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YUGOSLAV MINORITIES IN HUNGARY

The following report presents the Yugoslav point of view on Yugoslav minorities in Hungary. Miodrag Vlahovic

Geography and Population

Yugoslav minorities in Hungary are scattered from the Yugoslav-Hungarian border to Budapest and from the Austrian-Hungarian border to Czechoslovakia, as follows:

1. The Baja triangle -- comprising Baja, Bacsalmas, and vicinity -- is an imaginary triangle formed by the Danube River and the Yugoslav-Hungarian border on the left bank of the Danube. The area is populated by approximately 26,000 Croatsians, whose national consciousness is fairly high.
2. Hungarian Baranya, mostly settled by Croatsians; there are also a small number of Serbians, totaling approximately 36,000.
3. Csanad Megye, settled by approximately 5,000 Serbians, whose national consciousness is very high.
4. Somogy Megye, settled by 27,000 Croatsians.
5. Zala Megye, settled by approximately 5,000 Croatsians, who have been considerably Hungarianized.
6. The Raba River valley, a triangle formed by the Austrian-Hungarian-Yugoslav borders, settled by approximately 6,000 Slovenians. In contrast to most of the other areas, the Raba valley is a compact settlement.

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7. Burgenland, a narrow strip of land, extending from the Mura River valley and the Austrian-Hungarian border, over Neusiedler Lake, to Bratislava. According to the Austrian census of 1923, 42,000 persons, or 18 percent of the entire population, were Croats. After World War I, approximately 18,000 Croats scattered in three megyek remained in Hungary. However, the Hungarian census lists a much smaller number of Burgenland Croats. According to Hungarian official figures for 1930, there were 10,432 Croats in all three megyek.

8. A total of 7,000 Croats and Serbs are settled in the Budapest area. National consciousness is not very high in this group.

The size of the Yugoslav minority in Hungary has been influenced by various factors. After the Turkish defeat in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, some of the Serbs living in northern and central Hungary moved to the Yugoslav sections of Backa, Baranja, Srem, and the Banat. In like manner, approximately 10,000 Serbs moved from Hungary to Yugoslavia after World War I.

Although figures on Yugoslav minorities in Hungary vary according to the source, unofficial figures since World War II place the total at 130,000.

Hungarian Denationalization Policies

Although denationalization policies were initiated before World War I, such as the law passed in 1879 which called for all teachers to know Hungarian, the most stringent measures were enacted in the period between the two world wars.

In the latter part of the 19th Century, there was some Southern Slav cultural life in Baja. There were cultural societies, and books and other publications. In addition, there was a strong movement under way to introduce the Serbo-Croatian language into the schools and churches. In August 1921, after Serbian Army units withdrew from Baja, all forms of cultural activity either died or were suppressed. There were no minority schools, except in the larger villages (Bikuc, Kacmar, Szentivan, and others) of the Baja triangle. Instead, there were so-called "Christian reading rooms" and similar organizations. In addition, there were a number of amateur societies which occasionally put on some type of entertainment or show.

Croats in Burgenland lived under more favorable circumstances. Courses were taught in their own language, although the textbooks used dated back to the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The Slovenians of the Raba River valley lived under difficult conditions. Before World War I, Slovenian books had been published in Monostor, but after the war, the Slovenian language was used only in liturgical books.

The Serbs had 14 parochial schools of their own, with approximately 18 teachers. In 1937, 150 pupils of the Serbian minority were registered in Hungarian secondary schools. These pupils and approximately 100 Serbian elementary school pupils received religious instruction 2 hours per week in Serbo-Croatian. In addition, there were small farm cooperatives, choral groups, and similar groups.

Hungarian policies were obviously directed toward Hungarianizing the Yugoslav minority. For example, the requirement that members of the Yugoslav minority who wanted a government post were obliged to Hungarianize their first name and surname.

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As a result of systematic denationalization, a portion of the Yugoslav minority forgot their mother tongue, and many actually began to feel they were Hungarian. However, the national spirit of the Southern Slavs could not be extinguished easily.

Position of Yugoslav Minority After World War II

The peak of Hungarian anti-Yugoslav and pro-Fascist policies was reached with Hungary joining Hitler in World War II, the attack on Yugoslavia, and the occupation of the northern area.

Despite atrocities committed in the Vojvodina by Hungarian soldiers during World War II, the Yugoslav government wanted to establish friendly relations with neighboring countries. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, the Yugoslav position on the minority problem was in sharp contrast to that of some other delegates. In an attempt to support the Czechoslovak delegation's desire to expel the Hungarian minority of approximately 500,000 from Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak delegate, Klementis, postulated that the mere existence of a minority was a constant source of danger. In opposition to Klementis' argument, Szegedi-Mazak, the Hungarian delegate, stated that in Yugoslavia all minorities, including 460,000 Hungarians, enjoyed equal rights with other Yugoslav citizens.

