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JOSIP VILFAN (WILFAN): The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem

Author: Josip Vilfan (Wilfan)

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About the author

Josip Vilfan (Wilfan) (1878, Trieste–1955, Belgrade) was a lawyer, politician, and political thinker. He is considered one of the most important European liberal legal and political theoreticians of the minority question in the interwar period, when the modern concept of a national minority was still being stabilized

and articulated by various actors. It was particularly the Julian March—and its turbulent history during the First World War and after, with the attempt to implement the secret 1915 Treaty of London¹—that proved to be his original sociopolitical context and main point of reference in his later texts.

Born in Habsburg Trieste, he moved to Vienna to study law. Following his studies in Vienna, he returned to Trieste, where he practiced law, served in the Trieste municipal council, and became secretary and later president of the notable Slovenian cultural society *Edinost* (Unity). During the break-up of the Habsburg Empire at the end of the First World War, Vilfan promoted the annexation of Trieste and the (former) Austrian Littoral to the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Subsequently, he theorized on the modalities of cohabitation of the Italian and Slavic (mainly Slovenian) populace in the region.²

During this decisive period, the representatives of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—Vilfan among them—evoked Wilsonian principles, based on which nationality was to be the determining principle for drawing the new borders.³ By contrast, Italian diplomacy insisted on the legalistic view of the aforementioned London Treaty, signed by the Serbian Pašić government. This conflict, as well as the rise of the Fascist Party in Italy, motivated the political elites of the South Slavs in Italy to rapidly unite, which resulted in the creation of the Vilfan-led “Unity” Political Association (*Politično društvo Edinost*) in August 1919.⁴ This association later evolved into the Yugoslav People’s Party (*Jugoslovanska narodna stranka*, JNS), which worked toward re-establishing the recently closed schools in the territories newly acquired by Italy, as well as toward including South Slavic languages into official state communication. The party’s initiatives remained mostly unrealized, not least because of the political and ideological tensions within the party itself, particularly between Vilfan’s national liberalism and the Christian socialism of Virgil Šček.⁵

1 It was concluded by the United Kingdom, France, and Russia on the one part, and Italy on the other, in order to entice the latter to enter the World War on the side of the Triple Entente, promising it the territories of Austria-Hungary on the Adriatic, among others.

2 The 1910 Austrian population census estimated that some 400,000 people who could be identified as primary Slovenian- or Croatian-speakers lived in the region acquired by Italy through the 1922 Rapallo Treaty, which in turn was based on the 1915, British-brokered, secret Treaty of London. Importantly, the Italian population comprised the majority of the urban, Trieste-based population, while the majority Slovenian (and South Slavic) areas were predominantly rural. See Table VI, “Die Bevölkerung österreichischer Staatsbürgerschaft nach Umgangssprachen und die Staatsfremden mit Unterscheidung der Geschlechter,” *Österreichische Statistik, Neue Folge* 1, no. 2 (Vienna, 1914), 43.

3 Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

4 This is not to be confused with the *Edinost* Society of Trieste, which was founded as early as 1876 by Slovenes, Croats, and other Slavs in Trieste. They published a newspaper of the same name.

5 Milica Kacin Wohinz, “Poslanci Jugoslovenske narodne stranke v italijanskem parlamentu v predfašistični dobi,” *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 14, no. 1–2 (1974): 109–36.

Soon after, in 1921, Vilfan was nominated by the JNS and elected to serve as a representative in the Italian parliament, where his work mostly concentrated on improving the position of the Slavic populations that found themselves in the newly acquired Italian territories.⁶ Most of his appeals in that context were unsuccessful, leaving the local Slavic population without cultural associations and legal safeguards. His and his colleagues' (most notably Engelbert Besednjak's) advocacy prompted the Italian government to adopt a program in 1923 for the overt assimilation of national minorities in both Venezia Tridentina (targeting German-speakers) and Venezia Giulia (targeting speakers of South Slavic languages). This inspired a subsequent wave of anti-fascist resistance by the local Slavic population.⁷

The lack of success in the parliamentary arena led Vilfan to escalate the issue to the international level. First, he became a member of the Inter-parliamentary Union, an international organization which served as a platform for mediation and negotiation between governments, already in 1922. Crucially, he later became the chairman of the permanent working committee of the Vienna-based Congress of European Nationalities, which he founded in 1925, a year before experiencing several politically inspired arrests on Mussolini's orders.⁸ Following that, he relocated from Italy to Vienna in 1928.

