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XIII/1194 GCZECHOSLOVAKIAETHNIC MINORITIES (1100)  
Czechoslovaks Abroad (1102)THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SLOVAKIA.SOURCE SALZBURG: A 30-year-old schoolteacher who arrived in Austria in February 1956.DATE OF OBSERVATION: Current period.EVALUATION COMMENT: This is a worth-while report, although unfortunately the first part is not free from nationalistic prejudices.

It is not the purpose of this Comment to recall the whole tragedy of 1938 to 39 and to list all atrocities committed against Czechoslovak citizens in the annexed territories of the trimmed Protectorate, since it is believed here that Nazism caused many sufferings to the decent people of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian nations. However, in order to eliminate one-sided information it is necessary to furnish this report with the prelude to the events described in it. In the days of the First Czechoslovak Republic under MASARYK's and BENES' leadership, all ethnic minorities enjoyed rights equal to those of Czechoslovak citizens, having their own parliamentary representation, schools, churches, cultural activities etc. and in general their privileges and rights were respected. Then came the crisis of Nazism, during which the peaceful coexistence was purposely disturbed and the nationalistic differences were exaggerated. The happenings described in this report could be regarded as a consequence of the 1938 to 39 events, but were carried out without the approval of the majority of the Czechoslovak nation which through years and centuries of sufferings learned the folly of revenge. All Commissars are unpopular, and it is proved by a number of reports that their deeds were not different whether directed against the ethnic minorities or Czechoslovak citizens. Therefore, the person of the Commissar Balint SPANIO could hardly be regarded as a whip of revenging Czechs or Slovaks.

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(In any case the name is not believed to be Slovak it sounds rather like a Hungarian name.) The Hungarian minority was not subject to mass deportation as were Sudeten-Germans. Agreement was reached between the Czechoslovak and the Hungarian Governments to repatriate approximately 100,000 Slovaks from Hungary and about the same number of Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. Those who wished to claim Czechoslovak citizenship were given the opportunity of doing so. This was the theory, while the practice is unknown here.

The second part of this report dealing with the life of the Hungarian minority under the Communist rule is believed to be authentic and confirms earlier reports that many prejudices were eliminated by the Communists in an atmosphere of a common fate. More over the comparison between Communism in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary is most interesting and proves that Communism can be adapted to the national sentiment.

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### PART I

"The situation of Hungarian minorities living in Slovakia can be analyzed from different aspects, views of life and attitudes," says the young teacher. "My view is one in many. I was still a child when the territories populated by Hungarians were re-annexed to the mother country. Then came the war and the terrible tribulations, in consequence I fled to Hungary. I did not dream then that I had to escape from there too, for the sole reason that I was born a Hungarian and that I was not prepared to give up my convictions."

#### The War.

In the outcome of the present life of Hungarians living in Slovakia, war and its consequences played a large part. In the first days of December 1944 the Soviet troops stood at the river Ipoly and the spirit of devastating war came closer to my birth place, KICSIND, and other Hungarian villages. The Hungarian "Szent László" division fought its heroic battle in this region, but it could not escape its fate, neither could we. On Christmas Day the Russians

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occupied our village and thus the horrors of war overtook us too. In this region the advancing Soviet troops formed a sack which was held under fire by the Germans from the north, toward CSATTA; from the south, from across the Danube and a continual frontal artillery. In a month's time there was no village which had one house undamaged. Furniture and livestock were taken by the Soviets or destroyed by them, bridges were built from fallen-in roofs and were destroyed anew by artillery. Women, young and old, became victims of the passing Soviet troops. There was nowhere to hide. There was no time for rest, without a stop we had to dig trenches, air-raid shelters and bury the dead; first German corpses, stripped and looted by the Russians, later only Russians, but many of them. In this region countless Russians lost their lives.

Around February 10, the Germans -- crossing the Danube at EBED -- started a counter-attack. During this time even the little which had been spared by previous attacks was destroyed.

In the first days of March, the population of our village was evacuated to at least 50 kilometers to the back. People fled to all directions. Devastation was complete.

#### Begin of the Reconstruction.

On April 4 1945 we were able to return to our village. Some families were already there. The sight was horrible. Flourishing villages were reduced to ruins. Scattered about were human corpses, dead horses, abandoned arms and ammunition. It was a real abandoned battlefield. One could hardly breathe from the smell of decay..

For weeks we did nothing else than bury the dead and collect scattered ammunition. Two or three families pooled together and tried to build some kind of shelter from the ruins. As there was no food at all, we younger ones went begging in order that our families should not starve. We had to walk for 20 to 30 kilometers until we found anything at all.

We could not approach our fields. Mines, hand-grenades were lying everywhere. There were many accidents. Everyone armed himself, as if to prepare for war.

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Slowly, Czech soldiers infiltrated with the Soviet troops. They did not harm us, by we did not like it. On the railway line of ERSEKUVAR, Russian trains moved toward the East day and night. They carried everything movable as "war booty."

It was approximately June when we saw the last of the Russian soldiers. It happened in the following way: Czech soldiers came from PARKANY by carts to procure some hay. The young people from the village fired at them but only out of mischief. The Czech soldiers fled in a hurry. Next day Soviet soldiers came to the village and declared that all fire-arms have to be surrendered. The Russians started to pick up the mines and other dangerous ammunition. The population had to carry it to the bend of the river Garam where it was piled up. During this work many of the Russian soldiers were injured. When everything was piled up the Russians made it explode. The blast broke every window pane in the village and many of the rain drenched walls collapsed. Thus did the Russians take leave from our village, never to return.

