

SUB-ETHNIC IDENTITIES: RELIGION, CLASS, IDEOLOGY, ETC. AS CENTRIFUGAL FORCES IN HUNGARIAN-CANADIAN SOCIETY

NANDOR F. DREISZIGER

Royal Military College of Canada

“The essence of an ethnic group”, remarked Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer in their book *Coming Canadians*, is a sense of identity”. They go on to qualify this by saying that an ethnic group “is not a tightly closed group”, that often its members have “some degree of choice of ethnic allegiance”.¹ What these authors, as well as many other students of ethnic affairs fail to stress in their discussion of ethnic allegiances is that members of such groups often have identities within their ethnic identity that divide them into sub-groups. It seems that students of ethnic studies have tended to concentrate on what cultural and societal factors bring individuals together into ethnic groups, at the expense of examining the circumstances that separate their members into clusters of individuals that have distinct identities within a particular ethnic community. Indeed, systematic analyses of these sub-ethnic divisions within Canadian ethnic groups apparently have not been undertaken, although the late Professor Robert Harney was preparing an issue of the journal *Polyphony* that was dedicated to this theme.² It is certain, however, that no such study of the Hungarian community of Canada has been published.³

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to fill this gap — tentatively at least — in the literature. This will be done through the examination of both the more evident factors that break this ethnic group into subdivisions — such as religion, social class, political ideology, and local particularisms imported from the old country — as well as some of the less obvious ones, such as a sense of identity imposed by a common experience in the immigration process, and Canadian regional loyalties acquired after settlement in the new homeland.

Although individual Hungarians or small groups of them had started to arrive in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century, the bulk of Canada’s Hungarian community is the product of four waves or “streams” of Magyar immigration. The first came during and immediately after the turn of the century. The second and much larger wave came between 1924 and 1930. The third was made up of postwar “displaced persons” who came during 1948–52, and the fourth stream was composed of “refugees” who arrived during 1956–57. While members of these waves made up much of Hungarian immigration to Canada, it should be noted that Hungarians continued to arrive in smaller numbers throughout the first half of the twentieth century, with the exception of the time period of the two world wars when immigration to this country from most of East Central Europe was banned.⁴

Hungarian Studies 7/1–2 1991/92
Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

In 1990 people of Hungarian background number over 150 000 in Canada. Over half of them can be found in the Province of Ontario, but there are also significant numbers of them in Quebec, British Columbia, and the prairie provinces. Most Hungarian Canadians live in Canada's large cities: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and Hamilton.⁵ In terms of occupational distribution, Hungarians can be found in all walks of Canadian life, ranging from manual work to the professions.

Like most Canadian immigrant groups, the Hungarian-Canadian community has been divided in many ways ever since the establishment of the first Hungarian settlements near the end of the nineteenth century. The most obvious of these divisions are along religious, social and ideological lines. Often these differentiations between subsections of the Hungarian-Canadian community have been inherited from old country — in the case of Hungarians, the Carpathian Basin of East Central Europe. Sometimes, these subdivisions have been affected by Canadian conditions, or the impact of the emigrant experience. In a few cases, as a result of the evolution of the group in Canada, certain sub-ethnic identities appeared among Hungarian Canadians that have no parallels or equivalents in Hungarian society in the old country. One further preliminary remark that should be made on this subject is that the nature of Hungarian-Canadian society's subdivisions has kept changing throughout its century-old existence. Intra-ethnic divisions, sub-ethnic allegiances kept shifting in nature and intensity. A centrifugal force that had a dominant role in this group's evolution at one time might not have been a significant force earlier and again might have lost its importance at a later date.

An examination of the evolution of all the complex divisions of Hungarian-Canadian society through its more than one-hundred-year history could fill a volume. In a paper such as this not much more can be done than to offer an overview of the subject, highlighting significant aspects of the topic that prove interesting, or have been poorly understood in the past. It should be added that any investigation of this subject should begin with a survey of the most relevant and important of such phenomena in the old country. As is well known to students of Hungarian history, the most prominent divisions of Hungarian society in East Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were those that pertained to religion, class and ideology. The division of the population of Hungary, and especially the pre-1918 "old" Kingdom of Hungary, into various nationalities need not be considered, as our study is confined largely to an investigation of the characteristics of the Magyar ethnic group.

Religion

The most persistent and clearly identifiable rifts within Hungarian-Canadian society through the ages have been religious in nature. Religious attitudes and practices have been brought to Canada by Hungarian immigrants from their mother country. Only in a few cases has the immigrant experience altered these traditions or the religious al-

legiance of Hungarian settlers in Canada. For this reason it is useful to take a glance at the religious scene of the lands where Canada's Hungarians had come from.

