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## **Linguistic minorities in Hungary**

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#### **1. Introduction**

Hungary has one of the lowest proportion of minorities in Eastern Europe: Hungarian is the first language to 98.5% of the population and 97.8% identify themselves as ethnically Hungarian (Dávid 1993:34-35). With the exception of the Gypsies, all the minority groups – the larger groups like the Germans, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Romanians, as well as the smaller groups like Poles, Bulgarians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Ruthenians and Armenians – are economically and socially completely integrated into Hungarian society, and their life is not touched upon by prejudices or discrimination. Yet, the minorities tie into a lot of the questions and problems of the past and present of both Hungary and the adjoining states, and their history explains several key features of Hungary's relations with its neighbors.

In the first part of this chapter (section 2) I will describe the origin and historical development of the contact situation involving Hungarians and Hungary's minority groups, and characterize the various aspects of minority life will be given in the second part (section 3).

#### **2. Historical development**

In the course of the past century and a half Hungary has turned from a country with an ethnic "majority" Hungarian population of less than 50% into a state with no sizeable minority population. The major periods in history of the contact situation have been: the development of multiethnic Hungary (from the beginnings to the 18th century); the age of the rise of nationalism, of the ideal of the nation-state and of the ethnic and national consciousness for all of the linguistic-ethnic groups of the country (in the 19th century); the truncation of Hungary under the Treaty of Trianon, leaving the country with one-third of its former territory, two-thirds of its ethnic Hungarians and 10% of its minorities (in 1920); and the period of communism after World War II, accelerating the assimilation of the remaining minorities through urbanization and the neglect of the cause of minorities under the communist ideology.

##### 2.1 The development of the multiethnic state

The Hungarians – or *magyarok*, in Hungarian – are a Finno-Ugric people related to Finns, Lapps, Estonians, and many smaller peoples like the Maris, Mordvinians, Komis, Khantys and Mansis now living on the territory of the former Soviet Union. The ancient homeland of the ancestors of all the Finno-Ugric peoples was along the Kama River in the vicinity of the Ural mountains. After gradually breaking off from the other Finno-Ugric peoples, the ancient Hungarians moved to the regions now inhabited by Bashkirs. Having lived in close contact with Turkic peoples from about 550 A.D. to about 830, the seven Hungarian tribes embarked on a migration process, moving south and finally west, crossed the Carpathians, and in 895 settled on the great plain around and between the Danube and Tisza rivers. This area, which subsequently became Hungary,

was at the time of the Hungarian conquest populated by Slavic peoples: Moravians, Sloveno-Karantas and Bulgarian Slavs (Illyés 1988:177). An important consequence of the settling of the Hungarians in the Carpathian basin was the separation of the Northern and Southern Slavs. And, although the Hungarian conquest followed the pattern of many similar migration processes and conquests in pre-Christian Europe, this, together with the "Asiatic" origin of the Hungarians, became important causes of anti-Hungarian sentiments at the rise of nationalism in East-Central Europe exactly ten centuries later.

In 1000 Vajk, the son of the last pagan ruler, Géza, was baptized by the Roman Church and crowned as the first Hungarian Christian monarch, King Stephen (István) (1000-1038). This was followed by the conversion of the pagan Hungarians by German and Italian monks and preachers invited into the country by Stephen and his Bavarian wife, Gisela. Rome and Byzantium had both attempted to convert the Hungarians, and Stephen's choice of the western church irreversibly tied Hungary's subsequent history and affiliation to that of Western Christendom and Europe, rather than that of the East and the Balkans. Still during Stephen's reign the first German knights, traders and craftsmen were invited into the country. These were also the people who constituted the core of the burghers in the emerging cities. The next subsequent waves of German settlers were invited into Hungary in the 12th and 13th centuries to fortify the border regions in Transylvania, and also to revitalize towns after the Mongol invasion of 1242-44.

In the 13th century a small group of Cumans (or *Kuns*, in Hungarian), a pagan Mongol-related people, settled in Southern Hungary (Illyés 1988:179). They were quickly assimilated by the Hungarians, although their name still lives on in several place-names in Hungary, cf. *Kiskunság*, *Nagykunság*, *Kiskunfélegyháza*, etc. The 15th century marked the first appearance of Gypsies in Hungary. The first groups were followed by others, coming from Serbia, in the 16th and 17th centuries, and Romanian speaking Gypsies in the 17th and 18th centuries arriving through Wallachia.

One of the most important periods in the history of linguistic minorities is the late 17th and 18th centuries. By the end of the 150 years of Turkish occupation of the country the Great Hungarian Plain in the south of the country was almost completely vacant with its population driven away by the Ottoman rule and the war operations involved in the driving away of the Turkish occupants. At the same time, after more than a century of partial Habsburg rule, Hungary finally fell under a more or less complete subordination to the Habsburg Empire. The depopulated areas, the best agricultural lands of the country, were resettled first through a spontaneous migration of Serbs, Croats and Romanians, and later through organized massive population movement conducted by the Habsburgs involving Swabian Germans from the small south-western region of present-day Germany that borders Switzerland – by far the largest settled group – as well as Slovaks, South Slavs, Ruthenians, Czecks, Romanians, and even a small number of Italian, Spanish and French settlers (Paikert 1967:19). The latter, about 2 thousand people in all, were fleeing the French Revolution (Paikert 1967:14). The groups resettled by the imperial administration were given land, home-sites, construction materials, live-stock, food, and tax exemption, and were also allowed to bring their own clergy and teachers with them, as well as build their own churches and schools (Paikert 1967:25).

Although no exact numbers concerning the newly resettled non-Hungarian population are known, the following figures can indicate the scale of the migration and population proportions: from a country with a population of 4 million, approximately

80% ethnically Hungarian, in the 15th century, by the end of the resettlement in the end of the 18th century Hungary became a country of 8.2 million, only 40-44% Hungarian (Székely 1987:107). The mass migration also introduced a new denominational group in Hungary: all of the Serbian, and the large majority of the Romanian population belonged to the Orthodox Christian church. The newly arrived Slovak, German and Croatian populations were Roman Catholic, with a minority of Lutheran Slovaks.

The Habsburgs' rationale behind the mass resettlement was based partly on economic considerations, the utilization of empty agricultural lands, and partly political and religious, the mixing of the unruly Hungarians, 80% of whom were, at the time, converts to the Reformed churches (Karády 1990:6) with reliable Roman Catholic Germans (Paikert 1967:15).

The German population, which settled mostly in the region west of the Danube, consisted mainly of small-holders and land owning peasants who generally enjoyed a higher socio-economic status and living standards than Hungarians or the other minorities (Paikert 1967:30-1). The Slovak population, both the newly settled groups in the south of the country and the autochthonous population in the northern mountainous region (which constitutes present-day Slovakia), was composed mostly of peasants as well. The Romanian and South Slav, i.e. Croatian, Serbian and Slovene, populations were exclusively rural.

The Habsburgs, namely Empress Maria Theresa (1748-80), made the first attempt to integrate wandering Gypsies into Hungarian society. Under her order more than 8 thousand Gypsy children were made the wards of the state and placed into schools, while another 9.5 thousand were given over to foster homes. These measures did not prove very effective: within a few years all of the children had run away from their new homes (Crowe 1991:117).

Jews had lived in Hungary since medieval times, socially and physically set apart from the rest of the society, mostly because of religious reasons, just like in the rest of Europe (Katz 1990:13). In the 1790's the Jewish population was about 1% of the whole of the country (Katz 1990:16). The first half of the 19th century witnessed the influx of new Jewish population from Austria, Moravia, Bohemia and Galicia, and in the 1860's their numbers amounted to 4%, which was proportionally about 4 times as that of the Jewish population of Germany, and an even higher proportion than in France or England (Katz 1990:15-6). The 1840 Diet granted free settlement to the Jews in all places in the country with the exception of a few mining towns, which considerably opened up economic opportunities for them in business, industrial and agricultural professions, but also generated a considerable breaking up of traditional communities (Katz 1990:16-18). Hungary's Jewry was mostly Yiddish speaking, or if modernly educated, German speaking (McCragg 1990:64).

The situation concerning language use in Hungary in the 18th century was as follows. Until the late 18th century Latin was the language of government, administration, and law courts, as well as the symbolic expression of the "Europeanness" of the cultural elite. With Austrian rule the Hungarian nobility became more and more German speaking, and considered Hungarian the inferior language of the peasants, unsuitable for "higher" purposes like politics, law, or learning. An interesting twist in the course of events was brought about by Joseph II's (1780-90) decree which officially introduced German as the official language of the empire – a move intended to rationally

unify the political and cultural life of the empire more than to forcibly Germanize non-Germans (Karády 1990:7). The decree sparked off the first feelings of national identity: the Hungarian Diet of 1790-91 passed the first law concerning language, which ordered the appointment of teachers of the Hungarian language and literature in the *gymnasiums*, making Hungarian a language taught on a regular basis in these schools (Seton-Watson 1972:36-38). This marked the beginning of a period of awakening Hungarian nationalism and special attention paid to linguistic matters.

## 2.2 The 19th century

The following decades witnessed a linguistic movement of "language renewal" (*nyelvújítás*) initiated by Hungarian poets and writers aiming to modernize and expand the vocabulary of Hungarian through creating numerous new lexical items which had no native Hungarian word until then. In the 1825 Diet, the first demand for the establishment of Hungarian as the national language (*nemzeti nyelv*) of Hungary occurred, and in the same year the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the institution bearing the most authority in matters of Hungarian language use up to our day, was founded. In the 1830's and 1840's the knowledge of Hungarian became obligatory in public offices, Hungarian was extended to the courts as an alternative to Latin; laws and verdicts had to be published in both Hungarian and Latin; and Hungarian became the official language of the government, legislature, official business, and all public instruction (Seton-Watson 1972:39-42).

All of these laws were very important milestones in the process of awakening and asserting of the Hungarian national identity, but they also marked the beginning of problems in the relations of the Hungarians and their national minorities. Historical sources agree that although Hungary was a multiethnic state from its beginnings, no problems or crises occurred as long as the minorities' loyalty had been to the king, prince or local lord, and not to the nation (Paikert 1967:9, Seton-Watson 1972:3-42). In the new nationalistically minded political climate the fact that Hungary's population consisted of a minority of Hungarians outnumbered in total figures by the country's minorities created an especially problematic situation, unique in Europe.

According to the figures of the 1851 census, which was the first one to include data about "mother tongue", out of the population of 11.120 million of historic Hungary 40.5% were ethnically Hungarian, 19.5% Romanian, 12.3% German, 15.2% Slovak, 4% Serbian and Croatian, 3.2% Ruthenian, and 5.2% "other" (Dávid 1988:343). The census indicated an 83.8 thousand (0.7%) Gypsy population (Crowe 1991:118).

The Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49 became the peak of the national and independence minded aspirations of the Hungarians towards their Austrian rulers: the demands included various individual rights and national freedom, as well as administrative unity with Transylvania (it was administered as a separate entity in the Habsburg empire). This also generated a wave of nationalistic demands on the part of some of Hungary's minorities, especially the Slovaks and other Slavic population, pointed, in turn, against the Hungarians, but addressed to the Habsburgs. Hungary's Germans, on the other hand, sided with the Hungarians in the Revolution and supported the demands for resolving the social issues raised, like the abolishment of serfdom and various unjustifiable privileges (Paikert 1967:85). The Nationality Law of the Revolution, which was to secure "free development of all nationalities" was made too

late, in July 1849, only one month before the defeat of the movement by the Austrians (Kővágyó 1981:10).