The farmers returned to their fields, which had been cleared by now from the dangerous mines, and tried to gather in the "harvest." But first corpses had to be buried and trenches refilled. By distilling brandy from potatoes and rye they exchanged it for livestock with the Russian soldiers. Carts were built from war material left in the fields.

Decaying corpses caused typhoid fever. A doctor from PARKANY helped to fight the epidemic. He had much to do among the women too, because none of them wanted to bear a Russian bastard. The doctor was of the same opinion.

High school, which was interrupted in October the previous year, re-opened on May 20. A pontoon bridge was built next to the destroyed bridge at PARKANY, and thus we were able to cross over to ESZTERGOM on our way to school there. This was the nearest Hungarian high school. 20 per cent of its students came from across the river, from villages inhabited by Hungarians. In the middle of June I passed my examination for the 9-th grade.

Appearance of the Commissar.

In the fall of 1945, Slovaks started to take over

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control. The first sign of it was the appearance of a commissar who executed orders in the name of the Slovak authorities. The first commissar in our village was called Balint SPANYO, he spoke both Hungarian and Slovak. In the village there was a girl with a crippled leg, no one would have her. Balint SPANYO married this girl. He belonged to that type of men who like to use troubled times to make a career for themselves and to serve faithfully those from whom they are able to get the greatest advantage. Many tears were shed as the result of his orders. But finally retribution overtook him.

By the end of August it was not possible anymore to cross over to ESZTERGOM. The bridge was closed by Slovak authorities and later on broken up. In September school started in ESZTERGOM but it was impossible to reach the town. This side of the river there was no school. For a time, my schoolmates and I crossed clandestinely at IPOLYSZALKA, we planned to take our books home and to go on with our education privately. But we did not succeed, our clandestine crossings were stopped.

#### First Restriction.

At the beginning of 1946, the commissar issued an order, that all war damage claims are to be listed. It was me, the high school student who was given the task. I remember the exact number of the house I listed; it was 154, all of them in ruins. I received a list on the basis of which I was able to estimate the damage. Our family suffered a loss of 800,000 Kcs, but there were families whose damage amounted up to two and a half million Kcs. The Slovak population received considerable relief and support, while the Hungarians did not receive anything.

After a short time, commissar SPANYO too started to build his house; we had to cut rushes, trying to cover our roofs with it. There was no timber and the mudwalls were slowly washed away by rain.

We started to rebuild the church and the school, but it took a long time, as there was no building material available.

In the meantime, in 1946 orders for compulsory deliveries were given. The delivery quotas were set according

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to the size of one's property, disregarding the fact that vast areas were untillable due to fortifications, trenches etc. and that there was a lack of agricultural implements, or seed grain. Thus in the beginning naturally no one was able to fulfill the delivery obligations which started again a number of causes for friction.

#### Re-Slovakization.

We, younger people, wanted to help the financial situation of our parents and tried to get some work in the environs. Thus I found work at the building site of a bridge over the Garam river. They paid quite well and I earned approximately 1,000 Kcs per month. The bridge building work was done by Slovak firms.

If I recall it correctly, it was toward the end of July 1946 that the news spread, that at the intervention of cardinal MINDSZENTY a British commission of the UN would conduct an on-the-spot investigation, in order to ascertain whether or not the population of CSALLOKOZ and its neighborhood was of Hungarian nationality. Up to this day I do not know if this was correct. In any case a few days later a member of the GARAMKOVESD county council together with commissar SPANYO came and demanded every Hungarian to sign a printed affidavit written in Slovak.

First no one signed it, in spite of the fact that the officials declared that those who signed this document would immediately be compensated for their war damages by the State. Poverty and want was so great that some Hungarians wavered and signed the paper. But as the number of those who signed was still too low, the commissar threatened with deportation and other reprisals. This situation lasted for about a month. The conditions were similar in every other village populated by Hungarians. I told my father, that even if we lost everything we had and our fate could hardly be worse, we would never deny our Hungarian nationality. Namely the affidavit which the Hungarians were made to sign said among others that the undersigned declares that he is of Slovak descent, his ancestors had learned to speak Hungarian and that this was the reason why he speaks that language, too.

There were many villages in CSALLOKOZ, where no one signed the affidavit, whatever threats were used. In our neighborhood the percentage varied from village to village.

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In KEMEND for example, everyone signed the affidavit, in MUZSLA and EBED approximately 50 per cent. In KICSIND eight families only did not sign, our family among them. Later on many were ashamed of having renounced their Hungarian nationality. Namely those who had signed did not receive any compensation, the same as those who had not signed; later on when deportations started no differences were made either.

### Deportations.

The following weeks passed amidst worries and guesses, especially when detailed news arrived at the village about deportation methods used in the case of Sudeten Germans.

As far as I remember, it was toward the end of October 1946, that the news of deportation of Hungarians living in CSALLOKOZ arrived in our village. We heard that army units surrounded the villages and very little time was given to the deportees to collect their minimum of luggage allowed. It was rumored that able-bodied people were separated from the older members of the family. The deportees were put into railway cars, the doors locked, and thus the whole transport started its journey toward the Sudeten Land.

