

THE HUNGARIAN DIASPORA AND ISSUES OF MAGYAR NATIONAL IDENTITY BEFORE 1989

The Hungarian (Magyar) diaspora in Europe and overseas is one of the largest of the European peoples in proportion to the total Hungarian population. Every third Hungarian lives outside of Hungary's borders. Thus, as the title of a recent publication suggests, the Magyars constitute a *divided nation*¹ and this fact can hardly be disregarded in any discussion relating to national identity.

This article will summarize the evolution and characteristics of the Hungarian diaspora and its effects upon national identity before the 1989 political turnover. The diaspora is a result of several migration flows and changes of political borders mainly in the 20th century. A detailed summary of their consequences would need more time and space therefore I will discuss only some historical questions based on cultural anthropology. The emphasis is put on how the *imagined community*² is perceptible among people who live in different political communities. How in this context national identity is redefined by political, ideological statements and in people's everyday life-strategies?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to WW I the Hungarian nation was essentially a political community which did not refer to any one ethnic group, rather to all residents of the Hungarian state. As the Nationality Law of 1868 declared, the various nationalities of Hungary constituted one nation from the political point of view. They were members of "the integral Hungarian political nation". This legal-political formula of the Hungarian "state ideal" did not acknowledge the sovereignty of other ethnic groups in Hungary although it projected an inclusive and receptive orientation. The Hungarian nation-state did not exclude the immigrants, the people

1 Borsody, S. (ed.) 1988.

2 Anderson, B. 1983. 15.

of foreign origin and the strata assimilated to the Magyars.³ In 1910 out of 18 million inhabitants of Hungary little more than half (54,5%) was Magyar and the others belonged to different ethnic and/or nationality groups.

Within the Dual Monarchy Hungary enjoyed partial political independence and for this reason Hungarian nationalism sharply criticized Vienna. Thus, within its own compass, the country strengthened its own ruling position continuously. For the conception of political nation did not exclude rather involved the endeavors of Hungarian nationalism to assimilate the subjects of the country not only politically but in language and culture also.⁴ This process of building the nation-state meant in the first place the trouble of language homogenization for the non-Hungarian ethnic groups and for the non-Magyar speaking population. Consequently, the political loyalty of nationalities towards the state and their *hungarus* identity was considerably weakened. Lacking state sovereignty and restricted in the use of mother tongue the Romanian, Slovak, Southern Slavic and German intellectuals were thinking in the conception of the Herderian culture-nation. Their idea conceived the nation's collectivity, independently from state borders, as a result of common linguistic and cultural traits. However, obtaining territorial and/or state authority was only a first step in the view of Hungarian extremists. Hungarian nationalism perceived it as the most visible and dangerous potential for the state's territorial unity.⁵

Before WW I the Hungarian political-nation concept met the principle of nation-state as well in the sense that the Magyar ethnic group in its entirety lived essentially within the borders. The "normal" situation taken as granted that the Magyars predominantly belonged to one, to their own state authority was questioned first by emigration movements becoming more forceful in the 1870–80s. Previously, Magyars lived in Romania, Croatia⁶ and the the Monarchy, especially in Vienna, but only in small numbers. Emigration occurred as a new problem. In nationalist polemics it was worded as the destruction of the nation or a trauma of the nation's disintegration. Emigration increased the number of Romanian and Croatian Magyars as well. For example, pre-war sources refer to 60-80 thousand settlers in Bucharest. However, the "emigrating rush"

3 See Hanák, P. 1975. 447.; Anti-Semitism... 1989. 14–26.

4 Piault, M. H. 1988. 148–151.

5 Glatz, F. 1990. 298–299. See some cartoons showing threats against the territorial unity: *História*, IX. 1987. 1. 18–19.

6 The most numerous group was the one of *csángós* in Moldavia, who moved beyond the Charpatian moutains in the early Middle Ages, and were reinforced from Transylvania for centuries. See: Benda, K. 1989. In the South, in Croatia four Hungarian places which survived the Turkish occupation, did not belong to Hungary either.

and "emigrating mania" as "national blood-loss"⁷ meant for contemporaries mass migration heading towards North America in the first place. It is considered as the first large flow of emigration in Hungary.

Before WW I approximately 1.2 million people emigrated from the Hungarian Kingdom to the United States and about one third was Magyar by nationality. The mass labor migration was a rural population movement. Without forgetting the fact that the migrants did not constitute a socially homogenous group, they were mostly agriculturists, peasants, rural craftsmen and agricultural workers, wage earners. Their first intention was not to settle down in the United States for good. The emigrants wanted to improve their life at home with the money earned abroad. Herewith, as a result of voluntary decisions a significant number of the population left the nation-state and became members of another political community. According to the US 1920 census the Hungarian (Magyar speaking) community of the United States approximated 500 thousand.⁸

After WW I the state structures changed fundamentally in East-Central Europe. The multinational Monarchy fell into parts and the peace arrangements of Versailles treated Hungary very hardly. In consequence of the peace-treaty signed in Trianon with Hungary in 1920, the country lost 70% of its territories and 60% of its population. About half of the transferred population, nearly 3 million people were Magyars by nationality who became ethnic minorities in the new states.⁹ After all, the new map does not show the desired and promised conglomeration of ethnically homogenic nation-states, rather refers to the compromises of nationalisms and of the Great Powers. In contrast with emigration, Trianon resulted in political and artificial partition of the whole nation as it drew new borders across the territories inhabited by native populations. The Treaty of Trianon did not settle but multiplied the ethnic tensions of the Monarchy.