The newly-founded Congress of European Nationalities strived to develop into a European inter-governmental body dedicated to minority rights protection. It aimed to develop a normative legal framework for ensuring the rights of minorities in Europe as well as serve as an institutional basis for further European political integration.⁹ Its first assembly took place in Geneva, where the representatives of more than thirty European national minorities participated and presented their grievances. Not long after that, Vilfan and his associates managed

6 Egon Pelikan, *Josip Vilfan v parlamentu = Discorsi parlamentari dell'on. Josip Vilfan* (Trieste: Krožek za družbena vprašanja Virgil Šček, 1997).

7 Andrea Di Michele, "The Fascist view of the 'allogeni' in the border regions," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 28, no. 1 (2022): 90–112.

8 Gianfranco Cresciani, "Mussolini, Vilfan, and the Slovenian Minority," in *Anti-Fascism in European History: From the 1920s to Today*, ed. Jože Pirjevec, Egon Pelikan, and Sabrina P. Ramet (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2023), 157–69. Egon Pelikan, "Josip Vilfan in Engelbert Besednjak v Kongresu evropskih narodnosti v letih 1925–1938," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 40, no. 1 (2000): 93–112. David J. Smith, Marina Germane, and Martyn Housden, "Forgotten Europeans: transnational minority activism in the age of European integration," *Nations and Nationalism* 25, no. 2 (2019): 523–43.

9 Ferenc Eiler, "The Congress of European Nationalities and the International Protection of Minority Rights, 1925–1938," in *Populism, Memory and Minority Rights: Central and Eastern European Issues in Global Perspective*, ed. Anna-Mária Bíró (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 235–82. John Hiden, "European Congress of Nationalities," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture Online*, ed. Dan Diner (Leiden: Brill, 2017–2021), consulted online on March 14, 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2468-8894_ejhc_COM_0214.

to secure financial support for the Congress from both victorious and revisionist states. It was in the context of his work for the Congress of European Nationalities that he produced his most relevant political texts and declarations.¹⁰ After the Congress was dissolved in 1939, Vilfan moved to Belgrade.

During the Second World War, his son, Joža Vilfan (Trieste, 1908–Ljubljana 1987), also a lawyer, acted as one of the leaders of the regional chapter of the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*) in the Littoral, later becoming a high-ranking Yugoslav diplomat in the socialist period.¹¹ Following the end of war, Josip Vilfan acted as a member of the Institute for International Affairs, adjacent to the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and contributed to the Allied-led demarcation and making of the state border between Italy and socialist Yugoslavia in 1947, which eventually resulted in what is known as the “Trieste crisis.” Afterwards, Vilfan gradually disengaged from public life, remaining in Belgrade until his death in 1955.

Ultimately, Vilfan remained committed to broadly liberal internationalist and institutionalist values and practices throughout his career and intellectual production, which was at its most fruitful precisely in the period of his activity at the helm of the Congress of European Nationalities. Crucially, however, this was done in parallel to his fellow (post-)liberal Slovenian Yugoslavists’ radicalization and adoption of integral nationalism, despite the fact that they all largely supported both étatist centralism and individual autonomy throughout the interwar period.¹²

MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: “The Speech in the Italian Parliament,” in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945: Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 3/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górný, and Vangelis Kechriotis (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); *Les minorités ethniques et la paix en Europe* (Vienna, 1929); *Die Organisierung der Volksgemeinschaft* (Vienna, 1932); *Die programmatische Arbeit der Nationalitätenkongresse: aus der Eröffnungsrede Dr. Josip Wilfans zum Nationalitätenkongreß* (Vienna, 1934); “Manjšinski kongresi,” *Sodobnost* 2,

10 Gorazd Bajc, “Paradiplomacija’ Josipa Vilfana,” *Studia Historica Slovenica* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 461–97. Gorazd Bajc, *Josip Vilfan: življenje in delo primorskega pravnika, narodnjaka in poslanca v rimskem parlamentu* (Koper: University of Primorska, 2005).

11 Jože Koren, “Vilfan, dr. Joža,” in *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon*, vol. 17/4, *Velikonja–Zemljak*, ed. Martin Jevnikar (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva služba, 1991), online edition at <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi788321/#primorski-slovenski-biografski-leksikon>.

