

POLITICAL MOSAIC

DECLARATION OF RUMANIAN MINISTER FOR MINORITIES

M. Dragomir *Silviu*, the Rumanian Minister for Minorities, recently made a tour of the provinces inhabited by minorities. Of the numerous statements which the Minister made on this occasion, the most important one was that which he made at *Arad*. In reply to the address of a delegation of the Lutheran community in this city — on which occasion the delegation again asked for the recognition of the Hungarian Superintendency of the Lutheran Church — the Minister made the following declaration: "It has given me great pleasure to bring about a satisfactory settlement of this affair, though I had to overcome great obstacles. It is with deep gratitude that I think of those days when the noble mind of Baron Eötvös (the first Hungarian Minister of Education) accorded such liberal treatment to the minority churches in Hungary, and enabled — among others — the Rumanian Church to lead a free and independent life of its own. As a native of Transylvania I am sincerely glad to have been able to repay this liberal treatment by means of a similar treatment of the Magyars in Rumania."

The "*Magyar Kisebbség*" (*Hungarian Minority*), the political review of the Magyar minority published at Lugos (No. 10, May 16th, 1940) comments on the above statement as follows:

"In this statement the *Minister for Minorities* no doubt referred to the *Hungarian Act of Parliament* in which Baron József Eötvös, then Hungarian Minister of Education and Public Worship, enacted the establishment of an independent Rumanian Metropolitan Archbishopric, which enjoyed the same status as the Serb Metropolitan Archbishopric; furthermore, the same Act raised the Rumanian Bishopric of Transylvania to the status of an Archbishopric, and by this means it secured complete autonomy to both Greek Orthodox churches in Hungary."

The review then quotes a passage from the parliamentary speech made by Baron Eötvös on July 11th, 1843: "It is our sacred duty to bring about a satisfactory settlement of the church problems, and this not by particular institutions, but in such a way that there should never arise any more doubt or conflict between us with regard to those principles on which this settlement is to rest, whereby not only the peace of our

Protestant brethren but our own peace of mind shall ultimately be secured."

On the same occasion on which the *Rumanian Minister for Minorities* expressed his admiration for the liberalism of Baron Eötvös, he also made another very important statement. He said that "the Minority Act was not opportune just now. The *Rumanian Government* continued to treat the problems of the minorities on the basis of the existing laws." The above mentioned article of the Hungarian review comments upon this statement as follows: "When on November 28th, 1939, the Prime Minister declared that a Minority Act was to be passed, many of us were of the opinion that it would be better to adjust those minority problems the settlement of which not only contradicts the spirit of the existing laws but is actually provided by them. We have also pointed out that it is not from written laws but from the spirit of understanding that we may expect the solution of our problems. If every member of the Rumanian Cabinet will follow the example of M. Dragomir Silviu, if they will all come to understand the traditions of our national past, and if they will all listen to our complaints and endeavour to redress them, then a minority law well never be opportune, because it will not be necessary to pass a law in order to bring about the spirit of understanding and cooperation at a time when we are faced with the tragic fate of small nations suffering over the ruins of liberalism."

MAJORITY OF POPULATION OF TEMESVAR STILL MAGYAR

In several Hungarian newspapers it has been reported that according to the figures of the *Temesvár Municipal Statistical Office*, the population of that town on 31st December 1939 was 106.471, 33.369 being Rumanians, 27.584 Magyars, 27.652 Germans, 2.498 Serbs, 12.746 Jews and 2.632 others. We have no knowledge of a Census having been taken in Rumania at the end of the past year; it is therefore very probable that the Municipal Statistical Office simply quoted the nationality figures of the 1930 Census, making certain allowances for a natural increase of population and for its increase by migration. However this may be, the reason why these figures were blazoned abroad was to convince the world that the majority of the population are Rumanians. But at the best these figures merely show the ethnic origin of other inhabitants; from a language point of view — which is what has been accepted as the criterion of nationality by Hungarian statistics, as it was by the Rumanian statistics when the Census was taken in 1930 — they do not tally with the facts of the case. For in the statistics published by the *Temesvár Municipal Statistical Office* the Jews