The unsolved problems provided dangerous sources of hatred and bloodshed. WW II deepened the endangered-feeling of the nation. Territorial revisions, the devastations of warfare, the holocaust, the post-war deportations of specific ethnic groups, the Magyars' deprivation of civil rights in Czechoslovakia and the new peace-treaty of 1947 in Paris, which fundamentally restored the Trianon situation, had fundamental effects on the Magyars' national experi-

7 Kálmán Széll, the Prime Minister's speech in the parliament on 17th December, 1902. Published: *Tezla, A.* (ed.) 1987. I. 44. This motive occurs in Socialist papers as well: *Bresztovszky, E.* I. 1906-7. pp.

8 For details see: *Puskás, J.* 1982.

9 On the other hand, on the remaining country-part, which became almost ethnically homogenous, the number of Magyars was little more than 7 million. See note number 1 and. *L. Nagy, Zs.* 1987. 525-6.

ence. Within the span of three decades some territories belonged to four or even more state authorities.¹⁰ The historical cataclysms made impossible the consolidation of national and state loyalty.

The sovietization of Eastern Europe deepened the isolation of the Central European states. Despite political rhetoric, it made the development of political and economic integration impossible which is an essential characteristic of Western Europe. Sovietization led also to new waves of emigration. Those who left the country voted against the ruling regime even if the basic motivation was economic. The second intense outflow of emigrants from Hungary took place between 1945 and 1949. The mostly politically motivated emigrants, about 100 thousand in numbers altered the communities in overseas shaped by labor migration gradually. As a new experience the Magyars moved to almost all of the countries of the western world beside the traditional destination, the United States. The post-WW II emigrants, political exiles, DPs belonged primarily to the middle class of Hungarian pre-war society.

After 1956, as the third emigration wave, 200 thousand people left Hungary. Although more than half of them were of working class origin the proportion of intellectuals, scholars and undergraduates was significant. The refugees of 1956 scattered all over the world since dozen and dozen of governments helped them to settle down. The outflow still has not stopped. In the past three decades every year there were 2–3 thousand illegal and couple of hundred legal emigrants from Hungary.¹¹ Today the Hungarian diaspora in the western world is extremely complex. It extends to different continents, different countries, however its center remained the United States. The social complexity of the diaspora is due to the blend of different emigration flows and its generational structure.

THE TRIANON SYNDROME

The partition of the Hungarian Kingdom and the split of the Hungarian nation into five parts resulted in economic, political, social and cultural crises. Trianon also influenced all the cultural and symbolic processes which are the resources of national cohesion and of national experience. In contradiction with

10 It's worth to quote an anecdote here about the *widely travelled* Hungarian: "I was born in Austro-Hungary, I went to school in the Czech Republic, I was a soldier of the Hungarian Kingdom and now I live in the Soviet Union. Oh, you are really a widely travelled person! How could you travel so much? Me? I never moved from the city of Ungvár." The city (Uzhhorod) today belongs to Ukraine.

11 *Puskás, J.* 1985. 236–259.

the continuous course of Western European countries' nationalization the Trianon Peace Treaty encouraged the new-born states to fill the political frameworks in the quickest way. We do not consider the western model as harmonic as we used to do, the constitution of France for example is described as colonization these days,¹² but all the tensions of previous minorities becoming majority are perceptible here. Instead of uninterrupted continuity of nationalization so important to the western world, in Eastern Europe a nation-building euphoria in symbolical and real terms became dominant. It is only the nature of the *cul-de-sac Hungarian history* (István Bibó) that filled the national feeling of winners with euphoria, it burdened the Hungarian national feeling with lethargy. As a paradox, negation became the strongest cohesive force of the time. "No! No! Never!" blared everywhere the slogan, as well as the prize-winning prayer of a versemongering lady, the lines of "Hungarian Credo", repeated day by day in every school before classes: "I believe in one God! I believe in one country! I believe in the resurrection of Hungary!".

The long time visioned nation as *imagined community* and its postwar form in the successor states brought such a radicalism in "exterior-interior spreading"¹³ that it was necessarily sticking to someone coming from outside. Arnold van Gennep, the founder of French ethnography, watching the struggles of Eastern European nationalisms, wrote a book to describe the "exterior features" that separate the nations from one another.¹⁴ He recommended his work to the French people who "already settled their nation" and wanted to draw a scene to understand the national conflicts sharpened by the war and the peace arrangements. He examined the self-distinguishing marks of ethnic groups (language, costume etc.) as well as the state or political symbols, as for example the national flags, or the use of statistics and cartography. He used all his information to explain why certain groups neither individually nor collectively can assimilate to social and political structures which are forced upon them.

The birth of new states reproduced the methods of the nationalization of culture practiced in Austro-Hungary together with their negative effects. The main domain of national culture formed by education and mass communication radically changed for the Hungarians in minority. The school aimed at the reinterpretation of the past as press aimed at the reinterpretation of the present.

