

Statement by US Secretary of State Dean Acheson (9 February 1949)

Caption: On 9 February 1949, Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, makes a statement in which he deplores the ongoing trial of the Hungarian Cardinal, Jozsef Mindszenty, and condemns the totalitarian and police activities of the Communists in Hungary.

Source: Department of State (Ed.). A Decade of American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents 1941-1949. Washington: Department of State Printing Office, 1985. 969 p. ISBN 0403000084. p. 516.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_us_secretary_of_state_dean_acheson_9_february_1949-en-07879780-5cb8-4990-95fb-b36280a12aa6.html

Last updated: 03/07/2015

Trial of József Cardinal Mindszenty by Hungary

Statement by Secretary Acheson, February 9, 1949

The trial of József Cardinal Mindszenty, upon whom the Hungarian Government has now imposed a sentence of life imprisonment, confirms the Government and people of the United States in views expressed by the Acting Secretary of State on December 29, 1948. By this conscienceless attack upon religious and personal freedom, as well as by the persecution of Lutheran Bishop Lajos Ordass and other respected Church leaders, the Soviet-controlled Hungarian authorities seek to discredit and coerce religious leadership in Hungary in order to remove this source of moral resistance to Communism.

In their conduct of the case of Cardinal Mindszenty, the Hungarian authorities do not appear to have omitted any of the usual methods practiced by a police state. Such proceedings constitute not the administration of justice but wanton persecution. They have evoked universal condemnation, and the Hungarian Government must bear full responsibility for its action.

The cases of Cardinal Mindszenty and other Hungarian Church leaders are not isolated developments. During the past two years, with governmental power entirely in the hands of the minority Communist party, the people of Hungary have been increasingly denied the exercise of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Parliamentary opposition, an element indispensable to the democratic process, has been ruthlessly eliminated, the totalitarian controls of state and party have been laid like a deadening hand upon every phase of daily personal existence, and the Hungarian people have been divested of any real independence.

The people of the United States, and, without question, peoples of other freedom-loving nations, are sickened and horrified by these developments and fully comprehend the threat they constitute to free institutions everywhere.