

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH VERSION

This book is "a first." It is about the persecution of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War, a topic nobody wrote a book about before. It covers the years between Czechoslovakia's liberation from the Nazis in 1945 to Czechoslovakia's conquest by the Communists in 1948. During these "homeless years," as Kálmán Janics calls them, the Hungarians had been the target of a policy formulated by Czechoslovak exiles during the war: the liquidation of national minorities. The Czechoslovak policy was only partially successful against the Hungarians mainly because of American opposition, but the anti-minority mentality in Slovakia against the Hungarians survives. This persecution is almost entirely unknown to the world at large. Moreover, to the Western reader, it may come as a surprise that such a persecution ever existed in democratic Czechoslovakia after 1945—and, even more of a surprise, that this persecution ended only when the Communists destroyed that democracy in 1948.

Kálmán Janics, the author of the book, is a medical doctor and a sociologist. He is one of the few Hungarians of the older generation with a higher education who survived the calculated expulsion of the intelligentsia, first the general target of persecution of the Hungarian minority in postwar Czechoslovakia. Well known, both at home and abroad, as a Hungarian writer on minority problems, Dr. Janics has recently been forced into retirement as a physician. He lives in his hometown, in one of Slovakia's still predominantly Hungarian regions.

Gyulla Illyés, author of the introductory essay on Hungarian minorities in general, is an internationally known Hungarian poet and writer. At the age of 79, he is the grand old man of contemporary Hungarian literature. Although recipient of several official prizes, the Communist authorities suppressed Mr. Illyés's recently published book of essays because of his outspoken views on the Hungarian minorities. Of Calvinist peasant origins, he is regarded today as the voice of Hungarian national conscience, both in Hungary and by Hungarians everywhere.

If the world at large is hardly aware of Hungarian minority problems, all the greater is the Hungarian interest in them. Evidence of that is the extraordinary success of Dr. Janics's book, both among the million or so Hungarians living all over the world and among the fourteen million or so Hungarians in the Danube region. The latter know of it mostly by hearsay only, or from foreign broadcasts, since the book is banned in Hungary and in the surrounding Communist countries with Hungarian populations. It was published in Munich under the auspices of the Hungarian Protestant Free University in Europe with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland.

The success of Dr. Janics's book among Hungarians is easy to understand. It speaks out on an issue which lies heavily on the Hungarian mind but cannot be freely discussed in public back home. Although the Hungarian minority survived the postwar Czechoslovak assault, its survival is a precarious one. And the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia is just one of several. The largest Hungarian minority is in Rumania; two smaller ones are in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Ukraine. Altogether over three million Hungarians, one in every four, are exposed to the vicissitudes of minority existence today. Concern for their survival is aggravated by the Hungarian Government's apparent indifference toward them. The Communist regime regards the concern for the Hungarian minorities as a relic of bourgeois nationalism, which was discredited by the Horthy era's revisionist policy. Furthermore, according to the Communist theory of "common fatherland," the Hungarian minorities are well taken care of in the neighboring Communist countries since they are governed in the spirit of "proletarian internationalism." However, the truth of the matter is that, despite "fraternal" Communist Party demonstrations, national tolerance in the Danube region does not seem to flourish at all under Communist internationalism.

Understandable as the Hungarian interest in Dr. Janics's book may be, why should it be published in an English version?

The significance of Dr. Janics's book is that it speaks of a universal phenomenon: man's inhumanity to man under the dehumanizing influence of nationalist frenzy. Moreover, what is specifically noteworthy in this particular case is that it happened in a country with a democratic reputation. Furthermore—and this may reflect on the state of the Western democratic world itself—the brutalities committed in postwar Czechoslovakia against the national minorities did not seem to harm at all the

country's democratic prestige. The story of Czechoslovak policy to liquidate the country's Hungarian minority has never been told in any appreciable detail, which is another reason why this book deserves international attention beyond the Hungarian language barrier. Its topic has so far been subject to that "ugly silence" the British writer Nikolai Tolstoy spoke recently of in his book on the forcible repatriation of Soviet citizens by the West (*Victims of Yalta*; in American edition, *The Secret Betrayal*) at the end of World War II.

The historical setting of Dr. Janics's topic briefly stated is this: During World War II, taking advantage of the West's feeling of shame over Munich, and of the worldwide indignation over Hitler's cruelties, Edvard Beneš, President-in-exile of Czechoslovakia, launched a punitive campaign that advocated the expulsion of the German population from Czechoslovakia. Soon he advanced a general theory, flimsy but successful, that national minorities are the cause of war and a threat to peace. Thus, in order to make Czechoslovakia into a homogeneous Slav nation-state, the Hungarian minority too has been declared guilty of treason and dangerous to both the security of Czechoslovakia and to European peace. An "ugly silence" of a special kind was necessary to make Dr. Beneš's wartime anti-minority theory stick. Above all, silence had to be maintained about the clearly visible fact that the Slovaks themselves—from whose half of Czechoslovakia the Hungarians were to be expelled—had betrayed the Czechoslovak State and gained, for the first time in their history, separate national statehood with Hitler's help.