12 *Piault, M. H.* op.cit. Speaking of Scandinavia Orvar Löfgren criticizes the myth of the idyllic picture of nation-building. See *Löfgren, O.* 1989. 5-24.

13 *Löfgren, O.* op. cit. 12.

14 *Van Gennep, A.* 1922. The author spent years before and during the war in Poland under Russian occupation (in Chestochowa). The planned two other volumes were never finished.

Compulsory state education had the strongest effect. As for the minorities the syllabus implied a brand new national norm, and what made the situation worse was the reduction of mother-tongue schools and rendering their conditions harder. Naturally, the local administration and the state bureaucracy served the construction of the new nation-state that assigned great importance to broaden the domination of language. The national, cultural continuity of the Hungarian minorities were served by Magyar-language cultural institutions: press, literature, book publishing, churches, schools (mainly religious), cultural societies, etc.¹⁵ Within the new states the valid national norms caused psychological crises and culture-shock among the minority population never experienced before.

The "symbol-fights" of national *éléments extérieures* expressed the crises of loyalty between the two wars. Hundreds of "flag-fights", conflicts caused by singing the national anthem, and local petty suits on misunderstood folk songs and on objected pieces of dress illustrate the insults of the time.

In his book Arnold van Gennep claims, that "the territory what a group occupies is at least as much as language the symbol of cohesion and continuity, even for himself".¹⁶ The redrawing of the borders of historical Hungary has wounded this deep cultural resource that showed its effect on local and countrywide level as well. "During the transition from historical to linguistic borders the most difficult psychological problem is to dissolve historical emotions tying people to certain regions; in 90 percent of the cases these emotions involve the residents and the relics of towns"¹⁷ – wrote István Bibó, the political thinker, who brilliantly perceived the nature of the nation's collectivity. The previous statement explains how the geographical motives became so powerful in Hungarian national consciousness and national experience beside the political and ruling interests.

Between the two world wars the concept of the *Thousand-year-old Hungary* was the focal point of the political ideology. First, it meant space as it embodied the most palpable fact of "cohesion and continuity". At the same time, the perpetual emphasis in formal speeches in daily publications and in propaganda materials indicates the encouraging constraint of the fragile national consciousness as well.

15 Literature and data about Hungarian minorities by countries see: Jelentések... 1988. For Romania: *Ilyés, E.* 1982.

16 *Van Gennep, A.* op.cit., pp. 143.

17 *Bibó, I.* 1991. 13–88. On pp. 22.: "Here, just as everywhere in the world, national sentiments not only bind together a certain group of people, but also bind them to a certain territorial unit containing localities, sacred cities and historical relics." See the notion of *poetic space* used by *Smith, A. D.* 1986. 183–190.

The new political system abolished the foundation of the nation bounded to its geographical territorial unity and materialistic framework from one minute to the other. Hungary with the loss of its territories, as the historian says, had lost almost the whole "stage" of the national history: "the significant part of the scenes of borderfortress fights against the Turks, the majority of the plots of frequently discussed medieval conquerors got beyond the borders similarly to independence war scenes, so many songs recalled sharpened against Vienna, during the Turkish invasion in the 16–17th centuries the symbol of independent Hungarian statehood Transylvania and the previous capital, Pozsony [Bratislava]. Also the historical scenery, the castles, the buildings, the churches..."¹⁸ and we could add, the numerous inspirative local sources of folk art.

Losses could be replaced only symbolically. The compensation manifested itself in sabrerattling behavior. Regional alliances, societies for defending certain territories, (para)military organizations spread like fire. A *Magyarország Területi Épségének Védelmi Ligája* [League for the Defence of Hungary's Territorial Integrity] not only in its political motivation but in its name also expressed clearly the essence of its endeavour the rather general feeling of devotion to territories.

Right after the peace treaties "irredentist sculptures" were erected in Budapest on a main square and the four groups represented the lost parts of the country. In 1928 on the same square, a flag pole was set up with the national flag flying at half mast all the time. At the dedication of the monument, earth taken from the lost counties and from historical scenes was placed in the relic-holders. In front of it the "Trianon flower-bed" pictured the old Hungary with the text of "Hungarian Credo".¹⁹ American Hungarians tried to emphasize their belonging to country and nation similarly, while by means of propaganda they said: "As far as the flower-bed representing Hungary is concerned, it was well-tried... In front of the flower-bed a short note said »Look what had been done with a thousand-year-old country«. The illustration showed the divided United States with these words: »what would the Americans say if the same was done with their country«. "²⁰ Similar rendering of perception of dismembering was the

18 Glatz, F. 1988. 108.

19 Liber, E. 1934. 310–312., 344.; Pótó, J. 1989. 26–29.

20 This flower-bed was in the garden of the American provincialate of the Daughters of Divine Charity, a Hungarian sisterhood. See Record Group P 975 (Records of the World Federation of Hungarians), No. 354., National Archives of Hungary.

