

PREFACE: THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HUNGARIAN NATION

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The fate of Hungarian minorities in East Central Europe has been one of the most neglected subjects in the Western scholarly world. For the past fifty years the subject—at least prior to the late 1980s—was taboo in the successor states (except Yugoslavia), while in Hungary itself relatively few scholars dared to publish anything about this issue till the early 1980s. In the West, it was just not faddish, since most East European and Russian Area studies centers at American, French and English universities tended to think of the territorial *status quo* as “politically correct.” The Hungarian minorities, on the other hand, were a frustrating reminder that indeed the Entente after World War I, and the Allies after World War II, made major mistakes and significantly contributed to the pain and anguish of the peoples living in this region of the “shatter zone.”

It is important to remember that there was no problem of Hungarian minorities before 1918–1920. Until that time only the Csángó (Ciangău) Hungarians of Moldavia and Bukovina lived outside the borders of the Hungarian state (*i.e.*, the Crownlands of St Stephen). Furthermore, the minority question within the Hungarian kingdom became a “problem” only after the Ottoman Turkish occupation (1526–1686) of central Hungary and the ensuing devastation caused by constant warfare. To fill the lands left vacant by the wars, the Habsburg rulers encouraged a vast influx of immigration in the eighteenth century. This dramatically changed the ethnic profile of the land, increasing the proportion of Serbs, Romanians, and Swabian-Germans at the expense of the Hungarians.

The Hungarian kingdom prior to 1526 was already a multi-ethnic state and had an effective legacy for dealing with diversity. Its philosophy had been enunciated by St Stephen (István I) some time between 997 and 1038. The philosophy was stated in St Stephen’s “Instructions” (*Intelmek*) to his son Imre. While Imre died before his father, the *Intelmek* remained a guiding force in the inter-ethnic relations of medieval Hungary. In it István cautions his son always to tolerate differences, because it is these differences that make a kingdom strong. For the next five hundred years this advice served the Hungarians well and provided them with a kingdom that was both stable and strong. It assured Saxon–Germans, Croatians, and Transylvanian Hungarians and Szekelys local autonomy and self-governance. It also provided for a network of legal guarantees that placed limitations on the powers of the central political authority. This meant that the kingdom was able to accommodate many

different peoples who lived in relative harmony with one-another. Only the effects of the French revolution and the rise of modern nationalism undermined this order in the wake of the Ottoman conquest and the Habsburg policy of *divide et impera*.

By sheer coincidence, this preface is being written on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon, the legal document that officially terminated the Hungarian kingdom. This Treaty was an extension of the “kick the cat” syndrome, with the added problem that the “kicking” has not stopped and the cat is not only still helpless, abused and resentful, but also cornered and seeking to escape the scapegoat role. Of the treaties signed at the Versailles palace, none was so one-sided and devastating as the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920). It legalized the dismemberment of historic Hungary, by transferring its territories to the newly created states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and the barely sixty-one year-old Romania. The Crownlands of Saint Stephen were handed to states that were still inexperienced in statecraft and with weak traditions in power sharing, constitutional restraint (except the historic Czech lands), or concern for majority rule *and* minority rights.

Hungary lost not only three-fourths of her historic territories, but also two-thirds of her population. Furthermore, the ceded territories were also inhabited by ethnic Hungarians.¹ Thus, with one stroke of the pen, Hungarians became the fourth most numerous minority people on the continent of Europe, close on the heels of the Germans, the Gypsies and the Jews. After the Second World War (the Jewish Holocaust and the expulsion of the Germans), Hungarians acquired the dubious distinction of being—aside from the Gypsies—the most numerous minority people on the continent. Only since the collapse of the USSR have the Russians become the premier minority people in Europe. But even in this position, *proportionately* to their total population, fewer Russians are in minority status than Hungarians.