The following centralist and absolutist regime, named after Bach, the governor general of Hungary appointed by the Habsburgs and lasting from 1849 to 1860, was again characterized by strong Germanizing influences and an open suppression of Hungarian nationalist aspirations. The years 1860-67 mark a transition period with a departure from Austrian centralist policies and providing more political freedom to Hungary. The principles of a Hungarian Parliamentary Committee issued in 1861 proclaimed the existence of a unitary and indivisible Hungarian nation, with equal rights to all of the peoples dwelling in the country: Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Germans, Serbs, Ruthenians and others. They also secured free choice of language to churches, county assemblies, municipal councils, and church and nationality schools, and ordered that all official posts be filled without distinction of nationality (Seton-Watson 1972:125-6).

The year 1867 brought the most major change of modern times in Hungary's political and administrative system, and consequently effected the fate of the country's minorities in a similar way. According to "The Compromise" (or *Ausgleich*) reached between Hungary and the Habsburg court, the empire was divided into two virtually independent states, Austria and Hungary, united formally under the Austro-Hungarian crown, and conducting foreign, military and financial affairs jointly, but both enjoying autonomy in the control of its own state affairs. The Dual System also granted autonomy to the Croats, to the Poles, and in 1871, to the Transylvania Saxons, and united Transylvania with Hungary (Seton-Watson 1972:137-150).

The Law of Nationalities of 1868 formally laid down the legal framework concerning the status and language rights of Hungary's nationalities. It exercised the principle of equality for every citizen by declaring the nationalities equal in every respect as individuals, but did not provide for securing minority rights as collective rights. This, at the time when the idea of the nation state was the prevailing political guiding principle, and when the modern idea of minority protection did not yet exist, was in accordance with European standards. The law also ruled on the possibility of nationality language use in county assemblies, official business, communal and governmental petitions, gave a free choice of language to district courts and to churches and church schools. The language of state and municipal schools was prescribed on an individual basis by the Ministry of Education (Seton-Watson 1972:150-156).

The 1867 Compromise also brought emancipation to the Jews of Hungary, granting them equal political and civil rights (Herczl 1993:7).

The part of the law concerning a free choice of language by the churches had a different impact on the various minorities. For the churches with only minority membership it meant real linguistic and educational autonomy. These were the Romanian Greek Catholic, the Romanian and Serbian Orthodox Christian churches, and the Lutheran church of the Transylvania Saxons. The Slovaks and the Swabian Germans, however, belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations together with the ethnically Hungarian population, and thus these churches were never regarded as minority churches, and were more prone to be assimilated (Paikert 1967:44).

The four decades preceding the World War I was a time of Hungarian history characterized by unprecedented tendencies directed at the assimilation of the minorities

through state education and administration policies. For example, district courts that in 1867 were granted free choice of the language were abolished in 1870, without their rights extended to other courts (Seton-Watson 1972:154).

The forcible assimilation of state schools and the radical decrease in the number of state nationality schools in the period between the Compromise and the World War I has always been heavily criticized. Certainly such a tendency is obvious in view of the school statistics of the period, but for a complete picture of the state of education it has to be borne in mind that state schools were just a fraction of all schools at the time: in 1869 95.4% of Hungary's schools were church schools, and only 3.8% state or municipal, and although the number of the latter did increase in the period in question, in 1913 it was still only 20% of all schools (Paikert 1967:44-45).

Social and economical advancement was impossible without a knowledge of the Hungarian language. Historical sources agree though that assimilated non-Hungarians suffered no disadvantage either socially or economically, and their origin was never held against them once they accepted the terms of advancement (Macartney 1937:451-452, Paikert:1953:204). What is more, often it was the assimilated non-Hungarians (assimilated Germans, mostly) who became the loudest and most ardent promoters of assimilation (Paikert 1967:81). Assimilation was seen by some minorities – again, especially the Germans – as a positive notion providing a chance of advancement, and thus was not rejected outright or lobbied against. Numerous 18th and 19th century Hungarian professionals, mainstream architects, scientists, composers, and painters were of German descent, and neither they themselves, nor the Hungarians saw their contribution to Hungarian culture and arts as distinct from work by ethnic Hungarians. Resistance to assimilation is reported to have been strongest in the case of Romanians and South Slavic peoples, and weakest with Slovaks (Borsody 1988:22).

Modernization and the assimilatory tendencies also affected the life of the Jewish population. By the turn of the century a gradual split into two diverging trends occurred, that of the Orthodox and Neolog Jewry (Katz 1990:18). The Orthodox Jewry was composed of more traditional and more religiously observant middle and lower middle class small business and small enterprise owners, as well as grocers and innkeepers in small towns and villages (Katz 1990:21). Typically all had a working knowledge of Hungarian, although acculturated to the Hungarian mainstream only to a very limited extent (Katz 1990:22). The Neolog Jewry mainly consisted of city dwellers of higher social and economic standing, professionals and owners of large scale enterprises, almost completely Hungarian-speaking. Orthodox or Neolog, Hungarian Jewry was committed to the Hungarian cause (partly as a reaction to German anti-Semitism in Hungarian towns) (McCragg 1990:64), loyal to the Hungarian state, and universally declared themselves to be of Hungarian nationality (Katz 1990:22), driven by the conviction that commitment to Judaism and loyalty to the nation were compatible (Katzburg 1990:37).

Besides the individual nationalist sentiments, there is another important factor necessary for the understanding of national attitudes in the 19th century: the presence of semi-mythical ideologies. Of these, Pan-Slavism, Daco-Roman continuity, the Hungarians' assertion of their own cultural superiority, and later, from about the turn of the 20th century, Pan-Germanism were the most important. With regard to the various minorities' relation to Hungarians, Pan-Slavism, emphasizing the supra-nationalistic unity of all Slavic peoples, considered the, by then, one millenium old presence of "Asiatic"

Hungarians as the wedge between the Slavic peoples, and the main obstacle to their unity, i.e. in short, the greatest misfortune that had ever befallen the Slavic peoples (Borsody 1988:15). The ideology of Daco-Roman continuity, claiming that the Romanians were the direct descendants of the Romans who populated Wallachia and a part of Transylvania up to 271 A.D., made the question of sovereignty of Transylvania into one of the most sensitive issues of modern history. Pan-Germanism, which began emerging in the last decade of the 19th century, provided another supra-national ideology. As a reaction, Hungarians became preoccupied with the idea that their nation was surrounded by and completely forlorn in the midst of the Slavic and Germanic peoples, and came to believe in their own superiority: if destiny had allowed them to survive centuries of foreign occupations and other hardships amidst their alien neighbors, they were indeed destined to be a master race (Paikert 1967:70-71).

The World War I and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were followed by a short-lived rule (October 1918 to March 1919) of a revolutionary government under Count Mihály Károlyi, and the equally short, communist republic (March to August 1919). Both governments made provisions to grant self-government and territorial autonomy to the larger minority groups – the Ruthenians, Slovaks and the Germans (Paikert 1967:73-77) – but it was too late to try to improve national relations: the old order and old Hungary were already crumbling, and in June 1920 the Treaty of Trianon completely changed the shape of the country and the question of its minorities.

### 2.3 The Treaty of Trianon and World War II

The Treaty was implemented by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, driven by the ideal of the application of national self-determination. In accordance with the treaty Hungary lost 68% of its territory: Transylvania became part of Romania, the northern region and Ruthenia became part of newly created Czechoslovakia, a relatively narrow western strip became part of Austria, and the southern region of the country became part of newly formed Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Together with the territories Hungary also lost 90% of its minorities, and one-third of its ethnically Hungarian population. The exact figures for the changes in the population are as follows: according to census figures in 1910 out of the total population of 18.25 million people 10 million (or 54.%) were Hungarians, 3 million (or 16.1%) Romanians, 2 million (or 10.7%) Slovaks, 657 thousand (or 3.6%) Serbs and Croats, 464 thousand (or 2.5%) Ruthenians, 2 million (or 10.4%) Germans, and 402 thousand (or 2.2%) of other nationality (Dávid 1988:343). The 1910 census also identified 148 thousand Gypsies, while in 1930 this number is claimed to have dropped to only 14 thousand, although estimates put the real number to about 100 thousand (Crowe 1991:118). In 1920 Hungary became almost 90% ethnically Hungarian: of the total of almost 8 million people reported in the census of that year 7.15 million were Hungarians (Dávid 1988:345), about 550 thousand Germans, almost 142 thousand Slovaks, 52 thousand Serbs and Croats, 24 thousand Romanians and an unspecified small number Ruthenians (Chmelar 1937:57-58). During the negotiations concerning the Treaty approximately 350 thousand Hungarians fled to Hungary from the new successor states (Dávid 1988:336).

Besides the loss of a sizeable portion of its own Hungarian population the greatest grievance of post-Trianon Hungary became the fact that the Paris Peace Conferences

applied the ideal of national self-determination very one-sidedly, excluding the Hungarians, ignoring the local circumstances of the groups involved (Paikert 1953:204), and creating states with very high ratios of minority populations. (Minority populations constituted 34% of the total population in Czechoslovakia, 25% in Romania, and 17% in Yugoslavia Chmelar (1937)) In view of these facts the radical right-wing regime of admiral Miklós Horthy that followed Trianon immediately started seeking a redress for Hungary's losses.

Similarly to the other treaties drawn up by the Paris Peace conference with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey, the Treaty of Trianon obliged Hungary to commit itself to the protection of its racial, religious and linguistic minorities. It sought to provide for schools in the minority languages, the use of the minority languages in courts, and similar civil rights issues.

Ever since Trianon, analogies with the successor states' treatment of their Hungarian minorities have often had important influence on the formation of Hungary's minority policies. This usually meant that a repressive action against the Hungarian minority in one of the other states was answered by a similar action against that country's minority in Hungary (Paikert 1967:47), thus creating a political vicious circle. And although viewed in themselves these actions can be considered somehow reciprocal, their effects had to be different on the two sides of the border because of the numerical and proportional differences: in 1920 the number of Hungarians living in the neighboring countries amounted to 1.3 million in Romania, 739 thousand in Czechoslovakia, and 391 thousand in Yugoslavia according to census figures (Dávid 1988:345), as opposed to 24 thousand Romanians, 142 thousand Slovaks, and 52 thousand South Slavs in Hungary.

As soon as it came to power, the Horthy regime immediately nullified all the laws, decrees and regulations concerning the minorities issued previously by Károlyi's government and those of the communist republic.

Law XXXIII of 1921 inacted the obligations of the Treaty of Trianon, confirmed the equal status and the rights of the minorities, and contained provisions for minority education (Paikert 1953:207). It established three types of schools, A, B, and C: type A having instruction in the minority language and teaching the Hungarian language as a subject; type B teaching some of the subjects in the minority language, and some in Hungarian; and type C with instruction in Hungarian, and having the minority language as a special subject (Paikert 1953:207). Another law (Law II of 1924) made knowledge of the minority language compulsory for judges, justice officials and administrators in areas with at least 20% of the population belonging to the same minority group (Paikert 1953:207).

In 1935-1936 the three types of minority schools were abolished, and all the schools of the minorities were converted into one type of school, identical with type B school of the previous fifteen years (Paikert 1953:208).

In 1938, 1940, and 1941, Nazi Germany gave back some of the territories lost in the Treaty of Trianon to Hungary, namely a part of Slovakia, Northern Transylvania, and a narrow strip of Yugoslavia, respectively. These territories belonged to Hungary during the war years, and in 1945 the pre-war status quo was re-established.

Another very important detail in the minorities life in this period was the impact of the Third Reich on Hungary's Germans. Until this time the Swabians were claimed to have been the very group that was most loyal to Hungary and most willing to assimilate.



With the newly born notion of allegiance to a foreign nation the ideology of National Socialism appealed to many of the country's Germans. Its way was previously paved by the Pan-German League, a spiritual source and inspirer of German nationalism, by various cultural organizations discovering and reaching out to rural Germans outside of Germany, and last but not least by the open effort of the Weimar Republic to become the "protector of all Germans abroad" (Paikert 1967:101-5). With the older generation of Germans largely unshaken in their loyalty to Hungary, the younger Germans joined the Volksbund, a German folk union that gradually became associated with Nazi Germany. The Volksbund had about 50 thousand members in 1941 (Paikert 1967:167), and by the end of the war about 120 thousand ethnic Germans served in Nazi units recruited in Hungary (Paikert 1967:147). Nazi Germany also demanded (and was given) the release of German minorities from their Hungarian citizenship, thus placing them over the rest of their own country (Paikert 1967:138). Towards the end of the War, in the fall of 1944 an evacuation of ethnic Germans by Germany was carried out, and about 50 thousand people left Hungary voluntarily in this way (Paikert 1967:191).

In World War II about 564 thousand of Hungary's 825 thousand Jews were killed – about 450 thousand of them in the course of two months after deportations began in May 1944 (Kovacs 1985:168). In the provinces almost the whole Jewish population was deported, most of it killed, while a considerable number of Budapest's Jews survived due to the protection of foreign legations of Switzerland, Portugal, and Sweden (Paikert 1967:183). There remained a Jewish population of about 120 thousand by the end of the war (McCragg 1990:52). About 31 thousand of Hungary's Gypsies also died in the concentration camps (Crowe 1991:119).

At the very end of the war and immediately after it a number of further large population movements were carried out. The advancing Soviet army deported a total of 600 thousand people from eastern Hungary to the Soviet POW and labor camps, about one tenth of them ethnic Germans (Paikert 1967:195). Many of them died there, and the survivors were released after two to three years. The remaining Germans' possessions were expropriated, their lands confiscated, and they themselves were dispersed throughout the country (Paikert 1967:197-8). Under the Potsdam agreement of 1945, which allowed for the forcible repatriation of Germans, and mass population exchanges, 170 thousand Germans were expelled to West Germany, and 55 thousand to East Germany (Paikert 1967:208). In addition to this 87 thousand Hungarians were expelled from Slovakia to Hungary, and 60 thousand Slovaks (22% of whom had no knowledge of the Slovak language (Szabó 1991:54)) left Hungary voluntarily, following promises of economic improvement in Slovakia (Dávid 1988:338). The homes of expelled or dispersed Germans were given over to Hungarians from Slovakia, Hungarians made homeless in the course of the war, and also to 18 thousand Csángó Hungarians, resettled from Romania to Hungary in 1941 (Paikert 1967:211). The post-war number of the Gypsies was put at 21 thousand by the census, determining nationality identification on the basis of language, although it is estimated that 31-37 thousand people would have claimed to be Gypsy based on ethnic identification (Crowe 1991:119).

#### 2.4 The Communist era (1948-1989)

During the years of communist rule the educational policy and legislation concerning minorities was guided mostly by the Leninist nationality policy, just like in

other Eastern European countries. According to this all nationalities were equal, and their differences, be they linguistic, cultural, religious or any combination of these, were transitory and therefore relatively unimportant (Connor 1989:23). Also, whereas any pre-World War II regime demanded loyalty to the ideals of the Hungarian state, thus touching upon national sentiments of the minorities, during the four decades between 1949 and 1989 it was to the communist ideology that loyalty had to be expressed, affecting Hungarians and minorities alike.

Until 1968 the question of the minorities was treated through the Leninist "principle of automatism", supposing that under socialism the questions of minorities will be solved automatically, by themselves (Seewann 1990:57). Therefore there was obviously no need to cultivate or pay special attention to minority cultures and languages, and the emphasizing of ethnic or minority identity was also officially regarded as a form of "harmful western bourgeois ideology". In accordance with this ideology, no proper legislation or supportive policy was formulated in support of the minorities.

During the Stalinist years (1949-1956) the Hungarian minorities abroad were also largely ignored, and the people of Hungary were forbidden to concern themselves with their existence and fate (Kende 1988:280). The 1960's and 1970's brought a different kind of policy: in order to support its own claims for reciprocity of a positive kind, the Kádár regime (1956-1988) was trying to do its best to satisfy the cultural and educational demands of its own minorities (Kende 1988:282). Until almost the end of its existence, the Kádár regime followed the tactics of moderate and reserved claims for the support of the Hungarian minorities by their respective governments, believing that more radical claims or requests could in the end do more harm than good by provoking repressive, rather than supportive actions in these countries. At the same time, with the lifting of travel restrictions in Hungary in the 1960's, Hungarians could establish and/or reestablish their personal contacts with relatives and friends in all of the neighboring states, except for the Soviet Union which had restriction against individual tourism until the late 1980's. Thus in Hungary a kind of collective knowledge of the circumstances of Hungarians of these states was developed, with the situation known to be relatively the best in Yugoslavia, somewhat worse in Czechoslovakia, and clearly the worst in Romania. Although such a state of affairs was never officially acknowledged, it was never denied either.

Socially, the Stalinist era was marked by industrialization and urbanization which resulted in the dissolving of the life of the remaining peasant communities, again, affecting Hungarians and minorities alike. Industrialization also forced Gypsies out of their traditional trades as blacksmiths, locksmiths, tinkers and horse-copers, and into the workforce of modern industry as unskilled or semiskilled workers (Csalog 1992:77).

The collectivization of the late 1940s also meant the complete loss of the property of minority organizations – their schools, libraries and other buildings and facilities (Schlett 1992:40). Minority education and cultural life was thus taken over and regulated by the state. Between 1945 and 1948 there were two kinds of minority schools in Hungary: those with the minority language as the medium of instruction, and those with Hungarian instruction, but teaching the minority language as a special subject (Székely 1990 quoted in Kontra & Székely (1993:138). Minority language schooling was on the increase until 1960, which is when the minority schools were renamed bilingual schools, and ceased to offer instruction in the minority language, and taught it only as one of the

subjects (Székely (1990:12) quoted in Kontra & Székely (1993:138). Minority education thus decreased in the following years, until 1968 when following a Communist Party resolution that prompted formulating and developing educational and cultural institutions of the minorities (Ludanyi 1982:7). A Nationality Department was formed within the National Pedagogical Institute to carry out long-term planning, and overseeing teacher-training for minority schools (Ludanyi 1982:7). The following years witnessed an upsurge in the numbers of minority elementary and secondary schools, students and teachers, as well as choirs, bands, theatre groups and cultural clubs (Ludanyi 1982:8-12).

As Kontra and Székely note though, language planning was not done openly in the communist years, and the official standpoint was more that of tolerance than encouragement (1993:137). It is also difficult to say how much real contribution the aforementioned organizations of the minorities really had to the preservation and fostering of minority cultures.

### 3. The present situation

#### 3.1. Demographics

At present, according to 1990 census figures ("mother tongue" and "nationality" columns below, from Dávid 1993:34-35) and estimates of minority organizations ("estimates" column below, from Oltay 1993:58), the demographics for Hungary's minority populations are as follows, as given in Table 1 below.

	<u>Mother tongue</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Estimates</u>
(Hungarian:	10,222,529	10,142,072)	
German:	37,511	30,824	200,000-220,000
Croatian:	17,577	13,570	80,000-90,000
Slovene:	2,627	1,930	5,000
Slovak:	12,745	10,459	100,000-110,000
Serbian:	2,953	2,905	5,000
Romanian:	8,730	10,740	25,000
Gypsy:	48,172	142,683	400,000-600,000
Other:	22,079	19,640	
			Polish: 10,000
			Bulgarian: 3,000
			Greek: 2,500-3,000
			Armenian: 1,500
			Ruthenian and Ukrainian: 1,000
Total:	10,374,823	10,374,823	

Table 1. The demographics of Hungary's minority populations at present

The Bulgarians, who are descendants of traders and vegetable farmers, the Poles, Greeks and Armenians, who are political and economic refugees from various times, and their descendants are hardly "visible" in Hungarian society at all. The Ruthenians and

Ukrainians are autochthonous in the territory of Hungary. In addition to these groups, the "other" category in the census figures also contains foreign nationals residing in Hungary.

As can be seen from the figures, the mother tongue and nationality data do not differ considerably, except in the case of the Gypsies. The estimates of the minority cultural organizations are considerably higher than both sets of census figures, most probably because these are based on a fairly broadly and loosely defined ethnic affiliation.

### 3.2. Geographic location within Hungary

Due to the massive population movements and urbanization following World War II, minorities live dispersed in the country and do not form considerable ethnic islands except in a few rural regions, where all in all about two dozen villages have minorities forming more than half of the local population (Dávid 1993:36-38). About 35% of all the Germans live in Baranya county, 11% in Bács-Kiskun, 11% in Tolna, and 7% in Budapest. Croats live in Baranya (38%), Zala (18%), Vas (16%), Győr-Moson-Sopron (12%), Bács-Kiskun (9%) and Vas counties. 86% of all the Slovenes live in Vas county. Serbs live in Pest (28%), Békés and Bács-Kiskun counties. The county with the highest number of Slovak population is Békés, where 40% of all the Slovaks live. Other counties with Slovak populations are Komárom-Esztergom and Pest. Most of the Gypsies live in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (22%) and Szabolcs-Szatmár (17.5%).

About 75% of the minorities live in villages. As to the minorities' social class affiliation, there is only very scarce data: according to a survey of students of Romanian, South Slav, and Slovak minority schools in the 1955-56 school year, these students' parents belonged to the following social classes: peasants constituted 94% of the Romanian students' parents, 85% of the South Slavs', and 66% of the Slovaks'; 3% of the Romanian, 9% of the South Slav, and 25% of the Slovak parents were blue collar workers; none of the Romanian or South Slav parents, and only 3% of the Slovak parents were white collars; and 3%, 6%, and 6%, respectively, were of other professions (Kövágó 1981:117). Another source from the 1980's also supports these social class affiliation data for the Romanian minority: Patterson (1991:118) claims that most of the Romanians are village folk, who are almost exclusively peasant farmers, while the city-dwellers are mostly skilled laborers, some clerks and low level professionals. Data of similar nature about the other minorities is completely missing, although from the fact that 75% of the minorities live in villages it can be inferred that they are mostly peasants or blue collar workers.

### 3.3. Social integration and economic standing

Due to the urbanization and industrialization of the 1950s Hungary's minorities are economically and socially integrated into the society. The legacy of the communist era is, however, that they have been politically marginalized until recently: no possibility existed for the parliamentary representation of minorities, and neither could they have legitimate and recognized governing bodies on the level of local administration. This issue has been first addressed in the 1993 Law on Minority Rights.

The case of Hungarian Gypsies and Jews deserves some special attention in describing the present situation of the various minorities. Neither group is officially

considered a national minority in Hungary like the Germans, Slovaks, or the other discussed groups.

The Jews have been officially considered a religious minority in Hungary ever since the Treaty of Trianon: they refused to accept official nationality status in order to be able to keep the advantages of being classified as Hungarians (Karády 1990:33). They are thus organized along religious lines, and represented, along with various Christian churches and denominations, in various ecumenical church organizations. With the collapse of communism, just like other churches in Hungary, they have also been free to have their own schools and claim back church property confiscated during and after World War II.

The Gypsies, on the other hand, have been officially regarded as an ethnic minority, and thus had different rights and treatment than the national minorities under communism. Based on dubious research claiming that Gypsies did not have any real language, traditions, religion or beliefs (Vekerdi 1988:19-21), communist party resolutions in 1961 and 1979 declared that Gypsies could not claim nationality minority group status. Gypsies generally have the lowest socio-economic status in Hungary: two-thirds of them are unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Ladányi 1993:32), who are affected by the unemployment of the post-communist era much more severely than any other segment of the society. They suffer from an unequal amount of prejudice directed against them in Hungarian society. A curious indication of the Gypsies' similar position in Hungary to that of the Blacks' in America in the early 20th century popular mind is the fact that American Blacks were called *cigányok* (Gypsies) in the usage of working class Hungarian immigrants to the United States. The usual prejudice portrays Gypsies as unreliable, anti-social, and semi-nomadic people – all according to the stereotypes of the Gypsy lore of modern society. However, a survey dating back as early as 1880 showed 88% of the Hungarian Gypsies as settled, and only 7.5% as semi-nomadic, and 3.25% nomadic at the time (Crowe 1991:118).

In the 1970's a survey of Gypsy conditions found that about half of the Gypsy households did not have even a well, and two-thirds had no electricity (Crowe 1991:121), although already by this time the worst slums were eliminated, and the number of about 126 thousand people who lived in slums in the late 1960's were reduced to about 28 thousand a decade later due to housing and credit policy implemented by the state (Crowe 1991:122). The Gypsy population is increasing almost at double the rate of the Hungarian national average (Mészáros & Fóti 1995:24).

Up to this day only in very rare exceptional cases can a Gypsy professional be found. Although the rate of illiteracy dropped from 93.5% in the early 20th century to 60% in 1964, still about 50-60% of Gypsy children were shown to drop out of school in the early 1970's (Crowe 1991:123-124), and the numbers of children studying beyond the primary level (8 grades) are still very low: in 1990 only 8.2% of Gypsies finished a technical highschool, 1.3% a highschool qualifying for higher education, and 0.2% a college or university, while the Hungarian national average was 24.4%, 24.8%, and 12.2%, respectively (Mészáros & Fóti 1995:33). Gypsies have been denied bilingual education on the basis of claims of a lack of standardized dialect, as well as on dialectal diversity (Kontra & Székely 1993:140). 28.5% of Gypsy children are claimed to be "in need of care in institution for handicapped children", about half of the children in welfare centers are Gypsies, and about 10% are claimed physically or mentally retarded (Crowe

1991:124). The increasing demands for Gypsy schools, teachers, newspapers, and organizations were regarded as dangerous and encouraging Gypsy separatism even by certain experts carrying out research on Gypsies, and even as late as 1988 (cf. Vekerdi 1988). Although during the communist years there were sporadic official efforts to create representative bodies, these generally did not have any lasting effect on Gypsy matters, except maybe moving the Gypsy issue to a higher level of recognition (Crowe 1991:124-125). After the collapse of communism a Roma Parliament, a National Gypsy Forum and several other Gypsy organizations were formed.

### 3.4. Language maintenance and shift

All of the minority population in Hungary speaks Hungarian. According to census figures, in 1960 there were only 23 thousand people who did not speak Hungarian (Ludanyi 1982:12), but these people are generally claimed to be foreign nationals residing in Hungary rather than members of minorities – although at present there is no reliable data on whether all Gypsies in Hungary speak Hungarian or not. As the few existing sociolinguistic studies attest, the use of the minority languages is now mostly confined to the home, and to an even lesser degree to conversations among friends (Kontra & Székely 1993:136, Joó 1991:104). The language used at the work place and with officials is exclusively Hungarian (Joó 1991:104). Among the Croatian population, for example, the minority language is used more by older, less educated, and less socially mobile people (Grbic 1990).

Despite the fact that most of the minority population is bilingual to some extent, Hungarian seems to be clearly considered the language of social prestige and economic advancement (Grbic 1990). The same is signalled by the fact that the majority of the parents of minority students prefer bilingual education to education only in the minority language for their children, and by the curious observation that in 1989, the year when Russian ceased to be the obligatory foreign language taught in schools, most minority students chose to study English, German or French over their own minority language (Székely 1990:17-19, quoted in Kontra & Székely 1993:139).

In the 1989/1990 academic year there were 13 thousand children who received some kind of minority language teaching in bilingual kindergartens, which were introduced in the mid-1980's, 43 thousand students in minority primary schools, and 600 students in 6 minority grammar schools (*gimnázium*), while 107 German, South Slav and Slovak kindergarten teachers were being trained (Kontra & Székely 1993:138-139). Primary school teacher training was set up between 1946 and 1953 for the South Slavs, Slovak and Romanian minorities, and only in 1956 for the Germans (Kovacs 1985:168-169). It is carried out in three teachers' training colleges: in German and in Serbo-Croatian in Pécs, in Romanian and Slovak in Szeged, and in Slovene in Szombathely (Székely 1987:109), although the lack of qualified teachers, especially in the increased demands after 1989, is still a problem (Kontra & Székely 1993:141).