21 These maps were adaptation from the book of K. Szádeczky, L. 1926. and after its English publication they spread even abroad.; L. Nagy, Zs. 1985. 22–3.

projection of "Trianon maps" to other Western European countries²¹ expressed the anti-Western feelings that were other features of national feeling at that time. An other typical way of compensation for the losses was to name streets and squares after cities, rivers and mountains of transferred territories. Some quarters of the capital built between the two world wars topographically resemble Transylvania and Upper Hungary and the villas built in one of these quarters in the 1920–30s recall the romantic style and life style of Transylvanian castles.²²

The negation of territorial losses was strengthened forcefully in schools. Maps were printed on notebooks and textbooks of the historical Hungary, of the "mangled country" and of the future reintegrated outlines of the country. The triptichon was even stressed by the words below, saying: "Little Hungary is not a country, Great Hungary is Heaven!" The pupils still learned the geography of past Hungary and the maps still did not indicate the new borders. In history classes special emphases was put on the role of the nation's "saint" cities as in literature classes on the question what cities and what part of the disannexed country the famous writers and poets were born. On the other hand, the successor states found it most important to annex these "saint" places and used all means of symbols and political rituals to support their own nation by them. Magyars living in these cities had to call the cities by the names of the new official language. The names of the streets and squares were changed or translated also. New representative administrative buildings, quarters and churches were built in historical city centers and statues of national heroes were erected etc. The "saint cities" became the major plots of national aspirations.

The intellectuals protested with great emphases. *Vérző Magyarország* [Bleeding Hungary] was the title of a publication for example, in which Magyar literary men, public figures, politicians but independent intellectuals as well declared for the unity of historical Hungary.²³ The publication did not lack a map representing the emptiness of the Trianon country surrounded by the disannexed territories fully written with names. It listed the outstanding figures of the Hungarian past and of the nation's culture, suggesting that the remaining territory remained without collective memory and symbolic capital of the nation's cultural past. As one of the articles expressed succinctly the nation's cohesion was seen the unity of space and past. It stressed that the Hungarian politics' important and unchangeable idea was always "*to save the united and inde-*

22 *Teplán, I.* 1990. 15–31.

23 *Kosztolányi, D.* n.d.

pendent Hungary, almost determined by the thousand-year-old history and by nature" (enhanced in the original).²⁴ The argument takes part-truths as generally valid. While in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the independence of Hungary was only partial, in the same way the idea of nature-determined borders is exaggerated by some professional works also.²⁵

The new borders broke organic economic unities. The structure of division of labor broke down in the whole Carpathian-basin. Age-long market districts came to an end, cities were detached from their hinterland, fields, vineyards, orchards of villages got beyond the border. In many places working-connections of small-holders became paralyzed. People tried to accommodate to the new situation by transforming the local economic structure. For people living in the border-strips these economic and social problems meant the reality of the *divided nation* and the failure of the previous nation-state.

"I felt the shrinking of the country's territory [...] directly, within the family, so to say" wrote about the personal feelings Zoltán Szabó, a well-known contemporary essayist.²⁶ It was a general experience within the middle class who due to relations was mobile and could be at ease even in far distanced parts of the country. For them certain parts of the country recalled chapters of family life: "Pozsony [Bratislava] was the city our father finished his schools, Szabadka [Subotica] where our mother was born, Temesvár [Timisoara], Lugos [Lugoj] and Érsekújvár [Nové Zámky] where we visited our relatives",²⁷ someone remembers the losses. Even if it's hard to prove by objective data it was mainly the middle class who had – almost all of the families – relatives, connections, friends and previous colleagues in the disannexed part of the country. They perceived the most the tragic fate of the Hungarian refugees, mostly government officials and employees, who had to leave the detached territories. The existential crises of more than 400 thousand refugees at the time who have been living for years in carriages meant one of the most serious social problem of postwar Hungary. Refugees estranged from roots, lost their social status especially felt the endangered traditional nationalism of nobility and situation of nation through their own life-crises. In searching for remedies they became one of the most important basis of the political conservative powers, who placed revision to the center of their goals. By and by they became the most radical

24 *Ibid.*, 170–171.

25 Kádár, L. 1943. 69–90.

26 Szabó, Z. 1988. 28.

27 Zsirai, K. 1986. 154.

supporters of the leagues for defence of territories. They also played an important role in government politics, e. g. one third of the first counter-revolutionary parliament members originated from the disannexed territories.²⁸

Furthermore, the general refusal of Trianon desired also the *reorganization* of the loosened national community naturally. Instead of summarizing the various theoretical and practical programs of national unity I would like to point out only two aspects that touched broader masses in the course of heightening the feeling of national collectivity.

The *actualization of national history* played a significant role in reconstructing national feeling which has lost its stability. It was a characteristic of the interwar years that "the most significant ideological theses and programs were embodied by historic figures, gained symbolic meaning, and suggested validity over time and political blocs".²⁹ The *historic mythology* imbued the daily program of the government and the representative rituals of political and religious celebrations through which they wanted to influence the middle class, the major basis of the regime. The historic argumentation dominated even the publicity forums of circles further from the reigning spheres.