Simple and straightforward statistics on the religious subdivision of Hungary's population are not easy to offer as these have varied greatly throughout the ages. Certain historical events had drastic effect on the size of certain religious groups in Hungary. The Treaty of Trianon detached regions from Hungary where there were large Calvinist, Greek Orthodox, and Unitarian populations. And, during the Hungarian holocaust, the country's Jewry was decimated everywhere except in Budapest. Nevertheless, it might be said for the purposes of a brief paper that roughly between two-thirds and three-quarters of Hungarians are members of the Roman Catholic Church, while the remainder is made up mostly of members of various Protestant faiths (in particular Calvinists and Lutherans). In some parts of Hungary, however, other denominations could be found: Greek Orthodox in the northeastern countries, Jews in cities, especially in Budapest.

In Hungary, religious groups were often separated from each other geographically. Even in districts of mixed religions, many villages were populated by people belonging mainly to one. In other villages or towns people of two (or more) different religions co-habited, sometimes living in different parts of the settlement. (These communities could be identified by travelers from a distance, as their skyline was dominated by two or more churches.) Only in some industrial and commercial centres was there a real mixture of religious denominations.

In Canada's Hungarian-populated districts, the situation was different. True, in the early years of Hungarian settlement in the country — especially on the Canadian prairies — there were some purely Catholic, or Calvinist, or Baptist settlements. Later, however, especially in the cities, Hungarian newcomers settled without regard to religion. As a result, most of Canada's Hungarian communities were religiously mixed. Catholics, Protestants, and others co-existed in any given geographical area. In every newly emerging colony of Hungarian immigrants, the members had to work out the problems of the inter-relationship of various religions, and their respective role and influence in Hungarian ethnic affairs.

There was still another reason why the question of religious divisions was more complicated for the Hungarian—Canadian community than it had been for Hungarian society in Hungary. In Canada many Protestant churches became divided over Church Union. In the mid-1920s, a movement for the union of Canada's Methodist, Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches resulted in the creation of the United Church of Canada. Church Union split the Presbyterian Church, including the country's Hungarian Calvinists. Some of their congregations joined the United Church, while others remained with their old church. And the same was to some extent true of Hungarian Lutherans in Canada. Some of their congregations joined the new church, but others gravitated towards the Hungarian Lutheran Church of America.⁶

Once settled in Canada, Hungarian immigrants made strenuous efforts to resume their religious life if at all possible in the manner they were used to in the old country. This meant the establishment of ethnic congregations, headed by Hungarian, or at least

by Hungarian-speaking clergy. In this process certain Protestant communities (Baptists, Presbyterians) tended to have more luck, as their churches were more tolerant of congregations organized "from below" and administered in a populist fashion. The Roman Catholic Church in Canada was disinclined to allow these practices. Catholics were welcome in already existing parishes, or parishes that were newly established for all newcomers, but "ethnic" parishes — especially those led by newly arrived clergymen — were frowned upon. Indeed, in some parts of Canada, French-Canadian priests were anxious to enroll Hungarian newcomers in parishes controlled by the Francophone church hierarchy, in order to lessen the chance of immigrant Catholic groups being assimilated into Anglophone society.⁷

During the 1920s and 1930s many Hungarian-Canadian communities established their religious organizations. Some Canadian churches were instrumental in this. For example, the newly founded United Church of Canada undertook missionary work among immigrant groups and helped their congregations in various ways. As far as work among Hungarians was concerned this help included the training of several Hungarian ministers, and the launching and subsidization of Hungarian-language religious periodicals. For the Catholics, success came later, as members of Canada's Catholic hierarchy continued to be reluctant to allow the establishment of ethnic parishes. Nevertheless, after the creation of lay organizations of Hungarian Catholics, the founding of their parishes usually followed. When numerous Hungarian priests and ministers arrived in the country in the aftermath of World War II, organized religious life among the country's Hungarian communities underwent still another expansion.

It is clear that religious differences divided Hungarian Canadians into sub-groups, and it is not difficult to find evidence that these differences had an impact on the community beyond the realm of spiritual affairs. One of its effects was that it fragmented community efforts and sapped the Hungarian-Canadian society's energies and resources in many centres. Each Hungarian-Canadian ethnic church sponsored its own Sunday school, organized its own "socials", sponsored its own public lectures, and lobbied Canadian church or municipal officials. In some cases competition between the Magyar ethnic churches damaged their community affairs, such as when social or religious functions were organized with a view to keeping people from attending a function organized by another ethnic church, and when the leaders of these ethnic churches lobbied against each other when dealing with the Canadian religious establishment or City Hall. One contemporary Hungarian-Canadian observer lamented that in some Canadian cities several Protestant clergymen competed for the allegiance of immigrant Magyars who were so few in number that they might not have been capable of maintaining a single viable congregation.⁸ And religious rivalries permeated the group's politics as well. Toward the end of the 1920s, when Hungarian-Canadians had finally managed to set up a Canada-wide umbrella organization of their own, the Hungarian Canadian Federation, some detractors of the new body claimed that it was unworthy of representing the entire community since it was dominated by Calvinists.⁹

As time passed, the hold of the ethnic churches on the everyday life of Hungarian immigrants Canada gradually declined. In the mid-twentieth century, the ideological

conflict within Hungarian—Canadian society assumed much greater importance than inter-religious rivalries. The increasing secularization of both Hungarian and Canadian societies has also reduced the influence of the churches. Nevertheless, even nowadays Hungarian Canada's ethnic churches are important and influential in this ethnic group's affairs.