A few days later, -- up to this day, I do not know if it was true or not, -- rumors started that Czechoslovak families settled in regions formerly inhabited by Sudeten Germans fell victims to the secretly returning Sudeten Germans. In consequence no other Czechoslovak families wanted to move to that region and this was the reason Hungarians were deported there.

It was also said, that the train carrying the Hungarian deportees stopped at various places, and that work overseers selected the strong and able-bodied deportees, thus separating them from their families.

Much later I heard that these rumors were not quite unfounded since the Sudeten Germans did in fact knock at their windows several times, yet they did not do any harm to the Hungarians. It is also true, however, that a member of a BENY family -- not suspecting who knocks at their window at night -- unfortunately called out in Czech and in the next moment fell the victim of an exploding handgrenade.

The news spread soon that the deportees were assigned

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to do agricultural work.

### The "White Sheet."

At the news of deportations great panic broke out among the Hungarians. They knew that those who first claimed to be Slovaks will not escape their fate. Escaping to the West started.

A few days later the news arrived that the Hungarian Government had taken steps to ease the tension and published a kind of "white sheet." Allegedly this white paper was sent to members of the Hungarian Nationalists' Party.

No one knew anything for sure, therefore, I escaped to BUDAPEST to learn myself the truth. The refugee welfare department of the Ministry of Public Welfare was on Ede PAULAI Street. It touched me on a sore spot that the list of names to whom "white sheets" were to be sent, consisted of such Hungarians who were the first to disclaim their Hungarian nationality and we who had not signed such declaration did not figure on the list. Although I did not get an exhaustive reply at the time I assumed that the "white sheet" served the purposes of a Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange.

On my return to my native village a man from KEMEND, Janos MOLNAR, former cadet officer of the Hungarian Army, was waiting for me. He told me that Ferenc WAGNER, a government delegate, was in charge in BRATISLAVA of the conscription on the basis of the "white sheets." He mentioned that this is an official, licensed activity. A list has to be prepared of those families in the villages who require a "white sheet." He undertook to do this in KEMEND, and stated that it was already organized in the rest of the villages and that I had to do it in KICSIND.

Naturally I accepted. On November 20 1946 we registered together with a few students, approximately 50 families who required "white sheets." Everybody hoped that those who have "white sheets" will not be deported. Unfortunately it happened otherwise.

### Arrests. Jail.

The next day commissar SPANYO arrived in the village together with a gendarme patrol, arrested the four of us,

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had who prepared the list, and accompanied us to the PARKANY prison. We consoled each other by saying that MOLNAR will intervene for us, yet the days passed and we were cutting wood all day long for the district court. One day MOLNAR was brought to the prison. He looked very depressed and did not talk to anyone. Two days later he was released and we were told that we were going to be treated as political prisoners and transferred to KOMAROM. We were chained together by twos and taken by train to ERSEKUJVAR, where we had to wait for another train.

The accompanying gendarmes were talking to acquaintances while a Hungarian stepped behind me and asked what was happening to us. I quickly told him. He replied that he prepared a list of those requiring "white sheets" in OGYALLA and that he was going to BRATISLAVA to talk to WAGNER, the Hungarian Government delegate, about our release.

There were at least 200 prisoners in the cell of the KOMAROM prison where we were taken; Slovaks and Hungarians together, murderers, prisoners who had been there for ten months and did not know why. No one talked to them. Everything was clean and tidy.

The following day we were taken to the office and an indictment, consisting of ten points, was read out to us. I do not remember all the points, they included, however, that we had prepared a list of the Hungarian population, incited a revolt, organized armed conspiracy, tried to enforce the re-annexation of territories inhabited by Hungarians, slandered BENES, the Czech President, etc. We admitted the first point and defended ourselves by saying that we were Hungarians and were told that the registration of Hungarians is done according to an official agreement as WAGNER is the official government delegate in BRATISLAVA. We declared that the rest of the charges were slander.

From the tone in which the indictment was drafted we assumed that it was prepared by Commissar SPANYO.

After having spent a few days in the KOMAROM prison we were again called to the office, we got our belongings back and were told that we could return to our village, but not allowed to go beyond the boundaries.

I do not know, even today, whether our release was due to the help of our countryman met in OGYALLA, who had

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promised to inform Mr. WAGNER and whether the latter had taken steps in our behalf.

Deportation from our Village. Escape.

We hurried home to our people, yet could only get as far as PARKANY. Friends informed us that two days ago a lot of Hungarians had been taken away in cattle railcars and the day we arrived soldiers surrounded KICSIND and were deporting people from there..

This must have happened around December 4 1946.

We were terribly worried about our families, yet did not dare to return home as we too would have been deported straight away.

Two days later, however, we plucked up courage and returned home. Thanks God no one had been deported from my family. Approximately 20 or 25 families had been deported from the village; whole families or able-bodied members only. Those, who at the time were first to sign the Slovak declaration, wept bitterly as it did not protect them. Our family was not molested although we had refused to sign the declaration.

The choosing of families to be deported depended on the disposition of Commissar SPANYO.

The following day I visited the Hungarian villages. The situation was the same everywhere. General panic broke out, people were thinking of escaping.

A number of people escaped to Hungary over night. I waited until Christmas. As the premonitory signs of another deportation were approaching, and I knew that it will be my turn this time, I escaped at the beginning of January 1947 via IPOLYSZALKA-TELKES to SZOB. A few days later -- I was told afterwards -- another 15 or 20 families were deported from our village.

