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## Immigration and Emigration in the Course of Hungarian History<sup>1</sup>

Despite its excellent antecedents – the research and merits of István Rác (1980), Julianna Puskás (1982, 2000, 1991), Zoltán Fejős (1993), Albert Tezla (ed., 1987), Péter Tóth Pál (1997, 2011) –, Hungarian migration studies cannot look back on a considerable past. For lack of substantial literature and works of related popular science, the sudden and recent interest generated by the events of last summer can be satisfied with journalistic writings in Hungarian at the most. Hungarian (and partly, international) research on migration was caught off guard by the immense, mostly Muslim crowds moving towards Europe from the Middle East – just as they did European politics, national defense, police forces and public opinion about foreigners on the whole (Bade 2000; Husa et al. Hrsg. 2000; Bade et al. eds. 2013). Although personally, I have been involved in migration research and have been teaching it as a subject for four decades both in Hungary and abroad (Frank 1985, 1999: 7-190, 2015<sup>2</sup>), my knowledge about this vast domain is still imperfect and requires completion and most likely, correction by fellow researchers. Nonetheless, in the following I will attempt to raise some questions and make some claims that might contribute to the exploration of the history of Hungarian migration.

### Geopolitics

Due to its geopolitical situation, Hungary (historical Hungary just as much as post-Trianon Hungary) has always been more or less of a transit zone between East and West, North and South: it is a territory that has lent itself to foreign conquest. The ancestors of Hungarians were nomadic people continuously in quest of new pastures for their livestock, who followed their animals (Deér [1938]: 5-34; Györffy 1993: 3; Györffy 1977: 39; Kristó 1998: 11; Kristó 2002: 71). The “Conquest of the Carpathian Basin” was most likely not so much a recognition of a definitive homeland, but rather a posterior, benign, history political and historiographical explanation for the fact that upon arriving in the Carpathian Basin, our ancestors suddenly ran out of space necessary for moving on. In that respect, we are still left to intelligent guesses, assumptions,

conceptions and debates at best. It is certain, however, that in the German and Italian territories, there were already organized, state-like creations constructed with the help of Catholicism, which halted the flow of Hungarians and forced our forefathers to settle down and adopt Christianity. József Deér’s vision about the opposition of the “nomadic culture” and “Christian Europe” is quite thoughtprovoking (1938: 5-34). Although the conquering Hungarians did attempt to continue their migration, their “raids” are nowadays usually evaluated as part of the contemporary Hungarian (and Viking and Muslim) economy, the aim of which was to acquire the desirable goods to which they had otherwise no access. A bit like the Vikings who robbed if they could, and traded if they could not.”<sup>2</sup>

Though I would not categorize that as migration, in the next centuries, foreign armies repeatedly tried to traverse the territory, as it was well reflected by the Mongolian invasion in the 13th century, the Ottoman-Turkish attacks in the 15th-17th centuries, the attempts of the Hapsburgs to take over the country in the 17th-19th centuries and the Nazi-German and Soviet-Russian invasions and withdrawals in the 20th century. These cases were classic examples of conquest attempts: i.e. their intension was not to alter the settlement area, but to extend their power over an unchanged settlement area.<sup>3</sup> The Ottoman Empire, which had been continuously growing throughout the centuries, appeared as a conqueror in the whole of the Mediterranean region – as well as to the East and North of it – from the late mediaeval times till early modern history. Most probably, the Turks were more interested in taking Vienna, the gateway to the West than Buda: after the battle of Mohács, they did not even try to occupy the latter for 15 years whereas three years after the Hungarian tragedy, they were already besieging Vienna. The decline of the Ottoman Empire and its disintegration after the end of WWI, then the essentially bad peace treaties regulating its deconstruction left behind a cosmic chaos in every corner of this empire: in the Middle East just as much as on the Balkans. The migrations that we are experiencing today derive mostly from the Ottoman conquests, whether we consider their starting points (Syria, Iraq) or their destinations (Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and partly, Hungary).

### Traditions of inclusion and exclusion

The traditions of Hungary, or we should perhaps say, of Hungarians include not only the regular appearance of inimical conquerors. The country and the nation also regularly admitted “aliens” from the

<sup>1</sup> This paper is the edited version of the plenary opening speech delivered at the conference entitled “Global Migration Trends and Hungary – Challenges and Responses” organized by the Institute for Minority Studies, HAS Centre for Social Sciences on 16-17 November 2015.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Member of the Academy Attila Zsoldos for his above cited fresh-eyed review in which he commented on the first version of my article.