The primary figure of legitimacy was *Szent István* [Saint Stephen], the Founder of the State in the year of 1000. His figure and creation was identified with the *thousand-year-old* past of the country and with its fundamentally Christian idea. After the famous *Exhortations* addressed to his son saying that "the unilingual and uniform country is weak and fragile", the *Hungary of St. Stephen* became the synonym in political rhetoric of the multiethnic Hungarian Kingdom. There was a high emphasis to propagate the cult of St. Stephen and in his case they tried to activate even the lower social classes. On the celebration of St. Stephen's relic, the yearly held *Szent Jobb* [Saint Right Side] procession in the capital, the delegations of villages dressed in national costume and urban Christian worker organizations always took part. The cluster in the historic mythology altered the figure of *Szent Imre* [Saint Emeric], the son of St. Stephen to the educational ideal of youth. The cult of the saints of the dynasty of the first Hungarian kings, the Arpáds generally gained a notable position. Beside St. Emeric and St. Stephen, *Szent László* [St, Ladislaus], who defended the Eastern borders of the country in Transylvania, as well as *Erzsébet* [Elisabeth] and *Margit* [Margaret] were not taken simply as the prominent figures of Catholicism and of Christian universality but as national *Magyar* saints.

28 Mocsy, I. 1983. 67-82.

29 Szabó, M. 1978. 507.

In contrast with St. Stephen they have traditions in folklore and among the people. In revaluation and selection of past the memories and heroes of fights for independence were avoided. On the contrary, the motives of *Shield of West* and *Bastion of Christianity* were revoked. These were an important part of the thoughts evolved by the Trianon shock in relation with Hungary's position between East and West again and again. This motive was burdened heavily with anti-Westernism in conservative ideologies: the pain of the Treaty of Trianon was compensated with stigmatizing the ungratefulness of the Western world.

After Trianon and the suppressed revolutions of 1918–19 on behalf of national reorganization the strengthening and propagating national erudition and culture were very important goals and succeeded in concrete results the most. The accumulation of national values and the emphasis of national self knowledge in the numerous scholarly and popular publication that came out those years enhanced the national self-esteem. The moderate and representative summaries of the Hungarian history, art, geography, ethnography and folklore indicate this. The culture politics of Kuno Klébelsberg, the Culture Minister between 1922–31, covered broader strata than the intellectual reading public. His program was definitely motivated by the conditions of Trianon, with Hungary as a "cultural superiority" in its center: "We have to show to the great nations, and the public opinion of the world, that the interior values of Hungarian nation is greater, than of the surrounding nations, who became so great on our account. In the eye of the civilized West, the measure of this is civilization." He wanted to achieve cultural progress by providing high level schooling and educational and advanced institution at the European standard to the middle class considered as the leading power of nation. At the same time he also wanted to broaden the education of peasantry and of workers. So as to satisfy this great scoped program entirely, the financial resources of the country were not enough. The most results beside science politics came out on the field of primary education. Still it was not enough to reform society gradually, that was described by Gyula Szekfű, a leading historian as *neo-baroque*.³⁰

The Hungarian politics regarded the quest of regaining the territories of the historic country as one of primary importance. As we saw, this idea influenced public opinion and determined most of the practical and ideological concepts of national integration. Strikingly, little attention was paid to the detached Magyar population living beyond the borders. Minority Magyars were treated only as a territorial problem between the two wars as a Hungarian ethnic ersayist of

30 Klébelsberg, K. 1990. 542., 445.; Szekfű, Gy. 1920.

Czechoslovakia put it: "There is an interest for land and not for Magyars living on this land or for other nationalities". This can be the reason for the distinct and independent development and problems of minority Magyars are not understood in Hungary: "Where would minority Magyars get if they behaved as much with a rigid negotiation towards novel relations as the Hungarians in Budapest do?" These words were published before the first Vienna Award, the first revisionist success, in the special edition of such a "nation-political review" which aimed the educating and improvement of "the unity and undetachable consciousness of Magyar culture".³¹ The territorial reannexation reinforced these ideas in two ways. In one hand, in the name of "national defence in spirits" against German expansion and on the other hand, in the destructive racist politics of purifying nation that ended in catastrophe. The illusion of national division's end put the reality of diverging progress aside.

THE NADIR OF WAR TO THE "BAD MOODED REVOLUTION"

The collapse after the war and its consequences definitely discredited the politics of "old Hungary". All of the various groups of rebuilding aimed some sort of democratic national renewal and instead of the rejected *neo-baroque* worked out distinct thoughts of national identification. The pluralism of these ideas of alternative futures with the sudden communist taking over of power lost its validity from one moment to the other. The communist party acquired hegemony in power and announced a radically new program of social and state integration.

From our point of view the following question may be raised: how were the new power and national loyalty related to each other after this radical political turnover. Considering the political phraseology of the time it can be verified that the new era did not lack national rhetoric, however, the hegemonic regime propagated the idea of internationalism primarily. The communist party demanded to establish politics in the continuity of national history. In order to do this the concept of "progressive traditions" of Hungarian history was underscored. It meant the ideological idealization of the traditions of 1848's national independence essentially but encompassed resistance against the Habsburgs as well. An other slogan of the period before 1956 was: "national form, socialist

31 *Borsody, I.* 1938. 218-219.

contents". It wanted to sound out the national feature of socialist building, also. Nevertheless, national and political loyalty of the years are clearly distinguishable. They do not coincide in the new regime and the notion of *system* (political regime) became a factor of political identity. "The new regime, took up its quarters in 1948, meant such a coherent unity of all the spheres of life: of economy, of politics in the narrow sense, of culture but even of free-time activities; in which the functions of the factors could be interpreted only *politically* what is, as *system*. (...) Thinking in nation was absolutely pressed back beside thinking in system."³² The Hungarian Stalinist-, "Rákosi-era" in this sense beside all the national rhetorics it used was not an experiment of a new national program but of a new political doctrine. Its followers did not see its goals as ones of the renewal of the nation, and its opponents rejected it clearly as a political system. Despite the fall of the Rákosi-era the system-consciousness ensuring political loyalty in the various periods after 1956 was always present. So, generally speaking, a great gap can be experienced among Eastern European countries in the last decades in state and national identification and in the relation of citizens to state or political system and to nation.

