
Minorities History*Gizella Föglein***Problems of minorities demography in Hungary
(1945–1980)**

When establishing or estimating the number of national minorities a subjective and an objective factor have to be reckoned with i.e. the question of national identity and that of mother tongue. The choice of national affiliation should be a primary right of every person chosen by conscience - free of external pressure or influence and no kind of advantage or disadvantage must follow whichever nationality the individual decides upon. It is a fact, however, that "history" has provided several examples where this human right has been restricted or even denied. The question of the mother tongue is easier to settle since it is a question of facts. This why the statistical surveys approached the question from this angle following World War II.

It is the census returns which give some information about the tendencies of the numerical and ethnic distribution of national minorities after WWII. Without serious suspicion of fraud there is no reason to question the data of a national census. 'Naked' facts or surprisin indeces do not represent the absolute situation, they are only informative and thus the results of a census are a kind of reflection of given historical-political circumstances.

1941–1949

The data of the 1941 census of Hungary, its borders delineated in the Trianon Treaty, can serve as starting point for post war times too, taking in account the human losses caused by war as well as other changes in population and ethnic situation In 1941 Hungary had 9,319.992 inhabitants. Of these were 8,657.172 (92.8%) Hungarian, 662,820 (7.2%) non/Hungarian speakers (German 477,057 = 5%; Slovak 75,920 = 0.8%; Romanian 14,161 = 0.2%; Southern Slav 49,019 = 0.7%, of which Serb 5,444 = 0.1%; Croate 22,269 = 0.3%; Bunyevac and Sokac 16,491 = 0.2%; Wendish and Slovene 4,816 = 0.1%) Concerning national affinity – this was the first census to inquire about this aspect as well - 8,921.457 (95.8%) declared to be of Hungarian, 398,535 (4.2%) as non Hungarian nationality [German 303,419 = 3.3%; Slovak 16,689 = 0.2%; Romanian

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7,565 = 0.1%; Serb 3,633 = 0.04%; Croate 2,708 = 0.03%; Bunyevac and Sokac 1,511 = 0.01%; Wendish and Slovene 2,058 = 0.2%.¹

The military operations in Hungary, the pushing forward of the Soviet army, the withdrawal of Hitlerite and Hungarian nazi forces and their ditroyal resulted in the collapse of the earlier administration. This went hand in hand with the fleeing of German and Hungarian Nazi representatives and also members of the misled civil population. The Hungarian nazi power intended a 'total depopulation' of the country and evacuation was planned along these lines. By the end of November 1944 the wish to leave the country became less fervent and the people concentrated in masses in the Transdanubian area did not follow evacuation orders. A statistical survey of the situation of 30th June 1945 estimated 1,033,491 as the number of those who fled to the west; of these 641,506 had returned by the date of the survey.² It is possible there were more to return back in the following month. According to some estimates 10–15% of the German minority of Hungary fled from the country from the approach of the Red Army.³ Of the German speaking minorities 20,000 persons fled or were evacuated to the Western Zone of Germany, 4,000 to the Soviet Zone, 15,000 to Austria.

There are no 'up-to-date' data about the military, civilian and prisoner-of-war losses caused by WWII in Hungary; when Hungary became the actual field of military operation the publication of lists ceased, documents got lost or were destroyed.⁴ Therefore the magnitude of various losses can only be calculated and estimated on diverse bases with any accuracy.

There are contradicting accountst about the human losses of WWII. in Hungary published by various authors.⁵ According to some it is about

¹ Balogh Sándor (ed.) Magyarország a XX. században Kossuth Könyvkiadó. Budapest, 1985. p 500. (Hungary in the 20th c.)

² Somlyai, Magda: Torténelemformálókőnapok. 1944 ősze – 1945 tavasza. Gondolat Kiadó. Budapest. 1985. p. 19. (History-forming weekdawys). Reference: Magyar Statisztikai Zsebkönyv. Budapest. 1946 p. 204 (Manual of Statistics for Hungary).