About the same time the Hungarian school was closed down, teaching was done in Slovak only.

Slovak became the official language, those who came forward with a request in Hungarian received no attention.

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Those Hungarians, who lived in this area and regarded their land as their own fatherland, diminished into an undesirable minority with very few human rights.

The measures taken against Hungarians living in Slovakia were received with great indignation in Hungary, although it did not come as a surprise as the press and radio spread the old and new political maneuvers of President BENES and frequently declared that "there will be no nationality problems in Czechoslovakia in ten years' time."

Slovakia's awakening to national consciousness was also a well-known fact.

And then last but not least Czechoslovakia was a winning country while Hungary stood on the side of the losers.

Providing for the Refugees.

The large number of refugees put the Hungarian authorities in a difficult position. Committees were set up to provide for the refugees. The movement was led by Primate MINDSZENTY. The residence in ESZTERGOM was packed with refugees. My number, which I received in SZOB was over 47,000. We received identity cards and were allowed to travel to BUDAPEST within a few days.

The department of the Ministry of Education and Cult -- set up for the purpose of looking after refugees -- sent me with several others to BRENT-GOTTHARD, as there was no more room in BUDAPEST. I was able to continue my studies and became a primary school teacher.

Further News about Those Who Remained in Czechoslovakia.

All refugees remained in close contact with their relatives in Czechoslovakia, not only because we were worried about their fate, but also because we always hoped for a change and that we will at last be able to return home. I am able, therefore, to give a picture of the ensuing situation. I myself like many others escaped home several times, and we exchanged our experiences.

As already mentioned, the school language was Slovak. The first teacher in our village was a woman from POSCHNY;

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however, as she also spoke Hungarian she was replaced by a teacher from near the Polish frontier. Naturally there was no accommodation for the teacher, the school was empty, the children brought some kind of seats with them.

Delivery quotas became increasingly high, yet no assistance was given to agriculture.

Hungarian sermons were forbidden.

No building material was obtainable, consequently several families were obliged to live together in overcrowded quarters which naturally led to friction.

The burnt out and collapsed churches were repaired with great difficulty to be suitable for holding services there.

In one word, the everyday bread had to be earned with toilsome work and great sacrifices.

A change took place when Communism came onto the scene.

#### How the Communists came to Power.

In 1948 President HENES resigned and Communism started to gain power. As everywhere behind the Iron Curtain, MOSCOW's instructions had to be carried out at about the same time. Yet there was a great difference in the execution.

In Hungary the Communists overbid each other in cruelties to prove their servility to MOSCOW.

The continuous brutal carrying out of Communist instructions was unknown in KICSIND and in the surrounding villages, inhabited by Hungarians.

Delivery quotas were raised, the land, however, was not taken away. (The former episcopal estates were nationalized.)

Industry and trade were nationalized.

The kulaks had to work in mines.

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Religious persecution started. After several Catholic priests had been taken away, Slovaks and Hungarians stood up for their priests. North of our village in the Slovak community, the Communists wanted to take away the priest, who enjoyed great popularity. All the villagers accompanied him to the station and when the priest got into the train the people lay down in front of the engine. Finally the priest was released and is still in the same village.

Antal JUHASZ, the parish priest of GARAMKOVCE, came to our village to celebrate Mass. The men from our village went to fetch him and accompanied him back, armed with scythes and pitchforks. (Later on the villagers regretted this. Antal JUHASZ became under some influence, a so-called 'peace priest.' He did not mention this in his sermons, yet everybody knew that he regularly went to PANKANY to attend ideological lectures. He is not very popular anymore, and people wish that he would have been taken away at the time and replaced by a good priest.)

Of the post-war years, 1952 was the most difficult. The crop was taken away to the last bit, and all domestic animals. No seed was allocated.

Communism did not differentiate between Slovaks, Hungarians or Czechs. As the mercilessness of the Regime equally affected everybody, Slovak-Hungarian relations turned down to the extent in which terror increased.

I think that this was partly in keeping with MOSCOW's desire in the interest of a future aim, and partly the common fate did not make it possible for the Slovaks to deal with the Hungarian question. As the Slovaks -- chiefly owing to their religiousness -- are at least as hostile toward Communism as the Hungarians are, it would not have made much sense to intensify the minority question.

#### Main Alleviations.

While the period preceding the coming into power of Communism can be characterized by the sharpening of the Slovak-Hungarian situation (owing particularly to deportations) a considerable relaxation had set in since 1950 in favor of the Hungarians. We, who during this time 'enjoyed all the blessings of Communist paradise' in Hungary, could judge more objectively which Slovak regulation was brought on Communist instructions. However, many of our countrymen in Slovakia blamed the Slovak authorities for a number of severe regulations enforced by the Communists, since the same persons had carried them out prior to Communism.

Naturally this was not quite true as the Slovaks suffered from these regulations as much as the Hungarians.

The easing up of the situation manifested itself in the following:

1) Hungarian schools were reopened. This was the most significant event although it meant grave problems for the Hungarians. There was no teaching staff, most of the teachers had escaped to Hungary to avoid deportation.

The first teacher in my native village was the 20 or 22-year-old shoemaker from LELED, who had a couple of years elementary school education and had attended a training course for a few weeks. Naturally he did not remain long.

