

The Congress of European Nationalities and the International Protection of Minority Rights, 1925–1938

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Abstract

The Congress of European Nationalities (hereinafter, the Congress) was the only organization in the interwar period that aimed to create an international forum encompassing all organized national minorities in Europe. In the fourteen years of its existence, the Congress continued to see itself as a unified movement despite several national minorities turning their back on it due to internal conflicts. In this study, I first describe the organizational structure of the Congress and analyze its official and public activities. I then discuss the causes of tensions and the complexities of cooperation among the national minorities. I also examine the efforts of Germany and Hungary – the kin-states of the two most active national minority groups in the Congress – to use the institution to serve the interests of the Hungarian-speaking and German-speaking minorities.

I Events Leading Up to the Formation of the Congress

The peace treaties ending the First World War radically transformed the political map of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The Paris treaties recognizing the new borders more or less satisfied the aspirations for self-determination of nations able to form their own independent states (such as Poland and the Baltic states). They also satisfied, more or less, the claims of those national minorities that were able to join their kin-state as a result. Based on the size and ratio of the national minorities in the successor states, the new political map unquestionably corresponded more closely to the principle of the nation-state than the sprawling empires ruling the territories before the war. Nonetheless, almost every state in the region was home to minority communities of significant sizes.¹ Furthermore, many of these minority communities lived

1 On the sizes of the minority groups, see Wilhelm Winkler, *Statistisches Handbuch der europäischen Nationalitäten* [Statistical Handbook of European Nationalities] (Vienna, Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller Verlag, 1931).

in ethnically homogenous concentrated territories and often directly adjacent to the new borders. This was mainly due to the fact that the great powers approved the holding of referendums, perhaps the most effective and obvious means of enforcing the principle of self-determination, only in exceptional cases before the borders of disputed territories were drawn.

During their preparations for the peace conference, the great powers agreed that, in order to ensure the stability of the region, it would be necessary to find some means of protecting the national minorities of the new states. However, no clear concept of how these protections would actually be ensured in practice was agreed upon before the delegations arrived in Paris.² They were perfectly well aware of the fact that the discontent of the new national minorities, which regarded themselves as bound nationally to their kin-states (in particular the German, Hungarian and Bulgarian minorities), could easily destabilize the new states – and with it the new European peace. Therefore, with the intention of strengthening the internal stability of the new states, the great powers decided to develop a system for protecting the rights of national, religious and linguistic minorities under the auspices of the League of Nations (hereinafter, the League).³ The system of minority protections of the League left the states the power to pass laws positively impacting minority communities, while also establishing and enforcing (more or less) a minimum standard of minority rights protection for the Central and South-Eastern Europe countries through its system of minority guarantees. This was a major step forward in the history of international minority protections.

The German minorities reacted quickly to the changed situation, and in 1922 they founded the *Verband der deutschen Minderheiten in Europa* (Association of German Minorities in Europe) in Vienna.⁴ With the encouragement of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including financial support provided in secret, it created an institutional framework for supranational cooperation. The most important activities of the organization's Berlin office involved lobbying

2 On the ideas and visions for the region of the Entente Powers, see Erwin Viefhaus, *Die Minderheitenfrage und die Entstehung der Minderheitenschutzverträge auf der Pariser Friedenskonferenz 1919* [The Minorities Question and the Emergence of Minority Protection Treaties at the Paris Peace Conference 1919] (Würzburg: Holzner, 1960), 56–74.

3 On the terminological question, see Theodor Veiter, *Das Recht der Volksgruppen und Sprachminderheiten in Österreich* [Rights of Nationalities and Minorities in Austria] (Vienna, Stuttgart: Braumüller, 1970), 44–88.

4 The *Verband der deutschen Minderheiten in Europa* became the *Verband deutscher Volksgruppen in Europa* (Association of German Peoples in Europe) in 1928. Both are hereinafter referred to as the *Verband*.

ministries and civil society organizations interested in minority affairs. Delegates of the German political communities in the various states convened several times a year as committee members to discuss concrete problems and potential solutions. The organization recognized the League as the body that guaranteed international minority protection, and it requested the League to improve the effectiveness of its system of minority guarantees. It expected the individual states to implement laws guaranteeing minority protection and, in the long term, to allow for the establishment of cultural autonomy. The establishment of the system of minority protections of the League and the activities and political and social objectives of the Verband created the direct political background for the formation of the Congress.⁵

In late May 1925, Ewald Ammende, a German journalist from Estonia,⁶ who also played a significant role in the creation of the Verband, embarked on a journey across Europe. He set out on his travels in large part to share his notion of international cooperation among minorities with influential representatives of minority groups who could be important from the perspective of an organization that would bring together minorities of the continent. In particular, he wanted to persuade them to take part in a conference that he would organize. He met with leading politicians of the larger national minorities in the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Italy, Germany, Spain and Hungary.⁷

5 On the Congress of European Nationalities, see Rudolf Michaelsen, *Der Europäische Nationalitäten-Kongreß 1925–1928. Aufbau, Krise und Konsolidierung* [Congress of European Nationalities 1925–1928: Structure, Crisis and Consolidation] (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984); Sabine Bamberger-Stemann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongreß 1925 bis 1938. Nationale Minderheiten zwischen Lobbyistentum und Großmachtinteressen* [Congress of European Nationalities from 1925 to 1938: National Minorities between Lobbyists and Great Power Interests] (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2000); Ferenc Eiler, *Kisebbségvédelem és Revízió. Magyar törekvések az európai Nemzetiségi Kongresszuson (1925–1939)* [Minority Protection and Revision: Hungarian Aspirations at the Congress of European Nationalities (1925–1939)] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2007); Martyn Housden, “Ewald Ammende and the Organisation of National Minorities in Inter-war Europe,” *German History* 18 (2000): 439–460; Martyn Housden, *On Their Own Behalf: Ewald Ammende, Europe's National Minorities and the Campaign for Cultural Autonomy 1920–1936* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

6 Ewald Ammende (1892–1936) was a Baltic German journalist and minority politician. He was one of the pivotal leaders in the founding of the Verband. He convened the Congress of European Nationalities, of which he then became the Secretary-General. In the 1930s, he became active in the propaganda war against the Soviet Union. In 1936, in the course of a trip around the world, he had a stroke. He died in Beijing.

7 In May, Ammende began his trip after gaining the approval of Axel de Vries, president of the Baltic German Party in Estonia. Michaelsen, *Der Europäische Nationalitäten-Kongreß*, 71.

The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs firmly rejected the idea, and it did everything in its power to hamper the organization of the first conference.⁸ The organizational work in which Ammende was engaged was taking place at the same time as the Locarno conference and the negotiations concerning preparatory measures for Germany's entry into the League. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs feared that the conference might degenerate into an irredentist demonstration, which would have complicated Germany's negotiating position.⁹ The reason most often given for the rejection of Ammende's request, however, was that his initiative threatened the domestic political situation of some of the German minorities.¹⁰ Furthermore, Ammende did not have a good reputation within the ministry's bureaucratic circles. According to a 1923 document, although he spoke several languages and was both bold and helpful, Ammende was seen as unsuitable for any leading role within an organization or institution. His most serious flaws were his "unsuitability for proper parliamentary debate", "his lack of self-restraint" and his tendency to indulge in "uninhibited chatter."¹¹ Ammende nonetheless managed to organize and hold the first conference, the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notwithstanding.¹² The German government only began to support the cooperation envisioned by Ammende, which in the meantime had taken on institutional form, in 1928, after having realized that it did not pose a threat to the interests of German minorities or Germany itself.

The fact that Hungarian Prime Minister István Bethlen saw considerable potential in Ammende's idea, in particular its potential advocacy power, played an important role in enabling Ammende to transform his plan into a reality. Bethlen also hoped that the cooperation envisioned by Ammende would promote revisionist-oriented cooperation between the Hungarian and German minorities in the states neighbouring Hungary. (There had not been any such cooperation up to that point, nor would there be later.) On August 18, 1925,

8 Political Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PA AA), R 60462, unnumbered, Freytag's report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, September 18, 1925.

9 PA AA, R 60492, unnumbered, Welczek's report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs on his conversation with István Bethlen, Budapest, August 27, 1925.

10 PA AA, R 60462, unnumbered, Gen. Konsul Müller's memo concerning events pertaining to the international minority Congress, September 5, 1925.

11 In 1923, the advisory opinion on Ammende (author unknown) became widely known in the bureaucratic circles of the ministry. The document is presented in detail in Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress*, 74.

12 The only German organization to offer support was the Deutsche Stiftung, which provided 2,000 German [marks to defray the costs of the German delegates' travel to Geneva. The Stiftung provided no funding, however, to help cover the costs of the Congress. See Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress*, 149.

Bethlen and Ammende met in person at Bethlen's private estate. Bethlen immediately pledged to have the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs call the attention of the Hungarian minority parties to the event. He also promised to provide financial support to cover some of the organizational costs of the Congress, which would be held in September in Geneva. He told Ammende that he would provide 5,000 German marks, which would be made available by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹³

The first conference, which was held on October 15–16, 1925, was attended by fifty delegates representing twenty-eight minority communities (twelve nationalities in total) from twelve states. Since the response to the conference in the international press was positive, or at the very least neutral, the participants decided to convene again the following year in Geneva. The conference was held every year until 1938, with recognized minority politicians, experts and journalists participating. In 1933, forty-four minority groups representing a total of eighteen nationalities sent representatives to the conference, which was held in Bern that year. These numbers clearly illustrate the appeal of the organization.¹⁴

In founding the Congress, Ammende had two fundamental goals. He wanted to create an organization that would be able to represent and effectively lobby on behalf of the interests of minorities in the League, the international press and the actual states themselves. He was convinced that sooner or later the League would be compelled to take into consideration the resolutions that were adopted at the conferences, which were held either right before or right after the League's General Assemblies. He also believed that, in time, the League would recognize the organization as an equal negotiating partner. In addition, Ammende wanted to promote the recognition of and support for the idea of autonomy – more precisely the notion of cultural autonomy – which was enjoyed by minorities in Estonia in the 1920s and was remarkably successful.

II Legitimacy, Scope of Action and Organizational Frameworks

The Congress strove to establish its legitimacy by only permitting national minorities that showed a degree of organization and commitment to the

13 National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL) K 64 (documents of the political division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 1925-47-503, 369, Coded telegram sent by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Emich, Budapest, September 11, 1925.

14 On the national minorities that took part in the work of the Congress see Table A1 in the appendix.

preservation of their national cultures to delegate representatives. They also placed restrictions on the individuals who could participate as representatives of a minority group. One fundamental requirement was that the person lived in the country in question. In other words, mere knowledge of the problems faced by the minority group was not sufficient. The person had to accept responsibility back home for what he or she said at the Congress. In exceptional cases, representatives who did not live in the country in question could participate if the political circumstances in the country made travel to Geneva potentially dangerous or difficult. However, they were only granted consultation rights. In 1929, a resolution was accepted according to which the loss of citizenship for political reasons did not disqualify someone from taking part in the Congress.¹⁵

In the interests of averting the outbreak of internal or external conflicts that might threaten the very existence of the Congress, the organization always adhered closely to two basic principles: participants were prohibited from raising the idea of redrawing state borders (i.e. territorial revision), and no state-specific assessments of minority situations were made. The first principle was intended to ensure that the Congress would be able to function peacefully within the international order that had emerged after the First World War. The second was intended to protect the unity of the Congress by preventing clashes between representatives of different minorities.

