

REGIO

Minorities, Politics, Society

“Out of Romania!”

**Reasons and Methods as Reflected in State Security
Documents 1987–1989**



Diplomatic Way to the 1951 Geneva Convention



**The Birth of the Hungarian Refugee Administration
in 1988–1989**



**Hungarians in USA
(demographic data and ethnic-based public life)**

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EDITORS

ATTILA PAPP Z. (editor-in-chief)
NÁNDOR BÁRDI, ÉVA KOVÁCS,
GYÖRGY SZERBHORVÁTH

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Nemzeti Kulturális Alap

EDITORIAL OFFICE
H-1014 Budapest, Országház u. 30. III. 9.
Hungary

Tel. (00 36 1) 224 6796
E-mail: regio@chello.hu
<http://www.regiofolyoirat.hu>

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CHALLENGE

What is the CHALLENGE?

The concept of secure communities living within well-defined territories and enjoying all the celebrated liberties of civil societies is now seriously at odds with the profound restructuring of political identities and transnational practices of securitisation that we see today. CHALLENGE (“The Changing Landscape of European Liberty and Security”) is a European Commission-founded project (2004–2009) that seeks to facilitate a more responsive and responsible assessment of the rules and practices of security. It examines the implications of these practices for civil liberties, human rights and social cohesion in an enlarged Europe. The project analysis the illiberal practices of liberal regimes and challenges their justification on grounds of emergency and necessity.

The objectives of this project in 6th Framework Programme is:

- to understand the merging between internal and external security and evaluate the changing relationship between liberty and security in Europe;
- to analyse the role of the different institutions in charge of security and their current transformations;
- to facilitate and enhance a new interdisciplinary network of scholars who have been influential in the re-conceptualising and analysis of many of the theoretical, sociological, legal and policy implications of new forms of violence and political identity;
- to bring together an integrated analysis on the state of exception (Exceptionalism) as enacted through illiberal practices and forms of resistance to it.

The network comprises 23 universities and research institutes selected from across the EU (King’s College London, University of

Keele, Copenhagen, Leeds, Genoa, Barcelona, Szeged, Rouen, Athens, Utrecht, Nijmegen, Malta, Cologne, Centre for European Policy Studies, Foundation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, European Association for the Research on Transformation, Groups de sociologie des religions et de la laicite, Stefan Batori Foundation, London School of Economics, Centre d'Etudes sur les Conflicts, International Peace Research Institute). The project is organised around four types of issues:

- Conceptual. An investigation of the ways in which the contemporary re-articulation and disaggregation of borders imply an increase in exceptionalism practices. It covers on changing relationship between new forms of war and defence, new procedures for policing and governance, threats to civil liberties and social cohesion.
- Empirical. Mapping the merging between internal and external security issues and their transnational relation to national life, analysing new vulnerabilities (targeted others, critical infrastructures) and social in-cohesion (such as the perception of other religious groups, etc).
- Governance, polity and legality. An examination of threats to liberty and the use of violence, when the state no longer has the last word on the legitimate use of force.
- Policy. An examination of the implications of the dispersal of Exceptionalism for the changing relationships between government departments concerned with security, justice and home affairs; the securing of state borders and the policing of foreign interventions.

The Challenge project operates a database in order to follow in details the changes that are occurring to the concept of security and the relationship between danger and freedom. This Observatory traces the major transformations of institutions, internal and external security, policy and military functions. The resulting database of thousands of articles, documents, reviews and literature is fully accessible to all actors involved in the area of freedom, security and justice. To keep up to date with the network's activities, you can visit the www.libertysecurity.org homepage.

This volume of REGIO supported by the Challenge Project contains some of the recent articles on its Working Package dealing with birth of refugee regime in Hungary.

Introduction

From a methodological point of view the birth and death of a regime (institution, tradition) can be considered as a “natural experiment”, i.e. a situation when the independent variable is not artificially manipulated, rather but occurs naturally, so that these alterations can be used to monitor its effect upon the dependent variable.¹ Such a natural experiment occurred in Hungary when a Hungarian refugee system was created from nothing in 1988.

Due to historical causes Hungary in the late 1980's was an introverted and homogenous world having borders difficult to pass, taboos restricting talk about ethnic and Diaspora issues, and a single party system ruled by “soft methods” that (we now know) was about to collapse.

It was this context into which “refugees” came in 1988 – unexpectedly and in a concealed manner. The use of inverted commas is part of the essence of the story for two reasons. First, neither politicians, academics and journalists – nor even the migrants themselves – knew how to describe their exact legal and political status. Second, for better or worse, within a period of weeks, this had become the generally accepted term used to describe them.

Partly due to this “mild crisis”, partly due to the unusual political environment, and last but not least partly due to the activity of some unusual persons, for some months “everything was possible”, *contra legem* and *contra* formal ideological frames.² From the refugee system's point of view this enthusiasm, the ruling Party's experiment for a new

¹ List, John A. *Field Experiments: A Bridge Between Lab and Naturally Occurring Data*. 2007 www.nber.org/papers/w12992

² Sik, Endre: Innocence lost – Hungarian Refugee Policy between 1988 and 2004. In: Kósa, Magda – Pető, Andrea (eds.) *Balance Sheet*. Napvilág – Táncsics, Budapest, 2007. 259–271.

identity, and the lack of a crystallised bureaucratic system led to all elements of a natural experiment being in place.

This was the “era of innocence”³ when Hungarians could hardly have been xenophobic and when many offered assistance to the “refugees” because they felt sorry for them and/or were inspired by patriotic feelings or to desire to do something against communism. Public officials showed a human face, the border guards (when they were not busy deporting people) acted as social workers, the Hungarian parliament voted for a special Fund to assist migrants, the Party headquarters (when not directing the secret police) tried to channel these “popular initiatives” towards new forms of ruling.⁴ The churches undertook organisational work and assistance spanning the borders; the county governments joined forces with the local branches of the Red Cross to direct charity and voluntary work and to divide up central government funds⁵; newly-formed and more established “alternative” organisations distributed gift parcels, administered official affairs, lobbied, and used their personal contacts to offer support⁶.

Sociologists were given a unique opportunity to go “instant research”⁷ politically inclined persons could act “freely”, and legal experts could devise completely new frames. The results were several fresh analyses of the situation and those involved in it (migrants, organisations, legal instruments). What these analyses could not cover were the invisible (hidden, secret) aspects of this process, for instance, i.e. the role of the international community and secret services. This selection of papers is the first attempt to outline these processes.

This new and extended research was possible not only from support of the European Commission (6th Framework Research Programme,

³ Sik, Endre – Tóth, Judit: Loss of Innocence – The Sociohistorical aspects of the Hungarian Refugee Policy. *Migration*, 1991/11–12: 119–132.

⁴ Sik, Endre: Transylvanian Refugees in Hungary and the Emergence of Policy Networks to Cope with Crisis. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.5, 1992/1: 25–39.

⁵ Sik, Endre – Tóth, Judit: Governmental and Non-governmental Refugee Policy in Hungary. In: Adelman – Sik – Tessenyi (eds.) *The Genesis of a Domestic Regime: The Case of Hungary*. Toronto, York Lane Press, 1994. 65–72.

⁶ Francia, Gyula: A Menedék – Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület és a magyarországi menekültügy bizonytalanságai. ELTE PPK, 2004 szakdolgozat (thesis)

⁷ Sik, Endre – Tarjányi, József – Závecz, Tibor: Aus Rumänien nach Ungarn: Die Siebenbürgen-Flüchtlinge 1987–1989. *Journal für Sozialforschung*, Vol.30, 1990/1: 81–116.

Challenge project, 2004–2009) but also from the disclosure of archives and documents of the Party, secret services and ministries. Although this limited publicity protects confidential files and numerous eyewitnesses, actors of refugee story and administrations are nevertheless living with us, and the interviews with them, archive data, materials and memories together would ensure a basis for historical analysis for academics.

Finally, the dilemma of ethnic preferences in reception of refugees vs. commitments on human rights and international obligations are playing the best emblematic role in the refugee policy that is clearly visible in these papers. This debate started in 1988 between the NGOs and governmental organisations as well as later between academics and the ruling power⁸ whether receiving refugees and persons in need of protection would be justified and approached on the ground of ethnic proximity and kin-state policy⁹ or not. The refugee issues belong to the whole political community - but it has been out of interest for decades, while xenophobia and exclusion attitudes are growing, regardless of the (limited) number of applicants, effective or impotent authorisation or integration policy. Summing up, the 1989 accession to the 1951 Geneva Convention, while opening the borders for eastern German citizens some months later without refugee context, is loudly solemnized in 2009, and it remains a silent 20th anniversary. This academic attempt of “contemporary Hungarian history” is pioneering research, and we hope it gives an impetus for others.

Endre Sik and Judit Tóth

⁸ Fullerton, Maryellen: Hungary, Refugees and the Law of Return In: From Improvisation toward Awareness? Contemporary Migration Politics in Hungary. Sik – Fullerton – Tóth (eds.) *Yearbook of the Research Group on International Migration*. Institute for Political Science, H.A.S. 1997. 131–146.

⁹ Jungbert, Béla: Comments on M. Fullerton’s study. In: From Improvisation toward Awareness? Contemporary Migration Politics in Hungary. Sik – Fullerton – Tóth (eds.) *Yearbook of the Research Group on International Migration*. Institute for Political Science, H.A.S., 1997. 147–150; Világosi, Gábor (1997): A Politician’s Reflections on Hungary’s Migration Policy. In: From Improvisation toward Awareness? Contemporary Migration Politics in Hungary. Sik – Fullerton – Tóth (eds.) *Yearbook of the Research Group on International Migration, Institute for Political Science*. H.A.S., 153–156

BÉLA RÉVÉSZ

“Out of Romania!”

*Reasons and Methods as Reflected in State Security
Documents 1987–1989*

Could we identify with the refugee situation within the history of Romanian-Hungarian relations in 1987–89? We know that the answer is no, yet appearances persist even today. The wave of refugees arriving from Romania seemed to shield other dimensions of conflict in the relationship of the two countries, by the fact that the citizens of other countries increasingly targeted Hungary as a destination country. Furthermore, the migrating masses coming to Hungary gave an advantage to the Hungarian political elite in that they represented the positive alternative of a “reforming socialist” country in the West. This work of research seeks to examine factors that motivated, and, in turn, influenced, the mass migration of Romanian citizens in the mid-1980’s. The situation is unmistakable: “In the past few years, mainly due to the discriminating measures against citizens of Hungarian nationality, the lower living standards, the number of legal and illegal migrants, the majority of whom are ethnic Hungarians arriving in Hungary is increasing, and they have no intention to return to the Socialist Republic of Romania.”¹ Up to the mid-1980, Hungary gave refugees to the world;

¹ The Inter-ministerial State Committee dealing with the affairs of foreign citizens residing in Hungary informs the county and town committee secretaries about their tasks connected to the solution of the situation of foreign, mainly Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality residing in Hungary and not intending to return

but from 1987 onward, the country has taken refugees. Between 1988 and 1995, more than 130,000 refugees were registered in the country. The number of those who arrived in Hungary receiving support from private persons, that is, without registering with the authorities, may be substantially more. Chief among the reasons for this exodus were certain features of the Romanian-Hungarian relationship such as the so-called regional and settlement reorganization – in Romanian official language – systematization, in colloquial Hungarian “village destruction” that began in Romania in 1987. Furthermore, the practice of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship violating human rights also played a significant role, coupled with the discrimination against Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities. An increasing number of social and economic problems were also important migration factors. The immigration of Romanian citizens demanded measures of border control, administrative control, state security and public safety from the part of the Hungarian law enforcement, while the negotiations between the “fraternal socialist parties” was also needed as much as diplomatic and international political solutions. In the examination of the complex problem of migration, our research intends to focus on three characteristic processes, based on the contemporary documents: the instruments of the Romanian policy, including use of state secret services in the national settlement reorganization, the “incidents” along the Hungarian-Romanian border, and the differences in handling refugees.

1. Political and Security Background

Large migrations are first and foremost examined by national security researchers as a challenge to security, one of the factors that may endanger public safety.² The free movement of people between countries has been a natural phenomenon since the fall of the “iron curtain”, and migration

home. 14th April 1988. HSWP KB KAO NAH M-KS 288. f. 31/21. ó. (MSZMP = Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, HSWP = Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party; HSWP CC = Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party; NAH = Magyar Országos Levéltár, NAH = National Archives of Hungary.)

² Deák, Péter: Conceptual and content wise approaches and new interpretations of security. In: Deák, Péter (editor): *Handbook of Security Policy*. Osiris, Budapest, 2007. 17 p. .

affects security. Mass migration may also burden the social and economic capacity and infrastructure of a given country. In addition, it may foster the underground economy, money laundering and organised crime, or it may open channels to radicalism, extremism and political violence. However, beyond these security considerations, it is also worth examining the political and economic dimensions of migration.

In Hungary, just as in the Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, after 1947–48 the issue of legal and illegal migration was fundamentally considered a state security concern. In an era attentive to class struggle, the ideological argument was quite simple: those inclined to leave the people's democracy could be only (political) criminals, but most people arriving were considered likely spies.³ It was also characteristic that the Hungarian Bureau of Immigrant and Emigrants Protection⁴ created in 1921 was also dealing with the affairs of immigrants after 1945, ceased operations on June 15 1948,⁵ although formally minor issues were dealt with by the World Association of Hungarians.⁶ It is not accident that based on the resolution number 4353/1949/268./M.T. of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary; the Border Police were transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the jurisdiction of the State Security Agency (ÁVH).⁷ Furthermore, the Head Command of the Border Guards constituted organisationally one single department together with the Interior Security Police.⁸ In this period, a system of total border control was organised along the southern and western border areas.⁹ It reference to the restrictions to travel abroad, no data was found on

³ Our democratic police is five years old. *Magyar Rendőr* (Hungarian Policeman). 15th January 1950. 4 p.

⁴ 44.700/1921. Decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

⁵ 463.231/1948. Decree of the Ministry of the Interior.

⁶ Margit Jenes: The Bureau Defending Hungarian Emigrants and Remigrants 1945–1948. NAH XIX-B-7.

⁷ 255.100/Eln. ÁVH leading order of 30th December 1949. Central Archives of the Ministry of the Interior (furthermore: BM KI). Collection of Directives (furthermore Pgy) 1949. box 12 (furthermore d).

⁸ Beatrix Boreczky: The organisation of the ÁVH, 1950–1953. Safe. 1. Historical Office, Bp., 1999. 99 p.

⁹ In 1950, then in 1952, along the western borderlines a 15 km-long borderline area, and within it, 500 and 50 m-wide borderlines were established where one could enter only with the permission of the police or the border guard service. Only border guards could enter 50-m borderlines. Along the western borderlines, a square system of barbed wire was established. In the South and in

any permits issued to emigrate from Hungary until 1953.¹⁰ According to official political doctrine in a people’s democracy there are no reasons for emigration;¹¹ therefore, migration is not a concern. As for certain foreign individuals coming to Hungary, state security had to be particularly vigilant of those few “war-mongering, counter-revolutionary plotting imperialists”. Those who tried to cross the border illegally, “defying the scrutiny of border security”,¹² were in serious danger. Following the patterns, nearly to the letter, of the Soviet penal code, other Eastern-European countries also regulated border related transgressions.¹³

Keeping with the demands of in-depth prevention, the operational field of the border guard service was a 15-km-wide swat from the border. Within that area, the border guards were supposed to be always in service to detect illegal border crossings, with instructions to arrest illegal border crossers and hand them over to the police.¹⁴ The operational tasks were performed by reconnaissance units. Their assignment was to detect individuals that may endanger border security. This was to be done by covert and open means such as social interaction and cooperation with the civilian population. Usually, border control regulations were carried out without taking into account the particular political character of the neighbouring countries. The border control network, however, distinguished between the “Western relationship” and the “Southern and fraternal border relationship”. In the latter case, the border guard agency dealt mainly with illegal border crossers coming in

the West, a 318 km-long minefield was built. The minefield was removed along the southern borderlines in 1956, but it was resettled in the West in 1957. The minefields were ceased in 1965 in the southern, and in 1969 in the western borderline area. The removal of the minefields was finished in 1971. See also: Csapodi, Tamás: Mines in Hungary, *Fundamentum*, 2002. 2. And: Okváth, Imre: The period of “war preparations” 1948–53. In: Okváth, Imre: *A bastion on the front of peace. Hungarian army and military policy, 1945–1956*. Aquila, Budapest, 1988.

¹⁰ In 1953, 153 persons were permitted to emigrate. Tóth, Péter Pál: Migration in Hungary in the 19 and 20th centuries. In: *Migration and the European Union*. SZCSM, Budapest, 2001. 35 p.

¹¹ See Szántó, Miklós: *Hungarians in the world*. Kossuth, Budapest, 1984.

¹² Kádár, Miklós (editor): *Penal Code (special part)*. ELTE ÁJTK, Budapest., 1953. 87 p.

¹³ See Penal Code: Official Text. Edited by the Panel of the Ministry of Justice and Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Socialistic Republic of Romania. Scholarly Publishing House, Bucharest, 1956. section 320–322.

¹⁴ Border Control Regulations. Ministry of the Interior. Order number 7. 20th February 1958. BM KI Pgy. 1958.

and related to tourism, and those who wanted to leave the country illegally. The agency also performed cross-border assignments and exploratory missions – mainly in the western areas. For more effective cooperation the border guard units and the regional state security operatives prepared an annual joint plan of action.¹⁵

The establishment of the system of total border control (and the penal regulations for it) certainly did not completely prevent, but it hindered those who wanted to cross the borders illegally. For political reasons, after 1949 many Greek, and after 1973, many Chilean citizens escaped to Hungary, but apart from this, Hungary was a country that gave refugees to the world for more than fifty years. As for legal and illegal migration, there are no exact data after 1945.¹⁶ Based on different documents, we can assume that approximately 100,000 people migrated from Hungary in the period between 1945 and 1956, but the number of people legally migrating did not reach 15,000. After the wave of migration of 170,000 people in 1956–57, the number of legal emigrants was about 1500–2400, while the number of illegal migrants oscillated between 300 and 500.¹⁷ From the 1960's to the 80's more people left the country than those who migrated to Hungary, 1000 to 2000 people immigrated.¹⁸ Illegal migration was very low until the 1980's. Between 1960 and 1987, the number of illegal border crossings did not reach 500

¹⁵ The assignments of the exploratory bodies of the Border Guards of the Ministry of the Interior. Order number 014. BM KI Pgy. 1969. 10–21/14/69. sz.

¹⁶ It is only a partial explanation that the documents of the ÁVH from between 1951–1953 do not reach two metres documents in the Historical Archives of the State Security Agency. See: Baráth, Magdolna: Handling and eliminating documents. In: *The Report of the Professional Commission 2007–2008*. s. I. a. .131. p.

¹⁷ People who committed the crime of „escaping abroad” were not accused of a crime against the state, but for a political crime, based on the Penal Code passed in 1961. These people did not commit crimes included in chapter 9 of the Penal Code, but committed a crime against the public order and safety included in chapter 12. See: The number of crimes committed the state and of political nature, the reasons for the crimes based on the experienced of the past 14 years. Ministry of the Interior Department III/1. 3rd March 1974. 16 p. in BM KI Pgy. 1974. 34–67/74. sz.

¹⁸ Harcsa, István: Migration: In: Kollega Tarsoly István (editor): *Hungary in the 20th century II*. Babits Kiadó, Szekszárd, 1997. 221 p.

persons in any year,¹⁹ but the number of illegal border crossers coming from Romania did not reach 10,000 persons in any year until 1987.²⁰

From the middle of the 1980s, the situation changed. While the number of emigrants quickly decreased, the number of foreign citizens migrating to Hungary legally or illegally (primarily from Romania, but not exclusively ethnic Hungarians) and intending to settle down was increasing quickly. The years of 1987–88 were a reversal of the migration patterns since the end of World War II. In 1987, comparing to the number of immigrants, the numbers of legal (1,476) and illegal (4,923) emigrants showing a population decrease of 4,000. In 1988, however the population shows a net increase of 8000 people (12,788 immigrants vs. 4864 emigrants). From this period, the difference of migration did not show negative ratios in any period.²¹ It is a noteworthy circumstance that the number of illegal border crossings taking place in the “eastern border” already approached 7,000 (6,854), and, except one, all the border violators were detained.²²

The special attention gained by the migration phenomenon popularly known as “Romanian refugees” could be explained by the complexity of the issue. The controversy between two countries sharing a (communist) alliance became increasingly tense and gained permanence when the discrepancies of political leadership went beyond considerations of ideology, inter-party and international relations. The press, history and the evolving democratization taking place in Hungary became actors in the, at times, fierce disputes of the opposing sides, who also sought to elicit international support for their cause. In this situation, a variety of data, motives and interpretations of their decisions, were published in relation to the groups of people migrating from

¹⁹ Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3. MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/1054. ő. e.

²⁰ The number of Romanians migrating to Hungary in a yearly compilation. Horváth, István: The migration of the Hungarian minority in Romania to Hungary. *Korunk*. February 2002. Chart number 8.

²¹ See the date: Tóth, Péter Pál: *Is there only one home? Refugees, immigrants, new citizens in Hungary. (1988–1994)*. Püski, Budapest, 1997. 65 p.

²² Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3.

Romania to Hungary. The fundamental equation is, at first sight, simple: “people always tend to escape from tyranny to freedom”. The common thread of the reason for migration is coercion or pressure to leave: “as for coercions or pressures, we can think of political persecution, ethnic or racial discrimination, disasters, wars and military conflicts, and finally unemployment or social and economic problems.”²³ As for Romania, in the period discussed, it is evident that it would be a simplification to treat the political motives as exclusive. It is true that refugees escaping from Romania mainly complained at “the lack of democracy, the terror, the ever present spy network, and ethnic discrimination (violent urbanisation)”,²⁴ but despite the official propaganda it was well-known that in Romania, the majority of the population – not only compared to the European average, but also to the Hungarian standards of living – lived in poor and ever worsening condition.²⁵ Below, our research will primarily focus on the political motives of the refugees, since these not only did played a defining role in motivating the migration of Romanian citizens, but also in the measures taken by Hungary, and her domestic agencies as well as in the receptivity of the refugees by the Hungarian public opinion.

Besides the questions related to the legitimacy of the Kadar regime the nationality question, that is, the issue of the ethnic Hungarians across Hungary’s borders was a forbidden topic. The issue was made taboo by the web of commitments to the internationalist and “fraternal” Socialist (communist) party. It also meant that the interpretation of the problems presented by the presence of the Hungarian minority was a monopoly of the regime. Therefore, an open discussion of these issues was relegated to the politically illegal opposition. It also gave a voice and an agenda to the Hungarian émigrés of the West as well as to the Hungarian-language media functioning abroad.

²³ Tóth, Judit: From political migration to migration policy. *Mozgó Világ*, 1991. 11. 112 p.

²⁴ Kende, Péter: Romanian refugees in Hungary. *Külpolitika*, 1989. 2. 95–96 p.

²⁵ We may as well call the case of a twenty-year-old couple tragic-comical. They left their six-months-old baby in Romania and justified their escape with the fact that “there is video in Hungary”. Tamás Forró and Henrik Havas’s interview with captain Margit Péntzes, the acting director of the Division of Administration of Hajdú-Bihar county police department. *After Arad – who knows where?*, Háttér, Budapest., 1988. 78 p.

The meetings of the Editors-in-Chief of the Agitation and Propaganda Division of the Hungarian Socialist Party were also a control mechanism of the Party over the press.²⁶ The monthly meetings sought to identify expected events suitable for publication as well as an analysis of the work performed. It was no accident that the party leadership suspended in 1978 all “problematic writings” related to Transylvania as well as the “effectively functioning” “ex-post censorship”. It “provisionally” mandated that writings dealing with Hungarians abroad could only be published after consulting with the Agitation and Propaganda Division). However, more important than these measures were the interpretation of the set of principles for the press to follow:²⁷

- Regardless of location in the world, only socialism can solve the problem of nationalities; there is no other recipe.
- The fundamental precondition to resolve the nationality question is that there should be good relations between peoples and countries (tensions between Hungarians and Romanians only harms the situation of the Hungarians living in Romania);
- We must treat the issue in a way that we should not be detrimental to ourselves (the danger of isolation) and should not harm Hungarians living outside the borders;
- The ethnic issue is not a territorial issue for us;
- The hostile, fascist émigré groups now especially agitating for the sake of the Hungarians in Romania are our enemy, as they are enemies of our the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Hungarians living in Romania;
- In summary: we care about the fate of Hungarians abroad on the principle of internationalism.

In the same year, the same issue came up, with a similar level of secrecy, but with a radically different interpretation. In those times, the Department of Intelligence (III/I-1.) of the Ministry of the Interior dealt with intelligence against the United States and international organizations. Evidence of the success in obtaining information needed

²⁶ Hegedűs, István: Sajtó és irányítás a Kádár-korszak végén (Press and control in the end of the Kádár-era). *Médiakutató*, 2001. 1.; Pór Edit: A Kádár-rendszer sajtópolitikája, 1963–1979 (The press policy of the Kádár Regime). In: *Zárt, bizalmas, számozott II. Irodalom-, sajtó- és tájékoztatáspolitiká 1962–1979* (Closed, discrete, numbered II. Literary, press and publication policy 1962–79). Osiris, Budapest, 2004.

²⁷ NAH M–KS 288. f. 22178/25. ó. e.

for domestic consumption in Hungary was the quick repatriation of a NATO internal document. On 18th April 1978, the British delegation prepared a memorandum about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania for the session of the Political Committee of the NATO.²⁸ Slightly two months later, the Minister of the Interior sent the translation of the memorandum to János Kádár and to the five members of the Hungarian Political Committee.

1. The Hungarian ethnic minority – that lives mainly in Transylvania – is one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe. According to the results of the census in Romania, there are 1.7 million Hungarians of the total 21.5 million population. According to Hungarian émigré sources, the number of Hungarians living in Romania is estimated to 2.5 or even 3 million.
2. Transylvania has a historical importance for both Romanian and Hungary. For the Romanians, it means the homeland of their ancestors who lived since antiquity. The Hungarians had ruled Erdély directly or indirectly since the 13th century. From 1867 to the First World War, the Romanians suffered much from Hungarian nationalism and forcible attempts to assimilate. The Romanians – considering the invasion of northern Transylvania by Hungarians in the Second World War /Decision of Vienna, August 1940/ - are probably afraid that the Hungarians once again will demand Transylvania back.
3. At the end of the 1950's, the old Hungarian university in Cluj Napoca was integrated into the Romanian university as part of the coercion against the Hungarian ethnic minority, and this coercion has been practiced partly or totally ever since. Probably encouraged by other movements – opposing the regime – of Eastern Europe, some members of the Hungarian minority have started an open protest in recent years. The first manifestation of this protest – to which the West paid attention – was the so-called “Lazarus Document” allegedly written by a Hungarian person living in Transyl-

²⁸ A magyar kisebbség helyzete Romániában: újabb megpróbáltatások. (The situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania: further vicissitudes.) Report of András Benkei about the NATO-report, 1st July 1978. BM KI miniszteri iratok 1978/96. 1-a-776.

vania under a pseudonym.²⁹ This document contains a report about the past of the Hungarians in Transylvania, about their participation in the fight for Romanian socialism between the two world wars and describes their present situation. Although it is very probable that the document was written before 1976, it was published in the West only in March 1977. An intellectual group consisting of mainly Transylvanian Hungarians somehow managed to obtain this document; therefore, it also became known in Hungary before the meeting of Kádár and Ceaușescu in June 1977 near the Romanian-Hungarian border.[...] ³⁰

6. The Hungarians are critical to the “Romanization” policies in education, because they are afraid that this phenomenon will not only decrease the number of educated Hungarian in positions requiring a high level of academic preparation to a minimal number, but it also endangers the characteristic Hungarian culture in Transylvania. The ethnic policy of President Ceaușescu is the product of Romanian nationalism that is the gist of both his external policy and internal policy aiming to create a strong nation state. Ceaușescu, in his speech addressed to the

²⁹ In the March-April issue of the Paris Literary Journal the study entitled *Jelentés Erdélyről* (Report about Transylvania) is published, written by Sándor Tóth, professor of Philosophy in Cluj Napoca and Budapest philosopher Zádor Tordai, under the pseudonym György Lázár. The Western media turns attention to the report. For example, the issue of the *Le Monde* published on 5th May 1978 explains it, and then the report of György Schöpflin is written based on this report, published by Minority Rights Group. The Witnesses to Cultural Genocide was published in 1979 in the volume entitled Romania’s Minority Policies Today that was published in New York in the edition of the American Transylvanian Federation Inc. and the Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, with the foreword of György Schöpflin. See also: Tóth, Sándor: *Jelentés Erdélyből* (Report from Transylvania). II. Párizsi Magyar Füzetek 13. 1989. Introduction. 5–16 p.

³⁰ The document was later forwarded – with current information – to Károly Király, the former member of the CC of RCP and the Romanian Parliament. It deals with the letters of the Vice President of The Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality written to leading Romanian personalities, in which Károly Király expresses his deep anxiety about the violent assimilation attempts of the Romanian Government against Hungarians. Király was obliged to move from Tirgu Mures, a town populated by Hungarian majority to Caransebeș where he was assigned to be the director of a furniture factory. See the whole text: Révész, Béla: NATO dokumentum a romániai magyar kisebbség helyzetéről (A NATO-document about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania). *ArchívNet* 2005. 1. <http://www.archivnet.hu>

Commission of Hungarian-speaking Workers on 15th March said that ethnic problems must be examined based on class aspects, and “if discriminations occurred in Romania, then they did not occur based on national, but on class interests”.

7. Kádár also spoke about the solution of ethnic problems with socialist solutions. In an interview published in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* the previous year Kádár declared: “In the 20th century, an ethnic problem cannot be solved by 19th century standards. The fate of the minority cannot be separated from the fate of the majority. The ethnic issue is one of the issues that will gain their final solution in socialism, based on the fact that socialism provides free development for the whole society, including the minorities within. In today’s Europe, the fate of nations and ethnic minorities cannot be solved by recalling past glories, only by the correct application of the lessons of history.” This last sentence can be interpreted as a warning to Hungarians living in Hungary, or as criticism to the Romanians, or both. Kádár, while he is probably anxious about the fate of the Hungarians in Transylvania, has to operate carefully, if he does not want to see the revival of nationalism and irredentism in Hungary.
8. Kádár – according to the declaration – during his meeting with Ceaușescu last year agreed that for both countries the right solution of minority issues lies in building socialism; at the same time, he admitted that the solution of the problem are an internal affair of each country. During the meeting an agreement was reached on opening the border for local traffic and about the establishment of a Consulate in Cluj Napoca a long time wish of local Hungarians and about the establishment of a Romanian Consulate in the Hungarian city of Debrecen. Despite this, concerns in Hungary about the fate of Hungarians living in Transylvania did not subside. Gyula Illyés, the well-known Hungarian writer published articles in the December and January issues of the Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet* expressing concern for the increasing oppression of the Hungarian minority in Romania. When Ștefan Andrei, secretary of foreign affairs of the Party visited Hungary, the issue was obviously discussed, but judging from the brief statements issued and published on the press of both countries, no visible progress was made on the matter.

9. While it is not probable that Kádár would encourage the re-emergence of Hungarian territorial demands for Transylvania, the Romanian failure to improve their treatment of the Hungarian minority will most likely not satisfy Budapest’s expectations, leading to continued or even increased tensions between the two countries. The assumption is that it is not in the interest of the Soviet Union for the situation to worsen but it may be tempted to apply some degree of pressure on Romania in response to the Hungarian minority concerns.

The NATO report reflects the British Intelligence’s precise summary of the background of the historic ethnic conflict between Hungary and Romania, focusing on the current problems, that is, those of the 1970’s forwarding the information to the NATO Council, one of the most significant deliberative bodies of the organization. A very important approach of the report is that it made a connection between the increasing protests on behalf of the Hungarian minority and the opposition movements in Eastern Europe. Using material from legal and illegal sources of intelligence, the report was able to document the tensions between the two countries, it also offered dubious solutions to end the controversy, using official documents and unofficial or informal hearsay material. A common feature of the above mentioned documents is the article written by noted Hungarian writer Gyula Illyes published in the Christmas 1977 issue of *Magyar Nemzet*. In fact, while the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party calls it a “problematic writing”, the NATO report makes reference to the “very strong article” by the “highly respected Hungarian writer”. There are no data about the fate of the NATO report. János Kádár read the document without commenting on it. In the next decade, its most significant findings became increasingly valid.

2. *Urbanization, Village destruction: motives, opportunity, pretext*

After the publication of the three-volume *History of Transylvania*³¹ in 1986, the already tense Hungarian-Romanian relationship was further burdened by ideological conflicts. The Romanian Government did their best to make people and the international public opinion believe that the history book contained “fascist, chauvinistic and racist statements” and “forgeries of history that harm the memory of the victims of the Horthyist terror”.³² In their campaign, “the nationwide plenary sessions of the Committee of Hungarian-speaking Workers” was also enrolled in the effort. On 27th February 1987, a new session Commission of Ethnic Affairs was organised and even non-experts criticized the *History of Transylvania* without reading it and made their statements on prepared texts. Ceaușescu argued for the theory of Daco-Romanian continuity, spoke about the Hungarian-Romanian cooperation against the Turks and declared that the ethnic issues had already been solved in Romania. He commented on the book that “it was a forgery of history” that was thwarting cooperation between two socialist countries.³³

But the anger fuelled by the Romanian political leadership was only an element of increasingly vocal national homogenisation efforts. At the 10th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, the Secretary Gen-

³¹ *Erdély története I-III* (*History of Transylvania I-III*). [edited by Béla Köpeczi]. Akadémiai, Budapest, 1986.

³² On 7th April 1987, the *Times* published an advertisement that with the publication of the book, “under the aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, history has been forged”. Under the same title, another text were published in English written by academic St. Pascu, M. Musat and Fl. Constantinu (A Conscientious Forgery of History of Transylvania under the Aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences *Romanian News Agency*.), enumerating the opinions of Romanian historians about the Dacian-Romanian Continuity, the independent Province of Transylvanian, the national effort of duke Michael, the rightfulness of the Romanian revolution in 1848–49, the Hungarian oppression in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, citing Marx, Lenin, Tolstoi and Björnson. The Trianon Treaty of Peace was evaluated as the resolution of the Romanian population of Transylvania, in North Transylvania, the oppression of the Hungarians between 1940 and 1944 and the deportation of Jews were emphasised, and finally it was declared that ethnic issues were already solved in Romania. The edition was considered “revisionist, chauvinistic, reminiscent of the Hungarian history writings of the Horthy-era”. See: Köpeczi, Béla: *Erdély története harminc év távlatából* (*The History of Transylvania from a 30-year view*). *Kisebbségkutatás* 2006. 1.

³³ See: at the same place.

eral highlighted the changing role of the state: “No doubt that after the elimination of the exploiting classes, in harmony the developing homogenization of the socialist society, the role of the state and the instruments it employs also changes.”³⁴ When making reference to the nationalities of Romania and until the mid-eighties, Ceaușescu made specific references to “all of the workers – Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and other nationalities”, but this expression was replaced by “all of the workers without any differences, our whole people”, “all citizens of our homeland” and “nationalities living together” at the session of the Committees of Hungarian and German Workers at the end of 1984.³⁵

However, the process of cultural homogenisation was begun much sooner.³⁶ In the first quarter of 1985, the ethnic and district stations of the Romanian Radio were discontinued in Cluj Napoca, Targu Mures and Timișoara, the editorial staff and its nearly 600 employees were dismissed. The Hungarian TV channels had a similar fate. From 1986, the material of the museums in Transylvania was transferred to Bucharest,³⁷ and Hungarian books became unavailable for the readers

³⁴ N. Ceaușescu: The Report of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party about the activities of RCP from the period between Congress 9 and 10 about the future tasks of the Party. 6th August 1969. In: *Romania on the way of building a many-sided developed socialistic society*. Politics, Bucharest, 1970. 297 p.

³⁵ See: A Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsának feladatairól a XIII. pártkongresszusi határozatok fényében (In the light of the Resolutions of the Party Congress 13 about the tasks of the Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality). *Előre*, 29th December 1984.

³⁶ Süle, Andrea R. : Románia politikatörténete 1944–1990 (Political History of Romania 1944–1990). In: *Románia 1944–1990. Gazdaság- és politikatörténet* (Economic and political history). Atlantisz – Medvetánc, Bp., 1990. 265–269 p.; Lipcsey, Ildikó: A román nemzetiségi politika négy évtizede (Four decades of Romanian ethnic policy.) *Külpolitika*, 1989. 2. 64–66 p.; A stratégiai áttörés terve (The plan of strategic breakthrough). In: Tóth, Sándor: *Jelentés Erdélyből* (Report from Transylvania). II. Párizsi Magyar Füzetek 13. 1989. 124–133 p.

³⁷ “Connected to the preparation of the party meeting, the first room of the Museum of Local History in Cernat where the most ancient monuments of local history were exhibited was evacuated and was filled with the material presenting the periods of the Dacians to present day and the Ceausescu-era, based on the guidelines of the County Museum. However, on the county level it was considered so important that the Secretary of Propaganda Affairs ordered the leader of the Securitate to check it in person on Saturday, 7th November.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 10 November 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d.

in the libraries.³⁸ Bilingual inscriptions and street names disappeared in Transylvania, and the majority of streets of Hungarian towns were renamed in Romanian. The number of books published in Hungarian decreased to 50 % in 10 years; in 1972 265 books were published in Hungarian, but only 225 in 1980, in 1987 much less than 200. Only 2 million books of the 50 million copies published in 1981 were Hungarian, but based on the ratios, this number should have been around 4 million. After the Second World War, there were six independent Hungarian theatres in Romania – much more in 1956, since 4 companies operated only in Cluj Napoca – up to the 1980's, only two theatres remained: one in Cluj and one in Timișoara. The two large theatres of Transylvania were integrated into Romanian theatre companies: in Târgu Mures and Sfântu Gheorghe. From the end of the 1970s, the number of Hungarian primary and secondary schools decreased to 25 %. Based on the earlier Act of Education, 15 students were enough to create an ethnic class, but until the beginning of the 1980s the students could learn in Hungarian primary school in case of 25 students and in secondary school in case of

³⁸ “The distribution of all Hungarian press products was suspended throughout Romania for 1990. The chances of press subscriptions were very narrow even this year, but until 1989 it was allowed to subscribe for Hungarian press products not containing political and cultural references. The customs procedure well-known as for Hungarian press products makes it impossible that even a letter written in Hungarian should be allowed in Romania.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th December 1988. In the recent weeks, Chlef Bogdán, teacher of Romanian and French language was nominated as the director of the “closed library” of Sfântu Gheorghe, 54 years old (his wife is Hungarian) who is renowned for his hatred for Hungarians. The town propaganda secretary is Chlef’s best friend. The new library director was assigned to annihilate everything in the library and in the Székely Museum that is Hungarian as soon as possible. The ambition of the director leaves no doubt about that he will accomplish his mission as soon as he can. The “cleaning” will begin in a few weeks. Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th February 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. “Our cultural reporter has made an in interview with A. Pezderka who takes over the library in Romania. Pezderka told: The Romanian party does not intend to give back the books of 500,000 ROL value, as defined in the earlier agreement. Strictly for our own information, he handed us a list composed by him about our orders. From the list it turns out that only a small quantity of the books ordered by them has been transported up to now, one part of them is still being printed, another was not even sent to the printery. According to Pezderka, the Romanian intention is clear: since he cannot satisfy our demands, based on the principle of reciprocity, he will decrease his orders from Hungary.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 1st December 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. d.

36 students. While in the school year 1977–78 the number of Hungarian primary school students was 7–8 %, in 1986–87 this ratio was only 5 %. The practice introduced in 1956 according to which one could take an entrance exam also in Hungarian at any university of the country and in case of students a Hungarian group could be established was ceased. In the Department of Hungarian Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University 32 instructors taught in the school year 1964–65, but only 14 in 1988. In the school year 1986–87 7 students got a degree of Hungarian Studies, but since it was the state who gave jobs to graduating teachers, engineers and doctors, less and less of them got a job in the areas of Transylvania populated by Hungarian majority. In 1985, 5 of the 22 final-year students got a job in Transylvania, and since 1987, it was the norm that Hungarians having a baccalaureate or a degree were employed in nearly exclusively Romanian-speaking areas.³⁹

The situation worsened with news gradually coming out of Romania at the beginning of 1988 about the urbanization project of gigantic proportions, later called “village destruction” scheme. Romania declared in March that the majority of the population of villages will be relocated to so-called agricultural centres of urban character within the framework of the urbanization project. According to his own admission, President Nicolae Ceauşescu was preparing for the project for more than 20 years.⁴⁰ The details of the President and Secretary General of the Party were made known to the world of his speech delivered on 29th April 1988. The number of villages (then about 14,000) were to be decreased nearly half – declared Ceauşescu at the session of the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The central committee quickly accepted his declaration at its next session, and in May the forty county party committees also announced support for the project. In place of the about 7,000 villages to be eliminated, they wanted to create 350,000 hectares of field and nearly 500 large industrial and agro-biological complexes.

³⁹ See: Cabinet Decree 54/1975 about the position of graduates in the industrial production.

⁴⁰ The CC of RCP passed the principles of the improvement of the administrative-territorial reorganisation of the country and of the urbanisation of villages in October 1967. But exactly what it means was conceptualised by Ceauşescu in his comment held at the Congress of People’s Committee Presidents in 1976: “As for the urbanisation of villages we do our best to decrease the number of such settlements (...) and establish strong centres, the most important social and economic activities are focused on mainly in developable communities and villages.” 1989. 2. 78 p.

This project affected 2,000 largely Hungarian settlements, mainly in counties Harghita, Alba, Bihar, Cluj, Satu Mare and Covasna.⁴¹

The initial shock was followed by sharp Hungarian, and then, international protests. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations spoke up against the project. At the end of February the United States declared that they will deny Romania most favored nation status because of her human rights record. The most favored nation status trade privilege was given to Romania for her early independent foreign policy within the Soviet bloc. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany learned about the village destruction plan with “the greatest anxiety”, since it would affect the German minority living in Romania. At the Vienna follow-up meeting dealing with the Helsinki Final Agreement it was repeated in several speeches: the provision of ethnic rights is an organic part of normal interstate relationships, and the meeting in Vienna cannot ignore the event connected to it.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Romania in the beginning of April and explained: the Hungarian Government was informed with deep anxiety about the fact that in Romania the names of settlements had been used only in Romanian from 3rd April. Furthermore, they told him that the elimination of smaller settlements would modify the ethnic composition of the country and this measure would discriminate the ethnic minorities. The forcible eviction of residents would violate the most basic human rights; with the elimination of thousands of the villages inhabited by ethnic minorities their sense of community and preservation of heritage would be weakened.⁴² In this situation, Károly Grósz made an unexpected announcement in the middle of July at the national meeting of Worker Guard commanders, when he declared that he would soon start official negotiations in the Socialist Republic of Romania.⁴³ His proposal was accepted by the session of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party Secretary on 28th March 1988, and the official invi-

⁴¹ See: Vincze, Gábor: *A romániai magyar kisebbség történeti kronológiája 1944–1989* (Chronology of the Hungarian minority in Romania). László Teleki Foundation, Budapest, 1994.

⁴² The events were published only three months later. The spokesman of Foreign Affairs István Komoróczy about the Romanian measures. *Népszabadság*, 7 June 1988.

⁴³ Munkásőr-parancsnokok országos találkozója (Nationwide Congress of Worker Guard Commanders). *Népszabadság*, 13 June 1988.

tation transmitted by Bucharest with the proviso that “the date of the visit should be diplomatically agreed”.⁴⁴ According to the decision of the Political Committee made at the session on 14th June, the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs of the two parties should have a preparatory initial meeting where they would discuss the elements of the Hungarian-Romanian relationship. If these initial negotiations were successful, there would be a basis for the later negotiations with the Heads of the Governments and later a meeting of at Secretary General level.⁴⁵

The demonstration held at the Heroes’s Square in Budapest on 27th June rewrote the planned scenario for both Budapest and Bucharest. At the mass demonstration organised for the first time since 1956 about 40 to 50 thousand people (according to the police 20 to 30 thousand, and according to the participants more than 150 thousand) demonstrated against the plan of village destruction program.⁴⁶ Next day the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest and informed him that the Romanian Government decided to close immediately the Hungarian Consulate in Cluj Napoca and demanded that the staff of the Consulate should leave Romania within 48 hours. The decision was justified by the Hungarian demonstrations against the Romanian resettlement plan.⁴⁷

On the same day, the Council of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality held session. The approved statement hailed as the greatest achievement of the Ceauşescu-era that is “securing consistently the total equality of all compatriots and the unity of the workers.” They resented and declared unacceptable the chauvinistic, irredentist, and revanchist manifestations of the People’s Republic of Hungary that “purposefully distort reality and treat with hostility the great achievements of the Romanian people through the new socialist social system that not only falsify the present, but also the historical past.” Next day the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party took up the question

⁴⁴ NAH M-KS 288. f. 7/802. ó. e.

⁴⁵ NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1028. ő. e.

⁴⁶ *Hősök tere. June 88 27.* editor.: Csaba Varga. Eötvös, Budapest., 1998.; Attila Arakóvács: Délibáb az utcasarkon (Mirage on the street corner). *Beszélő*, 1999. 9.

⁴⁷ On 28th June the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania called in Pál Szűcs, Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest and informed him about the Romanian party and state leadership according to which the operation of the Consulate in Cluj Napoca is considered to be ceased, and the crew of the Consulate should leave Romania within 48 hours. *Népszabadság*, 29th July 1989.

of the Romanian- Hungarian relations in a similar vein.⁴⁸ Ceaușescu declared that “certain chauvinist and nationalistic circles, in order to distract attention from problems wanting for solutions, employ methods that even Horthy would not have allowed”.⁴⁹

The tense situation and its background were summarised by a comprehensive report prepared in Bucharest that was forwarded to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Ambassador.⁵⁰

Based on Nicolae Ceaușescu’s own conception, in the autumn of 1986 we obtained the first information about a comprehensive plan of resettlement according to which a demarcation of area where settlements can be built will be outlined, and the real estate and settlements outside that demarcation will be eliminated. According to the plans of that period, the affected real estate will be nationalized. The former owners will be compensated at 20% of the value of their property. These owners would be housed in rental units in the village center or elsewhere in the new settlement, generally with smaller plots of land (250 square meters). Vice Prime Minister Ion Dinca explained at the meeting with Comrade Vánca⁵¹ that with this new method, for example, with the elimination of superfluous roads they would gain back 500,000 hectares of land for agriculture. Another objective was to eliminate the differences between villages and towns.

From these conceptions evolved the program of village destruction and the bulldozer policy. The execution of the program would be just one component and symbol of the historically grandiose Ceaușescu-era. In our view, the redrawing of the ethnic and geographical map of the country, is not directly linked to the broad range settlement program worked out in the 1970’s in Romania. At that time there were no plans to eliminate half of the

⁴⁸ The letter of the CC to the HSWP. *Népszabadság*, 30 June 1988.

⁴⁹ See: *Történeti kényszerpályák – kisebbségi realpolitikák* (Forced orientations – minority policies). op. cit.

⁵⁰ A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása (The present situation of the village destruction project). Pál Szűcs ambassador’s proposal forwarded to Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi. Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12 December 1988. 198/Szt/1988. HSWP Department of Social Policy NAH M-KS 288. f. 22/1989. 22. ő. e.

⁵¹ Jenő Vánca was the Minister of Agricultural Affairs between 1980 and 89, himself born in Brasov (Brassó), Transylvania.

settlements. Thais why it is untenable Ceaușescu's claim that the project undertaken is a 20 year plan.

It is true that earlier resettlement plans were frequently discarded. The modification and destruction carried out in Bucharest were often done by on-site decision made by Ceaușescu himself (not only due the building program of the new government quarter) and as part of the creation of several town centres in the country. In underdeveloped regions, for example in Moldova, the new centres meant a positive change, a kind of improvement, but in other cases, for example, in Transylvania, they contributed to the uprooting of historic and ethnic characteristics. The Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party admitted that "settlements in Transylvania are more compact".

The plan of village destruction involving many settlements, real estate and masses of people – was unique in the world – and had from the very beginning a negative bent in terms of ethnic policy, since the settlement program was used to strengthen the Romanian character of ethnic areas and weaken the centuries-old compactness of Hungarian ethnic groups. The redrawing of the map of Romania by Ceaușescu would have immeasurably negative consequences for the Hungarian ethnic minority, their values and for the preservation of the universal Hungarian and European history and culture. Since the ethnic characteristics of towns were changed in the past 70 years in favour of the Romanians, the existence of the Hungarian ethnicity remained more or less untouched in villages. The disruption of this network of villages is the greatest danger. For example, the fate of churches and cemeteries is unclear; the majority of the properties are church property. We could assume that there may remain some historic buildings or monuments and others may be transferred by the church. However, since the church does not have the necessary financial means; many monuments could be lost, as it happened in Bucharest. The ethnic character of Transylvania would decrease with the redrawing of the map, since many villages would be eliminated, replaced by uniform new settlements and towns, becoming characterless, as it happened in the case of numerous towns in Transylvania.

Between 1986 and 1988, many villages were destroyed around Bucharest and modest small settlements were built where the whole population were forced to move in, while the existing villages were eliminated. Around Snagov, in the autumn of this year some villages were already destroyed.

The former owners had to dismantle their own houses, or else they had to pay for the contractors to do it. In the housing blocks they are not owners but renters. This is not only a violation of human rights, but also illustrates the forced character of the whole project.

It is noteworthy that the Romanian party leaders did not support the village destruction project until the beginning of this year. The project was mentioned only in a few speeches given by Ceaușescu. The situation was the same in the time of People's Councils, where Ceaușescu argued for speeding up the resettlement plan. He declared that the number of 13,000 villages must be radically decreased to 5 to 6,000. After the execution of the plan at most 2,000 villages should remain, and in accordance with the number of agricultural committees 558 agricultural centres must be established. Until 1990, 2–3 model agricultural centres must be established, and until 1995 the building of agricultural towns should be ended, and until 2000 the whole project must be executed in its main lines.

After the congress, the resettlement of villages received a greater emphasis in the propaganda effort. The media got weekly instructions to promote the execution of the plan. The Party's Central Committee and representatives of the National Council of People's Committees set up a Committee in charge of carrying out the project, and the Prime Minister shortly thereafter became its leader.

A decision, which was not made public, was made about the fact that county plans would be worked out and finalised in a few months. Although there were doubts about the feasibility of the program (at issue were financial resources and the capacity of the building industry), but the dismantling phase was fast approaching. There was information from the ethnic areas of the county of Covasna, where the whole plan cycle would be completed by 1992.

In fact, based on the speeches given by Nicolae Ceaușescu all preparations were made for the village destruction program.⁵² The area around Bucharest was a showcase of the consequences of the program.

⁵² See also: Hunya, Gábor: Falurendezési terv a határozatok, nyilatkozatok és sajtóközlemények tükrében (Urbanisation plans in the mirror of resolutions, declarations and press publications). *Tér és Társadalom*, 1989. 2.

When the report was made, “the top secret, highly confidential document made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership” could no be known for the Hungarian Embassy, but the document was in possession of the Hungarian intelligence “from an operational venue”, and it also reached the narrow leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party via the Department III/I.⁵³ The Department III/I. operating within the framework of foreign intelligence officially could not execute missions against “fraternal socialist countries” including Romania, but really the operational fields marked with X were in the area of fraternal. It was also an open secret that many agents of the Department of Foreign Intelligence of the Securitate, the Departamentul de Informații Externe (DIE) arrived in Hungary from Romania.⁵⁴ The documents evaluating the meeting of the Secretaries General Chief of the two parties on 28th August in Arad, made for the session of the Political Committee by the Foreign Department of the Central Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also turned the attention to this issue: “Violating the agreements concerned, Romania is doing wide-range intelligence activities in Hungary. To neutralise these activities, the competent authorities of the Ministry of the Interior should make an evaluation report about these activities against our state security, including the circles connected with embassy staff and the activities of Romanian intelligence present in Hungary.”⁵⁵

The document of the Hungarian intelligence sent to Budapest, cited below was not on the agenda of the Political Committee, but all of the

⁵³ Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára (Historical Archives of State Security Agency) (ABTL) Állambiztonsági Miniszterhelyettesi Titkárság iratai 1.11.1. 27. doboz, 45–13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988. 174–183 p.

⁵⁴ Dr. István Horváth (former Minister of the Interior): There was some cooperation between the organisations regulated by bilateral agreements. The Hungarians had such agreements with the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia and Austria, and we were preparing to sign such an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany. So there were certain agreements of cooperation between certain countries. There was cooperation and (...) there was also competition. And there was a manifestation, I must say, that we did not like, let us say that it is not important to write about in the daily press, but the Yugoslavian intelligence was operating in Hungary, in the same way as the Romanian intelligence. Memorandum about the session of the Committee Examining the Intelligence Activities of the Prime Minister, 6th July 2002, Delegation Hall of the Parliament. NBB-5/2002–2006.

⁵⁵ NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1035. ő. e.

members of the Committee and from among the Secretaries of the Central Committees, including György Fejti received the material.⁵⁶ The introduction of the report contains the summary of the Ministry of the Interior about the evolution of tensions up until 1988 and their reasons:

The competent authorities of the Ministry of the Interior – based on a high-level political decision – are continually informed about developments in the Romanian situation, the Romanian moves and their outcome. According to this:

The Romanian authorities increased in July the discriminative actions against Hungarian representations and their employees in Romania. The selective control at airports was extended to our staff and experts in long-term missions and their family members, and also to their relatives visiting them.

In a departure from earlier practice, an incident took place involving a Hungarian holding of diplomatic passport which was confiscated and a shipment consigned and sealed by the Ministry of Foreign Trade, was opened and returned to him 8 hours later. There is suspicion that our diplomatic pouches are monitored electronically.

In parallel with the discriminative measures against Hungarian citizens assigning official missions in Romania, the Romanians are trying to make the impression as if the Hungarians were not able to or did not want to provide the appropriate circumstances for the unhindered operation of the Romanian Embassy in Budapest. The advisor assigned to be in contact with Romanian diplomats accredited in Budapest told the diplomats of other countries that an expert of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited to Budapest at the beginning of this month and his assignment was to make a plan about the evacuation of the staff and families.

The successor of the Romanian ambassador in Budapest allegedly will not be career diplomat, but a well-known historian or academic. It is also

⁵⁶ Sent to: Comrades Károly Grósz, Dr. János Berecz, Judit Csehák, Csaba Hámori, Pál Iványi, János Lukács, Miklós Németh, Rezső Nyers, Imre Pozsgai, István Szabó, Dr. Ilona Tatai, György Fejti, Péter Varga III/III. 12., Irattár (Archives).

rumoured that the instead of an ambassador a provisional caretaker official will be appointed.

The are signs that there is resistance against the resettlement plan and that the leaders of Covasna and Harghita counties are trying to hinder the execution of the programs, since they did not prepare in a timely manner the proposals for elimination of villages and are also trying to bargain with the central organizations.

There are people who think that given the dissatisfaction in some villages populated by both Hungarians and Romanians with the resettlement program, the emphasis of Ceaușescu's speeches has shifted. In one of his speeches he said that the measures do not have to be executed so urgently, and in another there was a variation in the number of settlements to be destroyed.

There are prominent personalities and their family members among the Romanian citizens migrating to Hungary from Romania and not intending to return home (for example, the children of high-ranking officers of the Securitate, the daughter of the former Minister of the Interior, an ex-body guard of the President-Secretary General).

On the Romanian side of the border everything is done to prevent the migration of people. A Securitate brigade of 2,800 was sent near the Romanian-Hungarian border. Their main task is to prevent the illegal emigration of Romanian citizens to Hungary and to strengthen border control. To reinforce border guards, newly recruited Worker Guards are also deployed. On 15th July, shots were fired at a railway car behind the international express train to Biharkeresztes, and there are also unconfirmed reports of the presence of Securitate officers, with the mission to create among refugees in Hungary.

We obtained the rough Hungarian translation of a top secret document issued by the Romanian Communist Party for high-level political leaders. The material – assuming that was not disinformation – gives us an insight to the thinking of the highest Romanian leadership about the relationship of the two countries and about likely “solutions”.

(...)

Our agencies are still paying monitoring events and adopting measures consistent with their sphere of authority.

The Bucharest-originating document provided no further information about purpose and character of the material itself or the circumstances surrounding its distribution, and there was not comment on part of Hungarian intelligence either. But the observation that the document “may have been sent to us as a provocation” suggest suspicion on part of Department III/I. In addition, the translation of the text was not done by the Hungarian state security agencies either, but “a rough and extracted translation” was obtained by intelligence. And this fact rightfully raises the question whether or not it was possible that a document drafted in Romanian “for the highest political leadership” could be translated into Hungarian at once in the Ceaușescu-era, or it is only a bogus disinformation document made for the Hungarians.

However, the style and content of the document suggested that the document may be genuine and intended for the Party’s bureaucracy mid-level leadership. From the documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, it was known that proposals were complete only when the issuers of the concerned departments were identified. In the document obtained, the issuers are the Secretary, the Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Romanian Communist Party. Therefore, it can be assumed that document was confidential and prepared by the Department of Agitation of Propaganda of the Central Committee made with the active contribution of the DIE (Romania’s security agency) that intended to provide guidelines for the party apparatus (and perhaps leading press representatives) on how to handle the tense situation leading up to the summer of 1988. The stylistic feature of the document that it contains many *epitheton ornanses* like “our beloved Homeland, dear Romania”, “the great leader of the Romanian Nation, of our Homeland, Comrade Ceaușescu” may also support this assumption, since these elements were widely used in mass propaganda but rarely appeared in documents made for the highest political leadership. The document was not published later either;⁵⁷ therefore, supposedly it was used as an internal party document.

⁵⁷ Andrea Varga’s kind information.

The document, apart from the usual ideological arguments and pompous, meaningless rhetoric and some revolting statements, contains some really remarkable information.