Hitler's crimes notwithstanding, it was quite extraordinary that Dr. Beneš should embrace the idea of an ethnically pure Slav state. Czechoslovakia after all had been founded following World War I, with Western democratic assistance, as a multinational state with the expressed promise to become—in Beneš's own words—"a sort of Switzerland," a fair replacement, that is, of the defunct Habsburg Empire. Why things did not work out according to Czech plans and promises, has skillfully been obfuscated by Czech propaganda. Dr. Janics reveals a few points concerning this matter, worthy of Western attention. Mr. Illyés elaborates the theme on a universal level. Their joint message is: peace cannot be built on falsehood and injustice.

Despite blatant historical incongruities in his revised statemaking ideas, Beneš was singularly successful during World War II in getting Allied

approval of his plans for expelling the Germans from Czechoslovakia. He was less successful, however, in adding the Hungarians to his list of national minorities deserving liquidation. It is to the credit of the United States that, by opposing Beneš and his Soviet Russian allies, the total expulsion of the Hungarian minority did not materialize. With Soviet support, Beneš did everything he could think of (and he was quite resourceful) to overcome or circumvent American opposition. His tactical moves, as well as the horrors the Hungarian minority went through while Beneš's campaign was conniving against them, is told with impressive documentation (mainly from Czechoslovak sources) by Dr. Janics's book.

Since Dr. Janics's narrative ends with the Communist coup of 1948, marking the "end of the nightmare," a note is in order to clarify the Soviet role in Beneš's policy against the Hungarian minority. Credit should not be denied to the Communists for ending the indiscriminate persecution of the Hungarians in postwar Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, not unlike everywhere else in the Soviet orbit of power, in Czechoslovakia too, Communist policy had been utterly cynical, serving no other purpose but to facilitate Soviet postwar conquest. After some hesitation, Stalin during the war approved Beneš's plan to expel the Hungarians, and the Communists took the lead in the postwar persecutions of the national minorities in Czechoslovakia. This ensured Beneš's continuous praise of Soviet policy, thus playing into the Soviets' hands during the critical postwar years—not unlike during the war, when Beneš kept assuring the Western democracies of Stalin's good intentions. When, in 1948, Czechoslovakia's turn came to be transformed into a "people's democracy," as the last one in a series, the Communists switched sides. They restored to the Hungarians their citizenship rights and denounced their postwar persecution as the work of "bourgeois nationalists." This is the technique of "ugly silence," Soviet style.

I should reveal at this point that, although I am far removed geographically, the minority affairs of the Danube region are very close to my heart. I grew up in Czechoslovakia as a minority Hungarian. In fact, had good fortune not lifted me out of my place of birth, I would have shared the misfortunes my fellow Hungarians have suffered in Czechoslovakia. I would have hardly escaped the charges of "treason," and other indignities, for belonging to a "fascist nation" as the haughty Slovaks—sitting among the victors, thanks to the Czechs—started calling the defeated Hungarians

after World War II. Speaking of Slovak thanks to the Czechs, there is another aspect of "ugly silence," receiving attention by Dr. Janics. It is the story of how the Slovaks, while Hitler's protégés, expelled their Czech benefactors from post-Munich Slovakia.

Although geographically far removed, the Czechoslovak vindictive campaign against minority Hungarians did catch up with me. At the Paris peace conference in 1946, Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's Foreign Minister, singled me out (I was then Press Attaché of the Hungarian Legation in Washington) as an example of incurable "revisionism," in his vocabulary a capital crime. I committed this crime in a rather unexpected way. In a flurry of postwar idealism, born out of wartime necessity, I wrote a book in 1945 on reconciliation between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Among many other propositions to clear the air of hostility between us, I suggested that Czechoslovak propaganda was wrong in maintaining that Hungarian revisionism (as far as criticism of the post-First World War territorial settlement is concerned) was tied to Hungarian feudalism. A democratic Hungary—I wrote—would probably have collaborated with her neighbors after World War I, in a hope of securing the rights of Hungarian minorities, and of creating a favorable atmosphere for an eventual revision of frontiers. However—I concluded—it is impossible to imagine how any Hungarian Government could have renounced the idea of a revision of the Treaty of Trianon. To Mr. Masaryk, this was an evidence that post-World War II Hungary, under a "make-believe democracy," is unwilling to give up "her old and notorious revisionist policy which, as always, is directed against Czechoslovakia." To this way of thinking, which is as hypocritical as it is unrealistic, a "democratic" Hungarian is always supposed to side with Czechoslovakia against Hungary.