12 Oskar Mulej, “‘Post-Liberalism’, Anti-Clericalism and Yugoslav Nationalism. Slovene Progressive Political Camp in the Interwar Period and Contemporary Czech Politics,” *Střed. Časopis pro mezioborová studia Střední Evropy* 19. a 20. století. / *Centre. Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* 6, no. 1 (2014): 65–93.

no. 4 (1934): 145–51, and no. 5 (1934): 200–205; *O tisti obliki življenja, ki ji pravi-mo narod* (Trieste, 1978).

Context

The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem was originally published in 1936 as the organization's programmatic text on the pages of *Nation und Staat*, the Congress's organ, in ever-polarized Vienna.¹³ Due to Josip Vilfan's extensive experience in building an international institutional and normative legal framework dedicated to minority rights protection, his various publications, including declarations and speeches, and the institutional practices he introduced within this organization can be taken as a relevant context for the given source.¹⁴

Overall, his publications and institutional practices, particularly his design of the Congress of European Nationalities, can provide a valuable insight into the way he aimed to articulate the concept 'nationality' which was markedly ambiguous in the liberal internationalist context. His usage was characteristic for the prewar Habsburg context, in the sense of "nationality" (*Volkgruppe*) as a collective actor, and *Rechte der Nationalitäten* as an antecedent concept. This came in contrast to "minority", which represented a nascent, modern concept initially developed and enforced by the Entente in Paris, focused on numerical weakness.¹⁵ Importantly, the modern concept of national minority, developed in the context of the Paris Peace Conference, was defined primarily in conjunction with the presupposed assimilatory nation-state, the culturally homogeneous nation, and the international order.¹⁶ Vilfan's understanding and application of the concept 'nationalities' was developed in close cooperation with Ewald Ammende, an Estonian politician and human rights activist, whose 1925 Law on the Cultural Autonomy of Minorities in Estonia served as a key example of non-territorial autonomy that they both subscribed to, rooted in a voluntary, non-binding, and non-essentializing concept of nationhood.¹⁷ Vilfan's most notable contributions

13 Not to be confused with Vilfan's 1929 French-language publication with a similar title, which contains his speech from the 1929 Congress that took place in Geneva. Josip Vilfan, *Les minorités ethniques et la paix en Europe* (Vienna–Leipzig: Bräumiller, 1929).

14 Jože Pirjevec, *Pensiero e attività di Josip Vilfan* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994). For competing contemporaneous discourses tackling similar topics, see Vesna Mikolič, "Comparison of Fascist and National Defense Discourse," in *Anti-Fascism in European History*, 31–48.

15 Bence Bari and Anna Adorjáni, "National Minority: The Emergence of the Concept in the Habsburg and International Legal Thought," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies* 16 (2019): 7–37.

16 Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

17 Martyn Housden, *On Their Own Behalf: Ewald Ammende, Europe's National Minorities and the Campaign for Cultural Autonomy, 1920–1936* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2014). Oskar Mulej, "Illiberal Forms of Non-Territorial Autonomy: The Sudeten German Party Case," in *Realising*

in terms of political thought can be seen in the articulation of the modern liberal concept of the national minority, in developing the language of universal human rights, and his theorizations on the building of liberal international institutions.

It is also necessary to intellectualize his institutional practices undertaken at the Congress of European Nationalities in order to complement his thought espoused in the texts themselves. Importantly, the Congress, under his presidency and in contrast to comparable modern multilateral international organizations, hosted representatives based not on already established nation-states, but rather of those groups who had regional, religiously rooted, or other cultural or ethnic identities, needed representation, and were willing to send their representatives. For instance, the Congress gave platforms to Jewish, Rusyn, Frisian, and Catalan envoys, among others. This does not mean that the Congress was always successful in its attempts to provide such national projects with their platform. On the contrary, by the mid-to-late 1930s, its work was significantly impacted by the Third Reich's and other revisionist powers' instrumentalization of the 'minority question' and further destabilization of the Versailles order.