³ Dokumentum der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mittleuropa. Band II. Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Ungarn. Bundesministerium der Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsschädigte. Düsseldorf. 1956. 40 E. p. 40.

⁴ Stark, Tamás: Változások a magyarországi népesség számában 1938–1949. (A katonai, polgári és hadifogolyvesztés, valamint a szomszédos országokból Magyarországra menekültek száma). MS. 1988. ELTE Történelmi Könyvtár. P.6. (Changes in the number of the Hungarian population 1938–1949. Military, civilian and POW losses as well as evacuees from neighbouring countries into Hungary).

⁵ Stark, Tamás *ibid.* p.14

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700,000–750,000 persons, of these about 500,000 is the share of the present area of Hungary.⁶ Human losses mean partly the soldiers died in action or in POW lagers and partly the civilian victims of bomb raids and the victims of the Hungarian Holocaust.⁷ From the area of present-day Hungary there were about 850,000–900,000 persons taken prisoners of these 550,000–570,000 in the Soviet Union, the others to the west. Between 1945–1946 about 290,000 returned from the west and about 300,000 from the Soviet Union. In 1947 practically every POW returned from the west; by the end of 1947 further 128,000, by the end of 1948 another 170,000, in 1949 and in the following years some more thousands of POW returned from the SU.⁸ The number of those who did not return or died as POW was estimated between 50,000 and 150,000.⁹

The establishment of the military and civilian losses of the ethnic minorities is even more difficult if not downright impossible. With the exception of German speaking inhabitants, there are not even estimates. Earlier West German statistics reckon with about 60,000 persons as POW and in forced labour service; of these 30,000 – 35,000 civilians and about 30,000 POW were ethnic Germans.¹⁰ According to other estimates the was losses of Hungarian German minority was about 11,000.¹¹

The size and distribution of the ethnic minorities in Hungary were defined by migration: the deprivation of ethnic Germans and the Chocko-slovakian–Hungarian population exchange.

After the formation of the Temporary National Assembly in Debrecen 1944, but before the signing of the armistice treaty, Soviet authorities

⁶ Balogh, Sándor ed. Magyarország a XX Században (Hungary in the 20th c.) p. 262; Für, Lajos: Magyarország háborús embervesztesége. In: Glatz, Ferenc ed.: Az 1944. év története. História Évkönyv. Budapest. 1984. pp 80-80. (Human losses of Hungary. In: The history of the year 1944); Korom, Mihály: A magyar fegyverszünet. Kossuth Könyvkiadó. Budapest. 1987.p 174. (The Hungarian cease fire).

⁷ According to the estimates of Tamás Stark, the military losses were 1200,000 – 160,000 persons, the number of civilian victims about 80,000 – 100,000. Stark, Tamás: Változások a magyarországi népesség számában... pp- 30-38.

⁸ Pető, Iván – Szakács, Sándor: A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története. 1945 – 1985. Vol. I. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó. Budapest. 1985. p. 18. (The history of forty years of Hungarian economy).

⁹ Mihály Korom's estimate was 50,000–70,000 persons. Korom, Mihály: A népi demokrácia első éve. Valóság 1984. 3. pp. 3–4. (The first years of popular democracy). According to Tamás Stark there were about 150,000 persons who did not return. Stark: Változások... p. 76.

¹⁰ Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen. 44E, p.44.

¹¹ Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen. 72E. p.72.