His successor was a 30 or 32-year-old tailor from KEMEND. He had eight years of elementary school education and had attended a six-month training course for teachers.

When hearing the news about the reopening of Hungarian schools, several teachers returned from Hungary. For example, I and a schoolmate of mine we passed our teacher's exam together. Shortly after his re-escape he was appointed headmaster in IPOLYSZALKA.

School education got back to normal when the first trained teachers started to work. Even today they are having difficulties in this field.

Hungarian became the official teaching language, but Slovak and Russian were also compulsory.

2) Although the official language in the offices remained Slovak, one could speak Hungarian everywhere. This also applies to the church.

3) In POZSONY, a Hungarian language newspaper "Uj Szó" was published. Hungarian schoolbooks, novels, Hungarian newspapers could be bought. ("Magyar Hírlap," "Képes Sport," "Radio Újság." It is true that all of them are Communist publications but in former times even these were not for sale.)

4) Hungarian plays could be performed at the villages. (For example in my native village the comedy:

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"Nem elhetek muzsikaszó nélkül.")

5) Relief support was provided for the building of schools, culture halls and churches. Although usually this covered only half of the expenses, it was a help all the same. For example, a huge Hungarian school with parallel classes was built in PARKANY. KICSIND received an aid of 80,000 Kcs for the building of a culture hall. (It is not yet finished but even so, the value of the villagers' voluntary contribution can be estimated at 300,000 Kcs.)

6) The ancient church of BENY, dating from the twelfth century was rebuilt at State costs. (This church had been destroyed by German bombs.)

7) Social movements were permitted. In KICSIND for example, the fire-brigade was very efficient.

8) Hungarians too, got jobs in offices. (But they had to speak Slovak! In KICSIND for example, two Hungarian girls went to an office in PARKANY.)

9) The kulaks, who were formerly deported for work in the mines came gradually back. (Only two were deported from my native village.)

10) Until the end of 1955, all the deportees could return and could work on their farms. As far as I know — although I do not know whether this is exact — around ten per cent of the deportees did not return. They probably found a living elsewhere and did not wish to start again in their old homes in ruins.

11) The "efficient" commissars of old who used to rule the village, have vanished. Commissar SPANYO, who sold the timber supply of the village, was sentenced to prison.

An intelligent peasant JERABEK became his successor but as he had no idea of how to manage an office, he preferred to return to his farm and work there.

He was followed by a 38-year-old innkeeper, Istvan CIMER, a disabled soldier. He was pro-Communist but did not hold his post for long.

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12) In 1952 or 1953, the village itself elected its leader in the person of Lajos SASKA. Son of a peasant with 16 cadaster squares, he is a true Hungarian and well educated. He enjoys great popularity and is qualified for his post.

13) The men engaged in timber work or in the industry, got their wages in building material or timber -- in order to repair their damaged houses.

Wishes.

The exchange of the Slovak-Hungarian population did not bring any rest for either of the parties. The Slovaks hoped they will get the Hungarian estates of the CSALLOKOZ. Instead, they had to work in the mines. Now, they long to go back to where they had formerly lived. The Hungarians of CSALLOKOZ and its area, on the other hand -- who live in Hungary now -- would wish to return to their former place. They did not think at that time that they will have to live in a Communist ruled country and if they had stayed on in Slovakia their property would be theirs now.

Slovak authorities would like to have the Hungarians return to their former villages in Slovakia. They also would prefer if the Slovaks from Hungary settled in Slovakia for the time being, would return to Hungary. However, the Hungarian Government is against both solutions.

I was in my native village in December 1955 for the last time. I also visited the neighboring villages where my friends and acquaintances are living. Leaving out details, I should say that as a rule life in the Hungarian communities north of the Danube -- Slovak territory -- is much better than that in Hungary. Save food articles, everything is cheaper, the quality of consumer goods is better, there is a chance for work, there is no bloodsucking norm-overfulfillment and good work is well paid. And what is perhaps the most important: people do not constantly feel the merciless grip of Communism.

Yet despite all this, it was the same there as in Hungary; people cherish a wish-dream in the depths of their hearts: when will they be liberated?

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PART II.

At the end of November 1955, source was able to visit his parents living in KICSIND, his native village, which now belongs to Slovakia (it is situated approximately six kilometers north of PARKANY,) with a regular passport. Although also until that date he kept track of the fate of the Hungarians living there, during his ten days' stay he had plenty of opportunity to compare the standard of living of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia with that of the village population in Hungary. His experiences are as follows:

The General Impression

"The first station after crossing the Slovak-Hungarian border was PARKANY. I saw it for the last time eight years ago when I crossed the border illegally to visit my parents. At that time there was no Communism yet, the situation could be characterized with the strained Slovak-Hungarian relations. Teaching and talking in Hungarian were forbidden, a number of Hungarian families were deported to the Sudetenland and the Hungarian minority received no financial aid to repair war damages.

"After the Communists came into power, Slovak-Hungarian tension eased up considerably as Communist terror equally affected Slovaks and Hungarians.

"I noticed the first signs of this at the PARKANY railway station. The damaged building has been nicely reconstructed; it had a culture-hall with a Hungarian radio, Hungarian books and magazines. (Most of them were Communist publications, but in Hungarian.)