This particular text, published in 1936 and overflowing with conceptual clarifications and definitions, captures a moment in the transformation of Vilfan's liberal internationalist language from the one that was supposedly accepted as reflective of an objective order to a markedly defensive one. This publication followed the 1935 session of the Congress of European Nationalities which took place in Geneva. In the text, Vilfan dedicates a considerable amount of space to conceptual clarifications and definitions. In a reactive way, he reflects on various attempts at the politicization of national minorities and the reframing of, if not contestation of, their status. While Vilfan remained insistent on a liberal-democratic vision of minorities loyal to the sovereign nation-state and vice-versa, other relevant actors evaded that understanding either by promoting popular sovereignty (as in the case of National Socialists and other revisionists/irredentists) or by escaping the jurisdiction of minority treaties more broadly (as in the British and French empires).¹⁸ Vilfan criticized the National Socialists and other revisionists both in his speech to the Congress and in this text. Through his intellectual output during the 1930s, at a moment when Vilfan and his circle had become a weaker minority on the international stage, he developed and promoted a vocabulary around his liberal-democratic vision. This ranged from thematizing minorities' cultural autonomy (within a sovereign nation-state), but also pertinent issues such as statelessness, authoritarianism, ultranationalism, and the

Linguistic, Cultural and Educational Rights Through Non-Territorial Autonomy, eds. David J. Smith, Ivan Dodovski, and Flavia Ghencea (London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022), 73–87.

18 Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137–65.

potential annihilation of various national groups. In other words, while delimiting the cultural sphere from politics had worked in the 1920s, many revisionist actors started regarding minorities as the carriers of (state/territorial) sovereignty in the 1930s.

His focus on the problem of European peace can also serve as an indicator of the radicalization of his claims as a response to the increasingly illiberal understanding of national autonomy which changed the conceptual morphology of 'national minority' from excluding to including territorial claims.¹⁹ Importantly, Vilfan maintained civilizational arguments to the extent that he saw the unobstructed cultural development of national minorities as an indicator of a state's elevated intellectual and cultural level.

Intellectually, this text can be situated at the intersection of several strains of thought, with the liberal internationalist one as the central axis. Both in this text and in others, Vilfan relies on civilizational hierarchies when elaborating his claims on the international order and the nation-state as a form of modern political organization. This has already been widely discussed in the historiography on the making of the Versailles order and the League of Nations as the most relevant multilateral attempt at creating an international institutional and legal framework. Yet Vilfan's example demonstrates that it was not only the revisionist powers or the Western maritime empires that operated with civilizational hierarchies, but also the liberal thinkers who represented the newly established, post-Habsburg nation-states nominally rooted in the principles of political modernity. In this particular text, he seems to base his proposition for the minority protection mechanism on the existence of a European moral and cultural mission to further export the given system to those societies that would eventually reach the required civilizational or developmental level. In a nutshell, this source can be read as an attempt by Habsburg-socialized liberal thinkers not only to argue for their own states' political modernity (as opposed to what they saw as anachronistic, oppressive Habsburg imperial rule based on sheer force), but also to insert themselves symbolically into the ranks of civilized nations by theorizing on the (in)applicability of the novel framework to other, namely culturally inferior, social and political contexts.

Another important issue concerns the way Vilfan defined the concept of national minority in this context. Similar to other notable (post-)Habsburg thinkers, such as the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer or the Hungarian civic radical Oszkár Jászi, Vilfan insisted that the concept of national minority had less to do with the group's size and much more to do with the group's national quality, positing them primarily as an extension of a given national body, equally as important

19 Mulej, "Illiberal Forms of Non-Territorial Autonomy," 73–87.

as any other part of it. This assertion provided a basis for the concept of cultural autonomy complementary to one's loyalty to a sovereign state.²⁰

Overall, Vilfan's thought demonstrates that the very concept of the national minority, and adjacent concepts from the same conceptual cluster (e.g., assimilation, minority rights), was born out of an identifiable and contingent historical situation. It was articulated by distinguishable historical actors, namely the post-Habsburg liberal thinkers who had to grapple with the practical impossibility of creating culturally homogenous nation-states without including significant portions of minorities into their own population.

By contrast, the contributions by thinkers from Western maritime empires on the topic were less significant and elaborate. They mainly operated with legalistic arguments and existent nation-states as the main actors. What is more, their own (disproportionate lack of) intellectual participation in the elaboration of the newly founded international organizations and institutions might serve to indicate their disinterest in a multilateral order in which multiple actors decide on matters horizontally. Interestingly, the debates that took place within the Congress also produced numerous new arguments, claims, but also concepts. For instance, the concepts of cultural autonomy, assimilation, and dissimilation (later proposed by the Nazi-affiliated thinkers), but also of intellectual (*geistiges*) mutual respect in international relations, can be traced back to the debates among the representatives of different communities within the Congress.