- The intelligence material otherwise prone to the irrational, nevertheless identified the Hungarian national debt figures closer to reality than, in an attempt to calm public opinion, disclosed by the Hungarian government. It is well-known that Prime Minister Miklós Németh admitted only in the end of 1989 that the earlier statistical data on the Hungarian national debt was false.
- All the conditions necessary to go forward with the resettlement project summarised in nine points were ready for the elimination of more than 7,000 villages. These conditions included the project timeline, the financial and technical requirements, including the involvement of Romanian National Army. However, in the light of subsequent events, the effect of vehement domestic and international protests could not have been an exaggeration, even though we do not have more precise information on this.
- The Romanian government imposed 15 conditions to continue the Romanian-Hungarian talks with the probable aim that upon the likely refusal of those conditions the Hungarian side could be portrayed as uncompromising in resuming dialogue. Otherwise, the Romanian side would not have demanded next to the high minded respect for Romanian national sovereignty, the absurd demand that the Hungarian Government should take the commitment to “end illiteracy”.
- During 1987, according to Romanian data, altogether 1,262 citizens migrated to Hungary, while according to the Hungarian statistics, 10,445 people migrated to Hungary. This difference is explained by the arrival illegal migrants and those who arrived in Hungary with a valid passport but refuse to return to Romania. The Ministry of the Interior declared on 10th June 1988 that from the beginning of the year 4,977 Romanian citizens had declared that they did not want to return home, and until the end of the year, 12,273 people were granted temporary residency from the Hungarian authorities.

Recently, the humiliation of our beloved Homeland, our dear Romania and the international discredit of the whole Romanian Nation and the smears

against our great leader of our Homeland Comrade Ceaușescu and the whole Romanian leadership has continued.

Certain countries interfere in the internal affairs of Romania and endanger the revolutionary socialist achievements and endanger our socialist state. Our beloved Romania has always strived that who live in Romanian should have the same rights and obligations. It must be accepted that people living in Romania are Romanian citizens regardless to their nationality.

The party and state leadership of the People's Republic in Hungary is pursuing a nationalistic policy, the political leaders want to create a distraction from the serious economic and social problems of the country. They do their best to discredit socialism building Romania before the international public opinion with falsehoods. The Hungarian leadership also misinform the Hungarian people about the real conditions in Romania, on the rights and the life ethnic minorities of our country and they portray a false account of our resettlement program.

Suffice to say that the Hungarian People's Republic economy is burdened with high debt, amounting to 19 billion dollars that at the moment is unable to repay. The country sustains itself by borrowing. The economic development of Hungary is far behind Romania's achievements.

Hungarian goods cannot be sold abroad, the Hungarian technology, chemical industry and other branches industries are completely outdated. The exchange of goods has been the characteristic of the Romanian-Hungarian commerce for a long time. It is only due to the understanding of Romania and the patience of Comrade Ceaușescu that Romania is willing to buy low-quality products from Hungary.

Henceforth the economic relationships will have to be revised. Romania cannot endlessly sacrifice its economy to help a country that permanently violates the rules of cooperation, a country that is encouraging Romanian citizens to leave their homeland, encouraging the Romanian workers to act against our beloved Homeland and discrediting Romanian socialist achievements abroad.

The chauvinist leaders of Hungary, instead of solving their own social problems, interfere in the affairs of neighbouring fraternal socialist country, under the leadership of the great builder of socialism, son of our beloved homeland and the people, Comrade Ceaușescu. The Hungarian leadership also denigrate the Romanian nation.

The Hungarian Government calls the criminals escaping from the rightful fury and punishment of the Romanian people refugees. At the same time, the Hungarian Government keeps it secret that thousands of Hungarians citizens search for asylum abroad and request political asylum in other countries, without intention to return to Hungary.

Certainly, we cannot and do not want to solve the internal social crisis of the People's Republic of Hungary, but we expect the Hungarian Government to solve these issues within their own country, and should not be engaged in the Romanian nation's revolutionary building of socialism. That is why we, at international forums, such as in Vienna, we declare that all states should solve their own problems, and states should be banned from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

Hungary makes territorial demands on our beloved Homeland coupled with concern about the situation of our Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. The chauvinist leaders of Hungary also keep it secret that there are ancient Romanian territories and what is more, also in the territory of Hungary, Romanian towns and townspeople.

If someone could have territorial demands, then it would be our dear Homeland, Romania; but we do not speak about these rightful demands for the sake of friendship and the peace of neighbouring peoples. But we are always ready to defend our socialist achievements against aggressors, with arms if we must. We are not afraid of threats, particularly not in the use of military force. The Hungarian attempts to conquer territory are condemned to failure. It does not only derive from the qualities of the Romanian National Army, but also from the high-level preparedness, commitment and patriotism.

We have the appropriate information about the fact that based on their equipment, the Hungarian Army can be called modern, but in its thinking it, morally is still at the level of Horthy's army, and as for its human

material, it is far behind our National Army. The Hungarian military leadership is bland, alcoholism has reached critical levels.

The only military force that can be called modern is the Hungarian Air Force, although the airplanes are getting older, and there is no money to replace them. At the same time, the homeland air force of our beloved Homeland Romania has the equipment to defend our national air space.

The Romanian National Army will undertake enormous tasks in the forthcoming resettlement program. On the one hand, in conformity with regional development regulations, our units will participate in the creation newly designed functional districts; on the other hand, they will participate in the planned transfer of residents, assisting to convert the newly freed areas for agriculture.

The resettlement program begun on 1st June must be accelerated in every area. All assistance and support must be provided to the individuals and organizations that were appointed by the central administration to carry out the required tasks. The Presidential Decree clearly determines the tasks.

Within the territory of the country, the following tasks are to be done apart from the already mentioned:

1. Early registration of the population (composition of families, age, occupation, nationality, qualification, social status, etc.)
2. Estimating the required labor force, occupational distribution and evaluation of requirements.
3. Definition of the new functional districts. Estimating the requirements of skilled labor, with special attention to industrial capacity.
4. To achieve the goals of the project, residents need a structured reorientation. In this task local People's Council and the emerging new People's Councils and divisions of Party organizations will have a special role. The police will be in charge of public order.
5. The new building area must be secured and the dismantled area must have protective measures to avoid encroachment during the building phase.
6. Each citizen has to be given a job somewhere in the country. With this step we want to guarantee each Romanian citizen the right to work. If the citizen does not want to take the assigned position, this does not exempt

the citizen of the obligation to move to the designated residence. Refusal to move or placing stumbling block against moving endangers the great socialist transformation of our country, and requires appropriate measures on part of the authorities wish to accept the position granted to him or her, he or she is not exempted from the obligation to move to the previously marked region and dwelling place. Denying moving endangers the socialistic reformation of our Homeland; therefore, the authorities are obliged to make the appropriate measures against it.

7. Each citizen must be granted the chance to voluntarily undertake to move and accept a position, for a certain period of time, in the resettlement areas.

8. Proper provision must be made citizens moving, including food supply and other social services (health care, school, kindergarten, etc.).

9. Moving requests for multiple families is only possible within the framework of voluntary moving. In case of non-voluntary moving, we must insist on strictly adhering to the requirements of the economy and the regional experts. The proximity of relatives is not reason enough to ignore the strict principles of moving to the designated residence.

As for ownership matters, our guiding principle is that all land within the territory of our beloved Homeland Romania are state property; therefore, they are exclusively managed by the state.

As for the ownership and breeding of animals, a separate amendment of the decree will be drafted, considering the resettlement project and the formation economic areas. The areas have to strive to become self-supporting.

We have an enormous set of tasks before us – the creation of nearly 500 industrial agro-biological complexes – but this is endangered by the neighbouring People's Republic of Hungary by attempting to thwart the development our socialist society.

The chauvinistic Hungarian Government does not consider the reality of socialism, the fact that our dear Homeland Romania lead by its great and faithful son Comrade Ceaușescu is working on the realisation of a developed society. Nothing proves the anti-socialist nature of the chauvinistic Hungarian Government more than the fact that the heroic son of our Nation Comrade Ceaușescu, on occasion of his 70th birthday was

awarded, on behalf of the Soviet party and state leaders, with the Order of Lenin. If the accusations about our beloved Homeland and its great leader Comrade Ceaușescu disseminated by the chauvinistic Hungarian political leaders were true, then he would not have been awarded with this order for building socialism. The award itself is the best example that the Romanian Government represents the socialist advancement, while the Hungarian leadership denies its greatness.

This is why the dialogue between the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and the Central Committee of Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party will take place only if in the future the Hungarian leadership:

1. Desists in a policy of humiliation the Romanian Nation and its leaders.
2. Desists in the shameful forgeries of history
3. Ceases the interference in Romanian national internal affairs
4. Commits to stop disinformation about Romania in the Hungarian press and literature, banning all writings and articles humiliating Romania
5. Accepting the fact that that Romania has jurisdiction over any Romanian citizens, regardless of nationality
6. Repatriates Romanian citizens illegally migrating to Hungary without preconditions
7. Repatriates Romanian citizens who travelled to Hungary with official travel documents, and after the expiration of such documents did not return to Romania
8. Strictly abides by the Treaty of Friendship and other important international conventions related to Romania
9. Withdraws declarations that are against general principles of peace and international relations
10. Initiates legal proceedings against those that express hostility against Romania and the development of socialism by the Romanian people.
11. Makes a commitment to strictly abide human rights and enforces them. Guarantees housing and jobs to all residents of Hungary until de Millennium.
12. Solves the issue of alcoholism and drugs, and ends illiteracy
13. Commits not to violate Romanian territorial sovereignty
14. Commits to best practices in economic relationships and takes notice that Romania cannot henceforth support the troubled Hungarian economy.

15. Desists interfering in the affairs workers of Hungarian nationality living in the territory of Romania, and takes note of the protest of the Committee of Ethnic Workers.

The nationality has been solved in the socialist Romania, since laws guarantee rights and the ethnic minorities can have their own journals, schools, cultural institutions and book publishing houses.

Under the leadership of Comrade Ceaușescu, the heroic son of our beloved Romania, exemplary cooperation developed with the workers of German nationality in Romania Those who wanted to leave our beloved Homeland Romania could leave it on condition that the German State taking them will permanently contribute to their livelihood and that the state receiving emigrants pays to our homeland the social cost of services such health care and education.

We do not exclude similar mutually agreed upon solution for a determined number of Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. Certainly, Hungary should defray with convertible currency the social expenses of each emigrant. The People's Republic of Hungary would provide proper jobs and housing for the immigrants. The Romanian contracting party should have access to the emigrants to ensure their welfare. Only under these conditions would the Highest Council consider taking away their Romanian citizenship.

The Romanian people have manifested great patience towards the Hungarian people under the direction the prominent personality of our Comrade Ceaușescu. We hope that the Hungarian leadership will finally recognise their mistaken policy and will cooperate with our people in the interest of social and economic progress and independent socialist development.

Both party and state leaders are responsible for their people, for history, and for humanity. Based on this, we cannot renounce from furthering our economic and social development and we cannot allow ourselves to leave the path of building socialism, the modification of our economic and regional landscape to allow the elevation of our people. This is why we have redouble our efforts to carry out as soon as possible the resettlement and economic plan. To achieve this we have to mobilize our people, our

party so that we can stand up as one man for the sake of the flourishing of our beloved Homeland the Socialistic Romania.

Secretary General of the RCP
Central Committee of the RCP
Secretariat of the RCP

Classification Clause:

The material is top secret, made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership with a determined serial number, in a number of copies indicated below; therefore secrecy guidelines must be followed in handling this material.

Since the documents were undated, we only can have only assumptions about it. On the one hand, the supplement refers to the fact that “the resettlement should be accelerated from the 1st of July”; Then, by indicating the day, the report itself also refers to a date in July. However, it is precisely known that the report was on the agenda of the Assembly of the Vice Minister of National Security of the Ministry of the Interior on 20th September, 1988. After discussing the report, Szilveszter Harangozó, the head of the Department summed up the discussions. As for the political situation, he established that the opinion of the Communist Parties is not completely the same about ethnic issues, and the socialist camp is not completely unified in evaluating these political topics. “The interest of our policy – he added – is to prove the anticipated negative consequences of the policy of the Romanian Party, but at the same time, it must do its best to build legal contacts for cooperation and to develop in the direction of mutual understanding. At the moment, the manifold possibilities of strengthening contacts and the examination of communication methods are the most important factors. In this case, it is natural that national security agencies become more active, but despite this situation, we must react to the events in a moderate and sober manner. Therefore, we should be informed about different political events, not only considering the state security aspect. We can help the political leadership if we exploit our multiple opportunities of information and explore the realities based on facts, providing a clear picture

for the decision-making”.⁵⁸ After the digressing on the security agencies, it is worth continuing the exploration of the embassy report mentioned above that summed up the history of the village destructions in 1988 until the end of the year⁵⁹:

By the summer, by the time when the conditions were ready to begin the resettlement program international protests also grew. The Romanian Government was forced to consider this fact, even if they have not given up their plans. The protests had its results, even if ending the program was not a realistic expectation. The Romanian Government changed their tactics in several steps. At least they attempted to make the project more acceptable, but later – mainly concerning the use of bulldozers – they extended the deadline for the initiation of the program.

In July and August, they tried to make the “resettlement project” more acceptable in two directions. On the one hand, with the control of propaganda, they tried to influence the public opinion in a positive direction. The county authorities attempted to gain the support of the population with differentiated policies and tried to silence the protestors. The press justified the historical necessity of the program, as a historically justified natural process. Although the acceleration of the process seriously burdened the state, but, so to say, it serves the interests of the population. At the same time, the use of the word “destruction” was prohibited; only “modernisation” and “development” could be mentioned. Later, from September, among the arguments cited was that they intended to stabilise the village population in place, providing appropriate educational, cultural and health services for them. Towards diplomatic corps they emphasised that the process is voluntary, constitutionality sanctioned, and that buildings can be dismantled only with the permission of the citizens, and the whole exercise serves a humane process. In county Harghita, the first copies of applications in which a Székely villager requests the dismantling of

⁵⁸ Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (ABTL) (Historical Archives of State Security Agency) Állambiztonsági Miniszterhelyettesi Titkárság iratai 1.11.1. 27. doboz, 45–13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988, 174–183 p.

⁵⁹ A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása. Szűcs Pál nagykövet felterjesztése Várkonyi Péter külügyminiszternek. (The present situation of village destruction plans.) Proposal of Ambassador Pál Szűcs forwarded to Péter Várkonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12th December 1988.

his house to be replaced by new modern town-like dwelling in the settlement. This process was boycotted in Cehetel, Simonești, Tipari, Timiș and Bodovice. Another method was applied in Bodos, a small settlement in county Covasna: the local People's Committee "asked for" the elimination the settlemant in the name of the local population, saying that the village had no prospects for development. A nationalistic propaganda was used among the Romanian population of villages in the Banat region: the forces of the Romanian nation broken up in history must be joined again. In several places, those who refused moving in village centres were threatened with various sanctions.

The mentioned attempts were shielded from the public as it also was kept from the public the intended deadline of mid-August to complete the resettlement project in the county. In county Maros, they wanted to eliminate 266 villages from 487. According to the plan, 91 small villages also would diminish to 76.

In county Hargitha, 110 villages from the 264 were listed for destruction. This network of Hungarian settlements goes back to the 14th century, and the churches were built in the 14–15th centuries. According to the original plans, after completion, the list of villages to be destroyed would have been published, and the nationwide execution of the urbanisation project would have begun from September. The public notification was delayed up to today, as a tactical delay.

The first information was leaked in August and stated that that destruction program would not be begun in September, and only the building of agricultural centres will start this year with minimal disruption and without the use bulldozers. However, these plans were also delayed. That is why dismantling or destruction works did not begin in Transylvania. If some of such cases can be found, then they are connected to earlier building plans. It must be mentioned that much misinformation was published about the initiation of the program in Transylvania, and it is also the consequence of disinformation by the Romanian authorities. But our press should screen those.

Another tactical modification was observable from September, in parallel with the delay of the execution of the plans. It is imaginable that only the name of the centre will remain from the villages to be integrated, that is, the little set-

tlements nearby will be attached to agricultural centres. These settlements can lose their name and live on under the name of the central village. For example, the name of Chiurus, the birthplace of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma would be attached to Brates, a village quite far from Chiurus, and the village will officially become a “street” of Brates. If small villages are then eliminated, it is not a settlement, such as Chiurus that will be eliminated, only a street.

This “rearrangement” would subordinate centuries-old Hungarian villages with very young Romanian settlements. According to the plans, the small villages Borosneu Mic and Dobolii de Sus belonging to the village Borosneu Mare will be attached to the township Valea Mare to be established. Valea Mare is a village with about 1,200 inhabitants, and at the moment belongs to the town of Intorsura Buzalui. It is a completely newly established settlement inhabited by Romanian majority. Borosneu Mic has 500, Dobolii de Sus has 300 inhabitants, both of them are Hungarian villages. Borosneu Mic is one of the most ancient settlements in the region, Balázs Orbán indicates it in an article published in Székelyföld that the village was registered with 16 gates in 1567.

Another similar plan of “reattachment” betrays the same intention of Romanisation. The authorities are preparing to attach the villages Lisnau and Bicfalau from township Uzon to Dobirlau. Dobirlau is a village with 1,000 inhabitants, all of them Romanian, but it gained the rank of township a few years ago. It was established in a forest clearing location. However, Bicfalau was an independent parish already in the 14th century, and Lisnau is a similarly ancient settlement, both of them are inhabited by Hungarians.

Another possibility that may soon be introduced is the slow choking of the condemned villages. Schools, shops, health service and transport will be eliminated in these settlements, and no new building permits or restorations will be permitted. This is a tool to force people to move in the newly established centres. In county Covasna, there are at least 30 such small villages.

For example, Ceaușescu’s declaration in Pecica – one day before the Romanian-Hungarian summit meeting in Arad – where he stated that the resettlement plan should take into account the values of the past and the present and both must be preserved, was an attempt to confound public opinion.

By September, the press was given instructions to slow the propaganda effort. They did not have to write about the different phases of the execution anymore declared by Ceaușescu. Later, 2010 was cited as the final deadline for completing the project instead of the earlier mentioned 2000.

In the meantime it became clear that the Government considers everything that is against the resettlement program as a mortal sin and these sins are immediately punished. The replacement of Mihnea Gheorghiu the former President of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences and the proceedings against Nicolae Iorga and several researchers of the Institute of Historical Sciences illustrated this fact. It could occur because the plan was too strongly connected with the name of Ceaușescu.

At the full session of the Romanian Communist Party on 28–30th November, the Secretary General was dealing with the village destruction plans relatively much. He emphasised that the plans must urgently be executed. In this sense, he strengthened the village destruction program. We can evaluate the situation like this, because the session passed the speech edited based on the April Theses. Ceaușescu in his April speech spoke about the elimination of a few hundred townships and he said that it is necessary to eliminate 50 % of the villages. He declared the plans must be finalised in a few months. The unchanged character of the final aim is indicated by the declaration in the speech given on 28th November that 558 agricultural-industrial centres will be established with the development of existing villages. At the same time – evidently for tactical reasons – he was speaking about the issues from different perspectives once again. He said that up to 1995 in the towns, and until 2000 in the whole country, in its main outline, the housing issue will be solved. Apart from his speech in March, he did not speak about the fate of the 13,000 villages, but only about the 2,300 townships to which administratively all the villages will be attached. Despite his speech given in April, he declared that the number of townships will be preserved, but he could do it easily, since if the village destruction project is completed, 6,000 villages will remain; that is, more than 2,300 townships. According to his declaration owners of houses outside the borders of the settlements do not have to destroy their houses, but new buildings can be built only within the borders. This also suggests a silent intention to go ahead with the village destruction project. In a village, a family can have a plot of 200–300 square metre, including the house, the courtyard and agricultural activities. These

criteria can make for significant further changes possible, since there aren't such small plots practically anywhere in the country. In the end, Ceaușescu said that the establishment of modern dwellings in the villages is an objective requirement to be provided by socialism, and he is convinced that serious steps will be taken in this field in the next decade. Ceaușescu spoke about assisting the population with building materials and credits, which reveals that the Government was aware that the available resources of the state are insufficient to carry out the resettlement plan and the population should take at least part of the burden.

In our opinion, the temporal enumeration of the facts – partly based on the public announcements, partly on the experience and information of the population – clearly expose the original intentions of the Romanian Government. It showed that it was not a withdrawal, but just the introduction of tactical modifications. A decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and the delay of the beginning of the project. Ceaușescu never said – although the deputation of the Christian Democratic Faction of the EU Parliament also encouraged him to do so – that it would give up his plan of village destruction, he even made it reaffirm by the extended forum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. This evaluation is nearly unanimously accepted by the body of diplomats in Bucharest, at most a few of them are silent, having no opinion. When Ceaușescu was in power no decision was ever withdrawn, at most, some were not carried out. That is why, it is not only necessary, but it pays to continue with the public counter-propaganda.

In our opinion, we still have to compare facts with Romanian propaganda. From a point of view of human rights, we also have strong arguments. We can prove that there are serious contradictions in this year's publications at different occasions – mainly based on Ceaușescu's speeches. Our main argument is that despite the many warnings, the village destruction project was not given up or withdrawn, and tactical steps did not deceive anyone in the world. We can also emphasise that Romania is also responsible for exaggerating press positions in the same way that is responsible for the original plans. Since they do not provide credible information, despite the high-level contacts, they refused any fact finding possibilities. At the same time, we have to bring to light other forcible and discriminative measures of assimilation against the ethnic minorities apart from the plans of village destruction,

namely the cutback of native language education and the lack of cultural facilities, the exchange of population and the forcible relocation of students.

The popularisation of the program in the country or in Transylvania is imaginable, since according to the people's economic plan of next year, 40,000 dwellings will be built in rural environment, and according to the five-year plan, this quantity of flats will be doubled. This number was taken over by the propaganda after the extended session of the CC of the RCP on 28–30th November.

The opinion of the report stating that “only tactical modifications were introduced, the decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and the delay of the beginning of the project” was supported by the events that happened next year. It is not only about villages to be eliminated will not be destroyed, but they will let them perish “on their own.”⁶⁰ The political leadership applied ever increasing manipulative means when they tried to make people leave their ancient settlements on a voluntary basis. In the first phase, village assemblies were convened, and these assemblies “democratically” voted the integration of neighbouring settlements in certain counties. The integration of the settlements of mixed population required separate tactics. The “interests of assimilation” could also be realised on the other way round; that is, also Romanian villages could be integrated into villages of Hungarian population. These times, the remaining Hungarian population was “attenuated” by changing the original ethnic composition. Furthermore, on top of this, the decision-making process does not follow the stated guideline whereby economically weaker settlements should be attached to stronger ones.⁶¹

Gyula Fejes, the first Vice President of the Committee of Hargitha county, in the beginning of February 1989, sent “credible information”

⁶⁰ Süle, R. Andrea : Terület- és településrendezési tervek Romániában (Plans of the rearrangement of settlements and territories in Romania). *Regio*, 1990. 1.

⁶¹ Maros megyei községek megszüntetése (The cessation of townships in Maros county). Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 May 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. d. 112/Szt/89.

to the Hungarian ambassador about the processes taking place in the county.⁶²

So-called village assemblies were convened in all of the townships in Harghita. Residential integrations were voted at such assemblies. According to this plan, the representatives of the villages were convened to Miercurea Ciuc, and the modification of the village system was voted here. The county forwarded the results of the votes to the Nationwide Commission of People's Committees in order to be "passed". Finally, the "configuration" of the new townships was consecrated in a presidential decree. It is assumed that these presidential decrees will not be published, since Romania would then document a new phase of village destruction to the outside world.

In county Harghita there were no mass protest because of the village integration, but relatively many people protested individually: they did not want to participate in village assemblies and in the voting process. Therefore, many people were arrested and these people were usually locked by the police for several days. The county director of the National Savings Bank – who was born in a village condemned to elimination – tried to agree with the county Secretary of the Party. A. Costea told the financial director that they had to carry out instructions from Bucharest and there is no room for discussion, and if he does not want to have an "unpleasant experience", he should stop protesting.

Other incidents also reveal the execution of the village destruction program with new means. In county Harghita, 19 collective farms were also eliminated or integrated. 6 of them are of the villages to be eliminated, 13 are of other settlements. As far as Gyula Fejes knows, 700 kilometres of electric grid wires are planned to be uprooted in the county, which is also connected with the elimination of small settlements.

There are also Romanian villages among the settlements to be eliminated. Usually, it is considered a "tactical element" so that it can be said that not only Hungarian villages are subject to elimination. But the integrations

⁶² A falurombolási program új szakasza. (The new period of the village destruction project). Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 3 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 1989/74. d. 37/1/Szt/89

are not sustainable on the long run, since in several cases settlements are at a distance of 10–15 kilometres are attached together. For example, Pauleni Ciuc is nearer to the seat of the county Miercurea Ciuc (6 km) than to Frumoasa (15 km) where it was attached; that is, the intention to eliminate later must be present in the background of the integrations.

Gyula Fejes thought that the present methods of village integration were similar to the period of the violent establishment of collective farms when “everything was signed against the will of the population.”⁶³

A female language teacher of Hungarian and French who migrated to Hungary from Targu Mures in February 1989 spoke about similar experience. During her administrative procedures, she met with representatives of several villages along the river Nirad who turned to the country authorities with their complaints. They told that the presidents of the committees of 8 villages near Miercurea Nirajului were called in the town where they were informed that for now the elimination of the villages will not take place, but the electric and gas supplies will be cut-off, coupons for bread, oil, and sugar will not be accepted and from September, the school will close. The Embassy in Bucharest decided to check the credibility of the information on condition that if it proved to be true, they would turn to publicity, informing the Centre of Human Rights of the UN and the Swedish Government coordinating the nominations of special representatives.⁶⁴

Information such as the above and also similar cases contributed to put in the foreground the problems of the Romanian Hungarian relations when the Department of International Party Relationships of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker’s Party made a proposal about the situation of the socialist countries and the relation of Hungary with the socialist countries for the Committee of Legal and Administrative Affairs. The argument of the report clearly reveals the controversy of the ambivalent and contradictory party logic of a leader-

⁶³ See: Oláh, Sándor: A hatalomgyakorlás intézményei és eszközei az ötvenes évek székely falusi társadalmában (The means and institutions of practicing power in the Székely rural society of the 1950). In: *Fényes tegnapunk* (Our splendid yesterday). Pro-Print, Miercurea Ciuc, 1998. 22 p.

⁶⁴ Információk erőszakos, magyarellenes lépésekről Romániában (Information about violent anti-Hungarian steps in Romania). Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 20 March 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 1989/75. d. 00685/4/89.

ship on the verge of change of the regime: while it wants to accuse the Romanian Government of not following the principles of Lenin's ethnic policy, it wants to represent the issue of the defence of minorities referring to the universal character of human rights at international forums.⁶⁵

Humanitarian issues – in accordance with international tendencies – were put in the foreground both in the relations and in the internal practices of the socialist countries. It is our basic interest that a modern interpretation and a civilised treatment of human right issues should be outlined in the socialist world. It is inevitable to urge the solution of the problem, because the national-ethnic issue inherited from the past still strongly influencing the system of relations of the region has become an acute problem in all of the multi-national socialist countries, and it is an organic element of bilateral relations. The force of the common model, the requirement of monolithism covered this problem earlier, but it could not prevent the survival of tensions, it rather lead to their extension. The national-ethnic element is a basic factor of multilateral relations that – lacking advanced solutions – deepens distrust hindering cooperation in every sphere. However, the improvement of cooperation seems to be the hardest in these fields.

It means a serious burden that the Romanian ethnic policy and practice seriously violate the general norms of human rights, the Leninist principles. The oppression of the nationalities in Romania discredits socialist thinking and worsens the conditions and atmosphere of the multilateral cooperation between the two countries. All of this harms common interests. The inevitable problem, due to its connection to human rights, became an international affair and led to the isolation of Romania. The main reason for this are is not Hungarian foreign policy, but the internal policy of Romania.

Under such circumstances, bringing these set of issues, at least in their general conceptual connections, to a common forum should not be delayed for long. We always have to take into account the measure of expected support. Our experience in the vote at the human rights congress held in Geneva

⁶⁵ A szocialista országok helyzete; hazánk kapcsolatai a szocialista országokkal (The situation of socialistic countries; Hungarian relations with the socialistic countries). Department of International Party Relations of the CC of the HSWP. 10 May 1989. Committee of International, Legal and Administrative Affairs 9 June 1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 62/5. ő. e.

shows that when problems like these come up, we can, at most, count on silent goodwill or neutrality from our partners. The level of support should be measured on a case by case basis.

In bilateral relations, we have to aspire to facilitate a political and moral atmosphere necessary to solve concrete questions at hand and at the same time push for the observation of the individual and collective human rights in all countries where ethnic Hungarian live.

We have to take into account the historical fact that anti-Hungarian activities were always part and parcel of Romanian foreign policy ever since Great Romania was created. In relation to this, we have to assess signs in this leadership that for them the principle of natural borders is not an alien concept. The persistent or strengthening impulses of nationalism of a country suggests that their leaders will consider nationalism as an appropriate tool to channel internal social or political tensions.

The open anti-Hungarian foreign policy of Romania could not lead to open military confrontation due to the still existing, although weak ties of the Warsaw Pact⁶⁶, while Moscow finally gave up the intention “to at least preserve the traces of peace between the two countries”.⁶⁷ The deadlock of the conflict can be dated to the weeks before Ceaușescu’s failure. News of more or less reliability about the operations of the Romanian Army arrived in the entire year⁶⁸, but all of this was overcome

⁶⁶ Borhi, László: „Magyarország kötelessége a varsói Szerződésben maradni” – az 1989-es átmenet nemzetközi összefüggései magyar források tükrében (“It is Hungary’s duty to remain in the Warsaw Treaty – international connections of the changes in 1989 in the mirror of Hungarian sources). *Külgügyi Szemle*, 1007. summer-autumn.

⁶⁷ Ripp, Zoltán: *Rendszerváltás Magyarországon 1987–1990* (Change of the regime in Hungary 1987–1990). Napvilág, Budapest., 2006. 503 p.

⁶⁸ “After the rearrangement of the division of Moldavia that was done in the end of last year, in Transylvania where massive military forces were ordered from different areas of the country, the population gave information about military operations. At the same time, a serious number of reservist officers were called in.” ABTL Intelligence Reports. Romania in 1989 was planning a military offensive against Hungary. Allegedly they are convinced that they can quickly reach the line of the river Tisza unhindered before the Hungarian Army could mobilise its units in the Dunántúl region.” NOIJ summarising reports 21 June 1989. ÁBTLL 2.7.1. 062111

by the information out of Budapest published in the Austrian press according to which Romania was preparing for military action against Hungary in the autumn.⁶⁹ The same information could be obtained by the Ministry of the Interior when the Ministry warned the Presidency of the HSWP⁷⁰ for the preparations of a military action against Hungary in its Informative Report of 19th June 1989. The Minister of Defence of the Németh-government was afraid of similar conflicts: “With my colleagues we concluded that that Ceaușescu Clan, to preserve their power, may decide on adventurous steps, and it is not even excluded that they will take some aggressive, provocative steps against Hungary.”⁷¹ The negotiations between the Round Table of the Opposition and the Embassy of the Soviet Union in the second half of 1989 are a special event within this period. For the first time, Russian ambassador Boris Ivanovics Stukalin visited the session of the Round Table of the Opposition held in the Parliament on 18th August 1989. He replied to the question about the Hungarian population across the border diplomatically, without mentioning any concrete information: “We have to admit that on ethnic issues many deformations took place with the leninist approach, mainly in recent years.”⁷² Two days later Ivan Aboimov, the Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the representatives of the Round Table of the Opposition. József Antal drafted a position paper of the MDF (Hungarian Forum of Democrats) that may seem strange today. It stated that, if Hungary remains within the Warsaw Pact, it can

⁶⁹ Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Vienna, 3 August 1989. TÜK Declassified documents, Austria 1989. NAH KUM XIX-J-1-j. 20. d. 003390

⁷⁰ The proposal of the Department of International Party Relations of the CC of the HSWP forwarded to the Presidency about our participation at the session of the Political Negotiating Body of the Warsaw Treaty held in Bucharest. 30 June 1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 59/1. ő. e. 2. o.

⁷¹ Kárpáti, Ferenc: A román forradalom és Magyarország, 1989 (The Romanian revolution and Hungary, 1989). Egy volt miniszter emlékezése (The memories of an ex-minister). *História*, 2000. 4.

⁷² Az Ellenzéki kerekasztal ülése, a Szovjetunió nagykövetének látogatása 1989 augusztus 18 (The session of the Round Table of the Opposition, the visit of the ambassador of the Soviet Union 18 August 1989). In Bozóki, András (ed.): *A rendszerváltás forgatókönyve. Kerekasztaltárgyalások 1989-ben* (The scenario of the change of the regime. Round table negotiations in 1989). Vol. 3. Magvető, 1999. 245 p.

be a guarantee against the attacks from neighbouring states, and naming Romania he said that “the possibility of attack cannot be excluded”.⁷³

The session of the Political Council meeting of the Warsaw Pact held in July 1989 gave an opportunity for the party leaders of both countries to meet. Since upon the request of Rezső Nyers, the meeting was considered an “unofficial negotiation of comrades”, the proceedings of the meeting were not published.⁷⁴ The president of the Hungarian Party brought up the issue of political relations that since the meeting of Arad, not only did not improve but, on the contrary, reached a low point. In fact, no proposals of the Hungarian side were answered and all were ultimately rejected. The declaration on nationalities planned at the meeting of Arad was not prepared and the debate over the resettlement program had international repercussions and was continuing. “It is true that this is a Romanian internal affair – Rezső Nyers added – but it generates nationality problems in nationality areas, transcends our borders and worsens our relations.”

Ceaușescu responded in a sharp tone: Romania is an independent socialist country that solves its problems on its own. On this basis, the Romanian Government will not allow the presence of an international control commission to monitor the resettlement program. In his view, this Hungarian initiative amounts to nothing less than a deliberate attack on the friendship of the two peoples.”

Regarding the resettlement program, Ceaușescu said that such phenomena can also be observed in other places. The program was started 20 years ago, with the aim of improving the living conditions of village residents. He agrees with the earlier proposal that a Hungarian delegation should visit Romania in order to study the issue as soon as possible. He pointed to the fact that it is the Hungarians who do not want to receive a Romanian counterpart delegation; at the same time, the Hungarians are emphasising the control functions of their proposed delegation. International visitor rules designate the host country as organizer of the visitor’s programs. However, the Hungarian delegation may visit

⁷³ Memorandum about the meeting of Ivan Aboimov with opposition politician 17 October 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Soviet Union/1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 84. d.

⁷⁴ Rezső Nyers’s report to the Operative Committee of Political Affairs 10 July 1989. HSWP KB Információs jelentések. 1980–1989. évi iratjegyzék. 288. f. 11. cs. 890708 ő. e. 213–219 p.

counties with a Hungarian majority, but visitors should experience the entire territory of Romania. Romania “is one of the few countries” – declared Ceaușescu – where, in the widest sense of the world, there is native language education, local and national newspapers are published in the language of the nationalities as well as functioning theatres.” He called it strange that these facts are not known in Hungary, or if they are known, then the Hungarians distort these facts. The Romanians would like, he added, “that Hungarian citizens of Romanian descent would enjoy the same rights as the nationalities in Romania.”

At the height of the senseless negotiations between the parties, Nyers even commented that “along the Hungarian-Romanian border, tourists are literally undressed, and even the newspaper *Népszabadság* [Hungarian daily paper] is confiscated. Such incidents are not present in any of our other borders. (...) We consider the restriction on *Népszabadság* against the principle of free movement.” Ceaușescu’s response contained the usual phrases: Romania cannot allow the import of press material containing views with which we cannot agree. “If *Népszabadság* publishes only articles about Hungary, then it will be allowed in Romania. But if it propagates the Western socialism, arguing for the supremacy of the West, then it would not be allowed in.”

Despite the above, at the session of the Political Committee on 24th July 1989 agreed in its resolution that a delegation of the Hungarian Parliament should travel to Romania in the near future to study resettlement issues, and with a similar purpose, a Romanian delegation should be received in Hungary.⁷⁵

Hardly a week later, the proposal went nowhere. On 3rd August 1989, György Fejtő received Romanian ambassador Traian Pop at his own request, and the Ambassador handed the following memorandum to the Secretary of the Central Committee, in the name of the Romanian Communist Party and Government:

The leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and the Government of the Romanian Socialist Republic considers the interview with Mihai, former King of Romania aired by the program “Panorama” of the Hungarian television on July 31st as an anti-Romanian, anti-socialist and fascist provocation, and a direct attack against the independence and sovereignty of Romania.

⁷⁵ NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1072. .d. e.

In view of the nature of this action the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and the Government of Romania vigorously protests to the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Government of Hungary. At the same time wishes to convey the following measures taken:

- 1.) Romania withdraws the invitation for the visit of a Hungarian delegation to Romania.
- 2.) The Romanian Ambassador to Hungary is recalled for consultations.⁷⁶

The continuing propaganda war evidently contributed to a darkened mood in Romania reinforcing reasons to leave the country, even illegally. This is why new regulations nominally issued to defend the Romanian borders, but really to stem illegal border crossings caused an outcry in public opinion, but also in the Bucharest diplomatic corps.⁷⁷ The State Council of the Romanian Socialist Republic in the middle of July (official bulletin 26. 17. 07. 1989.) with Decree number 170/1989 issued regulations regarding the use of weapons, munitions and explosive material in the border areas, with a Decree number 367/1971. issued regulations modifying earlier border control operations, that is the Government Decree number 678/1969. In section 36 of Decree number 367/1971 (published on 8th March 1976, with subsequent amendments) there were regulations and conditions governing the use of firearms.

Point h./ of the section 3 of Decree number 678/1969. (republished on 17th April 1981.) was modified as follows:

Technical work are performed done and signs are installed in the border zones and in the region defined in point g./ of the present section in order to explore, identify and arrest persons committing border crimes. The length of defence and control fences established within the frameworks of the technical works cannot reach:

– 47 km along the Hungarian border

⁷⁶ György Fejti's report to the members of the Operative Committee of Political Affairs about the negotiations with the Romanian ambassador.

⁷⁷ The execution of the Cabinet Decree about the defence of the borders of Romania. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 September 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 171/Szt/89.

- 35 km along the Yugoslav border
- 20 km along the Bulgarian borders
- 33 km along the Soviet borders

The Decree about border defense, was updated with the following amendments:

- the width of the direct border areas has been modified to 1,000 m from the earlier 50 m, where exclusively plants of low stature can be planted
- hunting and fishing permitted along running waters near the border has been modified to 1,000 m comparing to the earlier 500 m
- the depth of the borderline zone (that was between 30 and 40 km up to now) has not been changed, but the regulation about the building of “control and defence fences” constitutes a new element. (However, the phrasing of this is not clear either in the Romanian text or in the Hungarian translation from more than one and half a month later.)

The diplomats accredited in Bucharest also received the Decree of the State Council with serious misgivings. In their view, the deliberately ambiguous language makes differing interpretations possible regarding the necessity, the subject and the purpose of the Decree. Many of them considered that the Romanian border guards had already authorization to fire, and from then on, the classification of crimes happening inside the zone and the necessity of the use of firearms are left to their own judgement. A leading American diplomat said that “this Romanian measure can serve as prevention of a military attack from abroad.” The number of fences to set up is not specified; therefore, they will certainly be put up in the strategically important areas. A Swiss diplomat informed us that he visited the competent official in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with reference to the complexity of the phrasing, in order to interpret the decree. From there he was sent to the Ministry of Defence, but there they were also unwilling to cooperate, and referred the diplomat to the Ministry of the Interior. He remarked ironically that in none of the places were they inclined to explain the new border regulations, or to make the complicated text clear to him. According to a leading Soviet diplomat, with the new border defence regulation, Romania would like to end all forms of interaction of residents in the

border areas, since with these regulations the presence of outsiders will become doubtful.

The Hungarian Embassy reaction to the new regulations was that in comparison with earlier regulations, it was clear that Romania became even more stringent regarding restrictions in the border zones. By building the 'fences', Romania increased its isolation from the outside world. By increasing the restrictions of freedom of movement and tightening up the rules of transit made more stringent an already over-regulated border transit system affecting the resident population. The new ones did not define border crime, but it stated that "if the subject persecuted in the zone has committed earlier a serious crime and crossing the border would cause extraordinarily serious danger, firearms can be used against them." This, in the last resort, meant absolute freedom in the use of firearms. These measures only strengthened the probability of the rumours that the cruel Romanian police and army would want to commit murder to prevent the flight of refugees into Hungarian territory. Such stories were not alien to public opinion, and the press was especially fond of publishing alleged or actual stories like these, some of which elicited international interest. The so-called "Gyula affair", gained political, legal and symbolic notoriety in early 1989.

3. Embassy detours

The real purpose in leaving Romania was not always to settle down in Hungary. Both Hungarians and non-Hungarians used it as a transit country, in large numbers. Those cases are more peculiar when people willing to escape from Romania wanted to reach Hungary without crossing the Hungarian-Romanian border. These atypical instances also turn our attention to the differences in perceptions and solutions related to the handling of refugees at the time of the fall of the Iron Curtain, in spite of comprehensive international regulations, that in turn, were dependent on the variations in the perception of refugee capacity and security.

On 26th November 1989, the Danish Refugee Council made a decision-setting precedent, in the issue of the first, seven-person group of the 200–230 people fleeing from Romania arrived in Denmark on the 31st of December, 1988. The Council – agreeing with the admission refusal of Danish immigration– did not grant political asylum to them. In con-

formity with Danish asylum laws, the authorities did not return the refugees to Romania. But, since the refugees came from Hungary, they would be able to return to Hungary if authorized by Hungarian authorities. The reasoning could be viewed as recognition of Hungary's status of in the human rights arena: the Danish authorities consider Hungary a 'safe country' from the refugees point of view since the returning refugees would not be sent back to Romania. According to the Hungarian Embassy of Copenhagen, half of the refugees were ethnic Hungarians, but half of the applicants did not want to return to Hungary, because of family reunification considerations. A further motivation to stay in Denmark was the perception that if the refugees gain refugee status, Danish authorities would be more effective in handling the family reunification effort. At this point Danish and international public opinion took interest in the case. Andras Back the Hungarian consul stated that Hungary would be open to review an immigration request on part of the refugees provided that is voluntary and not the result of Danish expulsion. But no such request was received by the Consulate.

On 27th January 1989, the head of Consular Affairs of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the information about the decision of the Refugee Council to the Hungarian consul. The Hungarian consul, after outlining the refugee status set in Hungary and the Government's measures for solving the question, provided information about the regulatory framework of the Hungarian-Romanian agreement on termination of dual citizenship and the unresolved family reunification matter. The Danish side assured the Hungarian Consulate that there will be no forced repatriations. After the police had formally asked Hungary's position on the matter and considering that most of the refugees did not want to return to Hungary, the Danish Refugee Council revisited her decision. The international significance that overgrew the concrete case was that the Danish authorities, from the point of view of human rights, declared for the first time Hungary as a state suitable to receive political refugees.⁷⁸ A year and a half later, a similar case took place in Finland.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Danish point of view about the pleas for asylum of Romanian refugees. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Copenhagen, 27 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 15/89.

⁷⁹ The admittance of Romanian refugees in Finland. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Helsinki, 3 August 1989. Declassified documents

A totally different situation took place in Moscow, an episode with overtones of absurdity, in the middle of 1989. On the 29th of July, a Romanian citizen of Hungarian nationality living in Miercurea Ciuc requested the Hungarian Consulate's assistance to travel to the People's Republic of Hungary, where he wanted to apply for residence. He said that he had been to the Soviet Union with a group of tourists with his wife and he left their hotel before the day of the trip home. He has informed his wife of his intentions and she agreed with his decision. He stated that his decision was a matter of conscience. He was a skilled labourer earning good wages, owner of a house and a car, spending 20,000 ROL for their trip. He had two sons from his first marriage who are raised by his parents and a 7-year-old daughter from his second marriage. From his parental branch, he has cousins in Budapest, but he would like to settle in the countryside, where he has acquaintances.

At the request of the Consular Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Hungarian Consulate in Moscow and contacted the Consular Office of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Information was given on the petition of the Romanian citizen and requested to explore the possibility of sending the petitioner from the Soviet Union to Hungary. While no immediate response was received the Soviet side gave assurance that the case will not be shared with the Romanian side. After two hour consultation with various staff members the Soviet authorities provide the official response: the only way to resolve the issue was for the two parties involved work out a mutually agreed solution. The Soviet side cannot and does not want be involved in matters concerning Romanian-Hungarian relations, particularly on an issue that the Romanian side could perceive as unfriendly.

Afterwards, the Hungarian Consulate informed the applicant that they cannot help him since the Soviet authorities are the only one able to authorize travel. And furthermore, they are obliged to follow the guidelines of their bilateral agreement with Romania. They further advised him to contact the Romanian Embassy as soon as possible – preferably from the airport – and try to give a quite credible explanation for falling behind from his group and ask their assistance to return home. They also told him any further attempts may carry the risk of being handed over to the Romanian authorities. Nevertheless, he made another

attempt to travel to Hungary. The representative of the Hungarian airlines informed the Consul's Department that the man asked for their help at the airport office in Moscow that day at eight o'clock, to travel to Budapest. His request was refused, and they recommended him to register at the Romanian Embassy immediately. After that, he was seen heading to the offices of TAROM, the Romanian airlines. "Since then there have been no developments in the case".⁸⁰

The most complicated – and so least researched – situation was set in Sofia where a Transylvanian group asking for refugee status lived at the Hungarian Embassy for five months. The first report of the case was published in the official weekly paper of the English Communist Party in November of 1988. Beside the title of the report – "Taking Refugees from Ceaușescu" – the subtitle precisely indicated the delicate and extraordinary situation: "Romania's treatment of its own Hungarian minority resulted in a diplomatic incident without precedent in Bulgaria." The paper related that on 24th September 1988, five children and seven adults left a tourist group arrived in Bulgaria from Romania and asked for help in the Hungarian Embassy to join their relatives living in Hungary. Although the Hungarian diplomats ordered a strict news blackout, the information about the defection reached the journalists from the leader of the Hungarian delegation participating in the conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Sofia at that time. At the end of the year, the English reporters turned to the Hungarian Ambassador in Sofia with the requesting to interview the refugees, since they did not receive any information from the staff. Ambassador Sándor Simics refused the request saying that adverse publicity could hurt chances for a positive outcome of the tense situation lasting for weeks then.⁸¹

Behind the scenes, political, governmental and diplomatic participants fought a great tactical battle from the beginning.⁸² The diplomatic messages exchanged with the Romanian leadership made it obvious that

⁸⁰ Plea of migration of a Romanian citizen. Report of the Consul's Department, Moscow, 10 August 1988. HSWP KAO.1988. NAH M-KS 288. f. 31/88.

⁸¹ The letter of British journalists in the affair of Transylvanian refugees. Report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Sofia, 4 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 3/Szt/89.

⁸² Transylvanian refugees at the Hungarian Embassy in Sofia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/1/89.

the situation could not be solved by a bilateral Hungarian-Romanian agreement. Bucharest insisted on the refugees' return to Romania, and that they should request to emigrate from their place of residence promising "readiness to grant it without delay". But the refugees – understandably afraid of the possibility of a serious reprisal – could not accept this in any circumstances, and from the Hungarian side it was considered that their safety was not guaranteed even returning back to Romania. On 4th of October 1988, the International Red Cross was asked for contribution through the Mission of Geneva, and was repeated by the Hungarian Red Cross in its letter of 17th October.

At the same time, diplomatic negotiations were begun with Bulgaria which was emphasising the importance of its neutrality from the beginning. Hungary took the position that the question cannot be solved without active contribution from Bulgaria. Finally, as a result of almost half a year of tactical fights, the situation changed. On the meeting of deputies of Foreign Ministers held in Sofia on 14th of October 1988, the Hungarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs attempted to persuade his Bulgarian counterpart to allow the refugees to leave for Hungary or to a third country. Prior to this they sought the assent of Yugoslav authorities to agree to become the transit country. But the official Bulgarian position was invariably the solution rested in the Hungarian-Romanian agreement. At the same time, the Hungarian side was able to secure from Bulgaria assurances that, among the possible solutions, none would require the refugees to be returned to Romania.

On October, 26, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Government of Hungary asked the Bulgarian government to mediate in finding a solution for the repatriation of the refugees to Hungary or to a third country. Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi negotiated with Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Petar Mladenov at the session of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact in Budapest on October 28, and asked for his personal involvement in a letter of November, 9. At the session, Péter Várkonyi made another unsuccessful attempt to change the Romanian position with Ioan Totu, Minister of Romanian Foreign Affairs.

On January 9, 1989, Prime Minister Miklós Németh met with Andrej Lukanov, alternate member of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Minister of Foreign Trade who was staying in Budapest on the 13th session of the Hungarian-Bulgarian Economical and Technological-Scien-

tific Cooperation Committee. At the meeting, besides the questions of bilateral and economic cooperation realised within the framework of the Committee of Mutual Economic Aid.⁸³ Miklós Németh brought up the case of the 12 Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality staying at the Hungarian Embassy in Sofia for the fourth month. He pointed out that the Hungarian leadership is under an increasing pressure to find a solution by the domestic and international media. The return of them to Romania would be politically unacceptable to both Hungarian and international public opinion. But regardless of this, the Hungarian leadership could not return the refugees to Romania because they are like to suffer physical and psychological reprisals.

Miklós Németh explained that the well-known Romanian position made solution of the refugee problem unsolvable within the framework of Hungarian-Romanian discussions. Therefore, Bulgarian help was needed. He asked Lukanov to convey the Hungarian leadership's relevant request to the Bulgarian leadership and primarily to Prime Minister Georgi Atanaszov. He also asked that as a precondition to solution to keep the status quo and above all, not to take any unilateral steps regarding the refugees. Lukanov made a promise for this in the name of the Bulgarian leadership, but at the same time, he repeated the formerly known Bulgarian point of view. He indicated that the Bulgarian leadership understands the humanitarian character of the issue, and in this regard there are no doubts on the Bulgarian position. At the same time, however, there is an agreement between Bulgaria and Romania on how to handle these matters and that agreement cannot be altogether ignored, since it would not be positive for Bulgarian-Romanian relations. He suggested that another Hungarian-Romanian meeting on foreign affairs should be initiated in the issue of refugees.⁸⁴ Finally, Miklós Németh mentioned that the Hungarian party would find the solution of the issue of refugees before the meeting of Secretary General in Chief

⁸³ Interpreter's report about Andrej Lukanov, alternate member of the CC of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Minister of Foreign Economy's visit at Prime Minister Miklós Németh (Sofian refugee affairs)a BKP PB) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. 11 January 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989/1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/1/89.

⁸⁴ „Our department sees no sense in holding further Romanian-Hungarian negotiations. We are still encouraging the Bulgarian party to make an attempt to solve the problems.” Pro domo comment at the end of the document.

Károly Grósz and his counterpart Todor Zsivkov planned for this year and already agreed in principle, practical and useful.

On January 28th and 29th January the Embassy in Sofia made it possible to the Hungarian press and television to report on the refugees in a limited fashion. It was meant to be a signal for the Bulgarian party to demonstrate that in spite of their agreement, the dragging the affair further is not in the interest or power of Hungary.

Parallel to the coordination efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contacts were made between the International Red Cross and the Bulgarian Red Cross and Hungarian Red Cross to find a viable solution to the refugee problem. They called the attention to the Bulgarian side suggesting that the danger of confrontation with Romania could be lessened if the refugees were turned over to an international organization, allowing the refugees to a third country. They also signalled (as alluded by Miklós Nemeth) that the Hungarian side is unable agree on a specific date for a high level meeting in 1989 until the refugees are staying in Sofia. These developments increase pressure on the Bulgarian leadership to find a solution for the refugee problem.

Finally, on 13th February 1989, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Marij Ivanov told the Hungarian ambassador that they will permit the refugees to leave for Austria with the travel documents and in company of the representative of the International Red Cross. After the thorough discussion of the conditions and details, the refugees left the territory of Bulgaria on February 17, 1989 on an Austrian plane arriving in Vienna. At the request of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian news agency released a press release with the news in the evening of 17th February.⁸⁵ A week after the successful outcome of the episode Ambassador Sándor Simics informed Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Várkonyi in a classified memorandum about the unknown details of the events in Sofia.⁸⁶

According to the preliminary agreement, Christina Kruck, representative of the International Red Cross after arriving to Budapest held a final coordinating discussion at the headquarters of the Bulgarian Red

⁸⁵ Report about the closure of the refugee issues in Sofia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Territorial Department III. 21 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 00172/3/89.

⁸⁶ The leave of refugees. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Sofia. 22 February 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. d. 3/3/Szt/89.

Cross on February 17 at ten o'clock. There was only one question left to agree about. The Bulgarian news agency (BTA) wanted to publish the announcement immediately after the takeoff of the plane transporting the refugees or, else, after arriving in Vienna. Ms. Kruck adamantly decided against it and set the date for the announcement by BTA for Monday, February 20. Finally, it was acknowledged by the news agency.

Ms. Kruck asked the Hungarian ambassador to do his best to keep the news from all unauthorized individuals, particularly the Hungarian press. The Ambassador proposed that one of the diplomats could accompany the refugees to Vienna to provide language assistance but Ms. Kruck declined the offer.

In order to provide the news blackout needed for the safe transport of the refugees, the internal and external telephone lines of the embassy was blocked at 11 o'clock in the morning. From then on, only one out- and incoming line was in operation at the secretariat. At noon, the administrative staff was allowed to leave except for the chauffeurs. From this particular time no one could leave the building of the embassy and no one could come in. At 13.15 the Ambassador in the presence of two Embassy employees described the developments that took place, the decision of the Bulgarian Government, and its importance to the eight adults. They were informed about the circumstances of their meeting with Christina Kruck, representative of the International Red Cross held at 14.30, the details of their trip, reception of their travel documents and the need to sign the required release documentation.

They were reminded on the importance of disciplined behaviour and the need to look out for each other in the remaining few hours. They were also advised to bring only the most essential luggage such as sports bag for each. They received assurances that the rest of their belongings will follow by truck as soon as possible. The Embassy staff provided allowances of 2,000 HUF to each married couple and 1,000 HUF to each child. The refugees received the information in and orderly and were well prepared for the departure. On Wednesday, after the photo shots, they started packing their belongings.

At 14.35 the representative of the International Red Cross arrived, and was accompanied by Ignatov, Marinov the head of Department of International Relations, M. Karaszimeonov, the international lawyer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the deputy head of the Consul's Department and a representative of the "competent authorities". According to

the preliminary agreement two specialists participated and recorded every signature on videotape at the handover ceremony. Immediately after arriving at the embassy, Karaszimeonov informed his Ministry of Foreign Affairs by telephone, and Ms. Kruck also informed her headquarters in Geneva about the events that have taken place. By that time, the 12 refugees were seated already in the small reception room upstairs by that time. First, Ms. Kruck expressed her thanks to the Bulgarian Government and the Red Cross for allowing them to close the case in such a positive way and allowing her to leave. She described the flight schedule in detail, mentioning the Austrian capital as a destination. Ms. Kruck handed the international Red Cross's documents to the adults concerned personally, after being introduced. After that, the refugees signed the documents and the statements prepared by the Hungarian embassy in two languages, in Bulgarian and in Hungarian at the request of Bulgaria. It stated: "I, the undersigned, categorically state my refusal to return to the Romanian Socialist Republic, and I leave the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary in Sofia of my own free will to travel to Vienna⁸⁷ with the assistance of the Bulgarian Red Cross and the International Red Cross Committee of Geneva. I certify that I have received on my behalf (and my children's) this document issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross."

At the end, two small mistakes happened during the carefully orchestrated scenario. It came to light during the handover that the Bulgarian Red Cross, in spite its commitment, did not pay for the airfare because the ticket office would have only issue them in exchange of American dollars. Finally, the Hungarian Embassy provided the \$3,042 needed for the transaction. A few minutes after 3 o'clock, the refugees got on the bus of the Bulgarian Red Cross waiting on the street outside the embassy – which proved to be too large despite the agreed upon arrangements, hence it could not be manoeuvred into the yard of the embassy – and they went to the airport. To check the luggage and examine the travel documents, the Bulgarian authorities provided a separate room for the refugees. As agreed no embassy staff accompanied them. Finally, the ambassador, referring to the state security activity observed: "We experienced that the competent Bulgarian authorities were present

⁸⁷ This could refer to complications around the selection of the target country where Vienna was typewritten in the blank space provided in the declaration at a later date. Otherwise, refugees flown to Vienna arrived in Budapest on the same day.

nearby our embassy in force, but in a very conspiring way on route to the airport.'

However, the action of Sofia surpassed the story of the single rescue. A similarly unknown situation but identical in its initiation was also set in Budapest half a year later. In the summer of 1989, 140–150 refugees from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) entered the Embassy, Consulate, and Department of Visa Affairs of the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) in Budapest, with the intention to travel to the West, to the FRG. At the Embassy of the FRG, they enjoyed diplomatic immunity, but could not leave, because the Hungarian authorities did not let them cross the Austrian border at that time, and according to the bilateral agreement they were liable to be handed over to the German Democratic Republic. The stalemate in the Hungarian-FRG-GDR triangle was resolved by mediation of the Red Cross. In the Committee established to find a solution to the situation were: the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the representative of the International Red Cross, and an Officer of the Hungarian counter-intelligence services. Finally, on August 24, 1989, 101 citizens of the GDR arrived in Vienna from Budapest on a plane of the International Red Cross. The timing could not be accidental, since Miklós Németh and Gyula Horn arrived to the FRG for the invitation of Helmut Kohl next day...

4. Instead of an epilogue

The sources cited highlight the fact the complex problems associated with the migration process are truly a big challenge to both the Hungarian political leadership as well for all organizations, whether of the state or not, that participate in the execution of the relevant tasks. We can see today in the resolution of these tasks that changes in regulatory systems and institutional techniques, and perhaps even more the legal culture, are a little ahead of the changes in other areas of transformation of the constitutional state. This, of course, is related to the fact that the effective and humane management of refugee affairs was adapted to the prevailing legal order in harmony with the international human rights norms. At the same time we should be mindful of the fact that when the prevailing political interest demanded it, then, and

depending on the situation, the application of the (international) legal standards could be placed in brackets.

But the international influence did not prove to be one-sided; hence, the experience was also useful the other way around. The appearance of Romanian refugees in Hungary and the solution of their situation is almost a model tableau for the new migration wave that started in the 90's, after the collapse of the communist system, already from 1988 onward. Therefore, those experiences learned Hungarian solutions strongly contributed to the fact that the Western European countries received the migration wave in a relatively – though with delay – more prepared manner. Finally, in spite of the various mistakes and occasional failures, the newly formed migration system answered unknown before challenges with essentially operational solutions 20 years ago.