<sup>3</sup> See Note 3.

very beginning of its history up to the 20th century. It should also be stated that the present-day Hungarian population is quite mixed: few can boast ancestors who had crossed the (not yet existing) border at the Verecke Pass in the company of Chief Árpád.

In my article published in summer 2015 (Frank 2015: 8-9), I offered a brief overview of the history of the Saxons settled in Transylvania by the Hungarian king, Géza II; the Slovak, Polish and Russian inhabitants having appeared after the Mongolian invasion; the Croat settlers and Pravoslav Serbs invited in after the desertion of the areas at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; the Germans (Schwabish) purposefully settled down by 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hapsburg rulers and the Jews admitted mostly during the reign of Joseph Frantz I.

As to the question of settling by the Hapsburgs, I share the opinion of Péter Tóth Pál who thinks that “the radical transformation of the ethnic composition of the population to the detriment of the Hungarians determined the ratio and spatial distribution of the Hungarian and non-Hungarian peoples of the country, and with that, the future of those belonging to the Hungarian linguistic community in the Carpathian Basin and the destiny of historical Hungary” (Péter Tóth Pál 2016). Tóth evokes the questions raised by István Szabó in 1941: what was the Hungarians’ attitude in the course of this massive migration of peoples, what place did the arrival of foreign masses have in the public opinion of the era and what was the reason for the Hungarians’ behaviour with respect to foreigners? As István Szabó pointed out, the first agitations against the situation at hand and in defense of the Hungarian language started to unfold at the end of the 18th century. [...] The movement for the Hungarian language (clothing, dances) made the Hungarian elite realize that the population of the country whose mother tongue was not Hungarian would have to be assimilated in order to increase the number of Hungarians and ensure their decisive role (István Szabó 1941: 121-199; quoted and further elaborated by Péter Tóth Pál 2016).

The tradition of inclusion was created by our great king and state founder St. Stephen I himself. As he warned in his political testament, “Intelmek” (Book of Admonitions), “a monolingual and monocultural country is fragile and weak”. This statement was traced back to Sallustius by József Balogh, excellent researcher of the era – unduly fallen into oblivion –, thanks to whom “the ideal of Rome and the ideal of the Emperor” were revived “at the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries”, i.e. at a time [...] when [...] the frozen mediaeval forms are briefly filled with life again for the years of transition”. It

is hard not to hear Balogh’s voice (who watched the spread of Nazism in Hungary with concern) speaking through his academic treatise where he argues: “Ethnic diversity as a state constitutive and state mainaining force was the unshakeable tenant of the Age of Roman Emperors, readily embraced by the Middle Ages, too, because they saw it as a driving force in the empire of Charlemagne again”. This leads us directly to Balogh’s final conclusion: ‘It is to the virtues, knowledge and work of newcomers that Rome and the new Christian Hungary owed their power and prosperity’ (Balogh 1938/2: 239, 241, 263; see also Balogh 1927/a: 89-95, Balogh 1927/b: 1-10, Balogh 1930: 129-164; 1931: 39-51 and 106-114, Balogh 1932: 152-168).

This philosophy of inclusion was attacked on many occasions and on many fronts, triggering opposition on behalf of those who began to think in terms of a nation-state – especially from the beginning of the 19th century, and for that, they projected for their compatriots the ideal of a Hungarian nation that had always been uniform, and then they tried to force that projection onto reality as well. Hungarian conscience used to be a *hungarus* conscience, which was gradually eliminated by the worldview of “Hazám, hazám, te mindenem”<sup>4</sup> (left to us by József Katona and Erkel Ferenc) beginning with the Reform Age, which, by the way, triumphed in the majority of the European countries at the time. This is when Verdi composes “Va pensiero” in Nabucco as a hymn to the Italian national unification, Smetana writes his symphonic poem *Ma vlast* (My Homeland) about the beauties of the Czech landscape, Wagner creates his German tetralogy based on the German mythology, advancing the concept of a unified Germany – just to mention a few examples. This century was the age of the creation of nations and of their space conquering processes depicted as a fight for national defense as well as of the birth of nationalist ideologies becoming increasingly rigid and aggressive, which basically paved the way for the eventual hatred and exclusion of “aliens”. The line “Itt élnek, halmód kell”<sup>5</sup> sought to bind the Hungarian population to the cluds of the motherland. That, however, entailed contempt for the ethnicities and efforts to Magyarize – often forcefully – the “Rascians”, the “Mócs”, the “Tóts”, the “Swabians” and the Jews. It

<sup>4</sup> A famous air from Ferenc Erkel’s national opera entitled *Bánk bán* (“My homeland, my homeland, my all”) (transl. note).