Social Class

Probably second in importance to religious divisions in Hungarian—Canadian society have been divisions based on class. This statement is especially true of the period from the 1920s to the 1950s, because of the arrival in Canada of people from all of Hungary's social classes. As wealth and, especially, social pretensions were brought to this country by Hungarian immigrants, an examination of the subject of social class in Hungarian—Canadian society should also start with a look at the Hungarian scene.

Nineteenth-century Hungarian society was notoriously class ridden, and social differentiations persisted during the interwar period. The social pretensions of the upper classes were matched by the generally-held expectation that the lower classes keep their place on the bottom rung of the social ladder. After the communist takeover following World War II, Hungary's new rulers conducted a systematic and brutal campaign to rid the country of the old class system, a campaign which amounted to a persecution of Hungary's upper and even middle classes. Landed estates were expropriated, financial and industrial enterprises were nationalized, the properties of the middle class (shops, rental properties, professional practices, etc.) were taken over by the state. In the countryside, kulaks (successful peasants) were harassed and country folk were driven into collectives. In this process, the bulk of Hungary's population became a brutalized proletariat, a large pool of labour for the country's artificially fostered heavy industry. Ironically, in this process there emerged a new class of privileged individuals serving the communist state.

The first Hungarian settlers in Canada hailed from the lower classes, from among the country's peasants or miners. Though there was a scattering of middle-class elements in this first influx of newcomers, their numbers did not foster conflict within Hungarian—Canadian settlements. The situation changed after the First World War. At that time a more substantial portion of Hungarian immigrants to Canada consisted of middle- and upper-class elements. Though Canadian immigration regulations gave preference to agricultural labourers, some Hungarians with money to start large-scale farming operations were admitted, while others of the gentry entered claiming they were peasants. It should be added that most of these people were refugees from the territories that had been detached from Hungary in the postwar peace settlement, and many had been landowners there before the war.

The arrival of "gentlemen" into communities of "ordinary folk" created some friction. Many of the former were disinclined to make a living through the backbreaking labour associated with homesteading, or mining, and took to selling life insurance or acting as agents for steamship companies. Fairly soon, the sentiments of some lower-

class Hungarian Canadians turned against these "men in trousers". The fact that some of these men gained prominence in certain conservative organizations, such as the above-mentioned Hungarian Canadian Federation, undoubtedly helped to propel some working-class Hungarian Canadians into leftist organizations.¹⁰

A still more critical situation developed in the wake of the Second World War. The post-war wave of Hungarian immigration to Canada included a very large contingent of middle- and upper-class elements. These were people who had fled Hungary when the Red Army advanced through the country in 1944–45. They were members of the establishment: bureaucrats, military officers, industrialists, professionals, etc. Their integration into a Hungarian–Canadian society composed largely of working-class people did not go without difficulties. Even the manners of these newly arrived people upset some old-timers. The Reverend Károly (Charles) Steinmetz, a Protestant clergyman explained that to the members of his congregation he had always been "Nagytiszteletes Úr" (loosely translated: The Reverend, Sir), even though he had known some of them for two decades. The aristocratic newcomers, however, soon after arrival in Toronto, began calling him *Karcsikám* (my dear Charley). The practice caused consternation among the old-time members of the congregation.¹¹ The arrival of numerous upper-class elements in the larger Hungarian–Canadian centres, resulted in the establishment of new and fairly exclusive Hungarian social organizations, as these newcomers were not inclined to join the organizations of "ordinary" old-timers.¹²

In time, class differences based on birth gradually declined among Hungarian Canadians. The democratizing influence of Canadian society had a certain impact. Also important was the fact that some of the worker or peasant old-timers had by the 1940s had become men of modest means, while their newly arrived social betters were penniless newcomers. True, new social differentiation arose in the community with the passage of time when some people grew rich while others remained wage-earners or small businessmen: But this differentiation did not necessarily lead to social pretensions and friction in the organizational life of the community.

Ideology

Closely related to class divisions in Hungary were ideological differences. This was especially true of the post-World War I period, when Marxism made inroads into Hungarian society. In fact, during the spring and summer of 1919 Hungary had a communist dictatorship. Although the radical left was suppressed during the Horthy era (1920–44), Marxist ideology had its covert as well as not-so-covert adherents in the country. After the Second World War, communism was re-imposed in Hungary with the help of Soviet occupation forces. Despite severe political repression, or in fact because of it, anti-communist sentiments persisted. The significance of this for the distant Hungarian community of Canada becomes obvious when we realize that political revolutions (or counter-revolutions) in Hungary tended to produce an exodus of political refugees, many of whom reached Canada.