VERONIKA KASZÁS

Diplomatic way to the 1951 Geneva Convention

1. Introduction

In March 1989, Hungary joined the 1951 Geneva Convention and the supplementing 1967 New York Protocol in a unique international environment. Since 1987 on, many Romanian refugees, mainly from Transylvania, immigrated to Hungary. They had decided to take this step due to the *“deepening Romanian internal crisis, the aggressive assimilation against the nationalities, the fear of being exiled from their birthplace, and the daily indignity they had to suffer”*.¹ According to official data, the number of immigrants was about thirteen thousand in the spring of 1989, but is estimated at twenty thousand when one includes unregistered immigrants.² From one day to another, the country had to face a brand new social and legal problem without a concrete solution. The situation was even more complex given the tone of international politics during that time.

Since a refugee could not possibly emigrate from another “socialist friendly state” according to socialist ideology, the situation facing the masses of asylum-seekers arriving from Romania was a unique and delicate one for Hungary. In addition, the issue of national ethnicity was also a question avoided in socialist countries, as many of them were

¹ Report of the consul of Cluj-Napoca, February 1988, MOL M-KS-288.f. 32. p.

² Sik Endre: Erdélyi menekültek Magyarországon. In: *Társadalmi riport*, Budapest, 1990, and MOL XIX-J-1-k/1988 137 V-94 2042/T A

deeply concerned by this problem. Hungary was also trying to avoid mentioning the problematic issue of Transylvania and national minorities living outside of Hungary. These issues also determined the style of communication at international forums. Hungary was not able to convey the message clearly to Western countries who were unable to decode the real message behind the socialist rhetoric.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Hungary was able to manage to join to Geneva Convention under these conditions when during that time the only countries within the socialist block that were members were Yugoslavia and China. What sort of role did the Hungarian diplomacy play joining the Convention? What were the pros and cons according to Hungarian leaders? How feasible was it for the Hungarian government to mention the issue of human rights in Romania and the problem of asylum seekers at international forums?

I mainly searched for the answers at the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Affairs Department and the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party (*MSZMP*), the official news of the Hungarian News Agency (*MTI*) and in the Foreign Affairs yearbooks. I also interviewed some of the actors taking part in the events through the different organizations.

The study highlights the different levels of negotiations in foreign affairs. Following the admitted failure of the bilateral negotiations, the possibility of communication at international forums was carefully considered, and thus Hungary finally arrived at a decision to get in touch with the UNHCR.

2. Exhausting the bilateral ways of problem-solving

“Our presumed mistakes can be summarized in our un-founded belief, namely that Romanian politics can be changed through gentle ways of diplomacy, and that the accumulating problems can be solved through a bilateral channel. Moreover, we adhered to some misinterpreted socialist norms.”³

³ Report of Hungarian ambassador, Bucharest, 14th July, 1988. p 93.; MOL M-KS-288.f. 32. p

Although the focus of this paper is not the development of bilateral relations between Romania and Hungary, it is important to highlight that Hungary only started slowly opening up towards multilateral organizations when they realized that, that negotiations with the Romanian government concerning the Hungarian ethnic minority and Romanian citizens re-settling in Hungary brought no results. As minister of Foreign Affairs Gyula Horn put it briefly: *“Practically, we only agreed that we are neighbouring nations and that it is the vital interest of neighbouring nations to ameliorate their relations.”*⁴

Following the announcement of the “village-structure reform” of Ceaușescu (on April 29, 1988), which aimed to reduce the number of the Romanian villages from thirteen thousand to five or six thousand, and due to the increasing number of refugees coming from Romania, mainly from Transylvania, the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party (MSZMP) had to change its position in foreign affairs. The meeting of the secretary generals Károly Grósz and Ceaușescu on August 28, 1988 in Arad was minor proof of the total failure of bilateral negotiations. Even though Grósz mentioned the difficulties of the masses of people continuously arriving to Hungary and of unifying families, the Romanian party defined this phenomenon as artificially generated by Hungarians, and felt it was not the Romanian government’s problem.

As a rule, Ceaușescu considered mentioning the presence of the large Hungarian ethnic minority living in Romania as an undesirable interference in Romanian internal affairs, which was contrary both to the norms of international public law and to the bilateral agreements. Similarly, the discussion between Mátyás Szűrös, secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Central Committee of the MSZMP and Ion Stoian, member of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party at the end of September, 1988 was equally as unsuccessful. The Romanian negotiating party argued that it was the Hungarian Consulate General in Cluj-Napoca that encouraged people to leave their country with the promise of a better life. Romania, however, believed that everyone should stay in their own country.⁵

Documents of the MSZMP that date from September 1988 express serious self-criticism concerning the proceedings over the last decades,

⁴ *Yearbook of Hungarian Foreign Policy*, 9th July, 1989.

⁵ MOL, M-KS 288. f. 32/1. ő.e.

when they had tried to solve the problem of the Romanian ethnic policy solely on the basis of bilateral negotiations, through internal diplomatic instruments excluding the public. *“Our politics based on the misinterpretation of the internationalism and on patiently waiting for the result has not only proved to be unsuccessful, but in the meantime, it even accelerated the assimilation procedure, and tightened our hands in the frames of bilateral negotiations. Our behaviour was too moderate and became less and less accepted by Hungarian public opinion, and along this line dissatisfaction with our official policy became stronger in an ever growing segment of the society. (...) At the same time, our behaviour has resulted in the growing uncertainty of the Hungarian ethnic minority living in Romania, has become a permanent cause of conflict with those living in the diasporas, and has made it impossible to create an appropriate international environment to advance our politics.”*⁶

According to the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest, creating a new Romanian government was necessary to start and carry out new successful negotiations.⁷

Until then, Hungary tried to take some unilateral steps. The new foreign affairs strategy aimed at publishing information and genuine facts on various multilateral, international forums regarding Romania's national ethnic policy and the mass of people arriving in Hungary. The main purpose of this strategy was to transform the events in Romania and the issue of Romanian refugees from an internal affair to an issue of Pan-European importance.

At the international forums, Romania lobbied actively for its interests, which made Hungarian leaders also take more intense steps. The arguments of Romanian politicians in the international organizations, such as the UN, the European Parliament and at the Council of Europe, were explicitly based on socialist ideology. Among others, they stressed that Hungary was provoking national hatred through the incorrect interpretation of the ethnical rights, which *“essentially endangers the interests of all multi-ethnic socialist countries.”*⁸

⁶ MOL, M-KS 288. f. 32/1. ő.e.

⁷ Report of Hungarian ambassador, Bucharest, 14th July, 1988. p 93.; MOL M-KS-288.f. 32. p

⁸ MOL XIX-J-1-j

Thus Romania's activity and aggressive steps⁹ warned against a strong offense: Several documents concerning the refugees underline that Hungary should only publish pure, precise facts, so that Hungary does not expose itself too much to the Romanian offense.¹⁰ In spite of increased external Romanian activity, the negative judgment of the country had grown, and due to its "*behaviour against all norms of traditional diplomacy,*" the acts of Romania only brought make-believe results.¹¹ It is argued that Romanian propaganda concerning the issue of refugees mostly harmed the reputation of Romania, and not that of Hungary.¹²

At the same time, it must be underlined that Romanian arguments were better known within the UN than Hungarian plans, due to an exaggerated Hungarian prudence, that also led to negative results. According to the UN Ambassador's report, Hungarian leaders gave hints without any names or other concrete facts that were often taken by unintended recipients, and thus brought new misunderstandings. The Ambassador wanted transparent information and stressed the necessity of concrete background materials and arguments supported by data about Romanian refugees, the proportion of the non-Hungarian refugees, and the statistics of the unsolved family-reunion cases.¹³

3. Possible ways within the Eastern block

"Most of the socialist countries are struggling with problems of national ethnicity, the open discussion of ethnic issues is considered as nationalism, and the top priority is to keep conflict out of the socialist world."¹⁴

⁹ Besides defensive arguments, the Romanian lobby initiated active offensive steps as well. On the occasion of the 43. Summit they initiated for example to put on the agenda the prohibition of nationalist, chauvinist and Anti-Semitism demonstrations. By this, they clearly aimed at the demonstrations against Romania in Hungary. (MOL XIX-J-1-j)

¹⁰ Visit of the Christian-Democrat Members of the European Parliament in Romania (Bucharest, 4th October, 1988). MOL, M-KS 288. f. 32 p.

¹¹ Report of Hungarian ambassador, Bucharest, 14th July, 1988. p 93.; MOL M-KS-288.f. 32. p

¹² Meeting of the Council of Europe and the Romanian deputies. MOL XIX-J-1-k

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ MOL, M-KS 288. f. 32/1. ő.e.

One of the reasons why Western countries reacted in a moderate way was that the issue was regarded as the problem of two allies, and therefore it was up to the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union to take the initiative in dealing with the problem.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the issue of refugees could not even be mentioned within the socialist block. If this question had been recognised as a problem, the following statements would have followed inevitably. First, if a citizen from a socialist country can be a refugee in another socialist country, this supposed to be a “friend state”, the unity of the whole block would have been put into question. Second, by admitting the phenomenon of asylum, the basic ideology that minorities are the cornerstones of “the friendship between nations” would have been put into question.¹⁶ Instead, documents of that time mentioned “*foreign citizens residing in Hungary*” or “*foreign citizens temporarily staying in our country*”.¹⁷

There were still some international forums based on the respect for human rights, where at least in theory even socialist countries had the chance to try to call attention to the basic rights of the national minorities. Following the guidelines for consultants to the Department of Foreign Affairs of the MSZMP, Hungary tried not to present its argument on the basis of the violation of national minority rights, but on the basis of general human rights, which was highly important to Western countries and in order to prevent any possible offensive by Romania. This point of view allowed Hungary to keep a certain distance from the difficult and complex problems arising on national and historical grounds, and it was simultaneously easier to go along with international socialist ideology.

The rhetoric towards Western countries, however, was not in accordance with the feeling of national solidarity present in Hungarian public opinion,¹⁸ and with nor did it complement the new national strat-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ József Rudolf: *Nemzeti és nemzetiségi önrendelkezés, önkormányzat, egyenjogúság*. Kosuth Kiadó, 1984. p. 200–251.

¹⁷ Tóth Judit: *Menedékjog - kérdőjelekkel*. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1994. p.69–86.

¹⁸ This is partly approved by the “reports on the mood of the people” prepared by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee of the MSZMP and - among others - the high number of anxious questions sent for the radio interview with Mátyás Szűrös on 25th January concerning the situation of the Hungarians living in Transylvania and the Transylvanians having arrived to Hungary. (MOL, M-KS-288 f. 22.p.)

egy announced at the beginning of 1988, which regarded national and historical responsibility for the Hungarians in Transylvania as an important factor, establishing a moral ground for the Hungarian government to protect Hungarians in Transylvania.¹⁹

As members of the UN, the socialist countries also participated in its Committee on Human Rights. Gyula Horn, State secretary of Foreign Affairs, protested against the violation of human and national minorities' rights in Romania in his speech delivered at the meeting on February 27th, 1989: "*Since the protection and enforcement of human rights is a universal obligation, we believe that in this matter we are all responsible.*" This rhetoric is a good example of the trend described above: trying to completely avoid the impression of being personally, "nationally involved".²⁰

However, it would be naive to think that the socialist countries pledged themselves to protect human rights within their own forums. The Soviets considered the humanitarian questions first and foremost as a matter of state security: "*The importance of the humanitarian issue arises also from the general concept of security.*"²¹ Humanitarian issues were important for them because they were aware that Western Europe would only be willing to carry out negotiations concerning military questions if the Soviet block was able to improve the humanitarian field. From their perspective, it was a matter of a formal obligation, which they had to fulfil as a precondition of reaching an agreement on another matter that was far more important to them.

Although there was a working group within the institutional framework of the Warsaw Pact that specialised in human rights and humanitarian questions, it did not exhibit a high level of professionalism, as demonstrated at the conference in Sophia in 1988: "*Most of the members of the human rights working group arrived unprepared without having anything of merit to say, and the whole conference was regarded as a formal obligation. (...) This behaviour also proves that as of the moment, not much essential change can be expected from them concerning their position in the field of human rights.*"²²

¹⁹ This thought has been declared in the radio interview of Mátyás Szűrös in January 1988, as well as in the article Szokai et Tabajdi in *Magyar Nemzet* on the 13th February 1988.

²⁰ *Yearbook of Hungarian Foreign Policy*, 1989.

²¹ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1988 126 VI-1 457-2

²² *Ibid.*

In spite of this, Hungary made an attempt to step up the protection of minority rights at this forum. Humanitarian and human rights issues discussed in Vienna during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe were put on the agenda of the conference on January 12–14, 1988 in Sophia. Hungarian representatives arrived with the mandate to prepare a thoughtful final document for the Vienna conference, including the protection of basic community rights. Their goal was to include national minority rights to the third basket of the Helsinki Convention.²³

As the member states of the Warsaw Pact had their own reasons for trying to avoid the discussion of the question of minority rights, this initiative could not possibly gain their support. The Geneva report states: *“The Soviet Union is struggling with several different problems of minorities and these will not disappear nor will they be solved in the near future. For Czechoslovakia, the “handling” of the Hungarian minority is already enough. In Yugoslavia, the growing dimension of the nationality problem increases the awareness of the leaders, and in addition they are responsive to slander proclaiming Hungarian intentions for revision of the borders. Bulgaria is busy with defending itself against the offenses concerning the renaming of the Turkish minority. East Germany does not care for national minority questions, they prefer to close their eyes when it comes to such problems.”*²⁴

In addition, Poland expressed their understanding of Hungary in bilateral discussions, and stated that they were fully aware of *“all those shameful events taking place in Romania”*, but they were in a difficult position to give a clear statement on this question due to the minority issues between Germany and Poland.²⁵ The reaction of the Soviet Union was somewhat ambivalent: on the one hand, it showed understanding for Hungary’s problems, and it did not make any step to prevent Hungary from voicing its concerns in Vienna, but since there was another “friendly country” involved in the conflict, it did not openly admit that either Hungary or Romania was right. For the Soviet Union, the most

²³ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1988 126 VI-1 126 VI-1 457

²⁴ MOL XIX-J-1-j

²⁵ In the forum of the Warsaw Pact, the argument was of course not based upon this, but on a formal consideration: since the question of national minorities is not included in the Helsinki Closing Documents, including a new issue would require the revision of the whole document.

important priority was to keep the unity of the Soviet bloc, and that was the main reason why it dealt with the issue in the first place.²⁶

It is no surprise that the strongest party opposing the Hungarian initiative concerning national minority rights was Romania, which stressed that *“human relations cannot be based on race, nationality or other similar criteria, because this would lead to discrimination and privileges.”* During the Warsaw Pact conference, Romania also highlighted that the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe did not endorse emigration policies, which were not supported by the Romanian public opinion. *“Romanian citizens search for and find their possibilities in their home country, as they ensure their well-being within the country.”*²⁷

Romania did not attend the conference on human rights issues organized by the socialist countries on April 25–27, 1989 in Kiev, and disagreement among the other countries has since further increased.²⁸

4. Multi-level relations with the West

*“Under the given circumstances (...) we could not allow ourselves not to mention the national ethnic problem surrounding us on a daily basis, but we had to do it in a way to avoid provoking offense.”*²⁹

The relationship between Western international organizations, governments and social institutions regarding the question of refugees in the years 1988–1989 was complex and ambivalent from several points of view. Although networking took place between the different groups, including the state, the opposition and the church, these groups also had their own Western contacts independently. On the one hand, cooperation amongst the groups formed in a way never seen before, partly due to the fact the dramatic increase in the number of immigrants was a new situation in Hungary and the country had to deal with problems it had not previously experienced. On the other hand, it is apparent from government and party documents that the state apparatus was aware of these activities. It maintained direct or indirect contacts with the various

²⁶ XIX-J-1-k/1988 126 VI-1 457-1

²⁷ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1988 126 VI-1 457-2

²⁸ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1989 135 V-1 4938

²⁹ MOL XIX-J-1-j/1988

organizations and churches, and from time to time, it used these organizations for its own networking with the West.

By the end of the eighties, the state itself had built deep connections with Western international organizations. In addition to the possibilities offered by wider flexibility in the surrounding political era, it is also true that the country was motivated by its deepening economic–financial situation.³⁰

Mátyás Szűrös accurately summarizes the changes occurring in foreign policy in his article published in the newspaper of the party “*Népszabadság*” in December, 1988. *“Our foreign affairs (...) have functioned lately as a prior branch of the political sector: it added to the positive international judgment of our country, and – also of high importance – it strengthened the common identity among the different classes of our society because it was supported by wide public opinion. (...) In the last few years, our foreign policy is characterised more and more by national commitments. Looking ahead, that was the spirit behind our initiations calling for the reform of the COMECON, we joined the GATT, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. These steps are based on much wider aspect than just purely economical and financial considerations: they clearly showed our intentions to openness. We have continued our opening policy also in order to establish the grounds for good cooperation with the Western-European integration organizations as well.”*³¹

By this time, Hungary did not need to be afraid of the dissatisfaction of the Soviet Union. *“It is favourable for us that the Soviet Union is building a new world based on cooperation and solidarity, without prejudice and bias among the states, and in the realization of this great concept, it also counts on the own initiatives of the other socialist countries.”*³²

Hungary’s communication with Western countries at the state level however, was still moderate and avoided making a stir, presumably in order to avoid further conflicts with Romania. Thus the state often used the Red Cross, churches, and other social organizations to invite, host, and inform and gain information about Western organizations that were willing to establish connections with Hungary, while in reality it was the Hungarian state backing these visits. One example of such a visit

³⁰ At this time announced prime minister Miklós Németh that the Hungarian national debt is double higher than they had stated before. (Interview with J. Görög)

³¹ *Népszabadság*, 17 December 1988, p. 5

³² *Ibid.*

was the visit of the UNHCR's special envoy in October 1989. Although six months prior Hungary had joined the Convention, the state prepared for the visit with special precaution.

The UN Commission issued a resolution to give mandate to Swiss citizen Joseph Voyame in March, 1989 to draft a report on the situation of human rights in Romania. According to his mandate, he was supposed to visit Romania as well, but the Romanian government did not provide him with the necessary visa. Therefore Voyame instead offered to use the reports of the asylum-seekers residing in Hungary, and counted on the co-operation of the Hungarian authorities by "*entering in contact with those possessing direct information and experience*".³³ Hungary hosted the envoy, and the Hungarian government masterminded and prepared his visit. "*It is in our interest to avoid the open communication of the Hungarian authorities, and thus the slander of influencing the government could be prevented.*"³⁴

Since there were many organizations that possessed solid, well-founded knowledge about the refugees, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had various ideas for a possible host for the envoy, such as the Lawyers' Association, the Human Rights Committee as part of the Hungarian UN Association, the Transylvanian Association, the Association of Transylvanian Hungarians, the Asylum Committee, the Minority Working Group of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Association of Architects, the Institution on Hungarian History, and the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also suggested that the Red cross host the envoy.

The situation was similar in December 1988 on the occasion of the International Organization of Human Rights' visit to Budapest. The organization originally wanted to study the situation of the Romanian residents, but Romania as "*an independent and sovereign country*" denied the visit. After this incident, they wished to meet Mátyás Szűrös in Hungary. Budapest denied the visit due to political reasons, namely, it wanted to avoid the impression that the visit might be an official one. This denial accurately reflects the ambivalent relationship between Hungary and Western organization.

³³ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1989 141 V-5 9741

³⁴ Ibid.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs simultaneously offered to organize the meeting with the Hungarian Red Cross, churches, opposition groups, and the refugees themselves. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the denial caused the international organization's final document to lack precision and neglect several important pieces of information.

The Western countries demonstrated their interest by other visits: documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mention the delegation visit by deputies at the German Bundestag, as well visits by two French non-governmental organizations.³⁵

Western countries and the public reacted in a sensitive way to the question of and respect for human rights, and there was a long tradition of human rights protection by established institutions. This however, was not the only reason for the West to provide help to the asylum-seekers from Transylvania. They also wanted to help them settle in Hungary in order to avoid becoming affected by the wave of refugees themselves by becoming target countries for immigrants

Sweden and Denmark were the countries that initially opened their borders to host refugees from Romania. There was temporarily no visa requirement in Sweden for a while, and several refugees could emigrate there simply with the help of the Hungarians living in Sweden, who sent money to Hungary to buy plane tickets for the refugees.³⁶ However, documents of the Red Cross and the UNHCR also state that in general it was quite difficult to find a host country for those willing to go further West.

The role of the Hungarian Red Cross

As one of the most important key organizations in helping the Romanian refugees, the Hungarian Red Cross had a somewhat strange and ambivalent status. On the one hand, it belonged to the ICRC seated in Geneva, so seemed to function as an NGO, but as all organizations in a system of party dictatorship, it operated under its strong control. Moreover, even within an international framework, socialist countries

³⁵ MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989

³⁶ Ara-Kovács Attila – Dávid György – Joó Rudolf – Kőszegi László – Nagy József – Tóth Károly Antal – Vásárhelyi Judit: Jelentés a romániai magyar kisebbség helyzetéről. In: *Medvetánc*, Budapest, 1988.

were separated in a block, and thus the Hungarian RC remained separated even at the international level.

The Hungarian Red Cross's key role is also demonstrated by the fact that it was the first organization to contact the UNHCR even before the great wave of Romanian refugees between 1986 and 1987. According to UNHCR demands, the Hungarian Red Cross to deal with foreigners residing legally and temporarily in Hungary during this time, and therefore already gained experience with immigrants. The High Commission reimbursed their costs ex-post. There were approximately 20–30 foreigners, mainly from Third World countries who turned to the Hungarian Red Cross for refugee status. The Hungarian Red Cross always forwarded their demands to Geneva.³⁷ The government did not intervene and overlooked this activity, presumably due to the small number of people affected.

During the great wave of Transylvanian refugees in 1988, it was only the Hungarian Red Cross who had previous experience dealing with refugees and delegating tasks among public and civil organizations and churches. The organizations worked extensively with different state groups, including opposition groups and churches.³⁸ The main form of cooperation with the state bodies was the so-called “*Intra-Ministerial Committee responsible for the foreign citizens residing in Hungary*”. According to the report of the Red Cross, the propositions made by the Red Cross within this committee, were often supported.³⁹

On March 15th, 1988 the Hungarian Red Cross tried to raise support for the refugees through civic actions, with the motto “Help us so that we can help!,” to be able to provide those in need with financial support and other material donations.⁴⁰ Churches often gave their own donations to the Red Cross for distribution. The Red Cross even

³⁷ Interview with Á. Jantits (January 2009)

³⁸ The importance of the Red Cross is underlined by the data which states that 88% of the refugees got in contact with the organization. (Sik, *op. cit.*)

³⁹ Most of them were aimed at the continuous information of the organizations participating in the attendance of the refugees, at supporting these organizations from the Re-settling Fund and at working on a the unified register of the grants. In addition to that, – only mentioned on the occasion of meetings behind closed doors – they also aimed at the preparation of a more stable and clear policy on refugee issues. (288. f. 22/1989/12.ő.e.)

⁴⁰ In the frame of this action more than 18 million forint arrived to the central aid account of the Hungarian Red Cross. (288. f. 22/1989/12.ő.e.)

arranged the transfer of donations from abroad to Hungary. According to their data, approximately 5000–5500 people visited the Information Office they established in Budapest.

On an international scale, the most important activity of the Hungarian Red Cross was their effort to get in touch with the Romanian Red Cross in order to help unify families. This outreach was based on the International Red Cross conference resolutions. Although there was no response from the Romanian organization, and mediations by the president of the ICRC achieved no substantive results, the fact that the general secretary of the Hungarian Red Cross asked the ICRC for assistance in this matter can be regarded as the first small step taken by the Hungarian RC towards the ICRC.⁴¹

Donations arriving from abroad were a great help to the refugees. In 1988, the Red Cross of eight countries,⁴² including Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain, gave financial donations to the Hungarian Red Cross. Moreover, the American and Brazilian RC also supported the donation collections.⁴³

The role of the Western Hungarian emigration

The importance of the role of Hungarian emigration in bringing Western attention to the situation of the Transylvanian and Romanian refugees is unquestionable. The Hungarian state was very well aware of this; it was no surprise that partly leaders in the spring of 1988 had already asked local embassies to report to them on the activity of Hungarian emigration “concerning the national minorities living in the neighbouring socialist countries.”⁴⁴

Reports from the local embassies tell us that the associations of Hungarian emigrants cared about the Hungarian minority’s situation in Transylvania, they kept continued to protest against village-destructions with their own tools to the official bodies of their host countries. One good example is Hungarian immigration to Switzerland. After several

⁴¹ Jantsits Ágnes: *A civil szféra és a nem-kormányzati szervezetek szerepe a menedékkérők fogadásában és a menekültek integrálásában*. Unpublished paper, 1998.

⁴² Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Monaco, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland

⁴³ 288. f. 22/1989/12.6.e.

⁴⁴ MOL M-KS-288.f./1988–89 22.p.

requests, the Swiss Parliament put the Transylvanian situation on the agenda, and the Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs disapproved of Romanian politics and promised to actively intervene through diplomatic channels.⁴⁵ The media also dealt with the question on a regular basis, which helped the issue to be followed by great interest.

The immigrant organizations also tried to gain support from international organizations. For example, the Hungarian League of Human Rights from France, together with the Romanian League of Human Rights, turned to the UNHCR for help.⁴⁶ The Swedish-Hungarian Cultural Club wrote a letter to the American president Ronald Reagan and to the leaders of the Western-European countries calling their attention to the situation.⁴⁷ Several Hungarian associations in the USA, including the Transylvanian World Federation, the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation/Committee for Human Rights in Romania and the American Hungarian Federation published a paper concerning the human rights situation in Romania and the situation of the Transylvanian Hungarians in Romania.⁴⁸

We can also find examples of demonstrations and marches, such as the demonstration of the “Action Committee” for the Hungarian Transylvanian minorities in front of the Romanian Embassy in Bern, Switzerland.

All reports prepared by Hungarian ambassadors concerning the opinion and activity of Hungarian émigré’s express the same view, namely that “*the Hungarians were happy to see the positive steps taken by the Hungarian government to solve the problem; nevertheless, they found them too weak and not brave enough.*”⁴⁹

The emigration played a key role also in organizing aid actions abroad. The emigrants organized donation collections through their own organizations, as well as through churches. As previously mentioned, the Hungarian Red Cross managed the distribution of donations.

⁴⁵ According to the documents it had a real effect at the next summit of the Council of Europe. (Report on the activity of the emigration, Bern, 1st October 1988) MOL M-KS-288.f./1988 22.p.

⁴⁶ Report on the activity of the emigration, Paris, 17th May 1988; MOL M-KS-288.f./1988 22.p.

⁴⁷ Report on the activity of the emigration, Stockholm, 7th October 1988; MOL M-KS-288.f./1988 22.p.

⁴⁸ Ara-Kovács et al. *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Report on the activity of the emigration, Stockholm, 7th October 1988; MOL M-KS-288.f./1988 22.p.

According to Hungarian Red Cross statistics, there were 16 Hungarian associations in the West that organized donation collections and transferred them to the Hungarian Red Cross in 1988. In addition, 88 private individuals gave their financial donations to the Red Cross.⁵⁰

According to the Hungarian state, the Hungarian emigrants' activity abroad was considered rather favourable; they were able to determine steps to fight for their country's interest that Hungary was either not able or not willing to do, – due to foreign policy reasons. To a great extent, Hungary was able to draw attention to the problem of the refugees abroad from the West only through these emigrants, since their own level playing field was much too limited during this period and it could only raise its voice with caution.

Szűrös already mentioned the possibility of using Hungarian emigrants abroad as a political channel by in the above mentioned study: *“In the spirit of openness we keep good contacts with the Hungarians living abroad – not as national minorities –, and above all: with Hungarians living in the West. (...) Our experiences so far prove that they play an intermediate role between Hungary and the rest of the world, both politically and economically, and also in scientific and cultural aspects. (...) we are making an effort to include our relations with the Western Hungarian emigrants into our international network. We would like to build on Hungarians living abroad as a very important source of power for our nation.”*⁵¹

5. Step by step towards the Geneva Convention

“From our discussions with all concerned parties in Hungary it appears to us that the asylum-seekers are of concern to the UNHCR. We now plan to go further in our cooperation with the authorities in legal matters concerning, for example, the formalities of accession, the drafting of legislation and the establishment of a procedure for the determination of status.”⁵²

The report by the Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the MSZMP dated September 1st, 1988, describes the possible ways to solve the problem of refugees arriving from Romania. Contact with the UNHCR appears only in the last point of the lengthy docu-

⁵⁰ MOL 288. f. 22/1989/12.ő.e.

⁵¹ *Népszabadság*, 17 December, 1988, p. 5.

⁵² MOL XIX-J-1-k/1989 137 V-94 2042–2/T

ment, as a last resort. *“In case the development of the situation makes it inevitable, it is the duty of the foreign affairs Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant state institutions to examine the possible ways of getting in contact with the UNHCR. With respect to our relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, this issue can be practically solved. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to prepare the applicable procedure.”*⁵³

What option could the joining the Geneva Convention offer to Hungary facing the increasing number of people “re-settling” in the country? Why is the formulation of this statement so cautious?

According to international lawyers, the most evident way to solve the problem is to search for a solution within the framework of institutions established by international public law. The Convention was easy to adapt to the Hungarian legal system without any new legislation, and it could thus arrange the status of the refugees by implementing the rights and obligations of both the Hungarian authorities and the refugees themselves.

The Convention declares the prohibition of returning refugees, and also states that *“the Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the integration and naturalization of refugees.”*⁵⁴ The personal travel document (identity card) issued on the basis of the Convention is regarded as a great tool to achieve this goal. Until this moment, the precondition of obtaining citizenship was a certificate issued by the Romanian authorities declaring the cessation of the Romanian citizenship. From this time on, even further travelling or re-settling in another signatory state was possible with this document.

For a couple of months in the summer of 1987, some of the Romanian refugees had the chance to gain the protection of the UNHCR. This was a period when through the Yugoslavian–Hungarian borders, several Hungarian and Romanian asylum-seekers tried and succeeded to travel to the UNHCR office in Belgrade, where they could submit their application for refugee status, and then could travel further to the West.⁵⁵

In addition to settling the questions of ideology, it seems that financial factors were considered highly important arguments in the debate to join the Convention. *“Those supporting the joining to the Convention argue in*

⁵³ MOL M-KS-288. f. 32.

⁵⁴ 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 34.

⁵⁵ Ara et al, *op. cit.*

*the first place that by joining, we could utilise the financial and other, administrative support of the UNHCR.*⁵⁶

Joining the Convention necessarily required more caution from a political point of view. Since the notion of refugees was unknown among socialist “friendly countries”, the disapproval of the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc could be expected. Nevertheless, even though the Soviet Union was well aware of the Hungarian steps at international forums, it did not intervene. The reason for this might lie in the changing attitude of the Gorbachev era, and also can be explained by the increasing economic and military crisis of the block. The displeasure of Romania was guaranteed, but since Romania was also member of the UN, Hungary could defend the decision to join a UN Convention very well.

In the meantime, the Western countries regarded the Hungarian steps as a positive trend: on the one hand, it was considered sound proof of Hungary’s commitment to the protection of human rights, and on the other hand, it widened the contacts of Hungary with the West, and as discussed previously, this was important for Hungary for economic reasons.

However, one must not dismiss the other arguments opposing the joining, which were strong enough to gain support from international lawyers within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who warned against joining the Convention.

Several bilateral agreements and legal norms of high importance were necessary to amend in order to create a framework to which the Convention could be applied. While the bilateral agreements on extradition concluded with the Western countries’ declaration of the protection of refugees, this statement was not included in the same agreements concluded with socialist countries. These latter bilateral agreements were thus against the Geneva Convention.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Görög János: A menekültek helyzetéről szóló 1951. évi genfi konvencióhoz és annak 1967. évi kiegészítő jegyzőkönyvéhez való csatlakozás kérdése. In: *A nemzeti kisebbségek és a menekültek jogai*. MTA, Államtudományi Kutatások Programirodája; Volume I., Budapest, 1989. The author adds however that the support can not be considered significant: Austria received for example less than 400 thousand dollar as financial assistance, which has not even covered a fraction of its expenses.

⁵⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs found that first and foremost it is the bilateral agreements concluded with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and East Germany on the issue of borders and travellings that are urgent to be amended. (MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p.)

One of the strongest counter-arguments was the long-lasting impact of the supposed difficulties Hungary would face after joining the convention. Hungary would be obliged to receive all refugees without any discrimination, which would have been a big political and economical burden.⁵⁸

Both these considerations and the following limitations of the geographical effect of the Convention⁵⁹ prove that Hungary's main goal was to *solve the concrete problem* of the refugees arriving from Romania through the UNHCR. Although it declared that it was committed to human rights, Hungary did not feel prepared enough to undertake the trouble of hosting more refugees arriving from other countries.⁶⁰

The head of the international legal department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered Hungary two options, stressing that *“at the moment, joining the Geneva Convention is not a good option for us, as we cannot undertake the political complication and financial burden arising from this step.”*⁶¹

According to him, one option for Hungary was to create a new legislative act, which would regulate the arrival of refugees. The other option would be to amend the present legislation in a way *“that would solve the actually most pressing problems –first and foremost the simplification of the procedure of issuing temporary residence permits.”*⁶²

In September 1988, István Varga, ambassador to the UN, mentioned that in the long term it might be wise to consider the possibilities at the UNHCR and at the working group drafting the Declaration on the Minorities' Rights.⁶³

⁵⁸ Görög *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ In March 1989, Hungary joined the Geneva Convention with geographical restriction: with respect to refugees arriving outside of Europe, Hungary was not bound by the Convention. (Tóth, *op. cit.*) The limitation was only released in 1997.

⁶⁰ Public opinion was quite diverse concerning the role of the Hungarian state in differentiating between Hungarian and Romanian ethnic refugees arriving from Romania. The Refugee Committee established in January 1988 for the purpose of supporting refugees argued that refugees cannot suffer discrimination on the basis of their national identity, and one must emphasize the support of those with Romanian nationality being in an extremely difficult situation. (Interview with A. Ara-Kovács) At the same time, Hungarians from Transylvania disliked the idea of being treated equally with any other refugees with different nationalities. (Interview with Béla Kis)

⁶¹ Görög *op. cit.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p

The Hungarian government did however, initiate contact with the UNHCR. It was the chairman of the National Executive Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross who paid a visit to the organization in Geneva in October 1988. The UNHCR had already expressed its interest in cooperation with Hungary on this occasion, and had also mentioned their visit to Hungary.⁶⁴

Around the end of November 1988, Imre Pozsgay initiated an informal discussion with the High Commissioner of the UNHCR in Switzerland, when he visited as state minister, i.e. a minister without a portfolio.

According to the Hungarian request announced in November 1988 in Vienna, the legal department of the UNHCR sent a draft agreement to the UN Ambassador in Geneva István Varga in January 1989.⁶⁵

Events sped up considerably during this month: documents show that several inter-ministerial negotiations took place. During the first few days of the year, István Ószi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to Zoltán Gál, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs with the following statement: *“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs finds the visit of the fact finding mission of the UNHCR very timely. In line with this, we suggest sending the invitation of the Intra-Ministerial Coordination Committee to the High Commissioner as soon as possible, whose relevant colleagues are, according to our information, ready to accept the invitation and visit Hungary.”*⁶⁶

The Hungarian Red Cross simultaneously proposed joining the Convention on Refugees during meetings of the Intra Ministerial Committee.⁶⁷ The opposition groups also supported this position. On January 6th, 1989, the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Refugee Committee published a common declaration concerning the situation of the refugees from Transylvania. They suggested that Hungary accept all refugees without any discrimination, join the Geneva Convention on Refugees, and thus ensure that the UNHCR function.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ MOL, 288 f. 22/1989/12.6e

⁶⁵ MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p; A conference on the admission of a new UN convention against the illegal commerce of drugs and other prohibited psychotropic materials started in Vienna on 25th November, 1988. Presumably, that is what the ambassador attended and on this occasion he could negotiate with the colleagues informally. (*Yearbook of Hungarian Foreign Policy*, 1988.)

⁶⁶ MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p

⁶⁷ MOL, 288 f. 22/1989/12.6e

⁶⁸ Hungarian Documentation of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI), 1989

Finally, instead of the January date suggested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Fact finding mission of the UNHCR visited Hungary from February 6–11, 1989.⁶⁹

According to the information provided by the Hungarian authorities, 13 719 requests for re-settling permit had already been handed in by Romanian citizens in Hungary by this time. Approximately half of them were legal, and the other half were illegal immigrants. 88% of them were of Hungarian nationality, 7% Romanian, 5% Saxon. Half were skilled, one third consisted of single men and about 20% were single women. About 40% of the refugees resided in Budapest, 20% in Debrecen. According to the official evaluation, the total number of refugees including the unregistered ones was estimated to be much higher.⁷⁰

Shortly before the UNHCR visit, István Ószi informed Zoltán Gál, Deputy Minister of Internal affairs of the Hungarian position to be put through to the delegation. According to the mandate, the final decision on joining the High Commission would most likely be made in the first half of 1989, “*after having exhaustively discussed the rights and obligations.*” The mandate also indicates the fields that the country would ask the High Commission for help. Financial and technical assistance would be the highest priority needs to establish and maintain refugee camps. The delegation also negotiated with many other individuals and organizations, including Dr. Zoltán Gál, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, István Ószi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, employees of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Council of the Capital, and representatives of the churches and the Red Cross. They also visited Debrecen where they met the refugees.

At every possible occasion, members of the UNHCR urged Hungary to join the Convention and asked them to request the rules of the Convention, with special regard to the prohibition of return: “*They urged the establishment of such an internal mechanism, which would be suitable to institutionalize the issuance of refugee status. They called the attention to the international fear arising from the existing Hungarian practice of sending refugees back*

⁶⁹ Members: G. Arnout, head of the legal and theoretical department of the UNHCR, F. Cappelli, Director of European and North-American Affairs and R. Stainsby, colleague of the legal department.

⁷⁰ MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p

without any previous internal examination. They offered help and support in order to establish this filter-mechanism."⁷¹

The members of the UNHCR stressed that Hungary expected to integrate the refugees of Hungarian society and that they would provide financial support in order to facilitate the integration. The UN representatives expected that the refugees with non-Hungarian nationality would want to travel further and felt the UNHCR could also provide help to these refugees by finding a third host country for them.

It is interesting to note that there was a difference between the UNHCR's treatment of Romanian and Hungarian asylum-seekers, as they made different plans and had different intentions in each country.

Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that UNHCR and Western countries were interested in Hungary's integration of refugees. They were willing to support Hungary financially in order to make the asylum-seekers stay in the country, and thereby avoid masses of refugees continuing towards the West where they would face serious difficulties.

On the occasion of the delegation's visit, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs István Ószi expressed the desire to join the UNHCR "*in the near future*" and the intention to cooperate with the organization. He informed the delegation that Hungary was considering the possibility of opening a UNHCR office in Budapest. Addressing Western fears, he stressed that "*even after joining the Convention, Hungary does not wish to function as a channel for Eastern-European refugees to the West.*"⁷²

Having received the report of the fact finding delegation, High Commissioner Hocke turned to the Executive Committee of the Refugee Organization concerning his suggestions on the financial and technical support for Hungary.

The closed meeting was called together on February 17th. In his report, head of the legal department of the UNHCR G. Arnaut gave a positive impression of Hungarian state activity, the Red Cross and the churches that provided clothing, food, temporary residence and jobs to the refugees. He underlined that the main problem in Hungary was the lack of lodging, which made it difficult for the asylum-seekers to settle.

When considering Hungary's request for help, the fundamental changes taking place in Hungary had a great weight: "*The visit coincided*

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

with the meeting of the Central Committee, which took the decision to re-orient the country towards pluralism and democracy. Hungary is turning towards and feels a part of Western Europe."⁷³

The most significant argument mentioned by several documents was that aid from Western countries was guaranteed, since it was in their own interest to stop the wave of refugees arriving in Hungary.⁷⁴

In the meantime, two Hungarian experts were invited by the UNHCR to participate in a conference in Geneva. The purpose of the conferences was to study the activity of the UNHCR. The two participants were from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

According to their report, the members of the UNHCR appreciated the efforts of the Hungarian government towards the asylum-seekers. According to the UNHCR, Hungary had almost fulfilled the provisions of the Convention.

Several UN collaborators emphasized that the Hungarian government should run a much more powerful propaganda at international forums concerning the issue of the Romanian asylum-seekers, for example by publishing concrete data and cases. The UN Ambassador stated in his report mentioned previously that the Hungarian government adhered too strictly to the guiding line of avoiding provocation and any possible aggression.

One of the most surprising moments of the Geneva conferences was that Felix Sztanyevszkij, head of the Soviet delegation participating at the conference announced in a private discussion with a colleague from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Soviet Union was also considering joining the Convention. According to his statement, the Soviet Union had already initiated informal contacts with the High Commission and that one of their experts had studied the activity of the UNHCR in the fall, during the same time the idea of joining the Convention had been broached in Hungary. He stressed that the Soviet Union was more than satisfied with the information provided by Hungary, and explained that the Soviets would most likely follow Hungary's decision to join the Convention. A later document proves that Sztanyevskij initiated contact with Hungarian experts in order to exchange accounts. In summary,

⁷³ MOL XIX-J-1-j 105.p

⁷⁴ Ibid.

one must keep in mind that Hungary's preparation to join the Convention took place amidst constantly informing the Soviet Union, and with their *silent approval*.⁷⁵

The most important question for Hungary during the negotiations, where they looked for reassurance, was that the member states are entitled to decide whether or not to issue refugee status. Although the member states have to respect the binding criteria, they do possess discretion as a tool of flexibility.⁷⁶ This proves that Hungarian leaders feared obligations to host all kinds of refugees other than Romanians after signing the Convention, which was clearly not the intention of the Hungarian government.

One week after the visit, Péter Várkonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and István Horváth, Minister of Internal Affairs, submitted a joint proposal concerning "The situation of the re-settled people from Romania" was to the Council of Ministers. With the authorization of the Council of Ministers, one day later, on 23rd February, Várkonyi submits the proposal to the Presidential Council:

"The recent situation of foreign citizens temporarily residing in Hungary, with no intention to return to their home country – who can practically be regarded as refugees – will inevitably solved. The situation calls for an urgent legal solution. Apart from Section 67 of the Hungarian Constitution where the question of the rights of refugees is briefly mentioned, our legal system contains no dispositions concerning the issue of asylum-seekers.

The most detailed, albeit not generally accepted, international regulation concerning the situation of the refugees is embodied in the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol extending its effects in time. With the

⁷⁵ This is also confirmed by the interview with Mr. János Görög: according to him, the Soviet Union was well informed of everything, and thus implicitly took cognisance of the Hungarian joining. However, after the Hungarian joining, the "friend socialist states" remarked that Hungary must have overlooked that detail that it is impossible to regard their own citizens as refugees. (Interview with J. Görög, December 2008)

⁷⁶ Professional consultation at UNHCR, Geneva, 28. February, 1989; MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989 105.p The importance of this condition reaffirms the above mentioned: the Hungarian government feared that joining the Convention would oblige the country to receive refugees from countries other than Transylvania, which was not its intention.

exception of China and Yugoslavia, the socialist countries have not joined these agreements.

(...) To sum up, joining the Convention would provide us with a more favourable situation than recently, and it would simultaneously not create new obligations against our interests that would increase the duties of Hungary. In the meantime, it could strengthen the tendency that the Hungarian Peoples' Republic is willing to abide by its human right and humanitarian policy and practice in all possible ways according to the universal framework provided by the UN.⁷⁷

The formal approval shows that the decision had already been taken before the submission of the proposal. The Hungarian leaders opted for a fast action: on February 24th, the day following the submission, the President of the Council decided that Hungary would join the Geneva Convention.⁷⁸

During these weeks in February, the UNHCR delegation was not the only important organization that brought both Hungarian and international public attention to the situation of the Transylvanian asylum-seekers. Hungary also, organized the transfer of the twelve Transylvanian asylum-seekers from Sophia with the help of the Red Cross on day following the departure of the delegation from Geneva. The refugees requested asylum in September 1988 at the Hungarian Embassy, and were transferred to Hungary via Vienna Austrian airline with temporary passports issued by the Red Cross. The international media actively followed this event.⁷⁹

Concerning the concrete preparation of the joining the UNHCR, the duties were shared among the administrative organs as follows:

- The International Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed the technical arrangement of the joining procedure.
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Intra-Ministerial Committee drafted the executive system.

⁷⁷ MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989 105.p

⁷⁸ MOL, 288 f. 22/1989/12.őe, 1–16

⁷⁹ Földes György: *Magyarország, Románia és a nemzeti kérdés*. Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 2007. p.359–493

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiated the establishment of the Office for Refugees in Budapest and also concluded the bilateral agreements.
- The Intra-Ministerial Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared the task of drafting and discussing a concrete program concerning refugees and gaining the signature of the agreement with the High Commission of.⁸⁰

There were three main departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that prepared the joining procedure: the main department was the Department of the International Institutions, lead by Ferenc Somogyi. The International Legal Department, led by János Görög, arranged mostly the technical drafting and harmonizing tasks. The Socialist Cooperation Department, led by István Ószi, ensured the coordination of political queries.⁸¹

The preparatory procedure was prepared in forms of strictly *confidential dossiers* within the ministries, behind completely closed doors. The public was only informed after the joining and only through brief summaries published in the newspapers.⁸²

The joining documents were put into a deposit at the New York organization of the UN on March 14th, 1989.⁸³ On March 16th, 1989, Gyula Horn, State secretary of Foreign Affairs informed Hocke, High Commissioner of UNHCR that Hungary was ready to carry on negotiations regarding opening a UNHCR office in Budapest.⁸⁴

In order to cement their financial and technical support, UNHCR sent a technical delegation to Budapest in March 1989. The UN delegation negotiated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the National Authority for Wage and Labor, and with the colleagues of the council organizations. They also visited the locations of the future refugee receiving stations.

The delegation had the impression that Hungary was willing to participate in a correct manner and was realistic when asking for support.

⁸⁰ MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989 105.p

⁸¹ Interview with J. Görög, December 2008

⁸² Hungarian Documentation of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI), 1989; Interview with J. Görög, December 2008

⁸³ The 1951 Geneva Convention came into force the 12th June 1989, the 1967 New York Protocol already the 14th March 1989.

⁸⁴ MOL XIX-J-1-k/1989; 135 V-1 3615

They positively evaluated the Council of the Capital's arrangement with the refugees.

Hungary and the UNHCR decided to provide *an one-time extraordinary financial aid* to equip the three receiving stations and to purchase health items from May to December 1989. In addition, the UNHCR planned special courses on the protection of interests of refugees for the civil servants of the Hungarian public administration.⁸⁵

In May, the Hungarian government and the UNHCR drafted a project for the period of June – December 1989 under the title “Re-settling refugees in the Hungarian Peoples Republic”. This project was a pre-condition to receive UNHCR aid.

On October 4th, 1989, Dr. Zoltán Gál, State Secretary of Internal Affairs, travelled to Geneva to sign the agreement on the project as well as the establishment of the seat of the regional office, to be concluded between the Hungarian government and the UNHCR. The press conference held before the session of the High Commission met with large interest. The 40th session of the UNHCR further demonstrated the interest in Hungary, where as the Hungarian UN Ambassador said: “*It is no exaggeration to say that Hungary was put in the forefront.*”⁸⁶ The large number of delegations that requested the Hungarian speech after listening to it also reflects the high level of international interest in Hungary during the time. In addition, the High Commissioner's request for \$5.2 million was already approved during the session by West Germany and the Finnish delegation.⁸⁷

The Ambassador of West Germany chaired the session, and he most likely appreciated the fact that Hungary had joined the convention, only a few weeks after Hungary had opened up its Austrian borders to East German refugees.

⁸⁵ MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989 105.p

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ By the end of November 1989, more than three million dollars of financial aid arrived to the UNHCR to help the Hungarian program. The donations were provided by Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, West Germany, the USA and from Finland (this latter offered donation twice). West Germany transferred a grant of three million German marks. MOL XIX-J-1-j/1989 106.p

6. Summary

Although the growing number of Romanian refugees at the end of the 90s created a constraining situation for Hungary, it simultaneously opened up the possibility of legitimizing steps toward the Soviet bloc.

Searching for a solution was somewhat *ambivalent* in Hungary. On the one hand, the difficulties arising from the mass of asylum seekers were clearly defined and the inevitable need to step up at international forums was also expressed. On the other hand, of Hungary's actions were unobtrusive and aimed to avoid provoking the socialist countries, especially Romania. Thus Hungarian rhetoric at international forums stressed on the importance of universal human rights, which drew attention from the West as well, but often did not refer to any concrete data and facts.

The Hungarian government's ambivalent role increased the importance of *non-governmental organizations* such as the Hungarian Red Cross, churches, the forming opposition, and Hungarian émigrés living in Western countries. These groups connected several Western organizations, often with the co-operation or at least silent consent of the Hungarian government, and in some cases they lobbied at the international forums, unlike the Hungarian leaders who wanted to avoid conflicts within the Soviet bloc. Their activity and involvement, which the Hungarian government knew about, made Hungary's diplomatic situation much easier.

As demonstrated by the studied documents, Hungarian leaders did not unilaterally support the decision to join the Geneva Convention, but it was a solution that brought along the least conflicts concerning foreign affairs. The decision was accepted on the basis of short-sighted arguments instead of arguments that addressed fears in the long run. Within the frames of the Convention, *the situation of the Romanian refugees could be settled in the easiest way*: financial and technical aid was provided to the organizations hosting and helping the asylum seekers. According to foreign affairs policy, these actions were taking place within the UN's framework and therefore UN-member socialist countries did not have the option to oppose them.

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JUDIT TÓTH

When an emergency has come to stay – The birth of the refugee administration in 1988–1989

According to the research hypothesis, there is a clear continuum in refugee administration and regulation in the 20th and 21st centuries: Displaced persons or refugees arrive in waves, most often on grounds of kin-minority ties; public administrators have no time to wait for the passage of adequate regulation because they are under political and public pressure that legitimise emergency; and ad hoc actions are taken in the absence of cost-benefit analysis and a long-term migration or integration policy. When the waves flatten out, the consolidation of and daily administrative routine to support migrants' social and economic integration, resettlement, or peaceful return disintegrates, and political attention lulls until the next mass influx.

Parallel events

After analysing the legal framework in 1988–89 and studying the letters circulated in public administration on refuge issues in that same time period, a general lesson can be drawn from the mass influx of GDR (German Democratic Republic) and Romanian citizens. Namely, the management of migrants' arrival and settlement did not become a regulated task of the consolidated public administration apparatus, but rather remained a policy-driven emergency situation led by law enforcement

in stronger or weaker cooperation with NGOs and churches¹ in Hungary. The controversial, continuously transitional actions of the migration administration are reflected in two citations:

1) “*Our forced adherence to principles has become our tragedy*”: a complaint expressed by Transylvanian refugees to the Hungarian consul in Austria regarding Hungary’s reluctance in the 1980’s to open its door to kin-minorities in the spirit of socialist internationalism and brotherhood.²

2) “*We have had a fluid, general political intention by government to put it into administrative practice immediately, but without experience or proper regulation*”: a summary by the local council chair in Debrecen in May 1988.³ At the gate of rule-of-law and democratic changes, there was only limited publicity of both administrative actions and respect for non-discrimination and human rights.

However, public administration managed (ethnic-based) mass influx more in the 20th century than in subsequent eras. Between 1919 and 1930 the total number of displaced persons and forced immigrants coming to Hungary from successor states was 504,000 (including 106,000 persons from the North, 193,000 from Transylvania, 74,000 from the South). These mainly ethnic Hungarian newcomers significantly contributed to the public administration and justice system workforce as lawyers, bookkeepers, and clerks (for instance, 43 percent of judges were foreign born at that time).⁴ During that emergency the Prime Minister issued a decree setting up the National Refugee Office in order to provide a unified administration of refugee issues (e.g., furnishing them with identity documents and providing shelter, schooling and health care) in daily cooperation with relevant ministries. Its task was supported by the Refugee Board involving civic organisations and experienced functionaries nominated by the Prime Minister. The Office, divided into three regional branches, operated under the auspices

¹ Sik, E. and Tóth, J.: The Role of GOs and NGOs in the Refugee Issues. In: Adelman-Sik-Tessényi (eds.): *Genesis of a Refugee Regime, The Case of Hungary*. York Lane Press, Toronto, 1994, pp.65–72.

² Forró Tamás – Havas Henrik: *A léger. Traikirchen*. [The refugee camp in Traikirchen] Háttér Könyvkiadó és Szolgáltató Kft. Budapest, 1988.

³ Interview with Ferenc Debreczeni in: Székegyházi Ágoston: *Debreceni napló Erdélyről. Két hazra között*. [Diary in Debrecen being between home and homeland] Csokonai Kiadó, Debrecen, 1989

⁴ Szarka László: A békétárgyalások és a kisebbségek ügye. *História*, 2008/6–7:8–12.

of the Peace Preparatory Bureau “B”⁵. After World War I and the partitioning of the monarchy, this rapid administrative reaction and budgetary decision indicated a high degree of professionalism.

Sixty-some years later, the arrival of about 30,000 refugees from Romania and the temporary appearance of up to 160,000 GDR citizens in Hungary led to social panic (only 5,000 of the latter were accommodated by the Red Cross). “*We cannot accommodate the settlement of a mass of GDR citizens in addition to the number of refugees from Romania here. In the absence of an interstate agreement and normal conditions, we might attract Soviet or Czechoslovakian newcomers who would settle down in our country. We definitively reject Hungary’s becoming a refugee camp,*” stated Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister Horn at the meeting of the Central Bureau (Hungarian Socialist Workers Party) on 2 September 1989.⁶

Moreover, the political reaction of public and civil organisations also reflected a reluctance stemming from the hypocritical ethnic and minority policy within the Warsaw Pact. Romania’s plan on destroying ethnic communities as part of its “modernisation project” was not put on the bilateral or wider political agenda, nor did Hungary raise the issue of the visibly deteriorating minority institutions in Czechoslovakia. As a result, 200 ethnic Hungarian elementary and secondary schools were closed, and Czechoslovakia also restricted pedagogic education, language use, use of bilingual names for settlements, cultural institutions, and the ministry responsible for minority affairs, despite the Constitutional norms that were in effect for two decades in Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the Committee of Hungarian Minority Rights Protection in Czechoslovakia praised Czechoslovakian minority policy in a surprise letter to the Hungarian government.⁷

While Hungary continued to admit protection-seeking Romanian citizens and temporarily tolerate GDR citizens, Hungarian citizens sought

⁵ A magyar királyi miniszterelnök 3.240.számú rendelete az Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal szervezéséről [PM Decree No.3.240 on Central Refugee Office] *Budapesti Közlöny*, 1920.április 21-i szám.

⁶ Horváth István és Németh István: *...és a falak leomlanak. Magyarország és a német egység. (1945–1990)* [And walls are flowing. Hungary and the German unification, 1945–1990] Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1999.

⁷ A Csehszlovákiai Magyar Kisebbség Jogvédő Bizottságának levele a Magyar Népköztársaság kormányához. [letter to the Government of the Hungarian People Republic from the Committee of Hungarian Minority Rights Protection in Czechoslovakia] *Kapu* 1988. szeptember pp.21–22

asylum in Austria. Two-hundred inns accommodated Hungarian asylum seekers, including 349 persons in 1987 and 690 persons in early 1988.⁸ Although new passport rules were introduced on 1 January 1988, and Hungarian citizens could travel without prior authorisation, they were considered “deviant” if they resided abroad for more than 90 days. Upon their return, they faced a minor offence proceeding with the police. The police had wide discretionary powers ranging from imposing a fine of up to 10,000 HUF to confiscating passports in cases of more severe unlawful activity. According to Police headquarters, the annual number of Hungarian citizens not returning to Hungary was stable in previous decades.⁹ Thus, irregular emigration of citizens from Hungary and the immigration of ethnic Hungarians to Hungary could be observed in parallel. Perhaps ethnic Hungarians from Romania shared rooms with dissident Hungarian citizens in the Austrian refugee camp in 1988.

At the end of this period, another change was coming: The refugee status of Hungarian citizens who had left the country in past would be revised taking into account democratization and, perhaps, refugee acceptance. For instance, the Refugee Office in Switzerland announced possible revisions to its definition of refugee status. The revisions would apply to refugees of Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian national origin whose home countries had drastically changed their persecutorial guidelines. This would provide the legal basis for the withdrawal of these people’s refugee status, or even their expulsion.¹⁰

Distinctions in actions and statements

According to bilateral agreements, foreigners crossing the borders as well as aliens whose visas expired had to be removed by sending them back to the country of their citizenship. This practice was partly accomplished with Romanian citizens in 1988–89. The statistics of newcomers proves it. However, the criteria of “*public order screening*” were

⁸ World News, 27 March 1988, *Free Europe Radio*

⁹ Before 1980 it was 2500–3000 persons per annum, in 1980: 4560, in 1981: 4100, in 1982: 2600, in 1983: 2200, in 1984: 2100, in 1985: 2500, in 1986: 3200 persons. Citation from Forró Tamás – Havas Henrik: *A láger. Traikirchen*. [The refugee camp in Traikirchen] Háttér Könyvkiadó és Szolgáltató Kft. Budapest, 1988

¹⁰ Telefax from the Embassy of Hungarian Republic, Bern, 28 December 1989, No.564

neither published nor reviewed by independent organisations. Consequently, the condemned practice of the rejection and removal of false or genuine protection seekers has remained a sensitive issue in immigration policy for years, even in liberal democratic regimes. After 1990 the newly concluded readmission agreements provided the legal foundation for refusing passage to immigrants at borders and international transit zones, while at the same time the publicity called for by the new alternative civil organisations superseded the formal provisions on how potential immigrants would be screened out for security reasons.¹¹

Table 1 shows that the ratio of rejected persons at borders was 8–35 percent in 1988–89. The reasons for rejection were in accordance with¹² the “*central decisions but contrary to the law*”.¹³ Those are as follows:¹⁴

- the migrant’s destination is a western country (and not Hungary);
- s/he is involved in court proceedings;
- s/he is a minor;
- s/he is an alcoholic;
- s/he owes a public debt;
- s/he is a vagrant;
- s/he is an alleged agent, spy or other member of the secret services;
- s/he is fleeing family conflicts;
- s/he is a non-Hungarian or s/he has no personal, family contacts in Hungary;
- other non-respectable reasons for refusal (e.g. unemployment, seeking better living standards).