The following studies reflect on the existence of these Hungarian minorities and on their relations to Hungary. The collection starts with a theoretical overview of the whole question of minorities. This essay by Charles L. Jokay provides a topology based on the settlement patterns of minorities. Each one of these settlement patterns raises different prospects for the reconciliation of minority and majority interests. The Hungarian minorities of East Central Europe have each of the settlement types discussed: “border,” “island” (clustered), and “mixed” (dispersed). The collection then begins a retrospective analysis of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Zoltan Szász and Tibor Frank summarize the attempts and ultimate failure of the Dual monarchy to deal with the nationality question. They describe the rise of nationalism in the region and the unfortunate effort of the leading elites to mimic the French model of the “nation-state.” This led to jaded efforts at Magyarization and “benign neglect” relative to minority emigration. But it also led to a polarization of “national wills” which directly led to the disintegration of the Empire at the end of World War I.

Pál Péter Tóth describes the consequences of this collapse for the Hungarians who now found themselves in a minority status within the boundaries of the new

neighbors of Hungary. He points out that in the interwar period roles were reversed, and it was the efforts of Serbianization, Romanianization and Slovakization that tried to achieve the French model. At this point the collection includes a brief editorial note to bridge the gap between past and present by summarizing the major traits of the Soviet model that was superimposed onto the French nation-state model. This means a summary of the “Marxist–Leninist” assumptions about nationalism and nationality and a description of the “polycentric” practice based on these assumptions.

Alfred Reisch links the fate of the Hungarian minorities in the successor states to the foreign policy options of present-day Hungary. He links some of the past problems of these policies to the recent efforts to chart a course that preserves good relations with neighboring states without sacrificing the minorities.

Then follows the main body of the collection analyzing developments since the end of Soviet hegemony. The lead article deals with the Hungarians in the Vojvodina region of Serbia, *that is*, the northernmost and most “Western” part of the truncated new Yugoslavia. This article by Lajos Arday is at the same time a reflection on the Leninist model’s Titoist adaptation. It is the lead piece of this section because Arday provides the flashbacks necessary to understand the present. At the same time, he and András Bertalan Székely deal with the Hungarian minorities that are presently most at risk as the military clashes between Serbs and Croats and Serbs and Bosnian Muslims continue.

Following the Arday–Székely analysis is Andrew Bell’s assessment of recent developments in the Hungarian inhabited regions of Romania, mainly Transylvania. Bell focuses on the numerically largest Hungarian community beyond Hungary’s borders, one which played a key role in the overthrow of the Ceaușescu dictatorship. The analysis reflects mainly on the developments of the past five years and their long-term implications.

The essay on Slovakia’s Hungarian minority parallels the present Romanian and Yugoslav scenario in a number of ways, although it is probably less acute and threatened. Iván Gyurcsik and James Satterwhite outline the nature of majority-minority relations in Slovakia. Paul R. Magocsi discusses the Hungarians in Carpatho-Ukraine (Subcarpathian Rus’) as the fate of the smallest minority among the minorities of Ukraine. Finally, in lieu of an afterword, Beáta Kovács Nás and Nicolae Harsanyi discuss prospects for the future. Kovács Nás focuses on the possible resolution of conflicts between majorities and minorities by discussing the “autonomy” proposals of the Hungarian minority communities in Serb-Yugoslavia, Romania and Slovakia. In turn, Harsanyi focuses on a resolution of conflicts within the context of multi-lateral agreements arrived at between nations and not just states.

To place these essays in a proper regional, demographic, and historical perspective, a chronology of events by Beáta Kovács Nás and the demographic data by László Sebök is provided together with maps that give a spatial distribution of Hungarian settlements in the states under discussion. For the maps we are particu-

larly grateful to Károly Kocsis of the Hungarian Institute of Geography. Most of the essays were submitted or written at the end of 1993. However, the situation at the present writing still confirms their observations.

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In all the above studies there are opportunities for confusion due to differences in documentation, the sources used for references, and the changed or changing designation of various peoples, states or organizations. Thus, while in the editing I strove to provide consistency, there are some inevitable inconsistencies. For example, throughout, references to the European Union (EU) are in its past form of European Community (EC), since this designation has changed after the receipt of all the studies for the present collection. Analogous to this problem are our references to CSCE (Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe) which has since been renamed the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

The other reference that might cause some confusion relates to the name and acronym of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), also frequently called the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (HDUR). Both these designations refer to the same organization. In the Bell study the latter is used, while in the Chronology and the Afterword Kovács Nás uses the former.