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deported men and women of German ethnicity – or carrying German names – of working age from the eastern part of Hungary, irrespective of their individual political responsibility or participation in war crimes. In 1944 and 1945 there were more than 60,000 persons deported for communal work to the Soviet union.¹² There are no data how many of them survived and returned back to Hungary later. West German sources estimated about 20% to have lost their lives.¹³

On the 29th December 1945 the decree on the evacuation of ethnic Germans from Hungary to Germany was announced and enacted on the insistence of the Allied Powers.¹⁴ The Nép gondozó Hivatal (Folk Settlement Bureau) registered 135 655 ethnic Germans who were relocated to the American Zone of Germany between January and December 1946, and 50,000 to the Soviet Zone from spring 1947.¹⁵ Contemporary German statistics published higher numbers because they included those too who fled or were evacuated at the end of the war. The number of German nationals who remained in Hungary or returned back at some later date can only be estimated or reckoned with the help of various statistics.

The Czechoslovakian – Hungarian treaty concerning the exchange of population signed on the 27th February 1946, was not reciprocal.¹⁶ There were 73 273 persons in Hungary who declared to be Slovaks and resettled voluntarily by April 1948.¹⁷ 31% of them were casual labourers, 19% poor peasants; in Hungary they left behind about 24,000 cadastral yoke

¹² Korom, Mihály: Az Atlanti Chartától a potsdami kollektív büntetésig. In: Zielbauer, György ed.: A magyarországi németek hozzájárulása a közös haza építéséhez. Tudományos Tanácskozás az elűzés 50. évfordulóján. Országos Német Önkormányzat, Budapest, 1996. 202. o. (From Atlantic Charta to collective punishment. In: The contribution of ethnic Germans of Hungary to the building of a common country. A scientific conference on the 50th anniversary of their expulsion.)

¹³ Zielbauer, György: Magyar polgári lakosok deportálása és hadifogsága (1945–1948). Történelmi Szemle. 1989. 3–4. sz. (The deportation and captivity of Hungarian civilians. 1945–1948).

¹⁴ A nemzeti kormány 12 330/1945. ME sz. rendelete a magyarországi német lakosság- nak Németországba való áttelepítéséről. Magyar Közlöny, 1945. december 29., 211.sz.

¹⁵ Balogh, Sándor: Magyarország külpolitikája 1945–1950. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest. 1988. pp.101, 102. (Hungarian foreign policy 1945–1950).

¹⁶ 1946:XV. Törvénycikk a Magyarország és Csehszlovákia között lakosságcsere tárgyában Budapesten 1946 február hó 27. napján kelt magyar-csehszlovák egyezménybecikkelyezéséről. Magyar Törvénytár. Budapest, 1946. pp. 64–71. (Act of the population exchange between Hungary and Czechoslovakia).

¹⁷ Balogh, Sándor: Magyarország külpolitikája 1945–1950. 1988.

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land. There were about 80,000 Hungarians resettled or evacuated from Slovakia who left behind about 137,000 cadastral yoke land in Slovakia.¹⁸

Census*1949*

Information about the number and ethnic composition of minorities in Hungary is provided by the census of 1949 and those of the following years. In 1949 Hungary's 9,204,799 inhabitants claimed to be Hungarians: 9,076,041 persons (98.6%) and only 128,758 persons (1.4%) to be non-Hungarian speakers. Of the latter: German 22,455 (0.2%); Slovak 25,988 (0.3%); Romanian 14,713 (0.2%); Serb 5,158 (0.1%); Croatian 9,946 (0.1%); others 50,498 (0.5%) (these are Wendish, Slovene, Bunyevac and Sokac, etc.).¹⁹ Between the minority indices of the census of 1941 and 1949 there is a difference of about 530,000 persons. The Germans who fled or were expelled from Hungary and the Slovaks who settled over to Slovakia together made out together about 328,000 persons, there were thus 200,000 non-Hungarian speakers unaccounted for. The indices indicating nationality are even more puzzling. In 1949, 9,104,640 (98.91%) inhabitants declared to be Hungarians and 100,159 to be non-Hungarians [Romanian 8,500 (0.09%); Slovak 7,808 (0.08%); Croatian 4,108 (0.04%); German 2,617 (0.03%); Slovene, Wendish 666 (0.01%)].²⁰

1960

The census of 1960 shows the highest indices concerning the number of the members of national minorities in Hungary, counted together or considered independently – with the exception of Serbs.²¹ All the ethnic minorities increased in number compared to the data of 1949, though later there were no more migrations. That Hungary's population was

¹⁸ There were about 105,000 Slovaks in Hungary in 1930 and about 634,000 Hungarians in Slovakia in 1937.