After the collapse of the Commune of 1919, hundreds of its sympathizers and participants came to Canada. Many of them joined the ranks of the country's Communist Party and helped to spread Marxist propaganda among Hungarian Canadians. During the Great Depression they were quite successful. By the early 1930s, the Hungarian—Canadian community's ideological split had almost totally and irreparably divided Hungarian Canadians between the followers of Marx and members of the Christian-patriotic camp. The most important institution of the former was the Canadian Hungarian Sick-Benefit Federation (C.H.S.—B.F.), the predecessor of the better-known Kosuth Federation of the 1940s and 1950s. The C.H.S.—B.F.'s mouthpiece was the paper *Kanadai Magyar Munkás* [Canadian—Hungarian Worker]. During the first part of the 1930s, when economic conditions for immigrant workers in Canada were abysmal, the ranks of the Federation swelled, and the split between the radicals and the conservatives (those who stood by "God and country") permeated virtually every Hungarian—Canadian colony and affected every community association.¹³

Into the camp of the conservative or "patriotic" group of Hungarians belonged people with a variety of more-or-less defined attitudes. What characterized them above all was a deeply felt Hungarian nationalism, which can best be understood in the context of the impact of the dismemberment of Hungary on Hungarian society. In Hungary this event produced a national neurosis that created a pathological preoccupation with the question of "treaty revision" as the movement for the modification of the peace settlement's territorial provisions was called. In Hungarian—Canadian society the "shock of Trianon" produced a similar, if not more acute "syndrome". Hungarian—Canadian society was very much afflicted with this syndrome because a large portion of Magyar immigrants to interwar Canada were people who came from territories that had been taken away from Hungary in the postwar peace settlement. Most of these people had experienced the shock of Trianon directly. At the time of their arrival in Canada, these people exercised little influence over Hungarian—Canadian community affairs, but as time passed the newcomers worked their way into positions of influence and by the early 1930s, they had come to dominate many Hungarian immigrant institutions.¹⁴

The immigrant institutions of this conservative element of Hungarian—Canadian society were imbued with the "spirit of revisionism". We may take as an example the paper, *Kanadai Magyar Hírek* [Hungarian Canadian News], of Winnipeg. Established in the winter of 1924—25, the paper had a modest start, but in a few years it became a large, semi-weekly publication with subscribers in many parts of Canada. Within a decade-and-a-half of its founding, the *News* became one of the two Viable Hungarian newspapers in Canada; the other was the *Worker*.¹⁵ Significantly enough, in 1941 an official of Canada's External Affairs Department described the *Worker* as the organ Canada's Hungarian Communists, and the *News* of Winnipeg as the voice of the "Magyar-speaking refugees from the old Hungarian provinces that had been turned over to Yugoslavia (sic!), Roumania and Czechoslovakia". It is not a mere coincidence that for much of the time under consideration in this paper the guiding spirit behind the *News*'s operations was an intelligent, energetic young man, Béla Bácskai Payerle, who hailed from the region of Hungary that had been transferred after the war to Yugoslavia. Other

refugees from Hungary's "old provinces" made it into the leadership of other institutions. Indeed, it is hard to think of any Hungarian-Canadian leader of the 1920s immigration stream who did not have close personal ties to one or more of the provinces taken away from Hungary.¹⁸

In the 1930s, the ideological split between the left and the right permeated all levels of the Hungarian community down to local social clubs and benevolent organizations. The ardent patriotism of the "patriotic right" was reinforced by official propaganda emanating from Hungary, while the left was feeding on communist propaganda and the miseries of the Depression. Not surprisingly, Hungarian Canadians were embracing widely divergent causes during the decade of the "dirty thirties". While some of them supported ventures designed to improve the chances of the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, others dedicated their lives to the struggle against fascism. Concrete examples of such efforts are not difficult to cite. One of the ventures undertaken in the name of revisionism was the "Justice for Hungary" ocean flight. It involved the sponsoring of a non-stop flight across the Atlantic, from Newfoundland to Budapest, to advertise the injustices of the peace treaty forced on Hungary. The venture was conceived in Canada, and was promoted in large part by Hungarian Canadians, although in the end it was brought to fruition through the efforts of Hungarians throughout North America.¹⁷ While many Magyar Canadians were devoting their energies to such undertakings, others were fighting for leftist causes. During the second half of the decade, scores of Hungarian Canadians volunteered to fight for the loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War.

The outbreak of the Second World War only complicated and acerbated the ideological conflict within Hungarian-Canadian society. The left was now expected (by the Communist International) to oppose the "imperialist" war against Germany, while the right had to decide whether to support the Canadian and Allied war effort against the Axis, or to declare its loyalty to the Hungary that would eventually become involved in the war on Germany's side. In the end the vast majority of non-communist Hungarian Canadians chose the latter option, and after the German invasion of the USSR in June of 1941, the left could begin to support the Allied war effort as well. Though by 1942 both political factions of the Hungarian-Canadian community were officially at least on the same side of the world conflict, bickering between them continued as if nothing had happened, in fact recriminations only intensified, each side accusing the other of disloyalty to Canada and past and/or present collaboration with the enemy.¹⁸

