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MÁTÉ FÁBIÁN

**Some Historiographical and Methodological Issues of
20th Century Hungarian Biography Writing**

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Abstract

This paper attempts to provide a concise overview of some historiographical and methodological issues concerning the composition of the political biography of Vitéz Emil Borbély-Maczky (1887–1945).

In the first part of my paper, I present some major accomplishments of 20th-century biography writing in Hungary, briefly covering the methodological context in respect of political biography vs. total biography. In the second part, I investigate the problems and opportunities of genre classification emerging during the composition of Emil Borbély-Maczky's biography by presenting available sources.

The primary goal of this paper is to set the biography of the most important public figure in interwar Borsod County into the context of 20th century Hungarian historical biographies.

Keywords: biography, Hungarian historiography, 20th century, Emil Borbély-Maczky

Additions to a biography in progress

The present study aims to provide an overview of the emerging methodological and historiographical issues and dilemmas regarding biography writing.¹ The relevance of this topic is related to my doctoral dissertation in progress, which presents vitéz² Emil Borbély-Maczky (1887–1945), who was the Head of County (főispán) of Borsod for several years. Since my research on writing his biography is to be completed soon, it is worth considering the dilemma of what type of biography is to be created.

Antecedents and frameworks

Writing a biography (writing down the life of a person, cf. life writing) has been of fundamental importance over the past centuries, especially from the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, when there was an increasingly sharper distinction between literary and historical biographies. The latter produced significant and relevant works.

¹ The writing of this study was supported by the tender titled EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001. “Kutatási kapacitások és szolgáltatások komplex fejlesztése az Eszterházy Károly Egyetemen (The Complex Development of Research and Services Capacities at Eszterházy Károly University)”.

² The title “vitéz” is a Hungarian order of merit awarded as a state honor between 1920 and 1944.

Gyula Szekfű's two monographs on Ferenc Rákóczi and Gábor Bethlen, both outstanding accomplishments of modern biography writing are notable examples.³

For several years after the Second World War, a watershed occurred in the evolution of Hungarian history writing – involving biography writing – when every area of life in Hungary saw gradual and radical reforms and Sovietization. Accordingly, history writing had to fully serve the Marxist ideology, and Hungarian history writing, which had great traditions and which was also gaining increasing renown in the West in the first half of the 20th century, was reformed from this new historico-political perspective. These large-scale reforms broke the careers of complete generations of historians or diverted them from their paths into a new direction. The aim was to rewrite Hungarian history grounded in Marxist-Communist theory and to sever every connection with the traditions and values of the former era. Regarding history writing, relief, change, and professionalization only occurred after the death of Stalin, and the loss of power of Mátyás Rákosi and his circle at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. It was then that the former ideological conceptualization of history writing gradually changed, its framework extended, and, as a result, a slow reformation of Hungarian historiography could take place.

This era is also characterized by the professionalization of biography writing, and Tibor Hajdu's biography on Mihály Károlyi and György Borsányi's on Béla Kun⁴ emerged as the first examples. Although the latter was quickly banned, the Károlyi and Kun biographies revealed a form of life writing, which came to be seen as the birth of the genre of political biography in Hungarian history writing. The life stories that the two authors told had already been written of by previous biographers. However, they narrowed their focus to examining the relationship between the individual and the political. In the more than five-hundred-page monograph by Hajdu, Mihály Károlyi is portrayed as a representative, a politician, Prime Minister, the first President of the Hungarian People's Republic, and a significant person of interwar emigration; the fact that Mihály Károlyi was a member of one of the most ancient aristocratic families and a husband is of little importance. Hajdu's biography is a classic political biography, which presents the events of Hungarian political history after the turn of the century through the person of Mihály Károlyi. Moreover, Hajdu reveals his reasons for this in the introductory thoughts to the book:

³ Gyula Szekfű, *A száműzött Rákóczi* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1913), Gyula Szekfű, *Bethlen Gábor* (Budapest: Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1929).

⁴ Tibor Hajdu: *Károlyi Mihály. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978), György Borsányi: *Kun Béla* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1978). In 1979 the latter book was published in cloth binding by Kossuth Kiadó, too.