are taken en bloc as a separate nationality, whereas they ought to have been registered as belonging to different nationalities according to what they profess to be their mother-tongue. This was the method adopted by the 1930 Rumanian Census, which for the greater part divided the Jewish population among the various columns representing the mothertongues of the population. A proof of this is afforded by the fact that according to the 1930 Census 10.989 Jews were registered in the whole county of Temes-Torontál (*including the town of Temesvár*), but only 619 figure separately as having a mothertongue of their own. The others are registered as Magyars, Germans and perhaps Rumanians, as they ought in fact to be. We have no means of determining how many were counted as belonging to the one or the other nationality, but we know from the 1910 Hungarian Census that in that year the mother-tongue of 65.3% of the Jews in Temesvár was Hungarian, while 33.6% stated theirs to be German, so that only 1.1% of the Jewish inhabitants professed other mother-tongues. We must assume that so far as language is concerned conditions among the Jews of Temesvár are practically the same now as they were then. If therefore we divide the 1.746 Jews registered according to that percentage, the number of Magyars will rise to 35.907, that of the German to 31.935, while the number of Rumanians is not likely to undergo any noticeable change, seeing that in 1910 only 4 Jews declared their mothertongue to be Rumanian. From these figures it is clear that even now the relative majority of the population of Temesvár are of Hungarian mother-tongue (35.907), then come the Rumanians (33.369) and the Germans (31.935).

Another interesting fact is revealed by the figures of the Temesvár Municipal Statistical Office, namely, that even without the inclusion of the Jews, the Magyars and Germans in Temesvár are practically equal in number, although in 1910, when the last Hungarian Census was taken, there were 3000 more Germans in the town than Magyars and Jews together. And if we deduct the number of the Jews from those of both the Germans and the Magyars, there were 5000 Germans more in Temesvár in 1910 than Magyars, whereas now their numbers are about equal. From these statistics we may infer that the town has grown more Magyar in character, at least in relation to the Germans. That this is very probable may be concluded from the circumstance that when in 1918 the Serbs were in possession of the town and took a Census, they found 41.979 Magyars as against 20.342 Germans, 6.053 Rumanians and 2.715 Serbs, and this although 2.175 Jews were registered separately (this could only have been a small part of the Jews then living in Temesvár). Compared with the 1910 Census, the Serb Census found an increase of 13.000 Magyars and a decrease of 11.000 Germans, which at the time may have been due to the desire of

the patriotic German population to preserve the town for Hungary by declaring themselves Magyars. There is no doubt that the Rumanian régime have attracted large numbers of Rumanians to Temesvár by the inducement of various privileges (in 1910 there were only 7566 in the town) and that the officials and soldiers transferred from the Regat have greatly helped to swell the Rumanian population, but all the same it is certain that if we examine the population purely from a language point of view, the Magyars still constitute a relative majority.

HOW THE MAGYARS OF SLOVAKIA LIVE

There was published recently in *Pozsony* a small book by *Count John Esterházy*, leader of the Magyars of Slovakia. The title of the book is "The Life of a Magyar Family in Slovakia." It will not be uninteresting to learn from one who knows best what minority life is like in the circumstances under which the Magyars of Slovakia, numbering one hundred thousand, live, and what problems they have to cope with. In the introduction we read: — "*The lot of none of us is easy. But we can and will endure it. It is a hard task to be a Magyar, but every one of us is ready to undertake it, proudly and consciously, for we all feel that an ancient nation which has given so much that is of value to culture and civilization in general, is fulfilling a lofty mission merely by preserving its national traits and qualities in the place where destiny has set it.*"

A group of people is to be regarded as a nation when they are imbued with a firm and resolute desire to live as one community. John Esterházy's statement makes it clear that the Magyars of Slovakia are firm in their determination to be regarded as belonging to the community of the Hungarian nation. They refuse to be separated from the historical past and future of that nation by the dividing force of political frontiers.

Count Esterházy says: — "We can and will endure it" — it being the lot of a minority. What is of primary interest now is the struggle being waged by the minority Magyars to make that lot bearable. In March, 1938, Slovakia made its own internal arrangements on the principle that it was a national State. The Slovaks took possession of the State, to the total exclusion of everybody else. Of the various nationality groups, the Germans alone succeeded in securing a more tolerable position. Backed up by the Reich they managed to obtain privileged treatment. This is clearly shown by the legislation dealing with the nationalities. The Magyars, on the other hand, are by no means a favoured ethnic body. They are being incessantly obliged to concentrate all their strength on major efforts. Since the formation of an independent Slovakia, the chief aim of the Magyar minority has been to create the framework of its own