Formally, the most important body of the Congress was the General Assembly, which was convened once a year. The decisions of the General Assembly ensured the legitimacy of all of the other bodies of the Congress. Although representatives of any national minority group were allowed to participate as observers in the sessions of the General Assembly, only representatives of minorities that had been accepted as members of the organization were allowed to vote. The minority groups that the three-member Steering Committee of the first Congress had invited to Geneva in 1925 could remain members in subsequent years. However, tensions concerning the question of the admittance

15 Resolution: 1929/*Report of the Organising Committee*/7. (The resolutions can be found in the final pages of the so-called *Sitzungsberichte*, the published reports of the annual conferences.) The real reason for this resolution was that the President of the Congress was facing an increasingly impossible situation in Italy. After an impassioned exchange of words with Mussolini on September 25, 1928, he left Italy for good, settling in Vienna. See Jože Pirjevec, "Die politische Theorie und Tätigkeit Josip Vilfans" [The Political Theory and Activity of Josip Vilfans], in *Die Minderheiten zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* [Minorities in the Interwar Period], ed. Umberto Corsini and Davide Zaffi (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1997), 172.

of new members made it necessary to establish criteria for their acceptance.¹⁶ Candidates had to demonstrate that they were representatives of organized minority groups and show “signs of enduring collective cultural life.” Moreover, a majority of member organizations had to support their participation in the Congress, or at least not oppose it.¹⁷

The primary task of the General Assembly was to discuss the items on the agenda prepared by the Steering Committee and accept resolutions concerning individual agenda items, which were presented to the public as the position of the European minorities. Reports and supplementary reports were read concerning each agenda item. With regard to the passage or rejection of a resolution, each individual minority group had one vote. The General Assembly also decided on the composition of the Chairmanship of each conference, and it consistently adhered to the system that had been adopted in 1925. Josip Vilfan, the representative of the Slovenian minority in Italy, was chosen as president, and five or six vice-presidents were assigned to serve alongside him, depending on attendance.¹⁸ The issue of the composition of the Chairmanship was a matter of consensus among the groups. Every larger national minority group could delegate one representative, but the Congress also took care to ensure that no minority would feel that it had been left without representation. Alongside the German, Hungarian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian and Catalan vice-presidents, Vilfan himself represented the Croatian, Slovenian

16 The problem began at the very first Congress with remarks made by the representatives of the Polish minorities in Germany in support of the acceptance of the Frisians as members. Since the German minority leaders did not consider the Frisians an independent minority, a three-member committee was created in 1926 to decide the question. The members of the committee were Romanian German Rudolf Brandsch, German Pole Jerzy Kaczmarek and Italian Slovene Josip Vilfan. The committee could not reach a consensus. The situation was complicated in part by the fact that the two official organizations of the Frisian minority had opposing views on the matter. Bundesarchiv (BA), Nachlass Vilfan, Josip (N 1250), Fasz. 32, 16–18, Vilfan’s memo on the Frisian question, undated (probably from late 1926). Ultimately, in order to gain time, the preparatory Steering Committee for the third Congress decided to postpone the admission of all new applicants until the charter had been approved. In response, the minority groups in Germany resolved as a group to withdraw from the Congress. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not consider it desirable for the Congress to accept the Frisians, and it proposed waiting to provide financial support for the year (1928) until after having learned the final decision of the Steering Committee. PA AA, R 60467, unnumbered, Transcript of communication from the fourth division to the sixth division of the German foreign ministry, undated.

17 Resolution: 1928/Charter Rule/II/2.

18 The list of names of the members of the Chairmanship and the Steering Committee can be found in the *Sitzungsberichte*. For a list of names including short biographical sketches, see Table A2 in the appendix.

and Czech-Slovak minorities. The Chairmanship was entrusted with the task of ensuring that the proceedings of the Congress went smoothly and without disturbance. It was also responsible for scheduling the plenary sessions and the sessions of the temporary committees (of which there were always three of four) that were assigned the task of preparing the texts of the resolutions concerning individual agenda items. Finally, it was responsible for overseeing the sessions themselves. With the close of the Congress, the Chairmanship ceased to function, with the exception of the activities of Vilfan, who served continuously as president.

Immediately before the close of the conference, the General Assembly entrusted a Steering Committee with the task of addressing the issues that would arise before the Congress met again the following year. Although the Steering Committee was formally independent of the Chairmanship and was a completely separate body in terms of the period of time in which it met and was active, starting from the very first Congress a practice emerged according to which the General Assembly proposed members of the Steering Committee to serve as members of the Chairmanship.¹⁹ The main task of the Steering Committee was to make the necessary preparations for the next Congress. It chose the optimal time and place, drew up an agenda and selected presenters from among the participants. In addition, during the first round of meetings, the Steering Committee made decisions concerning the acceptance or rejection of minority groups that were seeking membership of the Congress. On essential issues, the Steering Committee had to be unanimous in its decisions, while for technical matters a simple majority was sufficient. For the first three years, the Steering Committee met four times a year: once immediately after the conference, once on the day before the next conference and twice in between. Beginning in 1928, one of the meetings was held by the Council, a body that had been created in the meantime.²⁰ In contrast to the Steering Committee, every minority group had three representatives on the Council. The Council's primary task was to ensure that the individual groups familiarized themselves with questions concerning preparatory measures and that they arrived at decisions on these questions. Minority communities that belonged to the same nationality had a single vote. The Council reached its decisions in a similar manner to the Steering Committee.

The organization also included a few permanent committees. The oldest (which existed for almost the entire history of the Congress) were the

19 Members of the Steering Committee were permitted to send people to the sessions to act in their stead if they had to tend to other obligations. Resolution: 1926/7/I.

20 Resolution: 1928/Charter Rule/IV/3-5.

Organizing Committee and the Finance Committee, with the latter functioning continuously alongside the Chairmanship from 1929 onwards. The Organizing Committee was responsible for developing a strategy that would be adopted by the Congress. The Finance Committee's main task was to hold the Secretary-General financially accountable. Over time, other committees were formed, but the available sources provide only fragmentary information concerning their responsibilities, the regularity with which they met and the periods during which they were active. The Nationality Studies Committee was one such body. It was entrusted with the task of investigating the possibility of creating an institute of nationality studies. Examples also include a permanent committee dealing with petitions (formed in 1932) and the so-called Committee of Experts, which was created in 1935, at the suggestion of Elemér Jakabffy,²¹ to examine alleged infringements of minority rights.²² However, without exception, these committees had little power or influence, and they either did no real work or were not active for very long.

At their first conference, the minority group representatives elected Ammende as the secretary responsible for the coordination of the practical tasks related to the sessions. In doing so, they laid the foundation for the office of the Secretary-General. Ammende did the preparatory work for the first two Congresses without being able to rely on any real infrastructure.²³ In April 1927, the Congress opened a permanent office in Vienna, and this made it significantly easier for Ammende to address the tasks that awaited him as Secretary-General. This was true in no small part because one or two paid employees were able to take some of the administrative tasks off his shoulders. Ammende held this position until his death in 1936. His personality, vision, aspirations and connections fundamentally shaped the work and political orientation of the entire

21 Elemér Jakabffy (1881–1963) was a Romanian Hungarian politician, lawyer and editor. He was a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1938–1949). In 1922–1938, he served as the vice-president of the National Hungarian Party in Romania. He founded the periodical *Magyar Kisebbség* (Hungarian Minority) and was the only actual editor of the periodical almost until 1942, when it was banned. He was the vice-president of the Society of the Romanian Hungarian Folk League and one of the more prominent members of the Congress of National Minorities.

22 BA N 1250, Fasz. 6, 135, The founding session of the expert committee of the Congress of European Nationalities, May 4, 1935.

23 Until 1927, the Secretary-General's seat was in the Hotel Victoria in Geneva, not just for the duration of the conferences but continuously. Herbert Plesse, *Organisation und Arbeit der Kongresse der organisierten nationalen Gruppen in den Staaten Europas (Inaugural Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde)* [Organization and Work of the Congress of European Nationalities (Inaugural Dissertation for Obtaining a Doctoral Degree)] (Leipzig, 1930), 57.

organization. After Ammende's death, Ferdinand von Uexküll-Güldenband, also a German journalist from Estonia, was appointed temporary Secretary-General of the Congress, and his appointment was made permanent in 1938.²⁴

Fundamentally, the Secretary-General was responsible for two tasks. During the conferences, he had to address the administrative and technical questions that arose. When the conferences came to an end, he had to help the Steering Committee perform the preparatory work for the next conference. With regard to its fundamental functions, the office of the Secretary-General was a body that had to maintain the ties and the flow of information between the individual member groups, on the one hand, and the Congress itself, on the other. It had to establish and cultivate relationships with the press and with international organizations that dealt with minority issues and also, when possible, with the League. Before sessions of the Steering Committee, it had to determine whether or not minority groups seeking to become members of the Congress met the admission criteria. The office of the Secretary-General published the official periodical of the organization, as well as Congress reports. Financial questions, including income and costs, also fell within the scope of its authority.²⁵

The Congress was a very loose organization. Indeed, by its own definition, it was a "Congress community." It is hardly surprising that, in an organization whose members live several hundreds and sometimes several thousands of miles from one another, the influence of the Secretary-General, who holds a full-time position, will grow with time, even if officially he does not have the final say on any question of importance. This was the case with Ammende's Congress. After the 1926 conference, even the German minority leaders no longer called into question Ammende's suitability, and thus his position as Secretary-General was firmly consolidated. He exerted a far greater influence on the organization than one might think based on the powers given to him

24 Before becoming Secretary-General of the Congress, Uexküll-Güldenband was the editor-in-chief of the periodical *Nation und Staat*, which dealt with issues faced by the German-speaking minorities. Before he became part of the editorship of the journal, the German foreign ministry informed itself about him through the embassy in Estonia. According to the report, he was a remarkably talented journalist and editor. PA AA, R 60426, K 435709–K 435710. Since before his departure, Ammende had entrusted him to serve in his stead, and after the Secretary-General's death the 1936 Congress asked him to head the Secretariat temporarily. *Sitzungsbericht des Kongresses der Organisierten Nationalen Gruppen in den Staaten Europas: Genf 1936* [Meeting of the Congress of European Nationalities: Geneva 1936] (hereinafter, *Sitzungsbericht 1936*) (Vienna/Leipzig: Braumüller, 1937), 70.

25 From 1926 until 1930, the title of the publication was *Mitteilungen der Geschäftsführung*. In 1930, it was changed to *Pressewochenschau zur Nationalitätenfrage* and in 1932 to *Europäische Nationalitätenkorrespondenz*.

by the resolutions of the Congress. The primary reason for this is unquestionably related to the nature of the organization itself. However, other factors also contributed to the consolidation of his position and the strengthening of his influence and role.

Ammende was elected Secretary-General simply because the notion of creating a forum for international cooperation among the minorities had been his idea and because the success of the first gathering had indisputably been the result of his dedicated organizational work. His energetic and ambitious personality and his talents as an organizer made him indispensable, as did his background knowledge pertaining to the Congress. Naturally, his interpersonal capital, which was rooted in the relationships he managed to develop over the years, also contributed to the consolidation of his position. Well before 1925, Ammende was known as a journalist who was unusually knowledgeable about minority affairs and not only followed the fate of the German minorities closely but also paid close attention to its international nexus. When he served as Secretary-General, his network of relationships continued to grow, since he not only came into contact with people who worked at international organizations that were important from the perspective of minority affairs (e.g. the International Federation of League of Nations Societies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union) but also met with influential politicians in the course of his travels.²⁶ In addition, he maintained continuous ties with influential constituents of the minority groups connected to the Congress, both through correspondence and sometimes via personal visits.²⁷ This gave him a kind of monopoly on information that further strengthened his position. His good working relationship with Vilfan, the President of the Congress and head of the Steering Committee (who

26 Ammende did not only have ties to staff members at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also met with influential politicians, including Hungarian Prime Minister István Bethlen, Romanian Prime Minister Iuliu Maniu, various members of the government of Yugoslavia and even Scandinavian politicians in the course of his travels in northern Europe.

27 He wrote a detailed, two-part report of his travels that also testifies to this. The most important stops in the course of his travels between July 1 and July 14, 1930 were Berlin, Sombor/Zombor, Novi Sad/Újvidék, Belgrade, Vršac/Versek, Timișoara/Temesvár, Oradea/Nagyvárad, Sibiu, Bucharest, Silistra, Varna, Sofia, Belgrade, Budapest and Vienna. He began the second part of his trip on July 19 and ended it on August 4. He stopped in Berlin, Tilsit (now Sovetsk), Kowno (now Kaunas), Riga, Pärnu, Reval (now Tallinn), Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw, Vienna and Gottschee (now Kočevsko). Both the Hungarian and the German foreign ministries received the report. PA AA, R 60528, unnumbered, Ammende: Bericht über meine Reise nach Ungarn, Rumänien, Jugoslawien und Bulgarien vom 1. bis 14. Juli 1930 (II. Teil: Ostpreussen, Litauen, Estland, Polen und die Gottschee) [Ammende: Report on my trip to Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria from 1 to 14 July 1930 (Part II: East Prussia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Gottschee)].

moved to Vienna in 1928), facilitated cooperation between the two bodies of the Congress. This was particularly important for the Secretary-General, since any conflict with Vilfan would have weakened his position. For Ammende, the good relationship with the President was important for another reason as well. In the Chairmanship and on the Steering Committee, Vilfan represented the Croatian, Slovenian and Czech-Slovak minorities and sought to maintain good ties with the Slavic groups remaining in the Congress after 1927. Furthermore, Vilfan ensured that the Congress enjoyed the support (including financial support) of the leaders of the Yugoslav foreign ministry.²⁸ Ammende's position, however, was strengthened most by the moral backing and secret financial support he was given by the German and Hungarian foreign ministries.