¹⁹ Balogh, Sándor: Magyarország a XX. Században... p. 501.

²⁰ 1990. évi népszámlálás. Anyanyelv, nemzetiség, településenként 1980, 1990. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Census of 1990. Mother tongue, nationality according to settlements 1980, 1990).

²¹ The lowest index for the national/ethnic minorities was shown by the census of 1949 due to post-war migrations.

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9,961,044 persons, of which there were 9,786,038 (98.24%) Hungarians. The number of non-Hungarian speakers was 175,006 (1.76%), 46,248 more than in 1949. Of these: German 50,765 (0.51%, +28,310 persons); Slovak 30,690 (0.31%, +4,702); Romanian 15,787 (0.16%, +1,074); Croatian 33,014 (0.33%, +15,316); Serb 4,583 (0.05%, -575 persons); Gipsy (Roma) 25,633 (0.25%); and others (Bunyevac, Sokac, Wendish, Slovene and unknown mother tongues) 14,534 (0.15%, -2,479 persons).²²

Considering their claims to national affinity, there were 9,837,275 (98.76%) persons of Hungarian nationality, 123,869 (1.24%) non-Hungarian nationals; of the latter Croatian 14,710 (0.15%); Romanian 12,326 (0.12%); German 8,640 (0.09%); Serb 3,888 (0.04%); Gipsy (Roma) 56,121 (0.56%); others (Bunyevac, Sokac, Wendish, Slovene and unknown) 13,744 (0.14%).²³

The 1960 census shows a kind of 'magnanimity' in the case of the Southern Slav speakers: the minority indices refer only to Serbs and Croats; Slovenes, Wendish, Sokac and Bunyevac ethnics are lumped together with other ethnic groups under 'Others'.²⁴ The 'peak' results of the 1960 census is in connection to the beginning of the 'melting' in international politics and that the restoration and consolidation of the Kádár-regime was in progress.²⁵ While the measures of retaliation to the revolution still went on, the government made efforts to gain followers by popular provisions, e.g. by raising the salaries, by subsidies, that confidential files were discontinued, etc. It was to win over peasantry that through a law decree, already introduced by the government of Imre Nagy, came into effect which abolished the system of compulsory delivery of agricultural produce. Resignation from the agricultural co-operatives became simpler, and later the system itself ceased to exist. Another popular provision was the abolition of the tax for being childless; by appointing Easter Monday and Christmas (25th and 26th December) as holidays; and somewhat later the introduction of old age pension for co-op members. During

²² 1991. évi népszámlálás.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gypsies (Romans) were always grouped as individual both ethnically and nationally in every census.

²⁵ The first government of János Kádár 4th November 1956; government of Ferenc Münnich 28th January 1958–13th September 1961; second government of János Kádár 13th September 1961–30th June 1965.

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the Second Three Year Plan (1958–1960) and the Second Five Year Plan (1961–1965) the improvement of the living standard and living conditions of the population appeared as real targets. One of the proofs for these developments was the budget accepted by the new parliament assembled on the 26th November 1958, which true to the promises financed the above improvements and the sums for social, cultural and educational purposes were increased by 31%. János Kádár pointed out in his 9th December 1960 speech in the parliament that the forming of agricultural co-operatives was successful beyond hopes, nobody belived – as he put it – the development to be so vigorous.²⁶ The regime got first reinforced by the harsh and traumatizing terror than was consolidated by the amnesty. The second Kádár-government and the ones following it could make the people accept – ethnic minorities included – and not without reason that it serves their best interests in a country surrounded by an aggressive empire.²⁷ The growing numbers representing ethnic minorities in the census returns, however, were not the reflection of their actual size, merely a slight approach toward reality. The causes lie deeper. The German nationals who underwent much suffering might not yet have put off their fears and still harboured uncertainties and even suspicions. Besides, in their case as well as in the case of other ethnic minority communities, there was a strong spontaneous process towards assimilation, well expressed by the results of the 1970 census.