Lastly, Vilfan's crucial point on minority rights protection being the basis of further European political integration can also be taken as implying a vision of a horizontal, democratic European union with a mission to project political modernity towards those societies which are not (yet) culturally ready to participate in such an international legal-institutional framework. Vilfan was, however, not naively convinced by the power of liberal institutions. He underscored the importance of the intellectual work necessary to assist communities in retaining their cultural identity and—consequently—political and civic rights. To that end, he attempted to provide a corrective to the basic principle of nationality that held the (false) promise of creating modern homogenous and, presumably, democratic nation-states. On several occasions, Vilfan accentuated that implementing this corrective would present an important step in the general course of human progress and ensure a permanent peace in Europe—liberal and humanist ideals that proved insufficient to stop the escalation which resulted in the Second World War.

20 For more on the debates around sovereignty in this context, see Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

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DR. JOSIP WILFAN, President of the European Congress of Nationalities **“The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem.”**

First of all, I think we must be at least fairly clear as to which state we conceive as one of real peace. It seems to me essential for a real peace that it should be a lasting and constant state of affairs resting upon normal and regulated relations between the powers. It may indeed be occasionally disturbed by incidents and by conflicts of interests which may arise. At all events a real peace cannot possibly exist in circumstances where constant tensions and frictions bring about, as it were, a chronic disease in the relations between two or more countries.

Just as the characteristics of real peace require here, in my opinion, to be indicated in short, the contrasting representation of the problem of nationalities must really be set forth in detail. In the limits of a short article, however, it must be confined to the universal principles. ... But how could the areas inhabited by the individual nations be indicated and finely and clearly separated by lines on a map of this imaginary state comprising all of Europe? The concrete size of a nation and the extent and boundaries of its settlements change according to the definitions of the word “nation” and to which denotation or combination of denotations one gives preference. As the most important, the following denotations may be cited only as examples: Historical unity, the unity determined by geographical boundaries, common traditions, customs and practices, the bond of descent, of language, of a peculiar and strongly pronounced civilization, the existence of collective consciousness and feeling as well as of a collective will towards self-assertion, a social structure built upon special foundation and community or economic interests.

Still more, however, would the mutual delimitation of the nations on this map be rendered difficult by the fact that the settlements of the neighboring

peoples are not everywhere sharply contrasted. In wide stretches of territory various peoples live mixed together. Elsewhere runners of one nation project fairly deep into the territory of another nation or indeed whole nations are surrounded on all sides like islands by another nation. This is especially the case in Central and in Eastern Europe. On this hypothetical map of Europe could consequently only the central areas of the individual nations be clearly indicated as their own particular territories, with the exception of the Jewish people who lack entirely any such territory. ...

... In reality the size of the national minorities in several states will be not inconsiderably greater than can be ascertained from the official data. In a lesser percentage, however, all the other states of the European continent show an admixture of national minorities, with regard to which I must at this point stress that the numerically unfavorable ratio of a minority to the major nation, especially in the case of compact settlements, need not be of decisive importance. For, as I said once before, an oakwood remains as such, however great the pinewood may be which surrounds it. The nationalities or national minorities in the various European states are parts of the population which have lived on the soil on which they have settled for centuries, in most cases indeed from time immemorial. They regularly possess a cultivated social structure. The majority form on their restricted native land a compact community. Where this is not the case, and the minorities live together with the ruling nation, the cohesion of the individual nationalities is still with few exceptions so strong that one can still talk of united social communities.

The number of peoples in Europe who come under the heading of nationalities or national minorities in the accepted sense of the word is doubtless not overestimated at a round 40 million. In it, the Soviet Union is naturally not taken into consideration. Although this number does not indicate any united and tangible people which could step forward as a power into the ranks of the other powers of this continent, it cannot be overlooked that it has reached the census-total of a number of European great powers and that by its size alone raises to the importance of a "European question of the first rank" the problem of nationalities.

But to appreciate the whole weight with which the problem of nationalities falls into the balance, one must realize the degree of passion which the national feeling has reached on the European continent. There are high spiritual values which men, individually and collectively, feel as the result and as the expression of their belonging to a certain nation. ...

... In this matter of community national feeling knows no boundaries. For this reason what happens to an external national minority is felt by the

whole nation to be a wrong or a benefit. Therefore the numerical size of the minority plays a very subordinate role....

The connection between the question of a real peace in Europe and the problem of European nationalities is clearly manifest if one keeps the essentials of both constantly in view. The genuine peace presupposes a solution of the problem of nationalities, the unsolved problem of nationalities threatening the peace. The primary element of international relations is still the state. Where the will and capacity of a state to preserve itself are not present in a sufficient degree or are lacking, the exterior pressure gains the upper hand and forces in the walls of the state-building. For this reason, we must also consider the question of peace and the problem of national minorities in this perspective and often ask ourselves the question: Are the national minorities in themselves, merely because they exist, and by virtue of their existence making the claim for their maintenance valid, a danger to the state? Can they endanger the state by their influence directed against it? Does the continued existence of foreign nationalities especially when they are settled on the state boundaries create or increase the dangers which can threaten a state from without? By which procedure towards the national minorities within their frontiers can the states lessen or increase the dangers which threaten them on this side?

... At this point only some quite general statements can be made. Firstly this, that even the right of the states in question to exist or at least their right as opposed to that of the extra-national parts of their population is brought into question if one admits that the existence of the national minorities in itself threatens the integrity or even the existence of the states. And moreover, that it cannot be, for reasons of humanity and morality and in fact out of considerations of expediency, a right and an interest of the states to fend off suspected, supposed or real dangers at the price of the existence and right to live of the extra-national parts of the population. With regard to the so-called irredentism it must be at once admitted that appearances of indirect or direct aspirations of this kind in latent or open form whether it be in the interior of states or directed against them from without is to be noticed here and there in the age of the principle of nationalities before and after the World War. I nevertheless believe, however, that irredentistic aspirations can never by themselves alone lead to success, but that their realization depends upon a concourse of circumstances in which much more powerful forces work together, and against one another, on a much larger scale. And I believe in addition that the introduction of such a concourse of circumstances would not be arrested but only expedited, their pernicious effects not mitigated but only

aggravated, if the irredentistic danger is combatted by the suppression of the national minority in question.

... Today it appears again as though a new wave of intolerance and suppression, progressing from state to state, is about to break upon the national minorities. It is a tragic consequence of such unfortunate methods that mistrust increases mutually. A circumstance operates here which really, on rational consideration, should lead to a compromise of the two extremes. Doctor Ammende constantly lays special emphasis on the fact that, with regard to the problem of nationalities, almost all European nations find themselves in a twofold situation. On the one hand, in their own national states, where the extra-national elements of their population play the part of opposition to the governing nation, and, on the other, in foreign states, where parts of their own national population experience the fate of national minorities. From its own relationship towards its kindred minorities each nation can estimate how sensitive the nerve-strings are which bind all parts of a nation together. The seed which is sown on both sides of the frontier by measures taken against the existence and right to live of national minorities does not always spring up quickly. It is soon choked amongst the germs of confidence and esteem out of which alone real peace can grow.

This knowledge was one of the deciding motives for the creation of the international protection of minorities. A protector should be given to the minorities in the League of Nations who is himself uninfluenced by national passion. By his mediation amongst other things a spoke would be put in the wheel of the intervention of individual states on behalf of kindred peoples or any other closely connected minorities. Today it can be no longer withheld that the League of Nations has done little, or, if one takes a general standpoint, no justice to this great task of peace.

Concerning the present state of affairs, one might ask oneself if it were not perhaps just a question of a painful period of transition, and would the measures of suppression not lead one day to a coincidence of the state and national boundaries? In that case the policy of suppression would not be less detestable, but it would at least bring with it this advantage, namely, that moment of tension in the relations between the nations and the states would be avoided. Now experience should have shown quite clearly that the societies known to us as nations, nationalities, or national minorities can *never* be annihilated by measures of suppression however much the people who live in them may be persecuted, even physically. There are unfortunately examples of this, but, thank God, they have not been imitated in Europe. The resolution of the problem of nationalities, which Europe must seek, can only be found

on the basis of mutual tolerance and esteem between the nations. It can only come to pass when the nations, whether living in their own national states or not, are guaranteed that right to live which the claim of our continent to have a moral and cultural mission grants them. This solution must take the form of a legal arrangement in which is taken for granted loyalty to the national community on the one hand and loyalty to the state community on the other, and that, where these do not correspond, no contradiction should be implied. To advocate this idea and to elaborate in detail the implications resulting from it, the European Congress of Nationalities was called into existence. Its works signifies an important contribution towards progress along a path which amongst others must be traversed and which cannot be avoided namely, the path by way of the solution of the problem of nationalities to the realization of a genuine European peace.

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