<sup>5</sup> “From hence you shall not roam” – line from Mihály Vörösmarty’s poem entitled *Szózat*. (transl. note)

should be noted, however, that some of these ethnic groups chose to be Hungarians not under constraint, but of their own accord.

### **Migrations from the historical Hungary: labourers and political refugees**

From the mid-19th century, masses of economic labourers and people persecuted for political or religious reasons left Hungary. The first significant group was the Kossuth emigration with its approximately 7,000 refugees, continued by the – mostly illiterate – labourers of peasant descent in the decades between 1880 and 1914, the political and religious émigrés of the post-1918-19 years, those leaving the country for the most diverse political and religious motives between 1944-1949, the 200,000-person emigration wave of 1956 and the re-settlement of masses in the hope of a better life going on even today. The number of those having left the country definitively can be estimated at two to two and a half million people. Only the “big” emigration (or rather, search for employment) that began at the end of the 19th century propelled about one and a half million people to the United States basically as *Gastarbeiters* – although the notion was born in a different historical context and at a different time – , mostly from the ethnic minorities of the historical Hungary. Thus according to certain researchers, that affected 700,000 (Gletler 17-18; Frank 1996: 415), according to others, only around half a million (or above 600,000) Slovaks and Hungarians from Upper Hungary, i. e. one fourth or at least one fifth of the total Slovak population estimated around 2.8 million at the time (cf. Puskás 1982: 70-75, 441-456; Puskás 2000: 25; Péter Tóth Pál 2011: 73, Granatir Alexander). It is virtually impossible to determine the exact figures due to the inaccurate data provided by those arriving by ship, the errors of the passenger lists and the consequences of Hungarian assimilation (taking place especially in the above indicated period) on the national conscience of the ethnicities.

Ethnically speaking, we cannot talk about the emigration of “Hungarians” in those days, or we can do so only partially. The people who left Hungary were predominantly Croats, Romanians, Serbs, Ruthenes and Swabians. Their distribution by congregation was rather varied. During the three and a half decades preceding World War I, 2000 (!) cruise ships that could carry as many as one to two thousand passengers were going back and forth between the ports of Fiume, Trieste, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Hamburg, Cherbourg and Southampton and the tiny immigration island of Ellis Island located in the New York bay (Jones 1960: 184-187, Dinnerstein and

Reimers 1988<sup>3</sup>: 16). There were years – 1904, 1907, 1910, 1913 – when as many as 200,000 or even more people left behind Hungary for the sake of America. This crowd, setting off predominantly to make money, which sent or brought home hundreds of millions of dollars from America amid permanent protest from the Americans (Frank, published by J. Győri 2012), was quite meticulously registered by the passenger lists that recorded almost 30 pieces of data about every passenger. It is these passenger arrival lists that make up the foundation of the gigantic database created by the Ellis Island National Immigration Museum and Research Center (New York Passenger Arrival Lists [Ellis Island]).<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, some of the data are incomparable because the droves of data providers who did not speak English and with whom communication was attempted through interpreters left behind quite a lot of unreliable information, most likely often on purpose, too. Notwithstanding the above, it is a fact that the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and with it, Hungary – was among those ten countries of the world that gave the most workers to America (Kraut 1982, 20-21).

From 1921, the United States introduced drastic restrictions on immigration from the new nation-states created by the Paris peace treaties. The so-called Quota Acts (1921, 1924, 1929) sought to deter “bad”, i.e. East-Central and South European as well as Russian and Jewish immigrants, hence Hungarians (and Far Easterners), too. The number of those who could be admitted according to these acts was determined in proportion to the earlier presence of the given ethnicity. In 1921, the immigration quotas were thus set in proportion of the 1910 U.S. census while in 1924, they were defined as a very much reduced percentage of the ethnic data of the 1890 census (Archdeacon 1983: 143-172; Reimers 1998; Frank 1999: 7-190). At a time when the whole of the Hungarian population had suffered extreme losses due to Trianon, this measure deprived the country from its social valve that had operated for decades. The

<sup>6</sup> Upon the request of Ira A. Glazier and Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia, we set up a working group with Julianna Puskás between 1994 – 97 for the Ellis Island database that studied the 27-29 pieces of data for each of the approximately 30,000 passengers registered on the passenger lists of the ocean-going ships transporting Hungarian emigrants (among others), with the professional help of the research fellows of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. This is about 1/50 of the total number of the emigrants at the most; that was how much we could achieve then. These pieces of data were then incorporated into the immigration database of Ellis Island, which is accessible online for everyone these days.