In the biography of Mihály Károlyi, it is not necessary to separate the private person from the political personality, since unlike many of his fellow politicians, he did not implement public activities to achieve individual goals; on the contrary, he was ready to sacrifice his private interests in the name of his conviction at any time. I only deal with his peculiar personality as long as it is necessary to understand his unique career... The first three decades that formed his personality is only highlighted when it is crucial to understand the other Mihály Károlyi, the one that the country and the world got to know.⁵

György Borsányi's work provided readers with a plethora of little-known material concerning the public career of Béla Kun. There is a detailed description of the early years of the Hungarian labor movement, the effects of Russian bolshevism and revolution, the foundation of the Party of Communists in Hungary, and the era of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 (*Republic of Councils in Hungary*) all told through the lens of Béla Kun's life history. Also, in the second part of the Béla Kun book, the activities of the Hungarian communist emigration unfold – and via the Béla Kun case – a glimpse of the inner life of the Stalinist Soviet Union is provided.

In the 1990s the biographies of further important historical figures were written, all of which belong to the category of political biography. In 1991 Ignác Romsics's monograph on István Bethlen was published by Magyarorsághoz Intézet (*Hungarian Studies Research Institute*) and subsequently by other publishers.⁶ The author chose a main character, whose life and activities were hotly debated during the era between the two world wars, and which would be portrayed by later historians as wholly negative. Romsics emphasizes in the preface of his book that

His [István Bethlen] followers and political friends, for example his first biographers, Dénes Sebess and Miklós Surányi or the leading historian of the era, Gyula Szekfű, considered him an outstanding statesman and compared him to István Széchenyi. However, his opponents, for example, Dezső Szabó or the representatives of the left-wing democracy saw him as a cunning, petty Transylvanian count, who was only good at tactics and corruption. At the end of the 1940's and in the 1950's, when the label of fascism was stuck on Hungarian politics between the two world wars, without any differentiation István Bethlen was also automatically put in the fascist, semi-fascist camp.⁷

⁵ Hajdu, *Károlyi Mihály*, 7.

⁶ Ignác Romsics, *Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Magyarorsághoz Intézet, 1991).

⁷ Romsics, *Bethlen István*, 5.

It was precisely this incomplete and subjective historiography of István Bethlen, which motivated Ignác Romsics to undertake a more objective study, in which he reveals István Bethlen's political career shorn of ideology and prejudice. The monograph, similar to Tibor Hajdu's and György Borsányi's, primarily focused on István Bethlen as Prime Minister and as an outstanding figure of the conservative-nationalist doctrine. However, it is important to note that the author defined the concept of political biography in a broader sense, since he introduced the main character's family background, marriage, habits, and life circumstances in more detail than earlier biographies did. Therefore, while Romsics's Bethlen portrays one of the greatest politicians of the 20th century, he also gives an impression of almost half a century of history. At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, the subjects of both works were considered as being niche. That is, on the one hand, the picture of Bethlen was strongly influenced by the ideological limits of the second half of the 20th century, but on the other, a professional and objective political historical investigation of the era between the two world wars was yet to be undertaken.

Another watershed in the historiography of Hungarian historical biography, was János M. Rainer's political biography of Imre Nagy⁸. The two-volume work has much in common with Ignác Romsics's monograph of István Bethlen. Like Bethlen, Imre Nagy was not generally regarded as a prominent historical figure. The reasons for this were connected to the then contemporary political and ideological climate, which could only be resolved slowly. Unlike Bethlen, – who despite having the stigma of being a fascist was included in the historical works of the second half of the 20th century – Imre Nagy became a victim of silence due to an official policy of effacement. When at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, Rainer undertook the task of writing a biography of Imre Nagy, his motivation may have been to fill this historiographical omission. Although the author categorized his work as a political biography, similar to Ignác Romsics's, he portrayed his main character as a complex personality and this allowed the reader to become acquainted with Imre Nagy, the man behind the politician. This is partly because Rainer was able to engage in conversation with a living relative: Imre Nagy's daughter, Erzsébet Nagy. Moreover, as he noted in the preface, there were numerous memoirs available in the archives of the Oral History Archives of the Institute of 1956 (*1956-os Intézet Oral History Archívum*), which is a special resource. However, even though Rainer did explore the human character of Nagy, it was the politician that was portrayed in the book. Although the Imre Nagy biography pushes the limits of the genre, it was not because of this that the monograph is regarded as a remarkable accomplishment of 20th-century Hungarian historiography. Instead, it is because István Tóth, the first reviewer of the biography, emphasized that “it contributed

⁸ János M. Rainer, *Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz. I–II*. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1996–1999).

to the realistic judgement of Imre Nagy's lifework and respectfully immortalized it as well as it redeemed a lot that the Hungarian science of history indebted to him."⁹