"I was surprised to hear Slovak spoken most of the time, occasionally I heard a few Hungarian words. Previously this was exactly the opposite.

"For someone coming from Hungary it was almost unimaginable not to see any Soviet soldiers around. At home we look at Soviet soldiers as the source of every evil, thus it did not even occur to me to have an unpleasant feeling in connection with Slovak soldiers or policemen.

"The ruins along the PARKANY main line have been cleared away and the area converted into parks. 'Public

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buildings were reconstructed with State aid, for example the new big Hungarian school with several parallel classes. One can immediately recognize the houses in which Hungarians live; they still are in a terrible condition."

### Travel

"I traveled from PARKANY to KIOSIFU on a bus going through GARANKOVESD. Traveling in Slovakia is much cheaper than in Hungary. I paid 1.20 Kcs to KOVESD and 2.80 Kcs to KIOSIND.

"For the sake of comparison I have to add that approximately 60 Kcs equal 100 forints.

"A few days later I had the opportunity of traveling by train from PARKANY to NAGYSZOMBAT through ERSEKUVAR. I paid 17 Kcs for a single ticket, the same journey in Hungary would have cost at least 45 or 50 forints."

### The Reunion

"Catching sight of my native village and the reunion with my parents is of no interest to others. Yet this meeting again with my parents left such deep traces in my heart that I could not omit it from the general picture which I was able to gather during the ten days.

"My native village -- together with the rest of the Hungarian villages which I saw later on -- look, ten years after the war, as if a huge tornado had swept through them. A few new buildings can be seen here and there -- a culture-hall under construction, a part of the school, a kind of town hall, a few new Slovak houses -- yet the rest of the houses carry the strange marks of poor architecture. At first no one can imagine that it is at all possible to live among such ruins, particularly that in some cases two or three families have to live in one room which naturally leads to considerable friction and even to blows.

"It is a part of this sad story that serious battles had razed these villages to the ground.

"Building material is not obtainable in the district. The roofs were covered with reed-grass and the ceiling propped with gussets to prevent the damp walls from collapsing.

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"My appearance in the village caused great sensation. Not only people from KICSIND came together, but also my friends and acquaintances from the other villages.

"Good God, how quickly time passes! I did not recognize my own brother. He was a small kid when I left, and now a grown-up young man flung his arms round my neck. Girls in their teens pressed my hand and called me 'uncle Feri,' the daughters of my sister. Girls, with whom I was brought up, showed me their children with motherly pride. Thanks God they had weathered the terrible memories of Soviet 'liberation'."

#### Situation in Agriculture

"In this area, inhabited by Hungarians, no land-reform was enforced. The land was not taken away. Large estates, which previously belonged to the Bishop of ESZTERGOM, were nationalized.

"Delivery quotas were fixed according to the size of the land. This meant that hardly any farmer was able to fulfill the delivery quotas as even today a large part of the land is taken up by communication trenches and air-raid shelters. It was out of the question to grow anything on these areas, and besides no agricultural implements stood at the farmers' disposal.

"Today the situation is considerably better. Although delivery quotas are high and the State pays much less for the goods delivered than the free market price, the sum received by the farmers is much higher than in Hungary. The State buys a quintal of wheat for 60 or 70 forints in Hungary and for 120 or 150 Kcs in Slovakia. (I do not know the free market price of wheat.)

"The cultivation of land in Slovakia is not as advanced as in Hungary. In November tractors were still out on the land in Hungary, and the agronomists pressed the farmers to work faster. At the end of November, when I arrived in Slovakia, I found large strips of land uncultivated.

"In view of the fact that the Hungarians did not get any State aid for reconstruction and that it was impossible to live from the land for lack of agricultural machinery and because of high delivery quotas, young men

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looked for employment in industry or forestry. Thus old people only and women remained on the land.

"As industrial workers and those employed in forestry were paid very well they could afford to buy agricultural implements and machinery. Forest workers achieved to get a certain quantity of timber in place of wages.

"Elderly people who were left without young manpower, went to work on State farms where they earned very good wages.

"Naturally under such circumstances the productivity of the land around the villages is not great.

"In 1953 and 1954, propaganda was made for farmers' cooperatives, with little result. In the whole district, farmers' cooperatives were formed in KOHIDGYARMAT and GARAK-KOVESD only. Eight families joined it, yet they do not receive any assistance. These families joined the farmers' cooperative as for various reasons they could not get on on their own. Attempts to form farmers' cooperatives in the rest of the villages were given up.

"State farms are well equipped with agricultural machinery, yet private farmers are very badly off in this respect. The tractors were assembled from war material left behind after the war.

"The livestock situation is fairly good.

"As a number of small streams run through this area the population settled down to grow flowers and fruit as before. The PARKANY market is their chief source of income.

"An important difference between the situation in Slovakia and Hungary is that in the former no wine delivery quota or wine tax is imposed.

"In accordance with the Communist pattern the kulak problem was also brought up in Slovakia but in a much milder form than in Hungary. Only two so-called kulaks were taken away from my native village to the HANDELOVA mine. The families of the kulaks continued to cultivate the land; one of them had 30 'holds' the other 40 'holds.' Both of them returned in 1954 and carried on with farming. I talked to

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them during my visit. They got worn out from working in the mine. The confiscating of kulak property was out of the question as the war had damaged everything; merely the bare land could have been confiscated.