The events of 1944-45 and the post-war era brought no respite in the ideological fragmentation of the Hungarian-Canadian community. Concern for the victims of the war in Hungary during the winter of 1944-45 did allow for a union of Hungarian-Canadian organizations to provide "war relief", but this unity disintegrated with the outbreak of the Cold War. While some communist Hungarians returned to Hungary after the war, tens of thousands of people who had fled Hungary at the end of the war began arriving in Canada after spending many months or even years in refugee camps. Most of the new arrivals were ardent anti-communists. Their presence in Canada reinforced the camp of the "patriots". In time, these war-time refugees were joined by other Hun-

garian immigrants who had fled Hungary after the imposition of a communist dictatorship in 1947–48. The largest group of these were the “freedom fighters” of 1956. By the 1960s and, especially, the 1970s, the politics of the Hungarian–Canadian community became to be dominated by the anti-communist groups, as the old-line communists lost influence, in large part due to the aging of their membership. Interestingly enough, in the 1970s and the 1980s the right wing of this community became divided politically. The issue that induced this division was contacts with Hungary and her officials. One group of Hungarian Canadians was ready to resume ties with the mother country, while another group opposed these. A few ardent anti-communist Magyars took an extreme position and condemned even those among their co-ethnics who went to Hungary to visit relatives. The events in Hungary of 1989 brought this division to an end. Hungarian–Canadian society had reached a stage where it is not divided by serious political rifts. Only time will tell how long this situation will exist, and what new ideological divisions will be imposed on it in the future.

Local Particularisms

Less obvious and less dramatic a dividing force than the ideological one, is the one related to local particularisms. Yet, this factor has been, and to some extent continues to be a centrifugal force in Hungarian–Canadian community life. Local geographic loyalties constitute important sub-ethnic identities for Hungarians. This was especially true of the early immigrants. Among the pioneer settlers on the Canadian prairies there was a tendency for members of a Hungarian village community to settle in blocs or “ethnic islands”. For example, the community of Békevár, near Kipling, Saskatchewan, was founded and settled by people from the village of Botrágy, in northeastern Hungary.¹⁹ The members of such communities were known as *földi(s)*, and being a *földi* to someone was the next best thing to being his relative. Though the importance of such ties based on local particularisms declined with the passing of the decades, it remained a factor in the sub-ethnic identity of Hungarian Canadians, especially among immigrants stemming from the countryside.

While the ties associated with the *földi* network were based on common geographic background limited to a village or a group of villages, the larger regional identities derived from identification with a larger region of Hungary, such as a county or group of counties sharing some common cultural, geographical, or political characteristics or legacies. Most prominent among such geographical loyalties were the ones associated with the territories that were taken from Hungary in the post-World War I peace settlement. Not surprisingly, in the 1920s organizations of Hungarian immigrants appeared in Canada which bore the names of the territories which had been detached from Hungary in the post-war peace settlement. There were clubs of Magyars from “Upper Hungary” [felvidéki magyarok], of Magyars from Bácska and Bánát (today’s Vojvodina in Yugoslavia), and associations of Transylvanian Hungarians. In time, and especially in the post-Second World War period, some of the associations of Hungar-

ians from the "detached territories" became political organizations that lobbied for the revision of the territorial settlement in the Carpathian Basin.²⁰

The regional loyalties that Hungarians had brought with them to Canada from their homelands in East Central Europe in time were supplemented, or even supplanted by regional loyalties acquired in Canada. Long term immigrant residents — and, especially, their children — of one region of Canada developed attitudes and sensitivities that were different from those acquired by Hungarian residents of another part of the country. A kind of solidarity evolved among people who settled in a certain part of the country. Especially noticeable was the differentiation between the Hungarian immigrant communities of the Canadian West, and those of Central Canada, usually referred to (both by Hungarian Canadians and Canadians in general) and the "East".

Ethnic minorities

The immigrants who came to Canada from Hungary in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries belonged to different ethnic groups. This was particularly true of the immigrants who came from the pre-World War I multinational Kingdom of Hungary. Though what was left of Hungary after the peace settlement was a predominantly Magyar nation, it still retained significant cultural minorities. Roughly five percent of the country's population was of German background, and about the same percentage was Jewish. There were also members of other minorities, including Slovaks and Gypsies. Many members of these national minorities had been assimilated into the Hungarian culture, but others had clung to the German, Jewish, or other cultural heritage as they came from ethnic enclaves or had been recent arrivals in Hungary.

Most of the non-Magyar immigrants who came to Canada from Hungary did not become associated with Hungarian-Canadians and their immigrant institutions. They did not become a part of that hardly definable ethnic group that students of ethnic studies call the Hungarian-Canadian community. Rather, they joined other Canadian ethnic groups such as the Slovak-Canadian, German-Canadian, Jewish-Canadian, etc. But a few of these non-Magyar immigrants or immigrant groups from Hungary remained on the periphery of Canada's Magyar ethnic group. From the archival and historical records we become aware of the activities or associations of immigrants. Historians can find references to clubs of German-Hungarians, of Hungarian Slovaks, of Carpatho-Ruthenians, and of congregations of Magyar-speaking Jews.