1970

Similarly to all the census before 1941, the one in 1970 inquired only after the mother tongue and excluded the question about nationality. In 1970 Hungary had 10,322,099 inhabitants, of these 155,862 (1.5%) were non-Hungarians, 19,144 less than in 1960. Of these Germans: 35,594 (0.3%); Slovaks 21,176 (0.2%); Romanians 12,624 (0.1%); Croatians 21,855 (0.2%); Serbs 7,989 (0.08%); Slovene, Wendish 4,205 (0.04%).²⁸ The

²⁶ Tisztelt Ház! A magyar országgyűlés története 1848–1998. Eds. Stemler, Gyula – Tombor, László. Puskás Tivadar Távközlési Technikum. Budapest, 1998. p. 178. (Honoured House! The history of the Hungarian parliament 1848 – 1998).

²⁷ Magyarország miniszterelnökei 1848 – 1990. Ed. Dűs, Ágnes. Cégér Kiadó Kft. Budapest. 1993. pp. 206, 210, 212.

²⁸ 1990. évi népszámlálás. Anyanyelv, nemzetiség településenként 1980, 1990. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. Budapestm1993. p. 8 (The census of 1990. Mother tongue, nationality according to settlements 1980, 1990. Central Statistical Office).

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sudden increase in the number of Serbs is the result of an incorrect wording in the instructions;²⁹ the speakers of southern Slav languages were lumped together, according to the detailed instructions Serbs and Slovenes were to be entered into the rubrik as 'Serbs', Rác and Wendish under 'others', whereas Slovenes and Wendish, sharing the same religion belong together and Serb and Rác are two names of the same people.³⁰

1980

In 1980 Hungary had 31,231 (0.29%) German speaking inhabitants. The number is 8,776 more compared to 1949, but 19,534 less than in 1960. Slovak speakers were 16,054 persons (0.15%) 9,934 less than in 1949 and 14,636 less than in 1960. Of the Slovaks living in Hungary the 1980 return had the lowest number after WWII. and it is similar in the case of Romanians, Serbs Slovenes and Wendish. In 1980 there were 10,141 (0.09%) inhabitants who claimed to be Romanian speakers, this is 1,732 less than in 1949 and 5,646 less than in 1960; Serb speakers were 3,426 (0.03%) in 1980, 1,732 less than in 1949 and 1,157 less than in 1960; the number of Croatian speakers was 20,484 (0.19%) in 1980, this is 61 more than in 1949 but 12,500 less than in 1960; people with Slovene and Wendish as their mother tongue were 3,142 (0.03%) in 1980, 1,047 less than in 1949, There is no data about them for 1960 in the statistical manual.³¹

The data of the 1980 census represented the 'peak' concerning the number of German, Slovene and Wendish speaking minorities. The data

²⁹ Inhabitants with Serbian mother tongue were 5158 (1949), 4583 (1960), 7989 (1970) according to the census returns.

³⁰ Dávid, Zoltán: *A magyar nemzetiségi statisztika múltja és jelene*. Valóság, 1980. 8. p.101. (The past and present of national minorities statistics in Hungary). 'The realization of the number, position and local distribution of the national minorities is impossible since the last census ceased to give a report on each of the settlements individually. The data given for the county do not provide exact information, the global numbers do not allow to discover which villages have inhabitants belonging to national minorities and thus prevent the follow up of the processes and the comparison of time segments. This is the major cause of the disorder disturbing the discussions on minority problems. Everything is mixed up, those who kept their mother tongue and nationality with those who have long given up their original ancestry and those who have claimed to be Hungarians for several decades. This is how unfounded estimates are created about the number of national minorities.' *Ibid.* p.8.