"The deportees, with the exception of one family, returned and found employment."

Consumer Goods Supply

"The CSALLOKOZ, or rather the area inhabited by Hungarians, is Slovakia's granary.

"Although everything is obtainable in the shops, food prices are high as compared to other goods, they are approximately the same as in Hungary: one kilogram of flour four to six Kcs, one kilogram of sausage 30 Kcs, one crescent-shaped roll 50 fillers.

"Villagers -- as in the past -- bake their own bread. In 1952 the food situation was very bad. All the wheat had to be delivered. The population was obliged to buy bread in the shops. Afterwards the situation eased.

"The quality of bread in Slovakia is better than in Hungary, and there are no difficulties with food supply.

"Customs officials are quite lenient about taking out goods from Slovakia, yet no foodstuffs are allowed out."

Tradesman. Merchant

"According to Communist measures, here too everything was nationalized.

"Shops and inns were incorporated into cooperatives, called "jednota." In this case, the execution was much more lenient than in Hungary. The managers of both shops and inns are the former owners who have nothing to do with the Communist Party.

"Some of the small craftsmen, the same as in Hungary, are able to go on with their trade. For example, there is

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a cartwright in our village. Since he is the only person of that trade in the environs, he cannot form a cooperative. Thus, he works individually as a private sector craftsman.

"Shops are emptier than in pre-war times, but in general, nearly everything is obtainable. Here, the great difference from the situation in Hungary can be freely observed. First of all there is a wider choice, everything is cheaper, and the quality of goods is sky-high over those in Hungary, especially in textiles, leather and rubber goods.

"Prices of some consumer goods, for comparison:

<u>Goods</u>	<u>In Slovakia</u>	<u>In Hungary</u>
Winter boots, lined	194 Kcs approximately	600 to 700 forint approxim.
Snow shoes, lined	39 Kcs	200 forint
Men's pants	80 Kcs	180 to 200 forint
Double knit sweater	70 Kcs	200 forint
Men's overcoat	400 Kcs	700 to 800 forint
Men's stout boots	80 Kcs	300 forint
Radio set	500 Kcs	1,200 forint.

"It can be added to the Hungarian prices: "Even if they can be obtained, not the same quality."

"I have to mention, that Hungarians from Slovakia like all kinds of multicolored, Hungarian scarves. These are unobtainable in Slovakia. One of these scarves costs 25 forint in Hungary, and in Slovakia even 50 Kcs is paid for it.

"As I mentioned before, 100 forint have approximately the value of 60 Kcs.

"To give a whole picture of the prices, I would like to mention here that the monthly wage of a factory worker is approximately 1,500 to 1,800 Kcs, a laborer earns 1,000 to 1,200 Kcs."

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Teaching in Schools, Religion

"In 1946, the official use of the Hungarian language and teaching in Hungarian was prohibited. About 1950, this restriction was abolished. In the beginning it caused great difficulties, since there were no Hungarian teachers, they tried to remedy this by quick courses. Today the situation is much better, Hungarian teachers are trained now; as for example, my own brother, who went back clandestinely to Slovakia, graduated from the teachers' training college and teaches at the present in the Hungarian school of SZOLGYEN.

"The teacher at KICSIND is a young man from KOBOLKUT, a recent college graduate. The 'teacher's quarters' consist of a single room in a bombed building. The problem of his meals is solved by taking them in turn at the houses of his pupils.

"School is free and lasts eleven years. It is divided into two groups: elementary and higher elementary school. School age starts at six, the first year is the 'adaption period' only, the following five the elementary classes. There is an elementary school for the first six grades in nearly every village. Higher elementary school is taught in a larger village or town. To give a concrete example: pupils graduated from the lower elementary schools of KICSIND, GARAMKOVESD, HELEMBÁ, EBED and MUZSLA, visit the higher elementary school in PARKANY. As I mentioned before, a new, large Hungarian school was built in 1951, in PARKANY. A school bus takes the children to school for a very moderate fee, which is a great relief to many.

"Those who do not want to continue their education can leave school after eight years.

"The eleven years count as high school, after graduation the young people can take up office employment. Slovak and Russian languages are compulsory.

"Graduation from higher elementary school does not qualify for university. Unfortunately, I am unable to give any information on high schools and universities.

"There is no ban on religious teaching.

"There is freedom of worship. It is true, that some time ago, priests and religion were persecuted and several people arrested; today no restrictions can be observed. Maybe only inasmuch as there are fewer official holidays and on weekdays Mass can be read in the evening only or early in the morning. Churches are still in BÉNY

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only temporarily repaired. An exception to this rule is the church in BENY, which was repaired by the State as a historic monument.

"The only flaw in religious worship is, that the Roman Catholic priest became, under some influence, a so-called 'peace priest.' This is not perceptible in his sermons, but the population dislikes the fact that he attends Communist meetings, they would like to have another priest.

"In comparison to the situation in Hungary, the clergy is comparatively well paid by the State. The coachman, cantor and sexton get paid by the State for their services.

"Teachers are better paid than in Hungary."

#### The Population and Communism

"Although with severe exaggeration, but it can be said that in comparison to the situation in Hungary -- the Hungarian population in Slovakia does not know what Communism is. I am far from stating that there is no Communism in Slovakia and that the population does not suffer under Communistic yoke. But in my native village and in its environs the population does not feel the permanent, ruthless, desperate, oppressive, terrible and deadly grip of Communism.