To approach the problem of *divided nation* a distinction must be made between the early 1970s and the following period. The quest of Magyar minorities abroad arose within the strongly controlled publicity only after a long silence in the 1970s. Previously, it is worth mentioning, that in spite of the collapse of the pre-war revisionist politics, people had a slight hope that the new peace arrangements of 1947 in Paris would be more favorable. As the results of a Budapest survey of 1946 show, nearly half of the questioned looked forward to borders following the real ethnographic situation and less (37%) thought that the Trianon situation would be restored.³³ The new peace arrangements cleared up all the illusions and Magyars, who had been disannexed previously, became minority again. Partition grew even stronger as the north-east part of the countryside inhabited by Hungarians, that belonged to Czechoslovakia before, got to Soviet authority. Subsequently, the new regime manifested the problem as taboo simply by not mentioning it. Trianon became equivalent with the revisionist politics of the interwar period and so erased from the phraseology of Hungarian political geography.

At this time, politics did not pay attention to the minorities, altogether to the question of nation which were not independent of the delicate territorial is-

32 Szabó, M. 1988. 39-51.

33 Levendel, A. 1984. 114.

sues. National conflicts were taken as the curse of the "imperialist" past and were considered to be solved automatically in socialism. On the contrary, western Hungarians were mentioned the most. More precisely the "dissidents" who were branded by a loud propaganda. This notion signified political emigrants or exiles and essentially it meant the same as "traitor of the country" and "traitor of nation". However, hundreds of jokes³⁴ of the 1950–60s indicated clearly that the "dissidents" did not leave the nation but the system. As it was also clear for the opponents of the system both in and outside of the country by this time that the doctrine of "Magyar is, who lives in Hungary" is unacceptable. But at the same time, in the politically less heavy cases loyalty for nation was still forcefully bounded to the feeling of loyalty for country according to the general public opinion or even in the eyes of intellectuals as well.

To the mid-1950s, Magyar–Magyar relations were entirely restricted on the private level too. Beside the Iron Curtain detaching East and West there were very slowly demolishing walls between the "friendly socialist countries" also. In contrast with the slogan of internationalism everyday reality meant economy developed within narrow nation-state frameworks and the hermetic borders for everyday people. For renewal of connection among relatives living across boundaries became possible after 1956, but the situation was eased rather from the mid-1960s. (Then some countries abolished visas etc.) There were still exceptions as the Magyars in the Soviet Union who had to live in total isolation till the end of 1980s as a result of the Soviet policy. The situation in Romania was just the opposite. Though it became the problem of the next period, after the normal relation of more than a decade, the situation of the minorities was rendered more difficult in the mid-1970s, as for example to maintain private and family relations. (One of the orders e.g. forbade to put up foreigners at private houses.) To have a relation with *dissidents* was completely impossible before 1956, it was advisable even not to correspond. Real changes started after the amnesty (1963) that referred to emigrants as well. After a couple of years there were about 100 thousand visiting western Magyars. By the increase of this number, the propaganda moderated and the euphemism of "compatriot got to a strange country" appeared and replaced the "dissident". Everybody who had a neutral political viewpoint was welcomed. Though travelling from Hun-

34 An example: Photos of Stalin and Rákosi are found on a gypsy who is fleeing through the border. The frontier guards are astonished why he takes exactly those things with him. Answer: Well, I thought, if I were homesick, I would take out these photos... *Humor a romo...* 1957. 11. The word *dissident* as a system-specific term was bid farewell in the editorial of a major newspaper during the changes: *Búcsú egy...* 1989.

gary was more difficult still, but after a while visits of relatives could become mutual.³⁵

The slowly developing relations within the population separated by borders did not raise the question of national partition as a problem. It is clear that first the joy over the reestablished relations was decisive. The political stabilization after 1956 made it possible that thoughts related to nation, though in restricted measures, but gained publicity by and by. This was a long and slow process with several characteristics. One of these was the role of the folk-inspired authors, the so called "populist or folk writers", who started in the 1930s. The best known representatives of the group began to bring up the vital questions of Hungarian nation more and more consciously.