Following Ammende's death, his successor, Uexküll-Güldenband, did not play nearly as dominant a role in the life of the organization. Uexküll-Güldenband's contributions were essentially limited to the principles expressed in the resolutions of the Congress. The primary reason for this was simply that, beginning in 1933, serious changes took place in German "ethnic politics," and attempts were made to establish central control over civil society organizations in Germany.²⁹ As a consequence of these centralization efforts, the position of the head of the Berlin office of the Verband became significantly stronger.³⁰

28 The available sources contain no concrete data concerning the amount of financial support provided to the Congress, nor does Vilfan's bequest contain any references to it. However, the files of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade may offer an answer to this question.

29 On the centralization of ethnic politics, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik 1933–1938* [National Socialist Foreign Policy 1933–1938] (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin: A. Metzner, 1968).

30 Carl Georg Bruns, the previous head of the office, died in February 1931. Even before his death, the question of his successor had already led to a rift between the Germany-focused organizations that dealt with providing support for minorities and the leaders of the German minorities. There were people (for instance Paul Schiemann) who sought at all costs to avoid doing anything that would strengthen the position of the Schutzbund and its leader, Christian von Loesch, while others (Hans Otto Roth) supported von Loesch. Hasselblatt, in any event, was considered someone with close ties to the Schutzbund. The debate between Ammende and Schiemann became acrimonious. Ammende sought to put a confrontational leader at the head of the office who had himself lived as a member of a minority community. Schiemann preferred a sober, judicious, impartial expert, as Bruns had been. In the end, the debate was decided in favour of Hasselblatt. Because of his stance on this question, the principles to which he had alluded (on occasion quite publicly) in his opposition to the concentration on minority politics and his theory of the a-national state (which was unpopular both in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and among most of the minority leaders), Schiemann, who at one time had been an influential politician with a profound belief in bourgeois democracy, rapidly lost favour in Berlin following the rise to power of the national socialists. For more on the

Thus, Werner Hasselblatt,³¹ the head of the office of the Verband, not only began to supervise the international activities of the German minorities but also took over a significant share of the behind-the-scenes organizational and negotiating work of the previous Secretary-General.³²

III The Public Face of the Congress on the Basis of Its Resolutions

During the fourteen years of its existence, the Congress passed a total of sixty-three resolutions. Eight of these resolutions dealt with organizational issues, while the other fifty-five specified the position of the member groups on issues that were of importance to the minorities. There were questions on which the organization managed to pass only a single resolution, but there were also many to which the Congress often returned or which continuously remained on the agenda (as was often the case at the League of Nations).

It could be foreseen from a note that Ammende committed to paper in the spring of 1925 that the organization would devote particular attention to the international protection of minority rights guaranteed in principle by the League. This was indeed the case. At eleven Congresses, resolutions were passed that focused very specifically on the work and activities of the League.³³ The first two conferences gave a clear vote of confidence to the international organization as “the most important forum for the resolution of conflicts between peoples and preserving peace in the world.”³⁴ After this, however, assessments of the work and effectiveness of the League became more critical and, in some cases, even harsh.

The point of departure for this criticism was the realization that the League was unable to compel the governments of its member states to comply with the obligations stipulated in the treaties. In general, in its critical assessments, which were framed in the context of European peace, the Congress

fight for control of the office following Bruns's death, see Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress*, 181–197.

31 Werner Hasselblatt (1890–1958) was a German Estonian minority politician. In 1923–1932, he was the head of the Baltic-German and German-Swedish parliamentary caucus. He played a key role in the framing of the law guaranteeing minorities cultural autonomy and in the successful efforts to get it passed. In 1931, he became a legal advisor to the Verband and the director of its Berlin office.

32 As is clear from the materials in Vilfan's bequest, Hasselblatt was given a very important role in shaping the life of the organization.

33 Resolutions: 1925/3; 1926/6; 1927/1, 2; 1928/1; 1929/1; 1931/1; 1932/1, 3; 1933/4; 1934/4, 6, 7; 1936/2; 1937/1.

34 Resolution: 1926/6.

concentrated on the question of enforcement of minority guarantees and only rarely gave voice to expectations that went beyond the obligations specified in the minority treaties.

With regard to the mechanisms and procedures of the League's system of minority guarantees, the second Congress raised the objection that the League Council was in practice the first and last forum for debates concerning infringements of minority rights. It also objected to the fact that the activities of the League were not public and transparent and that a minority that approached the League with a complaint was not recognized as a party to the discussions and was not even given the chance to respond to the answers given by the relevant government. The essential principles of these objections did not change over time; indeed, in 1932, the Congress openly questioned the objectivity of the League Council.³⁵ It criticized the failings of the League's bodies participating in the minority guarantees system one by one, objecting first and foremost to the lack of familiarity of the Secretariat and the Committee of Three with minority affairs and their bias in favour of the governments against which the complaints were brought.³⁶

A recurrent theme of the resolutions concerning the League was the clarification of the attitude towards the recommendation of the third General Assembly of September 21, 1922.³⁷ This recommendation called on the member states to demonstrate the same degree of patience and commitment to justice in their dealings with their minorities as the minority treaties required of their signatories. From the perspective of its purpose, the recommendation was little more than a gesture for the sake of appearances. It avoided the question of general international protection and entailed no sanctions of any kind. The Congress, however, could not avoid appealing to it, since there were minority groups among its members (e.g. the Catalans and the Slovenians of Italy) that lived in states that were not actually bound by any obligations to implement

35 Resolutions: 1932/3/7.

36 The petitions were sent to the Secretariat. If they met the necessary criteria regarding form and content, the Secretary-General forwarded them to the Council. If a member of the Council wanted to take action on the basis of a petition, he or she had to call the attention of the other members of the Council to the infringement of rights that had been committed or to the fact that an infringement of rights was imminent. Although the Council was the body responsible for discussing such alleged infringements, in time it became common practice for the members of the Committee of Three that was formed to examine the given case to deal with a given complaint. Christoph Gütermann offers an analysis of the structure, development and functioning of the Secretariat in *Das Minderheitenschutzverfahren des Völkerbundes* [The Minority Protection Procedure of the League of Nations] (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1979) 273–287.

37 Resolutions: 1925/3; 1926/6; 1927/2; 1938/1; 1934/6.

minority rights. Naturally, the frequent references to the 1922 recommendation were an expression of the desire and aspiration to secure genuine international recognition and protection of minority rights. In 1932 and 1934, the Congress took a concrete stance on this question.³⁸

In addition to passing resolutions on the procedures of the League relating to the implementation of minority guarantees, the Congress also took positions on questions concerning the League that clearly pertained to international politics. The first such instance was a resolution passed in 1928, in which the Congress expressed its doubts concerning the suitability of Spain's Aguirre de Carcer as a candidate for the position of director of the Minorities Section of the League Secretariat.³⁹ The second instance was a letter written to Aristide Briand, the Prime Minister of France, in which the Congress essentially expressed its opposition to France's vision for Europe, the Briand Plan.⁴⁰ The third was a resolution passed in 1934 in which the Congress called on the League to accept among its members only states whose minority policies left little or no room for complaint. Though the resolution made no mention of any specific states, it was quite clear to everyone involved that the Congress was taking a position against the admission of the Soviet Union to the League.⁴¹

Ammende clearly wanted to get the Secretariat of the League of Nations to recognize the Congress as an authentic organization that faithfully represented the views of the minorities of Europe. Before the first conference in Geneva, however, the Minorities Section of the Secretariat adopted an unambiguously

38 In the 1934 resolution, the Congress responded to the steps taken by the Polish government, which had suspended all cooperation with the League of Nations on this question until the minority rights treaties had been accepted as general standards of minority protection. In addition to this measure taken by the Polish government, the states of the Little Entente also strove, in the debates that took place within the League, to link the reform of the procedure by which minority rights were guaranteed to the question of making the minority rights treaties generally valid. In its resolution, the Congress supported the general standards created by the treaties, but it considered it crucial not to allow the politicization of this question to weaken the existing commitments.

39 Resolution: 1928/1.

40 Resolution: 1930/2. The 1929 version of the Briand Plan for Europe focused very clearly on European economic integration as a means of countering emerging US dominance. However, in the version that was submitted to the League of Nations in 1930, the focus had shifted from economic issues to questions of politics and security. This was undoubtedly influenced in part by the fact that the French foreign ministry had realized in the meantime that the creation of a strong, unified single market would also mean a stronger German economy. Emma Kövics, *Az európai egység kérdése és Németország 1919–1933* [The Question of European Unity and Germany 1919–1933] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1992), 152.

41 Resolution: 1934/7.

dismissive stance towards the Congress. Erik Colban, the director of the Minorities Section, did not attend the first session, although he had been invited, and he also forbade his colleagues from receiving the participants of the conference as a delegation.⁴² In spite of this, Pablo Azcárate, one of the staff members of the section, followed the events closely, though not in an official capacity.⁴³ The stance of the Minorities Section later changed slightly, as reflected in the fact that on several occasions the director paid a courtesy visit to the sessions of the Congress and that each conference was attended by one staff member of the section. The neutral but curious attitude of the Secretariat towards the Congress became particularly evident in the first half of the 1930s, when the name of Danish staff member Ludvig Krabbe, who regularly attended the conferences, was included in the published minutes.⁴⁴ In 1931 and 1934, the chairman of the League Council even met with a delegation of the Congress.⁴⁵ These meetings, however, were little more than polite gestures. The organization never managed to attain recognition as a potential partner in Geneva.

From the perspective of their contents, the resolutions of the Congress concerning organizations that dealt with minority rights protection were also tied to the resolutions concerning the League.⁴⁶ They did not go any further than the expressions of acknowledgment addressed to the International Federation of League of Nations Societies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the declaration affirming the need to cooperate with them. Given the nature of Ammende's efforts, it is hardly surprising that the Secretary-General and the Steering Committee wished to deepen cooperation between the organizations. A significant number of Congress delegates were also members of one of the two organizations (mostly of the International Federation of League of

42 PA AA, R 96559, K 431876, Aschmann's report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Geneva, October 22, 1925. Erik Colban (1876–1956) was a Norwegian diplomat. In 1919, he became a member of the staff in the Secretariat of the League of Nations. In 1919–1927, he served as the director for the “Administrative Affairs (Saar, Danzig) and Minorities Section.” In 1928–1930, he headed the Commission for Reduction of Armaments.

43 Ibid. Pablo de Azcárate y Florez (1890–1971) completed his university studies and then taught administrative law at universities in Spain. In 1915–1922, he was a parliamentary representative. In 1922, he became a member of the staff in the Secretariat of the League of Nations and a colleague in the minority section. He was Erik Colban's right hand. In 1931, he became the head of the section. In 1933–1936, he served as the deputy Secretary-General of the League.

44 On Krabbe's report see *Sitzungsbericht 1932; 1933; 1934*, Introduction and presidential opening speeches. In 1936, Peter Schou, the Danish president of the minorities section of the Secretariat also took part in the conference. See *Sitzungsbericht 1936*, Introduction.

45 *Sitzungsbericht 1931; 1934*, Introductions.