Not long after the Paris peace conference, I met Jan Masaryk in the United States. He pretended not to remember what he had said in Paris, but his friendly eyes seemed to tell me: "Look, I did not mean it. . . ." He considered, I guess, that his patriotic and filial duty was to serve Beneš, co-founder of Czechoslovakia with the late T. G. Masaryk, father of Jan. He served Beneš to the very end. But, in the last agonizing moments of his life, Jan Masaryk might have been thinking, perhaps, not merely of his own nation's tragedy, but also of the tragedies that Beneš's policy had caused to other nations. Humane as he was, Jan Masaryk could hardly have believed in the rightfulness of Beneš's revolting theory which declared

Czechoslovakia's national minorities collectively guilty of treason, deserving expulsion from their homelands under the false pretext of peace and security. Personally, I wish to dedicate this English version to the victims of Beneš's vindictive campaign against Czechoslovakia's Hungarian minority. And specifically, because it is so insidiously buried in that "ugly silence," I would like to call attention to what Dr. Janics says about the tragic fate of János Esterházy, representative of the Hungarian minority in the National Assembly of the Slovak State during World War II. Esterházy's lonely vote in 1942 against the Slovak law authorizing the deportation of Jews is of particular interest, not merely as a measure of Esterházy's personal morality and political courage, but also for reasons related to the principal moral and political issues discussed in this book.

The Allied backing Beneš received in his campaign against Czechoslovakia's national minorities was due mainly to world-wide indignation aroused by Hitler's inhumanities against the Jews—not against the Slovaks. That the Slovaks, by demanding expulsion of the Hungarian minority from Slovakia, should claim benefits indirectly derived from Hitler's persecution of the Jews is truly the outrageous irony of the tragedy of which Dr. Janics is giving a polemical yet balanced account.

Janics and Illyés, authors of the Hungarian original, have expressed the wish that their book should be published in "world languages." Their book, however, is so specifically Hungarian as to make translation not merely difficult but impossible. A straight translation into English had been made and proved unfit for publication. An adaptation, which is different in form yet identical in substance with the original seemed to be the only solution. Such a radical operation entailed of course not merely stylistic changes but a rewriting and rearrangement on a scale which resulted in a book with its own character. Changes of sequences have been made, passages have been omitted and added. To indicate the many changes that were made in the English version would be technically impossible. I did it only in two instances: In Chapters 4 and 5, in sections on the Potsdam conference and the Paris peace conference. I added material there and expressed opinions which are my own. Otherwise, I have altered phrasings throughout the book, and made many minor and major adjustments, but never tinkered with underlying views. I had no reason to do so. I identify myself entirely with the authors of the Hungarian original, with their views, with their concerns. As author

of the English version I had only one aim: To communicate the subject matter in English as effectively as the original succeeded in doing in Hungarian.

It was one thing to wish that the Hungarian original should be published in a "world language" and another to make the wish come true. Credit for the latter is due to Professor Béla Király, Director of the Brooklyn College Studies on Society in Change. Also, acknowledgements are due to the Hungarian-Americans (their wish is to remain anonymous) whose contributions made the publication in the Brooklyn College Series possible. In 1956, very young, they fought in the Hungarian Revolution. They lost their country's bid for freedom, but not their interest in the cause of freedom—nor their concern for the least free among their compatriots today: the over three million minority Hungarians living in the countries of Hungary's neighbors.

The preparation for publication of this English version owes a great deal to Mrs. Dorothy Meyerson, Editorial Assistant of the Brooklyn College Studies on Society in Change. Her efficiency is as unparalleled as her good humor—a delightful combination. Also, I wish to express my coming the often awesome-looking barriers between two such different English translation (in manuscript); his work was helpful to me in overcoming the often awesome-looking barriers between two such different languages as English and Hungarian. However, I alone bear responsibility for the text of the English version. And I ought to stress emphatically—lest the authors of the Hungarian original are accused of "collaboration with foreign enemy"—that neither Dr. Janics, living in Slovakia, nor Mr. Illyés, living in Hungary have collaborated with me. Without their knowledge or consent, by preparing an English version, I alone collaborated with them. I did it with the conviction that such an odd collaboration is a duty rather than a crime, for it upholds the indivisibility of the Republic of Letters in a politically divided world.

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