political party. This has been a hard work. Other ethnic groups have been allowed to conduct their own affairs without interference; but an attempt has been made to subject every phase of Magyar minority life to pressure from without, — says Count Esterházy. Although all the Magyars of Slovakia belong to the United Hungarian Party, this Party, thanks to Government, is not adequately represented in Parliament. The Slovak Parliament comprises 67 members, *only one of whom is a Magyar. In the Prague Parliament there were 14 Magyar representatives, 9 out of 300 in the Lower House and 5 out of 150 in the Senate.* The ratio fixed, by law in Slovakia is one Deputy for every 40.000 inhabitants. On this basis the Magyar minority would be entitled to 3 or 4 seats. As things are — to quote Esterházy — “one single Magyar” has to make Sisyphean efforts to protect the interests of the minority Magyars in the Slovak Parliament. The whole Magyar minority is engaged in a similarly desperate struggle against vastly superior odds. “That the work we are doing is often of a Sisyphean nature is due to circumstances. That we are suffering for something in which we have no part, and can have no part, is perhaps also the consequence of conditions still in a state of ferment. As I once said: *we must endure and wait patiently.*” This is what Count Esterházy says.

The picture of Magyar education in Slovakia presented in Count Esterházy's book is a very depressing one. The Magyars have only 36 elementary schools all told, with only 103 classes. *There are no Magyar secondary schools except in Pozsony;* and all the Magyar secondary school pupils from every part of the country must go to that town for their education. All over Slovakia the Magyars are grouped in, or around, the larger towns, as, for instance, in Pozsony and Nyitra and their surroundings, and more sporadically on the frontier between Pozsony and Nagymihály. But, no matter where they live, they are dependent on the capital, Pozsony, for secondary school education, there being not one Magyar secondary school anywhere else in the country.

As regards social policy and social welfare, the Magyars of Slovakia are entirely dependent on their own efforts. The Administration gives them little or no support. By their own unaided efforts the Magyars of Pozsony have established a boarding-school for Magyar girls and boys. In the villages kindergartens and crèches have been established, where poor Magyar parents can leave their little children to be cared for while they go about the task of earning their bread. Slovak education does not afford minority youth the experience and the knowledge required. This circumstance impels the Magyars to organize extra-mural popular education and training for their own young people. The *Magyar Cultural Society of Slovakia* is the body competent to undertake this task. Or rather, the

Society would be competent to provide for extra-mural popular education, were it not for the fact that about a year ago the Government suppressed the activities of the Society. As a consequence its duties are being performed only by the local cultural societies, each working — if it works at all — separately, since Government has made organized cultural work impossible for the Magyars. Besides representing political interests, the United Hungarian Party also does social policy work, acting as a labour exchange, rendering assistance to the unemployed, etc. Sometimes the sums involved are quite trifling — money for the soling of a pair of shoes, for instance. *"Ours is no ostentatious charity; it is systematically organized work. It extends to Magyar babies in the cradle, infants under schooling-age and school children of all classes, to mothers and to the most unfortunate of all unfortunates: the people who are able and willing to work, but cannot find employment. Alas! there are many of our Magyar brethren who are in this pitiable situation."* — says Count Esterházy.

Despite their desperate position the Magyars of Slovakia have not sunk into the slough of despond of little nations. They do not regard themselves as a mere fragment, for they know they are an inseparable part of a great nation. It is wonderful to see how this wretched situation has given birth to the finest form of national consciousness, which helps to sustain the Magyars of Slovakia. Count Esterházy begins his work with a quotation from Széchenyi, the creator of modern Magyar national consciousness: — *"Let everyone strive after perfection according to the attributes and individuality given him by God. And let each of us, from the highest to the lowest, be the defender and supporter of his own nation. But nevertheless let none of us become an enemy of mankind."* This is also Count Esterházy's motto. He concludes his work with the following sentences: — *"We desire to believe in and are convinced of mankind's higher nature, which must direct all human effort towards Divine justice. And because our faith therein is unshakable, we, even now in this time of trials, look forwards with hope to the future — to a brighter future for the Magyars."*

During the era of the Czecho-Slovak Republic it was this belief and the hope of a fairer future that gave courage to a million minority Magyars. Their dream of a fairer future has come true for some of them, who have returned to the mother-country. We hope that the faith of the Magyars of Slovakia in happier days to come will also be justified.