46 Resolutions: 1925/4; 1928/3; 1929/3; 1934/5.

Nations Societies). Ammende was particularly active in his attempts to further cooperation among the organizations during the discussion of potential reforms to the enforcement procedures for minority guarantees, when he lobbied for resolutions that would lead to substantial reforms.⁴⁷ Both Ammende and Vilfan corresponded with leading figures in both organizations, and on several occasions these influential personalities were guests or even presenters at the conferences.⁴⁸

Some of the resolutions of the Congress concerning the League of Nations called attention to the failure to implement treaty obligations. Some of them made note of the general deterioration of the situation, but others closely examined issues that were of key importance from the perspective of minority rights, including citizenship, the right to vote, the use of minority languages and religious and economic equality.⁴⁹ Since the Congress could not make any single state the subject of its critical assessments, its resolutions offered only summaries of general tendencies. In certain cases, however, it formulated claims that went beyond the minority rights recognized in the treaties. A resolution concerning the right to vote and a resolution on the question of language are perhaps the best examples of these normative claims. In the first resolution, the Congress called for the proportional representation of minorities in legislative bodies and bodies of local government. In the second, it proposed the recognition of the minority language as the official language instead

47 He was able to build, first and foremost, on the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (hereinafter, the Federation), which in comparison to the other organizations was more actively involved in the minority question. At the general assembly of the Federation that was held in The Hague on July 2–7, 1928, the suggestion was made that the League form a permanent committee whose authority would extend to the minority problem in its entirety, much as was later suggested by the Congress (in Resolution: 1929/2). At the subsequent general assembly, which was held in 1929 in Madrid, the Federation called on the League to create a committee of experts (a so-called “Studienkommission”) to study the minority problem in Europe. László Buza, *A kisebbségek jogi helyzete* [The Legal Situation of Minorities] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1930), 390.

48 For the Congress, the support of the following individuals was most important: Théodore Ruysen (Secretary-General of the Federation), Willoughby Dickinson (president of the permanent minority committee of the Federation), Christina Bakker van Bosse (member of the permanent minority committee of the Federation) and Leopold Boissier (Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union). On their participation, presentations and telegrams of congratulations, see Vilfan's opening speeches in the Congress's annual reports.

49 Resolutions: 1926/2–5; 1932/2; 1933/2; 1935/3.

of the majority language of the state in the case of minorities living in homogenous blocks.⁵⁰

On several occasions, the Congress suggested an academic study of the circumstances of the minorities. In 1928 and 1929, for instance, it passed two resolutions on the necessity of the publication of a handbook of statistics on national minorities.⁵¹ It also made efforts to establish an institute of nationality studies.⁵² In 1931, a handbook was published by Wilhelm Winkler, a professor at the University of Vienna, although it was essentially independent of the work of the Congress. The envisioned institute never made it beyond the planning stages, but in 1931 the Congress did manage to publish a book compiled by the minorities entitled *Nationalities in European States: A Collection of Reports on Their Situation*.⁵³

The Congress regarded the idea of cultural autonomy as the most suitable means to address relations between minority and majority populations, and in its resolutions it often made reference to the question of various concepts of autonomy.⁵⁴ However, since it immediately became clear at the first conference that some of the groups present did not support such claims, the Congress made its expectations of the states more precise in 1926. In the interests of maintaining unity within the organization, it emphasized that cultural self-determination through self-government could only be implemented with the support of the affected minorities. Once minorities from Germany left the Congress because they suspected that Germany was behind the organization and they did not agree with the idea that they themselves, as communities with only limited financial resources, should have to establish and maintain the necessary institutional frameworks for cultural autonomy, the resolutions dealing with the question no longer stirred up discord.

The dual loyalties that were expected from the national minorities inevitably compelled the Congress to address the question of the relationship between the national minorities and their so-called kin-states. A resolution passed in 1928 entitled "The Cultural Relationships among Co-National Groups and between these Groups, the Nation as a Whole, and the Kin-State," which was addressed to the states, emphasized the essentially natural character of

50 Resolution: 1926/4–5.

51 Resolutions: 1928/4; 1929/4.

52 Resolutions: 1929/4; 1932/4.

53 Ewald Ammede, ed., *Die Nationalitäten in den Staaten Europas. Sammlung von Lageberichten* [Nationalities in European States: A Collection of Reports on Their Situation] (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Verlag, 1931).

54 Resolutions: 1925/2; 1926/1; 1931/2; 1933/3.

these ties.⁵⁵ It provided the basis for one of the most prominent issues of the first half of the 1930s, namely the question related to conceptions of nationhood. Naturally, the inclusion of the concept of transborder nations was closely intertwined with the fact that the belief in the primacy of cultural community (which at the time did not yet mean racial community) was gaining ground among German minority organizations and minority rights theorists.⁵⁶ On several occasions, the Congress emphatically insisted on a strictly cultural understanding of the notion of national community, and it also identified the limits of this concept. Membership in a national community could never undermine the loyalty of citizens to their host-state, nor could it be used in the service of the interests of other states. The Congress passed several resolutions touching on this subject.⁵⁷ When the agenda for the 1935 Congress was being drawn up, however, Hasselblatt objected to the inclusion (again) of this question for several reasons. He was certain that the states affected never thought for a moment that the activities of a national community were restricted simply to cultural affairs. Furthermore, he feared that, if the Congress were to raise the question, it would draw attention to the fact that the issue was being pushed primarily by the German minorities.⁵⁸

The espousal by the Congress of the notion of the national community was itself arguably a sign of the growing strength and influence within the organization of the German minorities and, through them, the German government. The ability of the Germans to use the organization to further their interests had significantly influenced the workings of the Congress before, but from 1933 onwards resolutions were passed that made this influence evident, even to an outside observer. The decision of the Jewish group to leave the Congress in 1933 and the stance adopted by the Congress in 1935 with respect to authoritarian systems were clear signs that this tendency was growing in strength.

Cooperation between the German and Jewish minority groups within the Congress had in fact been essentially problem free until the early 1930s, and

55 Resolution: 1928/2.

56 Paul Schiemann discerned this increasingly strong tendency and took a stand against it at the 1932 conference of the Verband: "We cannot elevate service of racial 'völkisch' character above ethical laws unless we wish to do away completely with the significance of ethical laws. Nor can we place service of ethnic character a priori above the relations that grow out of other communities. It is as wrong to ask about the order of rank of the relations among various human communities as it was of the Pharisee to ask the question he put to which Jesus replied, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.'" Paul Schiemann, "Die neue nationalistische Welle" [The New Nationalist Wave], *Nation und Staat* 6 (1931–1932): 802.

57 Resolutions: 1931/5; 1934/3; 1935/4.

58 BA N 1250, Fasz. 6, 125, Hasselblatt's letter to Ammende, Berlin, April 15, 1935.

the Jewish minority groups always sent highly respected and well-prepared individuals to represent them at the sessions.⁵⁹ Indeed, cooperation between the delegates representing the two groups was so close that they were able to put up sufficient resistance to the efforts of the Hungarian representatives seeking to promote more confrontational advocacy strategies.⁶⁰ In 1932, however, the Jewish leaders lost faith in the organization, especially in its Secretary-General and German members. In October 1932, an article was published in *Nation und Staat* which in their assessment constituted an unambiguously anti-Semitic outburst.⁶¹ Leo Motzkin, the Jewish member of the Steering Committee of the Congress, immediately lodged a protest with Ammende and demanded that the German minority leaders denounce the article.⁶²

At the session of the Steering Committee in Vienna on April 1, it became clear that the Jewish group would not simply allow the Congress to sweep the problem under the rug.⁶³ The situation was clear: the Jewish leaders sought to pressure the Congress to adopt a position condemning the events taking place in Germany, which would have put the representatives of the German minority groups in a very awkward position for several reasons. First, they depended on Germany's financial support. Had they taken any steps to condemn Germany, they would have faced serious financial consequences.⁶⁴ Second, most

59 "Particularly close cooperation developed between the German and Jewish groups. Dr Motzkin, the representative of the Jews on the Chairmanship, was remarkably loyal even in the preparatory stage of the Congress. During the Congress, alongside Motzkin, it was first and foremost Robinson (Lithuania) who worked in close cooperation with the Germans, contributing decisively to the resolution of the question of autonomy in favour of German interests." PA AA, R 60464, unnumbered, Junghann's report on the second Congress of National Minorities, Geneva, October 25–27, 1926.

60 National Széchényi Library, Manuscript Collection, bequest of Géza Szüllő (Fond X), X/27, 5. Szüllő's report to the foreign ministry on the Berlin session of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (1928), undated.

61 Norbert Gürke, "Der Nationalsozialismus, das Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtum und das Nationalitätenrecht" [National Socialism, Border and Foreign German Nationality and Nationality Law], *Nation und Staat* 6 (1931–1932): 7–30.

62 BA N 1250, Fasz. 32, 490, Motzkin's letter to Ammende, Paris, November 16, 1932.

63 Szüllő and Jakabffy suggested that the conference not be held that year, but the German and Jewish members of the Steering Committee did not agree. Emil Margulies emphasized that he did not wish to overwhelm the new German regime with an inundation of complaints, but the Congress definitely had to discuss the question. BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 114–115, Protocol, The April 1 (Saturday) 1933 session of the Steering Committee in Vienna.

64 A letter written by Ammende to Vilfan at the end of June also clearly illustrates the difficult position of the German minorities. Ammende informed Vilfan that he was travelling to Berlin in order to meet with Goebbels and intervene on behalf of the Jews of Germany. His argument sheds light on the assessment of the situation given by the German

of the leaders of the German minorities hoped that the new regime would strengthen Germany's international position, which in turn would lead to improvements in the circumstances of the German minorities.⁶⁵ At the July 2–3 session of the Steering Committee, an agreement was reached to discuss the issue, which would be included as an agenda item with the title “Dissimilation and Nationality Rights.” An agreement was even reached concerning the manner in which the question would be discussed.⁶⁶ According to this agreement, both the German representatives and the Jewish representatives would make a clear declaration, while the other minority groups would not participate in the debate. Paul Schiemann composed the text of the declaration on behalf of the German representatives, and Emil Margulies composed the text of the declaration for the Jewish representatives.⁶⁷ They both emphasized the struggle of the group in question against assimilation, and neither questioned the right of any group to decide who belongs among its members. Schiemann insisted that

minority politicians and their perception of the circumstances. He sought to call the attention of the German minister of propaganda to the fact that the measures that had been taken against the Jews in Germany seriously endangered the foreign policy interests of the Reich and the interests of the German minorities. He continued: “Or Mr Motzkin, do you believe that I, or any other person from the German circles, would still have a chance to intervene directly in Berlin, if we let ourselves ... to be pressured to make open declarations on the Jewish Question?” BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 1124, Ammende's letter to Vilfan, Vienna, June 21, 1933.

- 65 In his aforementioned critical speech, Schiemann offered the following characterization of the relationship between national socialism and the German minorities: “In national socialism, however, the concept of the state is so closely interlinked with the concept of the *Volk* [people] that for it [national socialism] the preservation of the German people outside of the country only seems possible through their incorporation into the territory of the German state, or at least through the direct intervention of the will of the state power.” Schiemann, “Die neue nationalistische Welle,” 804.
- 66 BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 1129–1132, Vilfan: Notes on the 2–3 July 1933 report of the Steering Committee and the Council.
- 67 Paul Schiemann (1876–1944) was a Latvian German minority politician and journalist. In 1919–1933, he was the editor-in-chief of *Rigasche Rundschau*. In 1920–1933, he was the head of the German caucus of the Latvian parliament. He was one of the founders of the Verband, as well as a member of the Chairmanship. Until 1933, he served as one of the editors of the Verband's periodical, *Nation und Staat*. He was also one of the creators of the Congress of National Minorities and a member of the presidium. He was an implacable opponent of national socialism from the outset. In 1937, he founded the Deutscher Verband zur Nationalen Befriedigung Europas, together with Eduard Pant. Emil Margulies (1877–1943) was a Czechoslovak Jewish politician and lawyer. He organized most of the Zionist societies in the German-speaking territories of Czechoslovakia. In 1924, he founded the Czechoslovak Jewish League of Nations Society. In 1927, he was one of the founders of the Jewish Party, and he served as its president in 1931–1935. He was also a member of the Czechoslovak Jewish National Council. In 1939, he moved to Palestine.

“one must not make the rights of the citizens of a state dependent on membership in a religious or national community.”⁶⁸ Margulies, for his part, considered it perfectly natural that Zionist politicians could not remain indifferent to the fate of Jews who chose assimilation, and without mentioning Germany by name he condemned the continuous humiliation of some 550,000 Jews and the deprivation by the state of their rights as citizens.⁶⁹

The Jewish representatives from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Latvia] again discussed the question at the Second Preparatory World Jewish Conference, which was held at the beginning of September in Geneva. Taking a stance that contradicted the earlier agreement, they decided to send representatives to Bern only if the Congress were to accept a resolution clearly condemning the acts of the German government depriving its Jewish citizens of their rights. They also demanded a free, open discussion of the issue, with no restrictions.⁷⁰ The Steering Committee unanimously rejected this demand, justifying its decision with reference to the rules of its charter. In response, the Jewish delegates did not attend the session on September 16. In his opening speech, Vilfan made very cautious reference to the situation and specifically announced that “Dissimilation and Nationality Rights,” which was one of the items on the agenda, would not be discussed as part of the session. (Schiemann was not present on account of illness.) Hans Otto Roth, a Romanian German politician, unexpectedly read aloud a declaration in the name of the German group that aggravated the situation even further. According to Roth,

this kind of exclusion of other people, in particular people who belong to another race/ethnic group, from the culture of the Volk,⁷¹ as one could observe in recent times, we consider fundamentally justified ... we vigorously state that we will stand up again in the future in firm defence of the fundamental principles of our Congress, principles to which we have already shown our commitment on many occasions.⁷²

68 BA N 1250, Fasz. 32, 583, Paul Schiemann: Dissimilation und Minderheitenrecht [Paul Schiemann: Dissimilation and Minority Rights].

69 BA N 1250, Fasz. 32, 578–580, Emil Margulies: Vorschläge zum Inhalt der jüdischen Ausführungen zum Programmpunkt: “Dissimilation und Nationalitätenrechte” [Emil Margulies: Proposals on the Content of the Jewish Statements on the Agenda Item: “Dissimilation and Nationality Rights”]. Margulies emphasized that the plan reflected his personal stance and that it also had to be accepted by the Jewish group.

70 BA N 1250, Fasz. 32, 494–495, Motzkin’s letter to Vilfan, Geneva, September 8, 1933.

71 Roth used the word “Volk,” which over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was increasingly used in a racial sense, in particular in the discourse of German conservative and right-wing politics.

72 For Roth’s speech, which he made before the gathering began to address the items on its agenda for the meeting, see *Sitzungsbericht 1933*, 26.

This proclamation, for which – at least according to the available sources – Roth had neither sought nor been given any preliminary approval by the Congress, added oil to the fire. On the afternoon of September 18, the President of the Congress read the response of the Jewish group, stating that the group considered further cooperation impossible.⁷³ Roth spoke again, announcing that, while he recognized the very painful nature of the process of dissimilation, the Congress had to remain faithful to its charter and could not take any position concerning concrete events. He again added that they could not violate the spirit of the resolutions of the Congress.⁷⁴ The mood was already tense, but then the situation exploded: the Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Catalan and Hungarian groups refused to accept the text of the resolution as it was.⁷⁵ They were only prepared to accept it with the following addition: “We consider the wave of particularly anti-Semitic measures that have recently been observed in some states, violations of general human rights and irreconcilable with the principles of our Congress.”⁷⁶

A resolution entitled “National Minorities in the Authoritarian State,” which was passed in 1935, was another clear indication of the increase in German influence. In this resolution, the Congress declared that it did not identify itself with any particular political system and that it was prepared, in the interests of addressing questions of minority rights, to work together with any state. It nonetheless expected authoritarian states to respect minority rights.⁷⁷ There was clearly no question concerning the immediate relevance of the issue, since by the middle of the 1930s authoritarian regimes or even dictatorships had replaced parliamentary democracies in many European states. The position of the speakers at the session was founded on the (perfectly accurate) contention that no single political system was in and of itself a clear guarantee of respect for minority rights. The final conclusion was that in any given case it might well be possible to expect improvements in the circumstances of a minority living in an authoritarian state. The primary problem with these statements and the comments added in response was not that they implied that minorities always had to seek to assert their interests in cooperation with the prevailing system at any given time, but rather that they seemed to deliberately blur the

73 BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 1223–1224, Letter of Motzkin, Rosmarin, Margulies and Farchy to the President of the Congress, Bern, September 17, 1933.

74 *Sitzungsbericht 1933*, 69–70.

75 “The Congress has determined that, in the case of the introduction and implementation of national dissimilation, all of the freedoms and rights must remain untouched, in support of which the Congress of European Nationalities has taken a stance in its declarations and resolutions since its founding.” *Resolution: 1933/1*.

76 *Sitzungsbericht 1933*, 70.

77 *Resolution: 1935/2*.

fundamental difference between democratic systems and dictatorships and ignored the examination of tendencies involving human rights violations. Dénes Strelitzky, a Hungarian politician from Yugoslavia, was the only person who was willing to go beyond this terminological framework.⁷⁸ In his assessment, the rights of minorities were under far greater threat in authoritarian systems, since, as he himself had experienced, authoritarian regimes were disrespectful of and hostile to not only the right to political representation but also freedom of the press, freedom of association and the right to use one's mother tongue. It was telling, at the very least, that not a single German delegate offered a response to the question.

In summary, 1933 was a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Congress – both politically and, arguably, ethically – but not in its efforts to catalogue the challenges faced by minorities. Of the various questions it raised, “only” the two above-mentioned issues were particularly politically sensitive because of the growing strength of national socialism. The organization continued to deal with the primary questions of the relationship between states and minorities (e.g. language use, education, culture, churches, religious life, etc.) on a theoretical level, as it had before.

IV The Complexities of Cooperation

1 *Financing*

After the 1925 General Assembly had reached agreement in support of holding the conference again the following year, the preliminary meeting of the Steering Committee was charged with the task of establishing the specific amounts that the individual groups would pay in order to provide the necessary funds.⁷⁹ The German, Jewish and Hungarian groups were asked to pay 2,000 Swiss francs each, while the Poles and the other minorities in Germany were expected to pay a total of 2,200 Swiss francs, in two instalments. The Slovenian and Croatian groups were asked to pay 750 Swiss francs. These amounts changed several times over the following years, as did their proportions to one another. In 1928, the system of finances reached its final form (at least from this perspective):⁸⁰

78 For Strelitzky's supplementary paper, see *Sitzungsbericht 1935*, 38–41.

79 BA N 1250, Fasz. 2, unnumbered, Excerpt from the report on the 1926 preparatory Steering Committee session of the organized national groups, Dresden, April 6–7, 1926.

80 At the time, a Hungarian ambassador to Paris, Berlin or Rome was paid a salary of roughly 4,000 Swiss francs. See Pál Pritz, *Magyar diplomácia a két világháború között* [Hungarian Diplomacy in the Interwar Period] (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1995), 59. In the years in which Ammende brought a total of 18,000 Swiss francs from Budapest

the German group would pay a total of 12,000 Swiss francs per year in four annual instalments, the Hungarian group would pay 8,000, the Jewish group would pay 7,000, and the Catalan group and Slovenian group (which included the Croatians) would pay 5,000 each.⁸¹

Immediately after the first Congress, the Steering Committee set the salary of the Secretary-General at 1,000 Swiss francs per month. This sum, which included the salaries of the assistants who worked in the office of the Secretary-General, did not change.⁸² Officially, Ammende was obliged to use whatever was left of this money, once it had been used to pay salaries, to cover the costs of office space, office supplies, postage, official travel, Congress publications and conference-related expenses.⁸³ In principle, the Secretary-General's salary provided a respectable living, but it was by no means enough to live sumptuously. Ammende, who travelled a lot, enjoyed the pleasures of life and supported both his mother and a sibling living in Estonia, would quite clearly never have been able to support this lifestyle without the additional monies he was sent once a year by Berlin and Budapest.⁸⁴

The member groups of the Congress were often late in making their payments, which hampered administrative affairs and also placed a strain on Ammende's finances. The situation was made even direr by the withdrawal of some groups and the announcement by others that they were unable to pay their dues. Indeed, financial issues threw the future of the organization into question.⁸⁵ The first blow came in 1927, when all of the minorities from Germany were joined by the Polish minorities in their decision to withdraw from the Congress. Next, following the 1929 conference, the Jewish minorities informed Vilfan and Ammende that they were no longer able to meet the

(including extraordinary subventions) in order to defray the costs of organizational operations, the Hungarian contribution was roughly 1/200 of the financial support provided in secret by Budapest for the Hungarian minorities (which in 1928–1929 amounted to 3.6 million Swiss francs). On the support provided for the Hungarian minorities, see Nándor Bárdi, "A Keleti Akció II" [An Eastern Action II], *Regio* 6 (1995): 121.

81 PA AA, R 60528, L 497565, Ammende's letter to Graebe, Vienna, March 14, 1931.

82 PA AA, R 60528, L 497561, Ammende's letter to Graebe, Vienna, February 8, 1930.

83 At the session of the Steering Committee that was held in early February 1927, the finance committee warned Ammende about the necessity of proper book-keeping. MNL OL K 64 1927-47-78, Flachbarth's report to Masirevich, Prague, February 8, 1927.

84 Officially, these funds, which were naturally kept secret, were intended to help defray travel costs and costs involved in the preparations for the conferences.

85 Because of delays in payment, Ammende often found himself in a seemingly hopeless position, since the Secretariat was unable to cover its financial liabilities. On several occasions, Vilfan provided loans that saved Ammende from immediate grief. Michaelsen, *Der Europäische Nationalitäten-Kongress*, 246–248.

financial obligations of membership, and so were compelled to withdraw from the Congress. Although they nonetheless regularly attended every meeting until 1933, they were never able to pay more than a fraction of the amounts they were supposed to provide.⁸⁶ By 1933, the Catalan minority was insolvent, and the Ukrainian group, which in 1927 had become a permanent member (until then it had only had observer status), never provided more than a negligible contribution to the costs of maintaining the organization.⁸⁷ By 1933–1934, only three groups paid their dues more or less as required: the Germans, the Hungarians and the Slovenes.⁸⁸

The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopted a position in support of the Congress. After 1933–1934, the Congress was the only international forum in and through which the German minorities could hope to secure the attention of a relatively substantial international audience for their alleged grievances.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the organization could be used as an arena to promote and further – or when expedient downplay – German foreign policy endeavours. For instance, in 1933, the German group managed to have a resolution passed concerning the potential justification of the principle of dissimilation, and in 1935, approaching the question from the perspective of minority politics, it blurred the distinction between authoritarian regimes and democratic systems of government. Ammende also openly played a role in the propaganda war against the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ Thus, since the organization and its survival were increasingly important in eyes of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1932 onwards, it regularly covered a significant share of the payments that had been

86 Ammende and Vilfan contacted the Jewish representatives on several occasions in order to pressure them to pay their debts. BA N 1250, Fasz. 3, unnumbered, Vilfan's circular to the leaders of the Jewish minority groups, Belgrade, December 22, 1930. The Secretary-General and Schiemann also sought to obtain help from influential German Jews, though their efforts were unsuccessful. PA AA, R 60529, L 497595–L 497596, Ammende's letter to Julius Hirsch, Vienna, November 27, 1931.

87 PA AA, R 60531, L 497732, Graebe's letter and attached summary report to the sixth division of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the financial circumstances of the Congress, undated.

88 MNL OL K 64 1935–47, unnumbered, Elemér Jakabffy's report to the Chairmanship of the National Hungarian Party on the tenth Congress of European Nationalities, undated.

89 PA AA, R 60531, L 497732, Graebe's letter to the sixth division of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, February 21, 1934.

90 Ammende was also swept along by the tide of affairs in politics and built up ties with the Rosenberg office. In 1933 and 1934, the Congress passed a resolution concerning the famine in Russia. The Secretary-General maintained a press campaign and wrote a book on the subject, and in 1935–1936 he set off on a trip around the world whose real (and also secret) purpose would have been to map the spread of communist influence. Bamberger-Stemmann offers a detailed analysis of the question in *Der Europäische*

left in arrears by other groups. By 1934–1935, Germany provided 32,850 German marks to support the Congress, and by 1935–1936 this sum had grown to 38,600 marks. Of this, 19,100 marks came from funds that had been set aside for the Verband. The rest was paid by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an extraordinary allocation, which, however, was becoming a regular practice.⁹¹

In contrast to Berlin, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Prime Minister had been committed from the outset to providing financial support for the new organization. However, while Berlin decided in 1928–1929, after an initial period of cautiousness, to provide adequate support for the Congress to survive, and essentially never changed its position on this question, after September 1932 the Hungarian foreign minister revised the policies according to which the government had provided support for such initiatives. From that point onwards, Hungary did not actually make the payments it had agreed to in principle until the conference in a given year had actually begun. This left the leaders of the organization in a state of constant uncertainty.