Particularly interesting is the situation of the several thousand Jews who came to Canada from Hungary after the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Most of these newcomers settled in Toronto and Montreal, the largest centres of Jewish-Canadian ethnic life.²¹ There they established an immigrant community of their own, one that had links to both the Jewish-Canadian ethnic group and the Hungarian-Canadian one. In Toronto for example, much of the cultural life of Gentile Hungarian Canadians and Jewish arrivals from Hungary merged or overlapped. A prime example of this is the Toronto Hungarian Theatre. In other ethnic institutional ventures Toronto's Hungarian Jewish

community went on its own way. It launched and maintained its own newspaper, the *Menohra-Egyenlőség*, the largest Jewish weekly in the Hungarian language in North America. Significantly, the paper was in Magyar, and for years during the 1960s, a debate raged in its letters to the editor section concerning the usefulness or otherwise of teaching children of Jewish newcomers from Hungary the Hungarian language.²²

In this discussion of geographical and ethnic sub-identities a special chapter should be devoted to the Székelys of Transylvania. It is hard to classify their case either under the category of geographical heading or the ethnic one, though it might fit under both. Though they considered themselves Hungarian, they tended to maintain a strong sub-ethnic identity that manifested itself most clearly in their proclivity to settle in bloc settlements of their own members, and to establish their own immigrant organizations. A good example of their settlement is the community of Székelyföld in the Arbury district of Saskatchewan, and the most prominent of their organizations was the Székely kör [circle] of Montreal.²³ With the arrival of Magyar refugees from Rumania in the late 1980s, the revival of such organizations is made possible today.

The immigrant experience

One of the most interesting, most important but least understood subdivision of Hungarian—Canadian society is the one based on the differing nature of the immigrant experience of the various streams of Hungarian immigrants that came to Canada over the decades. The members of each of these streams tend to feel that a common bond unites them based upon their experiences in the processes of leaving the mother country and settling in the new. And the more these experiences differed from one stream of immigrants to the next, the stronger the feeling of solidarity became for the immigrants in question.

The circumstances under which the members of the four streams of Hungarian immigrants to Canada left their homeland and settled in their adopted land tended to differ a great deal.²⁴ Although a book could be written on this subject, a few generalizations will have to suffice here to describe the most important of these differences. The first stream of immigrants from Hungary were driven from their homeland by poverty, rural overpopulation, and economic dislocations. In Canada, they were confronted by the harsh conditions of life on the frontier, whether on the prairie homestead, or in the northern logging camp, or a mining community. These invariably involved heavy physical labour, a hazardous workplace, and social isolation. Many members of the second stream were “pushed” from Hungary by a variety of factors not dissimilar to those experienced by their pioneer predecessors. Others were prompted to leave Hungary by the political upheavals that country experienced during and after the First World War. Many members of this stream were in reality political refugees. Some fled a Hungary where socialists and liberals felt out of place, while others wished to escape ethnic discrimination in the territories that had been taken from Hungary after World War I. In their new homeland all of them faced anti-Hungarian prejudices

heightened by the war. As most of these people came to Canada during the second half of the 1920s, they all shared the fate of trying to put down roots just as the country plunged into a severe economic depression. The most common features of this process were unemployment and the accompanying psychological despair. Since many newcomers were young men who expected to send for their wives or fiancées after they had saved some money, their life in Canada was marked by solitude as most of them could not reunite with their loved-ones in the 1930s because of the Depression, and in the 1940s because of the war.

The immigrant experience of the post-World War II stream was even more different. Most members of this stream left a "good life" behind: successful careers, social rank, and economic prosperity. They were driven from their country by the prospect of its conquest by the Red Army. These people were truly political refugees: had it not been for political changes in Europe, they would have never even thought of emigrating to Canada. The other important common experience that united members of this group was the years they spent in refugee camps. In Canada, they found themselves at the bottom of the social ladder, and faced wide spread prejudices directed against "displaced persons", especially newcomers from an enemy country. Obviously, members of this Hungarian emigration had little if anything in common with those that preceded them.

The refugees of the 1956 revolution also left their country and came to Canada under unique circumstances.²⁵ While they were also political refugees, unlike their 1945 predecessors they had no reasons to be nostalgic about the Hungary they had left behind. Their common legacy was the traumatic events that uprooted them and their families in the fall of 1956. And while they were welcomed by a sympathetic host society on arrival in Canada, most of them found adjustment to Canadian life difficult as they experienced what might be described as post-immigration trauma, caused by the sudden and dramatic changes in their lives. Members of previous streams of Hungarian newcomers to Canada had worked out the agony caused by the decision to emigrate before their departure from the mother country, or during their stay in refugee camps; but the 1956-ers were hit with it after their arrival.

In view of these widely differing "immigrant experiences" it is not surprising that there was disharmony and even friction between the different streams of Hungarian immigrants to Canada. The "pioneers" of the pre-World War I period tended to regard the newcomers of the 1920s as people who lacked perseverance and were reluctant to live by heavy manual labour. Another reason for which their leaders resented the Hungarian Canadian Federation when it was established in 1928 was because it was allegedly dominated by "inexperienced" newcomers to the country. And similar attitudes greeted the post-World War II arrivals on the part of the majority of Hungarians who had settled in Canada before then.

