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# MINORITY PROBLEMS AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

## THE ATTACK ON MAGYAR CULTURE IN THE SUCCESSION STATES

by

**F. Llewellyn-Jones, M. P. Hon., D. C. L.**

The recent Assembly of the League of Nations held in the month of September 1934 is of outstanding interest, for two reasons. The election of the Soviet Government as a Member of the League is an epoch-making event. The other reason is the amount of attention which was given to the problem of the protection of National Minorities. Colonel Beck's declaration on behalf of Poland on the 13th September, that his Government had in contemplation to refuse all cooperation with international organisations in the matter of supervision over the application by Poland of the system of minority protection, at once brought the representatives of the different Governments of Europe to a realisation of the danger to European peace which would result from any such action. The British as well as the French Foreign Secretaries pointed out that Poland could not adopt that course without imperilling the authority of treaties. At a later date the Polish delegate intimated that, while reserving the right to bring the question up again, he would not press the Polish point of view at this Assembly. It is clear that if the Assembly had given any countenance to Poland's suggested policy, the situation of all minority groups in Central and Eastern Europe would have become extremely critical.

On the 22nd September, at a Meeting of the Sixth Committee of the Assembly, Dr. Tibor Eckhardt, the well known Hungarian M. P. and representative of Hungary, made an eloquent appeal on behalf of the Magyar minorities in the Succession States. He pointed out that the situation in all the Danubian States was unsatisfactory, and so far as Rumania in particular was concerned every article in the Minority Treaty had been violated. There is only one aspect of the many-sided policy of repression adopted against the Magyar minorities in the Succession States mentioned by Dr. Eckhardt upon which I should like to dwell in this article. I refer to the way in which Hungarian publications of every kind are being excluded from these States. Not only are all the literary productions of contemporary Hungarian authors being rigidly prohibited, but works of a purely scientific character are being banned. For fully fifteen years Hungarians who have not been able to visit post-War Hungary have been deprived of the possibility of making themselves acquainted with the results of Hungarian research.

The reason urged by the Governments of the Succession States was that Hungarian books advocating Treaty Revision were being circulated among the Magyar-speaking population. Dr. Eckhardt in his speech at Geneva emphasised the point that in Rumania literary works produced in the XVIIIth century had fallen under the Government ban, and that moreover books written before the War on historical and philological subjects urgently required by Hungarian students were refused admission. The President of the Hungarian Academy, Dr. Albert de Berzeviczy, had previously called attention to the same matter and cited a large number of instances of the deliberate and systematic prohibition of Hungarian literature. In marked contrast with this policy is the fact that a work of President Masaryk of Czecho-Slovakia has recently been translated into Hungarian for publication in Budapest.

When one bears in mind that a very large proportion of the millions of the Hungarians who have been cut off from their fatherland by the Treaty of Trianon are men and women of education and refinement who are naturally desirous of keeping in touch with the cultural life of their nation, one can appreciate the deep resentment at this policy and the sympathy with their fellow-nationals felt by all Hungarians.

When Sir John Simon replied to the claim made by Poland to decline to be bound by the minority treaties he said that "it would not be possible for any State to release itself from obligations of this kind entered into by unilateral action". Poland was at any rate perfectly frank and straightforward in making this claim. On the other hand the Governments of those countries which, while professing compliance with treaty requirements, are deliberately failing to perform their solemnly undertaken obligations to their minority populations, are in effect guilty of such unilateral treaty revision. Moreover they can scarcely complain of the appeal which the Hungarian Nation continues to make for the pacific revision of the Treaty of Trianon. I am convinced that there is no consideration so likely to influence the statesmen and peoples of Europe to respond to this appeal as the knowledge that the pledges given to treat the Magyar minority groups with justice and equity have been ruthlessly disregarded.