



The American Hungarian Federation

Celebrating 100 Years of Service - Fidelissimus ad Mortem

November 21, 2008

His Excellency Jan Kubis
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Slovak Republic

Via Facsimile

Dear Mr. Minister:

The American Hungarian Federation, founded in 1906, supports democracy, the respect for the rule of law and minority rights in Central and Eastern Europe. We congratulate you for working with the Victims of Communism Foundation in Washington, D.C. to preserve the history of a scourge of the 20th century – Communism.

Among the many inhuman manifestations of that “ism” was the intolerance toward national, linguistic and religious minorities living behind the Iron Curtain, including the members of the Hungarian historical community in Czechoslovakia. The road toward democracy since the fall of the Berlin Wall has not been smooth; old impulses unfortunately have not disappeared and are evident in Slovakia insofar as the Hungarian minority is still subjected both to discriminatory policies and to an intolerance that is neither addressed nor condemned by Slovak officials.

For example, Slovakia incomprehensibly denies Hungarians the right to effectively participate in public affairs, particularly in matters affecting them, or in other words the right to autonomy. Restrictions on the right of that minority to be educated in the mother tongue are indefensible. Slovak National Party chairman Jan Slota’s xenophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Hungarian outbursts, *e.g.*, “Hungarians are the cancer of the Slovak nation, without delay we need to remove them from the body of the nation,” and why such vituperative statements are tolerated by the government are simply beyond comprehension. This hate mongering, especially by a government coalition party, has had a pernicious influence on Slovak society, as evidenced by a poll taken by the Open Society Foundation and the Center for Research of Ethnic and Culture in which 63.3% of the student respondents said that Hungarians should speak only Slovak in public places. Even more disturbing are incidents such as the “Death to Hungarians” graffiti that appeared in Nyitracsehi (Cechynce) this month. In sum, these shocking policies and practices are unacceptable to Americans and are inconsistent with the principles of democracy and Western values. Moreover, they cause inter and intra-state tensions that undermine stability in the region.

In addition to the resolution of the issues noted above (and others), two steps that would be highly symbolic and help to begin to remove the stain of intolerance would be the: (1) repeal of those provisions of the Benes decrees that imposed collective guilt on Hungarians after the Second World War and still adversely affect Hungarians; and (2) rehabilitation of 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.

Respectfully,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
Co-president