Quota Act of 1924 allowed for 473 (!) immigrants from Hungary per year. After a period of virtually unlimited immigration, the ultra radical American restrictions stripped the Hungarian society of a long-time and habitual form of persistence and social mobility, and contributed to the social tensions, racism, and misery of the 1920s-30s in Hungary. In those times, emigrants would rather head for German Central Europe, especially those whose university studies were jeopardized or made impossible by the *numerus clausus* act (1920:XXV).

It is worth recalling that – whether we identify with them or reject them – an astoundingly high number of our historic figures and politicians having played an important role in the national history died in exile (Ferenc Rákóczi II, Lajos Kossuth, Count Mihály Károlyi, Béla Kun, Miklós Horthy, Miklós Kállay, Count István Bethlen, Ferenc Nagy, Mátyás Rákosi, Anna Kéthly), had a violent death (Count István Tisza, Béla Imrédy, Ferenc Szálasi, Imre Nagy), or committed suicide (Count István Széchenyi, Count László Teleki, Count Pál Teleki).

The immigration waves of the post-1945 period are well-known; it is enough to refer to the respective works of Gyula Borbándi and Péter Tóth Pál (Borbándi 1985, 1996; Tóth Pál 1997). I offered the following brief overview about this period in my article published last year: “Between 1944 and 1949, the representatives of the extreme right, then of the liberal left and the conservative bourgeoisie fled from Hungary in waves – in other words, a significant portion of the Hungarian middle class. The members of each wave thought that they were the last to leave the country at the very last minute when it was still morally justifiable. This wave of immigrants – of a fundamentally political nature – was an indication of the blow of the Cold War on the life of the country. There were several outstanding scholars among these emigrants such as Nobel Prize winners Albert Szent-Györgyi and György Békésy who earned this distinction in emigration.

In the meantime, the homecoming of the émigrés also began. The return of Béla Bartók to Hungary, which he desired more than anything, was prevented by his death in 1945. The old and ill Ignatus, the one-time editor-in-chief of *Nyugat* came home. The surviving members of the émigrés of Moscow after 1919 also returned, and the politicians, with Mátyás Rákosi at the helm, took over the power. Those who returned at that time or a little bit later included such renowned scientists as Lajos Jánossy, Mór Korach and György Lukács and writers such as Béla Balázs and Andor Gábor, followed much later by József Lengyel.

The tragedy, however, was topped by the tide of emigrants after the defeat of the revolution of 1956. Although the Iron Curtain (in the words of Churchill, stretching “from Szczecin [...] to Trieste”) shut the country hermetically in the Rákosi era and despite the fact that in certain years only football players and artists who could leave the country (altogether 2,500 persons in 1954), there were about 200,000 Hungarians who fled after the revolution of 1956, mostly from the younger generations. 40,000 of them were admitted by the United States of America and another 40,000 by Canada. The majority of the rest remained in Austria and/or returned to Hungary sooner or later, or were dispersed. The exodus of this huge crowd was the response to the terror of Stalinism in Hungary, the unbearable oppression of the Rákosi regime and the Iron Curtain. The generation of the émigrés of 1956 had to face the awful dilemma that most likely, they would never be able to come back to their home country and they would bid farewell to their beloved ones for good. The notions of defection and dissidents began to ring familiar to Hungarians at that time. Those who left continued to live in another, virtual Hungary: they pursued their Hungarian lives among each other, in small Hungarian communities, small Hungarian newspapers, small Hungarian churches with all the hope and hopelessness of return. To paraphrase Sándor Márai’s beautiful words, the poet no longer “drew his language from his near family” (*Halotti beszéd – Funeral Oration*, 1951). Despite the almost festive and magnanimous reception of the Hungarian émigrés after 1956, the Hungarian emigration in the west constitutes one of the tragic dead-end-streets of Hungarian history, and few members of it lived long enough to see the unexpected triumph of the political changeover in 1989 (Frank 2015). Detailed and instructive analyses have been prepared about the migration trends after the political changeover by Judit Tóth (1994), Péter Tóth Pál (1997) and Endre Sik (2012, and several excellent studies by Sik himself in the volume edited by him among others.