¹¹ Tóth, Judith: Who are the Desirable Immigrants in Hungary under the Newly Adopted Laws? In: Fullerton – Sik –Tóth (eds.): *Refugees and Migrants: Hungary at a Crossroads - Yearbook of the Research Group on the International Migration*, Inst. for Political Science of HAS, Budapest, 1995, pp.57–68; Tóth, Judit: Humanitarian Security and Involuntary Migration in Europe. In: Dunay – Kardos – Williams (eds.) *New Forms of Security – Views from Central, Eastern and Western Europe*, Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1995, pp.150–165.

¹² HQ of Border Guard, Ministry of the Interior, Report to the Administrative Division in Central Bureau of HSWP, July 1988. 79/00827/1988.

¹³ J. Székely, chief commander of the HQ of the Border Guard, Ministry of the Interior, Report on border events (1988/05.01.-05.31)

¹⁴ Belügyminiszter irányelve a Magyar Népköztársaság területén tartózkodó román állampolgárok ügyeinek rendőrségi és határőrizeti szerveinél történő rendezésére, valamint a letelepedési kérelmek elbírálására [Guidelines on policing and border guard decision concerning entry and refusal of Romanian citizens] BM 50–589/1988.

Table 1. Registered Romanian citizens escaping in 1988–89¹⁵

	<i>Ethnic Hungarian</i>	<i>Saxon (German)</i>	<i>Romanian</i>	<i>Total</i>
1988				
January – June	1394	55	234	1683
<i>From them refused at the border and returned to Romania</i>				592
July	875	73	142	1 090
August	1 009	131	251	1 391
September	1 592	155	261	2 008
October	1 416	94	226	1 736
November	770	100	133	1 003
December	624	98	110	832
Persons registered in 1988				15 400
<i>From them refused at the border and returned to Romania</i>	950	67	564 + 71 others	1 652
<i>Persons leaving lawfully to a third country</i>	235	338	167	740
1989				
January	371	55	94	520
February	324	24	96	444
March	408	30	122	560
April	580	121	285	986
May	562	136	395	1 093
June	478	96	270	844
July	874	95	346	1 315
September	1 659	254	705	2 618
Issued (temporary) residence permit (on 31 st July 1989)		19 381		

¹⁵ Data are based on compiled documents, announcement by the Ministry of the Interior.

	<i>Ethnic Hungarian</i>	<i>Saxon (German)</i>	<i>Romanian</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>From them leaving to a third country</i>		204		
<i>Returned home</i>		37		
<i>Persons residing in the country</i>		16 971		
Persons residing in the country (19 th August 1989)	15 102	646	2 315	18 063
Persons residing in the country (30 th September 1989)	16 805	1 144	3 097	21 046
		1988–89		
Registered persons between Jan. 1988 – September 1989		26 132		
<i>From them refused at the bor- der and returned to Romania</i>		2 221		
<i>Issued (temporary) residence permits</i>		23 911		
<i>Left to third country</i>		2 357		
<i>Waiting for visa to a third country</i>		2 600		
<i>Returned home</i>		508		
Registered persons between Jan. 1988 – Dec. 1989		34 275		
<i>From them issued residence permits</i>		31 005		
<i>From them left to third country</i>		3 025		
<i>Returned home</i>		689		
<i>Intended to leave the country illegally (to AT, YU) but apprehended by border guards</i>		2 800		
Persons residing in the country (31 December 1989)	18 865	1 600	5 690	26 155

	<i>Ethnic Hungarian</i>	<i>Saxon (German)</i>	<i>Romanian</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>From them temporary permit holders</i>		30 630		
<i>Applicants for temporary permit</i>		7 190		
<i>Waiting for re-settlement</i>		2 853		
<i>Permanent residence permit holders</i>		2 840		
<i>Asylum applicants</i>		705		
<i>Recognised refugees</i>		320		
<i>Waiting to return to home country</i>		1 146		

As the list indicates, arbitrary decisions could not be prevented on these grounds, even while the Hungarian border guards were aware of the torture of refused persons by the Romanian border guards, or were witness to physical violence by the Romanian Party¹⁶.

The “*public order screening*” raised at least two overlapping types of concerns: the efficacy of law enforcement, and the credibility of the public statements of the government. In brief, the secrecy of law enforcement (and intelligence) often masked the absence of professionalism by the police, border guards or state secret service from their own leadership as well as public opinion. However, the acceptance of immigrants for humanitarian, kin-state reasons could hardly fit with an arbitrary security rationale in an environment where the rule-of-law had not yet been introduced. What were the major explanations for rejecting certain Romanian citizens or, more generally, certain protection seekers?¹⁷

- It was unclear what the lawful exceptions were to non-refoulement on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its corollaries, along with case law of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Prohibition on Torture of the 1966 UN Covenant. These human rights obligations were interpreted as severe

¹⁶ HQ of Border Guard, Ministry of the Interior, Report to the Administrative Division in Central Bureau of HSWP, 46–28/1988.

¹⁷ For instance, Memo of the meeting held in the Ministry of the Interior, 8 November 1989; Memo of the meeting of the IMC, 6 November 1989

limitations on state sovereignty because those rights determine which foreigners would be allowed to enter and reside in the country regardless of their ethnicity, race or living habits. The binding individualisation of the applicants' cases; reasoning; and the preconditions for rejection as defined in laws were considered inapplicable situations of mass influx. Thus, accession to the 1951 Convention was opposed until the last moment¹⁸, and perhaps the geographical reservations made to the Convention were also founded in a fear of a burden of accepting an increasing number of non-European immigrants.

- Management of security screening at border zones could not be solved due to inadequacies in infrastructure, skilled staff and co-operation among police, border guards and state security services.
- Preventing the influx of transit persons who do not intend to settle down in Hungary was considered to be crime prevention. Migrants in transit meant a contribution to crime, because, for instance, migrants had no regular contact with authorities and no intention of being employed. They also had attempted illegal border crossings into their destination country. How many times should a person in possession of a temporary residence permit be tolerated if s/he unlawfully intends to cross the western border? The third attempt was grounds for removal and eviction to the country of origin. The alternative solution to initiate criminal/minor offence proceedings for illegal border crossing, man-smuggling, and falsification of documents was finally adopted.
- Informal, fast removal to Romania in accordance with bilateral agreement occurred outside the public eye. Even in the period of inter-state conflicts, the joint Hungarian and Romanian committee of border protection occasionally met behind closed doors to discuss co-operation on re-admission.
- More time was favoured for the improvement of visa procedures. These involved the non-existent management of the acceptance,

¹⁸ Görög János: A menekültek helyzetéről szóló 1951.évi genfi konvencióhoz és annak 1967.évi kiegészítő jegyzőkönyvéhez való csatlakozás kérdése. [Accession to the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol] In: Timoránszky Péter (ed.): *A nemzeti kisebbségek és a menekültek jogai, I. kötet*. MTA Államtudományi Kutatószervezet Programirodája, Budapest, 1989. 39–47.

expulsion or accommodation of forced migrants and displaced persons from more distant regions.

There were more and more stories¹⁹ available on hardships in border crossing; rejected persons; violence and torture of readmitted or apprehended persons; and crimes committed by the border guards in the border zone in Romania. At first, these actions were officially denied or marginalized. For instance, the Hungarian deputy minister of the interior said, “*We can hear about more cases of the Hungarian authority returning refugees [to Romania]. Is it true? Yes, there were some cases. Why? Because some people who cross the border illegally do not have a clean criminal record. There are drug abusers, psychologically ill people, or minors crossing without their parents’ consent. In these cases, the rejection is decided by a three-party committee.*”²⁰ The highest commander of the Border Guard Headquarters (HQ) announced the same: “*There are an increasing number of reports on trespassing refugees being rejected and sent back to Romania. Is it right? First, their acceptance would contravene certain agreements. In fact, together with the police and local council we are screening out unwanted persons, such as felons, profligates or reckless teenagers. How many persons were extradited this year? About 1,400,*”²¹ he said in an interview.

These comments represent the embarrassment of the Hungarian public administration with respect to bilateral border agreements and the shifting priority of human rights and kin-state policy. The former would prevent entry of (un)wanted persons, the latter excludes arbitrary rejection of protection seekers without formal legal provisions and procedure. Who are the members of the three-party body? Who delegates them? The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) confirmed the establishment of this body in the border zone county police station. There the state security service and border guards were involved in making individual decisions on acceptance or rejection without formal decision and remedy. Moreover, there were no regular and skilled interpreters available, and the requirements for interpretation (qualification, impartiality, fairness) were not defined at all. For instance, two eyewitnesses

¹⁹ *Kapu*, September 16, 1988, *Beszélő* 1989/1 (26) *Románia dosszié* [Romania file] on refused refugees made by the Refugee Committee (Fényi T.) – it published individual cases of injured, beaten, died persons as apprehended by the Romanian authority.

²⁰ Gál, Zoltán deputy minister, Ministry of the Interior, interview. *Magyar Hírlap*, 19 December 1988

²¹ Székely, János leader of the Headquarter of the Border Guards, *Népszabadság*, 28 December 1988

told a story of a Romanian dancer escaping across the border who was rejected in March 1988 without reason. She was pregnant, beaten by the Romanian authority, and imprisoned. Her second attempt to move to Hungary was successful, and the policeman who remembered her case apologised for the first almost fatal decision. “*But we did not have good interpreters, only a refugee who arrived some days before, so we could not understand clearly what she said,*” summarised the policeman in May 1988.²²

On the other hand, the *kin-state policy was not considered in the authorisation of lawful emigration*. There were not only low statistics on the number of authorised applicants, but also political and administrative ambivalence toward influencing the Romanian Party to provide less bureaucracy or arbitrariness in issuing emigration permits. Rather, it reflected a covert ethnic preference made by law enforcement authorities. Due to this ambivalent practice, lawful immigration could not remain in the mainstream of migration in late 1980s. *Table 2* shows the high ratio of rejected applications and the low level of immigrants per year who obtained the Romanian permit as a precondition to receiving a settlement visa to Hungary.

*Table 2. Lawful immigration to Hungary from Romania*²³

<i>Year</i>	<i>Application for immigration</i>	<i>Rejected applications</i>	<i>Received applications</i>	<i>Issued immigrant visa holders</i>
1984	1446	654	792	n.d.
1985	1709	511	1198	403
1986	3284	951	2333	932
1987	6499	1570	4929	821
1988	5432	550	4882	1 936
Jan-Febr 1989	1091	23	1068 including 321 family members for unification	528
September 1989	7500	n.d.	n.d.	3 200

²² *Beszélő*, 1989 September 27.

²³ Alien Policing (KEOKH) data provided to IMC in different reports in 1988–89.

In order to see the structure of immigrants, the Central Statistics Office²⁴ summarized the following data on refugees (including all foreign persons who obtained a residence permit while seeking asylum): between January 1988 and February 1990 (26 months) the total number was 31,310 persons in the alien patrol registry. Of these, 11% was in the 0–14 age group, 50% in the 15–29, and 26% in the 30–39, showing that most newcomers belonged to the young generation. Their arrival ratio (31,310 = 100%) was growing; it was 42% in 1988, 55.7% in 1989 and 2.2% in the first two months of 1990. Their self-declared ethnic origin (31,310 = 100%) was 74% Hungarian, 21.4% Romanian, 0.3% Roma, 3.5% German. Of the refugees, 8.2% wanted to settle in a different country. From the active age categories, 87.5% were blue collar and 12.5% were white collar workers. These figures are embarrassing because they are lower than those in *Table 1*. Both, however, refer to the Alien Police HQ as their source.

The other root of the ambivalence of kin-state policy was that Hungary encountered emigrants (mostly ethnic Hungarians) *escaping from a hostile and oppressive country*. For this reason, the full political participation of the emigrants and their supporters was not desired. The rate of non-ethnic Hungarians was higher among rejected persons as well as persons whose temporary residence permit was withdrawn. In addition to this *ethnic mistrust*, the political activity of refugees or immigrants was also forbidden. Members of opposition emigrant groups (Romania Libera) faced an imminent danger of expulsion or removal. For instance, Virgil Pavlu and Dracea Dan²⁵ were forced by the alien patrol to cease joint demonstration against Romania (15 November 1988) and/or face resettlement to a different country. Their affiliation with Romania Libera was never cited as the cause for the revoking of their residence permits, but their expulsion was impeded only by the publicity their case received. However, the handing over of two ethnic Hungarian youngsters to the Romanian border authority (2 January 1989) was also disclosed, yet only the outcry by civil (opposition, human rights)

²⁴ A Magyarországra menekülők főbb demográfiai és foglalkozási adatai (1988–1990. május 31.) [The major demographic and labour data of refugees to Hungary] KSH, Budapest, 1990.

²⁵ *Beszélő*, 1989/1. (26)

organisations and ministerial intervention saved their fate. It proved that secrecy and the patrol mentality were stronger than ethnic preference.²⁶

This reaction is well known internationally among receiving states: *subversive behaviour of refugees and accepted immigrants*²⁷ is neither defined (what is prohibited) nor tolerated in order to maintain diplomatic relations with all states (including the pursuer, neighbouring) state. “*It would make it clear for persons coming from Romania and settling in Hungary that political activity and political assembly by foreigners is not allowed.*”²⁸ However, this restrictive statement had to be revised some months later²⁹. This “softening” of the HSWP (and public administration) was encouraged by the activities of the immigrants themselves and their supporters.

For instance, the Intellectual Club of Transylvanians called for not only the clarification of the legal status of refugees, including a transparent support system for their integration and family unification, but also representation of the refugees in the IMC.³⁰ When this association submitted its application for incorporation to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consented that it be granted corporate status with certain restrictions based on the legal authority of the central administration³¹ as well as Central Political Bureau of the HSWP decision on “political abstention”. The authorization letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) emphasizes the following: “*Refugee support is excessively emphasized among the goals of the association.*”

²⁶ Kőszeg Ferenc: Csacsi öreg belügyünk [Old state agents of secrecy] *Beszélő*, 1990/1.

²⁷ For instance, in Art III (1) of the OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa: Every refugee has duties to the country in which he finds himself, which require in particular that he conforms with its laws and regulations as well as measures taken for the maintenance of public order. He shall also abstain from any subversive activities against any member states of the OAU. In (2) it is more concrete: states undertake to prohibit refugees residing in their respective territories from attracting any state member of the OAU, by any activity likely to cause tensions between member states, and in particular by use of arms, through press or by radio.

²⁸ Central Political Bureau of HSWP decision adopted on 8 September 1988

²⁹ Central Political Bureau of HSWP decision adopted on 9 February 1989

³⁰ *Erdélyi Magyar Értelmiségi Klub*, Programtervezet é.n. Budapest

³¹ Law-Decree No.35 of 1970 (modified in 1981 and 1983) was in force up to 23 January 1989. Accordingly, organising a civil right personality had to be reported to the competent ministry in order to authorize it. If the ministry refused permission the organising work is ban, if it was supported even with some restrictions the organisation could be established and registered as legal personality.

Considering the number of lawful immigrants from Romania (4091 persons through 30 June 1988), this category shall be included in the scope of supported members. Furthermore, the number of naturalised persons absolved from Romanian citizenship by the State Council of Romania from January 1985 to 1 May 1988 includes 1059 persons, also a relevant group for the association. Refugees from Romania (about 11,000 persons) do not only come from Transylvania; it is important to also include non-Transylvanians. At the same time, the MFA discourages use of the flag of Transylvania (by the association) [...] that would cause harsh Romanian protest, and it would be used to prove nationalism and alleged chauvinism [in Hungary]. It is reasonable to refer to the Constitution [in the statute of the association] because the association's activity falls under the propaganda framework."³² The Association could be authorized "under the legal control of the Ministry of Health Care and Social Affairs, [...] and continuous financial review of the economic activity of the association".³³ The catch was that while the Association intended to represent the interests of Transylvanian refugees, it was brought under the politically less predisposed ministry. Thus, officially the Association was viewed as representing the social and economic integration interests of the refugees without the political, legal, and cultural components. (See *Appendix*.)

We have to add that some social initiatives were openly tagged to the social uncertainty of refugees. Some of these initiatives urged immediate changes in housing regulation (e.g. Transylvanian refugees would become tenants in state or local council-owned apartments despite being foreigners), housing credit (e.g. refugees would restore uninhabited community buildings and thereby acquire the property or rental rights),³⁴ and family unification. However, these primarily socially oriented initiatives raised the hard-core political issues of equal rights and representation of refugees, and transparency of aid distribution. This artificially-maintained distance from (party) politics was soon replaced by the Act on the Right to Association,³⁵ which introduced classical liberal laws in the establishment of civil organisations. Ideological control by

³² KűM titkársága, 9242/1988, 1988. november 8.

³³ Erdélyi Magyarok Egyesületének, Szociális és Egészségügyi Minisztérium, 40.040/1/1989, 1989. január 11.

³⁴ E.g. the letter of Erdélyi Menekültek Demokratikus Tanácsa, /Intézőbizottság to the minister of Health Care and Social Affairs Csehák, Judit (9 August 1988) and to the deputy-minister of the Interior, Gál, Zoltán (25 May 1988). This formation was established on 14 July 1988 (without legal personality).

³⁵ Act II of 1989, it entered into force on 24 January 1989

the ministry was replaced by court records. Thus, the government and the HSWP could no longer implement the prior “politically abstinent civil and refugee organisation policy”. Civil organizations increased their demands in two areas in particular. First, the reception of and support for refugees signified a nation-building and trans-border ethnic policy. In this context, the protection of Transylvanian refugees actually meant protection of only *ethnic Hungarians for whom quasi citizenship status was required*. For instance, the Alliance of Transylvanians mentioned unity of Hungarian nation as the basis for “monitoring minority rights and the reason for defection of Transylvanian Hungarians”.³⁶ It also required “*responsible refugee and minority policy. The Government shall stand for protection of ethnic Hungarian minorities at international fora. Arbitrary distinction of and an alien patrolling approach towards Romanian refugees shall cease,*” as demanded by the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Committee and other organisers of the peaceful remembrance and demonstration on 15 March.³⁷

Second, the practice and principles of Hungarian ethnic preferences in refugee treatment was challenged. The Menedék Committee demanded³⁸ equal administrative treatment for all refugees, for instance regarding free travel to destination countries (foreign travel of ethnic Romanians is supported either tacitly or by providing them documents or funds, while Hungarians are hindered); legal status and provision of proper documentation (asylum law must be applied to provide protection against refoulement); lawful deportation that shall be regulated and reviewed by the court; family unification in accordance with UN CPR Covenant; and accommodation at temporary shelters. This equality can be financed from the Settlement Fund and shall be monitored publicly if refugee and migration statistics and finance data are transparent. It is evident that the civil sector was divided on refugee issues: some organisations claimed that the refugee domain is a humanitarian issue (Liberals, Young Democrats, Democratic Trade Union of Academics, Menedék Committee) while others (majority) approached it based on ethnicity. “*In favour of the refugees, we have to criticise the ruling power, and for the*

³⁶ Statute of Erdélyi Szövetség, 3.§, the original version was outlined on 8 December 1988 but its adoption happened after the Act II of 1989 entered into force.

³⁷ What demands the Hungarian nation. *Beszélő*, 1989/1 (26)

³⁸ Bossányi Katalin: *Szólampróba. Beszélgetések az alternatív mozgalmakról*. Láng Kiadó, Budapest, 1989.

benefit of formal cooperation among NGOs,³⁹ we cannot tolerate the ruling power capitalizing on assistance to refugees fleeing a suppressed state. We have to urge democratization in Romania, but the government has an advantage in the refugee wave by being able to take people's minds off key questions through nationalism and anti-Romanian sentiments."⁴⁰ This dividing line has been maintained by ambivalent government policy on human rights commitments and ethnic preferences since 1988.

Beyond the disclosed cases of rejection, ethnic preferences and numerous ad hoc actions regarding GDR citizens raised the issue of the *trustworthiness of the government refugee policy*, in particular after ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Why did Igor and 17 other Czechoslovakian citizens (some ethnic Hungarians) have to stop at the borders as they moved west? Why would one be frightened to be sent back to Czechoslovakia by the Alien Police because "there is no reason to emigrate"?⁴¹ And why are GDR citizens endangering order along the western borders of the Warsaw Treaty area?⁴² How can authorities balance suspending implementation of bilateral treaty agreements to extradite friendly states' citizens, provisions of non-refoulement, and individual evaluation of migrants in need of protection avoiding without Hungary becoming a massive emigrant transit zone? The reluctant period seeking answers these burning questions forced a lot of migrants to become irregular or illegal aliens in Hungary, however supporting to preserve the law enforcement and emergency driven approach to migratory movement and "*always unexpected refugees*".

³⁹ She mentioned as example why co-operation is not possible with Reformed Church in Rákosszentmihály and Németh, Géza: for a registry of refugees introduced that is based on „voluntarily” given personal data on ethnic origin, motivation of escape, family and sensitive personal background of applicant but without it nobody is assisted. This screening method is argued that Church has to co-operate with law enforcement, and discrimination between Hungarians and Romanians in supports is put into practice.

⁴⁰ Lengyel Gabriella in Bossányi Katalin: *Szólampróba. Beszélgetések az alternatív mozgalmakról*. Láng Kiadó, Budapest, 1989.

⁴¹ *Beszélő*, 1989. October 23. Fényi Tibor: Déja vu

⁴² *Beszélő*, 1989. September 27. Fényi Tibor: Ki falazott?

The Inter-Ministerial Committee as quasi governance

The public administration system in 1988–89 was structurally and politically well-developed due to strong traditions of statism and centralisation. At first glance it is not self-evident why the whole refugee administration was so surprising and unusual beyond the political context. Since 1950, public administration was comprised of different levels of state administration under the direction of a one-party system. As Kádár, the infamous party leader, summarized the core of the functioning system: “*The [Communist] Party directs but does not command, it governs but does not reign.*”⁴³ At that time, this was applicable to the central state administration as well as to local and county councils. Council direction by the Party was outlined in the Act on Councils.⁴⁴ According to this, there was no legal hierarchy between the directing and directed units, but the Party’s own policies prevailed through legally non-binding directives, consultations, personal influence and party members, all of which *blurred responsibility and liability for political and administrative decisions*. A Party structure was fitted parallel to the local and internal (functional) structure of the state administration (i.e., a party committee, executive committee, and party units were analogous to existing administrative functions), and people with dual roles (e.g., the leader of the Municipal Council was also a member of Municipal Party Committee) ensured tight co-ordination. According to Hungarian traditions of power- and resource-sharing, the national and county levels of the administration have been dominant and, consequently, refugee issues were tagged onto those institutions.

Councils managing the public services at the local level consisted of the following components: a representative body (councillors) led by elected leaders; committees; an executive board led by the clerk secretary; administrative departments; and public institutions (e.g. schools, nurseries, museums) and companies established by the council. The system was completely centralised, and the state controlled all elements of the apparatus. The ministries were in a direct, chain-like link with the county executive committees and the district or municipal executive

⁴³ 12th Congress of the HSWP, 24–27 March 1980

⁴⁴ Act I of 1971, it was modified by the Law-Decree No.26 of 1983 and Act IV of 1985. Its provisions were replaced by the Act LXV of 1990 on Local Self-governments.

committees. In addition, the Party's analogous organization also had a non-negligible influence.⁴⁵

Despite the dual control of the higher council and administrative units in this "centralised democracy", the 2,000 local and county councils had a wide jurisdiction as follows: regulative power (adoption of decrees on local relevance); statement on national public policy issues; establishment and re-organisation of internal units, public institutions and companies; horizontal co-operation with other councils and political organizations; adoption of the annual budget; co-operation with sister cities/settlements and international partners; urban and regional planning and development; state administration and registry (birth, death, marriage); authorisation of trade, industry and agricultural issues; traffic and public transport; local taxation and duties; employment; health care; building authorisation and housing; public education, culture and sports; and social affairs and guardianship.

Establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee in early 1988⁴⁶ was a coherent reaction by the public administration to the "unexpected refugee affairs" and followed three principles:

- It was established without a time frame, and thus was intended to provide horizontal co-operation among the competent central administrative and governmental organizations as well as an indirect vertical co-operation (with the county level) through their influence within the lower echelons of the state administration. It was headed by the deputy-minister of the Interior and included high functionaries of the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Health Care and Social Affairs; the Labour Office; the Office for Church Control; the HQ of the Police and Border Guards. The Intelligence Services were not represented directly, but maintained a presence through the Ministry of the Interior and the Police. Due to the short time in which it was established, the Committee's operations were flexible without firm procedures, and its legal foundation reflected the transience

⁴⁵ Antal, Tamás: *A tanácsrendszer és jogintézményei Szegeden (1950–1990)*. Szeged, Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 2009.

⁴⁶ Government Resolution No. 3046 of 1988, February 25 on establishing the inter-ministerial committee dealing with issues of foreigners residing in Hungary. It was distributed for government members and head of units of the Central Bureau of HSWP, Red Cross, deputy minister of the Interior

and emergency nature of the entire refugee issue. It was required to submit a report to the government, following its first five months of operation.⁴⁷

- The involvement of well-established non-state actors (Patriotic Front, National Council of Trade Unions, Red Cross, churches) meant a sharing (and blurring) of responsibility, while the Party's leadership in public administration remained unchanged. Moreover, the representative of the Central Bureau of the HSWP was formally invited, while representatives from alternative civil organisations were not. Their activities were expected to be channelled through their members.
- Finally, this committee would provide limited publicity through horizontal, vertical and non-state actor co-operation. But the fact that its charter was not published in the Official Gazette and was available only to specific addressees demonstrates its limited scope.

Nevertheless, the Government provided the IMC with the following instructions:

- to ensure that the support it provides for foreign citizens residing in Hungary conforms to the capacity of the budget and the state;
- provided assistance cannot encourage potential emigrants to leave their homeland;
- relief management and support have to be within the existing legal framework applicable to 10–20,000 emigrants, thus avoiding the necessity for new regulation;
- coordination between the capital city and counties must focus on employment, job opportunities, temporary shelters, and accommodation of residing migrants; and
- aid expenses shall be covered by the Settlement Fund (reimbursement).

The major governing actors can be seen in *Table 3*. For instance, the Capital Coordination Committee was led by the secretary of the Council's executive committee and included representatives from the Capital Police Station (Alien Policing unit); the social, health care, labour, and administrative departments of the Council; the Red Cross; the Patriotic Front; the Reformed Church; the Catholic Church; political opponents;

⁴⁷ It was submitted to and adopted by the Government on 16 June 1988

and the Association of Transylvanian Hungarians.⁴⁸ However, other alternative, spontaneous civil associations, NGOs and international partners remained at the sidelines and gradually appeared in government rhetoric.

Table 3. Public administration structure under Party direction (1988–89)

<i>Public administration</i>	<i>Party's units</i>	<i>Refugee management</i>
Parliament (regulative power and finance, e.g. Settlement Fund)	Congress of the HSWP	---
Presidential Council of the People's Republic (substitute of the parliament, constitutional control on councils)	Presidency and Central Bureau of the HSWP	---
Council of Ministers --- Office for Local Councils (legal control on councils, co-ordination, supervisory power, annulations of unlawful decrees)	Departments of the Central Bureau	International organisations
Ministries (regulative, direction and supervision on the given branch of state administration)	(e.g. on Economic Policy, on State Administration), Party committee in each working place (at public administration units, Police...)	Inter-Ministerial Committee (exchange of information, good practice and adoption circulation letters)
Central offices (regulative, directing and supervisory power on lower units inside the given branch of state administration), e.g. HQ of the Police, Border Guards, Security services (military hierarchy)		
National Council of Trade Unions (directing the social insurance network)		
Sub-national levels		

⁴⁸ Dobó István: *A romániai áttelepülők (menekültek) jogi helyzete, ügyeinek intézése a fővárosi menekülügyi koordinációs bizottság irodája tevékenységének tükrében.* [Legal status of immigrants from Romania and management of their issues in the Capital Co-ordination Committee and at its office] Államigazgatási Főiskola, 1990.

<i>Public administration</i>	<i>Party's units</i>	<i>Refugee management</i>
Police, Border Guards and Security service units at county level (stations, patrolling districts)	Party committee in each working place (at police, border guard units)	County Committees (5–7 as mirror of IMC at county level for exchange of information and good practice, execution of circulation letters)
Police, Border Guards and Security service units at city/town level		
Metropolitan Council	Capital Party Committee	
District Councils (inside the capital)	District Party Committee	
County Councils (19)	County Party Committee	
City Councils and District Offices (25)	City Party Committee	Civil organisations
Town Councils (150)	Town Party Committee	
Village Councils (2000)	Village Party Committee	

Soon after it was established, in 1988–89 the IMC issued circulars or handouts to the central and local units of public administration on the topics listed below. These documents are rife with confusing terminology (e.g., ethnic Hungarians living across the borders, Romanian citizens, foreign nationals, settlers),⁴⁹ and all of them avoid encouraging emigration:

(a) Immigrants entering without a visa and a settlement permit shall be questioned regarding their personal situation and asked to provide a reasonable motivation for leaving their country (“*clarification of circumstances*”). Based on the responses, the county/capital police station may issue a temporary but renewable residence permit. Its length varied between 1–6 months or up to two years, and it was the basis for lawful employment. This authorization was completely *contra legem* (alien policing rules and bilateral agreements), thus a “stealth regulation” without formal legal entitlement. Holders of residence permits valid for two

⁴⁹ For instance, 14 April 1988, Ministry of the Interior, IMC Information Sheet

years were furnished with an immigrant identity card and special travel documents for visiting abroad.

(b) Councils may assist immigrants in possession of temporary residence or settlement permits, in particular those seeking jobs, accommodation and housing, because *“provision of support to establish proper living conditions belongs primarily to the state and council”*. This statement is vague regarding whether the duties of the state and council are synonymous, whether provision is the duty solely of the state administration, or whether local communities are to be the enthusiasts of refugee relief.

(c) The Labour department of the capital/county council may issue a labour permit (for instance, in 1989 15,859 Romanian citizens were employed through a permit⁵⁰), and its local unit provides an employment log and proper documents free of charge. As a result of this provision, immigrant workers without proper documentation and without an authorized employment record, skills or exams were considered suspicious, in particular those who provided false information at a labour registry or job interview. Self-employed persons had to take an exam at vocational training centres. Equal treatment was provided in publicly-financed “community work”, re-training and job training courses, and labour exchange services. The labour information centres gathered information on job vacancies and offers for workers’ shelters *“if possible in the countryside, where housing conditions are better”*. However, the majority of immigrants were moving to Budapest, Debrecen or Győr (close to the eastern or western borders) despite the severe shortage of (cheap, available) apartments. Nevertheless, there were opponents to this liberal employment regime among the kin-minority.⁵¹

(d) The address on the temporary residence permit was considered to be the holder’s permanent address for the discharge of certain welfare, social insurance, and schooling services.

(e) *“Housing conditions [for immigrants] shall not violate the interests of Hungarian citizens”*, thus, workers’ shelters, subletting, alimony contracts

⁵⁰ Országos Munkaerőpiaci Központ: *Külföldi munkavállalók Magyarországon* (Lezárva 1990. július 31-én)

⁵¹ „We demand to Hungarian Government immediately suspend the authorization of employment and settlement of migrants from Romania. They are not persecuted and homeland will be Hungarian-free and free from Hungarian intelligentsia”. Letter to the Hungarian Council of Ministers on behalf of MDSZ units in Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely, Temesvár, Arad, Nagyvárád (February 1989)

with the elderly, students' dormitories, reconstruction of uninhabited public buildings by the migrant family, or council rent subsidies were approved mostly by local refugee management administrators.

(f) Emergency health care (first aid, life saving) shall be provided for all people, but other health care available free of charge to Hungarian nationals is also available free of charge only to residence permit holders. This means that non-donations were financed from the budget (or reimbursed from the Settlement Fund).

(g) Social assistance was equally available for temporary permit holders as for nationals at the local councils. *“Immigrant adults and minors in need and without a residence permit may be supported in exceptional cases (e.g. education assistance, free meals at school, elderly-home accommodation)”*. However, eligibility requirements were less stringent than for nationals. For instance, free dormitory accommodation, free nursery meals, and temporary accommodation in a children's home were available without the normal residency requirements and were grounded in the “persons in need” presumption due to emigration. Furthermore, fast cash support was also introduced for immigrants, while nationals had to complete a background check.

(h) Social (public) insurance was available for immigrants taking into account their prior work history (in Romania). Thus, family and child care, sickness allowance, maternity support, and *“in exceptional cases and where there is an absence of employment in Hungary, the county boards of social insurance may approve financial assistance for immigrants in need”*. This special treatment applied also to nationals, but in limited number only, while the presence of immigrants in some parts of the country meant a massive group of applicants in those localities. Moreover, bilateral agreements concluded with Romania required lawful emigration and immigrant authorisation as preconditions of equal treatment in social insurance (and labour law), so this measure was *contra legem*.

(i) Public education services available to nationals—such as certificate issuance, obligatory school attendance for certain age groups, and access to scholarships—were also equally available for resident permit holders. Furthermore, *“voluntarily organised, supplementary catch-up courses for non-Hungarian speaking pupils may be offered unless the pupils have access to minority schools”*. The whole education (and refugee support) system was based on ethnic Hungarians, so speakers of other languages were considered exceptions or deviances. Supplementary courses for all children unfavourable

miliar with the Hungarian school curricula and regardless of native language were not developed. This remained an isolated, local problem for teachers. Access to higher education was diverse, so the Ministry of Culture passed a Guideline for Romanian citizens residing in Hungary for university and college studies.⁵² According to the Guideline, the Ministry of Culture may exempt students from submitting their high school graduation exam documents normally required for application, while universities may accept “*any documents that can prove the completed curricula and studies of a student who wants to continue or finish higher education in Hungary*”. A similar proposal was supported on how to recognize Romanian diplomas that lacked a proper appendix on curricula content, although universities or colleges “*are entitled to determine whether or not the holder possesses the knowledge of the respective profession*”. These instructions were mandated outside of the laws in force and applicable to non-immigrant inhabitants.

(j) Some components of the relief measures cannot be compared to the (equal) rights of Hungarian nationals because they are unique to the immigrants’ conditions:

- councils were expected to monitor the life and working conditions of immigrants in companies that employed foreigners in great numbers. This would normally be done by trade unions, but those had been silenced and at most were active locally in the recruitment of new members;
- central and eastern counties were offered a special adviser or public servant to deal with immigrants;
- certified translations of official documents (e.g. diplomas) cost a lot of money and may be subsidized by the councils or provided for a reduced price upon request;
- the National Railway Company provided free tickets to immigrants moving from their temporary residence to their final destination;
- H. Insurance Co. (state owned) offered immigrants one year of free accident, student, and non-real property insurance;
- the Red Cross was to encourage solidarity by coordinating donations to refugees from civic organizations and churches.

⁵² Irányelv a felsőoktatásra vonatkozó jogszabályoknak a Magyarországon tartózkodó román állampolgárok ügyeiben való alkalmazásáról [Guideline on applicability of laws on higher education to Romanian citizens residing in Hungary], Művelődési Minisztérium, 1989. január 5. 49.035/1989.

Despite strong pressure from the refugees and civic organisations, the IMC was almost passive regarding two topics: support for family unification at international and bilateral fora, and assistance in obtaining lost or abandoned official documents (e.g., through consular offices or popular diplomacy).

The other complex and nearly hopeless issue during and after this entire period was immigrant housing. Although the Hungarian population had faced a severe housing shortage, the refugee influx was unable to trigger the launch of housing programmes either centrally or at the council level. Supply remained limited, so while efforts were under way to provide easier access to loans or non-repayable contributions needed to purchase apartments or construct or reconstruct family homes, temporary solutions (offered shelters, dormitory capacity) and rent subsidies were gradually phased out. Loans were made available for resident permit holders seeking a 10–20 year mortgage, as opposed to defectors holding only a temporary permit. Furthermore, foreign nationals had to obtain currency authorisation, a real estate purchase permit, permission for access to a guaranteed state loan, and exemption from the residency requirement in cities (e.g. the capital). This involved four different authorities,⁵³ making it expensive—in addition to high-risk—for refugee families. *Table 4* illustrates the limited capacity of temporary shelters for 20–30,000 persons.

These efforts led to “*debt slavery*” in certain refugee families, while the use of state subsidies (Settlement Fund) was also disproportionate as indicated by some figures in *Table 5*. A small part of all refugees could obtain support while the others (perhaps non-ethnic Hungarians⁵⁴) have remained out of housing benefits.

⁵³ Útmutató a tanácsok és a pénzintézetek számára a Romániából menekültek lakáshoz jutásának elősegítéséhez. A Magyarországon tartózkodó külföldi állampolgárok ügyeivel foglalkozó állami tárcaközi bizottság, 219–70/16/89. [Guideline on refugees’ housing management for councils and financial institutes by the IMC]

⁵⁴ The Guideline on refugees’ housing management for councils and financial institutes by the IMC starts: “the overwhelming majority from the actual residing 15 000 refugees as ethnic Hungarians intend to settle in Hungary...”

Table 4. Temporary shelters in 1988–89*

<i>Place</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Expenses</i>	<i>Other information</i>
Pécs	33 persons	354 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	
Kecskemét	260 persons	300 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp of the Agricultural Co-op.
Kecskemét	5 persons	260 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Accommodations provided in a flat
Mezőkovácsháza	120 persons	350 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp, medical service is available
Békéscsaba	100 persons	No data	Accommodation, meal and medical care is available
Békéscsaba	150 persons	333 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp, medical service is available
Szeged Algyő	300 persons	69 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Poor conditions
Szeged	30 persons	305 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp
Szeged	21 persons	225–545 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Motel
Szeged	25 persons	240 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Hotel Royal
Bicske	220 persons	No data	Accommodation, meals are available
Székesfehérvár	14 persons	441 HUF accommodation per capita per day	
Győr	26 persons	100 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Workers' hotel

* Data are based and compiled with document by the Ministry of the Interior on the ground of Local Council information

<i>Place</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Expenses</i>	<i>Other information</i>
Novákpuzsta	82 persons	320 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	The facility is a former training centre
Debrecen	50 persons	84 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Meal is partly provided by donations
Léányfalu	200 persons	300 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Medical care is available in the hotel
Vérocsmaros	45 persons	300 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Medical care is available, operated by the Red Cross
Nyírszöllős	20 persons	135–428 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	
Nyírbátor	10 persons	230 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	
Kállósejnyén	15 persons	145 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	
Nyíregyháza - Sóstó	80 persons	200 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp
Öcsöd	8 persons	50 HUF accommodation per capita per day	
Várdomb	40 persons	Self-subsistence for families	
Nagykanizsa	29 persons	No data	Accommodation
Budapest 9 th District	62 persons	36 HUF accommodation per capita per day	Developing to a capacity of up to 120 persons
Budapest 12 th District	130 persons	320 HUF accommodation and meal per capita per day	Youth camp, medical service is available

Table 5. Financial burden of the central budget
for received Romanian citizens

	<i>Per capita from the Sett- lement Fund (average)</i>	<i>Per capita for health care (average)</i>	<i>Per capita for reception centre (average)</i>	<i>Per family for apartment purchase (average)</i>
August, 1989	18 000 HUF	20 000 HUF	10 000 HUF	300 000 HUF
1989	Apartment purchase support for 1092 families in 223.5 million HUF			204 700 HUF ⁵⁵
	For 1043 persons housing support in the amount of 7 million HUF			
	Housing renovation cost for 1368 persons in the amount of 63,8 million HUF			

The Capital City Coordination Committee and its Service Office operated in accordance with IMC instructions⁵⁶ alongside their own administrative and financial statutes. The main tasks focused on employment, social affairs, temporary accommodation and other administrative issues. The following include problems it frequently faced in its operations:⁵⁷

- Lawful employment in health care required original and recognized certificates or diplomas that were missing in numerous cases. Highly qualified persons thus were unable to gain employment in health care.
- Non-Hungarian speaking workers were not (easily) employed, and there were no interim measures or assistance/training available to them.

⁵⁵ *Útjelző* (Information sheet of the MI Refugee Office) June, 1990. p.3.

⁵⁶ Állami Tárcaközi Bizottság 1901–6/1988. BM sz. Tájékoztató a tartózkodási engedéllyel rendelkező román állampolgárok főbb jogosítványairól, kötelezettségeiről, ügyeik intézésének szabályairól [Guidelines on administration, rights and obligations of Romanian citizens in possession of residence permit by the IMC]

⁵⁷ Dobó István: *A romániai áttelepülők (menekültek) jogi helyzete, ügyeinek intézése a fővárosi menekültügyi koordinációs bizottság irodája tevékenységének tükrében.* [Legal status of immigrants from Romania and management of their issues in the Capital Co-ordination Committee and at its office] Államigazgatási Főiskola, 1990

- It was almost impossible to offer both housing and employment in the same settlement, especially in the absence of up-to-date data and aligned databases. Inexpensive rent or real estate was available in depressed border zones that lacked employment opportunities.
- Refugees attended schools in a system in which vocational training was underpaid. As a result, the Hungarian labour market refused to accommodate their inadequate knowledge in numerous blue-collar occupations (9–10th class).
- The Council and Service Office was unable to control the employment and living conditions offered by companies or entrepreneurs, although refugee exploitation and abusive job conditions would be screened out by a broader office capacity.
- The Red Cross, churches and the Office provided uncoordinated financial aid even for persons without temporary resident permits (immediate aid). Within one year, the Office developed some preventive measures against abuse; however, the system based on obligatory notice of all supports noticed on the residence permit was imperfect..
- A joint committee of the council, Red Cross and churches was set up to make well-founded decisions on settlement financial aid for refugees.
- Temporary accommodation run by the Council (in the 9th District) was managed for up to a maximum of 8 nights for refugees in need of shelter.
- The increasing number of minors (teenagers) unaccompanied by family members had to be accommodated in youth homes with appointed guardianship. But frozen contacts with the Romanian guardian authority hindered the exchange of information on missing minors.
- An increasing number of refugee families had no credit capacity, and the Office (or Council) was nominated as a credit insurer. However, the Council had no real budget from which to pay the debts, so this insurance was only a façade.

The county-based coordination committees faced similar problems, but their leaders expressed those in a sophisticated way. For instance, *“we really want to assist, but we have to remain inside the legal provisions and the legal system. Furthermore, immigrants from Romania cannot be considered traditional political refugees; we believe in normalization in Romania, soon after*

which they can return home without a scratch,” said dr. Virágh, chairman of the Hajdú-Bihar County Coordination Committee.⁵⁸ The dilemma of how to effectively manage the refugee influx in the eastern county, and how to respect both basic human needs and the legal order was the main concern. Illegal immigrants were continuously arriving, and law enforcement at the border zone was unable to perform scrutiny and security checks that would result in well-founded decisions of acceptance or rejection when “*per capita, there is no more than 15 minutes time for each hearing*”. Moreover, persons without documents as client in emergency relief were outside of ordinary praxis in state administration. “*A general political intention [on acceptance] has to be put into administrative practice in expeditious procedure without prior experiences and perfect regulation*”,⁵⁹ summarized Dr. Ferenc Debreczeni, deputy council leader in Debrecen.

In a local scandal related to the confiscation and ban (by the pressure of the County Party Committee) of copies of *Debrecen* that criticized delays in council and co-ordination committee management of refugee issues proved the fragile publicity of refugee emergency regime. The newspaper (4 March 1988) demanded transparency and publicity regarding refugee issues. Dr. Debreczeni evaluated the ban as an excessive and old communist reaction; however, “*acceptance of defecting citizens from an alliance state, despite agreements, caused international tensions. But we have to explain this political motivation connected to Hungarians. Explanations would mean publicity, open discussions and solidarity. But state loyalty could not be replaced by those, and council leaders had to struggle for this under-regulated political intention with administrators who strongly protected the interests and benefits of public institutions against newcomers’ claims.*”⁶⁰

In reaction to a proposal by six deputies, the Parliament decided to establish a fund that would provide aid to foreigners settling in Hungary. The Government accepted this proposal and reallocated 300 million HUF from the central budget for this purpose. It was not made public that in January 1988, the secretary of the Central Bureau of the HSWP, Miklós Németh (future Prime Minister), visited the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to discuss a one billion DM credit to Hungary. His intention was to isolate 200 million DM of it in stock to finance the

⁵⁸ Kaufmann, Sylvie *Le Monde*, 27 April 1988

⁵⁹ Székegyházi, Ágoston: *Debreceni napló Erdélyről. Két haza között*. [Diary from Debrecen – in between homeland and kin-state] Csokonai Kiadó, Debrecen, 1989.

⁶⁰ Op.cit. p.105–106.

costs related to the growing mass of refugees from Romania. Németh's discussion of this issue with high-ranking German officials demonstrated the intolerable conditions of minorities in Romania and the tensions inside the alliance created by Hungary's acceptance of refugees. At that time, the German press started to criticize Romania's policy of demolishing villages and settlements as a tool of "modernization".⁶¹ However, the resource of refugee management was not disclosed.

The Settlement Fund was established with 12 opposing MP votes on 17 March 1988.⁶² In the absence of detailed regulation, the Government passed a decree on major expenses and payment method.⁶³ Accordingly, the Fund could cover costs related to equal treatment in the public services sector in addition to temporary shelters, settlement and housing allowances, and additional administrative expenditures. For instance, a one-time financial aid payment to refugees starting a new life in Hungary was introduced (its maximum amount was 600% of the regular livelihood support per capita per month), to be managed by local councils. Neither the parliament nor the government clearly defined reimbursement deadlines, registration, the prevention of dual claims, book-keeping, and financial control. These shortcomings in regulation caused troubles. Finally, the Minister of the Interior issued a retroactive order—in a confidential letter.⁶⁴ Although quarterly the claims for reimbursement of charges coming from councils,⁶⁵ state administration and civil organisations, the Ministry of the Interior were collected and verified by the IMC, finally, the deputy minister accepted the requested claims and instructed the financial transfer to the addressees. Fifteen copies of this order were distributed internally.⁶⁶ Consequently, transparency of the Fund even within the existing law enforcement routine was fragmented, and information on its implementation procedures was left out. At the same time, the Fund welcomed and urged private donations. The

⁶¹ Horváth István és Németh István: *...és a falak leomlanak. Magyarország és a német egység. (1945–1990)* [...and walls are decaying – Hungary and the German unification] Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1999.

⁶² Kende, Péter: *Erdélyből jöttek.* [Coming from Transylvania] Ifjúsági Lap-és Könyvkiadó, 1988.

⁶³ Government Decree No.49 of 1988, June 28.

⁶⁴ Ministerial order No.20 of 1988, July 25 that had to be implemented since 1 January 1988.

⁶⁵ BM 67–6/12/1988. TÜK számú VB titkári tájékoztató.

⁶⁶ Only for internal using, 10–21/20/1988. Printed in 15 copies.

figures in *Table 6* show that in 1988 the Fund used only 60 million HUF, private donations were limited, and the role of UNHCR became significant after 1989.

Table 6. Financial burden from central budget on received Romanian citizens (1 January – 11 December 1989)⁶⁷

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>HUF (million)</i>	<i>Incomes</i>	<i>HUF (million)</i>	<i>Total balance in HUF (million)</i>
Maintenance of temporary shelters (contributions)	4.45	Settlement Fund from the yearly budget	242.1	
Contribution to nursery and elementary schooling costs	0.33	Bank commission	5.8	
Health care expenditures	2.29	Donations	0.9	
Allowances in cash	10.10	Redemptions	0.4	
Immediate support in cash	12.44	Extra support by the parliament	100.0	
Contribution to apartment purchase	10.01		349.2	
Administrative costs including translation	12.02			
Total at the end of April	51.64			297.56
Contribution to apartment purchase	54.5			
Setting up/reconstruction of reception centres	107.0			
Others	70.4			
Total at the end of August	231.9			117.3

⁶⁷ MI, Planning and Finance HQ and Refugee Office: Report to the Minister, August 1989

<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>HUF (million)</i>	<i>Incomes</i>	<i>HUF (million)</i>	<i>Total balance in HUF (million)</i>
Administrative costs of formal refugee procedure (e.g. 30 new staff members)	45.3		59.02	
Maintaining of temporary shelters	117.65	UNHCR contribution		
Contribution to nursery and elementary schooling costs	1.2			
Health care expenditures	9.52			
Allowances in cash	35.47			
Immediate support in cash	47.90			
Contribution to apartment purchase ⁶⁸	134.58			
Administrative costs including translation	9.6			
Total in mid-December ⁶⁹	401.30			408.22

However, the Ministry of the Interior recognized the need for regular control of reimbursements from the Settlement Fund, in particular apartment purchases, renovation, and housing support, which represented the highest rates. But that could not prevail⁷⁰ due to new coopera-

⁶⁸ This type of expenditures was gradually growing as the IMC issued more and more sophisticated instructions on administration and equal treatment in benefited credit, contribution to purchase and own building of apartments. For instance, Memo of the IMC meeting (25 May 1989)

⁶⁹ Memo on IMC meeting (26 October 1989) explains that these figures refer on paid expenses but in fact the costs size is higher due to pending reimbursements claim. Accordingly deficit of the Settlement Fund in mid-October 1989 was 11 million HUF.

⁷⁰ Javaslat a Letelepdesi Alap terhére történő tanácsi kiadások ellenőrzésére, (Recommendation for regular control of reimbursements from the Settlement Fund) BM 1989. január 16.

tion with the UNHCR that required specific efforts in planning, instalment management and programme evaluation.

Institution-building through temporary measures and limitations in transparency and publicity were at the core of the main disfunctionality of the refugee administration. Since the first moment of refugee acceptance, this impotency was attacked by articles and civil initiatives urging, at a minimum, public discourse on security and solidarity. For instance, *“the refugee issue, in particular family unification, has been placed on the agenda of international fora such as the UN and the CSCE meeting in Vienna [...] we would accept Hungarians but not criminals, while priests, teachers, and physicians have to be sent back to the minority communities in need. We have to provide assistance—through visa procedures and diaspora contacts—to Romanians and Saxons travelling to a destination country. Refugees and applicants for lawful immigration shall be allowed to stay in Hungary; however, the receiving capacity of this country will be defined by the authorities taking into account the number of immigrants and emigrants. No refugees are forced to return to Romania that shall be controlled by civil organisations, and settlement shall be allowed only for ethnic Hungarians and their family members [...] they can enjoy scholarships from company donations and tax deductions in constructing their own homes.”*⁷¹ These fragments indicate how incoherent and selective the demands to the IMC were.

While during the prior refugee influxes of Greeks and Chileans there was no state security concern raised in Hungary due to their limited number, the increasing number of immigrants from Romanian did pose a concern *“because the balance between humanitarian principles and illegality had not been established.”* For example, among immigrants, *“there was an increase in the activity of Romanian state security services, although the associated agencies did not utilize intelligence agents or informants. About one quarter of apprehended males can provide information on the actions and operations of the intelligence agency. This increase in intelligence activity is facilitated by the growing number of unidentified foreigners, underdeveloped security check methods, slack control of residence permit issuance (e.g. some DDR citizens introduce themselves as Romanian refugees), increase in cases of marriage of convenience, illegally transported family members, illegal border crossings, and exiting Hungary without proper documents. Moreover, law enforcement’s lack of a coherent legal process also may encourage further illegality. The legal status of newcomers is uncertain,*

⁷¹ Protocol made on Meeting in Szilasliget, 4 April 1988. In: Franka Tibor: *Most jöttem Erdélyből* [I have just arrived from Transylvania] Láng Kiadó, 1988.

and their equal treatment may spawn prejudices in an atmosphere of fragmented security controls".⁷² This summary was provided in an expert paper on law enforcement's dilemmas at that time. Furthermore, a deputy was required to stop the refoulement, deportation and non-acceptation of Transylvanian refugees who intended to settle down in Hungary (4 January 1989). The Minister of the Interior, in an answer to an interpolation, asked for patience while Hungary prepared to ratify the 1951 Geneva Convention. He also called for the adoption of administrative measures for the admission of Transylvanian immigrants to western countries.⁷³

As the key instruction toolkit, the guideline was not very effective in avoiding discrepancies in administrative practice, even though law enforcement traditionally was—and has been—a hierarchical, militant structure. The deputy minister (Ministry of the Interior) issued a circular but confidential letter⁷⁴ to all county police captains in which he forcefully drew their attention to the following:

- prior guidelines on selection principles for entry and residence⁷⁵ shall be executed accurately because, "*in the recent past, an absence of proper deliberation has been observed, which led to the rejection of immigrants who are eligible for residence in Hungary*";
- a unified and tight process is necessary regarding authorization of entry and residence, "taking into account equity and the individual conditions of the concerned persons";
- only the captains (leaders of county police stations) personally shall make decisions on the denial or admission of illegal immigrants, and this entitlement must not be delegated to other colleagues;
- before deciding, the captain must consult with the head of the immigrant policing HQ of the Police;
- decision shall be made without delay.

This under-regulated and semi-public mechanism changed only after ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention, but not immedia-

⁷² Horváth Zoltán: A letelepedni szándékozó külföldi állampolgárokkal összefüggő biztonsági és rendészeti kérdések. [Security and law enforcement issues concerning immigrants] In: Timoránszky Péter (ed.) *A nemzeti kisebbségek és a menekültek jogai, I. kötet*. MTA Államtudományi Kutatások Programirodája, Budapest, 1989. 233–242.

⁷³ Földes, György: *Magyarország, Románia és a nemzeti kérdés 1956–1989* [Hungarian and Romanian relations and nationalism] Napvilág Kiadó, 2007. pp.453.

⁷⁴ Ladvánszky Károly, BM SZT 50–15/1/1989. 1989. január 4.

⁷⁵ See upper as BM 50–589/1988.

tely and automatically. The key message of the 1951 Convention did not require a profound legal knowledge to be well-understood by all: namely, that it forbids the deportation of protection seekers. After March 1989, the first step was to prohibit border guards from firing a weapon against anyone illegally crossing the border except in cases of warranted self-defence. The second was to respect the universal ban on refoulement. However, the concept of refugee has not been trivial, so implementation of non-refoulement – in law enforcement practice – depends on *who the subject of immigration is*. In the case of GDR citizens apprehended at Hungary's western borders, a narrow interpretation was applied until 31 July 1989: they were considered subjects under the bilateral agreement between Hungary and the GDR, so they were discharged to the GDR (state security) authority. Only in early August 1989 did the Chief Prosecutor issue an order instructing public prosecutors⁷⁶ what to do in case of illegal border crossings. Accordingly, GDR citizens were not to be subjected to expulsion or deportation for (attempted) illegal border crossing to the west – neglecting the bilateral agreement – but they are to be treated as nationals (in minor offence or criminal liability laws), depending on committed act. But the fate of Romanian immigrants was determined by circular letters and guidelines – also bypassing the bilateral agreements – until the procedural decrees of 1951 Geneva Convention were applied in mid-October 1989. Furthermore, a confidential order of the HQ of the Border Guard issued on 8 September 1989 that gave instructions on how to open up the western borders reinforced the following: unhindered departure (without visa) for Germany via Austria would be applied “*exclusively for GDR citizens, while other foreigners (Romanians, Turkish, etc.) have to abide by the existing bilateral rules*”.⁷⁷

Summing up, the IMC operation was considered as successful according to its Report submitted to the Government. Accepting the Report (16 June 1988), the IMC chair was obliged to “*prepare alternative solution on how to cope issues of a possible great mass of refugees coming to Hungary*”.⁷⁸ It meant that Government under the migration pressure of DDR and Romanian citizens projected a possibility of further migratory movements

⁷⁶ Oplatka András: *Egy döntés története. Magyar határnyitás 1989. szeptember 11. nulla óra.* [History of opening borders for DDR citizens] Helikon Kiadóm Budapest, 2008.

⁷⁷ A határnyitás 20 éve [Opening the borders – 20th anniversary] (1989–2009) Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum kiállítása (1–26 April 2009)

⁷⁸ Raft Miklós, MT Hivatala, 1988. június 21.

as a short-term, emergency situation and tailor-made solutions to each migrant population (GDR, Romanian) and not as a standard task for public administration. Naturally, this evaluation did not reflect on critics, e.g. a refugee office had to be set up, IMC instructions could not substitute formal regulation on asylum and refugees, Geneva Convention would not be applicable for ethnic Hungarians for whom benefited naturalisation and legal remedy against refusal shall be immediately accepted.⁷⁹

The 1951 Geneva Convention and institutionalisation

Parallel to the ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the IMC began management of GDR and Romanian immigrants. This institution-building period took some months from March to mid-October 1989. At the end of this period the National Roundtable negotiated the content of the constitutional reform that was passed by the Parliament on 23 October 1989.⁸⁰ The main principles and work phases of these months were approved by the Central Political Bureau of the HSWP as follows:⁸¹

- a) Without encouraging immigrants from leaving their home country, Hungary has to make an international effort to obtain support for the admission and status consolidation of “*persons residing in the country who refused to return home as quasi refugees*”. Accession to the Geneva Convention provided a good basis for these efforts.
- b) The main task of the Border Guards (18,500 persons) is to control (legal and illegal) human and vehicle traffic at borders with better infrastructure. Due to free travel rights (since January 1988),⁸² the electronic signal transfer, pursuit trail, as well as restrictions on certain activities at the Austrian and Yugoslavian borders must cease

⁷⁹ See the statement of Minority Protection Association formed by academics (16 February 1989)

⁸⁰ Act XXXI of 1989 amended the Act XX of 1989 on the Constitution of Hungary

⁸¹ Report on Government session (22 February 1989) to the CPB of HSWP 00140/TÜK/1989, and Report on Government session (16 May 1989) to the CPB of HSWP 00390/TÜK/1989.

⁸² HQ of the Border Guard prohibited for border patrols to use fire arms against escaping persons across the borders, illegal migrants. Other so called preventive measures were ceased at the Romanian border zone, so illegal border crossing cases were increasing since 1987. Kórműves, József – Nagy, György – Ravasz, István: *Határőrségben. A Magyar határőrizet és határvédelem szerveinek története a modern korban*. Hadtörténelmi Intézet és Múzeum, Budapest, 2008.

