

“Czechoslovakia is authorized to transfer a maximum number of 200,000 inhabitants of Magyar ethnic origin from its territory to that of Hungary and the latter is bound to receive these persons on its territory and to recognize them as its nationals.

“The conditions for the execution of the present article shall be fixed by a bilateral agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary which these two States will conclude between themselves within six months from the coming into force of the present treaty. As regards respect for the rights of person and property, this agreement will establish conditions corresponding to those laid down for this purpose in the agreement concluded on 27 February, 1946, between Czechoslovakia and Hungary on the exchange of populations. The non-conclusion of this agreement shall not prejudice the execution of the present article.”

This was the most difficult of the tasks set the Sub-Commission. It was generally felt that Czechoslovakia was justified in seeking to solve the problem of her Hungarian minority which had in 1938 and 1939 helped to disrupt the Czechoslovak Republic. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak proposal raised significant moral and economic problems.

The Hungarian objections were for the most part based on considerations of economics. The argument that room could not be found in Hungary for the Magyars whom it was proposed to transfer was not a convincing one in view of the fact that 240,000 Jews had been killed in Hungary and some 300,000 Hungarian soldiers had been lost in the war. Moreover, according to the Hungarian Foreign Minister himself when he testified before the Sub-Commission, Hungary had already expelled from her territory 120,000 Germans and proposed to expel a further 150,000. Since the Czechs had stated that they were prepared to reduce to 150,000 the number of Magyars liable under the terms of their proposal to transfer to Hungary, it seemed reasonable to suppose that room could be found for this number in the farms which the Germans would vacate. The fundamental moral objection, of course, remained, but the Hungarians, even then expelling their Germans, were not themselves well placed to employ moral arguments against the Czechoslovak proposal, more particularly as they were driving out the Germans in a state of destitution, while the Czechs proposed to pay full compensation for all property left behind by the Magyars and to spread the operation over a period of three years.

Another circumstance which influenced the New Zealand delegation was the fact that the Czechs had expressed their determination one way or the other to solve this problem of the Magyar minority. If the Conference refused to countenance their present plan, they would resort to other, and it was feared, less humane, methods. Their alternative plan was to uproot the Magyars from their present abodes and re-settle