"The cohering powers are loosening in our nation" – wrote one of them, László Németh, the well-known literary personality in 1966. He saw the reason for this in the value system of the industrialized society that broke in "with the dream of private cars". In other word, he blamed the fact of modernizing processes gaining ground. Sometimes later he accentuated the lack of national pride. "The disintegration of Magyars have speared up in the last years. The attracting center is weakening that would bound Magyars stuck beyond the borders and scattered all over the world."³⁶ Scatteredness became the central thought especially in the works of an other author, of Gyula Illyés. In his essays examining the "root-hairs of national feeling", he formulated he metaphor of "five-forked whistle". "Magyar nation is a five-forked whistle – untunable" – he wrote, and somewhere else he added, that possibly "from this segmentation should be produced something good". At this time, he thought of working on better relations with the neighboring nations in first place.³⁷

As a traditional Eastern European tendency rooted in the times of "national awaking" thoughts of writers and other intellectuals fostered collectivity consciousness. Literature got again a determining role in shaping common feelings. It was redrafted that national collectivity, the "disintegrated nation" (László Németh) has to be reinforced by the "adhesive material" of literature. In the 1970s literature truly became one of the most significant devices in maintaining historical memory and grew to be the symbol of national identification.

From the beginning of the 1970s the politics have not been aversed any longer to the most articulated national questions arising in intellectual circles.

35 *Burucs, K.* 1983. 26–28.; *Hahn, L.* 32–34.; *Szántó, M.* 1984. 178–180.

36 *Németh, L.* 1980. 452., 792.

37 *Illyés, Gy.* 1971. 267., 534.

The "bridge" conception was built in the ideology concerning Magyars beyond the borders. "In agreement and cooperation with the governments of neighboring countries we endeavor mutually that nationalities will not be separating factors but binding ties" – claimed the Foreign Minister then.³⁸ This thought was well-known in minority publications in the interwar period and gained ground in Hungary in the 1970s. Within the ideology of internationalism and regarding the "sensitiveness" of neighboring countries concerning minority problems, this idea became the most tolerable conception of nation.

These years meant fundamental changes of the society as well. After 1956 parts of the "neutralized society"³⁹ and the generation who grew up during the post-1956 years found guarantee in the identification models of ethnic renaissance and counter-culture movements. For them, interest concerning minority Magyars as well as the necessity of national identity was not exclusively an intellectual or literary issue any longer. This period was the renaissance of peasant culture and the movements of youth "folklorism". Ethnography, not so much the inland official science rather the amateur and professional ethnographic researches done by ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders played an important role in shaping self-consciousness. The folk art and folklore publications of ethnic Hungarians from Romania were real best-sellers in Hungary also and provided abundant first-hand information for the Hungarian youth folklore, folk-dance movements. They were predominantly not professional but alike literature of "nation adhesiving" nature. Beside they served education. Urban youth learned crafts in clubs and camps, trying to discover new aesthetic values of in-group performance and entertainments. The resource was over and over again the Magyar minorities, primarily in Transylvania. The fundamental endeavor of the movement was to learn of people living in Transylvania. A local tradition, the dance-house became the central element of the movement. As a form of non-institutionalized attempt for community-building it served emotional identification and in terms of folklore thirst for learning non-communist values. The dance-house movement gained ground rapidly in other communities of Magyar minorities and overseas Hungarian diaspora. Certainly, it succeeded the old-fashioned "horsemen and goulash" national stereotype of Hungary in many places.⁴⁰

38 *Népszabadság*, December 14, 1972. 4.

39 *Szabó*, op.cit 1989. 241.

40 *Siklós*, L. 1981.; *Martin*, Gy. 1982. 73–83.

Groups and individuals motivated in various ways took part in this youth movement but students were dominant. Surely, the conscious appearance of the new generation of popular writers was determining. "For a long time in Hungary I could be a Magyar as if I had been invited to a masquerade" – as one of them put it. Possibilities to deal with folk culture served the "missing Magyar-consciousness". "Furthermore: if not a hiss can be conveyed about Magyars living in Transylvania, in Upper Hungary, and in Vajdaság [Vojvodina], then their songs should be summoned. As the song of Mezőség and of the vicinity of Nyitra and of the province of Kalotaszeg and Beregszász are all Magyars."⁴¹ Presumably, not everybody experienced the concept of "five-forked whistle" as consciously as the poet. The average looked for and found the experience of youth subculture in the dance-house movement.

Thus, the significance of social transformation is apparent: the nation's disintegration became conscious (again), and expanded from the intellectuals in various channels to the broader circles of middle class. It did not get further till the mid-1980s. Scattered surveys verify the people were still not well-informed, although people in cities and with higher education showed better results. One of the surveys in 1981 compared the national consciousness of Magyar and French students, resulted in a great surprise. Accordingly, only 27% of the Hungarian students new there are important Magyar communities beyond the borders and only 4% could tell figures. Other surveys, relying on more secure grounds methodologically, give better picture, but those remained unknown to the public.⁴²

It gave a real impulse beyond such and similar warning signs that things were getting worse for the minorities from the mid-1970s. Situation became critical, primarily in Romania. It gained voice more and more clearly even through the controled publicity of the time. The informal circles of the middle class, intellectuals and university organs drafted the problems of Magyars in Transylvanian as one of the (if not *the*) key issues. Consequently, the unsolved legal, cultural, demographic etc. issues of other Magyar minorities in neighboring countries became known as well. This process turned in 1988 into political mass-demonstrations. There were demonstrations on March 15th and later against the Romanian minority policy and against the so called Romanian "village-systematization plan" on July 27th when 200 thousand people went to the streets of Budapest. These political rituals were explicitly the manifestations of