³¹ 1990. évi népszámlálás. P. 8.

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referring to the German speakers gave 11,310 (0.11%) persons, 8,693 more than in 1949 and 2,670 more than in 1960; Slovene, Wendish: 1,731 persons, 8,693 more than in 1949, no data were given for 1960. (In 1970 there was no question about the nationality of the minorities). The number of Slovak speakers was 9,101 (0.08%) which is a kind of transition between 1949 and 1960: 1,293 more than in 1949 and 5,239 less than in 1960. A similar process is reflected by the data for Romanians and Croats: the former with 8,874 persons (0.08%) is 374 more than in 1949 and 3,452 less than in 1960. The number of Croatian speakers was 13,895 (0.13%), 9,735 more than in 1949 but 815 less than in 1960. The number given for Serb speakers was the lowest in 1980: 2,805 (0.03%), which is 1,385 less than in 1949 and 1,083 less than in 1960.³²

The census data can only partially indicate the number of the members of national minorities in Hungary; rather than giving the size it seems to be a reflection of their political and legal situation, which mirrored the historical-political situation of the times. Expressed in numbers, the internal and international politics came to the surface which directly or indirectly influenced the lives of the national minorities.

Various demographic surveys

In addition to the census indices there are other – mainly estimated – data about the number and ethnic composition of the national minorities in Hungary.³³

Surveys

The Ministry of Cultural Education prepared a proposition for the Party Committee of MDP on the situation of national minority education in Hungary.³⁴ The document drew attention to the difficulties which obstructed

³² 1990. évi népszámlálás P.8.

³³ e.g. from the state-party, various ministries, minority associations, Central Statistical Office, documents, publications, press material.

³⁴ A magyarországi nemzetiségek adatai. (data concerning the national minorities of Hungary) MOL 276.1/1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e.

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the minorities cultural work of the previous ten years caused 'by the inaccuracy in counting the number of minorities population of our country.'³⁵ It claimed that the data of the 1949 census did not represent real numbers, i.e. they were not reliable. In order to get rid of ambiguities, the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and other national organs were asked to provide data and further estimates were made with the collaboration of the county councils. These investigations yielded the following counts: Germans 250,000–300,000; Slovaks 120,000–150,000; southern Slavs 80,000–100,000; Romanians 25,000–30,000; total 470,000–580,000 persons.³⁶ The above estimates are the result of the counts carried out in the villages, and reflect the proportion of the inhabitants using their mother tongue in everyday situations. In addition to these estimated data the CSO also supplied data which gave the number of Germans as 3,437, Slovaks 22,359, southern Slavs 24,702, Romanians 10,000, total: 60,498 persons.³⁷

The Ministry of Cultural Education attached a preparatory resolution to the above proposition in which the CSO was requested to 'revise the data concerning the number of the ethnic minorities and provide the Ministries of Education and Cultural Education with more reliable figures.'³⁸ It also suggested the CSO to take samples in at least some of the minority communities to be able to publish verisimilar data.

The CSO prepared a report and published it for inner use on 1. January 1955. The number of ethnic minorities were deducted from the results of the census of 1930 and 1941 as well as the data collected about the post-war migrations. This document gave the number of Germans as 220,000, Slovaks 60,000, southern Slavs 45,000, Romanians 15,000, total 340,000 persons belonging to ethnic minorities in Hungary.³⁹ In later publications these figures cropped up over and over again frequently without reference to the sources or the archive material.

³⁵ MOL 276.f./1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e

³⁶ MOL 276.f./1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e

³⁷ MOL 276.f./1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e

³⁸ MOL 276.f./1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e

³⁹ MOL 276.f./1954/91. cs. 83. ö.e