The next chronologically significant biography, which belongs within the framework of political biographies, is a two-volume Miklós Kozma monograph written by Mária Ormos.¹⁰ Ormos began her lengthy research after she had established herself as a significant historian and gained substantial recognition. Unlike in the case of the examples mentioned so far, her interest was not in a personality of mainstream politics, but a man who achieved great acclaim while working in the background. Miklós Kozma was not only an MP and one of the leaders of the Race Defender Movement, but a Minister of the Interior, the Regent's Commissioner of Kárpátalja (*Subcarpathia*) as well as the reformer of the Hungarian Telegraph Office and the leader of Hungarian Radio. Thus, the author did not choose a globally significant political figure as the main character of her study, but a man who, although a member of the political elite during the era between the two world wars, was most certainly not on the frontline. The contrast is even sharper if we add that at the turn of the Millennium, Hungarian historical writing did not have a biography of Miklós Horthy nor many of the country's Prime Ministers, either. Therefore, the novelty of the work by Ormos may have in part been as a result of the relative anonymity of Miklós Kozma. On the other hand, he is a strong subject: Kozma liked to write, thus he left behind an extraordinarily rich documentary heritage consisting of numerous diaries, notes, and letters. Few historians had dealt with the source material prior to Ormos, and nobody had undertaken the task of writing and publishing an entire review, a situation the authors of former biographies could only have dreamed of. Thus any author attempting Kozma's biography had the luxury of being able to ignore biography writing traditions, and instead of a political biography could provide a more complex overview of Miklós Kozma. It was this situation that Ormos partly exploited as she highlighted in her introduction:

On the following pages I will touch upon public history only to a minor extent, and I will put more emphasis on our hero and the way of thinking and acting of his friends, naturally taking into consideration how the significant figures and milestone events of the era were seen through his eyes.¹¹

⁹ István Tóth, "Rainer M. János: Nagy Imre. Politikai életrajz," *Múltunk*, no. 2 (1997): 306.

¹⁰ Mária Ormos, *Egy magyar médiavezér: Kozma Miklós. Pokoljárás a médiában és a politikában, 1919–1941. Volume I–II.* (Budapest: PolgART, 2000).

¹¹ Mária Ormos, *Egy magyar médiavezér: Kozma Miklós*, Vol. I., 15.

The author intended to follow this principle throughout the two volumes. There were relatively few documents left detailing Miklós Kozma's family and youth, thus the character of Kozma as a soldier and counter-revolutionary in his early thirties is presented after a comparatively brief overview. Subsequently, there is a more substantial description of Kozma the politician, the minister, the businessman, and the media director. Ormos attempted to exploit the documentary heritage, which enables the reader to learn much about Kozma's thinking. It is primarily a picture of Hungary between the two world wars, complemented with portraits of prominent politicians and leaders as Miklós Kozma saw them. Despite this, although Ormos did not write a classical political biography, it can still be considered an example of this genre.

János Kádár was the subject of the next Hungarian historical biography written in a similar vein.¹² The two-volume bibliography can be regarded a novelty in the history of Hungarian biography writing. Tibor Huszár was essentially a sociologist; however, at the beginning of his career he also studied psychology, and therefore had the opportunity to extend the traditional framework of biography writing by integrating contributions drawn from multiple disciplines. It must be added here that the author predetermined the genre of the biography; moreover, the concept of political biography appears straightforward in the title as well. It also contributed to the novelty of this work that the author – unlike earlier biographers – was a contemporary of the main character under investigation:

This can be beneficial, too: sharing the illusions of the reform-communists for a long time, from inside and still with a distance, I had the opportunity to get to know and practice the distinct way of speaking and thinking of the era. However, the advantages of these prove to be a trap... Censorship operated and the important decisions were made behind closed curtains. Albeit critical social science and arts – in particular in the late Kádár era – revealed many mysteries that we could see and hear still it was not identical to what really had happened and what we faced while investigating highly confidential and manipulated documents.¹³

Although the author was aware of the risk of bias deriving from personal involvement and empathy, still – especially in the second volume – he foregoes a critical stance on several occasions. The first volume is essentially about Kádár's family background, childhood socialization, and his early years in the communist movement. While studying this era, Huszár utilizes the methods of social psychology and political sociology in at-

¹² Tibor Huszár, *Kádár János politikai életrajza, 1912–1956. Volume 1.* (Budapest: Szabad Tér – Kossuth, 2001); Tibor Huszár, *Kádár János politikai életrajza, 1957. november – 1989. június. Volume 2.* (Budapest: Szabad Tér – Kossuth, 2003).