- (by 31 July 1989), and draft legislation on the state border and its management shall be prepared (by 31 December 1989). Long-term administrative changes (e.g., reduction of staff, replacement of persons on duty by professional law enforcement public servants) shall be decided by the end of June 1989.⁸³
- c) Although refugee governance stands the test, the politically significant role and oversight of the parliament has to be strengthened (e.g., “*we can be considered as under-informed in refugee issues,*” summarized the parliamentary committee.)⁸⁴
 - d) The Ministry of the Interior established the new Office for Refugee Affairs in April 1989. In the beginning, it had a staff of five.⁸⁵ Its formally approved tasks⁸⁶ by the IMC were as follows: support for refugee placement and integration, assistance with secretarial work for the IMC, preparing use of the Settlement Fund, direction of refugee camps, and co-operation with NGOs and churches in refugee relief affairs.
 - e) Refugees basically have to become self-sufficient through paid work, so their employment is a key topic, even as the ratio of unskilled migrants increased. The criteria for refugee recognition, the legal status of refugees, and exceptional conditions of refoulement were to be regulated. Due to the high number of refugees, stable regulation of admittance was required, while research on newcomers’ sociological characteristics was also conducted. The IMC also ordered a mass survey of social institutions and public opinion on refugee acceptance.⁸⁷ These results would show support for better administration and regulation by July–September 1989. There was a feeble initiative that combined refugee housing with entrepreneurship: Settlement Fund support would be available for cooperatives, small entrepreneurs, and companies that employ refugees to build and furnish apartments.⁸⁸

⁸³ In accordance with the Government Resolution on Border Guards’ tasks No.3141 of 1989, May 18

⁸⁴ Memo of the joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Parliament discussed the report of the Government on 1 March 1989.

⁸⁵ Feljegyzés a Hivatal felszereléséhez, 1989. április 24. Belügyminisztérium (*Protocol made on 24. April 1989.*)

⁸⁶ Memo of IMC meeting (25 May 1989)

⁸⁷ Contract with Tárki. 8. December 1988.

⁸⁸ Memo of National Association of Entrepreneurs meeting (30 March 1989)

f) Immigrants and applicants shall be accommodated and monitored in sanitary and secure refugee camps. An ad hoc body of high-ranking public officials was established in February 1989 to identify suitable locations⁸⁹ in adherence to regulations adopted by similar institutions in other convention countries (e.g., what is the optimal length of accommodation in camps, and how to manage cooperation with local NGOs).⁹⁰ Projecting an increase of refugees (in the preceding 13 months residence permits were obtained by 13,719 persons, 88% of whom were ethnic Hungarian), about 3–4 camps would be established as part of refugee management efforts, and they would be reported on by the government to the parliament in its forthcoming session (March 1989).⁹¹ However, the acquisition of camp buildings was time and money consuming (purchase in Békéscsaba and Bicske, and lease in Hajdúszoboszló). Until the arrival of UNHCR financial aid, the Settlement Fund covers all expenditures. It is important to operate the camps as law enforcement institutions under the direction of the Refugee Office and in light of refugee law. The security, finance and human resource tasks shall fall under the redefined mandates of their respective ministerial units.⁹² The construction and operation of refugee camp services is subject to VAT. Consequently, only a small number of exemptions would be provided through international agreement (with UNHCR), and the Settlement Fund is responsible for the VAT until the UNHCR support agreement enters into force. If refugee camps would be established as apartments, VAT law would allow for an exemption.⁹³ However, the UNHCR delegation in June 1989 requested a clear exemption from VAT in all renovations,

⁸⁹ Vaja, Nyíregyháza, Dánfork, Bicske, Hajdúszoboszló, Budapest XVII.ker., Békéscsaba was selected taking into account how the local population was refusing the project.

⁹⁰ Memo of refugee camp preparatory ad hoc committee activities, 7–8 March 1989

⁹¹ The joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Parliament discussed the report of the Government on 1 March 1989.

⁹² BM Államtitkár: Feljegyzés a menekülteket befogadó állomásokkal kapcsolatos feladatok BM-en belüli meghatározásáról és összehangolásáról. 1989. május 30. (*Protocol made on 30. May 1989*)

⁹³ PM Államtitkár, dr. Kunos Péter levele dr.Gál Zoltánhoz, 14.638/1989., 1989. július 18. (*Letter to dr. Gál Zoltán*)

operations, and furnishings of refugee camps and supplies, otherwise donor countries would refuse their promised contribution to Hungary. Thus, necessary measures need to be taken by the responsible ministry.⁹⁴

- g) Although family reunification was the central concern, and parliament pressured government to act, frozen bilateral relations paralyzed negotiations. The Hungarian Red Cross collected completed questionnaires and forwarded them to the Romanian Red Cross, petitioning support in vain. Non-involvement in family relations and a non-active assistance policy has remained a peculiarity of refugee law. A survey on refugee assistance also identified this as a government weakness.⁹⁵
- h) Establishing connections with the UNHCR was urgent for at least three reasons: this organisation would provide financial support for refugee admissions; it would assist with legal and administrative preparations (e.g., setting up refugee camps); and it would extend the international political space for manoeuvring for the Hungarian government in transition. „*At the invitation of the Hungarian government, a UNHCR delegation visited Hungary to negotiate on cooperation with participation of church representatives and the Hungarian Red Cross. Within one year, 13,179 resident permits were issued for asylum seekers from Romania. Representatives of the Hungarian authorities expressed their intention to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention*”.⁹⁶ Consultations and visits were organised (e.g., by representatives of the Ministry of the Interior to the Belgrade Branch Office and refugee camps in April 1989,⁹⁷ and a visit by the High Commissioner to Hajdúszoboszló and Debrecen on 31 October 1989⁹⁸).

The UNHCR branch office was established in Budapest, and its tasks, immunities and privileges were included in an agreement that came into

⁹⁴ BM államtitkár Dr.Gál Zoltán levele dr. Békesi László pénzügyminiszterhez 1989.június 21. (*Letter to dr. Békesi László*)

⁹⁵ MSZMP KB Társadalomtudományi Intézete: *A menekültekkel foglalkozó szociális intézményrendszer szerkezete és működése. Zárótanulmány*, 1989. október 5.

⁹⁶ *Refugees* 1989/3: 8–9.

⁹⁷ BM titkárság nemzetközi kapcsolatok osztálya, 1989. márc.14.

⁹⁸ Delegation of UNHCR led by J.P.Hocke (M.Capelli, G.Arnaut, H.Hszi-Ven and K.Laukó from the BO) visiting health care institutions, temporary shelter and refugee camp

force on 4 October 1989. The partners⁹⁹ (MFA, MI and UNHCR) cooperate in the protection of refugees and other persons within the scope of the UNHCR to implement the rules of Convention, Protocol and EXCOM resolutions. The agreement includes consultation on and control of refugee aid programmes contracted with the UNHCR. The government shall provide access to state officials, NGOs, refugees and other persons within the jurisdiction of the UNHCR, and free entry into all refugee institutions that oversee the fair implementation of contracts and agreements in each phase. The first refugee relief agreement¹⁰⁰ in 1989 provided for the co-financing of expenditures related to setting up camps in Bicske, Békéscsaba and Hajdúszoboszló, including its information systems, the social care of applicants and refugee families, health screening, housing, and public schooling of 4.94 million USD.

After ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention,¹⁰¹ its advantages and duties were discussed within the state administration.¹⁰²

- a) Bilateral agreements concluded with Socialist States on consular assistance, prosecutorial issues, border control and legal aid shall be modified (to include non-refoulement) or implementation of certain provisions shall be suspended (partial suspension) if Hungary will admit refugees from these states. Cooperation with Socialist States' law enforcement shall be also be modified.
- b) It is necessary to regulate both the criteria for refugee status and procedural rules. Even if regulation involves actions or entitlements by parliamentary decree, it must be more swift under the busy schedule of parliament. Retroactive regulations shall be applied to refugees residing in Hungary at the time of passage (for 15,000 persons within a short period).
- c) It must be resolved how to determine the treatment of applicants and refugees, before they seek asylum, who attempt illegal border crossing to the West. The issue is whether to disqualify from

⁹⁹ Government Decree No 23 of 1990, 7 February publishing the Agreement concluded between the Government of Hungary and UNHCR on 4th October 1989. This Decree shall be implemented since 4th October 1989 and minister of foreign affairs in consent with other responsible ministers shall execute its provisions.

¹⁰⁰ *Magyar Közlöny*, 1989/76: 1274–1281

¹⁰¹ It was promulgated and published by Law-Decree No.15 of 1989, August 25 and proposal was made to the Presidential Council by the Government Resolution No. 2010 of 1989.(HT.3.) MT határozat

¹⁰² Memo of the BM meeting made on 22. June 1989. (dr.Gál Zoltán)

refugee status immigrants who request refugee protection from the border guard and illegally leave for Austria. In all cases, screening methods (visa procedures, state security checks) shall be restricted in due time, and GDR citizens shall leave the country if they are apprehended at western borders, but without forced deportation (quasi voluntary departure). GDR authorities shall be notified of this change (no further deportation to the GDR). However, undesirable persons shall be deported outside the scope of the Convention.

- d) Should ethnic Hungarians be treated as other applicants that seek refugee recognition, or should they be offered an alternative status (e.g., preferences in settlement authorisation or in acquisition of Hungarian citizenship), particularly given the low recognition rate of ethnic Hungarian applicants. This involves the bilateral agreement between Hungary and Romania, which avoid the topic of dual citizenship. Perhaps its termination is necessary.
- e) Geographical caveats require a solution for illegal Turkish immigrants and protection seekers.
- f) Passports would be issued to refugees regulated in the Convention. However, *“it is not an aim to scatter Hungarians throughout the world, but we have to respect freedom of residence, and travel to destination states is on the rise. 700 persons have left, and 1000 are waiting for visas”* – without real chance for reception in desired destination countries.¹⁰³
- g) Correct implementation of refugee rights in the Convention without more favourable position for recognized refugees.

Beyond these issues, the points of view expressed by the ministers raised further normative questions¹⁰⁴ that shed light on the core of admission policy:

- a) The timeframe of the refugee admission procedure involving security forces and the immigrant police would not be so short (15–45 days). On the other hand, the deadline for the submission of applications will be short due to the high rate of illegally arriving applicants.

¹⁰³ See the Memo of the joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Parliament discussed the report of the Government on 1 March 1989.

¹⁰⁴ Jegyzőkönyv miniszteri értekezletről (Memo of the ministerial meeting), 1989. június 26. BM Titkársága, 10–52/12/1989.

- b) The first step in the refugee recognition procedure would involve the jurisdiction of the captain or head of immigrant police at the county level, while legal recourse is provided by the Office for Refugee Affairs, which underlies the immigrant policing appeal system. On the one hand, the specialized nature of refugee law explains why it pertains to the Office for Refugee Affairs. On the other hand, evaluation of the illegal entry of potential applicants, their illegal border crossing at western borders, and settlement authorisation overlap and belong to the jurisdiction of the Immigrant Police. The question is whether a new branch of the Ministry of the Interior with a distinct mandate would be established, or the Office for Refugee Affairs would manage the light tasks of coordination, accommodation and public relations. Finally, the first step was designed to screen and not to protect (e.g., the staff authorized to perform criminal and security background checks of applicants would be recruited from the state security and police organizations, and their communication with other law enforcement units will remain confidential)¹⁰⁵.
- c) It must be determined how to reject the applications of citizens from other socialist states if submitted on Convention grounds. Perhaps an asylum law or decree implementing only Convention provisions will be issued that contains an alternative status (B status, humanitarian status). However, Convention rules for ethnic Hungarians would be inadequate without a provision for an individual's (fear of) persecution, so parliamentary support at least at the committee level shall be obtained in the absence of full consensus.

The Government passed the joint proposal of the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Justice on the process for refugee recognition and approved the submission of a law-decree proposal to the Presidential Council of the State on the legal status of recognized refugees on 31 August 1989. The codes of the legal and administrative system of refugee affairs are as follows:

- a) Despite a government resolution¹⁰⁶ on the passage of legislation on refugee status and procedures, the Government issued a temporary decree taking into account the approximately 17,000

¹⁰⁵ BM ORFK III/2. osztály, 302/902. sz. Jelentése 1989. augusztus 21. dr. Nagy Károly

¹⁰⁶ Government Resolution 2010/1989. (HT.3.) MT határozat

refugees from Romania residing in the country. Moreover, Act XI of 1987 also called for further legislation. But “*due to time-consuming political negotiations, the 1951 Geneva Convention and its Protocol must take effect without delay*”, thus, refugee status will be regulated by a Law-Decree,¹⁰⁷ and procedural issues will be regulated by a Government decree published in September¹⁰⁸ and entered in to force on 15 October.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, it was noted that “*this regulation is temporary and cannot be take the place of the law and political debates on asylum. Thus, based on experience, the three responsible ministers shall submit a Bill in the 3rd quarter of 1990*”.

- b) The definition of refugee shall be narrowly interpreted and implemented to prevent persecution of non-European persons (geographical caveat to the Convention) and on the grounds of public health, state security, and risk to public order. The presence of any of these would provide sufficient cause to terminate the process or withdraw the status. Another restriction is that the deadline to submit recognition is more curtailed than in other administrative proceedings, while a decision to deport a (potential) refugee may be taken in the absence of a merited decision on recognition. “*We would recognise persons in limited number*”. Re-application is also denied. All immigrants whose applications for protection are rejected either formally or with merit, as well as those whose protected status is terminated shall be subject to alien policing rules. This means that ethnic Hungarians “whose admission is based on Convention responsibilities” would be allowed to reside in Hungary with a settlement permit and without charges of harsh violation of public order, or would be guaranteed favorable future access to Hungarian citizenship in accordance with the termination or modification of the bilateral agreement with Romania. Non-Hungarian applicants would be furnished with temporary residence permits until their resettlement or travel to a destination country in accordance with the modification of bilateral agreements with other Socialist countries (e.g., in special

¹⁰⁷ Law-Decree No. 19 of 1989 on legal status of recognized refugees

¹⁰⁸ Government Decree No. 101 of 1989, September 28

¹⁰⁹ In fact period of non-applicability rules of Convention and Protocol took seven months.

- cases Hungarian authorities may extend the geographical scope of an immigrant's passport).
- c) The Bill will contain alternative status to the Conventional refugee, *“that would attract citizens of Socialist States to Hungary, resulting a growth of their illegal border crossing to the West”*. However, illegal leaving (its attempt) for West means the applicant's removal to the country of origin.
 - d) There will be differences in the implementation of the Code on Administrative Procedure with regard to refugee affairs (e.g., the questionnaire shall be completed by the applicant providing personal data including the applicant's financial situation and reasons for defection; the shall be conclusive evidence of the probability of persecution upon return; a representative of the UNHCR shall be present during the process and personal hearing; and unaccompanied minors must be appointed a guardian by the authorities).
 - e) Refugee camps would be obligated to provide shelter and accommodation, as well as health and security screening. Residents will be furnished with a policy card to be used for short term employment within the camps.
 - f) Initial decisions on refugee issues will be made by the Office for Refugee Affairs, and appeals will be handled by the Office's new organisation under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. Judicial redress will be ensured at the county or capital city court authorized to annul or alter the administrative decision, but the non-litigious proceedings will be decided on documents. In order to fulfil personnel requirements, 25 extra staff members at administration level and 5 additional staff members at judiciary were allocated by and financed from the Settlement Fund (it was calculated to cost 45 million HUF per year with an annual caseload of 15,000, unless the Ministry of Finance finds an alternate source).

The fact that the status of the recognized refugees was relatively liberally defined compensated somewhat for the restrictions: the legal status of an admitted refugee was extended to his/her spouse and minors, and their rights were the same as those of nationals—with some exceptions. Namely, their identity card was a different colour and contained different personal data; they did not have voting rights; they were not allowed to be employed as public servants and officers, they did not possess a Hungarian passport. The absence of horizontal and vertical

co-operation between the camp staff and county police station, public administration, local councils, NGOs or the Office for Refugee Affairs was really painful for refugees, in particular in restricted movement and daily routine of life.

The IMC meeting illustrates the results and drawbacks of institutionalisation.¹¹⁰ "The refugee administration and its institutional and legal infrastructure have been formed," said the IMC president in a brief statement. These efforts

- a) led to a deficit in the Settlement Fund (11 million HUF), so an extra contribution from the state budget was requested while waiting for the delayed UNHCR contribution;
- b) required harmonization of bilateral agreements with the 1951 Convention as noted by the ministries;
- c) urged measures regarding family unification. A total of 4,489 claims were forwarded to the Romanian authorities to no avail, while approximately 1,000 individuals obtained passports and permits to leave Romania. The Red Cross provided international documents as final solutions for resettlement. However, unaccompanied minors arrived in growing numbers, and their acceptance to Hungarian youth and children's homes have been problematic without the proper documentation, exchange of information, and cooperation with Romanian authorities.¹¹¹ Furthermore, reimbursement of significant costs to youth and children's homes was not planned for in the Settlement Fund;
- d) imposed certain changes in refugee policy that would increase its professionalism. "*Numerous signs indicate that refugee affairs have to be considered as long-term issues*". For this reason, "refugees cannot be targeted by political contests, and national accountability and consensus are required." For instance, benefits resulting from the acquisition of Hungarian citizenship may be provided on grounds of sovereignty (modifying or terminating the bilateral citizenship agreement soon). This cannot isolate Hungary, but must support our international alliances. Moreover, the self-subsistence of refugee families (employment, housing improvement by

¹¹⁰ Memo of the IMC meeting, 26 October 1989 (6 November 1989) and Press Release

¹¹¹ Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Care, 5th National Conference on Children and Youth Protection, 28 October 1989

credit) has to be supported instead of being exposed to scattered social assistance. In this context, the role of refugee camps has to be re-defined (e.g., temporary accommodation for lawful immigrants and protection seekers versus social housing service). The admission of immigrants must be better regulated (reasons; screening criteria; unrestricted settlement versus designated settlement locations or quotas), and the competencies and work among governmental agencies and authorities must also be better regulated. The Office for Refugee Affairs is a first step in this direction, but the IMC operation has to be stabilized and improved (e.g. passing the rules of its procedure). Geographical reservation to the 1951 Convention has been held back at least until an impact assessment of the social, economic, demographic and diplomatic effects of immigration supports its termination. For these purposes, asylum legislation shall be prepared to expand public discourse on immigration, admission and refugees.

Taking into account these considerations, the Ministry of the Interior in October 1989¹¹² conceptualized how to map the ramifications of refugee movements and the Convention through different ministries. Accordingly, social and economic impact assessment will establish the public administration tasks and operational programmes until autumn 1990. For instance, a screening method for undesirable immigrants (for the visa and entry process) and a method to cope with transit, non-European or non-Hungarian (at that time about 5,500) immigrants shall be developed “*protecting us from state and public security dangers due to illegal travel to Austria and Yugoslavia (Romanian) by migrants*”.¹¹³ In parallel, academic background papers were also planned on key topics¹¹⁴ such as health care, social services, labour force forecasting, demography, public education and migratory movements and normative requirements. But a further emergency of Romanian “manipulated revolution¹¹⁵” and the

¹¹² Memo of the meeting made on 8 November 1989

¹¹³ Memo of the meeting of state secretary with law enforcement leaders in the Ministry of the Interior, 8 November 1989 kept up the tripartite committee making decision on refoulement of migrants endangering public or state security until adoption of high level regulation.

¹¹⁴ Javaslat a menekült-kérdéssel kapcsolatos törvénykezési koncepció előkészítésére + melléklete, 1989. szeptember

¹¹⁵ Mandics, György: *A manipulált forradalom*. Concord Media Jelen, Arad, 2009

bloody events of the collapsing dictatorship in December 1989, as well as and subsequent minority clashes, launched new mass influxes...

Balance sheet and conclusions

The two years analysed in this paper illustrate the difficulty in understanding, in an ideology-led state, that human rights commitments precede state sovereignty even in a non-independent, non-sovereign country. “Socialist legality” became anachronistic by 1988–89, and the question was raised whether respect for human rights would disguise prior practices in order to obtain visa facilitation and visa-free travel, or whether rule-of-law can penetrate the whole public administration and legislation. We have to add that in law enforcement documents, references to old obligations from UN Covenants and UN Conventions were missing, thus the changing rhetoric on the Geneva Convention served more to cope with the emergency situation with the assistance of international and civil organisations. They and their standards could balance the one-sided international relations system of law enforcement (e.g. participation in the work of Council of Europe,¹¹⁶ Humanitarian Law Institutions, IOM¹¹⁷), and financial and experimental support of the UNHCR provided a relevant impetus to the increased professionalism of officials (e.g., how to plan budgets and international programmes, competency building, foreign contacts). The role of the UNHCR was outstanding in training in and monitoring the implementation of refugee law as actor in the asylum procedure as defined by the Government Decree and it was as well as protector of non-European applicants.

Hungary as a newborn rule-of-law state (even after the reform of the Constitution) was ambivalent regarding how to surrender its existing bilateral agreements and internal provisions protecting (or at least intending to protect) public order yet not in conformity with human rights and 1951 Convention requirements; how to compensate for missing regulations on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees; and how to benefit ethnic Hungarians from the immigration and naturalisation

¹¹⁶ Refugee and Demographic Committee of the CoE visited Hungary including the Red Cross, Reform Church Refugee Service, IMC and minority organisations. 30 October – 1 November 1989.

¹¹⁷ BM Menekültügyi Hivatal: A menekültügy nemzetközi kötelezettségei és kapcsolattrendszere. 1990. augusztus 8.

regime of the 1951 Convention while implementing it without discrimination. These three overlapping issues have been neither fairly answered, nor critically evaluated internally. This was particularly obvious in the informal practice of rejection at the borders and in the consequences of immigrants illegally crossing the Austrian (Yugoslavian) borders. Even today, publicity has remained a sensitive issue in law enforcement. But during that period, the state's responsibility for the acceptance and support of immigrants was, in fact, divided among churches, civil initiatives and alternative organisations. The incoherent terminology (refugees, residing foreigners, immigrants, Romanian citizens, Transylvanian refugees)¹¹⁸ easily proves the ambivalent policy, fear of public discourse, and sharing of secrecy and administrative work with non-officers.

What is the legacy of 1988–89 in refugee affairs?

The Office for Refugee Affairs as “youngest brother” was absorbed by law enforcement. Today, immigration and citizenship affairs are considered to be law enforcement issues,¹¹⁹ and the name of Office for Immigration and Nationality (OIN) neither refers to inter-alia managed refugee and asylum issues, nor do its regional units have separate refugee divisions. In the meantime, the border guards were absorbed into the police force.

Through the prism of the refugee story, we can see the absence of a system-based, horizontal, cross-cutting and long-term approach in public administration. Although it was often debated whether a refugee and immigration commissioner, a secretariat, or a ministry would be the best governing agency, that task has belonged to the Ministry of the Interior and its successor Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement. Public order legislation and weak co-ordination in the administration explains why certain ideas such as complex authorisation (e.g., issuing visas, residence and labour permits in one step) or centrally organised nourishment and simple family apartments with numerous social workers (instead of refugee camps) remained futuristic.

¹¹⁸ Tóth Judit – Kolláth György: A menekült-kérdés néhány főbb szociális, szervezeti, jogi és tartalmi problémája. In: Timoránszky Péter (ed.) *A nemzeti kisebbségek és a menekültek jogai, I. kötet.* MTA Államtudományi Kutatások Programirodája, Budapest, 1989. 177–232.

¹¹⁹ See the www.irm.hu

The IMC as the main co-ordinating agency was formally established with a new form as the Inter-Ministerial Refugee Committee between August 1991 and July 2001.¹²⁰ Its main tasks were to advise the government concerning refugees, protected immigrants, settled and rejected migrants, and migrant workers and how they can be integrated into society, returned home or resettled in other countries. Reconciliation with stakeholders, horizontal and territorial co-ordination, monitoring public finance efficiency as well as legislation were all part of its work led by a minister without portfolio. However, its secretariat was operated by the Ministry of the Interior. Today, universal law enforcement has made this type of organisation unnecessary.

Temporary refugee regulations remained in effect for a decade. The promised Asylum Act was adopted in 1997, and the Government Decree procedure was replaced only in 1998.¹²¹ Despite available surveys¹²² on the socio-demographic parameters of immigrants, the level of prejudice towards refugees in public opinion, and public evaluation of refugee management by the administration, the “*emergency approaches*” to refugee measures and immigration legislation has come to stay, in conformity with the European security rationale and further influxes of Romanians, Yugoslavians and non-Europeans...

¹²⁰ Governmental Resolution No.1037 of 1991, August 6

¹²¹ Act CXXXIX of 1997 on Asylum, Government Decree No. 24 of 1998, February 18 on procedural rules of refugee recognition and on documents issued for applicants, temporary protected and tolerated migrants

¹²² TÁRKI: *Jelentés az erdélyi menekültekről*. 1989. július., TÁRKI: *Az erdélyi menekültek. Erdély – vizsgálat*, Budapest, 1989; MTA Földrajztudományi Intézet: *Területi letelepítési alternatívák*, 1989.

APPENDIX

Chronology 1988–1989

Made by Judit Tóth and Veronika Kaszás

1988, Jan. 1	Free travel right of nationals introduced in Hungary (residence abroad for 90 days or for 5 years or up to expiry of the passport but a fine is complied for over-staying abroad and a personal hearing at Metropolitan Police was also ordered)
Jan. 12–14	Meeting of the working group of the Warsaw Pact responsible for human rights and humanitarian issues in Sophia. The main goal of Hungary is to include the national minorities' rights in the third „basket” of the Helsinki Convention. Nevertheless, it is not supported by the rest of the participating member states.
Jan. 25	<p>Secretary Szűrös M, Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (HSWP) giving interview in the Hungarian Radio: since 1st January nobody was forced to return to Romania unless s/ he was coming for pure economic reasons or illegally. Ethnic Hungarians are in need of guardianship of Hungary and proper regulations on their supports have to be prepared as it was urged by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament.</p> <hr/> <p>Secretary of Central Committee of HSWP, Németh M. visits Germany for preparation further 1 billion DM dept to Hungary from which 200 million DM would be kept in stock as financial cover supporting Romanian refugees resided in Hungary. This purpose of dept draws the public attention to the Romanian village destroying actions and minority issues.</p> <hr/> <p>A statement is issued and signed by hundreds of intellectuals in Budapest condemning the political era of Ceaușescu and declaring solidarity with those fighting against the dictatorship. The notice was published at an international press conference chaired by Vásárhelyi, M. in the apartment of Für, L.</p>

1988, Jan. 28	Spokesman of the government denied the deportation of 200 ethnic Hungarians (Romanian citizens) while number of applications for residence submitted by Romanian citizens was growing (in 1985: 3550 applicants and from them ethnic Hungarian was 1709, in 1987: 9068 and from them 6499 persons were ethnic Hungarians).
Jan. 29	Menedék (Refuge) Committee (civil organisation) is established aiming to provide equal rights for all refugees and residing persons regardless ethnic origin. It submits numerous petitions requiring publicity and manages supports, shelters, jobs for newcomers in need.
Jan.-Feb.	There were 401 Hungarian citizens as asylum seekers in Austria (in 1987: 349, in 1988: 690 during the same period of the year) by Die Presse, Free Europe Radio
Feb. 1	The Bishop of Reformed Church Tóth K. appointed the congregation in Rákosszentmihály as central support coordination for newcomers from Romania (Transylvania) A silent demonstration protesting against Ceaușescu's politics in front of the Romanian Embassy in Budapest is dismissed by the police.
Feb. 13	Write-up on solidarity toward kin-minorities even in socialism without automatic guarantees in minority protection and critics to the past; kin-minority issues are part of the bilateral relations (article by department leaders on foreign affairs of the HSWP, Szokai and Tabajdi).
Feb. 20	Vicar of St. Anne Catholic Church in Debrecen launched a public donation and support for newcomers from Romania
Feb. 25	Spokesman of the government gives information how the government is managing the affairs of Romanian citizens residing in Hungary in growing numbers, the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) is established by the government decision
March	Protection seekers from Sri Lanka in Hungary (received by the Hungarian Red Cross) Agreement was concluded between the Hungarian Red Cross and Bajcsy-Zs. Association how to co-operate in support of newcomers from Romania

1988, March 6	3 rd meeting of the Hungarian Democratic Forum discussion on minorities and it urged to insert a closure on kin-state responsibility and solidarity towards kin-minorities living across the border to the reformed Constitution of Hungary
March 10	First meeting of IMC is held with the participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Public Office for Wages and Labour Affairs, the National Council of the „Hazafias Népfront” (Patriot People’s Front), and the Red Cross. The head of the newly established committee is dr. Gál, Z. deputy Minister of Internal Affairs.
March 14	Prime Minister statement: due to 10,000 newcomers from Romania the government is seeking a proper administrative, managing method in support
March 17	Hungarian Red Cross is requested by the IMC to coordinate the private and civic donations for Romanian citizens residing in Hungary, the support office is established
March 18	The Parliament passed a proposal on budget covering on support to Romanian citizens residing in Hungary, the Settlement Fund is established
March 18	Since January 369 Romanian citizens claimed temporary residence permit in Debrecen, from them 69 persons were coming without documents but only 12 persons were refused and send back to Romania
March 21	Letter of the Peace Community Congregation (Németh, Géza) to the chair of the IMC: there is a growing rate of unqualified, undocumented, suspicious persons among newcomers from Romania, beyond the civil and church supports, there is need for a better organised security screening.
March 24	The County Co-ordination Committees (CCC) under the aegis of the IMC started own operation supporting Romanian citizens in settling and residing – shelters were opened in Debrecen, Pócstelek,
March 29	Metropolitan Council opened a supporting office together with the Police and Hungarian Red Cross for Romanian citizens (Tanács krt.28.) Meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact in Sophia.

1988, April 1	Ethnic Romanians residing in Hungary are estimated as 17,000 mainly in Budapest, and Romania Libera was representing and managing their movement to West – by the Free Europe Radio
April 3	From this day on in Romania, names of towns and other (geographical) places can be used officially and in the media only in Romanian
April 4	Protocol of civil (opposite) meeting in Szilasliget openly forced to raise the family unification of split refugee families from Romania at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) meeting held in Vienna; to stop refusal of refugee to Romania; to manage housing for refugees.
April 7	Deputy Minister of the Interior giving an interview: number of applicants for settlement in Hungary was submitted from Romania in 1985–1987 was 11,492 but this procedure provides permits about 4,000 Romanian citizens; number of lawfully entered as tourists it was 900,000 persons in 1987 and in early 1988 it was 126,000 persons from Romania, and certain parts of them rejected to return – for them in the first 3 months of 1988 the police issued 1,800 temporary residence permits.
April 12	Students of Debrecen University (Faculty of Philology) requires more transparency and publicity on refugee issues avoiding paranoia and misleading news on growth of informers, felons among newcomers; communication experts are required to delegate to the IMC and CCC
April 14	First circular letter on management of temporary residing Romanian citizens by the IMC
April 20	Ambassador Erdős André states in the (CSCE) meeting in Vienna that minority issues could not be considered as internal affairs and kin-minority affairs deeply were influencing on bilateral relations between Hungary and Romania. He urged democratic solution for tensions.
April 28	Left-centrist Group at Debrecen University are managing relief actions in kind and mentally for refugees, it makes a survey on sociological background of refugees

1988, April 29	Ceaușescu declares that in the frame of the program of reforming the structure of settlements, the number of Romanian villages would be reduced from 13,000 to 5–6 000 (systematization)
May 15	The number of issued temporary residence permits for Romanian citizens was 3,700
May 22–23	Party Congress of HSWP elects president Kádár J., his successor as the new secretary general of the party is Grósz, K.
May 26	Witnesses and victims of refusal to Romania: beating and torture by the Romanian border guards, launched criminal procedure for illegal border crossing in March 1988 was approved. The imprisoned female got away and came to Hungary living in a shelter.
June 8	The Association of the Hungarian Architects is the first to issue a declaration protesting against the plan of demolishing Hungarian villages in Romania. During June, other organizations are protesting as well, such as the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT), the Association of Young Communists (KISZ), the Hungarian Academy of Science, the National Peace Council and the representatives of the Hungarian churches.
June 27	More than fifty thousand people demonstrating on the Heroes' Square in Budapest against demolishing villages in Romania. The Romanian Embassy refuses to take over the letter of protest drafted by the civic organizers of the demonstration.
June 28	In response to the Hungarian demonstration against the Romanian „settlement re-structuralization”, the Hungarian Consulate General in Cluj-Napoca, Romania is closed down.
June 28	The fact that 6,178 Romanian citizens requested residence permit from the Hungarian authorities is officially published. The Parliament set up the Settlement Fund for their support and the government adopts a decree on its implementation.
Aug. 22–23	Sit-down strike with the participation of young people, mainly university students protesting against the Romanian village-destruction in front of the Romanian Embassy in Budapest.

1988, Aug. 28	Romanian-Hungarian summit meeting of Grósz K. Prime Minister with the secretary-general of the Romanian Communist Party Ceaușescu in Oradea without results.
Aug. 30	Spokesman of the HSWP announces that the Romanian leaders accepted the suggestion for holding an exchange of views at the highest level in 1989, and that at this forum a common declaration concerning the ethnic issues is drafted. The Romanian party is willing to widen the economic co-operation and to organize a new meeting for the cultural joint committee. A joint body will examine the situation of the Romanian citizens residing in Hungary.
Aug. 31	Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Association's petition to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament requiring to stop village destroying in Romania at international stage and how to receive refugees
Sept. 7–8	Grósz, K. addresses in writing the conference on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) held in Milan. Hungary is represented by Kovács, L. deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He announces that Hungary wishes to join the Protocol of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
Sept.13	In a letter addressed to the UN, Grósz, K. proposes to include also in an international agreement the protection of national minorities and the right to preserve national cultures, as the Human Rights Declaration does not explicitly mentions these rights. Horn, Gy. state secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivers a speech in Vienna at the plenary session of the follow-up meeting of the CSCE.
Sept. 20–22	Szűrös, M. secretary of the Central Committee of HSWP pays a visit to Romania meeting with Ion Stoian, substitute member of the Political Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and secretary general of the Central Committee. Nicolae Ceaușescu also receives him.
Sept. 23–8 Oct.	Várkonyi, P. Minister of Foreign Affairs participates on the 43rd session of the UN General Assembly. He delivers a speech at the General Assembly.

1988, Sept.25	12 ethnic Hungarians from Romania request asylum at the Hungarian Embassy in Sophia.
Sept.30	The Hungarian Catholic Episcopal Conference requests the European Parliament to take the issue of Romanian village-restructuring plans on the agenda of its following meeting.
Oct. 24	Hungary is the first country within the Central-Eastern European block to allow for the UN Human Rights Committee to launch an investigation within the country if it is necessary.
Oct. 27	Pozsgay, I. as state secretary giving interview to <i>Népszabadság</i> : shutters at the state borders have to be ceased for political and financial reasons.
Oct. 28–29	Conference of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the member states of the Warsaw Pact in Budapest.
Nov. 8–9	Várkonyi, P. Minister of Foreign Affairs attends in Vienna the follow-up meeting of the CSCE, he delivers a speech on 8th November in the plenary session.
Nov. 15	Memorial demonstration of 1 st anniversary of uprising in Brasov organised by civil organisations. It was forcibly dissolved by the police.
Nov. 25	The Parliament elects Németh, M. as prime minister. Grósz, K. remains the secretary general of the party.
Nov. 26	Following the constituting “ <i>persona non grata</i> ” of the Hungarian commercial counsellor in Bucharest, the counsellor general of the Romanian Embassy is labelled the same.
Dec. 22	Following the report of Szűrös, M. general secretary of the Central Committee of the HSWP, president of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the message of Pope John Paul II concerning ethnic minorities, the Parliament delivers a position on the papal message.

1989, Jan. 6	The Alliance of the Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and the Menedék Committee publishes a declaration concerning the issue of the Transylvanian refugees, urging that Hungary should receive everybody without discrimination. It is also suggested that Hungary join the 1951 Geneva Convention and thus open the possibility for the operation of a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office.
Jan. 16	A press conference is organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the reconsideration of the relations of Hungary to ratified international conventions in the framework of the UN, and about the establishment and improvement of the co-operation with the international organisations working in the field of human rights.
Jan. 16–19	Várkonyi, P. Minister of Foreign Affairs attends in Vienna the final meeting of the follow-up meeting of the CSCE. His speech on 18th at the final meeting of the plenary he stresses that the Hungarian government would like to include the recognition of the collective rights of the ethnic minorities into the final document.
Jan. 26–27	Horn, Gy. secretary of state for foreign affairs attends and gives a speech at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee.
Feb. 6–11	Upon the invitation of the IMC, the Investigating Committee of the UNHCR arrives to Hungary in order to examine the situation of the refugees coming from Romania.
Feb. 17	12 asylum seekers from Romania from the Hungarian Embassy (Sophia) arrive by a plane of an Austrian Airline in Hungary through Vienna.
Feb. 23	The government adopts a proposal on the situation of the Romania citizens residing and resettling in Hungary, and submits it to the Parliament.
Feb. 24	On the base of the governmental proposal, the Presidential Council takes a decision on the accession of Hungary to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
Feb. 27	Horn, Gy. state secretary of Foreign Affairs delivers a speech at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva.

1989, Feb. 28	The removal of the electric border is decided by the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the HSWP.
March 3	Together with six other states (Australia, Austria, France, Great-Britain, Portugal and Sweden), the Hungary officially requests the UN to launch an investigation through its Human Rights Committee concerning the emergence of human rights in Romania.
March 10	Hungary submits its request to the full membership (including voting rights) at the UN Human Rights Committee.
March 12	The European Parliament condemns Romania in a resolution for the violation of human rights. The resolution welcomes the Belgian initiative aiming at the “adoption of the villages”.
March 15–22	The UN delegation pays a visit to Hungary in order to define the details of financial and technical support. Apart from staff of the relevant ministries, the four members of the delegation meet also the representatives of the protestant and catholic church as well as the Hungarian Red Cross. They also visit the future possible reception centres (refugee camps).
March 17	The spokesman of the UNHCR announces in Geneva that on 14 March Hungary joined the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol as the 106th member state, but as the first one from the Central-Eastern European block.
March 22	Roundtable negotiations between the ruling power (HSWP) and political opponents are formally launched.
April 6	Under the presidency of Pozsgay, I. minister without portfolio, the government establishes an ethnic secretariat aiming at the co-ordination of the governmental tasks concerning the ethnic minorities living in Hungary and at the monitoring of the situation of Hungarian ethnic groups living outside of the borders of Hungary.
April 25–27	Consultation on human rights issues in Kijev held by the socialist countries with the exception of Romania.
May 2	Director of the HQ of the Border Guards, Nováky B. on an international press conference in Hegyeshalom states that removal of iron curtain has been launched at the Austro-Hungarian border.

1989, May 19	Establishment of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee
June 12	The 1951 Geneva Convention enters into force in Hungary. The 1967 Protocol had already been in force since 14th March.
June 12–16	UNHCR delegation prepared further support agreement in the Ministry of the Interior mainly to contribute to the costs of reception centre and health care of refugees
July 1	The government decree on reception centres (refugee camps) enters into force. Those operation and services managed inside are financed from the Settlement Fund.
Aug. 8	The Chief Public Prosecutor issues circular letter (order) to public prosecutor offices what to do in case of illegal border crossing: instead of expulsion or deportation the individual conditions shall be evaluated through his/her warning or launching a trial against migrant in Hungary if it is well founded. The ambassador of DDR protests for this erosion of bilateral agreement but the Prime Minister instructs the Ministers (Interior and Foreign Affairs) to prepare the method of opening borders and free leaving the country (for citizens of DDR)
Aug. 10	Number of diplomatic asylum seekers in the German Embassy in Budapest is 117, and due to unbearable conditions in the Embassy its closure is decided. The Government requests the Hungarian Red Cross to manage free leaving of DDR citizens from the Embassy issuing humanitarian documents for them.
Aug. 19	Pan-European Movement's Picnic is held at the Austro-Hungarian border (Sopronpuszta) and about 600 DDR citizens can leave without obstacles to Austria. This meeting of Hungarian, Austrian and West-German politicians is followed by great attention of the international press.
Aug. 23	DDR citizens from the German Embassy furnished with Red Cross documents travel by air to Germany via Vienna.
Aug. 30	The Official Gazette (<i>Magyar Közlöny</i>) published the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol in the Law Decree No.15

1989, Aug. 31	Foreign Minister Horn visit in Berlin announcing that Hungary suspends the implementation of bilateral agreement with DDR on deportation of overstaying citizens. Due to ratification of the 1951 Geneva Convention this agreement is not applicable. Agents of STASI are allowed to convince DDR citizens residing in Hungary on return.
July 1	Gorbachev, M. mentions the importance of ethnic issues in his speech on television and radio.
July 7	On the summit of the Warsaw Pact, Gorbachev recognizes that member states are free to follow the way they choose for themselves.
Aug. 25	Prime Minister Németh, M. and Horn, Gy., Minister of Foreign Affairs enters into negotiations in East-Germany concerning the DDR citizens residing in Hungary.
Sept.1	The Hungarian ambassador in Geneva hands over the draft agreement concerning the Hungarian refugee strategy to J.P. Hocke, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
Sept. 2	The Central Committee of HSWP discussed how to cope the growing mass of DDR citizens residing in the country. "It is categorically refused that Hungary would become a refugee camp". Decision to solve soon the conflict is adopted.
Sept. 8	According to government's decision on opening the border crossing at Austro-Hungarian border for DDR citizens the top leaders in Berlin and Bonn are officially informed on forthcoming event.
Sept. 10	The Foreign Minister Horn announces in a central shelter that since midnight DDR citizens can freely leave the country towards Austria. It is broadcast in TV online. Thousands are leaving within hours and days.
Oct. 4	Gál, Z. state secretary of Ministry of the Interior signs the Agreement on Seat and a further Support concluded between the Hungarian Government and the UNHCR. The support of UNHCR means 4.9 million USD to the reception of refugees.
Oct. 7	The HSWP is officially dismissed. It is replaced as its successor by the Hungarian Socialist Party.

1989, Oct. 15	The government decree on asylum procedure enters into force. The first instance decisions are made by the local units of the Refugee Office (Ministry of the Interior) located at police or reception centres, the second instance (appeal) is decided by the Refugee Office. The legal status of recognized refugees is regulated by Law-Decree No.19 entering into force on the same day. The applicants on the ground of non-European reasons belong to the UNHCR directly.
Oct. 17	The Office of the UNHCR starts operating in Budapest. The Office provides the protection of asylum seekers and refugees due to non-European reasons of well-established fear of persecution. The Office's building is provided by the government.
Oct. 23	Declaration of Republic of Hungary replacing the People's Republic, the comprehensive reform of Constitution is adopted (Act XXXI of 1989) by the Parliament on the base of National Roundtable Negotiations, and it enters into force.
Nov. 8	Through diplomatic channels, Hungary is protesting at the Romanian government against the atrocities against Tőkés, L. Hungarian protestant priest in Timisoara.
Nov. 9	Berlin Wall is opened, the leaders of DDR open up the borders in Berlin
Dec. 16–19	Demonstrations are started in the neighbourhood of the protestant church in Timisoara. People – including Romanians – march in front of the apartment of Tőkés, L. but they are unable to stop his eviction and arrest. The demonstration is dismissed, some demonstrators are fired. The borders are closed down towards Hungary and Yugoslavia.
Dec. 17–25	An uprising breaks out in Bucharest. On 22nd December, the presidential palace is in the state of siege, and on 25th December, Ceaușescu and his wife are executed by the army.
Dec. 25	New government is formed in Romania. Following it, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues a declaration on the reconsideration and reforming of the Hungarian-Romanian relations.

BÉLA RÉVÉSZ – JUDIT TÓTH

Why the files of the security services have remained secret

With the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe, archives formerly kept secret were now made public. This statement, however, that sounds simple and true, covers reality only partially. First of all, from the remaining material conclusions could be drawn on what was missing from the documents.¹

With respect to state security apparatus, the rules of procedure which existed for every administrative body, provided for instance, in 1972, that at the central offices *“in the first half of every year (from January 1st to June 30th and at the county offices (and that of Budapest) in the second half of every year (from July 1st to December 31st) the documents filed more than 3 years earlier have to be reviewed and, as needed, discarded.”* Apart from this “normal” regulation, the materials that were sensitive from the historical, operative, or political point of view were mostly destroyed before the constitutional reform (October 23rd, 1989). The mere existence of them – and especially their publication – could have embarrassed certain circles of the reigning political leadership. Ever since these docu-

¹ A few important archives without trying to be complete: Hungarian National Archive, Historical Archives of the State Security Services, Office of Information, State Security Office, Military Security Office, Special National Security Service, Office of Military Intelligence, Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor, Military Court of Justice, Archives of Pest County, state security documents kept at the Ministry of Self-governments and Regional Development, Archives of Political History and Trade Unions, documents kept at the National Police Headquarters and the Budapest Police Headquarters, documents of the National Command of Corrections and the Government Security Guards.

ments “could be lasting bases of intrigues”. In 1960–61, for instance, the state security apparatus, following the order of the Party, collected and destroyed all films, recordings on tapes or on record discs that were connected to the show trials and procedures.

About the size and character of the destruction of documents that was speeded up in the face of the approaching constitutional reform, there weren’t even estimates earlier. The report of the committee of experts commissioned by the latest government (the so-called Kenedi Committee)² stated that “it is likely that a larger proportion of the documents survived than were declared as dead by the spokesmen of the ‘total destruction’”. “From the middle of December, 1989, to the middle of May, 1990, a sort of lawlessness prevailed when all those implicated in the past did what they were not ashamed to do, not caring about the constitution or the laws”, as reported by the Kenedi Committee. According to the committee, the destruction of the documents, the movement of the inventories without keeping a record created a chaotic situation, where the original condition of the archives cannot be reconstructed any more. In their view a new law, or the thorough amendment of the law now in force could open the way for an intellectual restitution and the establishment of guarantees for scientific inquiries. On the basis of the law, to be called the Files Act the services would be obligated to prove that genuine national security interest necessitates keeping a certain document secret.

At other organs producing documents, the selective destruction of those along political considerations also seems likely, although not in the extent it was done at the state security organizations. Therefore the law on public documents and archives and the protection of the content of private archives that was passed in 1995, provided that archive materials that are primary sources for the discovery of the historical past and indispensable to the enforcement of civil rights must be protected and continuously augmented. At the same time, the limits to the access to these documents is justified by the protection of personal rights. Thus the law passed in 1992 on the protection of personal data provides special protection to data on one’s racial origin, national and ethnic minority status, political view or party affiliation, religious or other ideological

² The Committee functioned in 2007–2008, for its full report see the page http://www.meh.hu/misc/letoltheto/jelentes_1pdf (last hit March 20, 2009)

conviction, membership in protecting associations, medical condition, pathological addictions, or sexual life.

Research in the archives is hindered the most by the bureaucratic impediments to the access to documents containing state or official secrets. The law enacted in 1995, on state and official secrets mandates the review of the legal justification of all of these categorizations, in the case of state secrets every 3 years and of official secrets every 5 years. Experience shows that the organizations concerned do not comply with this rule, or comply only reluctantly. They regard it as unjustified extra work and anyway, their basic task is to attend to the documents connected to “live” cases. The absence of the review and the potential downgrading of the qualifications (declaring data open to the public) can prevent access to the requested documents for a long time, while these documents would not need increased protection at all.

Even at the first glance it appears that the processing of the remaining documents of the Hungarian state security services does not fit the German, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Romanian practical examples, although certain elements of those showed up among the legislative experiments of the domestic constitutional state. Their professional criticism did not remain unknown either. The South African and Latin American “theatrical” attempts also kept emerging in Hungarian public life but they – due to a decision of the constitutional court – also failed together with the draft of the justice restoring law. The theatrical other “lustration” designs, reminding one of the so-called “calling to account tribunals” also passed away in Hungary. The 60/1994, December 4 decision of the Constitutional Court declared the Act XXIII. of 1994 unconstitutional. To be sure, the legislators worked on its cloned version even two years later. Moreover even in August, 2002, a parliamentary committee was engaged in the issue of the state security connections of the post-communist cabinet members. To wit, the media had revealed the past of the incumbent Prime Minister, Péter Medgyessy, as a former covert state security officer. But even this committee could not bring lustration back to life. Its activity otherwise did not contribute to the consolidation of the archives of the secret services and the intelligence gathering units, did not facilitate the face-to-face confrontation of offender and victim, and on the top of it, demoralized the press. Still, it had its merits. It drew public attention to the fact that, on the basis of the law on the protection of personal data, the same legal measure cannot be applied to the secret

agents of the former regime and to the public personalities of today's constitutional state. But, if we followed the spirit of the prevailing Act III. of 2003 on the former agents, we would regard as our fundamental task the intellectual compensation of those under surveillance, the guaranteeing of their right of informational autonomy and these should be joined by the purposes of sovereignty, the guarantee of the constitutional order. It would follow that the data on the former surveillants should be made accessible. As they agreed to become informants, so did they agree to the risk of being unmasked. Anonymity can be due only to those who were observed, the victims, as information that were their private secrets was collected about them - without their consent.

Just one example of the anomalies. Foreign Minister János Martonyi (1998–2001) was an agent of the former Department III/II (counter-intelligence) under the alias „Magasdi”. The weekly *Élet és Irodalom* (*Life and Literature*) published an article based on documents.³ To protect his reputation the former minister sued the author of the article and the periodical. The head of the trial court of the first instance, a division of the Capital Municipal Court, attached the following commentary to the decision against the periodical: “*Upon earlier cases the court arrived to the conclusion that ‘nothing is certain in this subject area’. Nobody is in the position to re-examine state security informations.*” One wonders if there is one other formerly sovietized country in Eastern Europe where the unprocessed condition of the stock of documents of the former political police and the precariousness of the relevant legislation would move a highly respected judge to so spectacularly disregard giving the objective reason in support of a judgement. Why did lustration go bankrupt in Hungary? Albeit it failed in spite of the fact that it projected far softer degrees of punishment than the Stasi law with real hard degrees of punishment that was passed by the German parliament in 1991. To answer the question one has to consider the deliberate misleading of the opposition participants of the round-table negotiations; the professional deprivation of the society from the enjoyment of the heady experience of liberty after the change of the regime; the political immaturity of the opposition negotiators of the regime change. Therefore we explain the failure of the lustration with the almost incidental conjunction of independent reasons. The existential struggle for the

³ *Élet és irodalom* April 27, 2007

survival of the state security organs, their overt and covert personnel, and for the control of the documents created before February 14, 1990 were also involved in this process.

We faced the above mentioned problems at the research conducted in 1988–89 on the subject of migrations. Some of the documents requested on the basis of the very usable catalogues of the Hungarian National Archives turned out to contain classified data that rendered them non accessible. Sometimes the anomaly occurs that a lengthy document could be studied, but for a small classified part that renders the whole document non accessible, and not only the page in question. The same applies for the Historical Archives of the State Security Agencies.

The important stock of documents from the point of view of migration research can be found in the National Archives. Among the documents of the Hungarian Workers' Party, the documents of the Political Committee (from June 1989 Political Executive Committee), the Presidium also established during the summer of 1989, the International, Legal, and Public Administration Policy Committee created at the end of 1988, are of prominent importance. Among these numerous reports of state organs were included that perhaps could not be found in any other archives.

During the summer of 2005 the inventory of the top secret documents of the Foreign Ministry from 1989 was compiled in two volumes.⁴ This contained newly accessible materials from the reports, accounts of the embassies in Romania and the GDR that were the most important from the point of view of the flood of refugees. The documents of the National Command of the Border Guards proved to be indispensable sources.⁵ Beside reports on the events at the borders these documents provided a flow of continuous observations on the political informations of the border guards, but also on the practical experiences of the processing of the captured Romanians who crossed the border illegally or on the activities of the Reconnaissance Department of the border guards. The documents of the freshly organized Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs⁶ provide information on the setting up of the administrative and information system for the reception of the refugees just as on the arrangements for maintaining order in and around the receiving stations,

⁴ MOL XIX-J-1-j

⁵ MOL XIX-B-10

⁶ MOL XIX-B-11

or on the tasks of the local administrations with respect to the settling the situation of foreign citizens who are in Hungary with no desire to return home. The Daily Operative Informational Reports⁷ served prompt reporting for the home affairs, government, and party leadership on the domestic and international information of the counter-intelligence and intelligence services that were relevant to the issue of migrations.

The Archives of the Open Society was a peculiar source of the relevant documents. Here, the programs of Radio Free Europe on the refugee affairs can be found, but also the audio materiel on how the Hungarian radio stations treated this question.⁸ It was precisely the Open Society Archives that helped to digitalize and publish on its home page in full the document collection that contains all the documents that emerged during the research from various archives.⁹

The fact that the exposure of the totalitarian past did not take place in the other post-communist countries is proven by a debate in the European Parliament held at the end of March in 2009. The unity of Europe can be realized only through the unity of its history, if Europe is capable of accepting communism and nazism as its common heritage and conducting a sincere, detailed debate on all the totalitarian sins of the previous century – emphasizes the draft resolution promoted by politicians of the People's Party which was the subject of the debate. According to the plans the proposal will be voted on at the beginning of April. The so-called Prague Declaration points out, among others, that in five years following the 2004 enlargement the knowledge of the European population continue to be alarmingly superficial and shallow with respect to the totalitarian systems. Therefore it is necessary to expose to the light of publicity and evaluate from the moral point of view the practices of the totalitarian communist systems. According to the report, a unified approach with respect to the crimes committed by the totalitarian communist systems continue to be missing that hinders the reinforcement of European solidarity and equality, and contributes to the mental division of Europe to "West" and "East". The reunited Europe celebrates the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the Central and East European dictatorships and the fall of the Berlin Wall and that provides the opportunity

⁷ ÁBTL 2.7.1.

⁸ HU OSA 300–40

⁹ Access: http://www.osaarchivum.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=210&Itemid=332&lang=en

for raising the consciousness about the past and for the acknowledgement of the role of the democratic civic initiatives as well, moreover it gives momentum to the strengthening of the sense of interdependence and cohesion, according to the draft. Nevertheless, the report proposes the establishment of a European documentation center and a memorial dedicated to the victims of the totalitarian systems. The proposal also finds important the review of the European text-books of history and bringig them up to date. During the debate the liberal representative István Szent-Iványi stressed that in certain member states – including Hungary – the access to the secret service documents of the communist oppression's mechanism is still not complete and he called it necessary that this situation be remedied.

“What we managed to achieve depended on either the goodwill of people, or we forced it.”

Interview with Béla Kis, President of the Association of Transylvanian Hungarians (July 2008)

– *When and how was the Association of Transylvanian Hungarians established?*

– I migrated to Hungary in November 1987, and the Association was established in March 1988. Then there was still dictatorship, and Transylvanians, if their passport expired or had no documents, they were forwarded back to the Romanians by the authorities. There were all sorts of abuses there: the refugees were sent to the Delta of the Danube, were beaten or simply became unemployed. After a while, I myself had to hide in Hungary.

In the meantime, there were more and more Transylvanians in Hungary, and a kind of contact and concord evolved between us. Géza Németh, a Calvinist priest, was among the first who helped these people losing their last hope. As far as I know, he was dealing with drug addicts from the Moszkva square and other handicapped young people; he collected them in the prayer house of Csaba street and tried to convert them via religion. Moszkva square was a gathering place of Transylvanians in the end of 1987 and in the beginning of 1988: people were taken to work from there. Recalling the events, I suppose that Transylvanians migrating to Hungary started forming a group. We were more and more, and finally a separate Transylvanian group evolved; they were visiting the worships in Csaba street in order to exchange information. In the beginning, it was an underground grouping; I do not think that the authorities knew about it. It was characteristic of the whole atmosphere of the era that we were searching for Romanian spies between us.

Then in 1988 the so-called Szűrös Declaration was published. It was a very important event, since from that date it became officially possible for Transylvanian refugees to reside in Hungary.

– *What did this change mean politically?*

– After a while, I think, it was not sustainable that there was a mother country chasing its own nation into destruction. I suppose, at the same time, that beyond the internal pressure – we were more and more – the Western pressure also played a role in the political changes. There were indignant letters sent from the West, pressure in order that the Transylvanians should not be expelled back to Romania. From this moment, the Transylvanians could stay here also officially. We had to register ourselves at the police, and then we were granted the permit of residence. In the beginning, perhaps, we had to show up every week, then every month, and then we always got a seal that we could stay longer. After a while we could be employed, and that meant that we could start a new life.

– *What were the assemblies of the Transylvanians like in those months?*

– On the one hand, there were worships in Csaba street; on the other hand, there was some community life evolving. Everyone tried to collect information from Transylvania or transmit information to Transylvania. It was quite risky, since there was news that some were captured or shot dead at the borders or expelled back to Romania. The families of those who migrated to Hungary were not safe any longer. It was difficult to learn what happened to them or what happened to those who were here. That is, these assemblies had a kind of role of information exchange.

The meetings in Csaba street developed so far that there was not only one Transylvanian group, but two. There was not enough space in the room for all of us, and thus two worships were held. Then, by the concord of Géza Németh and Tivadar Pánczél, the whole organisation was moved to Rákosszentmihály, to the Calvinist church of Budapesti street. There were times when 500 people came. Assistance was divided, clothes, simple lunches, news were read aloud, news from home and from here, there was chanting, crying, praying, everything. It was strange, somehow touching, somehow depressing. I did not belong to the people who came for assistance, but so to say I was the man who prepared the simple lunches.

– *Where did the Transylvanians migrating here live?*

– At different places, it was very mixed. There were people living at their acquaintances and relatives, and there were people living at railway

stations. For example, I left Transylvanian with a rucksack, and went from one of my acquaintances to another.

– *Under what circumstances did you decide to leave Transylvania?*

– My migration was the result of a process of several years. I did not simply decide to leave and everything would be good. Recalling those times, it was quite shocking. At home I had to face permanent atrocities. I as a Hungarian had a completely hopeless situation and future. I got a university degree in Biology, became a teacher at Avasújváros.* It was a village populated by 99% Hungarians; only the policeman, the council president and the headmaster were Romanians. At the same time, in order that the school should not be Hungarian, Romanian children were brought from the neighbouring villages who were residing here. A Romanian class had to be established for them. The Hungarian class was soon full, and the other Hungarians had to learn in the Romanian class, in Romanian. There were a million problems and affairs with the Securitate, the Romanian political police. I taught there for one and a half years, then I was sent to Kolozsvár,** to the Biological Research Institute. My boss was a radical man, he had permanently anti-Hungarian manifestations. In the last years a process started, the regime wanted to cease the Hungarian intelligentsia. Those who were Hungarians in higher positions were dismissed or retired. No Hungarian teacher was employed in the university for 10 years. The situation was the same in the research field. I saw that my fate would be similar in a few years: I would either be dismissed from the institute or I would resign voluntarily.

– *When you left home did you know to whom you would go, did you have any plan?*

– The situation became completely impossible at home, and I decided to leave. I thought of Hungary, since it is a Hungarian language area, there were acquaintances, but since I could not remain, I left Romania aimlessly.