For their part, the post-war émigrés had little respect for their predecessors. They rarely joined their organizations but established new ones of their own. The justification for the creation of some of these was that institutions were needed for the preservation and promotion of Hungarian culture in Canada, forgetting that many of the clubs

and association that had been created by Hungarian immigrants before, served precisely this purpose. At the same time, the members of the "old" immigrant streams despised the newcomers for being reluctant to take on jobs involving physical labour.

Immediately after their arrival in Canada, the 1956 refugees tended to be well treated by members of all three streams of previous Magyar immigrants.²⁶ Soon thereafter, however, jealousies and suspicions emerged. The newcomers were reminded how difficult it had been for their predecessors in Canada: how the pre-World War II immigrants had to work in menial jobs for years, and how the post-war group had to confront strong anti-Hungarian prejudices. The refugees (many of whom suffered psychological problems after arrival) were considered restless, unable to persevere at most types of Canadian employment. Often they were ostracized from established immigrant social life, and courtship and intermarriage between newcomers and the children of Hungarian immigrants was discouraged. Time only would temper these inter-ethnic disharmonies and allow the integration of Magyar newcomers in Hungarian—Canadian community life. In the 1970s and the 1980s, when the members of the pre- and post-World War II emigration stream began to retire from organizational life, the prejudices based on the "immigrant experience" began to subside and would no longer exert an important influence on the group's community affairs.

Conclusions

Hungarians have been living in Canada for over hundred years. Canadians as well as non-Hungarian immigrants to this country have regarded them as members of the Magyar ethnic group, people who make up that rather vaguely definable Hungarian—Canadian community. These immigrants accepted this categorization, though their children occasionally rejected it emphasizing that they were not Hungarians but Canadians of Hungarian (or mixed-Hungarian) ancestry.

Within the Hungarian—Canadian community, however, people referred to themselves differently, depending on the context of the situation they were confronting. They were Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans or Baptists; in other contexts they were workingmen or gentry folk, communists or patriots, the people of the village of Botrágy or of Farád, or immigrants from the Bánát or Transylvania. In some circumstances they saw themselves as German—Hungarians or Magyar-speaking Jews. Quite often they stressed that they were the members of a certain stream of newcomers: *ókanadá-sok* [loosely translated: old immigrants or old Canadians], DPs (displaced persons), or refugees (56ers). Clearly, more-or-less definable sub-ethnic identities or loyalties persisted within the Hungarian—Canadian community for the entire existence of this ethnic group.

The importance of these various loyalties had varied through the years. Religious differences were often taken very seriously in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but not so in recent decades. The evidence of this is the strong ecumenical movement that built up in some Hungarian—Canadian circles during the last quarter century.

Some Hungarian Canadians had gone all the way to denouncing intra-ethnic religious differences and advocated the acceptance of an all-Hungarian Christian faith.²⁷ Similarly, ideological differences have declined in importance during recent times, especially in the late 1980s. While in the 1930s and 1940s Hungarian-Canadian society was split right down the middle between the Christian, patriotic camp on the one hand and communists and their fellow travelers on the other, today only a few people confess being adherents of communism.²⁸ Disharmony between members of different emigration streams also has tended to decline in time, and makes little difference for people who have been in Canada for decades, or for their children.

Some sub-ethnic identities and intra-ethnic divisions within Hungarian-Canadian society have not been adequately explored by social scientists and have not been touched on in this paper. The generational gap between the immigrants and their Canadian-born children, and between the latter and the members of the third generation, has not been touched on. While these differences seem to be real in Hungarian-Canadian society, they do not appear to be as acute and identifiable as they are between the Issei and the Nissei in Japanese-Canadian (or Japanese-American) society. Further, no speculation has been made in this paper on the loyalties of Hungarian-Canadians to their trades and professions, although such loyalties are undoubtedly considered important as evidenced by the fact that some Hungarian Canadians belong only to professional associations of their co-ethnics (Hungarian-Canadian Engineers, Hungarian-Canadian Foresters, etc.) and not to non-specific Hungarian cultural and social clubs.

What impact the division of Hungarian-Canadians into subgroupings has had on their community life could be the subject of controversy among historians and social scientists. It is possible to argue, indeed it has been argued that intra-ethnic divisions caused jealousies and rivalries within the community and sapped its energies and resources.²⁹ It has also been suggested that these divisions had inspired some Hungarian Canadians with a spirit of competition, and that squabbling within the ethnic group led to an atmosphere of "keeping up with the Joneses" and greater achievements in social and cultural life.³⁰ This debate could only be resolved after further research.

This brings us to our last comments. Much has been written about immigrant ethnic groups in Canada, but very little about ethnic sub-identities within their ranks. The historiography of the Hungarian community of Canada is equally if not more deficient. Only extensive research by students of social history and sociology will remedy this situation. Hungarian-Canadian academics are reluctant to enter this field as there seems to be very little interest in the subject either by Canadian social scientists or by the members of the Hungarian-Canadian public. One hope is that scholars from Hungary, often highly qualified and motivated, might come to the rescue. Unfortunately with the growing economic uncertainty in Hungary nowadays, even this prospect is dim. Research into the subject might not be conducted while some of the community's historical records are still available and while members of the community are still available for oral history projects.