"Naturally I am unable to say whether the situation is the same everywhere.

"I know for certain that in my native village, which has 800 inhabitants, there are four Communists only, these are elderly people who joined the Party in 1919 and do not know themselves the reason of their Party membership. The fact that these men are Party members does not give them any advantage over the others. In the neighboring villages the situation is similar in this respect.

"There are village councils, the 'narodny vibor,' but the president is a non-Communist, the son of a respected farmer (owing 16 cadastral acres of land) named Lajos SASKA, the village calls him 'judge.'

"Pages could be written on the differences between the villagers of Slovakia and those of Hungary, the latter having nearly unbearable difficulties. Only to mention a few characteristic examples:

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"They do not know what 'Peace Loan' means; they are able to talk freely; there is no informer system; no cooperatives; no Stakhanovism; no norms; no AMH to watch every step. When looking for a job, no one is asking for the Party card, everyone is paid for his work; no standing in line for meat; no tormenting work-competition; one has not to kowtow permanently before the glorious and perfect Soviet Union, no one has to memorize the works of LENIN, no one has to spend sleepless nights figuring if the next day STALIN should be glorified or abused; there are no Party meetings; everyone is free to make the sign of the cross and to pray, everyone can freely listen to RFE.

"Although I do not think there is any difference between Communist leadership in the two countries, Slovakia and Hungary, the merciless execution of Communist measures does not get as far as to the villages in Slovakia. General orders yes, but not in detail.

"In 1945-1946, there were five radio sets in our village. Today every second family owns a wireless set. These are run on battery as there is no electricity installed in the village. (The authorities promised to have it installed in the fall.) The population is starving for Hungarian print and Hungarian speech. For this reason the population often listens to Radio BUDAPEST and depending on the capacity of their wireless sets to Western broadcasts in Hungarian. Radio licenses cost five Kcs per quarter.

"Among the Hungarian newspapers, the following are obtainable: 'Magyar Nemzet,' 'Képes Sport,' 'Radio Ujsag,' and the 'Uj Szo' which is published in POZSONY. 'Uj Szo' is popular, because it has a radio program. Naturally, all these newspapers are Communist, thus unsatisfactory to the population. Anyway, people have not much time to read.

"State power is represented in the village by the 'village policeman.' In reality he is a gendarme from the nearest gendarmery post. He too lives in one room of a bombed building. It is of greatest importance in which manner the 'village policeman' interprets the paragraphs. It happened recently, that one of my relatives distilled brandy for sale. Naturally this is prohibited. The village policeman, led by the smell, entered the premises, everyone stood frozen to the ground at what will happen next. The policeman asked in a professional manner, how much they are distilling? Such and such a quantity, was the answer. 'Well, you can easily give me one liter,' he pronounced the verdict, and

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immediately got the 'fine.' This was the way our village policeman interpreted the law in this case.

"Talking of judgment, I have to mention, that here in Slovakia in contrast to the situation in Hungary, it is not always the Communist lackays who win the case.

"Because of the housing shortage, two families had to share a room. Two men started a fight and in consequence one of them knocked the other's teeth out. As the injured man was unable to go to work, he reported his attacker, who having a bright idea, said in his defense that the injured man permanently abused the Communist Regime, and he, as a true Communist (this was untrue) could not listen to it any longer, and had to defend the Party.

"The court remained unimpressed and the attacker had to pay the medical bills and one week's wages to the injured man.

"The culprit swore revenge and in the darkness of the night, tried to hit his opponent with a stick on the head. The blow, however, only hit his shoulder. The neighbors, hearing shouts, rushed for help and the assailant was beaten by them in such a way that he had to be taken to hospital. He was brought before court again and it is assumed that he will be sent to prison. At the time I was still at home, the trial was not yet closed.

"On this, the two separated, it had become impossible for them to continue living in the same room.

"I can also give examples that in several cases, the authorities show an understanding for the point of view of the population. My father for example, could not meet his delivery obligations for years. He was summoned to appear before the district magistrate where he stated the reasons for his arrears; his son does his military service, he and his wife are over 60 and unable to work as much as needed for a living besides having to pay their delivery duties.

"The magistrate accepted his point and canceled all my father's debts. I have never heard of a similar case in Hungary."

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The Administration

"The 'village judge' of my native village tries to keep order with a strong hand, efficiency and with a honest Hungarian mentality.

"Festivities and theater performances are arranged. When I was there, the villagers were just performing the comedy 'Nem elhetek muzsikaszó nélkül.' The entrance fees were one or two Kcs and the receipts used for the building of the house of culture.

"The necessary repair works of public buildings are also carried out by voluntary contributions.

"The village has an orchestra which provides the music for the theater performances and dancing parties.

"The fire brigade -- which kept its old standard and is well trained -- is an additional help for organizing festivities. Young people like to become members of the brigade (it is like the old 'levante' organization.)

"The village judge, on the other hand, tries to educate the youth in a Hungarian spirit and eliminates with diplomatic skill the eventual disagreements with Slovak authorities.

"When all is said, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia lives in much better conditions than the Hungarians in their own country. This, however, does not mean satisfaction but only a comparative wellbeing. Every day, in the depths of their hearts, people put the question: when will the present situation come to an end? They have the same worries as I had when I fled to Austria in order to escape the terror. "

End

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