It was another method for making people emigrate that they were not granted passports. Legally one could travel to Hungary every two years, but in practice it was not permitted. One could go to hearings, but in vain, and then completely unexpectedly the permit arrived after six years. This was in fact a call to leave but never return, because the next

* In Romanian: Orașu Nou

** In Romanian: Cluj Napoca

time you would get no passport, this was the last chance. I had to think about what to do. Finally, I decided to emigrate and give it a try.

– *Did you have a family at home?*

– Only my parents lived at home; I had no family, migrated alone. Certainly, I had friendly contacts, so the separation was not easy. The passport also had an expiration date; I had to leave in half a year, that is, until August 1987. I was simply unable to depart. It was my fortune that I had a contracted job in the research institute that I had to hand in September, therefore I wrote a plea referring to it so that my passport should be prolonged. It was extended until the end of November. I did the job according to the contract and handed in the material. In the meantime, time was passing, and my parents were desperate about what would happen if I did not go. They did not know that I wanted to leave permanently. I tried to visit all the acquaintances who were important to me. I only told my intentions to three of four people, but not to relatives. In the meantime, I visited everyone and silently said farewell to them. Slowly I also said farewell to my parents, but only two weeks later did I get on a train, on 2nd November. I also met others who wanted to migrate to the West. There were people who were repatriated several times. It was also very interesting that if someone managed to cross the border, we could be incredibly happy for them.

Later in Budapest I contacted people who were in similar situations. The idea of writing a letter to Mátyás Szűrös for the sake of staying longer was spreading. Then a letter writing movement evolved, and I am sure that these letters had an effect on later events.

– *Arriving at Hungary, were you less afraid of the Hungarian authorities? And what could you expect of them?*

– We also had to be afraid of them. If you were asked to identify oneself in the street and were found to have expired Romanian documents, you were repatriated at once. We had to be very careful in order not to meet policemen. In the beginning while I had a valid passport I was cleaning. I was registered under the name of some old lady; I got my salary like this. When my passport expired it was a very uncomfortable situation that the authorities could have found out at any time that I was an illegal migrant. I was going from street to street and where I saw construction I asked whether or not they needed a day-labourer. And finally I succeeded: I was digging gardens, insulating roofs, mixing concrete, there was always some job. In the meantime, with my rucksack on my back, one day I slept here, next day there, at friends, acquaintances, charity hostels, etc.

– *How did people in Hungary treat migrants from Transylvania?*

– It depends on whom. The picture was very mixed. There were people who helped a lot, mainly Transylvanians migrating to Hungary earlier. But in many cases we were called Romanians, there were malicious remarks, there were people who knew nearly nothing about Transylvania. There were people who believed that Transylvania was a village in Eastern Hungary. The great demonstration of Transylvania brought interesting experiences. Many, about 500,000 people participated. There were people there demonstrating for Transylvania, but were surprised at the sight of Transylvanians, believing that Transylvanians were shabby, starving and could not speak Hungarian.

From the circle of my acquaintances I got a lot of help. By the proposal of a group of spelunkers, with whom I was in contact as a spelunker, I was working for their construction company for half a year. In the meantime, for the sake of maintaining contacts, I was visiting meetings, to Rákosszentmihály and to the Endangered Plant Research Institute that was important to me from a professional point of view. After I while, I was offered a job and I was glad to accept it. They were very kind; they were the first to provide a room for me as accommodation that was an enormous aid for me.

– *From whom did the Transylvanians get further aid?*

– On the one hand, from the church. They helped the migrants to obtain lodgings or rented flats, and in everything that they needed. Those times people maybe helped each other much more, clothing, money and food were regularly among the assistance. Then there was aid coming also from the West.

In Budapest, at the meeting of Transylvanians I saw that people were coming, took the assistance, then disappeared. Next week another group of Transylvanians came there, but there was no cooperation. Perhaps those felt the strongest togetherness among each other who came in the very first wave, when there were really reasons to be afraid of what would happen to us.

– *Did this aid have any organised form?*

– The usual assembly on Friday had a scenario. We went in, the worship began, then news was read aloud, clothes and other assistance was divided, then people ate and talked. But in fact, no real organisation existed. There were people who felt it their personal affair and there were some who helped in the operation.

I myself wanted to gather the intellectuals, to form a little scientific community where a few lectures could be held and heard and common theses could be written. I announced this and 15 people applied, but only one couple of doctors who had university degrees were among them. Despite all of this, it seemed that there was some demand of cultural meetings broadening our knowledge. Finally, in March 1988 the first such meeting was organised where we invited Pál Bodor who is also Transylvanian and worked as a journalist of the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* in those times.

In those times, we could not even pronounce the word Transylvania. Examining the newspapers of the era, we cannot find it. The first name of the organisation was “Club of Transylvanian Hungarian Intellectuals” (Erdélyi Magyar Értelmiségi Klub = EMKE), on the one hand because of the thought of the formation of a scientific circle, on the other hand, because it rhymed with the name of the old EMKE (Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület = Public Education Association of Transylvanian Hungarians) that was an organisation originally operating in Cluj Napoca since 1885. We were warned not to call ourselves “Transylvanians”, but we did not change the name of the organisation. And no “association” could exist, there was no so-called civilian sphere. What was operating were the so-called clubs, but they were not acknowledged by the authorities either. Clubs that defied the regime only a little were simply prohibited and destroyed. There was a Committee of Clubs unifying about 52 clubs; this organisation and its members played a serious role in the change of the regime. The opposition evolved through these clubs. We were involved in this sphere very soon. The members of the opposition or changers of the regime stood for the affair of the Transylvanians, and we became partners very soon. We were connected to the Round Table of the Opposition and mutually aided each other.

– *Were there other groups organised by refugees?*

– Yes, but those times it was impossible to know which group wanted what. There were Romanian groups, very suspicious groups, these organisations were hard to investigate; one time they were established, then ceased; no one knew what they represented and who belonged to them.

– *Were there mainly Transylvanians at the meetings or were there also native Hungarians?*

– In our meetings there were mainly Transylvanians and refugees. The common fate and similar situation brought people together. They felt it

necessary to exchange experiences, tell what happened to them and ask for or give advice. The community of Rákosszentmihály had a somewhat religious character, not secular. The togetherness was connected to praying, but with us it was connected with lectures. We always invited different lecturers. After the lectures, everyday pressing problems were put in the foreground: assimilation, creating and leaving home. More and more questions arose which no one had dealt with earlier. For example, that two Transylvanians could not get married here, because they were Romanian citizens, or because they could not obtain a driving licence, since they were not Hungarian citizens, etc. The chasm between refugees and institutions dealing with refugee affairs was surprisingly enormous; they did not even know about these problems. One time we invited the director of the Transylvanian Office and due to this meeting, many problems were later solved. The association became a contact organisation between the refugees and the official authorities.

– *Were the Transylvanian communities connected to each other and cooperating?*

– In the beginning, we did not understand how to treat other organisations. I participated at many other opening sessions, but there was little chance for cooperation due to local and temporary interests. We tried to represent a kind of intellectual line. Many people were upset at this, saying that we wanted to exclude labourers and peasants. We were a little surprised at this social stereotype and I tried to explain that it was not an intellectual group because it consisted of intellectuals, but rather because its activity was intellectual.

– *Did these clubs have to get registered?*

– No, clubs did not have to be registered; if they were organised, they existed. The state security probably examined it, and then if there was any problem, further assemblies were not permitted, for example, they were not granted a place to meet. Those times there was no act of assemblage, there was no basis on which they could have introduced charges against us. Mainly individuals were arrested.

Later associations also started being formed based on the principle that their founding was not prohibited by any legal regulation. Then we learnt that Greek refugees also had an association. It turned out that we could not officially establish an association, but we could enter associations. We had to find 10 Hungarian citizens who were willing to give their name to the establishment of an association. There were people who later had problems due to this, but we finally succeeded.

- *Why was it important to operate within the frameworks of an association?*
- Legally an association meant much more. For example, we could obtain welfare, supports, assistance. A civilian sphere started evolving; the opposition was becoming stronger and stronger. We offered cooperation to other similar associations, but it did not really work and does not work even now. In those times, in the West Transylvanians were kept together by the International Association of Transylvanians, and I was in contact with them. In the meantime, a lawyer in Hungary established a private organisation of Transylvanians. I was present at the opening session and offered my cooperation for them. Finally, about six organisations joined there in order to draft a common program for common purposes.
- *What were the common purposes?*
- That is a good question. In those times wrote down on a sheet what we wanted to do and tried to increase the organisation's popularity. We were doing it until others stole our programs. What was common? For example, evidently the protest against the village destructions and Ceaușescu, but cooperation was late.

It was characteristic of that period that we were the only organisation and suddenly writers and journalists started visiting our meetings. They came and conducted interviews with Transylvanians, they wrote their reports and books. And there were often questions like *How did you cross the border? What did the officers of the Securitate do with you? How were you beaten?* etc. We were a little surprised that they wanted to hear only terrible stories from us. It was not compassion what worked, but sensationalism. Writers, journalists, reporters – it was the best for them if someone was crying in front of the camera.

Returning to the assemblies, it crossed our mind that there should be an organisation amalgamating different Transylvanian groups. We could have been supported from the West. There was a Worldwide Association of Transylvanians, and we thought, why not become members, somehow I considered it natural. I met István Zolcsák, the president, who said that he did not support two different Transylvanian associations. Then I found out that the previous day a female journalist was present between the negotiating parties, and this lady had also been present at our meetings.

There was a period when a campaign was initiated against Géza Németh, different discrediting articles were written about him, stating

that he had stolen so much and abused Transylvanian refugees. I myself knew about nothing specific like this, these were only rumours. Then this female journalist visited me so that I should tell her what a bad man Géza Németh was, and I was unwilling to do so. Her feelings were hurt, saying that I was a patron of Géza Németh, and according to her statement, it was the reason why I had not been informed about the new organisation.

Later, by Zolcsák's proposal, I met one of the prospective leaders of the Association of Transylvanians and told him that we had already a club and we could work on the establishment of the association. He said that we will be allowed to enter the Association of Transylvanians. It became clear for me that we were too little to participate in it, simple newly arrived refugees, while there had been prominent personalities among the organisers of the Association for long. We decided to continue our own meetings and programs, and then we would establish an association.

– *Who were the members of the association and how many were you?*

– It was always changing. There were stable people, and there are people who have been members since then. But mainly in the beginning, the membership was changing week by week. In the beginning, it was important because of the applications how many members the association had. Those who wanted to enter filled in an application form and became a member of the association. It was inaccurate, since there were people who filled in the form, but we have not seen them since then. At the same time, there were people who were afraid of entering, saying that it would be registered by the Securitate, but they nevertheless came to the assemblies. While we were gathering members, we had about 870 members.

– *Were they all Transylvanian refugees, or were there also native Hungarians among them?*

– In the beginning, they were nearly exclusively Transylvanians, because it was not officially considered a good thing to be a member of a Transylvanian organisation. Those who joined it as Hungarian citizens were very decisive and broad-minded from this point of view, but these people were also mainly of Transylvanian descent. There were native Hungarians who feel Transylvanian affairs their personal duty, or people who got to know Transylvania through us. At the moment there is a strong core membership, about 400 people who pay the membership fee and visit the meetings regularly, there is a layer that sometimes comes, they are contacted with us, but usually do not pay the membership fee any longer, and there is a wider circle that hardly ever comes.

We published a book, the list of *Migrating Transylvanians*. There are about 3,000 names in the book from among Transylvanians living in Hungary or in diaspora somewhere in the world, the names of those who voluntarily filled in the application form. There are people living in Japan, but it is important to them that they are Transylvanians.

– *When the Transylvanians migrated to Hungary in 1988–89, did they plan to ever return? For example, when you left, did you think that you would ever return?*

– Many people migrated because they wanted to live better. Many of them migrated and went further, since their identity might not have been so important to them. There were people who came to Hungary and were so shocked by their home situation that they never returned and never want to return even now. There are people who do not want to hear about the Romanians or the Transylvanians, and do not even want to be Hungarians.

Everyone reacts in a different way. There are people for whom the emotional bonds are so much that they simply cannot leave. There are people who come to Hungary but are unable to adjust themselves to the local circumstances. There are people who manage to go home and believe that they really came home. But at home they have to face another problem and as time is passing they want to return from where they emigrated.

– *Have you ever thought of returning home?*

– Yes, I have. I can go back to Kolozsvár, but the town that I knew is different; it is not the same any longer. The town and the people changed. I can feel home because I often return home. Finally everything changes, not only Kolozsvár, Budapest is also much more different than it was twenty years ago. Those who left Budapest twenty years ago and now return home do not feel home. It is very hard to return. It does not mean that I return to the same place but to enter a completely new atmosphere. I must depart once again; fortitude and audacity are necessary in order to start a new life. There are many people in this situation. Here they get to know the possibilities and the people, learn what and how to do, for example how to establish a company. These things all must be done at home in a completely different way, these things operate differently, and it is very hard to adjust ourselves to a new system. There is evidently an attraction to the homeland, one tries to live a little at both places, but in fact one will never find one's place, this is the truth.

I myself was also thinking a lot about it, and many people also asked the question why I do not return home. Mainly because after the change of the regime: “Ceaușescu is dead, everything is in order, you should go home”. All in all, the situation of the Hungarian population in Transylvania is not much better, only different. I myself would ask why I should return, what I could do there. Here is the association, this is a contact organisation, I am also in contact with Transylvania and try to do something.

– *In what fields do you try mainly to act?*

– In the cases of Transylvanians, for example, once at the Committee of Coordination of Refugee Affairs, where there were the representatives of different ministries present. Here they attempted to solve problems, drafted and amended legal regulations. Their work was good and efficient, rational changes in the legal system could be achieved. But it was also among the assignments of the Committee to grant the right of renting 50 flats in Budapest to Transylvanians in difficult situation and to treat reduced credits.

– *Did this committee have direct contact with Transylvanians?*

– Yes, certainly it did, Transylvanians could go to the office in order to ask for information or lodge complaints. Apart from this, they negotiated with the local self-governments about how to help refugees, in some cases, by offering cheap plots or jobs. I wanted to achieve that in this committee the Transylvanians should have their own representatives, and finally I myself was assigned to be this representative. I was present at these sessions and commented on the events, I could make proposals and raise issues, I could vote for decisions. It was a very effective body, but unfortunately it ceased.

– *Did the other Transylvanian organisations have their own representation in the committee?*

– Those organisations did not raise these issues so much. Our association emphasised the importance of dealing with Transylvanians living in Hungary. The others were not interested in it as much; they were rather struggling for Transylvania, their purpose was to help people still at home, to create the autonomous Transylvania.

What we tried to achieve, the support of Transylvanians living in Hungary, and possibly their representation, is not looked upon well even today. While Romanians living in Hungary are granted serious assistance by the local self-governments, we get nearly nothing, only some little sum after some quarrelling. I am unable to make the official bodies realise

our situation even today. We are members of the Hungarian nation, but migrated here from the neighbouring countries. We are in a different category from other immigrants, but we also have problems that should be dealt with. The problems of assimilation of Transylvanian children are not important for the Hungarian authorities, since we are simply Hungarians.

– *Did you expect something else when you decided to migrate to Hungary?*

– The fact that we were not kindly admitted, as far as I can judge it subsequently, was not very surprising. The continuous migration of Transylvanians started even before the turn of the century, before the Treaty of Trianon, and Transylvanians were not kindly admitted in Budapest even those times. All other immigrants are more important in Hungary, with the slogan that we are not strangers, but rather a people to be assimilated. But Transylvanians have their own identity. It does not mean that we are not Hungarians, but there are certain characteristics in our traditions, behaviour, manner of speech which we should not discard. We should not speak in the same way as people speak in District 8 of Budapest or anywhere else. But many people want to integrate us.

In our case, the issue of refugees or of migration lasts only until they realize that 70 of 100 people migrate here from the neighbouring countries, and they are simply Hungarians from the neighbouring countries. Then the issue is no longer interesting. After that the authorities deal with the remaining 30 percent. 70 percent are Hungarians, and they do not have to be cared for, since they have neither problems nor importance.

– *You mentioned that in 1988–89 you had a strong mutual cooperation with the forces participating in the change of the regime. What did it mean?*

– We obviously wanted the communist power to cease, since in that period even the word Transylvania was prohibited and the blazon of Transylvania could not be our symbol, saying that there would be international problems. Like this, we could struggle on the side of the opposition, but from the part of the communist regime there was no positive attitude. What we managed to achieve depended on either the goodwill of people, or we forced it. There were people who were understanding and saw through our situation. For example, those who were the members of the Committee of the Coordination of Refugee Affairs had a very helpful attitude.

– *What kind of change did you expect in this period?*

– No matter what, we wanted the disappearance of the regime and freedom for citizens, freedom to travel, etc. – but in that period it was not drafted in such a form, we rather wanted that restrictions, barri-

ers and pressure should be ceased at last. Finally, a multi-party system evolved and democratic votes were held. Later we had to realise how false these things were, and that democracy does not unconditionally equal freedom, since power can also be abused in democracies, there are people exploited and what is permitted to one, is not permitted to the other. But back then there was still a fantastic enthusiasm, people were motivated because they had something to hope for. We thought that with freedom, people would be honest, justice would prevail, and misery would disappear. Unfortunately, these notions were not realised. Furthermore, certain people changed and become the same as their predecessors. When the Pan-European Picnic was held and the Iron Curtain was demolished, or when the great Transylvanian demonstration was organised with the enormous masses, we had unforgettably enthusiastic moments and felt that nothing could stop the world becoming better...

“I can see that many refugees
from Transylvania who migrated
to Hungary remained in a bitter mood”

*Conversation with Árpád Spaller, Vice President
of Association of Hungarians from Transylvania
(October 2008)*

- *When and how did you migrate to Hungary?*
- This story began in 1981. One of our friends offered us to host our whole family, that is, two adults and two minor children. The host family had a suitable property, which was verified by the authorities, and the family was required to issue a notarized letter of acceptance. At the Hungarian Consulate of Kolozsvár Napoca/Kolozsvár, we asked for an application form, and after filling it, we handed in our immigration application together with many other documents. This seemingly straightforward process was much more difficult than expected. We asked for the application forms in the summer. The head consul was then away, and a member of his staff gave us the document. Normally, it wouldn't be a problem, but in this case it was. When we handed in the documents, the head consul “received” us, and with his hand in his pocket, smoking a cigarette, and shouting he asked who had given us the documents. He also said that we had nothing to do in Hungary, and if it depended on him, we would be never allowed to migrate there. We did not know the reason for his hostile behavior. All was explained, when we later read in a clandestine booklet that he sold applications for money. It was no wonder at all, since the Hungarian Consulate in Kolozsvár Napoca was in those days managed in a scandalous manner. There was debauchery nearly every Sunday in the summer. But the staff often got drunk even on other occasions. Then they were quarrelling, so loud that it could be heard in the street. The Romanian neighbours were offered coffee (at that time coffee was una-

vailable in Romania) and the employees of the Consulate were kind to them, but they ignored the greetings of their fellow Hungarians. I know these facts because my parents lived in the neighbourhood of the Consulate. From the window, we could see their yard. It was sad to see. The head consul was right, we were not granted the visa.

– *What could you do after the refusal?*

– We had to wait for two years, when we were allowed to try it again. But in two years, the head consul was replaced by Domokos Vékás whose family was from Transylvania. Under his management everything changed. Everything became much more human. It was no accident that later he was expelled from Romania. Everyone was given an application form without an interview. We obtained our visa in 1985. After that, we had our ordeal with the Romanian authorities. As we handed in our emigration application, my wife was dismissed from her job in the education field because she became an “unreliable and treacherous element”. I could retain my position, because I was working in Mezőtelegd,* 20 kilometres from Oradea, as a special education teacher. We lived on one salary with two little children for one and half a year, until we got our final permit to migrate. We knew that they would let us migrate, since Romania did not need educated Hungarians. But no-one knew exactly when. Applicants were usually hindered until they had used up all of their savings so that they should leave as poor as possible. Aside from our books we did not take much with us: just furniture for one room and clothes. The books were checked by a “cultural cop” and not all of them were allowed out, the more precious ones were sealed, and the container in which all of these arrived was broken up. After the custom control, we were checked once again, and the container was simply left open.

Only a few people travelled on the long train. We crossed the border in July 1987. We really hurried, since we were promised employment and lodging, and we wanted to start working in August. It was a great disappointment when we learned that there was neither job nor a flat for us. I mention this, because the same institution later announced the availability of these jobs. Although we did not consider the proceedings honest, we had no choice but to accept it. If we had been informed sooner, we would have looked elsewhere. Those were hard times. September was coming and we had to have our children enrolled in school.

* In Romanian: Tileagd.

We had to leave Budapest and move to county Tolna as special education teachers. In a year, mainly because of the studies of our children, we moved back near Budapest. At first we lived in Gyál, then in Felsőpalkony, then we were finally able to sublet an apartment from the municipality of Budapest.

– *Why did you decide to leave Kolozsvár?*

– I have my roots in Kolozsvár. It is proven that even my great grandfather was born in Kolozsvár. The city, was the liveable place for us. I never wanted to leave it, since everything connected me there, my childhood and my youth. But Romanian migrants, who were paid to move from Moldova to Kolozsvár, had to have accommodation. As a result of this migration the ethnic Hungarian population of Kolozsvár decreased below 20 %. We were victims of this diabolic policy that began after the World War I. After graduating, I was officially sent to Szilágysomlyó.* From there, I was sent to Papfalva,** then to Mezőtelegd. We commuted to Mezőtelegd in inhuman circumstances. It would be too long to relate. Then I had a strong desire to move back to Kolozsvár. Naturally, we could not even dream of it. The Hungarians of Kolozsvár were all sent to distant places. We had a great circle of friends. Later, I learned that we were all shadowed by the Securitate, the Romanian secret police. None of this circle of friends was allowed to remain in Kolozsvár. The city became off limits for Hungarians. After that, anywhere I was sent, I never felt homesick. I called this state of soul “little death”, and it has continued to the present. Other circumstances also contributed to our desire of escaping: the visit of the Securitate in our home, the “inspection” over the Ady Circle in Nagyvárad,*** the humiliation of the editors of the journal *Ellenpontok* (“Counterpoints”), the maltreatment of my child at school, etc. There were many of us who wanted to emigrate.

– *When you migrated to Hungary, did you have to solicit for permit of residence and employment from the Hungarian authorities?*

– Since we entered Hungary officially, not via the “green borders”, we were automatically granted the permit of residence and employment. The fact that we chose the legal way was good in the beginning, but later

* In Romanian: Șimleu Silvaniei.

** In Romanian: Popești.

*** In Romanian: Oradea.

it proved to be disadvantageous. As opposed to “true refugees”, we got no advantages or allowances whatsoever. The authorities did not care about us at all, saying that we had entered Hungary officially, so we had been able to bring anything we needed, and we probably had everything. It was far from the truth, and they knew it, but it was the easiest way to get rid of a family. It was also a difficult and humiliating procedure to obtain our identity cards.

– *Did you want to settle down in Hungary for good?*

– Yes, naturally. We knew that if once we left, then we would never be allowed to return. We did not even think of that, since in that dictatorship I could not even remain in my hometown. Those who once migrated left behind everything. The official character of the procedures also contributed to the fact that we did not think of returning. After the change of the regime in Romania, in 1990, many people in Hungary said that we could return because everything had changed. Certainly, only those people said this who did not know the situation and the people living there. At that time I said that I would think of returning home if I could hoist a Hungarian banner beside a Romanian one. Certainly, it cannot be done even today, twenty years after the “revolution”. Those who had illusions were sobered up by the pogrom in March of 1990. All of this only strengthened the fact of migration. If we had migrated again, we would have moved only towards West. But we did not. When I had the opportunity to migrate to Western Europe, I did no longer want to move again. Our existence in Hungary was not unhindered, but I did not want to change it. As I see it, many refugees from Transylvania remained in Hungary with a tinge of bitterness.

– *When and how did you obtain Hungarian citizenship?*

– At the time we migrated to Hungary, in 1987, we could apply for Hungarian citizenship on condition that we give up our Romanian citizenship. The obstacle we had was that we could not afford the expense, so we did not pursue the matter further. Our situation was so bad that we were considering moving on. But, finally we gave up on that too. When we were able to apply for citizenship without giving up our original one, then it became less pressing. That is why we received our citizenship relatively late, in 1992. But our rights of Hungarian citizenship were not equal to the rights of “old” Hungarian citizens. For example, if we wanted to sublet an apartment from the municipality of Budapest, we needed an organization or institution to vouch for us. They did not

fully accept our degrees. Despite our academic background, the local community college in Budapest argued that our Hungarian is not good enough. All of these episodes embittered our stay here.

– *How much were you in connection with Transylvanian refugees arriving later?*

– We got to know refugees arriving later through the Associations of Hungarians from Transylvania. The newcomers visited the Association to get as much assistance and information as possible. They did not undertake a job voluntarily. There were people who wanted to advance through positions within the Association or who took money from the Association but never returned it.

And there were those old friends of ours from home, who, even if they did leave Transylvania, chose different paths. Therefore, friendships and bonds were broken up. Meeting with friends again failed to revive old friendships. A chapter of our life closed behind us. We could not follow what was happening in daily life in Transylvania. We did not experience it as we lived in a different reality. When we met we had no more common topics. There were only a few friends left, with whom we still keep in touch.

– *Were you not connected with old friend even when you arrived in Hungary?*

– No, we were not. We did not maintain these connections. We were not connected with those who stayed at home, because all of the letters were censored. This is why we were more likely to send postcards, which is not the best way to connect. We quietly ran out of topics in common. When we arrived I tried to contact old friends. For economic reasons, we had to leave Budapest resulting in a loss of contacts. In the meantime, one of my best friends migrated further to Western Europe. In a year, when we returned to Budapest – in 1988 –, the authorities started to deal with Transylvanian refugees in a formal way. As a result, the number of Transylvanian associations suddenly mushroomed. At first we made an attempt to join the Federation of Transylvanians, but they did not need us. At that time, the number of “Transylvanian experts” also increased, some of whom did even know Transylvania’s location. Those who really visited or lived in Transylvania in the darkest period and really encouraged us did not boast about their past, they only did what they had to do. Finally, I found the Association of Hungarians from Transylvania, in the beginning of 1989. The Association was less “fashionable” than the Federation of Transylvanians. I tried to do some

something for the fellow Transylvanians. At that time care packages started arriving from the West. I witnessed many abuses in connection to those shipments. These packages did not arrive to the Association, but we were only asked sometimes to help in their distribution. After the change of regime in Romania, I edited a journal within the auspices of the Association. It was called *VIGYÁZÓ* (“Guardian”), and it was, in fact, a quarterly with a selection of articles published in the Hungarian-language newspapers in Transylvania. It is a pity that without financial support, the quarterly was able to run only for five years.

– *From where did the care packages that you mentioned arrive?*

– They arrived mainly from the West. Mainly Hungarians living there did their best to support Transylvanian refugees. These care packages were distributed in Hungary. After the change of regime in Romania, these shipments were sent directly to Transylvania. But often the recipients of these shipments were not Transylvanian refugees. There was someone who even showed me – perhaps he did not sense that I was also a Transylvanian – how much he collected from the shipments meant for the refugees. There were shelves of clothing and abundant foodstuff, etc.

– *How much solidarity could you sense on part of the Hungarians?*

– It was a kind of solidarity mixed with pity. True, my friend who took me in did it without any kind of hesitation or conditions. He was very kind to us. We are still good friends. We spent a month at his home. It seemed a long time for me. We came to Hungary believing that we would have lodging and employment; that is, that Hungary was in need of our labor and skills. We were promised this, yet we did not ask for it. Finally, it happened differently. So there were exceptions, but the usual climate of opinion – which I also experienced in the country – was compassion mixed with pity. If we went beyond this, wanted or achieved more, we were not poor Transylvanians any longer. It was already impossible to feel pity. Especially after the political developments in Romania, many people said that “now you can go home”. As if it was so easy to move from one country to another. Also the climate of opinion became hostile and condescending. The sad reality was that we were left “twisting in the wind”. That is, we were not needed here, nor were we needed in Transylvania either. Those from home claimed that they stayed and stood their ground and did not run away, as we did. Naturally, this was not the case, since everyone goes through his own personal odyssey, but they jumped at the opportunity to deride us, who

earlier were the “subject of envy”. When I proved that my friend was one of the people who knew that I was shadowed by the Securitate, the Romanian secret police, but he did care to utter a word of warning of what I should expect, he became angry. As a result of my truthfulness, he no longer sought my company. Unfortunately, at that time, many people became “upstanding heroes”.

– *What was the attitude of the Hungarian authorities towards the refugees?*

– The Hungarian authorities were not prepared for this flood of refugees. For forty years the Transylvanian Hungarians across the border simply did not exist. It was comfortable not to deal with this problem, since the “friendly socialist Romania” solved the question of nationality. Officially, we became Hungarian-speaking Romanians. And no refugee can arrive from a friendly country. When the Hungarian authorities faced the facts, it was rather late. Although they tried to treat the issue institutionally, they reacted too late and with very poor organization. The Transylvanians had a much stronger sense of national identity than Hungarians born in their homeland. We were a burden for the Hungarian state, because we caused a ripple effect on still waters that they did not expect. We still had very much alive in us the sense of solidarity and the experience of passive resistance. They knew by experience that socialism was a utopia. They knew demagoguery, deception, and the darkest form of dictatorship. The majority of home-born Hungarians had no idea about it. We were the carriers of rebellious ideas, something not welcome in a “place of tranquillity”. Hungary benefitted from the contribution of many of the well educated, but this did not compensate for the perceived inconveniences. It would be worth to examine to what degree the change of regime in Hungary should be grateful to contribution of the Transylvanian refugees. Our sense of unimportance was highlighted by the fact that we were not given an apartment. For a number of years we had to sublet from the municipality of Budapest, at market prices. While we paid the market price for our rent, our neighbour who was a Hungarian-born citizen was given an apartment of the same size but because of rent control regulation had to pay only a tenth of the rent. Our attempts to correct this discrimination resulted in the “socially sensitive” municipality’s threat of lawsuit and eviction.

– *How much could you sense the activities of the Interministerial Committee established for the settlement of refugee affairs?*

– We who legally migrated to Hungary did not sense the activity of the Interministerial Committee. Their activities, as far as I know, were connected to people of refugee status. From this point of view, we were disadvantaged. We could not turn anywhere for aid. We were completely helpless.

– *Did Hungarian movements, for example, the demonstration against the destruction of villages in Transylvania, have any affect? What did it mean for you?*

– These movements turned the public attention to Transylvania, the events taking place there. At the same time, the Hungarian people realised that with joint action, even dictatorships can be defied. I can still hear the anguished pronouncements of people such as the journalist Pál Bodor. It was no coincidence that supporters of the regime were worried about these great and “unmanageable” movements.

– *What was your relationship with the churches like?*

– In their own way, the churches did their best to aid Transylvanians. They collected and distributed clothing and food. They also sought to provide spiritual support to the refugees. For reasons mentioned above – I was a migrant, not a refugee – I had only a marginal contact with the churches. At that time Géza Németh was the best known individual who aided and even sheltered illegal immigrants in Hungary. In this period I did not attend church services, I did not practice my religion. I was too immersed in problems of livelihood than religious practice.

– *In what did the Declaration of Szoka-Tabajdi count as a real breakthrough?*

– Comparing to former policies, the breakthrough was that people residing in Hungary illegally, became legal refugees. Hungary acknowledged the fact that the refugee issue existed, the fate of the Transylvanian Hungarians is critical and unsustainable, and it also became clear that the socialist fraternity is not as pretty as people had been made to believe it up to then. It was not an accidental recognition, but happened under international pressure. We Hungarians were always slow to anticipate events.

This gave hope to many Hungarians from Transylvania. Even for those who stayed at home, because they felt that something was changing in the stagnant water of the dictatorship.

– *What was known about the birth of this Declaration? Was it a central political decision or a decision made by individuals?*

– It was evidently a central political decision. In those times, and neither even today, it was not and is not the individuals who decide on so momentous political issues. At that time, those two young men only played the role of the spokesmen. But the issue was previously decided at a very high level. It may also be possible that they had asked for the opinion of the great brother, the Soviet Union. Those times we could feel that collapse of the whole socialist system was near. Then the Eastern Germans came, who used Hungary as a migration staging point to continue further West. Change was in the air. Everyone could feel it, but we did not know, quite well the direction of change.

How much did the situation change after Hungary joined to the UN Convention of Refugee Affairs in 1989?

It brought a change after which Hungary had to face the fact that refugees can also arrive from “the brotherly Romania” or from East Germany. These refugees contradicted the much heralded notion of socialist brotherhood. These events proved that the socialist camp was an artificially kept “marriage of convenience” that had finally come to an end. Hungary formalised the situation of refugees without coordinating with the other socialist countries, that is, it charted her own way. This was a great advantage for that seeking refugee status, because Hungary recognized them as refugees and provided assistance. I personally was not affected by it but there were many who were joyful.

– *What was the interest of the Romanians regarding the Hungarians? Did they want the Hungarians to leave or to stay?*

– Unquestionably, the interest of the Romanians was that we should leave. The domestic official policy, whether open or disguised, always aimed to have Hungarians leave Transylvania. They declared it already in 1919 that their main goal was to “Romanize” Transylvania. This policy has not changed since then. The fact that they hindered people as much as they could was only because they wanted to physically and psychologically torture people so that they would never intend to return. This policy also had financial factors, since families were usually permitted to leave the country with so many delays that they had to use up most of their savings. This whole system was a diabolic plan. Unfortunately, Hungarian policy-makers never learned anything from these developments.

– *We read that the first large wave of refugees arrived in Hungary during the Formula 1 in 1987...*

To a certain degree is true that these refugees came to see the race and riding in Western cars and taking advantage of the loose border controls decided to “jump out”. But that could happen only once. The second time, the border control was much stricter. Around that time, for a while, it was possible to migrate to Sweden. Many people left Hungary through Yugoslavia, with more or less success. But we do not know even today how many people were shot dead along the Hungarian–Romanian borders because they tried to escape. But I know that the Hungarian authorities also returned refugees back to Romania. We also know very little about their fate.

– *Did the majority of those who left from Romania want to migrate to Hungary, or did they want to migrate further?*

– In my opinion, most of them intended to stay in Hungary. First, because they knew the language, since this is their native language, they knew the local habits, they could assimilate more easily. Mainly younger people migrated to the West, and certainly those who were not naturalised in Hungary, mainly in the middle of the '80s. I think that it was a great omission of the Hungarian government. Those who migrated to the West were mainly young people and intellectuals. The authorities should have not permitted it any longer. But it was no wonder, since the same occurred in 1956. Dictatorship was always afraid of intellectuals, as it is still afraid of them.

– *Did less people migrate to Hungary after the revolution in Romania?*

– Immediately after the revolution many people who applied to migrate withdrew their application. According to statistical data in the two first months of 1990 the migration wave virtually ended. People had hopes and dreams about forging a fraternal meeting of minds and an accord between the two nations. Already in January, we could hear dissonant voices about this “friendship” about Hungarian aid and related things. I heard about all this while sitting on a train travelling home. Hungarian illusions were shattered by the anti-Hungarian pogrom in Marosvásárhely.* This event created or contributed to a large wave of refugees leaving for Hungary. That year the number of Hungarian refugees from Transylvania exceeded those leaving at the end of the 1980's.

* In Romanian: Târgu Mureş.

They keep coming up to this day. Some come to work, others to study. And many of them stay. Many of them end up in the West, particularly those with high skills in areas of technology. But these days nobody keeps count of the ever decreasing number of Hungarians in Transylvania.

HUNGARIANS IN USA

LEVENTE PAKOT*

The Characteristics of the 2000 United States Census and Its Scope in Quantifying Hungarian Americans

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant sources of examination of the ethnic groups of the United States is the U.S. Census taken in every decade. The census is essentially the only official document that attempts to exhaustively quantify and classify the composition of the country's population.

The census data is processed in varying degrees regardless of whether they seek to quantify the number of Hungarians¹ or inform on the demographic characteristics² or to present a to this day unrivaled sociological analysis,³ all data has to be equally validated against the unique characteristics of the data source and the attendant analytical

* Co-author with Attila Papp Z. of section 6.3 of the chapter.

- 1 Nagy, Károly: Hány Magyar él az Egyesült Államokban a XX. század végén. (How Many Hungarians Live in the United States at the end of the 20th century) In: Nagy, Károly –Papp, László (eds.) *A magyar nyelv és kultúra megtartása az Amerikai Egyesült Államokban 1977* (The preservation of Hungarian language and culture in the United States of America in 1977): Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága (International Society of Hungarian Culture and Language) – Ancestry Language Conference, Budapest 1998. 26–33. Nagy, Károly: Magyar népesedési tendenciák az Egyesült Államokban (Hungarian Demographic Tendencies in the United States), *Valóság* 2005/12. 122–123.
- 2 Huseby-Darvas, Éva V.: *Hungarians in Michigan*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press. 2003.
- 3 Fejős, Zoltán: Magyarok az Egyesült Államokban az 1980-as Években (Hungarians in the United States in the 1980's [demography, social data, conceptual

problems. The recurrent theme and source of inquiry for the authors is to what degree it is possible to describe the Hungarian ethnic presence in the U.S. population based on the census data. A particular challenge is the identification and evaluation of the different foreign ethnic groups or ethnic origin of populations that in English we call „ancestry”. There is a tendency within the wider population polled to accept the ethnic origin or ancestry category incorporated in the survey responses, including those of Hungarian origin, as truly representative of actual social communities or groups. Based on this premise, it is assumed that the subjective relationship of the questionnaire respondent, that is, the individual who has Hungarian ancestors, is to him or her and to others, from the community or social standpoint, Hungarian. This premise was challenged, first and foremost by Zoltán Fejős in several studies pointing out that the use of *ancestry* related data has to be used with great caution, particularly if we want to quantify from that the data the number of ethnic Hungarians within the population.⁴ An important finding by Fejős is that “based on the «hard» statistical data we could only determine a picture of the Hungarians by examining the nature and characteristics of the data sources regarding them.” According to him, „the statistical categories of the analyses, the questions and the wording of the questionnaire, as well as unexamined phenomena of past censuses, are determinants of the overall structure of the national ethnic canvas.”⁵

Based on the realistic interpretation of the 2000 census data – it is necessary to review the theoretical, methodological and technical characteristics that were used in mapping the various ethnic groups, including the identification of the Americans of Hungarian origin. Below, I am examining the following related issues: 1) What were the main characteristics in carrying out the 2000 census? 2) How did the census and with what precision did it measure ethnicity? 3) based on the data, what is the picture that we have of the profile of Hungarian Americans residing in the United States?

issues]) In: *Magyarságkutatás 1988* (Research of Hungarians 1988), Annals of the Institute of Hungarian Research, Budapest, 1988, p. 177–216.

4 Fejős (1988) that is, Fejős, Zoltán: Az etnicitás változatai: identitások a magyar diaszpórában. (Modalities of ethnicity: identity in the Hungarian diaspora), In: Gergely, András A. (ed) *A nemzet antropológiája (Hofer Tamás köszöntése)* (The Nation's Anthropology [Salute to Tamás Hofer]), Új Mandátum, Budapest, 2002, p. 145–159.

5 Fejős 1988. p. 177.

To accomplish these objectives in the first part of the study, I outline the motivational factors of the 2000 U.S. census and the main characteristics of its execution. After this, I present an overview of the historic evolution of statistics of race and ethnicity as well as the main modifications that have taken place in the last decades. I introduce the immediate and mediate issues affecting race and ethnicity, and in a separate chapter I address the question of the population of Hungarians living in the United States. I discuss in detail the statistical reliability in measuring ethnic populations. Finally, at the end of the study I analyze the social perspectives and processes that could support certain characteristics of the ethnic data.

In my study I propose that in the last census, the preparation and realistic interpretation of the data regarding Hungarian Americans could only be realized paying due attention to the analytical constraints stemming from characteristics of the available data.

2. THE MOTIVATING FACTORS OF THE CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES

The most important source for the demographic data of the population of the United States is the national census taken every decade since 1790 that aims to account exhaustively for all the country's residents.⁶ Besides the fundamental interest of learning about the national demographic profile, the census undertaken every decade has an inherently political cause. In keeping with the wishes of the framers of the American Constitution (1787) the census taken every decade also serves as the basis for political representation among the states as well as the proportional distribution of the budget. The organization, execution, processing and transmission of the census was for a long time the ad-hoc responsibility of each administration, until 1902, when the census became the responsibility of the Census Bureau.⁷

⁶ To process the data of the 2000 Census, see: Farley, Reynolds – Haaga, John (eds.) *The American People: Census 2000*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2005. The processings carried out by the Census Bureau are available on the Internet: <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>.

⁷ The history of American censuses and the circumstances of the establishment of the Census Bureau are detailed in Desrosieres, Alain: *La Politique Des Grands Nombres: Histoire de la Raison Statistique*. Éditions la Découverte. Paris, 1993. 218–257.

In the course of the nation's history the continuing census undertaken 22 times made possible the *reapportionment* of the seats of the House of Representatives in proportion to the state populations. The political significance of the census increased in the course of the last two hundred years. The census is also important in the enforcement of today's stronger civil rights laws, the distribution of Federal funds, as well as in the political *redistricting* between states and a host of economic and socio-political decision-making at the local and national level. We should consider – in agreement with the opinion of Kenneth Prewitt and Thomas Jones, that the census may be regarded as the widest in scope and longest lasting social study project.⁸

3. THE EXECUTION OF THE 2000 CENSUS AND ITS MOST SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS

The 2000 Census sought to quantify the population residing in the United States, including servicemen abroad, employees of the U.S. Government overseas as well as foreign nationals and their relatives who reside in the country either as workers or students. The census tried to quantify all residents of the United States on April 1, 2000 (Census Day) in their „usual residence”.⁹

Just as in earlier census, the Census Bureau has been doing preparation work before the census including planning and testing for the operations to be undertaken.¹⁰ The greatest challenge for the agency was to estimate the population of the country as accurately as possible. Among the reasons that spurred the agency to be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible was the fact that they received strong criticism from politicians and from the public that in recent censuses there were shortcomings on data compilations and in the execution of the census. Repeated censuses indicated that there was a systematic undercount (differential undercount) that affected differently the

⁸ Prewitt, Kenneth-Thomas, A. Jones: *Census 2000: An Overview*, ICPSR Bulletin 2001, 21 (3, Sprong): 1–7.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau: *Plans and Rules for Taking the Census*. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. 1999 (<http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/plnsruls.html>, downloaded on June 3, 2007).

¹⁰ For details for the preparation and execution of the 2000 Census see: Prewitt-Jones in.: U.S. Census Bureau: *Census 2000 Operational Plan*, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2000.

various segments of the population. There were certain groups in the population such as the homeless, the itinerants, the travelers, the renters, children and minorities for whom the distribution of the census survey form presented difficulties. Statistical data showed that this undercount in 1980 was four times greater among African-Americans than those whites and nine times higher among urbanites than in the population at large.¹¹ As a result of the socio-political changes in the second half of the 20th century, such as civil rights laws, social justice and implementation of affirmative action, the issue of differential undercount came to the fore of public discussions. It became apparent that if the undercount becomes higher among certain segments of society – such as ethnic or racial minorities, the homeless, the urban poor, may well result in significant errors in the formulation of policies guided by those statistical data. And in the course of the 20th century the significance of this demographic data grew¹² in importance because of the implementation of human rights laws that secured state funding for assistance programs as well as provided for demarcation of new or revised electoral districts, to name the most salient government responsibilities. According to New York City officials because of the differential undercount of 1980, the city of New York lost one seat in the House of Representatives and 50 million dollars.¹³ To remedy this problem the Census Bureau introduced the dual system estimation. This consisted essentially, in carrying out a parallel evaluation or estimation to the national census, taking a national sample for evaluation, called accuracy and coverage evaluation, and comparing the results of both estimates to assess the size of the undercount, correct the errors and come up with a new and more reliable demographic profile.¹⁴

¹¹ Maier, Mark H.: *The Data Game. Controversies in Social Science Statistics*. M. E. Sharpe Inc., New York, 1991. 11.

¹² Prewitt, Kenneth: The US Decennial Census: Political Questions, Scientific Answers. *Population and development review* 2000. 26(1). p. 1–16.

¹³ The discussion related to the issue of undercount is found in: Anderson, Margo J. – Fienberg, Stephen E.: Who Counts? The Politics of Censustaking, *Society* 1997, (37) 3. p.19–26.

¹⁴ For pros and cons about the incomplete recordings, see: Anderson, Margo J.: *Who Counts? The Politics of Census-Taking in Contemporary America*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1999.; illetve Skerry, Peter.: *Counting on the Census? Race, Group Identity, and the Evasion of the Politics*. The Brookings Institution., Washington D. C. 2000.

The next challenge of the census was the design of the survey form, including the text and form of the questionnaire, and their order. Prior to the census, two demographic tests were carried out. The *National Content Survey* of 1996, sought to find out the effect of the newly worded and designed survey questionnaires. Similarly, the same year's *Race and Ethnic Targeted Test*, sought to test possible modifications to the questions related to race and ethnicity.¹⁵ Besides these two significant test studies, numerous small scale focus group studies were carried out to gather information related to the wording and design of the survey's questionnaire.

The actual Census 2000 was performed in a number of steps. As in earlier censuses the technical staff of the Census Bureau designed two different questionnaires: a short and a long one that in the course of the month of March was mailed to all households.¹⁶ The short form questionnaire sought information on seven topics and was successfully delivered to about 83% of the households. After reception of the survey questionnaire it is the responsibility of the heads of household to provide information on the ownership of the residence and provide the following information for each member of the household: name, sex, age, relationship to the head of household, Hispanic origin, racial category and legal status within the household (*table 5.1*). The questions of the short form questionnaire were also called „100 per cent data” because the information was collected from all individuals. Of the total households, 17% received the long form questionnaire from the Census Bureau where the gathered information went beyond the data gathering of the short form and asked for the social, economic and financial profiles as well as additional information about the physical aspects of the place of residence. These questions are known as „sample questions” since it was sent to every sixth household.

Following up on the delivery of the survey questionnaire a multi-faceted marketing program was launched to induce the population to send in the responses to the questionnaire either by mail, telephone or internet. The primary objective was to minimize as much as possible

¹⁵ For a summary of the research results in the 1966 *Race and Ethnic Targeted Test* see: Hirschman, Charles – Alba, Richard –Farley, Reynolds: The Meaning and Measurement Of Race in the U.S. Census: Glimpses Into Future, *Demography* 2000, 37 (3), P. 381–93.

¹⁶ Since 1960 in the United States, the census is done voluntarily by the head of the household filling out the questionnaire sent to the household by the postal service.

the number of non-respondents, since the non-responsive households had to be followed up by a visit. Thanks to the mentioned campaign the response of the population in 2000 was 67%, that is, about two thirds of the households answered the survey. Those not responding until the end of April were sent a follow up form (*Nonresponse Follow-up*) until the end of June.

The second largest part of the Census is the *Quality Counts Program* that seeks to revisit 10% of the households as a quality control exercise. It has two main components: the *Coverage Improvement Follow-up*, that sought to insure completeness of the responses and the *Coverage Edit Follow-up* that tried to improve the quality of the responses. In the first instance the surveyors sought out households where there was response to the questionnaires, while in the second, the aim was to identify households with multiple residents, that is, more than six, and those households that needed follow up on the response provided.

According to the 2000 Census, the population of the United States as of December 28 was 281 421 906 individuals. This represents an increase of 32,7 million over the population of 1990, that is an increase of 13,2%. In an estimate of the Census Bureau taken before the Census the number of residents exceeded by 6.9 million the estimate, that is, an increase in 2.5%, over the projected estimate announced on April 1 of the earlier year.¹⁷

4. ETHNIC AND RACIAL STATISTICS

It would be helpful to better understand the questions related to ethnicity and race if we present first a historical perspective the efforts to include ethnic and racial groups in the national census, and we also mention briefly the changes introduced in the last few decades. We would like to underscore two essential points. First of all, that in current classification practices certain physical characteristics, such as skin color, and ethnic groupings or segmentation are treated separately. And we can find the explanation for this in the uniquely American narrative of race relations. On the other hand, in the last decades very significant advances have been made in the area of ethnic and racial identification from objective ques-

¹⁷ Farley, Reynolds – Haaga, John (eds.) *The American People: Census 2000*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2005.

tions (mother tongue, place of birth) made by the census taker towards a more subjective and self-defining determination.

4.1. *The separation of race and ethnicity*

American history is often told as the story of the waves of immigrants that practically since the country's inception has taken place. It is no coincidence therefore that since its beginnings government of the United States had to deal the identification of immigrants in the official documents. Given the presence of native residents, the importation of black people from Africa and the influx of European groups arriving to the country meant that, from the beginning, the United States was a multiracial and ethnically diverse society.

In the censuses of the colonial period – exception made of the 1765 census of Massachusetts¹⁸ – the population was classified according to race: the European immigrants were differentiated from the blacks and the Indians. But no ethnic distinction was made among whites: „if you were white, your place of origin did not matter, nor your religious belief or affiliation” – says the American historian Stephan Thernstrom.¹⁹ This practice of classifying individuals of the population based primarily on race has been followed by census takers every decade from 1790 to our days.

The classification of ethnic groups came about the second half of the 19th century, in parallel fashion due to the increase of immigrants coming in and also because of the greater diversity of the immigrant groups. In the first half of the century and in the last decades, the number of European immigrants grew exponentially – the earlier mainly protestant denominations immigrants were overtaken by a majority of Roman Catholic and other religious affiliated groups (Irish and German Catholics, later Italians, Jew and immigrants originating from Eastern and Southern Europe). These new immigrants were received with fear and

¹⁸ The census at that time categorized the population as whites, Indians, blacks and mulattos as well as „French neutrals” (most likely the Acadian French of northern Maine) were also included.

¹⁹ Thernstrom, Stephan: *American Ethnic Statistics*. In: Horowitz, D. L. – Noiriell, G. (eds.) *Immigrants in Two Democracies: French and American Experience*.; New York University Press, New York and London, 1992. p. 83.

animosity by the already settled a few generations ago, citing differences in language and culture and consistently questioned their capacity for assimilation. In order to identify and differentiate the new groups of immigrants the census required from 1850 the identification of the place of birth, and from 1870 there the identification of the place of birth of the immigrant parents was added, information helpful to determine the origin of the immigrants up to two generations.²⁰ We can say that until the 1980 Census when the term „ancestry” was introduced to denote ethnic origin, there was no attempt to categorize by ethnic groups the white immigrants beyond the second generation of their arrival.²¹ For a long time it was the defining assumption that beyond the second generation, the groups that comprise the white population mix among themselves so much, becoming so assimilated that, in their case, it becomes meaningless to try to sort out the third and succeeding generations.

This assumption existed only in case of the population of European origin and did not include, for instance, oriental immigrants. The Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other Asian groups were considered racial categories, and were treated accordingly as permanent categories. In was the view of the census takers, that race categories remained the same in later generations, even if the place of birth of individuals and their parents were not. As a result, the differences had to be reflected in the way that race was categorized.²²

In this area, the civil rights movement of the 1960–1970-ies period brought significant changes that fundamentally transformed the political context and the aims of race categories. The Federal *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 and 1968 and the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965, with later addendums sought to eliminate mechanisms of discrimination in the categorization and treatment of minority groups including, the right to vote, hous-

²⁰ The question about the individual's birth place is currently among the census questions. The question about the birthplace of the individual's parents was included in the questionnaire continuously from 1870 to 1970.

²¹ To record more accurately the ethnic category (two generations) starting in 1910 the question of „mother tongue” was introduced, in its retrospective mode. Stated in different ways, the question tried to elicit the language of childhood or the language of the household. For background on the mother tongue of immigrants and its application in the American census, see: Stevens, Gillian.; A Century of U.S. Censuses and the Language Characteristics of Immigrants, *Demography* 1999, p. 389–390.

²² Thernstrom op. cit.90.

ing discrimination, job discrimination and exclusion from institutional life. Current public policy measures are based on the notion that certain groups that have suffered discrimination in the past (blacks, Native Americans, Asians and later Hispanics) and these groups require special treatment in the areas of education, job placement and other areas of social interaction.²³

To validate this policy the *Office of Management and Budget* (OMB) established official guidelines for the gathering of information for ethnic and race categories.²⁴ The latest Federal guidelines were issued in 1997 directing the use of 5 broad categories to be used in Federal offices: „American Indian or Native Alaskan”, „Asiatic”, „Black or Afro-American”, „Hispanic or Latin”, „Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” and „White”. In conformity to the regulations Federal administrators may collect more additional and detailed information on the ethnicity and race of the population, but the data aggregation has to keep the categories specified in the guidelines.

For the white population born in the United States there are no ethnic identity guidelines. The use of ethnic categories are governed by the already mentioned affirmative action, although here we cannot really talk about group differentiation within the population of European origin, exception made of the small group of the original population of Spain that would go under the category of „Hispanic”. Sociological studies indicate that within the used ethnic categories, whites are free to determine their own ethnic identity, and the importance they assign to that emphasis. The best evidence for this is that many of the individuals with mixed ethnic backgrounds, highlight multiple identity,

²³ For a critique of the racial categories see among others: Thernstrom, Stephan: *The Demography of Racial and Ethnic Groups*. In: Thernstrom, Abigail M. – Thernstrom, Stephan (eds.) *Beyond the Color Line: New Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*. Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 2002. 13–36. Hirschman, Charles: *The Origins and Demise of the Concept of Race*. *Population and development review* 2004. 30(3). p. 385–415.

²⁴ OMB: *Statistical Policy Directive 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting*. Office of Management and Budget, 1977. OMB: *Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity*. Office of Management and Budget, 1997.

others emphasize a single identity and yet others, do not give any importance to their ethnic background.²⁵

4.2. The basis for categorization: self-enumeration – self-identification

The racial and ethnic categorization in the last censuses were based on self-enumeration and self-identification²⁶. This method is relatively recent, since it was introduced in the 1960 Census. Self-enumeration was introduced primarily as a cost saving measure, because it meant a less costly and less labor intensive operation on part of the census enumerators. It also had a technological advantage, since with the use of computers reading the data from the turnaround forms was done quickly. The other significant reason for the introduction of self-enumeration was that researchers gave greater significance to the objective indicators than to the subjective self-identification. Among the former category was language as an ethnicity marker. But this turned out to be a poor ethnicity marker since the vast majority of Americans use English. The other ethnicity marker, the birthplace of the parents also became questionable, when we consider that by the seventies more than half of the American population was at or beyond third-generation of the immigrant ancestors.

The introduction of self-enumeration was also spurred by the fact that self-identification is in harmony with American individualism. According to Peter Skerry the opposition of government agencies in the enumeration of the American population may be found in the historical experience that individualistic values could not hold valid in the case of racial minorities (slavery, Jim Crow, the wartime internment of citizens of Japanese origin). As a result, a certain historical gap exists between values held and practice, and the self-identification of race and ethnicity came to the fore as a virtual regime principle.²⁷

²⁵ Alba, Richard D.: *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990. Waters, Mary C.: *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*. University of California Press. Berkeley 1990.

²⁶ The section below is largely based on the line of thought of Skerry, Peter: *Counting on the Census? Race, Group Identity, and the Evasion of the Politics*. The Brookings Institution., Washington D. C. 2000. p. 43–79.

²⁷ Skerry *op. cit.*47.

The transition from identification by enumerators to self-identification according to Matthew Snipp has moved the concept of race from determination of essentially physical characteristics towards the notion that self-identification may have quite a wide interpretation.²⁸ In the opinion of Peter Skerry self-identification carries with it a duality that manifests itself in response to the question: „which self” plays the defining role in the self-identification process. Skerry says that there are two possibilities: in one case, the social self draws the individual to identify with a given group or groups, and in the other case, the sense of individual autonomy, is driven by individual desire to reach the self-actualizing self.²⁹ Skerry thinks that since about 30 years ago when the census transitioned to self-identification of racial and ethnic groups, the Americans perception of self became increasingly psychologized. It has become the norm that the individual is the sole arbiter in choosing to belong to a group or groups. And most Americans according to Skerry interpret group ties not so much as social relationships as psychological identification with group goals and symbols. Ethnicity has shifted from a social concept of belonging to given groups to a psychological concept of identity. According to Srephan Thernstrom ethnicity in the census has become „matter of choice” a state of mind, rather than a matter for genealogists to decide: „it does not matter, if you do not think I look Chinese. I feel Chinese, then, I am Chinese.”³⁰

The two conceptualizations of ethnicity and race described above are not mutually exclusive, but neither are they identical. A key point, emphasized by Peter Skerry, is that census experts assert either or both conceptualizations to suit their purposes, without acknowledging that an important shift has taken place. However, to the degree that these categories are becoming more subjective and psychological, they are more imprecise and fleeting. In other words – says Peter Skerry – „as the census moves towards racial and ethnic *identities*, its task becomes more difficult.”³¹

²⁸ Snipp, Matthew C.: Racial Measurement in the American Census: Past Practices and Implications for the Future. *Annual review of sociology* 2003. 29. p. 570.

²⁹ Skerry *op. cit.* 48.

³⁰ Thernstrom 1992. p. 9.

³¹ Skerry *op. cit.* 48–49.

5. THE QUESTIONS RELATED TO ETHNICITY AND RACE IN THE 2000 CENSUS

In the 2000 Census we find five questions that directly or indirectly relate to ethnicity or race: 1) race; 2) Hispanic origin; and 3) independently of the direct question of ethnic origin 4) birth place of the respondent, as well as 5) questions related to the language spoken at home that indirectly may relate to ethnic origin.

During the census all individuals asked the question about race and Hispanic origin, but the questions regarding ethnic origin, household language and place of birth are asked only to those individuals sampled in the census.

5.1. Direct questions: race, Hispanic ancestry and origin or Ethnic origin (ancestry)

In reality, the census captured data more comprehensively and in greater detail than the OMB guidelines required. The directly addressed questions of the 2000 Census were: race, Hispanic origin, or ethnic origin or ancestry (*Table 5.1*)

The respondents had to reply to specific, that is, not open-ended questions. The sequence of the possible responses was: white; black; African-American or Negro; American Indian or Alaskan Native (blank space field for tribal designation); Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, other Asian (blank space); Native Hawaiian, Guam or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander (blank space) and other race (blank space). While earlier censuses instructed the respondent to choose a single response to the ethnic identity question, the 2000 census allowed to respond to the race question as „one” or „multiracial” response.