Exogamy, which was rather rare among minority people (even "unheard of" in the case of Germans (Paikert 1967:213)) before World War II, is rather high nowadays. In the late 1980's 80% of those interviewed endorsed exogamy in a survey investigating the bilingualism and cultural and ethnic self-identification of Hungary's Slovenes (Joó 1991:105). From the statistics in the 1983 Demographic Yearbook published in Hungary it can be seen that no minority group is exempt from exogamy. The individual figures for

each group are as follows: exogamy is highest in the case of the Germans at 94.5%, 89.3% for Slovaks, 73.5% for South Slavs, 62.5% for Romanians, and 31% for Gypsies. In only 6 out of 960 marriages involving minority individuals were the two marrying partners of different minority affiliation, while the rest of the marriages involved minority individuals marrying Hungarians (*Demográfiai évkönyv* 1983:65). According to data from the same source, there is no significant difference between men's and women's marrying outside their own minority group in any of the groups.

All minority groups, even the smallest, have their own bilingual or minority language magazines and cultural or folk art organizations. For example, the Armenians publish the magazine *Ararát*, and the Ruthenians have an arts association named after the by far most famous artist of Ruthenian extraction, Andy Warhol.

### 3.5. Contact with the respective majority countries

The contact of the minorities with the countries where their linguistic group is in the majority has varied from group to group. During the communist years the German minority was only allowed contact with East Germany, but not with West Germany or Austria. The Romanian minority lived in more or less complete isolation from Romania. This was partly due to the Romanian rural islands' isolation from Romanian cultural and intellectual life since the 19th century, as well as to rather bad relations between Hungary and Romania since the Treaty of Trianon, and the discouragement of contacts and travel into Romania by the Ceausescu regime in the 1970's and 1980's. The self-suppression of the Romanian national identity among Hungary's Romanians is also reported, resulting from the embarrassment of identification with a country that openly oppressed its Hungarian minority (Patterson 1991:119). No data has been found on the contacts of the Slovaks or the South Slavs with Slovakia and Yugoslavia, respectively.

The contacts of the various groups with their mother countries have been allowed to develop more freely with the change of political regime after the collapse of communism in Hungary. The new Law on Minorities – discussed in more detail below – contains as one of its basic principles the individual and collective right of the minorities to maintain contacts with the countries where their conationals live. It is a sure sign of cooperation that 40 native speaker teachers from Germany, Yugoslavia and Slovakia were reported to be employed by minority primary and secondary schools in Hungary in 1989-90 (Kontra & Székely 1993:140).

With the beginning of "free market times" in Hungary, the prosperity of the mother country of the minority group and the economic success of the minority group itself are likely to become determining factors in predicting their future success in slowing assimilation and conserving educational and cultural resources.

### 3.6. Legislation and self-government

The Law on Minorities (*Törvény...* 1993), passed by the Hungarian Parliament in July, 1993, for the first time in the legislation of Hungary, and, in fact, of the countries of the region, guarantees collective rights in addition to the individual rights to ethnic and national minorities. The law was prepared in cooperation with the Minority Roundtable, a joint organization of all the minorities formed in January 1991 to provide a unique platform for the representation of minority interests in legislative, educational and other minority issues. The collective rights include rights concerning language use, minority

language education and television and radio programming, maintaining contact with the minorities' mother countries, parliamentary representation and the formation of local governmental bodies. There have been minority representatives in the Parliament before (e.g. about twenty, including, for the first time, two Gypsy members in the 1990-1994 parliament), but these were elected as candidates of various parties rather than as minority representatives. (For other details of the law, see Oltay (1993).)

In the two years following the enactment of the law, several hundred local minority councils were formed. Legally, the election of a minority council can be initiated by any 5 people of voting age from any of Hungary's 13 officially recognized minorities (those listed in Table 1 above). By the definition of the law, any minority whose members have resided in Hungary for at least a century is officially recognized for purposes of local administration. Depending on the size of the locale, a 3-5 member minority council can be elected to serve with the respective local city or village council. The support of a minority council is required for a local council to pass decisions touching in any way on the life of the represented minorities, such as in the language of education in a local school. In 1997 the number of minority councils nationally totaled 760, with 421 Gypsy, 163 German, 56 Croatian, 49 Slovak, 19 Serbian, 16 Armenian, 12 Romanian, 7 Polish, 6 each of Greek and Slovenian, 4 Bulgarian councils, and 1 Ruthenian and no Ukrainian councils nation-wide (*Adatok...* 1997:162).

In 1995 the post of a national minority rights ombudsman was created, and an ombudsman was nominated with the support of the minority councils and approved by the Hungarian Parliament. The minority rights ombudsman's task is to investigate cases where a person has suffered unfair or unequal treatment from a national or local authority or institution in connection with exercising their minority rights, and also to report to the Parliament if a case deserves the attention of this body. In the few months following the appointment of the minority rights ombudsman, about 70-80 cases were presented to and dealt with by him, most of these cases relating to members of the Gypsy minority (Bodáné 1996:136).

Such legal codification of rights is viewed as an important progressive step and will, in the opinion of the representatives of minorities themselves, make it possible to truly democratize minority relations and to stop the deterioration of the cultural and language situation of the minorities. Even with the legal foundations now present, amidst the increasingly difficult economic situation Hungary finds itself in, financial guarantees for expanding minority institutions are the next issue requiring urgent attention.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As we can see, all in all, Hungary's minorities are at a rather advanced stage of assimilation due to the considerable length of time – 300 to 1000 years – that they have lived in the country, as well as due to the assimilating policies of the late 19th century, and the communist era. At present they still retain knowledge of minority languages and cultural traditions to a greater or lesser extent, and, it currently seems that for the first time in the modern history of Hungary, the preservation of these are given legislative support.



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