Following the second Congress, the annual payment for the Hungarian group was raised to 4,000 Swiss francs, and then 8,000 Swiss francs after they decided to establish a permanent office. This amount never changed, at least not officially, in the remaining eleven years of the organization's history. From the moment this decision was made until September 1932, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly sent the funds on behalf of the Hungarian group (two payments of 4,000 Swiss francs each) to Ammende, sometimes with slight delays. The only change that took place came in July 1928, when at Ammende's request the funds were sent to the Secretary-General through the embassy in Vienna, though in some cases Ammende was given the money in person in Budapest.⁹² The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the payments contingent on at least one condition. Ammende had to enter each payment in the records of the office in Vienna as a "contribution made by the Hungarian minorities," since even a minor indiscretion could have put the Hungarian government in an extremely awkward position.⁹³ After the Hungarian contact had

Nationalitätenkongreß, 325–349. Ammende received 8,000 German marks annually, in quarterly instalments, for the "Russia Operation." PA AA, R 60496, K 262362, Hasselblatt's letter to Twardowski, Berlin, May 19, 1936.

91 Ammende's "Russia operation" was presumably one of the things covered by the extraordinary allocations, as was covering the costs of the groups that either had withdrawn or could not pay. PA AA, R 60496, K 262361–K 262363, Hasselblatt's letter to Twardowski, Berlin, May 19, 1936.

92 MNL OL K 64 1935–47 (403/1928), Instruction of the foreign ministry to Ambassador Lajos Ambrózy, Budapest, June 20, 1928.

93 *Ibid.*

convinced himself that the Secretary-General was proceeding in accordance with the requests of the Hungarian government, the deputy minister gave his consent to allow the funds to be transferred through the embassy.⁹⁴

Between 1925 and 1938, the financial support provided to the Congress definitely exceeded 140,000 Swiss francs, taking into considerations the various payments (e.g. annual membership fees and extraordinary allocations made by the foreign ministries). These payments, however, were by no means the only state costs of membership in the organization. For instance, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs covered the travel costs of the delegates.⁹⁵ Furthermore, in the years immediately following the founding of the Congress, the Office of the Prime Minister also provided extraordinary allocations to support the annual conferences (in the amount of 5,000 Swiss francs per conference).

2 *Representativeness and Solidarity*

The founders of the Congress were guided in their efforts by the goal of creating a unified organization in which all national minorities of Europe were represented. They sought to create a forum founded on a belief in the complete equality of individual minorities, a forum that recognized and accepted differences arising from their various backgrounds but was still able to develop unified strategies in relation to fundamental issues and represent them effectively. While the Congress enjoyed the participation of a significant share of the minorities of Europe, full representation and complete consensus on issues of importance among members proved to be an illusion.

The first group to withdraw from the Congress consisted of members who disagreed with its official position (more precisely the position of the majority of its members) on cultural autonomy as a long-term goal. The notion of cultural autonomy was attacked from two sides. The representatives of the political organizations of the Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities in Poland were not satisfied with the Congress's stance, which they regarded as too moderate. As numerically significant minorities living in relatively homogenous blocks, they strove to assert their right to self-determination. For this reason, they participated in the first three congresses only as observers.⁹⁶

94 MNL OL K 64 1935-47 (322/1928), György Lukács's letter to Khuen-Héderváry, Vienna, July 20, 1928.

95 For instance, MNL OL K 64 1927-47-430, Costs of the travels of Péter Matuska, the foreign ministry's chargé d'affaires, to Prague, Budapest, September 15, 1927; MNL OL K 64 1927-47-385, Kristóffy, Pro domo, Budapest, August 17, 1927.

96 Elemér Jakabffy, *Adatok családunk történetéhez* [Information concerning the History of Our Family], Manuscript, National Széchényi Library Manuscript Collection, F 625/3066, 9-10.

(In 1928–1929, they became permanent members of the organization, although they maintained their stance on the issue of cultural autonomy.) The minorities in Germany were critical of the concept for an entirely different reason. They did not find it acceptable for the Congress to focus in its strategic goals on an idea whose implementation would compel the so-called “weaker minorities” to bear costs that exceeded their means.⁹⁷ Their opposition, however, may also have been a sign of their discontent with some of the details concerning the manner in which the Congress functioned. The Danish, Polish and Serb minorities, which formed the Alliance of Minorities in Germany, found the influence wielded by the German minorities – an influence that exceeded their numerical proportion in the Congress – overwhelming. They felt that the German minorities had created the organization as a tool to promote pan-German interests. When they withdrew from the Congress in 1928, the explanation (or pretext) for their decision was the fiery debate concerning the possible admission of the Frisian minority and the official decision of the Congress to reject its application.⁹⁸ Out of solidarity with the Frisians, all the Polish minority groups withdrew from the organization.

While the admission of the Frisians to the Congress was blocked by the German minorities, the admission application of the Slovak minorities in Hungary (or rather the application of a Czechoslovak emigrant organization because the Slovak minorities were “hindered” in their efforts to join the Congress) was hampered by the Hungarian minorities or, more precisely, by the Hungarian Office of the Prime Minister.⁹⁹ In cases like this, it was already obvious that the states were striving to instrumentalize the Congress as a forum to assert their interests. Likewise, their financial support of the Congress was dependent on whether or not the decisions reached at the sessions of the Steering Committee on individual issues served their interests.

On several occasions in the 1930s, questions surrounding the identity of specific individuals who represented the various minorities at the Congress became a source of tension between the German, Hungarian and Slovenian groups, which until then had managed to cooperate with one another relatively effectively. For instance, in 1930 and 1931, following the dissolution of the political parties in Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav state sought to prevent the leading politicians of the Hungarian minority from reaching the sessions of the

97 Remarks of Ernst Christiansen, Danish German minority politician. *Sitzungsbericht 1925*, 54–56.

98 PA AA, R 60426, K 435450, Lutz Korodi's confidential report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the session of the German minorities that took place after the conference, Berlin, undated.

99 BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 706, Szeberényi's letter to Ammende, Miskolc, July 12, 1931.

Congress in time by making the process of obtaining a passport more complex and burdensome. Instead, they supported a politician who had never been recognized by the Hungarian minority as a legitimate political representative and had shown himself to be willing to cooperate with the regime (and even facilitated his travel to the Congress). In the meantime, however, the politicians who represented the German minorities in Yugoslavia were able to travel and attend the annual conference without any difficulty. It was not until Hungarian delegates from Transylvania and Czechoslovakia and the Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister issued an ultimatum threatening the withdrawal of the Hungarian group from the organization that the President of the Congress managed to persuade Belgrade not to create any more obstacles preventing the Hungarian politicians from travelling abroad.¹⁰⁰

The relationship between the German and Hungarian groups was fraught with complexity and tension between 1936 and 1938 because of the question surrounding the representation of the German minorities in Hungary. Until 1936, the German minority in Hungary had been represented in the Congress by one of the leading officials of the *Ungarländischen Deutschen Volksbildungsverein* (German Folklore Association in Hungary), who was recognized by the Hungarian government. However, when Jakob Bleyer, the leader of the *Volksbildungsverein*, died in 1933, a fight for control broke out in which the leaders of the *Verband*, the Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister and even the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part. After 1935, the *Verband* supported the more radical wing of the *Volksbildungsverein* and insisted that it represent the German minority in Hungary at the conferences. However, the Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister did not allow an internal opposition figure to travel from Hungary to the conferences instead of the more moderate official leaders, who had the support of the Hungarian government. The stance of the Hungarian government was hypocritical, since no one could represent the Hungarian minorities without the preliminary approval of the state secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister. For years, the Office of the Prime Minister had taken advantage of the influence of Géza Szüllő, the Hungarian member of the Steering Committee, to prevent the radical wing of the German minorities in Hungary from representing the German minorities at the conference. Hasselblatt, however, blocked the active participation of the wing of the *Volksbildungsverein* supported by the Hungarian government in the work of the Congress. Even in the last years of the existence of the Congress, this conflict remained unresolved, and the relationship between the Hungarian delegates and the German delegates became increasingly tense.¹⁰¹

100 BA N 1250, Fasz. 5, 1174, Ammende's letter to Vilfan, Vienna, August 10, 1933.

101 On the representation of the Hungarian Germans, see Eiler, *Kisebbségvédelem*, 251–279.

The principle of solidarity, however, had already suffered a major blow in 1933, when the Jewish group called on the Congress, in particular the German representatives, to publically condemn the persecution of the Jews of Germany and the deprivation of their rights. The German representatives were not willing to condemn the measures that had been implemented by the German government, so the Jewish group broke its ties with the Congress. A declaration was added to the relevant resolution expressing the limited solidarity of the other groups of the Congress with the Jewish group, but this did not suffice to persuade the Jewish group to remain. The debate, which took place behind the scenes, had at least one other consequence: relations between the German and Hungarian groups continued to worsen. The German delegates regarded the events as a manifestation of disloyalty to them.¹⁰² In his conversation with Romanian Hungarian politician Elemér Jakabffy, Hans Otto Roth, who was serving as president of the Verband, made no effort to mask his disappointment or anger:

Sir! You have stabbed us. Even here you have isolated the German nation. Papen recently travelled to Budapest to introduce a far-reaching programme for German-Hungarian cooperation. You have now made this impossible. With your decision, you have delved deeply into European politics, and this will have consequences. We did not expect this of you.¹⁰³

Jakabffy described to Roth the motivations underlying the steps that had been taken by the Hungarian group, and he could not resist giving the Saxon politician a lesson on the minority organization's limited influence on the German government: "With regard to international politics – concluding ironically – I don't think that we are such big players that our declarations will influence the decisions of the Berlin government."¹⁰⁴

3 *Divergent Goals and Means*

With regard to the work of the Congress and the tactics it adopted, two basic viewpoints came into conflict: the cautious German stance, which did not wish to endanger the situation of the minorities in their host-states, on the one hand, and the confrontational Hungarian stance, which urged more radical steps and sought to attain as much influence as possible through advocacy, on

102 PA AA, R 60530, L 497705, Junghann's report on the ninth Congress of European Nationalities, undated.

103 Jakabffy, *Adatok*, 52.

104 *Ibid.*, 53.

the other.¹⁰⁵ The members of the Steering Committee tended to side with the more cautious Germans.

Immediately after the first conference, the Hungarian minority leaders were already entertaining visions of an influential organization with a firm institutional framework, an organization that would have its own periodical and serve as a tool of effective international advocacy, first and foremost in Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations. Otto Junghann, one of the deputy chairmen of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies and an observer at the conference, described the viewpoint of the German leaders, which was hardly compatible with the Hungarian stance, as follows:

The German group is unanimously of the view that a rigid organization of the European minorities is not desirable. ... However convinced they may be that the Congress should be used as an instrument in the future, they fear that a permanent organization with permanent tasks may cause complications that eventually and inevitably will lead to its disintegration.¹⁰⁶

After the second Congress, a kind of compromise was reached with regard to the structure of the organization and the independent periodical – a compromise with which both the German group and the Hungarian group were temporarily content. The Germans essentially regarded the organization that took form after 1926 as a movement that did not function continuously, as the organs of the Congress only met occasionally, with the exception of the Secretariat. The official tasks of the Secretariat, which had a permanent office but only a minimal staff, consisted only of preparatory and publication work.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the official organ of the Congress, which was created in November 1926, ended up under the control and oversight of Ammende, who besides being German was concerned about the future of the organization and

¹⁰⁵ The primary cause of the differences between the German and Hungarian stances on this question was the fact that all the Hungarian minorities supported territorial revision. The circumstances of the German minorities were more complicated. The German minorities that lived directly next to the border with Germany also supported territorial revision, while for those living in south-eastern Europe this was not a “life or death” question, since they would in any case remain distant from Germany and under the power of another state.

¹⁰⁶ PA AA, R 60464, unnumbered, Junghann's report on the second Congress, undated.