Since 1970 the short form of the census questionnaire includes a question regarding Spanish or Hispanic ancestry. The main cause in introducing the question to the census was that the majority of Spanish-speaking immigrants, particularly newcomers were uncertain about the race related responses, since Latin-American culture was not altogether receptive to changing American race relations. Hispanic political leaders recognized early on that the recognition by OMB and the separate census category may represent an advantage in their petitions, given the

large size of the group.³² The question of Hispanic origin was placed in the 2000 Census before the choice of race categories. These categories included: no (Not Spanish/Hispanic/Latin), or, yes (Mexico), yes (Puerto Rico), yes (Cuba), yes (other Spanish/Hispanic). The last choice included a blank space for the appropriate response. (*Figure 1*)

From our perspective, the subject matter that deserves most attention is the long form direct question on ethnic origin or ancestry that was included in the census in 1980.³³ Since the question of place of birth did not allow the differentiation and identification of groups from multiethnic societies (e.g. Russia and Austria-Hungary) at the third and later generations, the staff of the Census Bureau decided to introduce to include in the census in 1980 the question about „ancestry”.

At each of the subsequent three censuses the wording of the question was modified. In 1980, the question was: „What is this person’s ancestry?” In 1990 the question was extended to: „What is the person’s ancestry or ethnicity?” In 2000 the question was modified again: „What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?” The question was open-ended because the respondent could choose any response. The questionnaire provided additional information to assist respondents in providing an answer, including the option to select one or more ethnic groups, but excluded indication of religious affiliation.

The question of „ancestry or ethnic origin” tries to capture that element of ethnicity that is related, to ancestors, earlier generations and common family trees. It is a conceptually wide term, since it may include immigration groups as well as country of origin. Those who formulated the question evidently presumed that respondents would be at least somewhat knowledgeable of their family history. We see in the questionnaire the question aimed to inform the ethnic origin of the respondent, and, in addition, instructions on the choice of answers

³² Choldin, Harvey M.: Statistics and Politics: The “Hispanic Issue” in the 1980 Census. *Demography* 1986. 23(3). p. 403–18.

³³ For the processing of ancestry data, see Farley, Reynolds: The New Census Questions about Ancestry: What Did It Tell Us? *Demography* 1991. 28(3):411–29. Lieberman, Stanley – Waters, Mary C.: *From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1988. Lieberman, Stanley – Waters, Mary C.: The Ethnic Responses of Whites: What Causes Their Instability and Inconsistency? *SOCIAL FORCES* 1993. 72(2):421–50. References to Hungarian ethnicity are discussed in detail by Fejős 1988. p. 200–210.; Fejős 2002. p. 146–147.

suggesting to indicate the group with which the respondent „identifies” with. The question therefore mixes the concept of ancestry or origin with that of identity.

The instructions to the 2000 census emphasize that the ethnic origin or ancestry question does not seek to measure the degree of identification with a given group or groups. The responses may imply a deep connection with an ethnic community or merely the memory of generations of ancestors.

The researchers specializing on ethnicity underscored the importance of differentiating between ancestry and ethnic identity. According to the American sociologist Richard Alba in the data available for sociologists the mixing of the concepts of ancestry and ethnic identity are the source of most errors in the evaluation of ethnicity.³⁴

Richard Alba observed that to understand ethnicity in the United States it is very important to differentiate between self-identity and objective knowledge of the family past (ascendants, ancestry). The two concepts are certainly related, since to have an identity other than American implies certain knowledge about ancestry, but that knowledge does not necessarily imply ethnic self-identification. In a parallel way, the increasing number of individuals with mixed ancestry increases the complexity of the question. It is conceivable that a given individual is familiar with his ancestry, but that the elapsed time factor may make the ethnicity component irrelevant to him or her. The individual with multiple ethnic ascendants may think of a multiethnic background. Finally, it also may occur that the individual, for various reasons, has little or unreliable information about his or her ancestry, and will state, as far as his or her generational memory goes, American ethnicity.

Contrary to ancestry, identity involves the image we have of ourselves. According to Alba, identity does not only refers to the statement „my great-grandparents came from Poland” but rather by certain way of expression saying that „I am Polish”, although adds Alba, in certain circumstances stating that his or her ancestors came from Poland could be also understood as an expression of identity.³⁵

³⁴ Alba, Richard D.: *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990. p. 39.

³⁵ Alba *op. cit.*38.

5.2. *Indirect Questions: place of birth and language at spoken at home.*

The 2000 Census presented questions related to ethnicity in an indirect fashion that is, asking for the place of birth and language spoken at home. The respondent had to specify in the „place of birth” question the actual place of birth – either the American state or foreign country – conforming political demarcations.

After the 1980 Census the questions related to the use of language remained in their wording and contents nearly the same. Unlike past Censuses, the post 1980 Censuses primarily emphasized the level of knowledge of English, essentially focusing on the current use of language.³⁶ The Census of 1980, followed by the 1990 and 2000, had their questions in closely related wordings³⁷: „Does this person speak a language other than English at home?” This question then led to other two language related questions that seek to identify the language and the level of knowledge of the English language. These questions were primarily useful to determine the geographic area where there may be a large population with poor English language skills, and also to evaluate the need of services such as bilingual education and perhaps other services.

In the censuses of 1980, 1990 and 2000 the question regarding knowledge of English was asked from Native Americans as well as foreign-born Americans. The usefulness of the responses was significantly curtailed by the fact that the answers were mandatory only to those who spoke at home a language other than English.

The data related to the use of language only takes into account the language spoken at home. It excludes information on those who also speak English at home, even if their native language may be different (for instance, in ethnically mixed marriages).

³⁶ A good historical review of the language related data in the censuses is in Stevens, Gillian.: *A Century of U. S. Censuses and the Language Characteristics of Immigrants. Demography* 1999. 36(3). p.387–397.

³⁷ The survey questionnaires differed only slightly in the questions and responses. In 1980 the English language appeared underscored, which was not the case in 1990. In 1990 the sentence „speaks only English” was dropped – earlier this response could be given to the second question (Does this person speak a language other than English at home?) provided the answer was negative. In 1980 the response to „what is the language?” included Chinese, Italian and Spanish; in 1990 the languages were Chinese, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese. In 2000, the languages were Korean, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Figure 1. The 2000 Census Survey form with questions related to ancestry and ethnicity

→ **NOTE: Please answer BOTH Questions 5 and 6.**

5. Is this person Spanish/Hispanic/Latino? Mark the "No" box if **not** Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.

No, not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino Yes, Puerto Rican
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano Yes, Cuban
 Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino — *Print group.* ↗

6. What is this person's race? Mark **one or more races** to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

White
 Black, African Am., or Negro
 American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↗

Asian Indian Japanese Native Hawaiian
 Chinese Korean Guamanian or Chamorro
 Filipino Vietnamese Samoan
 Other Asian — *Print race.* ↗ Other Pacific Islander — *Print race.* ↗

Some other race — *Print race.* ↗

10 What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?

(For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am., Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)

6. THE HUNGARIANS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

The identification of the Hungarians living in the United States is determined by questions regarding ancestry, use of language at home and place of birth.³⁸

6.1. Population of Hungarian origin/ancestry

In the 2000 Census 0.5 of the total population, that is 1,398 thousand individuals identified themselves as „Hungarian” or „Hungarian and Other”.³⁹ Of that total 903 thousand individuals indicated Hungarian as primary ancestry and 494 thousand as secondary ancestry. (*Table 1*). The wording of the questions on ancestry, the data changes along the decades may be observed in *Table 2*. The continuously falling tendency should be viewed with strong reservations.

Table 1. Responses to Hungarian origin/ethnic ancestry in the order of category in 2000

<i>Name of Category</i>	<i>Primary Ancestry</i>	<i>Secondary Ancestry</i>	<i>Total</i>
„Hungarian”	903 963	494 028	1 397 991
„Magyar”	699	34	733
Total	904 662	494 062	1 398 724

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Special Tabulation PHC-T43* (http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/ancestry/ancestry_q_by_DAC_2000.xls).

³⁸ For Hungarian ancestry data in the first and second option, and the demographic profile of those speaking Hungarian at home, with a detailed socio-demographic study of Hungarian speakers see Papp, Attila Z. *Beszédből Világ. Elemzések, adatok amerikai magyarokról. [Data and Analysis on Hungarian Americans]*, MKI, Regio, Budapest 2008 demographic appendices p. 459–506.

³⁹ The ancestry/ethnic origin data are sample based, that is, the question is given only to those households in the sample, that is, on average every sixth household. The numbers obtained are then estimates of the values given by the population as a whole. Sampling and non-sample errors are likely to affect the estimated value and be at variance with the actual demography profile. For information on the margins of confidence and sampling and non-sample errors see: U.S. Census Bureau: *Census 2000 Summary File 3*, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2002.

Table 2. The Population of Hungarian Ancestry between 1980 and 2000

1980	1990	2000	Difference 1980–1990		Difference 1990–2000	
			In numbers	%	In numbers	%
1 776 902	1 582 302	1 398 702	-194 600	- 10.9	-183 600	- 11.6

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Special Tabulation PHC-T43*; U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 1990 Special Tabulations CPH-L-149*; U. S. Census Bureau, *Ancestry of the Population by State: 1980 (Supplementary Report PC80-S1-10)*.

The age structure of the population of Hungarian ancestry shows a slightly aging population. (Table 3) 15% is over 65 and the proportion of women is high. There are no fundamental shifts within the age groups. The lack of balance or maturity characterizes the young as well: marriages, leaving the parental household are life turning points that do not affect the stated ancestry. The household types has a high proportion of non-family households (35.4%) The household's 10% is over 65 years of age and the head of household is an aged woman or man.

The level of education may be considered high, since 90% of the population over 25 years has a high school degree or higher level of education. (Table 4)

Table 3. General Demographic Characteristics of the Population of Hungarian Ancestry in the United States in 2000

<i>Demographic characteristics</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In %</i>
Total Population	1 398 702	100.0%
Sex and age		
Male	674 485	48.2%
Female	724 217	51.8%
Under 5 years	66 596	4.8%
Between 9 and 5	75 395	5.4%
Between 10 and 14	81 816	5.8%
Between 15 and 19	79 444	5.7%
Between 20 and 24	73 400	5.2%

<i>Demographic characteristics</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In %</i>
Between 25 and 34	183 649	13.1%
Between 35 and 44	240 782	17.2%
Between 45 and 54	227 949	16.3%
Between 55 and 59	86 365	6.2%
Between 60 and 64	66 535	4.8%
Between 65 and 74	110 355	7.9%
Between 75 and 84	80 498	5.8%
Over 85	25 918	1.9%
Average age (in years)	40.3	
Over 18	1 126 653	80.5%
Male	534 605	38.2%
Female	592 048	42.3%
Over 21	1 080 092	77.2%
Over 62	255 828	18.3%
Over 65	216 771	15.5%
Male	94 925	6.8%
Female	121 846	8.7%
Type of Household		
Households	622 846	100.0%
Family Households (Family)	402 215	64.6%
With own children under 18	172 423	27.7%
Married Couple	335 585	53.9%
With own children under 18	138 720	22.3%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	49 127	7.9%
With own children under 18	25 503	4.1%
Non-Family Households	220 631	35.4%
Householder living alone	180 601	29.0%
Householders over 65	66 581	10.7%
Households with individuals under 18	182 410	29.3%
Households with individuals over 65	211 153	33.9%
Average household	2.37	
Average family	2.94	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau , Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT1, PCT3, PCT4, PCT8, PCT9, PCT10, PCT11, PCT12, PCT14, PCT15, PCT23, PCT26, HCT2, and HCT7.

Table 4. Main Social Characteristics of the Population of Hungarian Ancestry in the United States

<i>Social Characteristics</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT		
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	323 862	100.0%
Nursery school, pre-school	21 506	6.6%
Kindergarten	14 262	4.4%
Elementary (1–8 grades)	128 835	39.8%
High school (9–12 grades)	65 384	20.2%
College or Graduate School	93 875	29.0%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Population 25 and over	1 022 051	100.0%
Less than 9th grade	27 672	2.7%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	71 888	7.0%
High School graduate (includes equivalency)	266 038	26.0%
Some college, no degree	225 171	22.0%
Associate degree	71 293	7.0%
Bachelors degree	211 193	20.7%
Graduate or Professional degree	148 796	14.6%
High School graduate or higher in percentage	90.3	
Bachelor degree in percentage	35.2	
MARITAL STATUS		
Population 15 years and over	1 174 895	100.0%
Never married	283 184	24.1%
Married	674 834	57.4%
Single household	15 442	1.3%
Widowed	83 598	7.1%
Female	67 755	5.8%
Divorced	117 837	10.0%
Female	70 831	6.0%
CAREGIVER GRANDPARENTS		
Grand parent with grandchild under 18	15 604	100.0%
Responsible for the grandchild	5 483	35.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT1, PCT3, PCT4, PCT8, PCT9, PCT10, PCT11, PCT12, PCT14, PCT15, PCT23, PCT26, HCT2, and HCT7.

92 percent of the individuals of Hungarian origin or ancestry were born in the United States and are descendants of second, third or higher generations. (Table 5)

Of the 110 thousand foreign born more than 50 percent immigrated to the United States before 1965 (Table 6). After 1965 immigration patterns resemble light waves: in the seventies we note a decrease and in the eighties and nineties the number of immigrants increases. In the late nineties we find the highest numbers (between 1995 and 2000 the number of immigrants is 11 900 while between 1990 and 1994 is 7442) If we look at the sex of the immigrants we see a slight difference between men and women, particularly in the last decade of the 20th century, were women top men by almost 1%.

Table 5. Hungarian origin/ancestry, place of birth, citizenship and year of entry in 2000

Place of Birth, Citizenship and Year of Entry	In numbers	Percentage
Total population	1 398 702	100.0 %
Born in the United States	1 288 425	92.1 %
Foreign born	110 277	7.9 %
Naturalized citizen	81 658	74.0 %
Not a citizen	28 619	26.0 %
Entered between 1990 and March 2000	19 342	17.5 %
Naturalized citizen	3 004	15.5 %
Not a citizen	16 338	84.5 %
Entered between 1980 and 1989	15 942	14.5 %
Naturalized citizen	10 148	63.7 %
Not a citizen	5 794	36.3 %
Entered before 1980	74 993	68.0 %
Naturalized citizen	68 506	91.3 %
Not a citizen	6 487	8.7 %

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 4

Table 6. Population of Hungarian ancestry by Sex and Year of Entry in 2000

<i>Sex and Year of Entry</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In percentage</i>
Total	110 277	100.0%
Men:	54 029	48.9 %
Between 1995 and March 2000	5 472	4.9 %
Between 1990 and 1994	3 340	3.0 %
Between 1985 and 1989	4 510	4.0 %
Between 1980 and 1984	3 640	3.3 %
Between 1975 and 1979	2 621	2.3 %
Between 1970 and 1974	3 046	2.7 %
Between 1965 and 1969	3 507	3.1 %
Before 1965	27 893	25.2 %
Women:	56 248	51.0 %
Between 1995 and March 2000	6 428	5.8 %
Between 1990 and 1994	4 102	3.7 %
Between 1985 and 1989	4 599	4.1 %
Between 1980 and 1984	3 193	2.9 %
Between 1975 and 1979	2 324	2.1 %
Between 1970 and 1974	3 062	2.7 %
Between 1965 and 1969	4 114	3.7 %
Before 1965	28 426	25.7 %

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 4

Table 7 shows the immigration pattern of the foreign born population of Hungarian ancestry classified by region. The table shows the preponderance of the European born immigrants, that is 90.4% or 99,797 as their total number.

88.3 percent of the Hungarian ancestry population speak only English at home (*Table 8 and Table 9*). Their number differs little from the population born in the United States so that we may assume that there is an overlap among the two categories of the population. If our assumption is correct, we see at work a very important tendency regarding use of language. In parallel with the phenomenon of the sequential timing of generations arriving to the country, there is also the reality of lan-

guage adaptation to the language of the dominant culture. Based on this we may assume a generational gap in the use of language between the older and younger generation. We find those speaking Hungarian at home in the „any other language” category. They constitute 7.7 percent and 68.8 percent of them „speak English very well”.

Table 7. Foreign born population of Hungarian ancestry by region of origin and year of entry

Region of Birth and Year of Entry	In numbers	In percentage
Europe	99 797	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	16 584	16.6 %
Between 1980 and 1989	14 292	14.3 %
Before 1980	68 921	69.1 %
Asia	1 414	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	289	20.4 %
Between 1980 and 1989	258	18.2 %
Before 1980	867	61.3 %
Africa	220	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	34	15.5 %
Between 1980 and 1989	41	18.6 %
Before 1980	145	65.9 %
Oceania	372	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	143	38.4 %
Between 1980 and 1989	72	19.4 %
Before 1980	157	42.2 %
Latin America	2 733	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	592	21.7 %
Between 1980 and 1989	530	19.4 %
Before 1980	1 611	58.9 %
North America	5 741	100.0 %
Between 1990 and March 2000	1 700	29.6 %
Between 1980 and 1989	749	13.0 %
Before 1980	3 292	57.3 %

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Summary File 4

Table 8. Population of Hungarian ancestry over 5 years and language spoken at home in 2000

	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In percentage</i>
Population over 5 years	1 332 106	100.0%
Speaks English only	1 175 743	88.3%
Speaks a language other than English	156 363	11.7%
Spanish	17 214	100.0%
Speaks English very well	13 062	75.9%
Speaks English well	2 178	12.7%
Does not speak English well	1 895	11.0%
Does not speak English	79	0.5%
Other Indo-European languages	35 050	100.0%
Speaks English very well	25 185	71.9%
Speaks English well	6 112	17.4%
Does not speak English well	3 378	9.6%
Does not speak English	375	1.1%
Asian and Pacific Ocean languages	1 391	100.0%
Speaks English very well	1 203	86.5%
Speaks English well	96	6.9%
Does not speak English well	90	6.5%
Does not speak English	2	0.1%
Any other language	102 708	100.0%
Speaks English very well	70 657	68.8%
Speaks English well	23 793	23.2%
Does not speak English well	7 373	7.2%
Does not speak English	889	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT38, PCT40, PCT41, PCT42.*

Table 9. Population of Hungarian ancestry and Ability to Speak English in 2000

<i>Ability to Speak English</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In percentage</i>
Population over 5 years	1 332 106	100.0%
Speaks a language other than English	156 363	11.7%
Between 5 and 7 years of age	15 882	1.2%
Between 18 and 64 years of age	95 370	7.2%

<i>Ability to Speak English</i>	<i>In numbers</i>	<i>In percentage</i>
Over 65 years of age	45 111	3.4%
Speaks English less than very well	46 256	3.5%
Between 5 and 7 years of age	4 155	0.3%
Between 18 and 64 years of age	24 856	1.9%
Over 65 years of age	17 245	1.3%
<i>Ability to speak English at home</i>		
Linguistically isolated households*	14 723	
<i>Population over 5 years</i>	<i>1 308 880</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
In linguistically isolated households	21 927	1.7%
Between 5 and 7 years of age	1 060	0.1%
Between 18 and 64 years of age	9 849	0.8%
Over 65 years of age	11 018	0.8%

* Linguistically isolated households are those homes where there are no residents older than 14, who 1) speak English only, or 2) speaks a language other than English, and speaks English very well. In other words, the households where the residents are over 14, find it difficult to communicate in English.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Summary File 4, Matrices PCT38, PCT40, PCT41, PCT42.*

6.2. Population born in Hungary

Among the population of Hungarian ancestry, those born in Hungary (92 thousand) are well below the total Hungarian ancestry population, and closely approach the Hungarian ancestry population born in Europe (99,797). This population has an aging profile since the average age is over 61; 42 percent is over 62 (Table 10). Most likely the refugees of 1956 are the most significant contingent within the age of 60 and 84; this age group constitutes 43 percent of the total population.

Of the total households 21 percent are single households of men or women, who are 65 or older. The married couple families are also high (53.2%) among the total households. Educational attainment is also high (Table 11). The population's 77% has a high school degree or higher education.

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of the Hungarian-born population of the United States in 2000

<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	<i>In Numbers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Total Population</i>	92 015	100.0%
Sex and age		
Male	45 060	48.9%
Female	46 955	51.0%
Below 5 years old	340	0.3%
Between 5 and 9 years old	550	0.6%
Between 10 and 14 years old	685	0.7%
Between 15 and 19 years old	1 230	1.3%
Between 20 and 24 years old	2 705	2.9%
Between 25 and 34 years old	7 410	8.0%
Between 35 and 44 years old	7 340	7.9%
Between 45 and 54 years old	15 635	16.9%
Between 55 and 59 years old	8 190	8.9%
Between 60 and 64 years old	10 625	11.5%
Between 65 and 74 years old	17 910	19.4%
Between 75 and 84 years old	12 040	13.0%
85 and over	7 355	7.9%
Average age	61.1	
Over 18 years old	89 865	97.6%
Men	43 865	47.6%
Women	45 995	49.9%
Over 21 years old	88 940	96.6%
Over 62 years old	44 160	47.9%
Over 65 years old	37 310	40.5%
Men	16 630	18.0%
Women	20 680	22.4%
Households by type		
Total Households	53 595	100.0%
Family Households (Families)	33 145	61.8%
With own children under 18	7 620	14.2%
Married couple family	28 560	53.2%
With own children under 18	6 405	11.9%

Demographic Characteristics	In Numbers	Percentage
Female householder, no husband present	3 230	6.0%
With own children under 18	805	1.5%
Non-family households	20 450	38.1%
Householder living alone	18 190	33.9%
Householder 65 years or over	11 275	21.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159)

Table 11. Main Social Characteristics of the Population of Hungarian Ancestry born in the United States

Social Characteristics	In Numbers	Percentages
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT		
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school	6 915	100.0%
Nursery school, pre-school	160	2.3%
Kindergarten	125	1.8%
Elementary (1–8 grades)	975	14.1%
High school (9–12 grades)	1 235	17.8%
College or Graduate School	4 420	63.9%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Population 25 and over	86 510	100.0%
Less than 9th grade	9 555	11.0%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	10 280	11.8%
High School graduate (includes equivalency)	20 675	23.9%
Some college, no degree	15 455	17.8%
Associate degree	4 555	5.2%
Bachelors degree	11 630	13.4%
Graduate or Professional degree	14 355	16.5%
High School graduate or higher in percentage	77.0	
Bachelor degree in percentage	30.0	
MARITAL STATUS		
Population 15 years and over	90 440	100.0%
Never married	9 610	10.6%
Married	55 680	61.5%

<i>Social Characteristics</i>	<i>In Numbers</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Single household	1 175	1.3%
Widowed	14 360	15.8%
Female	11 720	12.9%
Divorced	9 620	10.6%
Female	5 105	5.6%
CAREGIVER GRANDPARENTS		
Grandparent with grandchild under 18	1 885	100.0%
Grandparent responsible for grandchild	490	25.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159)

The demographic profile corresponds to the detailed data shown in the immigration periods. *Table 12* shows that the immigrants arriving before 1980 exceeds 70 percent of the total. 23.5 percent of the Hungarian born population are not U.S. citizens; between 1990 and 2000; 50 percent of them immigrated to the United States. 10 percent arrived to the United States before 1990 and they do not have currently U.S. citizenship..

In the Hungarian born population the details of language spoken at home and ability to speak English indicates the prevalence of the use of the language other than English (75.8%). Nearly half of this population claims to speak English „less than very well”. Going back to the language gap or fault line mentioned earlier, it would be reasonable to conclude that such a gap takes place between the first and second generation. If we assume that keeping the language bears relation with continuity or with a renewed manifestation of ethnic identity, then the language gap and the process of assimilation may have a connection. According to the American researcher Gillian Stevens the language boundaries, the language gap or fault lines run counter to the theory that the descendants of immigrant groups are homogenous entities. The language boundaries are likely to generate a level of language and social diversity that may create internal conflicts with, for example, maintaining certain institutions, such a bilingual schools.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Stevens, Gillian: Nativity, Intermarriage, and Mother-Tongue Shift. *AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW* 1985. 82.

Table 12. Hungarian-born Population by Citizenship and Period of entry in 2000

U.S. Citizenship and Period of U.S. Entry	In Number	Percentage
Total Population	92 015	100.0%
Naturalized U.S. Citizen	70 320	76.4%
Entered 1990 to 2000	2 075	2.2%
Entered 1980 to 1989	7 000	7.6%
Entered before 1980	61 245	66.5%
Not a U.S. Citizen	21 700	23.5%
Entered 1990 to 2000	11 970	13.0%
Entered 1980 to 1989	4 225	4.5%
Entered before 1980	5 500	5.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159)

Table 13. Hungarian-born Population by Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English

Language Spoken at Home and ability to Speak English	In Numbers	Percentage
Population 5 years and over	91 680	100.0 %
English only	22 165	24.1 %
Language other than English	69 515	75.8 %
Speak English less than very well	29 135	31.7 %
Spanish	735	0.8 %
Speak English less than very well	335	0.3 %
Other Indo-European languages	9 300	10.1 %
Speak English less than very well	3 880	4.2 %
Asian and other Pacific Island languages	100	0.1 %
Speak English less than very well	40	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Tabulations (STP-159)

6.3. Population of Hungarian Also Spoken at Home (5 years and over)⁴¹

We have less information from the census data of the population where individuals speak Hungarian at home, but we do have information regarding this group from other sources.⁴² According to the data of *Table 14*, the number of individuals who speak Hungarian at home is 117 thousand; this number represents a decrease of nearly 40 percent since 1980, which reinforces our assumptions regarding the generational gap or fault line in the use of the mother tongue.

Table 14. Population of Hungarians who Speak Hungarian at Home (5 years and over) between 1980 and 2000

1980	1990	2000	Difference 1980–1990		Difference 1990–2000	
			Numbers	%	Numbers	%
178 995	147 902	117 975	- 31 090	- 17.3	- 29 929	- 20.2

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Special Tabulation 224*; Fejős 1988: 192.

Based on estimates derived from the IPUMS database 111,320 individuals speak Hungarian at home and of this total nearly half was born in Hungary (49.6%), 7.1% in Romania, 6.4% in Ohio and 5% in New Jersey. If we examine those who speak Hungarian at home and those whose ancestry is Hungarian we can find individuals who were not of Hungarian origin, yet they spoke Hungarian at home. (See the case of countries of origin: Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, (and former Czechoslovakia,) and the former Soviet Union. – *Table 15*). We assume that those are mixed marriages originated in Central Europe, where one spouse was not Hungarian, but still spoke Hungarian.

⁴¹ This section of the chapter was co-authored with Attila Papp Z..

⁴² We obtained data used in the subsection of this chapter, such as the 5 percent sample from the 2000 Census, from a IPUMS (*Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*) project, organization located next to the Minnesota Population Center. For other demographic data, see Papp *op. cit.* 459–506.

Table 15. Population of Hungarian Ancestry and Country of Birth in Central Europe

Place of Birth	Total	Hungarian Ancestry			Hungarian speakers at home
		Option 1	Option 2	Total	
Hungary	88 820	73 440	640	74 080	55 260
Romania	126 420	6 900	620	7 520 ^a	7 940
Czechoslovakia	82 620	1 940	400	2 340 ^b	2 980
Yugoslavia	220 840	1 700	360	2 060 ^c	1 220
Soviet Union	758 600	380	20	400 ^d	700
(Russia)	68 340	1 340	660	2 000	580

^a Presumably Hungarians from Transylvania

^b Presumably Hungarians from Southern Slovakia

^c Presumably Hungarians from Voivodina

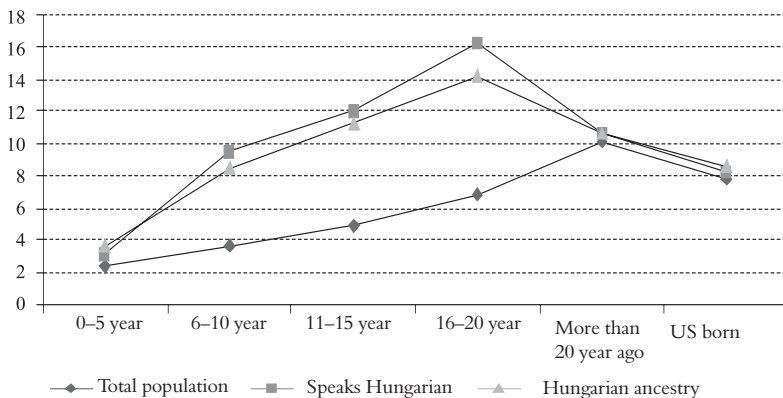
^d Presumably Hungarians from Subcarpathian Ukraine.

Source: IPUMS database

The Hungarian speakers (at home) classified by place of current residence are highest in California (16.1%), New York (15.2%) and Ohio (10.3%). The same populations classified by cities are primarily in New York (9,560 individuals), followed by Los Angeles (4080), Chicago (1060) and Cleveland (940).

If we examine the profile of the Hungarian speakers and those with Hungarian ancestry and their immigration status, among Hungarian speakers, and to a lesser degree among those with Hungarian ancestry we notice a much higher rate of divorce than among the U.S. population at large. This is particularly true among those who are in the United States 20 years ago or less. (see Chart 3) This proportion, however, decreases to the general population level among those who were in the United States for 20 years or more. This is to say, that the rate of divorce is highest among those who speak Hungarian; however, after 20 years of immigration experience, there is no significance from the point of view of divorce, whether the language used at home is Hungarian or not, and similarly, the Hungarian ancestry also may be irrelevant. We could also say that if a couple could surmount 20 years of speaking Hungarian at home, the eventual divorce should not necessarily be attributed to ancestry or language but rather to accommodation to an average American trend.

Chart 3. Proportion of Divorces in Relation to Immigration Status, Ancestry and Language

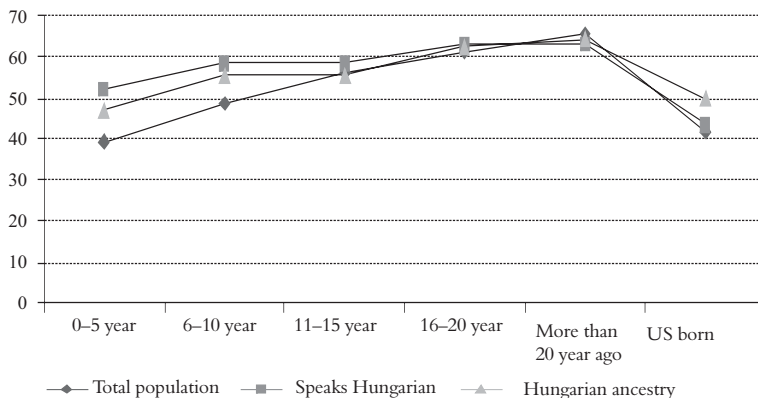


Source: IPUMS database

With some variations, we have noticed a high rate of marriage among Hungarian speakers that after 15–20 years levels off to the tendencies of the U.S. population at large. (*Chart 4*) In Hungarian speaking immigrant households the rates of marriage and divorce are high, showing a high degree of intensity in marriage related activity. The ethnically homogeneous Hungarians tie the knot in greater proportion to untie them also in greater proportion than the average American marriage does.

Upon examination of the social and demographic trend of the Hungarian speaking population we can determine that the population is very much aged (average age 54.7), and that in this group the proportion of women is high. This data indicates that in a family setting the language spoken hinges on the mother. Those who speak Hungarian at home have lived longest in the United States. It is of interest to note that among those who were not born in the U.S. but identify themselves as Hungarian live, on average, in the U.S. 3.87 years. We could also say that among the population of Hungarian ancestry, but not born in the U.S., after nearly four years, tend to stop speaking Hungarian at home (or because they are in mixed marriages or for reason of assimilation).

Chart 4. Proportion of Marriages in Relation to Immigration Status, Ancestry and Language



Source: IPUMS database

Finally, we could determine from the data of *Table 16* that the income of the Hungarian speaking income is the lowest, since it is an aged population with a defining proportion of retirees. At the same time they are the most educated, not only in relation to the population of Hungarian ancestry, but compared to the American average as well.

Table 16. Social Characteristics of the Population of Hungarian Ancestry Speaking Hungarian at Home

	<i>Hungarian Ancestry: 1st option</i>	<i>Hungarian Ancestry: 2nd option</i>	<i>Hungarian speakers</i>	<i>Total Population</i>
Average Age (year)	43,09	35,65	54,78	36,2
Proportion of Women	51	52	55	51,2
Years in the U.S.	3,87	0,68	20,2	2,01
Total Personal Earned Income	23643	23666	18777	16731
Educational Attainment	10,1	9,7	10,3	8,7

Source: IPUMS database

7. THE RELIABILITY OF THE ANCESTRY DATA

The quality of the ancestry data of the U.S. Census has received numerous critical comments on part of researchers.⁴³ Below, I am presenting studies that support those critical comments, focusing on the results of two research studies. First, I present the results of the *Census 2000 Content Reinterview Survey's* concerning the ethnic origin and ancestry data. This is followed by a summary of the ancestry data study of 1980 by the American sociologist Reynolds Farley. The results of the two studies may further affect our own views on the nature of the data.

7.1. *The Results of the Census 2000 Content Reinterview Survey*

The *Content Reinterview Survey* (CSR) that follows the census is fundamentally designed to determine the measurement reliability of the statistical data. The CSR study is essentially a repeat survey of the survey questionnaire filled out by individuals of a selected sample. The results obtained in the census survey and the CRS surveys are then compared to look for any discrepancies. The study seeks to determine measurement reliability, that is, to what degree does a question elicit identical responses taken at different times.

The Census 2000 Content Reinterview Survey used a *test-retest methodology* in which a sample of households from Census 2000 long form respondents were contacted a second time a re-asked the long form questions. The intent was to measure the simple response variance. The measure used to summarize this response variance is the index of inconsistency. The higher the index value, the more problematic is the interpretation of the data from the census item. Census workers consider an index of 20 or less as a good or low level of response variance, an index between 20 and 50 as a moderate variance, that is moderately problematic; and a variance index of over 50, as high variance and problematic. In the Reinterview Survey of 2000, the ancestry question gave a medium variance (30.7) than the white population (37.3). The variance

⁴³ Concerning the work done in Hungarian we should first mention the studies of Zoltán Fejős. Among other works he has published critiques on the handling of ancestry data in the 1980 Census; Fejős 1988. p. 200–204. A summary of the most significant aspects of his work are in Fejős 2002. p. 146–148.

index for those of Hungarian ancestry had an inconsistency level (23,4) considered moderately problematic.⁴⁴

7.2. Characteristics related Ethnic Origin or Ancestry

In an independent study (Farley 1991) examined to what extent does the question of ancestry measures ethnicity. By doing a comparison of the 1980 ancestry data with the *Current Population Survey* of 1979 and the *National Content Test* of 1986 (the survey prior to 1990) Farley very much questioned the usefulness of the ancestry question. He concluded that there was very strong inconsistency among certain European groups in 1979, in 1980 and in 1986. In the case of the British, the Russians and the French found discrepancies in the range of 25–30%. Farley also concluded that the wide variations measured in a short period of time rendered the handling of the ancestry data with great caution, particularly in trying to determine the size of a particular group.

Farley has used the *Current Population Survey* of 1979 and *Content Reinterview Study* that followed the 1980 Census to evaluate linkages between ancestry data and other demographic characteristics (place o birth of parents and use of language). The CPS of 1979 linked ancestry data of 100 000 individuals, including place of birth, place of birth of the parents, use of mother tongue, use of language other than English in the household. This data allowed examining the closeness of the languages and national groups to the ancestry responses. Based on the tabulation of the responses, Farley observed three fundamental tendencies:

- There is a sharp contrast among the groups that entered the United States after the 1968 Immigration Law (Asian Indians, Chinese, Colombians, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Iranians, Jamaicans, etc.) Four fifth of them had an ancestry matching the birth-place of their parents, and a significant number of them spoke the language of ancestry.
- The second group is also well differentiated, that is, those immigrants who entered the United States between 1880 and World War I, and their descendents. These individuals came from

⁴⁴ U. S. Census Bureau: *Census 2000 Content Reinterview Survey: Accuracy of Data for Selected Population and Housing Characteristics as Measured by Reinterview*, U. S. Census Bureau. Washington, DC. 2003.

countries of Eastern and South Central Europe (Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, Romanians and Ukrainians); in this group 5 to 10% was born in the listed countries, one quarter to one third of their parents were born in those countries, and approximately the same number identified these same countries as their mother tongue. These individuals and their descendants represent the survivors of the second great migration wave. According to Farley, this group is aging quickly and it will cease to exist in two decades.⁴⁵

- The third group is made up of individuals who entered the United States before the period of the American Civil War. Their ethnic identity is mostly Dutch, French, German, Irish, Norwegian or Scottish. In this group very few were born outside the United States, their parents were also native and few of them speak the language of ancestry.

In the course of the CRS of 1980, following the Census of the same year, 13,800 households were surveyed as a quality control exercise. Instead of repeating the census questions, census officials gathered information related to ancestry, that information on parents, grandparents, and earlier generations. If the response was that the ancestors were born in the United States, they asked about the nationality or country of origin of the most remote ancestor. After reviewing the responses, Farley found dramatic differences among the generations. In the first and second generation group of individuals 90% of the ancestry coincided with the place of birth of the individual and that of the parents. There were only two exceptions: half of the French and a third of the British stated that they do not have ancestors in the countries cited.

Less than half of the respondents with ancestry going back to the third and fourth generation provided answers that matched the country of origin and ethnicity of the ancestors. In this group the majority stated that all ancestors were born in the United States and that they have no knowledge of the particular country their ancestors immigrated from.⁴⁶

We see therefore that the more consistent responses to the ancestry question are those respondents whose ancestors came to the United States relatively recently and the most inconsistent responses were made

⁴⁵ Farley, Reynolds: *The New Census Questions About Ancestry: What Did It Tell Us?* *Demography* 1991. p. 423.

⁴⁶ Farley *op. cit.* 424.

by those individuals whose ancestors entered this country before the Civil War, that is, British, Dutch, German and other northern European groups. It seems that these results, outline in the ancestry responses the generational changes that have taken place, a pattern that we were able to correlate in the use of language.

8. SOCIAL PROCESSES THAT EXPLAIN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHNICITY RESPONSES

Researchers identify and associate with assimilation the ultimate cause of the unreliability of ethnic data of the European population in the 20th century, and particularly in the period after World War II. Assimilation has been called „*America's dirty little secret*“⁴⁷ and assimilation according to authors Richard Alba and Victor Nee is the result of a long term social process that gradually chipped away those social elements safeguarding the ethnic differentiation of groups. First of all, the cultural differentiation that served as ethnic identity markers and strengthened ethnic solidarity diminished. Gradually, the playing field for social advancement, such as school diplomas and well paid jobs, evened out; at the same time that ethnicity lost connection with specific segments of economic activity. A shift took place of people moving from downtown urban ethnic enclaves to ethnically mixed suburbia or other urban districts. And finally, it became socially acceptable to cross ethnic barriers, which resulted in a high number of mixed marriages and ethnically diverse population. (Alba & Nee 2003: 70–71). Although ethnicity is present in the lives of third and fourth generation populations, its manifestation has evolved significantly. The current situation is best characterized by – using an expression borrowed from Alba and Nee – „the twilight of ethnicity“ where ethnicity is more of a symbolic expression than social determinants such as endogamy, segregation and economic marginalization.

According to Richard Alba and Victor Nee certain hallmarks of contemporary identity for white unmistakably support the successful assimilation of these groups.⁴⁸ One of the hallmarks is malleability, that is, for

⁴⁷ Massey, S. Douglas.: *Revenge of The Chicago School. Contemporary sociology* 2004. 33(4). p. 408–10.

⁴⁸ Alba, Richard D. – Victor Nee: *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Mass. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2003. p. 96–97.

most individuals the importance, intensity and even definition of ethnic identity may vary from situation to situation, that is, it is situationally specific.⁴⁹ In the background of the malleability of ethnic identity, undoubtedly there is a role to play by the generational distance separating the individual from their immigrant ancestors makes complicated and difficult establishing the particular ethnic identity. At the same time we should note that in the great majority of cases, there is no strong social pressure to associate with any ethnic groups, since most often their ethnic backgrounds are not self-evident. There are in this group, those whites who hold intensely to ethnic identities in a variety of situations, and also those who believe that ethnicity has little or no importance. The majority, however, are between the two extremes, who take a middle of the road approach to ethnic identity. For this group ethnic identity often manifests itself with family events or festivities celebrated with the family.

Another common feature of American white identity in the view of Alba and Nee is that expression of this identity is usually weak in their daily manifestations, such as, for instance, in the consumption of ethnic food. This is an experience that is within the realm of private life and it does not have the potential for negative outside criticism. At the same time, it is an experience that may be shared with individuals of a different ethnic background.

The third hallmark according to Alba and Nee is the „privatization” of ethnic identity. For most white American individuals ethnic identity belongs eminently to the family because most community connections have lost their former ethnic character. For this group membership in ethnic organizations is not a priority, even if the cost of voluntary association would require minimal effort. Typically, most of them are unconcerned about the ethnic affiliation or sense of belonging of their children to a particular ethnic group, a choice they regard as personal.

⁴⁹ In the *Summary* of the book we will return to examine the limits of situationally specific ethnic identity and also the characteristics stemming from interaction with ethnic organizations.

9. SUMMARY

The method whereby we measure ethnicity, reflects well the limits of our data gathering and our theoretical assumptions, says Calvin Goldscheider.⁵⁰ It would be worthwhile to take this statement as a normative principle.

We could see that the ethnic origin or ancestry question of the *Census 2000* failed to distinguish between those individuals with deep connection to an ethnic group or ancestry and those whose ethnicity was merely a casual choice among various ethnic ancestors as preserved in family memory. Some researchers contend that a separation of ethnic self-identification and ethnic or national origin would yield better measurements. This would include a set of questions aiming at identifying the most important ethnic groups as well as the individuals' ancestors. The wording of the questions would be as follows: 1) „Among the groups listed which do you consider the one closest to your primary identity?“ and 2) Thinking about your parents, your grandparents and your ancestors, what nationalities or ethnic groups are represented in your family history?“⁵¹

The direct question related to ethnic origin that asks for the place of birth merely helps identify first generation ancestry. Many researchers think that it was a mistake to drop the question regarding the place of birth from the survey questionnaire.⁵² The cross reference of the questions regarding Hungarian ancestry and the language spoken at home highlight the generational dynamics of the population of Hungarian ancestry.

⁵⁰ Goldscheider, Calvin: Ethnic Categorization in Censuses: Comparative Observations from Israel, Canada, and the United States.” In: Kertzer D. I. and Arel, D. (eds.): *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 2002. p. 85.

⁵¹ See also: Hirschman, Charles: How to Measure Ethnicity: An Immodest Proposal, In: *Challenges of Measuring an Ethnic World: Science, politics and reality. Proceedings of the Joint Canada-United States Conference on the Measurement of Ethnicity April 1–3, 1992*. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1993. 547–558.

⁵² Thernstrom, Stephan: Counting Heads: New Data on the Ethnic Composition of the American Population. *Journal Of Interdisciplinary History* 1989.20(1). p. 107–16. Boyd, Monica: *Offspring-Parent Shifts in Ancestry: Ethnic Bedrock or Ethnic Quicksand?* Florida State University: Center for the Study of Population. Working Paper, vol. WPS 1997. p. 97–138.

We should realize that the responses regarding the white population do reflect a measure of the reality despite the problems of interpretation and inconsistency. The complexity of the data derives also from the fact that in the case of most individuals, the ethnicity of the ancestors may be multiple and that the importance of a particular ethnicity depends on the timing and social context when the choice is made.

Despite these constraints we found the available data on the Hungarian population of the United States enriches our knowledge not only with new information but with new perspectives.

ATTILA PAPP Z.

Ways of Interpretation of Hungarian-American Ethnic-based Public Life and Identity

Between 2006–2008 we carried out a research which tried to use a variety of methodologies to best capture the main characteristics of the Hungarian-American institutions, civic activities, and social life, and to identify the worldview of the participants and leaders of Hungarian-American public life.¹

Below, we define the methods used to classify the functions and characteristics of Hungarian-American institutions, in order to arrive at an institutional typology. We also examine and try to identify the ethnic identity profiles that emerge from participants in Hungarian-American institutional life, since participation in public life is a constituent factor in the dynamics of Hungarian ethnic institutions. Finally, we try to determine fundamental diaspora community relationships, employing our research-based institutional and identity profiles, and to explore connections between community life in the diaspora and the ancestral homeland (or the perception of the homeland). Further, we attempt to determine whether such relationships create an autochthonous ethnic culture or, instead, represent an adaptation of the old cultural heritage to a new environment.

¹ Based on the research we published a book: Papp, Attila Z. (ed.) *Beszédből világ. Elemzések, adatok amerikai magyarokról*. MKI, Regio Books, Budapest, 2008. 514. This paper has appeared in the book as the summary of the research findings.

1. *Types of Institutions*

There are a number of ways we can classify Hungarian-American institutions. One of the handiest and frequently used is to classify them by the date of the creation of the institution and its goals. This, mostly historical approach is linked to the various waves of migration and results in the following groups:

- Traditional (“old”) Hungarians’ institutions, such as: fraternal associations, Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations;
- DP (Displaced Persons, that is, refugees from World War II) organizations, such as: MHBK (*Fraternal Association of Hungarian Veterans*), *Hungarian Scout Federation in Exile*, *Hungarian National Committee* (a forty-sevensers organization)
- Organizations of 1956 refugees, such as: *Hungarian Freedom Fighters’ Associations*
- Organizations partly maintained and created by economic refugees and newly arrived immigrants, such as: *HungarianAmerica Foundation* (Washington DC), some Hungarian Sunday schools and Magyar/Hungarian Houses in various cities (i.e. Los Angeles).

This classification, although it takes into account fundamental factors, is of limited use because in today’s Hungarian-American community, the traditional group definitions that characterized migrating patterns have either disappeared or have evolved. Currently, we have simultaneously first, second and third generation DP immigrants, first and second generations of refugees of 1956, the wave of migration of the 1960’s to the 1980’s (the so-called Kadar’s orphans²), and the skilled immigrants of the 1990’s seeking to make a better living. The immigrant institutions were also affected by the fact that the end of the Cold War and the attendant emergence of newly democratic states in Europe also meant the disappearance of the “enemy image” that was part and parcel of the legitimacy, and indeed, the identity of the institutions. A third factor affecting the institutional crisis, besides the end of the underlying context of the ideological divide, was the advanced age of institutional

² The term is used by Huseby-Darvas, Éva V. *Hungarians in Michigan*. Michigan State University Press, 2003. p. 27.

leaders and the dying out of their generation, which brought new challenges for those institutions striving to endure.

The institutions may also be categorized by areas of activity. In this respect, the most important are those that have an orientation toward a particular set of activities, such as politics, culture, worship, scouting, or professional affiliation.

In its 2006 report, the since-abolished Office of Hungarians Abroad (HTMH) uses yet another set of categories³ to classify Hungarian organizations in the United States:

- Organizations which focus on Hungarian-American relations and represent Hungarian interests, and which no longer fit the mold of the traditional civic institutions (e.g. *Hungarian American Coalition*, *Center for Hungarian-American Congressional Relations*)
- Organizations that are “transitional” in the sense that they seek both to represent Hungarian interests and to protect the Hungarian heritage (e.g. *Manhattan Hungarian Network*)
- Organizations that function in the framework of traditional immigrant institutions.

Based on our research, and particularly on an analysis of the interviews undertaken, we propose to categorize the organizations in terms of spheres of influence, separating the local organizations from the national ones. From this vantage point, we have three types of organizations: local, buffer and national organizations.

In this classification, “buffer” means organizations which are essentially both local and national in scope: their sphere of activities goes beyond local boundaries. Such is the case for the church-based organizations, the scouts (the *Hungarian Scout Association Abroad*), and to some extent the Hungarian schools. For the church-based organizations, the organizational structure is a given (i.e. diocesan framework); the scouts have their own strong linkage between the local troops and the Scout Association which oversees them. In case of the schools, however, national integration is, for the most part, a desirable but unfulfilled goal. The operation of Hungarian schools has not been standardized despite the creation of *American Hungarian Educator’s Association* (AHEA) and *Hungarian Language Conference* (Anyanyelvi Konferencia). As for the

³ Office of Hungarians Abroad (HTMH): *Report on Hungarian communities outside the Carpathian Basin*, 2006.

national organizations, our analysis shows that they are primarily lobby, trade or professional affiliations, while the local organizations concentrate on local Hungarian cultural and social activities, and have very little involvement in the political sphere. Both the local and national organizations suffer from internal and external conflicts; these might be overcome with the influx of younger generations.

Another way to classify the organizations is to examine how a given organization formulates its goals and how it carries them out: according to this logic, organizations may be divided into two large categories:

- Closed ethnic organizations
- Open ethnic organizations

The working language of *closed ethnic organizations* is primarily Hungarian; their perception of the Hungarian-American community is static, and echoes their self-perception. This type of organization entails a folk-populist culture with the traditional ethnic overtones (e.g. traditional Hungarian food).

In the *open ethnic organizations*, English-language communications are also acceptable and the perception of the Hungarian community is dynamic, in the sense that the organization's activities involve interacting with local and national American groups. From the perspective of representatives of this type of organization, Hungarian-ness is not just for preservation, but should be showcased before the wider society.

The organizing principle of open vs. closed ethnic organizations is relevant at both the local and national levels. We could say that while ethnic openness is a precondition for organizations representing Hungarian interests at the national level, in other types of organizations the opposite is true: their closed ethnic organizational mode allows them to transcend local boundaries and function successfully at the national level as well (e.g. scout troops). An analysis of the historical narrative of Hungarian organizations indicates that these organizations were primarily closed ethnic organizations, since they were largely created to preserve an ethnic culture. However, because of integration into American society, the feeling of being immigrants has receded, and with increasing frequency we find ethnically open organizations at the local level, where Hungarian identity is more relational with the wider community. It should be noted that this type of organizational vantage point is, perhaps paradoxically, more typical in communities where larger numbers of citizens of Hungarian ancestry live. It is reasonable to assume that

in these geographic enclaves (Cleveland, Florida, New Jersey) there is a greater pool of second and third generation Hungarians and of economic immigrants, partly due to mixed marriages, and this favors the ascendance of open ethnic organizations.

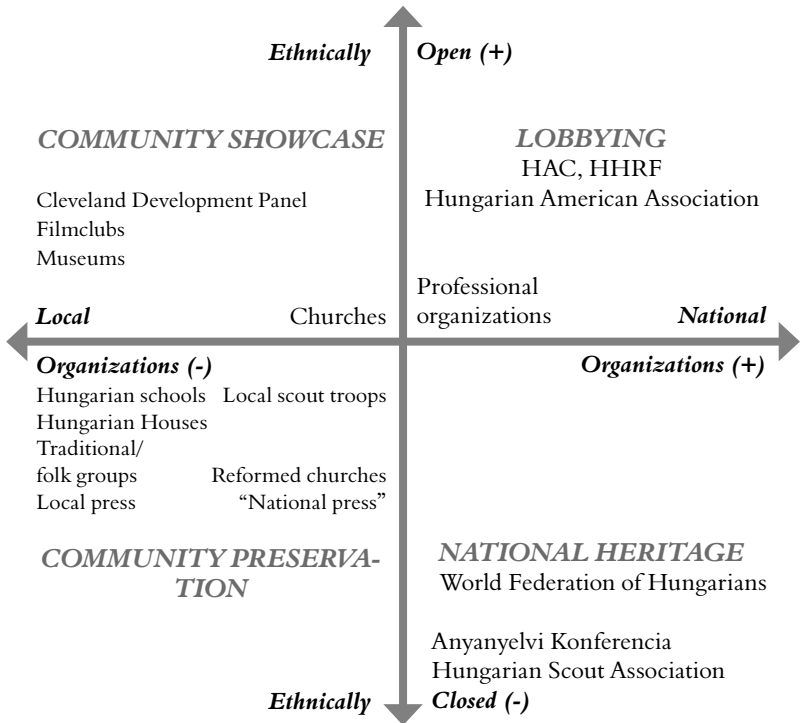
If we combine the organizing principles described above (local vs. national, and open vs. closed) we can create a matrix that encompasses four major types of organizations (see figure 1.): *lobbying organizations*, *heritage organizations*, *community preservation organizations* and *community showcase organizations*. These types of organizations, even though we included some actual organizations in the illustration, are really sociological ideal types,⁴ that is, theoretical structures designed to accurately reflect operational aspects or the most salient characteristics of organizations. We should note that these ideal types seldom if ever exist in their pure form in everyday life. In reality, actual organizations share characteristics of different types, although usually its most salient characteristic allows us to characterize it as a single type.

Lobbying organizations aim to achieve a national profile, which is reflected in their rhetoric, and their very existence is predicated upon ethnic openness. These organizations seek to represent Hungarian interests by building relationships with American and Hungarian political entities. These institutions seek to look “greater” than they actually are. We can get a sense of an organization’s size by membership figures, or – a better indicator – the number of its constituent member organizations, although it is often difficult to settle on a specific number. In reality, membership figures are not fundamental; instead, the number of member organizations empowers representing organizations to act or communicate on behalf of 1.5 million Hungarian-Americans. We should note that there are organizations that, although by charter without any organizational membership, may still claim to represent Hungarian-Americans in general.

A particular subset of lobbying organizations is *professional interest group*. These interest groups, although they transcend locality, still cannot be regarded as national in the full sense of the term. Their activity centers on cooperation among professionals of various professions or trades, and though they achieve a measure of success, they cannot

⁴ The term is used in weberian sense. See Weber, Max *Gazdaság és társadalom. A megértő szociológia alapvonalai 1. Szociológiai kategóriáiban*. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1987. (mainly on pages 49–51.)

Figure 1. Operational Typology of Hungarian-American Organizations



achieve a complete professional integration. These professional organizations work on behalf of Hungarian interests but their very professional orientation requires a working relationship with American counterpart organizations, which precludes the use of Hungarian as the exclusive language of communication.

The *Heritage organizations* are also national organizations (or even transnational) and their activities focus on protecting the heritage of the Hungarian nation. These organizations are ethnically closed, as indicated by their working language (Hungarian) and their presence in Hungary and the Carpathian basin. We may include in this group cultural institutions which may not be fully national in terms of sphere of activity, but which

transcend locality and operate in a wide area including Hungary and other parts of Central Europe (i.e. Anyanyelvi Konferencia).

The *Community Preservation organizations* function primarily as local entities; their emphasis on “preservation” means ensuring the continuity of their own communities. These organizations are active locally and they interact with other local organizations intensively, but know little of similar organizations in other locations, and do not really maintain relationships with them. Of course, there are exceptions to this “insularity”, but this generally takes the form of a loose network of relationships among Hungarian-American intellectuals, which however does not reach the level of formal connectedness among the local communities. The Hungarian identity of Community Preservation organizations is not merely a sense of national kinship, but also rests upon specific local community activities. For example, the local scout troops, schools and Hungarian Reformed churches largely focus on daily tasks that serve the community; they do not necessarily wish to set goals of national policy. This does not mean that individuals active in these organizations do not have an ethno-social or national consciousness, rather that they are active in community roles instead of serving the nation in the more abstract sense.

In our illustration, we placed the press in the category of Community Preservation organizations. In the case of the local electronic media or publications of local organizations, this categorization is understandable, but the inclusion of the “national-level press” in this community category requires elaboration. This seeming paradox is explained by the fact that the so-called “national” press actually functions within a local framework. Whether considering the Hungarian papers in California, or the newspaper that reports from Chicago but is published in Canada, we see strong affiliations with local interests. The *Amerikai Magyar Népszava Szabadság*, currently published in New Jersey, includes topics of interest nationally and news from Hungary, yet still it is inward-looking and plagued by internal conflicts, and so retains the characteristics of a local institution.

The function of *Community Showcase Organizations* is to present Hungarian ethnicity to the American public. The need to be “visible” becomes an organizing force; Hungarian-ness becomes something to be introduced to the local non-Hungarian-speaking public. Museums are the most obvious example of such an organization (one which involves both being Hungarian and also showing our heritage to others), since museums are places that show and preserve. In addition, the churches,

as buffer organizations, also belong to this category to some extent, because the growing trend toward bilingual services assumes ethnic openness. However, a sizable proportion of the Reformed congregations nevertheless more properly belong to the *Community Preservation* category described above, since these churches, besides nurturing the faith, act locally to preserve Hungarian culture.⁵

In *Figure 1*, we placed a few organizations in the diagram in an attempt to suggest the operational logic of the diverse organizational functions. Two things should be noted here. First: organizations placed in the various coordinates of the diagram most likely have characteristics that might make them equally suited for another category. The Hungarian schools, for example, are interested in the preservation of the Hungarian heritage and nationality, but their functions are carried out locally. Similarly, the *Community Showcase Organizations* also have community preservation functions, although their defining function is to present the national heritage to the American public. In short, the classification gives greater emphasis to the organization's operational method over its heritage-preserving aspects, which is, in some measure, common to all of the organizations.

Our second observation is regarding the nature of our analysis. We do not intend to apply a value judgment to the organizations and their operations. For us, these modes of functioning are value-neutral, since the purpose of the analysis and research is not to evaluate the organizations according to their relative importance, but to shed light on this small universe of Hungarian-American organizations and thereby to reach an understanding of the character of (a segment of) the Hungarian-American present.

2. *Hungarian-American Identity Structures*

Although the primary aim of the qualitative research was to enter the inner world of Hungarian-American organizations, our interviews gave us an opportunity to learn about the identity awareness of a significant group of Hungarian-Americans.

⁵ And this twin function may be a source of repeated conflicts.

In our analysis, we came up with three levels of identity in the Hungarian-American community. We defined an *ethno-personal identity* level, where the relationship is between the individual and the host country. We defined an *ethno-social identity* level, characterized by a well-defined relationship with the American way of life within the context of belonging to a Hungarian community. And third, we defined an identity level which assumes a more encompassing sense of *national consciousness*, strongly influenced by returns to the ancestral homeland and by the individual's view of the Hungarian nation.⁶ Naturally, these identity levels and their characteristics occur to varying extents among different individuals: this became evident through our own direct interaction with the interview subjects, but also indirectly, from what the interviewees had to say about their fellow Hungarian-Americans. A number of interview subjects stated that those individuals who regularly participate in Hungarian-American community life are a small proportion of the entire Hungarian community, estimated at most at 5 to 10 percent of the total. As we have detailed in our demographic analysis U.S. census data estimating the number of persons of Hungarian ancestry include an element of uncertainty, but it is generally accepted that 10 percent of Hungarian-Americans regularly speak Hungarian at home. But who are the Hungarian-Americans who do not participate in Hungarian community life and who do not speak Hungarian?