FRESH REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF MAGYAR MINORITY

Quite recently Senator Dr. Emery Várady, vice-president of the Government Party organization in the Danube Banate, saw

M. Beshlitch, Minister of Transport, and urged him to keep his oft-repeated promises to the Magyar minority. He also saw M. Mihaldzhitch, Minister of the Interior, from whom he requested permission to form a General Magyar Cultural Alliance, the statutes of which he then and there presented for approval. After so many fruitless requests the Magyar minority is now curious to see whether these recent representations will lead to any positive results.

MILAN GROL ON THE SITUATION IN THE VOIVODINA

On 21st April celebrations were held in Ujvidék (Novi-sad) in memory of *Ljuba Davidovitch*, a former Yugoslav Prime Minister, the founder and one-time chairman of the Democratic Party. At the impressive celebrations a speech was made by the present chairman of the Party, M. Milan Grol. In this speech with ardent words, he praised M. Davidovitch's exemplary unselfishness, noble spirit and unfading merits. The part of his speech that concerns us is where he spoke of Davidovitch in connection with the Voivodina, the gist of which, as particularly illuminating, is given below.

Ljuba Davidovitch saw that during the Austro-Hungarian era the Serbs of the Voivodina were free to sing their own national songs...

Next to Southern Serbia, the developments in the Voivodina were what filled Davidovitch with the greatest anxiety. *He saw that the way this territory was administered by strange officials was bad.* Those officials did not understand their new, heterogeneous surroundings; *they had carried out the Land Reform badly, and that had led to unfortunate consequences. Corruption, like a noxious weed, had thriven in the Voivodina, where till then it had been unknown.*

In the first golden years after the formation of the Yugoslav State everybody had had bread enough and to spare — those who did not work, as well as those who did. *At the time of the economic crisis, however, the Voivodina suffered much, for its burdens were greater than those borne by the rest of the country. Ljuba Davidovitch had criticized the regime there as sharply as he had the administration of Southern Serbia...*

M. Milan Grol then went on to extol Ljuba Davidovitch's honesty and love of fair play. *"Davidovitch — he said — fought for equality and the liberty of every man in the Voivodina,* but he never lost sight of the interests of that territory as a whole.

"We shall never forget the touching scenes we witnessed when in 1935 he visited the Voivodina.

"Behind the ranks of policemen armed with bayonets the people cheered Davidovitch. At the time of the Parliamentary

elections in 1935 that grey-haired politician set out from Ujvidék (Novisad) and visited Óbecse (Staribeč), Zenta, Kanizsa, Szabadka (Subotica) and Bácskatopolya, returning again to Ujvidék. Everywhere he went he saw the same picture: *the worst of all the authorities were those imported from Serbia. I do not mind — he said — how they treat me, but I am ashamed of the country from which they came. The Square in Zenta was empty except for policemen. In Szabadka and Zenta a state of siege had been proclaimed on this occasion. When we were leaving Szabadka, the people of the town flocked to the long suburban streets, and when Davidovitch's car appeared, they fell on their knees and, weeping, cheered the greyheaded leader of Democracy. Davidovitch's eyes were also full of tears, for he saw how greatly the authorities in Southern Serbia and the Voivodina had undermined the prestige of Sumadja. His one desire was to see a free and active life that would strengthen the prestige of the authorities."*

The audience listened with appreciation to M. Milan Grol's speech. Any comment on the extremely interesting and illuminating statements of the Minister of Education and present chairman of the Democratic Party would — we think — be superfluous.

THE HOME-RULE MOVEMENT IN THE VOIVODINA

In addition to the Serbs, the Bunyevatz and the Germans, a considerable number of Magyars are also taking part in the political campaign conducted for the purpose of securing home-rule for the *Voivodina*. At a recent meeting of this Magyar group *M. Ivan Nagy*, one of the representatives of this principle, explained the motives of the "home-rulers" as follows:

"Like every other form of minority campaign, our campaign, too, endeavours principally to achieve complete equality of rights. We have always protested against the present dictatorial form of government in this country, and have invariably professed to be the champions of democracy, because our object has always been to overthrow this dictatorial régime and secure a happier future for our people with the methods of democratic government. A bitter struggle is now being waged for the reorganization of the State, and it is our firm conviction that both for the Magyar and for the other nationalities living here the best solution is the complete self-government of the *Voivodina*. It is impossible to outrule oppression and exploitation and to secure our equality of rights, if we ourselves do not take part in the government of the State. The bitter experiences of the last twenty years have made us understand that without the home-rule of the *Voivodina* our rights would still remain mere paper forms and our very existence would still depend on the whims of the authorities."