¹⁰⁷ BA N 1250, Fasz. 2, unnumbered, Werner Hasselblatt: *Denkschrift zur Anregung der Begründung einer Europäischen Gesellschaft für Nationalitätenrecht* [Werner Hasselblatt: *A Memorandum on the Foundation of a European Law on Nationality Minorities*], Geneva, August 1927.

therefore clearly cautious.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the organization managed to avoid a situation in which “the bulletin would offer an opportunity for some of the minority groups adopting shrewd tactics to create a broad platform for their advocacy goals with this periodical.”¹⁰⁹

From the Hungarian viewpoint, however, the mere fact that a Secretariat with a permanent seat had come into being at all was viewed as a positive development, in particular considering that Ammende, who was on good terms with the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was at its head. While only three people worked in the office in Vienna, this did not necessarily mean that the office would not later undergo further development. Since the composition of the Steering Committee had been made permanent, the Hungarian group would always be represented, and without its consent no decisions could be made on any issue of importance. With regard to the periodical, while the Congress had not decided in favour of a publication that would be put under Hungarian editorship and could be used for confrontational advocacy, the new situation nonetheless was regarded as a step in the right direction, at least from the Hungarian perspective. The new publication would be made available to influential officials in the League of Nations and some of the politicians who took part in its sessions, and this was clearly better than nothing. Furthermore, the Verband launched its own periodical – *Nation und Staat* – the same year, with secret support from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Naturally, the limits that applied to the Congress’s bulletin did not apply to the journal of the Verband. The Congress’s periodical regularly presented accounts of the situation of the individual minority communities in Europe, and Hungarian minority politicians published articles in it.¹¹⁰

108 The first issue of the bulletin was published in November 1926. It was entitled *Mitteilungen der Geschäftsführung*. The periodical, which was initially disseminated only in small circles, provided a summary of the new minority petitions, the sessions of the Congress and the legal regulations in force in individual states. It also made reference to the most important publications on the question of minority rights. In 1930, it was supplanted by *Pressewochenschau zur Nationalitätenfrage*, which was published for six years, and (from 1932 onwards) *Europäische Nationalitätenkorrespondenz*, which was unambiguously supportive of German interests from the outset. Initially, Ammende edited the periodical entirely on his own. At the beginning of the 1930s, however, he was joined by his journalist sibling Erich. Bamberger-Stemmann provides a detailed discussion on the publications of the Congress in light of the efforts of Germany to use it as an instrument of German aims in *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress*, 203–233.

109 PA AA, R 60464, unnumbered, Junghann’s report on the second Congress, undated.

110 At the end of April, Ammende informed the Hungarian foreign ministry that there would be a section in the periodical being launched by the German minorities on August 1 dealing with the circumstances of the other national minorities in Europe, and that he would be responsible for compiling it. He indicated that he would be happy to include news

A few years later, however, a quarrel again broke out between the German and Hungarian members of the Steering Committee because of their differing strategic goals. Géza Szüllő, one of the Hungarian members, urged the Congress on several occasions to present the actual conditions under which the minorities lived to the wider public. He summarized his criticism regarding the Congress as follows:

a minority conference is not here to promulgate academic principles, nor should it sink to the level of a botanical Congress. ... I assert that I do not see any need for us to take part in this kind of academic institution since our goal must be first to demonstrate to Europe that we are dissatisfied and, second, that we are a fire trap in the middle of Europe.¹¹¹

The other Hungarian representatives did not lend their unanimous support to this vision until the period immediately preceding the next conference. They did not want to cause a scandal that might disturb the official programme, but they did authorize Leó Deák to “suggest,” in his remarks, the drafting and publication of a book presenting in detail the circumstances faced by the minorities belonging to the organization before the next session of the Congress.¹¹² While the Germans were irritated by the Hungarian’s suggestion, they gave in after considerable negotiations. The book was eventually published in 1931. It met with little interest in the arena of international politics.

Earlier in the year, Ammende and Vilfan had been engaged in serious international advocacy efforts, and this may have prompted the Hungarian group, in spite of the threats, to content itself with the publication of a book presenting concrete infringements of minority rights. At a session in December 1928, Rauol Dandurand, a member of the Council of the Congress delegated by Canada, announced that at the next session of the Congress, which was to be held in March 1929, his government would suggest a detailed debate concerning possible reforms to the complaint procedure.¹¹³ Ammende then threw himself into the fight to win the favour and support of the leading politicians of

concerning the problems faced by the Hungarian minorities. MNL OL K 64, 1927-47-181, Ammende’s letter to Khuen-Héderváry, Budapest, April 25, 1927.

111 National Széchényi Library Fond XX/27, 5, Szüllő’s report on the inter-parliamentary conference in Berlin, Bratislava, September 5, 1928.

112 Leó Deák, “A Népszövetség és kongresszusunk jövő feladatai” [The Future Tasks of the League of Nations and Our Congress], *Magyar Kisebbség* 8 (1929): 670–679.

113 On the session of the Council, see Bastian Schot, *Nation oder Staat? Deutschland und der Minderheitenschutz* [Nation or State? Germany and Minority Protection] (Marburg/Lahn: J.G. Herder-Institut, 1988), 208–213.

the neutral states. On December 13, he informed the permanent deputy of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, having been given authorization by the Steering Committee, he was going to travel with Vilfan for a short time to Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Denmark at the invitation of the member organizations of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies. The purpose of the trip, he explained, was to establish ties with the “relevant authorities” and urge them to take more active steps in support of reforms.¹¹⁴ At the end of December and the beginning of January, the Secretary-General travelled to Finland by himself, where according to the Hungarian ambassador he created quite a stir. In February, Vilfan held a presentation in Geneva at an event led by William Martin, the editor of *Journal de Genève* and a man of considerable esteem.¹¹⁵ They then travelled together to the Netherlands and the Scandinavian states.

At the March session of the Council, Dandurand and German Minister of Foreign Affairs Gustav Stresemann held a speech on the importance of reforming the minority rights protection procedures. While they may have listened to the speeches politely, the other members of the Council clearly sought to sweep the question under the rug.¹¹⁶ It was quite clear that it would be necessary to reach a compromise, and this was indeed what happened. The Council entrusted a committee consisting of three people, chaired by the Japanese delegate Mineitcuro Adatci, to compile a thorough report on the issues Dandurand and Stresemann had raised by the time of the session scheduled for June.¹¹⁷ It also called on the states to inform the committee of their views concerning the protection of minority rights and made it possible for international organizations dealing with questions of minority rights to share their ideas and visions with the committee members.

The Steering Committee drew up a memorandum calling for complete transparency of the minority rights protection procedure, the participation of minority complainants in the procedure, improvements to the procedures governing the functioning of the Committee of Three, systematic requests for the opinion of the Permanent Court of International Justice (hereinafter, the Court) in The Hague and the creation of a committee of experts that would

114 MNL OL K 64 1928-47-757, Ammende's letter to Khuen-Héderváry, Vienna, December 13, 1928.

115 PA AA, R 60527, L 497516, Ammende's letter to Consul Reinebeck, undated (arrived on February 22, 1929).

116 Schot, *Nation*, 227–229.

117 Hugo Wintgens, *Der völkerrechtliche Schutz der nationalen, sprachlichen, und religiösen Minderheiten* [Protection of National, Linguistic and Religious Minorities under International Law] (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1930), 456.

operate alongside the League. In addition, the memorandum called on states with no treaty obligations to protect minority rights to respect the spirit of the minority protection treaties in cases involving minority complaints.¹¹⁸

In light of these expectations, the outcome of the June session of the Council was disappointing. The reforms that were passed brought some improvements to the procedures, but Dandurand's and Stresemann's suggestions, which would have significantly redrawn the framework for the minority rights protection procedure, were essentially ignored.¹¹⁹ The Court in The Hague was not handed a larger role, and nothing came of the idea of involving minority plaintiffs in the procedure, improving transparency or creating a committee of experts. From the perspective of the Congress, it was an unambiguous failure.¹²⁰

In 1934, the Hungarians again sought to exert pressure on the Secretary-General and the President (and thus on the Steering Committee), as well as on the other members of the Congress. They hoped that the Congress, instead of busying itself with theoretical analyses of infringements of minority rights, would engage in genuine awareness-raising efforts to influence and inform public opinion, identify the problems faced by minority communities and take a clear stance on concrete violations of rights. This demonstration of determination on the part of the Hungarians in the mid-1930s differed from their earlier attempts to influence the Congress in the late 1920s in two major ways. In 1929, the Hungarians had threatened to withdraw from the organization, but this threat had been little more than a bluff. In 1934, however, it was quite real. No one could know for sure when the Hungarian foreign minister might arrive at a potentially irrevocable decision concerning the withdrawal of the Hungarian minority groups from the Congress. The other difference concerned the conditions for remaining in the organization. In 1929, Szüllő and those in his circle had contented themselves with the Congress's pledge to publish a book containing reports on the state of affairs of the minorities, but in 1934 they set their sights considerably higher. They made demands that would have fundamentally transformed the operations of the organization if they had been met immediately.

However, the other two conditions set by the Hungarian group created serious difficulties for the leaders of the Congress. One of them was a request

118 Denkschrift des Ausschusses der Europäischen Nationalitätenkongressen [Memorandum from the Steering Committee of European Congress of National Minorities], *Nation und Staat* 2 (1928–1929): 583–589.

119 For the text and an analysis of the resolution, see Wintgens, *Der völkerrechtliche Schutz*, 461–463.

120 MNL OL K 64 1935–47 (575/1929), Ammende's letter to Bethlen, Vienna, July 22, 1929.

to transform the office in Vienna into a bureau that would operate continuously and examine complaints concerning concrete infringements on minority rights. If it determined that the complaints were well-founded, it would submit a petition to the Secretariat of the League of Nations. The other condition was that, if the Vienna office were to be restructured, a Hungarian representative would be made part of its staff. Although the two conditions were related – in their arguments the Hungarians explained the necessity of the second with reference to the first – they quite clearly served different goals. The transformation of the scope of the duties of the Secretariat would have resulted in fundamental changes to the essential functioning of the Congress, which at that point was ten years old. The second condition was merely meant to increase the influence of the Hungarian minority groups within the organization.

Naturally, Jakabffy already knew whom he wanted as the Hungarian member of the staff in the Vienna office: Imre Prokopy, who had been active as a Yugoslav Hungarian politician and enjoyed the confidence of the Office of the Prime Minister.¹²¹ According to Vilfan, this demand could have been met, but only if three conditions were satisfied first. The Hungarians would have to name someone they considered suitable for the position, they would have to cover the additional costs and under no circumstances would the appointment of a Hungarian assistant be allowed to serve as a precedent for other national minorities to make similar demands.¹²²

In the end, no Hungarian was actually appointed to serve as a member of the staff in the office in Vienna. There were several reasons for this. First and foremost, it is doubtful that the Office of the Prime Minister or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have been willing to cover any additional costs, but they were certainly not willing to do so once the Steering Committee had essentially torpedoed Jakabffy's suggestion concerning the transformation of the Secretariat.

The essential part of the Hungarian ultimatum of 1934 concerned the changes that the Hungarians hoped to make to the role and work of the Congress. However, Vilfan had serious reservations – and indeed anxieties – concerning this suggestion.¹²³ He cautioned Jakabffy that the positions adopted by the Congress could easily give rise to tensions among the individual national minority

121 MNL OL K 64 1935–47, unnumbered, Elemér Jakabffy's report to the Chairmanship of the National Hungarian Party, undated.

122 BA N 1250, Fasz. 8, 856, Vilfan's letter to Jakabffy, Vienna, June 23, 1934; BA N 1250, Fasz. 30, 7, Minutes of the session of the Congress of European Nationalities' Steering Committee, Vienna, June 29, 1934.

123 BA N 1250, Fasz. 8, 855–856, Vilfan's letter to Jakabffy, Vienna, June 23, 1934.

groups. He also felt it was worth keeping in mind that, if the submission of petitions to the League of Nations were to become a central part of the Congress's endeavours, minorities that did not fall under its protection would no longer have any interest in becoming or remaining members of the Congress, since no one would be able to submit complaints to Geneva on their behalf.

The session of the Steering Committee that took place on June 29, 1934 was decisive from the perspective of the fate of the Hungarian proposal. Szüllő represented the Hungarian group.¹²⁴ Those who made remarks essentially agreed that it would be inappropriate for the office in Vienna to draft or even offer an opinion on petitions and then submit them to the League of Nations. The inadequacy of the existing infrastructure made this practically impossible, not to mention the other complications it raised. Vilfan spoke out, first and foremost, in the interests of members of the Congress who did not enjoy the protections of the minority treaties. The President called Szüllő's attention to the fact that the representatives of these minorities would find themselves in a difficult position vis-à-vis their constituencies if they were to support complaints submitted by other minorities with their signatures, since those other minorities had no way of reciprocating the gesture given the nature of the mechanisms involved.