⁶ It should be noted that although from a different perspective and with a different terminology, Miklós Szántó arrived at a similar descriptive identity structure. (Szántó Miklós *Magyarok Amerikában*. Gondolat 1984. 36–40.) According to him, the strength of the levels of Hungarian identity depends on contacts with the ancestral homeland, integration in the adopted country, and degree of participation in the life of the ethnic community. These determinants may be further examined according to their respective sociological, cultural and political dimensions. Based on these criteria, there are 8 types, ranging from those who have a harmonious dual relationship with both the ancestral homeland and the host country, to those who are more prone to reject the new country and remain at the periphery of its society. This model is largely consonant with research on nationalism and minorities pursued by Rogers Brubaker, though in 1984 Szántó could not possibly have known the work of Brubaker, which was published in 1996. Brubaker also says that the situation of the minorities is defined by relationships with the ancestral country, the minority community and the host country. (Brubaker, Rogers *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.)

The above-described levels of identity, which emerged from our series of interviews, are helpful in identifying – at least in theory – the identity consciousness of these “other” Hungarian-Americans. If our point of departure is that the three-level framework is observable to varying degrees for each person (that is, each of the three identity levels either applies to an individual or not), then we can define a range of identity-consciousness. At one pole, we find those who actively participate in the organizational life of the community; his/her Hungarian identity is important at the individual level (for instance, he/she uses the Hungarian language); he/she feels, in some fashion, part of the Hungarian nation and regards himself or herself as a member of the Hungarian community. At the other pole, we find those who are completely assimilated (third, fourth or nth generation) Americans of Hungarian ancestry for whom Hungarian identity is unimportant both at the individual and community levels, who do not speak Hungarian, and who have no sense of belonging to the Hungarian nation either symbolically or more substantially.

Within these extremes we can find several transitional stages, each of which can be defined as an identity profile. We have identified a total of eight such profiles, as shown in *Table 1*.⁷

Let us examine what these identity types may entail:

1. *Active Hungarian Identity*: A sense of Hungarian identity exists at both the individual and communal levels, and the question of national identity is also very much present. Such an individual speaks Hungarian, participates in Hungarian events and public life and has opinions about his/her own Hungarian identity, about Hungary and about the Hungarians who live as minorities in Central Europe.

2. *Local Hungarian Identity*: for this individual, the country of ancestry and the fate of the Hungarian nation have become less relevant. This individual still speaks Hungarian and attends Hungarian events from time to time, but it is unlikely that he or she travels to Hungary, or does so infrequently.

3. *Cautious Hungarian Identity*: this individual speaks Hungarian, and Hungary and a sense of belonging to a larger Hungarian community are still important, but he/she does not attend explicitly Hungarian events.

⁷ In fact, it is possible to further refine the identity types by indicating the relative presence or absence of each identity level's typical characteristics, ranging from “very much present” (+++) to “entirely absent” (---).

Based on our interviews, the oft-mentioned “illegal Hungarians”, “new Hungarians”, and “fresh-off-the-boat” Hungarians might be classified in this group. Other members of this group include those immigrants who came earlier, and whose Hungarian identity is still important, but who for some reason do not wish to participate in the activities of the Hungarian-American organizations.

4. *Private Hungarian Identity*: these individuals have lost their relationship with the Hungarian community, whether in a close-knit family sense or in the wider sense. He/she still speaks some Hungarian, if only the colloquial language. For these individuals, Hungarian identity is a private matter which is rarely expressed to others.

5. *Hungarian in heart*: we could define this identity type by the saying “the nation lives not only through its language but in the heart as well”. These individuals, as a rule, barely speak Hungarian or do not speak it at all, but they have a sense of respect and responsibility toward the country of ancestry, and as a result they participate in Hungarian-American community events, still visit Hungary, and concern themselves (whatever that concern may be) with Hungarian issues.

6. *Festive or Occasional Hungarians*: this is where the individual’s ancestry is foggy or unsettled, although he/she participates from time to time in Hungarian events (perhaps events where Hungarian dishes are served, for example). Individuals in this category may not indicate their Hungarian ancestry in the census questionnaire and they do not speak Hungarian at all.

7. *Census-Hungarians*: these individuals have some notion of Hungarian ancestry, which they indicate in the census questionnaire. Otherwise, they do not consider Hungarian identity important, nor do they attend Hungarian events.⁸

8. *Assimilated Hungarians*: these are individuals for whom their Hungarian roots are completely irrelevant and any consciousness of Hungarian origin is absent.

The eight ethnic identity types cover all variations of Hungarian-American identity consciousness. It should be noted that only seven of these are reflected in the census, since those who have been assimilated

⁸ A returning theme for census professionals is how to measure and statistically differentiate those respondents having a significant ethnic consciousness from those individuals for whom ethnic identity is merely occasional, such as when responding to a census questionnaire.

Table 1.1. Hungarian-American Identity Profiles

	<i>Ethno-personal identity exists</i>	<i>Ethno-social identity exists</i>	<i>National identity exists</i>
<i>Sample Questions</i>	<i>Is being Hungarian important at a personal level? (for example: does the person speak Hungarian?)</i>	<i>Is being Hungarian important at the local community level? (e.g. does he/she participate in Hungarian events?)</i>	<i>Does he/she self-identify as part of the Hungarian nation? (e.g. is he/she aware of his/her Hungarian ancestry?)</i>
<i>Identity Profile</i>			
1. Active Hungarian	+	+	+
2. Local Hungarian	+	+	-
3. Cautious Hungarian	+	-	+
4. Private Hungarian	+	-	-
5. Hungarian in heart	-	+	+
6. Festive, occasional Hungarians	-	+	-
7. Census-Hungarians	-	-	+
8. Assimilated Hungarians	-	-	-

completely probably do not even know whether their ancestors were Hungarian. In the course of our analysis, our interviews were mostly with members of the first group, that is, the Active Hungarian Identity, plus a few persons who do not speak Hungarian, but nonetheless are active in Hungarian-American organizations and may be classified by Identity type number 5 or perhaps number 6. Our theoretical identity types do not cover dual-identity or dual allegiance issues, although such issues likely occur in all of first seven identity categories. (In the last identity type, dual identity issues do not arise.) If we were to undertake a more detailed analysis, we could examine to what extent these

eight identity types are present in the various migration groups and their descendants.

Using these identity types, we can extrapolate theoretical processes of (ethnic) identity loss. This process of loosening ethnic affiliation may begin at any level of identity, that is, either at the individual, social or national level.

A. If an individual no longer speaks Hungarian, theoretically he (and his descendants) could take the path of becoming a Hungarian in heart, then a “festive” Hungarian, then a census Hungarian, and finally reach the stage of full assimilation. In other words, after losing the language, ethnic or national identity may still remain, but after two or three generations even this level of identity is easily lost (*Fig. 2*).

B. If we find that the significance of national identity deteriorates, then the individual may still participate in community events. But if this level of participation does not remain steady, then there are two possible outcomes: participation becomes haphazard as a result of loss of language skills, leading down the path to total assimilation, or else attendance at Hungarian events ceases altogether, with the result that Hungarian language use is restricted to the home. Here, the next stage might well entail the total loss of language skills, which again leads to assimilation (*Fig. 3*).

C. If an individual does not participate in Hungarian institutional activities, he or she may still preserve his or her Hungarian identity privately, but either because the use of the Hungarian language recedes or because of a diminishing sense of national identity we again arrive at full assimilation (*Fig. 4*).

Given these defined paths to assimilation, and given our hypothetical assumptions about the behavior of the different generations, we can also determine the time horizon of the phenomenon of assimilation. If our point of departure is that with each new generation, a given level of identity is damaged or diminished - that is, the children will not consider their Hungarian identity (either at individual, social or national level) as important as their parents do, then we may easily conclude that full assimilation will come about within four generations, regardless of the path followed. But if, for instance, the parents are not particularly active as individuals, or as members of an organization, or, for example, the parents do not consider their national identity relevant for whatever reason, then the path to assimilation becomes shorter: the assimilation

Figure 2. Assimilation paths beginning by loss of ethnic language.

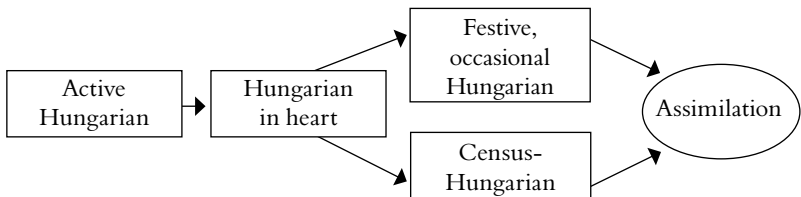


Figure 3. Assimilation paths beginning by weakening of national identity

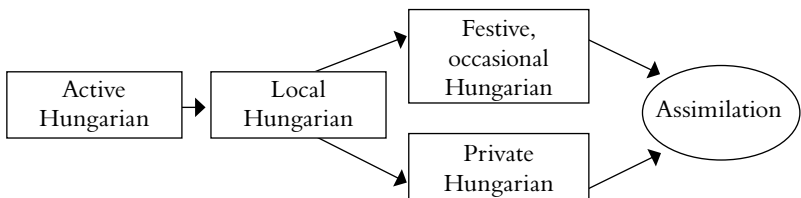
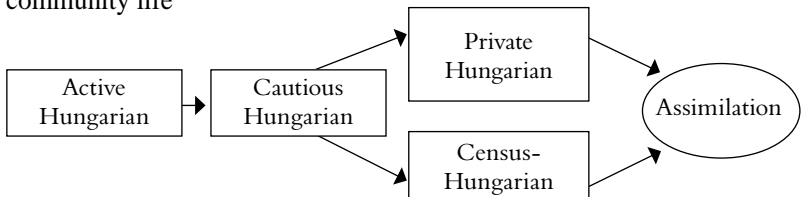


Figure 4. Assimilation paths beginning by non-participation in ethnic community life



trajectory speeds up to three or even two generations. Similarly, the path to assimilation becomes shorter inasmuch as the younger generation's identity levels are diminished simultaneously. An example of this, which often happens in reality, is that the younger generation simultaneously loses both its language capabilities and does not participate in Hungarian-American organizations.

In these theoretical pathways, a reverse process is also possible - that of an ethno-cultural revitalization. In this case, it is possible that a completely assimilated individual may be induced to attend Hungarian events, and if he/she learns Hungarian and the ancestral national

ties become important, then in two or three generations the descendants may even become Active Hungarians in terms of identity level. Although it is possible to find instances of this, the usual reality and our interviews indicate that the younger generations are increasingly unlikely to speak the language of their parents and their links to Hungarian institutions are also decreasing.

This assimilation pathway is described by Julianna Puskás as the process by which group identity is gradually replaced by the development of individual identity.⁹ In the course of her micro-historical research, Puskás describes the main stages of this identity modification. Initially, the Hungarian sections of town begin to lose their ethnic quality. Daily commuting distance replaces the earlier physical proximity and neighborliness of daily interactions. However, ethnic institutions do support the community's sense of togetherness despite its physical dispersal. But with time, these institutions also start to become bilingual, and in addition, their names often shed their distinctive Hungarian designation. For example, the former *Verhovay Fraternal Association* (*Verhovay Testvérségi Egyesület*) merged with the *Rákóczi Association* (*Rakóczi Egyesület*) and became *The William Penn Fraternal Association* – which sells better in the American marketplace. This institutional evolution placed the older generation, who favored keeping the Hungarian designation, at odds with the younger members, who favored Americanization (and who prevailed). Later on, even the reference to the communal character of the institution was dropped, so that it sounded even better in English: *William Penn Association*.¹⁰ In a parallel development, the originally Hungarian-language publication of the Association becomes bilingual and later on an English-only publication. A similar process can be observed in the Hungarian churches, where the formerly all-Hungarian congregation becomes a bilingual one, then an English-speaking one. (This is more frequent in the Hungarian Catholic congregations, whose parishioners have no say in choosing the pastor.)

⁹ Puskás Julianna *Ties that Bind, Ties that Divide. 100 years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*. Holms Meier, New York / London 2000. p. 290–303.

¹⁰ Underscoring the “Hungarian in heart” categorization we created, this organization up until recently describe itself: : „American in Name.....American in Spirit..... But Hungarian in Heart. Serving Hungarians and their Families since 1886” (See the publication *A Nyugat Oldali Magyar Református Egyház 1906–2006. Celebrating on 100th Anniversary*, Cleveland, p. 20.)

Besides the institutional evolution towards bilingualism, the identity individualization process is reinforced by developments in the marriage market: on the one hand manifested by the desire to overcome the intra-ethnic conflicts generated by marriages of diverse backgrounds and, on the other hand, the increase in mixed marriages.

The second element supporting the move toward individualization is related to the educational opportunities of the descendants of Hungarian immigrants, many of whom surpassed their parents' working-class, blue collar status. Thus, social mobility and career considerations contribute to creative impulses and willingness to take initiatives – both hallmarks of individualism, which, in turn, strengthens the assimilation process.

Based on our model, we can also state that the assimilation process may be delayed if at least one of the identity levels is shared by both the children and the parents. For instance, if the child speaks Hungarian and is active in community life, the assimilation process takes longer, but assimilation still occurs. We experienced this in a number of interviews: our subject belongs to the younger generation; he has an active Hungarian identity, speaks Hungarian and participates in Hungarian organizations. Yet in our conversation, he concedes that for him the Hungarian language is a second language, and that he is more at home in English. He also may reveal that his Hungarian national identity lacks a cognitive component and is largely built on emotional kinship or perhaps on elements which were natural for his parents but which, for him, are relevant only as “a parental legacy”. The assimilation process slows, but we can nevertheless see the “end of the ethnic tunnel”.

Identity, and national identity, are situational. A socio-psychological survey taken in Hungary indicated that Hungarian identity is important for 37% of respondents, but only in the context of a “foreign situation”, while under “domestic” normal circumstances the importance of national identity falls to only 3%.¹¹ The immigrant and above all the refugee is permanently in “a foreign situation,” so in the socio-psychological sense their greater degree of commitment is completely understandable. It is also true that if this commitment borne of the “foreign situation” comes into contact with the realities of the homeland – that is, if these two worlds, the imagined Hungarian identity in a foreign setting, and the experience of the identity levels of citizens in present-day Hungary meet, then these

¹¹ György Csepeli *Szociálpszichológia*. Osiris, Budapest, 1997. p. 526.

varying levels of Hungarian identity may either reinforce or cancel each other out. Those individuals who return to Hungary, and those whose thoughts are occupied by the situation in the homeland, resist this cognitive dissonance by seeking out kindred spirits in the homeland, or those thought to be kindred spirits. Quite naturally, they are more likely to maintain relations with groups in Hungary that stress their commitment to the Hungarian nation.¹² Whether we are looking at immigrant parents or their descendants, a measure of alienation will always be present and passed on to the next generation. The refugee, the immigrant, will develop and change in his new setting, and the environment left behind will continue to develop as well, and will not remain the same as when the refugee left. For the individual who stays abroad, the myth of returning may be tantalizing, but his own transformation, combined with unseen changes in the old setting, may result in illusory perceptions.¹³ The individual (whether a refugee, second or third generation immigrant) senses this disconnect, perhaps subconsciously, and thus his relationship with his ethnic group, his country of ancestry and birth, and with his nationality involves the search for some validation of authenticity. Thus, there is a constant struggle to maintain an “authentic” national identity, and to prefer and display the “pure” forms of Hungarian worldview, style, music (e.g. an insistence on teaching only authentic folk songs), values and cognition, and history (in which the emphasis is on the “pure,” ancient myths regarding the origins of the Hungarian people). In the course of our interviews and analysis, we saw all of these effects and their repercussions on the ethnic institutions.

Becoming aware of the assimilation process, as well as its opposite (ethnic and cultural revitalization), is relevant because these processes deepen our understanding of the organizational universe we are trying to describe and understand. Today, it is the assimilation process that provides the larger framework of the world of Hungarian organizations.

¹² One of our survey respondents elaborated on this; he found it hard to believe that [Hungarians] could espouse views other than those of the right: “*Even today, when I hear pronouncements that are at variance with my national sentiment, I am taken aback that there are such things. This is because I hear very little of that.*”

¹³ Lewin, Kurt: The psycho-sociological problems of minorities. In: Lengyel, Zsuzsanna (ed.) *Szociálpszichológia. Szöveggyűjtemény*. [Socio-psychology. Text compilation.] Osiris, Budapest, 2002. 491–449.

This was not always so, since the organizations, which were created in parallel with the arrival of sequential waves of refugees, were often motivated by political issues and by the exigencies of immigrant life. But with the change of regime in Hungary in 1990, these immigrant-centered underpinnings have crumbled. The organizations have consequently undergone a distinct ethno-cultural transformation, whose rhetoric centers on strategies for survival (strategies which, incidentally, never took any comprehensively expressed form).¹⁴ The Western diaspora of the early nineties sensed this fundamental change, and in addition to pondering the new ramifications of identity issues, began to interpret their minority status not in terms of immigrant destiny, but as a challenge and a duty.¹⁵ In the United States, this ethno-cultural change began to emerge even before the change of regimes in Central Europe, as the melting pot ideology in the U.S. was discarded in favor of a vaunted ideology of ethnic and cultural pluralism, accompanied by a greater measure of ideological and legal frameworks for preserving communal cultural heritage.¹⁶ Although this wider legal framework¹⁷ varied by state, and its popularity faded in the 1980s, it did nonetheless contribute, if selectively, to the strengthening of Hungarian communities within the paradigm of ethnic revival.¹⁸ Multiculturalism and the

¹⁴ One of the most obvious signs of this cultural change, evident in our interviews, is that Hungarian-Americans' assessments and expectations toward the Hungarian government are cultural: that is, their image of Hungarian-ness is related to cultural preferences (and is not political in nature).

¹⁵ Borbándi, Gyula: A nyugati magyar szórványok identitáskérdései. [Identity questions among the Hungarian Diaspora of the West.] In: *Kisebbségnek lenni nem sors, hanem feladat*. Tanácskozás Kismartonban 1992. szeptember 19 – 20 [To be a Minority is a Duty, not Destiny. Meeting in Kismarton, Austria, September 19–20, 1992.]. Published by Ausztriai Magyar Egyesületek és Szervezetek Központi Szövetsége, 1992. p. 43–47.

¹⁶ Borbándi also determined in his 1985 book, that with diminished political activity there is a widening of efforts to preserve the national patrimony, identity consciousness, and intellectual achievement. (Borbándi Gyula *Emigráció és Magyarországnak. Nyugati Magyarok a változások éveiben 1945–1985*. [Political Emigration and Hungary. Western Hungarians in Changing Years 1945–1985.] Európai Magyar Protestáns Szabadegyetem 1985. p. 447.)

¹⁷ For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Bilingual Education Act of 1968.

¹⁸ See Fejős, Zoltán: Magyar szórványok mulietnikus környezetben és az etnikus politika. [The Hungarian Diaspora in a Multiethnic Environment and Ethnic Politics.] In: *Magyarságtudat. Magyarságtudató Intézet Évkönyve*. Budapest, 1989. p. 23–35.

end of the sense of immigrant destiny both contributed to the strengthening of the so-called Community Showcase organizations: preserving Hungarian communities and presenting their heritage to the wider public satisfied both the duty to preserve Hungarian identity and the expectations of American society.

Today, most organizational functions are really geared to responding to the challenge of assimilation. The controversial term “*magyar-kodás*” (a negative term particularly in the current political context of Hungary, loosely translatable as “doing the Hungarian thing”) is, when uttered by Hungarian-Americans, considered a useful form of activism without which organizations cannot exist. Since the process of assimilation is most effective when an individual lives his private and social life free of ethnic and national ideologies, the process may be slowed and delayed by committed intervention in the community setting. If the organizations are to survive, logically they require an unusually intensive degree of activity, which entails considerable commitment in terms of time, energy and often finances from the active individuals. The intensity of commitment is particularly noticeable if we consider that the individual has to respond to not only to assimilation challenges but also fulfill ordinary private duties involving career and family. Upholding and preserving ethnic identity therefore cannot be separated from other segments of social identity. Three routes are possible: 1. Career takes priority, which implies a less intensive process of revitalizing ethnic identity. 2. Maintaining ethnic identity at all cost, with sometimes negative consequences for the career. 3. Finding a balance between the competing goals. In our interviews we found instances of all three cases, though we heard most often that involvement in organizational life implies career failure in some way, or else a tendency toward “counter-selection” of the individuals who become activists and leaders of the community. This does not necessarily mean that those active in organizational life did not build successful careers, rather it means that these individuals get their community experiences and find satisfaction in shared activities not at their jobs, but in the framework of the organization they helped to create.

The relationship between participating in organizational life and maintaining ethnic identity brings the unavoidable question of how to ensure organizational continuity from one generation to the next. By now, it is a widely accepted view that the future leaders for

Hungarians in the West are likely to come from among the scouts. The scouts and the schools they support provide the formative framework to produce the future organizational leaders, that is, the elite of the Hungarian Western diaspora. All identity formation, including the scouts' program, can be successful if it transmits the type of knowledge that the individual can use at various stages and fields of interest of his or her daily life. Just as technical or professional knowledge is built up at various levels of education and satisfy the evolving requirements of the workplace, so Hungarian-related studies can also represent high value if they can be used both in narrower and wider environments. For today's Hungarian-American youth, the practical application of their formative experiences is given a clear boost by the possibility to travel and study in the ancestral homeland. However, a curriculum built on essentially static and rigid concepts of Hungarian nationhood, sometimes even with an ideologically exclusionist outlook, could be outright counterproductive in terms of heritage protection. A good example, and also a warning sign, is the case of Burg Kastl, a Hungarian high school established in 1957 in Bavaria. The goal of the institution was to educate future leaders for the Hungarians of Hungary and of the West. Although the school produced excellent physicians, engineers, lawyers and economists, the participation of Burg Kastl graduates in Hungarian community organizations was disproportionately low. Already in the mid-eighties, Gyula Borbándi observed: „It is as if the education they received at a Hungarian school alienated them from Hungarian concerns and from activities of Hungarian organizations, instead of strengthening bonds or increasing their sense of solidarity.¹⁹ And to make the point more fully – about the pitfalls of a totally self-contained method of ethnic identity formation that lacks nearly any reference to interrelationships with the everyday environment – we must note that this institution closed its doors for good in 2006.

The question therefore emerges: is it possible to preserve ethnic identity and activity in the absence of some kind of ethno-political paradigm? Shoring up ethnic revitalization or fighting assimilation can only be successful if these efforts are linked to a more general and explicitly stated ethno-political conceptual framework and policy of ethnic recog-

¹⁹ Borbándi 1985. p. 338.

inition-building.²⁰ If there is no internal and external assistance for these, then attempts to build and showcase ethnic identity may run into serious hurdles. In the Hungarian-American context, this process of identity revitalization is a difficult undertaking because there is no apparent consensus on a policy of Hungarian ethnic identity-building. We have seen that Hungarian-American institutions and communities are characterized by fragmentation and, in many cases, an ad-hoc nature. The challenges of assimilation crop up in varying and unequal measure; they take on innumerable local particularities. The national organizations are not able to act as overall coordinators, and, in general, the relationship between local communities is so weak that we may even question the very notion of „Hungarian-Americans”, at least in the sense of a social subset. The most startling observation about these organizations is the absence of initiatives that attempt to perform a coordinating function. Although there are umbrella organizations, or organizations that coordinate professional or technical activities, these are, as we have seen, interest groups with limited or incidental reach. The teachers association (AHEA), for instance, does not coordinate the teaching activities of the schools, and the rest of the professional organizations, except for that of the medical doctors, are all but invisible. The Hungarian-language press is fundamentally local, so there is no unified public media. Most organizations focus on local issues; their inception is rooted in the interests of certain individuals rather than as a response to local or general social needs (apart from recognizing the process of assimilation). The organizations, then, do not serve as unifiers of the Hungarian-American community (or the Hungarian minority); their achievements are often tied to the organizational abilities and interests of particular individuals. This is true for national organizations, schools, university-level Hungarian programs, and scout troops alike.

The historian Julianna Puskás reached a similar conclusion from a different research perspective. According to her there are serious challenges to the preservation of Hungarian ethnic identity, and these are not only the result of the small number of communities but also of conflicts among them. According to Puskás, the Hungarian-American community as such exists only as a subject of theoretical research; in reality,

²⁰ There are those who go further: „There is no self-knowledge without recognition, self-identity without function. There is no ethnicity without ethnopolitics, no identity without the politics of identity” Kovács 2003. p. 54.

they are disparate groups that compete, or are adversarial or indifferent toward each other²¹.

3. *Is 'American Hungarian Diaspora' a Diaspora?*

As we have seen there is no such thing as a Hungarian-American community that is organized around a system of common principles. Instead, we have local communities which are able to revitalize ethnic identity with varying degrees of intensity. With the exception of the churches and the scout movement, there is no solidarity or cooperation between the organizations. The Hungarian-American community, then, is not a unified community, but rather a set of „islands” or scattered groups, which are connected to each other psychologically. This connectedness stems in part from its members harboring an ethno-social or diaspora consciousness, and in part by informal networks among the locally based elites.²² For these elites, a sort of mental map exists of Hungarian-American communities that are spread (albeit in varying concentrations) throughout the country. This network among local elites crosses the whole continent, joining the Hungarian communities that are located at great distances from each other. These networks of individuals regularly organize nationwide speaking tours to a series of Hungarian-American local communities for illustrious figures (political or cultural leaders) visiting from Hungary or the surrounding countries. These speaking tours, or more poetically the “peregrination among like-minded souls,” strengthens or potentially strengthens the notion of a unified Hungarian-American community.

According to Károly Nagy, the organization of these speaking tours and the resulting exchanges are one of the most important activities of the Western Hungarian “islands”, in addition to identity preservation, interest-representation and serving as liaisons between their adopted

²¹ „Only in theory we can speak of American Hungarianhood, of an American ethnic community – this notion can be used as an instrument of research. In reality one can only find a great number of competitive groups, who feel aversion or at least indifference to each other. Uprooted or transplanted, both adjectives are valid for great numbers among them.” (Puskás *op.cit.* p. 318)

²² These relationships may also be family-based.

and their ancestral homelands.²³ These functions undoubtedly exist, but we should add that they affect only a certain segment of the elite. In our research we tried to bring in other perspectives, through intensive interviews. Through our conversations, there emerged not only those topics that the activist elite deem important, but also the ethnic and non-ethnic identity issues that stem from the everyday activities of social groups and individuals. True, some of these issues became evident without the conscious intent of the interview subject, or were merely alluded to, but including these points of view in the structure of our documentation may have helped us to present a more complete picture of Hungarian-American organizational life. Through these discourses, we attempted to discover perspectives on the inner life of the communities and their system of relationships, as well as to analyze the abovementioned activities.

The initiatives for preserving ethnic identity continue to this day through the activities of the schools, the scouts, the press and the churches, although the challenge for our research is not just to document these laudable activities, but also to determine, for example, how these schools function (individually and together), what role the scouting association plays in addition to performing their declared and explicit functions, and how the church or the media adjusts to local conditions. In addition, we must give at least a brief answer to the question of whether this organizational universe can be described using the concepts particular to a diaspora, and to the question of whether it can be characterized as operating under its own particular operational logic (known in the sociological literature as “uprooted”), or whether it is just an extension and adaptation – “transplantation” – of experiences brought over from Central Europe.

In our analysis, we consider “diaspora logic” to be the organizational *modus operandi* that developed within the ethnic community, as described by active members of these Hungarian-American organizations. In order to determine whether the various local communities constitute a diaspora, we must first define the diaspora concept. Among the many interpretations of diaspora,²⁴ one of the most comprehensive

²³ Nagy, Károly: *Szigetmagyarság és szolidaritás*. [Scattered Hungarians and Solidarity]. Corvin Kiadó, Montreal, 1988.

²⁴ See Fejős, Zoltán: Diaszpóra és az „amerikai magyarok” – háttér egy fogalom alkalmazhatóságához. [Diaspora and the „Hungarian Americans:” Background to the Use of a Terminology]. In: Kovács, Nóra (ed.), *Tanulmányok a diaszpóráról*

is that of Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau. These researchers defined a diaspora as a community that results from a communal dispersal (usually with political origins), whose members are driven by a collective memory and the desire to preserve their identity. It is also important, however, to consider the historical context of an ethnic or religious community's functioning, since the term "diaspora" only applies to communities which survive over a period of time. In considering how these communities operate, important factors include their relationship with the ancestral homeland and the relationships among the communities that constitute the diaspora.

Our analysis considers all of these factors in addressing the diaspora nature of the Hungarian-American community. The collective dispersal originating in political events is a given, since the current presence of Hungarians in the United States is due, among other things, to immigration, though this immigration includes economic refugees from the 1960's and 1970's, and others who emigrated for economic reasons in the 1990's. This circumstance indicates that the condition of a universal dispersal does not quite apply, since the Hungarian-American communities were replenished over time by ever newer waves of immigrants, whose reasons for immigrating varied. Despite this, the collective memory of these communities did evolve, and continues to be passed on. In our discussion of Hungarian-Americans' impressions of the Hungarian nation, we have seen that this process of passing on collective memory is not universal, yet the varying and competing ideological or cultural conceptions of Hungarian-ness do survive, and in some cases serve to create the institutions (scouting, the churches, schools) which strive to pass on these views and to preserve Hungarian identity. All of these factors tend to support the existence of a Hungarian-American diaspora, though it would be a too-optimistic simplification to simply declare that such a diaspora exists. Indeed, there are important factors which work against the existence of a comprehensive diaspora.

First, it is questionable whether the Hungarian diaspora will pass the test of time. Up till now, the continuity of Hungarian American communities has depended on great political cataclysms. In the absence of

[Studies on Diaspora.] Gondolat, MTA Ethnic and National Minority Research Institute, Budapest, 2004. p. 9–24. Biczó Gábor: A szórványkérdés transznacionális dimenziói és a magyar szórványkutatók. In: Ilyés, Zoltán – Papp, Richárd (ed.) *Tanulmányok a szórványról*. Gondolat, MTA ENKI, Budapest 2005. p. 21–42.

such cataclysms, the survival of Hungarian America will depend solely on the economic immigrants whose Hungarian identity is of varying intensity and, more importantly, whose motivations in immigrating vary widely. Yet these groups alone cannot ensure the continuity of Hungarian-American communities, since the economic immigrants usually arrive to the United States as individuals, to this country in which individualism is so highly prized. Also, the organizational life of these new immigrants is hampered not only by their own motivations, but also by the resistance of the existing communities and the existing organizational framework. The psychological distance between these groups threatens the communities' future, for whom ensuring continuity is a constant problem – one for which no strategy exists, and indeed no strategy is possible.

Second, we must recognize that only a small proportion of Hungarian-Americans participate in the current diaspora communities that are supported by the organizations. If we confine ourselves to the estimates given by our interview subjects, we can say that at most 10 percent of Hungarian-Americans participate in such organizations. Not all of them speak Hungarian, but their connection to a Hungarian community survives. But as we have seen in our discussion of the process of ethnic identity loss, even these groups are fighting a difficult battle against assimilation, and the number of active members of these organizations continues to decline.

Third, as we concluded earlier, we cannot really speak of a unified Hungarian-American community, only of multiple local communities. This “structure” might even be appropriate for sustaining a state of diaspora, but the communities' internal conflicts and the physical and mental divides between sub-groups of these communities do not support the survival and continuity of a state of diaspora. Moreover, while the spread of new communications technologies has, in a few instances, created and maintained new types of communities, generally speaking the internet's capacity for community-building (or diaspora-building) is not being used to its full potential.

Putting all these considerations together, we may conclude that only a certain segment of the Hungarian-American communities can be considered diaspora communities. Diaspora functioning takes place primarily in cases where the communities, centered on organizational life, are self-sustaining and contribute to the preservation of some folk-based

or cultural form of Hungarian-ness. In other words, a particular segment within the larger set of Americans of Hungarian origin constitutes a diaspora community, but we cannot speak of a Hungarian-American diaspora in general, for if there is no organizational participation, or if links to these organizations is not accompanied by a certain level of commitment, then we can only speak of a “sleeping” diaspora, one that will perhaps never be awakened, and which cannot be mobilized. But that segment which does behave like a genuine diaspora is quite vital, despite the pressures toward assimilation. The ethnic identity of those belonging to these communities is nurtured by the active, local, and festive Hungarians and “Hungarians of the heart,” to use the categories described earlier – it is these types of individuals who display the particular emotional and cognitive conditions that generally characterize a diaspora. These diaspora-type communities have developed very specialized modes of functioning – and here we come to the crucial dilemma posed by rootlessness versus transplantation.

4. *Beyond the Uprooted versus Transplanted Dilemma*

In analyzing the character of American ethnic communities, a frequently recurring question is whether these communities are truly independent, both culturally and operationally. There are two general answers to this question. One of them, which favors the interpretation of the communities’ uprootedness,²⁵ posits that the ethnic immigrants to America found themselves in an entirely new environment,²⁶ in which the values they brought from their homelands seemed irrelevant, producing a feeling of great loneliness despite the new emphasis on individualism in the U.S. The immigrants found they could rely only upon themselves. The other interpretation²⁷ contends that the immigrants to

²⁵ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1953.

²⁶ The Hungarian expression „*idegenbe szakadt*”, „wrenched into a foreign environment,” accurately conveys this sense of uprootedness, loneliness, and the rift between the old and new environments.

²⁷ Rudolph Veccoli, *The Contadini in Chicago: A Critic of the Uprooted*. *The Journal of American History*. 1964. Vol. 51. 404–417. John Bodnar *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985. On the specifically Hungarian American experience, see also Fejős, Zoltán: *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890–1940*. [Two Generations

the U.S. never really cut their ties to their homelands, and their activities in the New World can be considered a continuation of their old way of life. Julianna Puskás (cited earlier) and Zoltán Fejős both generally support this second “transplantation” interpretation, though not completely, and both recognize the erosion of ethnic culture. However, our own interviews have apparently led us to conclude that the “uprootedness” thesis is the more accurate analysis.

Upon consideration, however, we believe that these two approaches – uprooted vs. transplanted – cannot really be applied to Hungarian-Americans in a mutually exclusive sense: our analysis of community life, of the small micro-universe which display certain characteristics of diaspora, are more assuredly hybrids: they are unique community cultures which, however, are built upon inherited values.

Undoubtedly, Hungarian American community life is rooted to some extent in experiences from the old homeland. This applies to the churches and to the scouts, but many other organizations – particularly the lobbying groups, the “showcase” and national heritage groups - are less dependent on any such roots in the homeland. These organizations, as we have shown, operate just like American civic groups: they are self-sustaining, and they are based on mutual cooperation and solidarity. The active members of local Hungarian communities fulfill their needs for civic and social life through these organizations. This is partly sustained by these groups’ middle-class and ethnic foundations – as seen, for example, in the widespread custom of balls and dances. These factors differ markedly from recent social customs in East Central Europe, even though the post-Communist societies experienced an upswing in civic activity.

Leaving aside the organizational framework, it is important to consider the Hungarian worldview and attitudes of these activist Hungarian-Americans. With respect to their Hungarian worldview (i.e. their conception of “Hungarian-ness”), we have seen that the Hungarian American mentality of these leaders does not include (for ideological and cultural reasons) the multi-faceted cultural life of present-day Hungary – it only includes those cultural elements that are in sync with their

of Hungarians in Chicago 1890–1940.]. Central European Institute, Budapest, 1993., Gyáni, Gábor: Könyvszemle. Puskás, Julianna: Kivándorlás és az amerikai magyarság sorsa. [Book Review. Julianna Puskás: Emigration and the Fate of Hungarian Americans.] *Magyar Tudomány* 2001/4.

concept of higher culture or “pure” folk/popular culture. With respect to attitudes, as we have seen, interviews with Hungarian-American leaders in many cases have created a social divide between themselves and the Hungarians from Hungary as well as the new immigrants from Hungary (who have come for economic reasons). This divide between Hungarians who were born in the United States and those who have newly immigrated is ever-growing.

Putting together the particularities of the organizations and the attitudes of the active individuals, we see that the result is a community that points to a sort of American-style, ethnic-based independence – in short, the American spirit prevails. It is into this context that Hungarian symbols and Hungarian values are placed. One might say they have been “transplanted,” but in fact these symbols and values continue to evolve in their new context. A map of greater Hungary, a folk song or even an expression (like the differing interpretations of the phrase “magyarkodás”) means different things in a Hungarian-American context than they do in Hungary. True, the internet promotes the impression of transplanting, for the symbols of modern-day Hungary become easily and instantly available half a world away, yet these symbols are used selectively by Hungarian-Americans, and adapted into the local institutional framework that has evolved in an essentially rootless context.

The argument in favor of the “uprooted” nature of Hungarian-American organizations is further supported by their diaspora nature. If we contend that a diaspora can be identified with reference to its organizational life, then we must be able to identify a *modus operandi* that is peculiar to those organizations – because “diaspora” implies, to a certain extent, a rootless nature; it is this rootlessness that defines or legitimizes a community’s characterization as a diaspora. Just as a community must pass the test of time to be considered a diaspora, so does its rootless nature require the passage of time before it evolves or becomes apparent. Over the past century, ever-newer waves of Hungarian immigrants have arrived, who did not let the existing organizations to become entirely rootless. But it is likely that in the future, the organizations that are maintained by Hungarians born in the United States will more clearly display their rootless characteristic – that is, a truly specialized *modus operandi*. There are, even now, signs of this particularity.

For example, the organizations created to maintain ethnic identity – as described earlier – actually function as cultural, static institutions that

aim to preserve and pass on unchanging values: they serve to maintain the community. Scouting explicitly strives to maintain traditional values; the schools strive to preserve the Hungarian language; the media tries to maintain the community; and other local organizations support these efforts and similarly aim to preserve the ethnic communities. And they do this in a constantly changing, fast-paced nation that is at the forefront of globalization. In this context, we see the Hungarian American organizations as a kind of “pressure valve”, a response to the psychological pressures of voluntary or forced emigration. Although most of these activities occur in the Hungarian language, these volunteer-based free-time activities, which have adapted the ethos of American-style community groups, have the effect on the whole of integrating Hungarian-Americans into the wider society. In other words, Hungarian activities actually strengthen the active individuals’ integration into American life, and the Hungarian-American communities are just one more part of the United States’ pluralistic culture. Today, Hungarian-American organizations have developed their own operational logic which differs from the institutional life of the ancestral homeland, although this development varied over time, and was affected by political and administrative factors. For example, the way the Hungarian-American churches operate is similar to that of the American churches; the scouts are sometimes confounded by their counterparts in Hungary, who are “not Hungarian enough”; the press is isolated from the internet-fueled growth of the world of Hungarian media; Hungarian-American schools make little use of professional experience from Hungary; and the values held by the organizations are in many respects much narrower than the values of today’s Hungary (Hungarian-Americans’ music is dominated by folk music and operettas; the values of scouting are antithetical to modern youth culture, etc.).

Based on all these considerations, it is safe to say that after a period of uprootedness, Hungarian-American ethnic culture as generated by its organizations has by now become largely rootless. Although the symbolism used by this culture also exists in Hungary, Hungarian-American culture is unique, and its institutions do not resemble the workings of similar institutions in Hungary. The adopted symbols used by Hungarian-Americans acquire a different meaning in their new context: what in the U.S. is Hungarian, or appears to be Hungarian (churches, organizations, festivals) are in fact very American.

The organizations' response to the pressures of assimilation relies on a particularly American mixture of self-reliance, rootlessness, and preservation of existing cultural patterns. Self-reliance means that individuals recognize their own problems and those of their community; they act to manage these problems; and in all this the American example of volunteer community cooperation is of great assistance. The community creates its own self-sustaining organizations, based on volunteerism, mutual trust, and solidarity. But in the absence of direct experience, the new organizational structure is characterized by a kind of "permanent ad-hoc" nature. The ability of such organizations to gain strength over time is hampered by the fact that the various groups of immigrants, who all bring their different backgrounds and varying immigrant experiences, create their own organizations. As a result, the continuity of the organizations is brought into question and their internal structures easily falls apart. Exceptions to this tendency are the highly structured organizations with explicit rules – those "built on the ten commandments" (e.g. churches, scouts). But overall, most organizations are personality-based – that is, they hinge on the selfless efforts of one or two dedicated individuals. This factor, as other researchers have noted, does not at all detract from these organizations' worth, but it is certainly a particularity of their *modus operandi* that deserves notice.²⁸

5. *American Hungarian Public Life as Provincialism and Locality*

In the absence of firm foundations and professional management, and due to the constant conflicts arising among them, these organizations cannot work effectively enough; often they are characterized by a kind of provincialism. The oft-mentioned conflicts are most often due to denigration of another person's background, an overemphasis on personalities, the ina-

²⁸ This is also noted by Gyula Borbándi, a scholar of Western Hungarians, including the Hungarian-American organizations: „Most studies on the activities and achievements of the ethnic communities in the West give little mention to the individual and communal achievements of the „one-man show” institutions, but this author would like to call attention to the value and importance of the contributions of these unnamed Hungarians.” (Borbándi Gyula *Emigráció és Magyarország. Nyugati Magyarok a változások éveiben 1985–1995*. [Political Emigration and Hungary. Western Hungarians in Changing Years 1985–1995.].Európai Magyar Protestáns Szabadegyetem 1996. p. 54.)

bility to communicate dispassionately, and a kind of permanent oversensitivity. In such situations, an individual's identity becomes a hypersensitive issue, leading the individual to seek out situations in which he can validate his identity.²⁹ The term "provincialism" is also not used here as a value judgment, but rather as a particular characteristic that is best described by the scenario of "agonizing tribes" whose situation is neither urbanized nor rural.³⁰ The "neither city nor village" scenario is a good metaphor for the particular contradiction that characterizes Hungarian-American communities: while they are located in a country that is at the forefront of globalization, often in or near metropolises and urban centers, or else physically at great distances from each other, their behavior and face-to-face style of communication suggests a close proximity characteristic of village interactions. The conflict between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Toennies) – that is, community and society – is resolved by a provincialness that we also noted during our interviews: our interview subjects, even when literally surrounded by skyscrapers, often spoke as if they were chatting about the everyday activities in a village. It is as if the huge geographical distances do not exist in their minds. Thus, the narratives about the Hungarian-American organizations remained at a localized level. The interviewees speaking on behalf of their communities seemed to be seeking the security of the long-lost village amid the alienation of the concrete jungle. Put another way: they seem to be seeking a people-friendly little green oasis in the vast alienating desert of American life.³¹ This is the imagined location, the province, in which most Hungarian-American communities still exist. But the perception of stability underlying these communities is continually threatened by the ever-returning thought: we are diminishing, and will become extinct. The agonizing caused by the oft-cited demographic crisis is becoming more prevalent, and this worry is not only on behalf of Hungary and the Hungarians of Central Europe, but also their own Hungarian-American communities. This threatened feeling affects the internal life of the organizations, but in an apparent contradiction, does not result in an atmosphere of panic – at most, it is a source of disagreements; it does not, however, spur – in each cases – the organizations to

²⁹ On the negative strategy of assimilation, see Csepeli *op. cit.* p. 523.

³⁰ See Konstantinovic, Radomir: *A vidék filozófiája*. (The Philosophy of the Province.) Forum (Novi Sad), Kijarat (Budapest).

³¹ For the use and explanation of the metaphor of America as a desert, see Baudrillard, Jean: *Amerika*. Magvető, Budapest, 1996.

any initiatives to shore up their institutions. Instead, the agonizing spirit characteristic of a provincial community just sweeps the feeling of threat under the rug and calmly sits on it. And the very fact that there are a few individuals who raise their voices against this situation demonstrates that these organizations are not undertaking an honest self-assessment; there are no generally accepted strategies for how the time frame of the inevitable process of assimilation might be lengthened.

We have often used the term “local” to describe the Hungarian-American communities and the manner in which their organizations operate. For the most part, we use the word “local” in the sense defined by Appadurai, who states that locality is a phenomenological characteristic which is expressed through the ability to take action, the impulse to join forces, and the ability to reproduce itself as a community, and which provides a structure for an individual’s emotional makeup. In today’s globalizing world, with migration on a global scale, it is important to understand locality as not strictly or exclusively tied to geographical location. This implies the deterritorialization of localities, and also emphasizes the existence of translocal communities: these communities extend beyond the bounds of physical proximity, yet still embody the type of locality expressed in “the spirit of a place.” At the same time, it is important to distinguish between locality and proximity: while the former is based upon a kind of local knowledge, the latter means physical closeness and actually existing social forms (through which locality might be expressed, though not necessarily). According to Appadurai, the key question is how to create the locally based knowledge that is capable of recreating locality even amid anxiety and entropy, the erosion of social structures and constant change.³²

Using Appadurai’s terms, we may easily conclude that the deterritorialization of localities – i.e., the existence of communities that are not limited by geographical place – applies to the great majority of Hungarian-Americans, as a result of the changes in the ethnic geography of American cities. The Hungarian-American organizations may be considered, in this construct, to be proximities that embody a locality that provides (a segment of) Hungarian-Americans with an identity and a structure for emotional ties. As with every other locality, this one faces the challenges posed by a globalized media and the internet, which

³² See Appadurai, Arjun: *Creating Locality*. Regio 2001/3.

in our case means – among other things – that new communications technologies can theoretically bring immigrant Hungarians and their descendents closer to the ancestral homeland – with all the positive and negative effects of this proximity. Such communications can expand the locality concept to include a global-national dimension, but this dimension can also erode the neighborhoods and exacerbate local conflicts.³³ With respect to textual media, as mentioned earlier, new communications technologies make it easier to produce these texts, but the extent to which they are read, and by whom, becomes more uncertain: today, it is all too easy to publish information that is useless in the creation of local knowledge. But the locality remains, and the “spirit of the place” continues to rule the media and its assessment.

Similarly, we can place the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad into this framework. The scouts embody the ethos of “glocalization” two times over. First, on an ideological level: scouting is a global movement, but within this framework, the Hungarian scouts have pledged to preserve national goals in keeping with diaspora logic. Second, on an organizational level: while the Hungarian Scout Association Abroad is a global organization, its functioning is based on localities: the scout localities create the geographically determined neighborhoods, so that its local troops are active participants in the local Hungarian communities. And again, we can use this framework in considering the formerly “buffer” or transitional Hungarian-American organizations, such as the churches. But the big issue facing the lobbying and professional organizations is this: are they capable of creating localities? Our interviews indicate that they are not. And for this reason, it seems that these organizations may be struggling with a crisis of legitimacy from the point of view of the Hungarian American communities, since the organizations are neither able to act as integrators nor to participate in creating local knowledge.

The great challenge facing Hungarian-American organizations in general is whether, following the above-described cultural transition, they are able to create or recreate local (Hungarian) knowledge. For the most part, the answers to this seemingly rhetorical question cited the demographic decline among the local elites, assimilation, the lack of new members, the destructive internal conflicts, and fears that the

³³ For example, if the local participants have differing interpretations of a current political event in Hungary.

organizations purporting to unify the Hungarian-American communities lack the necessary strength. Finally, it will be a remaining question that Hungarian-American communities and decision-makers in Hungary would be able to make the necessary decisions in the interest of ensuring a longer time-frame for the survival of these communities.

REVIEW

ANDERS BLOMQVIST

Hungarian Elite Strategy and Discourse in Interwar Romania

Ferenc Sz. Horváth: *Elutasítás és alkalmazkodás között. A Romániai magyar kisebbségi elit politikai stratégiái (1931–1940)*¹
[Between rejection and accommodation. The political strategy of the Hungarian elite in Romania (1931–1940)] Csíksz-
ereda: Pro-Print, 2007.

In his dissertation,² Ferenc Horváth explores the political discourses, orientations and strategies of the Hungarian elite in Romania in the interwar period. The focus is on the Hungarian elite's responses and strategies in reaction to Romanian nationalisation efforts and to right-wing ideas and influences, especially from Nazi Germany, in the 1930's. The author's motives for studying the Hungarian minority elite is that it was the largest one in Romania and that its political activities constituted a serious threat [to the interwar status quo] because of its relations with the revisionistic homeland (Hungary). Apart from the more obvious revisionist ideas, the author points out different streams of ideas within the Hungarian minority, ranging from radical left to the extreme right, including the perhaps lesser known anti-Semitic ideas. This diversity of responses created a major challenge for the Hungarian

¹ This is the Hungarian translation of the German original; Horváth, Franz Sz.: *Zwischen Ablehnung und Anpassung : Politische Strategien der ungarischen Minderheitselite in Rumänien 1931–1940*. München: Ungarisches Institut, (Studia Hungarica: Schriften des Ungarischen Instituts München, 50), 2007.

² Defended at the Heidelberg University.

minority party to maintain unity and to mobilise the votes of all ethnic Hungarians in the elections.

In the introduction, the author gives an overview of the political strategies of the Hungarian elite in the 1920's as well as a theoretical and methodological orientation. The framework can briefly be described as the process of nation-building by the majority and the different reactions and positions taken by the minority.³ These positions are similar to the ideal-types taken from Ernest Gellner's typology (including migration, assimilation and irredentism), in which the last two positions have been extended by A. D. Smith's typology into four: isolation, communitarity, cultural autonomy and separation.⁴

This conceptual framework fits very well with the empirical findings, even though it is rather conventional. The study itself is also conventional, focusing on one ethnic group and its elite. However, it fills an important empirical gap in the research on the Hungarian elite, and the use of a conceptual model makes it possible to easily compare this research with research on other minorities.⁵ The study is based on solid and well-documented empirical work, including extensive primary research involving multiple sources, including documents, newspaper and private collections.⁶

The first chapter covers the beginning of the 1930's, when political ideas were very diverse: they ranged from left-wing young liberals open to negotiating with the centre in Bucharest, to a right-wing Christian direction that rejected any cooperation with the state and also espoused anti-Semitic views. The Hungarian party played a double role: they turned to Bucharest for redress against grievances, while also negotiating with Budapest in making future plans for autonomy.

³ For nationalist politics, see,

⁴ Gellner, Ernest: *Nationalismus und Moderne*, Hamburg, 1995; Smith, Anthony D: *The Ethnical Revival*. Cambridge, 1981. In this vein see also, Hirschmann: Albert: *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970.

⁵ Earlier studies: Mikó, Imre: *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története*, Budapest, 1941.; Lengyel Zsolt K.: *Auf der Suche nach dem Kompromiss. Ursprünge und Gestalten des frühen Transsilvanismus, 1918–1928*. München, 1993; Bárdi, Nándor: "A romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai stratégiái a két világháború között. *Regio*, No. 2, 1997, pp. 32–67.

⁶ My only remark here is that ethnic demographic data has references to several secondary sources instead of one reference to the primary source. See for example on p. 65 regarding the Romanian census of 1930.

The second chapter describes events during the rule of the National Liberal Party (1934–37), an era in which the positions of the Hungarians became more unified as the Romanian nationalisation policy intensified. The Hungarian party advocated a policy of self-sufficiency and rejection, and hoped for revisionism. This rejectionism was demonstrated in 1937 with the “It is not possible”-debate initiated by Sándor Makkai, in which he stated that the life of a minority was unworthy of humans.⁷ This rejection showed that parts of the minority did not see their future in Romania, but instead desperately hoped for a change of borders. Right-wing ideas based on populism and Christian exclusiveness, combined with racial anti-Semitism and open support of the National Socialist propaganda, gained importance among the Hungarian elite. This was coupled with support for Nazi German foreign policy, in the hopes of gaining support for a revisionist program.

The last chapter focuses on the period of the Royal Dictatorship (1938–40), a time when the Hungarian minority formed its own national community. Its leadership had strong connections with Budapest. During this last phase, the relationship between Hungarians and Jews broke down as the Hungarian elite followed the anti-Semitic developments in Hungary, which had already imposed two anti-Jewish laws in 1939. The Hungarian elite in Romania and Hungary both supported Nazi Germany’s foreign policy – support which bore fruit in 1940 when half of Transylvania was annexed to Hungary. The long wait for this unification was depicted by the title of Imre Mikó’s book: *Twenty-two years*.⁸

In my view the dissertation is well written and based on original empirical findings. It convincingly demonstrates the diversity of Hungarian political positions and how they were influenced by Romanian, Hungarian and international political trends, especially from Nazi Germany.

In the following I would like to make some critical remarks and discuss some alternative views on this topic. These are not necessary direct criticism of the study itself, but rather alternative ways of approaching this topic.

Even though the title indicates that the thesis is about strategies, I believe that the empirical parts of the study – based to a large extent on newspaper articles – are more accurately described as discourses and

⁷ Cseke, Péter (ed). *Nem lehet. A kisebbségi sors vitája*. Budapest, 1989.

⁸ Mikó, Imre: *Huszonzét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története*, Budapest, 1941

debates in relation to possible strategies, rather than a full analysis of possible strategies at any given time. I think that the socio-economic aspects of these collective strategies as well as the personal interests of the leaders are not fully integrated into the analysis. Many of the leaders of the Hungarian minority had certain economic interests – for instance, some of them lost their property during the land reform of 1921. This was framed by the Hungarian party as a grievance of the whole Hungarian minority, despite the fact that some landless Hungarians actually received land as a result of the reform. The elite's economic interests are also reflected in the program of support received from Hungary, which – for example – provided financial support to specific ethnic Hungarian companies, indicating that the support was not always equally distributed within the Hungarian minority.⁹

The elite had strong ties with Hungary, and the minority received substantial economic support. They also filed grievances with the League of Nations. Members of the Hungarian elite always had political and economic incentives to portray the situation as grimly as possible, as a way to gain support. In the elite-driven dual processes of ethnic division in Romania, the Hungarian minority excluded itself and was excluded from the Romanian society, and opted for inclusion into the Hungarian political and cultural nation. In this process, economic factors played a role, as Hungary was expected to secure and restore the former economic and political position of the minority elite. However, in order to fully understand the political positions within this process it is also necessary to analyse the modes of revisionism within Hungary itself.¹⁰

I believe that relational and comparative approaches can be useful in understanding historical processes that are complex and involve sensitive national/ethnic issues.¹¹ The problem with focusing on one ethnic group is that the results can be inward looking and ethnocentric. How-

⁹ See for example the Hítel Akció within Keleti Akció MOL P 1077

¹⁰ Weaver, Eric Beckett: "Revision and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon 1931–8" D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2008; Zeidler, Miklós: *Ideas on territorial revision in Hungary 1920–1945*, Boulder, Colorado, 2007.

¹¹ Constantin, Iordachi, "Entangled Histories: Re-thinking the History of Central and Southeastern Europe from a Relational Perspective. *Regio*, 2004, pp. 113–147; Werner, Michael and Zimmermann, Bénédicte "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity" *History and Theory*, 45, February 2006, pp. 30–50.

ever, in this case I believe that the author's results can be used easily in comparative research, as he has applied a conceptual model.

It would be interesting to compare the results of this study with the Romanian minority during the dualist period, as there are some similarities: for example, the shift between active and passive politics, struggle for implementation of minority rights/laws, social and economic tensions within the minority party itself, development of cultural and political contacts with their home-state, international protests and propaganda, etc. This kind of comparison can show the continuity and effects of nationalistic politics, which I believe are important for understanding developments during the 1930's as well.¹²

Another way of doing comparative studies would be to compare relations between different ethnic groups.¹³ Even though this study includes both Jews and Hungarians, it focuses on the Hungarian standpoints vis-à-vis the Jews and not their relational aspects as viewed from both groups. I think that the finding about anti-Semitism among the Hungarian elite is an interesting aspect. However, in order to understand this development we must also view it from the Jewish perspective to see what their strategies and options were (e.g. migration, Zionism, communalism, isolation and accommodation). Because of the Holocaust, it is all too easy to impute a passive and victimised role to the Jews as early as the 1930's.

Regarding specific ethnic relations, I think it is also important to have a local perspective.¹⁴ In my research in Satu Mare,¹⁵ I did not come across any open anti-Semitism among the Hungarian minority in the 1930's. Hungarian-Jewish relations only deteriorated after 1940, and even then, some of the Jewish elite received some protection. I think that local studies are suitable for studying ethnic relations, as most of the literature on Hungarian, Jewish and Romanian ethnicity/national-

¹² Bíró, Sándor: *The Nationalities Problem in Transylvania*, Boulder, Colorado, 1992, covers both periods, but he is not as critical to the Hungarian rule as for instance Jászi, Oszkár: *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 1929, Chicago, 1929.

¹³ Glass, Hildrun: *Zerbrochene Nachbarschaft. Das deutsch-jüdische Verhältnis in Rumänien, 1918–1938*, München, 1996.

¹⁴ Brubaker, Rogers et al, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, Princeton, New Jersey, 2006; Hausleitner, Mariana: *Die Rumänisierung der Bukowina*, München, 2001.

¹⁵ In Hungarian: Szatmárnémeti.

ism mainly treat only one of the groups/categories. Our knowledge will increase if we apply comparative and relational approaches.

The author provides a short introduction to every chapter in which the general situation is described. What is somewhat lacking from these introductions is the factor of socio-economic development and particularly the impact of the economic depression. Instead of viewing right-wing ideas as an influence of German policy, these ideas might be seen more as reactions to the general socio-economic situation which affected the entire world. It is also important to note that the anti-Jewish laws and measures targeted the economic and social activities of Jews. I therefore believe that social and economic factors played an important role in the development of anti-Semitism.

To conclude, I think that the dissertation has made an important contribution to the study of the strategies and discourses of the Hungarian elite in interwar Romania and definitely fills an important gap. The conceptual framework works well with the empirical findings, which can easily be useful in making comparisons with other elites. However, I believe that the role of the socio-economic factor at all levels, for society in general, for the minority elite as a collective and for its individuals, needs to be taken more thoroughly into account in the analysis, in order to understand the strategies of the Hungarian elite as they range from rejection to accommodation.

AUTHORS

ANDERS BLOMQVIST

Historian, Baltic and East European Graduate School,
Södertörn University College, Flemingsberg, Sweden

VERONIKA KASZÁS

Historian, PhD-student, ELTE, Budapest, Hungary

LEVENTE PAKOT

Historian, ELTE, Atelier, Department of European
Historiography and Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

ATTILA PAPP Z.

Sociologist, research fellow, Hungarian Academy of Science,
Institute for Ethnic and National Minority Studies, Budapest,
Hungary

BÉLA RÉVÉSZ

Senior research fellow, University of Szeged, Faculty
of Law, Department of Political Sciences, Szeged, Hungary

ENDRE SIK

Sociologist, ELTE, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Budapest, Hungary

JUDIT TÓTH

Associate Professor of Law, University of Szeged,
Faculty of Law, Szeged, Hungary