The Yugoslav delegates reached agreement on all major issues with the Hungarian representatives, including an agreement on the right of the Yugoslav minority in Hungary to be educated in their native tongue. Although the Yugoslavs had submitted a formal amendment, which was to guarantee the right of Yugoslavs in Hungary to be educated in their native tongue, and although this amendment was accepted by the Hungarian delegation, the amendment was withdrawn by Yugoslavia with the explanation that it expected the Hungarian government to carry out its promise as had been previously confirmed in writing.

As a result of this expression of confidence and for the following reasons, Yugoslavia's popularity in Hungary increased greatly after World War II. German concentration camps in Hungary were filled with members of the Yugoslav minority as well as Hungarian citizens. Victories of the Yugoslav Army affected the Yugoslavs in Hungary, particularly those settled in the Baja triangle and northern Baranya. Approximately 300 volunteered for the Yugoslav Army and fought in battles along the Srem and on other fronts, while a considerable number joined the Red Army.

Immediately following the war, the desire of the Yugoslavs in Hungary to have their own schools became obvious. The status of schools for the Yugoslav minority was as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>No of Schools and Departments</u>	<u>Total No of Pupils</u>
1945	25	585
1946	32	600
1948	60	1,080

In addition, there was a Serbo-Croatian teachers' school in Pecs.

The education of the Yugoslavs in the national spirit was visibly improved with the formation of the Anti-Fascist Front of Slavs in Hungary and, later, with the publication of Nase novine (Our Newspaper).

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The Anti-Fascist Front of Slavs in Hungary, which changed its name in October 1947, to DSJS (Demokratski Savez Juznih Slovena u Madarskoj, Democratic Association of Southern Slavs in Hungary), was founded in early 1945. It was the only political organization of the Yugoslav minority in Hungary. By 1946, it comprised 57 local organizations and a membership of 13,000. It had its own statute, which it promulgated in May 1946 at the Congress in Baja.

The association was divided into a Yugoslav and a Slovak section, headed by a central administration. The basic aims of the organization were to campaign for the implementation of rights of the Yugoslav national minority and provide support to the progressive democratic /Communist/ forces in Hungary. Until the publication of Nase novine as the organ of the southern Slavs in Hungary, Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian articles had appeared in the Slovak-language newspaper Sloboda. On 20 October 1946, Nase novine began publication as a weekly with a circulation of 3,500. The editor-in-chief was Antun Rob.

The life of the Yugoslav national minority began to develop in other fields. Amateur and folklore groups sprang up in all areas where Yugoslavs lived. By early 1948, there were 18 theater groups and 25 reading rooms in these areas.

Publishing activities were more trying. Until the publication of the Cominform Resolution in mid-1948, only three publications had appeared. These included two almanacs in Serbo-Croatian and a brochure for Slovenians of the Raba River valley, entitled Slovenska narodna knjiga (Slovene People's Book). The scarcity of reading matter was due to the fact that the government would not appropriate funds for the cultural life of the minorities. The lack, however, was alleviated to a certain extent by gifts of books and publications from Yugoslavia.

After World War II, the political situation in Hungary was such that for a long time it was hard to tell who was in power. This was most obvious in small towns and villages, where there was no organized democratic power to strengthen the government. The Yugoslav minority undertook to fight for their rights and to provide support to the Communist Party of Hungary, which it was assumed would support the interests of the proletariat. At the Second Provincial Conference held on 5 October 1947 in Bacsalmás, the DSJS passed a resolution on the following points:

1. Enemy remnants in the state organization prevent the execution of laws and decrees on the position of the national minorities, and it is requested that these remnants be purged.
2. Discrimination based on sex, religion, or nationality is severely punishable by law.
3. The People's Republic of Hungary assures every nationality living within its borders of educational possibilities in its native language and development of its national culture.

The conference also protested that the Ministry of Education had not fulfilled its promises. Approximately half the localities settled by Yugoslavs had not been given schools of their own, and Yugoslav youth were being Hungarianized. There was not a single school for the Yugoslav minority in Somogy, Zala, Győr, and Sopron megyék.

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The conference took a stand on the question of employment of representatives of the minorities by the government, as follows:

1. If the Slavs were to have representation in autonomous agencies and in the government, terrorization and denationalization of the Slavs could not go unpunished.
2. The Southern Slavs must have proportionate representation in town, jaras, and megye councils.
3. The law on minorities must be implemented in all areas inhabited by the Southern Slav minority.

In like manner, the official policies of the Hungarian Communist Party, later known as the MDP (Magyar Dolgozok Partja, Hungarian Workers' Party), demonstrated that it was a cover for the ordinary police.

On 9 May 1948, the MDP announced the following: "As regards national minorities (Southern Slavs, Rumanians, Slovaks, etc.) who live in Hungary, the party will pledge itself to gradually assure their cultural advancement; education in their native tongue; full freedom for their cultural, social, and political organizations; and freedom of cultural exchange and communications with their neighboring mother countries."

Barely 2 months passed before leaders of the MDP became ringleaders in suppressing the rights of the Yugoslav minority, and in carrying out incredible police terrorism dictated from Moscow.

Yugoslav Minority-Victim of the Cominform Resolution

When the Cominform Resolution was published, Yugoslavia and everything pertaining to it was attacked by the Kremlin. The Yugoslav national minority sided with the Yugoslav people.

The police, particularly the AVH (Allamvedelmi Hatosag, State Security Authority) and the party leadership had the final word in the campaign against the Southern Slav minority. The trouble began when Mihaly Farkas, deputy general secretary of the party and minister of the Hungarian government, called upon Antun Rob, general secretary of the DSJS and the only representative of the Yugoslav minority in the parliament. Farkas attempted to convince Rob that he should declare himself against the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and contribute articles in this vein to Szabad Nep and Nase novine. Unsuccessful in this attempt, Farkas withdrew Rob's mandate. Other members of the Executive Council of the DSJS were pressured to state that they opposed the Yugoslav Communist Party, and were imprisoned if they refused. In July 1948, the Minister of Internal Affairs issued an order abolishing the autonomy of the DSJS.

A bitter struggle developed between the powerful police system and the defenseless minority. The following is a faint picture of what ensued. On 10 July 1948, a few days prior to the order to abolish the DSJS, the Central Administration of the DSJS made an announcement that Milutin Brcan, member of the Central Administration of the DSJS, called on Aladar Karpinski, owner of the printing office where Nase novine was being published. The issue was to publish the DSJS protest against the withdrawal of Rob's mandate, other protest material, and a resolution made by Southern Slav teachers in Pecs and some DSJS organizations. Brcan was informed that earlier a police major had

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visited the office and demanded to see Nase novine. When he saw that the paper was in Serbo-Croatian, he upset the type and forbade the paper's publication. He had no written order to support his action, but said that the DSJS should consult the police if it had any complaint.

In a note dated 27 August 1948, the Yugoslav government made a formal protest against suspension of the paper and abolishment of the DSJS. The note stated that on 16 July Janos Duska was assigned as commissioner to the DSJS administration by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Duska forcedly organized a congress of the DSJS; those who attempted to defend Antun Rob and the former management were thrown out.

Until the publication of the Cominform Resolution, the Yugoslav minority in Hungary had been one of the pillars of Hungary's progressive forces, but the Hungarian police system saw its greatest enemy in the Yugoslav minority. The police organized a campaign mobilizing lesser authorities inflamed with chauvinist rage. In the spring of 1949, the police organized a census of the Yugoslav minority. The census was verified by organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In the census, answers had to be supplied to the following questions: (1) Does the undersigned have relatives in Yugoslavia? (2) Does he have contact with these relatives or anybody else in Yugoslavia, and what is the nature of such contact? (3) What is his attitude toward Yugoslavia after the Cominform Resolution?

As a result of the census, difficult days ensued for the Yugoslav minority. Many were arrested, searched, flogged, or removed from their posts. The police knew that the minority in the Baja triangle supported Yugoslav policies. Although "resolutions" were passed at party meetings of the minority against Yugoslav leadership, the members of the Hungarian Cominform knew that these resolutions were the result of police pressure.

In their tyranny over the Yugoslav minority, members of the Hungarian Cominform resorted to the assistance of military units. In the village of Cikerij, homes were searched by soldiers and public hearings were held. By mid-1949, persecution of the Yugoslavs had assumed such proportions that it became necessary for Hungarian internal and foreign propaganda to try to justify its inimical policies toward minorities. In September 1949, the Hungarian Cominform with the assistance of Moscow organized the Rajk trials. However, neither the Rajk trials, similar trials, mass arrests of the Yugoslav minority, nor other measures could bring about the desired results.

Hungarian authorities considered it necessary to undertake more stringent reprisals. In the summer of 1949, rumors were spread that because of pro-Tito sympathies many Southern Slavs would be imprisoned or deported into the interior of Hungary. In the latter part of July 1950, these rumors turned into reality. On 23 July, the police drove into the city of Bacsalmás all families designated for deportation from the border sector between the Danube and Tisza rivers. On the following day, approximately 2,000 members of the minority were accompanied by several police groups to an unknown destination. Other megyek (Baranya, Somogy, Zala, and others) soon fell under the Cominform attack.

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