Other problems relate to the designation of place names and references to peoples. Our rule of thumb has been to use the currently official designation of a place, with the historic Hungarian or German, or both designations, in parentheses following it. For example Bratislava (Pozsony, Pressburg) or Novi Sad (Ujvidék). The designation of Magyar or Hungarian has also caused some problems for historical reasons. The Latin designation *natio hungarica* applied to anyone who was part of the Hungarian kingdom, without regard to ethnic or national identity. However, since the age of modern nationalism has dawned, the nationality affiliation of people is not automatically considered to be the same as their state affiliation. Thus, during the last two hundred years Magyar has been used mainly to designate the Magyar-speaking part of the Hungarian political state, or its dominant ethnic/nationality component. However, more recent usage has tended to use the designations interchangeably, although most of the studies in this collection use the Hungarian designation both as definer of a state affiliation and as an affiliation with a national community.

With respect to Rumania, Romania and Roumania, the present compilation has digressed from the presently official "Romania" designation only in those instances where another spelling better conveys the perspectives of the time. For example, the older "Roumania" designation has been retained in the Frank study.

Finally, the designations of Slovenia, Slavonia, and Slovakia refer to different geographic and ethnographic centers in East Central Europe. While an area specialist will be aware of this, the casual reader may think that the different spellings are simply misspellings or typos. Thus, it is important to point out that Slovakia is now

an independent state inhabited mainly by Slovaks and Hungarians, which constituted the eastern half of the former state of Czechoslovakia until January 1993. Slovenia is now also an independent state that seceded from Yugoslavia in the summer of 1991. It is inhabited mainly by Slovenians, but contains some small minorities, including Italians and Hungarians. It is located northwest of Croatia, south of Austria and east of Italy. Slavonia, on the other hand, is not an independent state, but simply the eastern portions of Croatia, located between the Drave and Save rivers. Most of it is inhabited by Croatians, but it contains significant Serb and Hungarian minorities. At present the Serb (Yugoslav) army has occupied the easternmost parts of this land.

The objective of this collection is to help fill the void that exists on the fate of the Hungarian minorities. If it helps to open the door to this formerly ignored or taboo subject, then it will have achieved its primary objective. At any rate, a better understanding of their present existence and future prospects can only be viewed as desirable for the peaceful co-existence of all the peoples in that region.

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In the editing of this special issue of *Nationalities Papers* I would hereby like to express my thanks to Henry Huttenbach for the original idea and the challenge. For finally getting the job done, I have to give credit to my two daughters, Csilla and Anikó, for their constant nagging, about “still doing that thing,” and to my wife Julie, for her last minute proof-reading assistance. For the final translation of the IBM hard disk to a usable MAC hard disk I am particularly indebted for the advice and assistance of Gabriele Simoncini and Bob Beer. And last but not least, I would like to thank Barbara Roberts for her first-class word processing skills and tolerance.

NOTE

1. The concept of “ethnic” is used in this context for the American reader. In the European context, the concept of “nationality” or “national community” would be preferable. Within the present collection of studies “ethnicity” and “nationality” is used interchangeably. However, I do wish to point out that it would be more precise to talk of Hungarian communities as “nationality communities.” Both nationality and ethnicity are culturally transmitted characteristics. Unlike racial features, ethnic and national commitments are learned rather than genetically passed from parents to offspring. Socialization inducts individuals into an ethnic or national community. The cultural characteristics that are acquired in this way are closely related to customs and behavior patterns as well as historical circumstances and linguistic or dialectical differences. Ethnic groups, however, tend to be less politicized than nations, but an ethnic group can become a nation over time if it feels threatened in its very existence, *and*, if it is not too dispersed, in a larger nation or ethnic group. While nations have pronounced cultural commitments, which create a bond of solidarity among those who consider themselves members of a nation, this bond is less developed among ethnic groups. Nations have a strong sense of common interests that predispose them to seek control of their own destiny via some measure of self-determination (*e.g.*, Americans, Russians, Basques, Chechens, Kurds, Hungar-

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ians, Romanians). As opposed to this, ethnic groups will not seek political self-determination, either because of a less developed sense of common interests and lower level of self-awareness, or because of insignificant numbers and greater dispersal (*e.g.*, Gypsies in any part of the world, Turkish guest workers in Germany, Italian-Americans, Brazilian Jews, Mexican-Americans).