¹³ Tibor Huszár, *Kádár János politikai életrajza, 1912–1956.* Vol. 1., 5–6.

tempting to reconstruct the early phases of Kádár's life. He analyzes interviews and memoirs along with archival resources and attempts to resolve anomalies stemming from these sources. However, the unity and continuity are shattered in the second volume due to the time that passed between the publication of the two volumes. Although during János Kádár's life a new chapter began in November 1956, an even more momentous era than that which preceded it, the biography transforms back into a public historical description. In the Miklós Kozma biography the portrayal of him as a businessman is also present; however, there is less and less focus on his everyday life, his thinking, and opinions. As a result, although this János Kádár biography was the first to investigate perhaps the most significant historical figure in Hungarian history, Tibor Huszár's two-volume work became nothing more than a public history description.

The photo tableau comprising the political portraits of the featuring characters of our recent historical past is similar to the one of a graduating secondary-school class. You cannot retouch the "bad guys" and you do not know the future career path of the young man smiling in the graduation photo tableau... Regarding the key figures of "high politics," however, the case is different. As though the historians walked on hidden, unexploded mines, even if they try to reconstruct their political career grounded on sources and resources without pathos and passion. Because usually posterity either requires a historical justice, which can also be called "rehabilitation," or it would like to pull down and subsequently "punish" the historical figure set on pedestal till then.¹⁴

The above extract is taken from the preface of Jenő Gergely's monograph on Gyula Gömbös. They are the remarks of a historian, who produced works on several historical figures (among others: Ottokár Prohászka, Sándor Giesswein, or Béla Bangha) prior to Gömbös. Later he explains why he considered it essential to reveal these thoughts at the beginning of his work:

Nowadays historians, journalists, and politicians dealing with the era between 1918 and 1945 put the leaders of the quarter-century hallmarked by Horthy's name into the following two camps: the now "presentable" Bethlen-Teleki-Kállay camp, and the retrograde, proved-to-be-guilty camp of those causing failure, which would have started with Gyula Gömbös and would have continued with Béla Imrédy, László Bárdossy, and finished with the Arrow Cross dictator Ferenc Szálasi... Gyula Gömbös, whose political career I follow in this book, was a unique and distinct phenomenon of the political elite of Hungary between the two world wars. It was a phenomenon to which nobody was indifferent neither in his life nor after his

¹⁴ Jenő Gergely, *Gömbös Gyula. Politikai pályakép* (Budapest: Vince, 2001), 7.

death. People either liked Gömbös, some even worshipped him, but, at the same time, from the “other side” even his contemporaries regarded him not simply as an opponent but an enemy. Posterity declared him as the main offender in the sins of an entire era and a whole regime.¹⁵

Thus Jenő Gergely chose a difficult subject for his biography of a distinctive individual active between the two world wars.¹⁶ It is precisely because of this investigation of the Gömbös image and phenomenon that this biography is located within the genre of the biographies already discussed here. Gergely did not analyze and interpret the complexities of his main character. He briefly presented his family background and adolescent socialization, and then switched to the public life of Gömbös’ career, detailing his transformation from a soldier into a public person. He presented his portrait of Gömbös in five large units each presenting an important stage in the politician’s life: counter-revolutionary, governing party politician, opposition politician, minister, and Prime Minister. The highlight of the monograph in terms of novelty was the last chapter in which the author focused on his main character’s contemporary evaluation, political heritage, and persistence in the memory of posterity in more detail than previous biographies.

Almost fifteen years after the Gergely monograph, József Vonyó’s Gömbös biography was published by Napvilág Publishing House (*Napvilág Kiadó*).¹⁷ In which the main character’s assessment and influence on future generations as well as his political career also played a significant role. Compared to Jenő Gergely’s work, József Vonyó devoted more time to his subject’s background and personality. His family, home village, youth and then later the background to certain decisions are foregrounded, achieving the goal formulated by the author in the preface:

We not only want to present Gömbös’s thoughts and his activities that motivated him. Above all, we wish to understand. We intend to apprehend why he uttered the particular words, why he chose the particular actions in a particular situation; what urged him to get into a powerful position at all costs; and how he handled that when he had already possessed it. That is, we are more interested in the “why” than in the “what.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Gergely, *Gömbös Gyula*, 7–8.