### **The modernization of communication and the revolution of migration**

In the present historical overview, I do not wish to propose an assessment of the contemporary trends – I shall limit myself to a few remarks. The 19th and the 20th centuries (not to mention the 21st) brought such changes in communication and modernization and on such a scale that made mass migration possible (the migration of hundreds of millions, or according to some sources,

migration exceeding even one billion). The ethnic map of the world is being reshuffled, and the tempo of this process has been accelerating parallel to the revolution of travel. The last two hundred years have given us the steamboat, the steam-driven, then electricity-driven locomotive, the wonder train called TGV, the car, the bus, the airplane. 130-140 years ago those thinking about emigration and finding employment in America would usually send forth a man from whom they hoped to receive news about the prospects of their enterprise. These news were sent by the lucky few who could write and who could also read them, and they were forwarded by ship mail over weeks or even months. Today migrants have not only the telegram, but they are helped by the telephone, the radio, the television, the video, the fax, e-mail, the (smart) mobile phone, the Internet and Skype as well. Everybody was surprised or shocked to see the thousands of mobile phones in the hands of the refugees camped in the vicinity of the Eastern Railway Station of Budapest. It is not only slowly travelling letters and written messages that can provide information about our world today: we have visual information about nearly every corner of the Earth. Thanks to Google, we can virtually peek into into every house and every garden in the world. Visuality having become a general phenomenon, migrants first of all have an image of the desired location they wish to reach, especially on the basis of the idealized images from movies, so they can brace themselves for the long journey. They can become acquainted with the – good or bad – circumstances awaiting them, legislation, obstacles; they can assess the appealing and appalling features of foreign countries and they can compare that to their living conditions at home. At the same time, the so-called push and pull factors can be seen and assessed clearly from a great distance, too.

The world – at least in the megalopolises – is going from monoculturalism towards cultural pluralism. The fact that more than seven and a quarter of a billion people inhabit the Earth in improving or degrading conditions leads to mass phenomena. People are looking for their place in the world, which yields anxiety, frustration and aggression. There is a growing tendency to isolate ourselves while the population of the European nation-states is diminishing, and most likely, they will only be able to maintain their labour output if they liberalize immigration. This will result in the erosion and possibly disintegration of the nation-states in the long term. More than 10 percent of Germany's 83 million inhabitants are immigrants, and within that, the majority of them are Muslims. In a nation-state, it is easy to provoke xenophobia while millions are fleeing from esca-

lating persecution, danger and genocide on many points of the world. Turks and Armenians, Kurds, Arabs and Jews, Hutus and Tutsis are massacring each other and, and people are basically running for their life.

In 2011, the European Union opened its labour market before the citizens of its East-Central European member states.<sup>7</sup> This attracted an unusual mass of guest workers from Hungary to Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom. As demonstrated by this example, migration – whether we put it down to push and pull factors or describe it as a movement from the peripheries towards the centres – is most frequently influenced by external factors: legal changes in other countries, the demographic trends of foreign states, the climatic changes of other regions. Migration in Hungary, this virtually incessant immigration and emigration is not an isolated phenomenon: it can be equally observed in numerous other places. Due to its location, historical destiny and standard of economic performance, Hungary will continue to be exposed to the waves of immigration and emigration that counterbalance each other, but which trigger increasing fear.

Historians should take their time before evaluating the current tide of mass migration. There are no primary sources or archival documents at our disposal (and it is questionable whether there will ever be any). At present it is impossible to decide whether the huge wave of migration coming from the Middle East should be considered purely as a mass of refugees, or if there is also a snippet of more-than-aggressive attempt at conquering the land. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the driving force of the millions flowing towards Europe is not only the military destruction and the civil wars of the Syrian and Iraqi regions and other regions affected by the barbarous conquest efforts of ISIS, but added to it are the global implications of climate change and starvation that also induce migration.

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<sup>7</sup> Working abroad in the European Union: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=25&langId=hu>; About working abroad: <http://europass.hu/kulfoldi-munkavallalaskol-140528105504> – Both accessed on 12 February 2016.

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## **Tibor Frank: In- and Outward Migrations in Hungarian History**

### *Summary*

Throughout its history Hungary has always been in a vulnerable geopolitical situation which induced large groups to leave, and also to enter, the country. Both welcoming foreigners as well as forcing emigrations have traditions in Hungarian history. The article surveys this dual legacy and its lessons from István I, the first king of Hungary (1000 – 1038) to the current patterns of migrations. Most émigré Hungarians were leaving their homeland because of political or religious persecution, and unemployment. The nature of most of this emigration, however, has been closer to the *Gasterbeiter* patterns of the 1960s and 1970s. Those who came to Hungary were often invited as additional laborforce after major foreign invasions. The article addresses some of the crucial issues of contemporary xenophobia, racism, and anti-foreignism in Hungary as well as the push and pull factors in the European Union today.

# **Autonomy**