cheered Poland with wild enthusiasm.

On 29th October the Polish committee formed to work for a common Polish-Hungarian frontier arranged a mass demonstration in Warsaw's biggest theatre, at which several prominent men in political life addressed the audience. Crowds of demonstrators cheered Admiral Horthy and the Hungarian army and loudly demanded a common frontier with Hungary. Lieutenant-colonel Béla Lengyel, Hungarian military attaché, thanked the crowds cheering the Hungarian Legation for their sympathy towards Hungary.

The desire for a common Polish-Hungarian frontier has also assumed a more concrete form. On 31st October volunteer regiments ready to fight for it were recruited in Warsaw, Cracow, Vilna and Lemberg. A few days earlier a delegation from the "Falanga," a youth organization of the "right" wing, went to the Hungarian Legation and offered to form a free corps and send it to help Hungary. The Hungarian Minister in Warsaw also received a letter from the leader of a volunteer legion in Vejherovo. The letter contained a solemn statement to the effect that the corps of volunteers recruited in the district of Kassub was ready to fight for the national cause of the Hungarians.

On the same date — October 31 — the Polish War Cripples' Association sent a Hungarian telegram to the Hungarian General National Association of War Cripples, War Widows and Orphans. The telegram said that the war cripples in Poland fully sympathized with the legitimate desire of the Hungarian nation to deliver the Hungarians in Czecho-Slovakia from the Czech yoke, and that they also demanded a common frontier with Hungary. "We are waiting — says

the telegram in conclusion — for the happy moment when we can shake hands across a common frontier."

The Vienna decision was welcomed by the Polish Press with great jubilation. Nevertheless the newspapers emphatically declared that Poland could not accept the decision as final because the question of Ruthenia had not been settled by it. The "Kurjer Poranny" said that the Vienna decision had sustained almost in their entirety the territorial demands made by Hungary on an ethnographical basis. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that this had solved the problem of Ruthenia. The decision did not exclude the possibility of the entire population of Ruthenia giving free expression to their wishes regarding future arrangements in that province.

Hungarian public opinion received the news of the pro-Hungary demonstrations in Poland with unbounded pleasure and gratitude, and there is no member of the Hungarian nation who would not be willing to lay down his life, if by that means Hungary's and Poland's common aim could be realized.