Tibor Pataky, a state secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister who dealt with minority affairs, was clearly aware that these objections were well founded, much as he knew that the Congress would have collapsed relatively rapidly if it had accepted the proposal without any changes. However, the Hungarian group did manage to achieve something, as the Steering Committee showed some willingness to deal with concrete infringements of minority rights, in addition to its theoretical work, and did not refuse from the outset to make efforts to influence and inform public opinion. Presumably, they succeeded in part because Jakabffy stopped insisting on his request that the Vienna office draft and submit petitions.

Eventually, the Congress was swept from the stage of history by the Second World War. The German group planned to call a conference in 1939, and the Secretary-General and Hasselblatt had both taken steps in preparation for the conference. However, the occupation and partition of Czechoslovakia and the invasion of Poland (which signalled the outbreak of war) made the conference logistically virtually impossible.¹²⁵ Furthermore, given the resulting

124 For details concerning the events of the session of the Steering Committee, see BA N 1250, Fasz. 30, 3–9, Minutes of the session of the Congress of European Nationalities' Steering Committee, Vienna, June 29, 1934.

125 BA N 1250, Fasz. 11, unnumbered, Uexküll-Güldenband's letter to Vilfan, Vienna, January 27, 1939.

rapid and drastic shift in international relations, it clearly would have been preposterous to hope that the national minorities would be able to work together with one another as they had in the past.

v The Congress's Place in the International Arena

During the years of the interwar period in which it was active, there were basically two opposing views on the role of the Congress. These assessments did not change in the decades following the Second World War, long after it had ceased to function.

Many people saw the Congress as little more than a tool of the German government – and to a lesser extent of the Hungarian government – whose activities contributed, even if only on a small scale, to the disintegration of post-First World War European order. According to this assessment, the politicians who were active in the organization were at fault for at least two reasons. First, their efforts in the framework of the Congress weakened the League of Nations. Second, the demands they made and the attention they attracted on the international stage further poisoned relations between majority groups and national minorities, which were hardly free of tension to begin with. Finally, they did this with the goal of helping the two states that had lost the war (Germany and Hungary) achieve their revisionist aspirations.¹²⁶

Others, however, had an entirely different – or rather contradictory – assessment of the Congress. In their view, during the fourteen years of its existence, the Congress had striven to minimize the harm caused by the peace treaties. It had been an initiative from below that aimed to promote and foster stability and create a sense of solidarity among the minorities, and it had basically managed to preserve its independence, even if, towards the end of the 1930s, minority politicians who sympathized with national socialism had acquired roles of some influence.¹²⁷ Each of these assessments of the Congress focuses on a different aspect of the actual situation and offers categorical statements from

¹²⁶ Maria Rothbarth, *Der Europäische Minderheitenkongreß als Instrument imperialistischer deutscher "Revisionsstrategie."* *Grenzrevision und Minderheitenpolitik des deutschen Imperialismus (1919–1932)*, Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades Doktor der Wissenschaft [The Congress of European Nationalities as an instrument of imperialist German "revisionist strategy": Border revision and minority policy of German imperialism (1919–1932), Doctoral dissertation] (Rostock: Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität, 1982).

¹²⁷ Plesse, *Organisation*; Erwin Kelm, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongreß 1925–1938* [The Congress of European Nationalities, 1925–1938], Dissertation (Cologne: University of Cologne, 1958).

a single perspective without actually examining the organization's activities and the work in which it engaged or the motivations of the politicians who accepted roles in it and their interactions with one another and with forces outside the Congress. The truth, not surprisingly, lies somewhere between these two extremes.

The Congress can indeed be regarded as an initiative from below, but it was never – not for a moment – entirely independent of state influence, not least because of the tension between the need to cover its operational costs and the continuous financial difficulties faced by the minority groups. However, it is not true that the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs was behind the founding of the Congress from the outset. The years 1927–1928 constituted a turning point in the life of the “Congress community,” although this was not necessarily entirely obvious to an outside observer. It was at this time that the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that, all things considered, the Congress could be used in support of German foreign policy interests, and so it guaranteed the necessary funds to ensure that the organization would be able to cover its operating costs. In exchange, however, it required the German leaders to coordinate with the ministry on a continuous basis, especially prior to Congress gatherings. This by no means meant that from then on everything went just as the German government desired. The organization maintained some of its freedom of movement, which was due in part to Amende himself and in part to the fact that the various steps that were taken were motivated by various interests. In other words, on basic questions, the Secretary-General also had to come to an agreement with the leaders of the other national groups.

The fourteen-year history of the Congress came to an end in 1938. It was hardly a success story, as the organization was unable to bring about enduring improvements in the circumstances of the minorities. But its failure was not the consequence of a lack of commitment, theoretical preparation or political experience on the part of the delegates. The realities of European power relations limited its scope for action from the outset. Even the League of Nations did not officially recognize it as the foremost international organization representing the interests of the national minorities of Europe and certainly never considered it a possible partner.

The minority politicians, who were well prepared for the challenges they faced, and the many minority lawyers, who had established reputations across Europe and provided the theoretical/legal background for the work of the Congress, did everything possible to strengthen the organization's prestige and authority on the international stage and help it develop into a prominent forum for the discussion and resolution of minority affairs. Their efforts,

however, proved unsuccessful. From the 1930s onwards, the organization became increasingly marginalized, and this, along with political events at the international level, only hastened its internal collapse. After 1933, there were significant changes in the leadership, and many of the original figures who had supported cultural autonomy passed away or left and were replaced by others. Ammende died in 1936, and many of the more prominent members of the organization, who were troubled to see the ideas of national socialism gaining ground rapidly within the German group, subsequently decided to leave.¹²⁸

The real significance of the Congress lay in the tremendous and genuinely valuable theoretical work in which it engaged, which resulted in the creation of a kind of catalogue of the various problems arising in connection with the existence of minorities – problems to which the members of the Congress were compelled to adopt position that in their assessment were – or should have been – understood as normative. To this day, the writings published by the Congress remain important sources in the scholarship on minorities and minority rights, and the resolutions that were passed, with the exception of a few that were clearly shaped by political exigencies, continue to embody important viewpoints on the complex question of minority rights.

¹²⁸ Even individuals who had played important roles in the founding of the organization later turned their backs on the Congress. For instance, Paul Schiemann left the organization in 1934, followed by Elemér Jakabffy in 1937.

Appendix ■ Appendix Table numbering and there citations are changed into Table A1 & A2, please check and confirm.

TABLE A1 Participation of the minorities in the annual conferences of the Congress (1925–1938)^a

Minorities/Countries	Participation in the annual conferences
Germans	
Poland	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Czechoslovakia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Estonia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938
Romania	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1938
Hungary	1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938
Yugoslavia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1937
Latvia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1938
Denmark	1925, 1926, 1927, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1937, 1938
Italy	1925, 1926, 1928, 1937
Belgium	1934, 1935
Lithuania	1926, 1932
Jews	
Czechoslovakia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1932
Latvia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932
Poland	1925, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1932
Bulgaria	1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1932
Lithuania	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930
Romania	1927, 1928, 1929, 1931
Estonia	1927
Poles	
Czechoslovakia	1925, 1926, 1927
Latvia	1925, 1926, 1927
Lithuania	1925, 1926, 1927
Germany	1925, 1926, 1927
Romania	1926

Minorities/Countries	Participation in the annual conferences
Russians	
Estonia	1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937
Poland	1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933
Romania	1929, 1930, 1931, 1935, 1936, 1937
Latvia	1932, 1933
Hungarians	
Yugoslavia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930 ^c , 1931 ^c , 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Czechoslovakia	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Romania	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Ukrainians	
Poland	1925, 1926 ^b , 1927 ^b , 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938
Romania	1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1937, 1938
Slovenes	
Italy	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938
Austria	1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936
Bulgarians	
Romania	1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1937
Yugoslavia	1929, 1930, 1933, 1934
Lithuanians	
Poland	1925, 1926 ^b , 1929, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1935
Germany	1930, 1931, 1934
Catalans	
Spain	1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937

TABLE A1 Participation of the minorities in the annual conferences of the Congress (1925–1938)^a (*cont.*)

Minorities/Countries	Participation in the annual conferences
Czechs	
Austria	1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935
Carpatho-Ukrainians/ Ruthenians	
Czechoslovakia	1925, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934
Belarusians	
Poland	1925, 1926 ^b , 1927 ^b , 1928, 1931, 1933
Croats	
Austria	1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1935
Basques	
Spain	1930, 1931, 1932, 1934
Danes	
Germany	1925, 1926, 1927
Swedes	
Estonia	1930, 1937, 1938
Sorbs	
Germany	1925, 1926, 1927
Greeks	
Italy	1931
Gaus	
Spain	1933 ^c

a The author compiled this table on the basis of the Congress's reports.

b Only as observers

c Arrived late

TABLE A2 The members of the Steering Committee^a

Members	Political work and endeavours
<i>German group</i>	
Kurt Graebe (1874–1952)	A German Polish minority politician. In 1922, he was made a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Sejm. In 1924–1934, he was a key figure in acquiring secret financial support from Germany for Posen-Pomerellen. He was a member of the Chairmanship of the Verband. In 1930–1933, he was the head of the German caucus in the Sejm. After 1933, he began to lose political influence and prominence. He was the main representative of the older generation and, as such, often came into conflict with members of the younger generation. In 1937, he moved to Berlin. He never joined the Nazi party.
<i>Jewish group</i>	
Leo Motzkin (1867–1933)	Zionist politician. He began his political career as a leading Zionist in Russia. In 1897, he gained recognition as one of the youngest members of the first Zionist Congress. During the First World War, he represented the interests of the organization in Copenhagen. As one of the leaders of the Zionist delegation, he took part in the Paris Peace Conference. He settled in Paris, and in Geneva he often represented Jewish interests at the League of Nations. He was the Jewish vice-chairman of the European Congress of National Minorities. He was also one of the most influential leaders of the World Jewish Congress.
<i>Hungarian group</i>	
Géza Szüilló (1873–1957)	Czechoslovak Hungarian minority politician. In 1901–1908, he was a representative in the Hungarian parliament. From 1925 until his resignation in 1932, he was the president of the National Christian Socialist Party. In 1925–1938, he was a representative in the national assembly. In 1927, he became the president of the parliamentary club of Hungarian parties. He was the honorary president of the Czechoslovak Hungarian League of National Societies. After the so-called First Vienna Award, he served as a member of the Hungarian upper house until 1944.

TABLE A2 The members of the Steering Committee^a (*cont.*)

Members	Political work and endeavours
<i>Ukrainian group</i>	
Dymitr Levickij (1877–1940)	Ukrainian Polish minority politician. In 1927–1939, he was the head of the Ukrainian National Democratic Society. From 1928 to 1935, he was a representative in the Sejm. He was also one of the leaders of the Ukrainian caucus in the Polish parliament.
<i>Polish group</i>	
Stanisław Sierakowski (1891–1939)	Polish German minority politician. One of the founders of the Polish Alliance of Eastern Prussia. In 1922, this organization evolved into the Alliance of German Poles, and he served as its first president (and as its honorary president until 1932). In 1922, he became a member of the Prussian parliament. He served as president of the Association of National Minorities in Germany, which was founded in 1924 (ditto). In 1939, he and his wife were murdered by German soldiers.
<i>Catalan group</i>	
Juan Estelrich i Artigues (1896–1958)	Catalan Spanish writer and politician. He sought to draw international attention to the Catalan problem. He was a parliamentary representative in 1931–1939. He was a member of the governing council of the Catalan League. During the civil war, he edited a periodical. In 1952–1958, he represented his county in UNESCO.
<i>Slavic group (after 1928)</i>	
Josip Vilfan (1878–1955)	Slovenian Italian minority politician. He began his political career in 1906, when he became the secretary of Edinost, an organization of the Slovenians of Trieste. In May 1921, he became a parliamentary representative in Rome. In 1922, he became active in the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In 1925–1938, he served as the President of the Congress of National Minorities. On September 25, 1928, he quarrelled with Mussolini. A few days later, he moved permanently to Vienna. In 1939, he moved to Belgrade.

a The author compiled these brief biographical summaries based on a selection of national and subject-specific encyclopaedias, as well as data found scattered in the secondary literature.