Notes

1. Jean R. Burnet with Howard Palmer, "Coming Canadians: An Introduction to A History of Canada's Peoples (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), p. 5. For a theoretical discussion of ethnicity, especially in the Canadian context, see Alan B. Anderson and James S. Frideres *Ethnicity in Canada: Theoretical Perspectives* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1981).
2. Information from Professor Jean Burnet.
3. For a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography of works related to Hungarian—Canadian society see John Miska (compiler), *Canadian Studies on Hungarians, 1886–1986: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987).
4. For an overview of Hungarian immigration to Canada see N. F. Dreisziger, M. L. Kovacs, Paul Bódy and Bennett Kovrig, *Struggle and Hope: The Hungarian—Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), as well as John Kosa, *Land of Choice: Hungarians in Canada* (Toronto: U. of T. Press, 1957).
5. A recent treatment of the geographic distribution of Hungarians in Canada can be found in N. F. Dreisziger, *Immigration and Re-migration: The Changing Urban-Rural Distribution of Hungarian Canadians, 1886–1986*, *Hungarian Studies Review*, 13/2 (1986), pp. 20–52.
6. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, p. 120f.
7. See M. L. Kovacs's chapter, The Saskatchewan Era, 1885–1914, in Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 61–93; as well as by the same author: The Hungarian School Question, in *Ethnic Canadians: Culture and Education*, ed. M. L. Kovacs (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1978), pp. 333–58.
8. The Reverend Jenő Ruzsa, quoted in Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, p. 152.
9. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, p. 129.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 155–57.
11. Information from the late Reverend Charles Steinmetz, 1975.
12. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 199f.
13. N. F. Dreisziger, *The Hungarian Experience in Ontario* (Toronto: *Hungarian Studies Review*, 1985) special issue of the HSR (Pall, 1985), p. 32.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Carmela Patrias, *The Kanadai Magyar Újság and the Politics of the Hungarian Canadian Elite* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1978), pp. 38f.
16. Dreisziger, *The Hungarian Experience in Ontario*, p. 33.
17. Kornél Nagy, *Igazságot Magyarországnak! A magyar óceánrepülés* [Justice for Hungary: The Hungarian Ocean Flight], *Magyar Szárnyak*, 10 (1981), pp. 63–75. Norbert Csanádi, Sándor Nagyváradai and László Winkler, *A magyar repülés története* [The History of Hungarian Aviation] (Budapest: Műszaki Könyvkiadó, 1977), p. 140. Also, N. F. Dreisziger, 'Justice for Hungary' Ocean Flight: The Trianon Syndrome in Immigrant Hungarian Society, in S. B. Vardy and A. H. Vardy, eds. *Triumph in Adversity: Studies in Hungarian Civilization in Honor of Professor Ferenc Somogyi* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988), pp. 573–89.
18. Dreisziger, *The Hungarian Experience in Ontario*, p. 38.
19. M. L. Kovacs, in Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 66 and 70. The subject is discussed in Kovacs's *Peace and Strife: Some Facets of the History of an Early Prairie Community* (Kipling, Sask.: Kipling District Historical Society, 1980).
20. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, p. 200.
21. B. L. Vigod, *The Jews in Canada* (Ottawa, Canadian Historical Association, 1984), p. 6.
22. George Bisztray, The Hungarian Canadian Press, in Papp, *Hungarian in Ontario*, a special double issue of *Polyphony* (1979–80) pp. 54–58.
23. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 66, 70, 103–04.
24. Paul Bódy, Emigration from Hungary, 1880–1956, in Dreisziger, *Struggle and Hope*, pp. 74f. Also, Papp, *Hungarians in Ontario*, pp. 45–48.
25. N. F. Dreisziger, The Impact of the Revolution on Hungarians Abroad: The Case of the Hungarians of

Canada, in B. K. Kiraly et al., eds, *The First War Between Socialist States* (New York: Atlantic Publications, 1987), pp. 411–25.

26. *Ibid.*

27. There is a small group of people who have advocated the return to the pre-Christian traditions of the nomadic Hungarians; however, they have not attracted many followers. Their main congregation (complete with a place of worship) is in Toronto.

28. Most of these are no doubt people who find it difficult to admit that they had backed a bankrupt ideology most of their lives. However, there are some recent converts to communism, more particularly to its populist or “Kádarian” variety. One former high-ranking Arrow-Cross official (who shall remain nameless) became an admirer of János Kádár’s Hungary, particularly what it had done for the people of Hungary’s villages. He only regretted that Arrow-Cross leader Szálasi was never given a chance to do the same.

29. Dreisziger et al., *Struggle and Hope*, p. 156.

30. The point has been argued by Geraldine Vörös, one-time student at McMaster University, in a study of the Hungarian–Canadian community of Welland, Ontario. Cited *ibid.*, p. 166.