



The American Hungarian Federation

Serving the Community since 1906 - Fidelissimus ad Mortem

March 22, 2010

His Excellency Knut Vollebaek
High Commissioner on National Minorities
Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Dear High Commissioner:

I very much enjoyed your lecture, "Conflict Prevention and the Rights of National Minorities," which you gave in Washington, D.C. on March 11, 2010. I also appreciated the opportunity to speak with you thereafter concerning the Slovak language law. I trust you had a productive trip to Washington and a pleasant trip back home.

In the unlikely event you have not seen the article, "Slovakia's disturbing patriotism; Culture creep; The Slovak leader deploys national culture as a political weapon," published on March 11th in the print edition of *The Economist*, I am attaching it for your consideration as you address the language law with your Slovak interlocutors. The title of the article itself speaks volumes and underscores the fundamental flaw in viewing the language law as an aberration, a case of sloppy legislating or a dispute between Slovakia and Hungary, as some erroneously believe.

The discriminatory and ill-advised language law is, in fact, the latest manifestation of the intolerance toward the Hungarian minority by certain segments of Slovakia's political elite now in office. One would have expected that after demanding and exercising external self-determination by breaking up the former Czechoslovakia and becoming an independent state, Slovakia would fully respect the rights of its minorities.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Instead, a series of official actions have created an inhospitable environment for Slovakia's Hungarian minority. These actions include the gerrymandering of the administrative division of Slovakia so that Hungarians are in the minority in the administrative regions; adopting a resolution proposed by extremist Jan Slota ratifying and confirming the Benes decrees (which imposed collective guilt on Hungarians and continue to adversely affect them); and refusing to rehabilitate Janos Esterhazy, who as leader of the Hungarian Party in Tiso's Fascist Slovakia was the only Member of Parliament to vote against the deportation of Jews in 1942, yet who died in a Czechoslovak prison after the war. This is the context of the latest anti-minority campaign -- the language law.

We, therefore, respectfully reiterate our previous suggestion that the unacceptability of the language law -- a law which is inconsistent with Slovakia's freely assumed obligations, Western values, democratic principles and the international norms to which Slovakia as a member of the OSCE has committed itself -- needs to be forcefully raised and the rights of the Hungarian minority protected.

Sincerely,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
President and Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee