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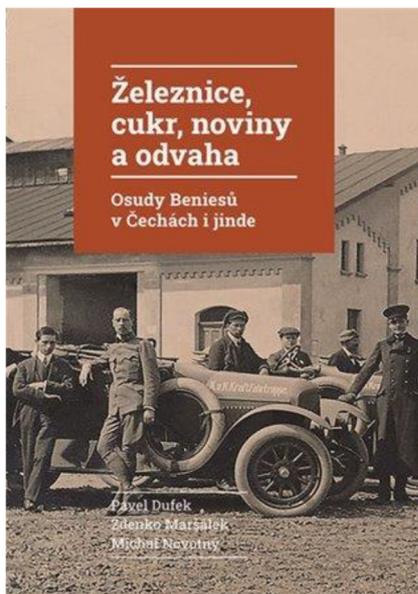
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Erased from Memory. The Benies and Mercy Families as Examples of Difficult Assimilation in a Time Burdened by Nationalism



NLN, Praha 2023, 339 S, ISBN 978-80-7422-917-6

A Project to rewrite the book for German readers

The story of the Benies business family, later linked to the family Mercy, is essentially an illustrative example of the complex history of the unique phenomenon of Galician Jewish entrepreneurs, who during the short period of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries managed to achieve economic success in what was then Cisleithania and build large and prosperous

businesses in a number of different fields. Despite major upheavals, they also managed to adapt to the new conditions of smaller nation states after 1918; however, at a time of rising nationalism and authoritarian regimes, they became victims and targets of racial and political persecution. Virtually nothing remained of their business activities after 1945. Moreover, the post-war ethnically homogenized Czech society did not accept them back, nor did they accept their heritage and even memory of them, which they quickly erased from their own “national stories.”

The gradually uncovered story of Benies-Mercy families became the subject of research by three historians of different academic specialities. As the project was a private venture in fact, it took quite a long time before the team was able to complete the work alongside other professional commitments of individual members, and the publication was released at the very end of 2023.

From the very beginning, the authors had a German edition of the book in mind. The original Czech version is aimed at the Czech professional community. For German readers, however, the entire concept of the book needs to be reworked, among other things to target a wider audience. At the same time, the authors would like to complete their archival research, as they have come across other interesting sources in recent years. The German version project therefore means writing the book practically from scratch.

However, the original model of a private venture proved to be extremely demanding in terms of coordination, finances, and, above all, time. The team of authors will therefore seek institutional and financial support for the project and is turning to the auditorium for advice.

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