41 Csoóri, S. 1989. 50–51.

42 Kóteles, P. 1981. 62–65.

victory over the *system*, that was soon followed by real political turnover and by the Hungarians' "discussing revolution".⁴³

In relation to the *divided nation* two facts have to be emphasized. The major factor of renaissance of national identification and fostering the nation's collectivity was the rediscovery of Magyar ethnics living beyond the border. The process did not start with the intention of shaping political community, whether consciously or unconsciously. The goal was a self-organization built on cultural values that made possible to learn and unite the cultural values of Magyars "dispersed in the world". The vision of Magyar nation as being endangered came ahead in redrafting national community. For Magyars, this motive of national experience has been conscious since Herder. The new definition of nation in post-1956 Hungary became similar to the situation of minorities as a result of the division of cultural and political community was apparent. As the political analyst formulated: "The reason for the high interest what shows for Magyars living beyond the borders is that by the reawakened collectivity conscious inland Magyars formulate their own Magyar consciousness again."⁴⁴ *Division and people living outside of Hungary* became again the central motivation in the search for national identity, though in a different sense than after WW I.

The rebuilding of national collectivity is in this context dominantly literature-centered. The *five-forked whistle*, that the poet, Gyula Illyés originally meant as *literature*, more and more referred to the totality of the Magyar nation. Later the metaphor was elaborated in further variants as the "three-branched lifetree", "six-forked whistle", "Magyar island-world", "island Magyars" etc.⁴⁵ Important inspirations originated from certain intellectual groups of Western Magyars. They varied the thesis of Illyés but paid more attention to the general and everyday aspects of identity feelings of those who belong to specific branches of the *divided nation*. In their works the national culture was interpreted on a quite normative level. These theories tried to bring to existence an *imagined community* in a symbolic way between people and communities all over the world. However, they concealed the fact that from the anthropological point of view there are necessary differences in culture, i.e. in acts, symbols and values. Since individual Magyar islands are not homogenic themselves and are

43 *Hősök tere* '88 július 27. 1988.; *Gabanyi, A. U.* 1989. 235–258.; *Kürti, L.* 1990. 5–8.; *Hahn, C. M.* 1990. 1. 4–24.

44 *Szabó*, op. cit. 1989. pp. 247.

45 Among others e.g. *Köteles, P.* 1985. 11–16.; *Nagy, K.* 1988.

sociologically structured the nation as cultural process and code-community can be seen as diverse. The question remains still now: to what degree a national culture is built up on lived experience and common cultural practice? Is there a national sharing of Hungarians being as members of a *devided nation*? Or, are they only united by a set of symbolic representation or ideological rhetorics?

According to some theories⁴⁶ the period of 1970-80s was also determined by another social practice which had its effects mainly in the private sphere of society. In Hungary the modernization process and individual economic achievements created a special identification role. At this time the Hungarian "system" had an unique economic policy in Eastern Europe. Certain forms of the western standard of living, the financial rise of the middle class and a "shy" national pride in the relative Hungarian economic prosperity were the best-known attributes of the time. The conclusion was drawn by broader social strata than intellectuals. The people redrafted and "relived" in a specific manner the traditional issue of Magyar national consciousness, the position of Magyars between East and West. The "language" was the object-world of consumption devices. Modernization and commodities of social prestige in Hungary came from the western consumer society. It would be hard to prove by data, but their introduction can be connected to a degree to the western Magyars as there were more people with western relatives than who could work abroad as diplomats or as employees. Magyars could experience the reality of their diaspora as an extension and outcome of their family relations. Since the early 1980s private ventures in Hungary were supported primarily by the emigrants of 1956, or even more recent "dissidents". Visiting relatives could easily take out the necessary capital for small boutiques, restaurants, record stores etc. from their pocket and place at the relatives disposal. This trend intensified and is still perceptible. For numerous joint-ventures the western investment came from members of the "western Magyar island-world".

Trips to other Eastern block countries, least but not last visits of relatives and Transylvania tours awakened on the other hand the consciousness of the situation of Magyars and the country's relative economic prosperity. The difference between *them*, the *soviet block* and *us* became stronger and visible by consumption goods. This consumer oriented attitude articulated the ground of an identity based on comparison. Personal and primary relations, information networks were decisive. The ironic notion of Hungary as *the happiest barrack*

46 Lengyel, L. 1985/4-1986/1. 171-196.

in the socialist camp used widely became the badge of shy proudness. The situation between East and West, a perpetual issue of Magyar national consciousness was experienced in everyday life strategies. The identity was based on possibilities of having western products or gadgets. For Hungarians living in the neighboring countries Hungary meant a good place where all attractive goods such as jeans, Adidas, stereos etc. and a relative abundance of provisions were available. From here commodities could flow towards East having produced some national pride or from time to time even some self-satisfaction in Hungary. Commodities served obviously as the means for national identity. Altogether, the *attracting center* claimed by the writer, László Németh grew stronger with the results of achievement of relative economic prosperity or *em-bourgeoisement* and not as a result of spiritual national values as thought by Németh. The common national ideals uttered by a *five-forked whistle* were paralleled by rather different everyday life-worlds.

(1990–1992)

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