¹⁶ It may not be unintentional that unlike in earlier biographies, the author reported the current stage of his research not only in studies but two years prior to the publication of the big monograph, he published a brief version; that is an outline. In this work the author mainly formulated questions and proposed problems, around which he is to build up the forthcoming biography. For more detail see: Jenő Gergely, *Gömbös Gyula. Vázlat egy politikai életrajzhoz* (Budapest: Elektra Kiadóház, 1999).

¹⁷ József Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2014),

¹⁸ Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula*, 11.

This approach, however, does not lead to the direction of writing a total biography, instead the author undertakes to analyze and present Gömbös's life path in a different way. He predetermined his work by saying: "The title of this could have even been: Gyula Gömbös and Power."¹⁹ In the era between the two world wars, the next prominent politician to become the subject of a biographical work was Pál Teleki.²⁰ There were several Teleki biographies already available at the turn of the Millennium; Balázs Ablonczy was not introducing a new character into the discourse. This, however, was not necessarily to the advantage of the author, since over the decades numerous rumors and stories had emerged about Pál Teleki, and each had to be investigated so that Ablonczy could produce an objective synthesis. Accordingly, unlike former biographies, he chose to introduce his work with an extensive and detailed historiographical review. By doing this, he reviewed and condensed all the images of Teleki that had been constructed over the years as well as providing a thorough review of the literature of the antecedent events, through which could be observed not only the changes in the Teleki portrait but it also made it possible to follow the main tendencies of 20th-century Hungarian history writing and the continuous development of public thinking. This extensive review is of professionally accurate and outstanding quality. Subsequently, the main character is depicted as a complex personality. Pál Teleki did not merely pursue a political career but engaged in public life in many other guises. Therefore, the author had to introduce not only Teleki the politician but also the scientist, the teacher, and the participant in several social movements and organizations. These were roles he engaged in fully, and as a result, beyond the complex person the reader is provided with an overview of the fields related to him. Although in this biography the political, public, and social roles are the main focal points, the author also provided information on Teleki's personality and in doing so he deviated somewhat from the conventions of political biographies. As Miklós Zeidler, who produced a fairly detailed and accurate review on the monograph, wrote: "In Ablonczy's book Teleki struggles and contemplates, is enthusiastic and disheartened, prideful and empathic, advised and sudden, fair and unfair, honest and mendacious, victorious and frail – a man."²¹ Balázs Ablonczy, based on his extensive research wrote a dense and precise monograph, which reveals the real Pál Teleki in all his complexity.

In Hungarian historiography the first decade of the new millennium passed without the writing of a biography of any significant 20th-century historical figures, like Miklós

¹⁹ Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula*, 11.

²⁰ Balázs Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005).

²¹ Miklós Zeidler, "Olvasónapló. Gondolatok Ablonczy Balázs Teleki Pál című könyvéről," *Limes* 25, no. 2 (2012): 142. For the whole review see: pp. 109–146.

Horthy. Although the era named after him was studied by historians from many perspectives, for a very long time no biography was produced that displayed both scientific exactitude and objectivity. This all changed when a young and talented historian, Dávid Turbucz published his biography in 2011 after several years of research.²² His Horthy biography has also been published in an extended version since then. Turbucz conducted research into Horthy's life and in addition, his biography is "based on a wide selection of published documents and relevant literature available and undertakes to provide a scientific, informative, brief, and easy to understand overview of Miklós Horthy's life and activities as Head of State."²³ There is a discrepancy among the different portrayals of Horthy, and a good example of this can be evidenced in the preface to the biography, where the short reviews of Bálint Hóman and Erzsébet Andics can be read in succession. This preface demonstrates that a biographer of Horthy must synthesize extreme views – the results of which are complemented with his own research – as well as portraying it as a story. From the point of view of the present historiographic overview, the work of Turbucz treads a timeworn path, that is, it primarily investigates the relationship between the individual and the political which it foregrounds. Horthy's private sphere only appears in the background to reveal his motivation for certain decisions. Although the author provided a brief description of the family history and Horthy's youth, still these are not dominant parts of the biography. Similar examples are when Turbucz wrote about two events when the role of the father and the Head of State became inseparable. On August 20th, 1942, his son, István Horthy's plane crashed, of which the governor learnt on the same day. The author writes that Miklós Horthy, an elderly man was physically devastated by his son's death, but acted as a statesman and governor without delay. Similarly, Turbucz investigates the death of István Horthy from the perspective of the vice-governor institution and the later cult and propaganda. In a similar vein, the governor objectively recorded the kidnapping of his only living child, too. He wrote how the Gestapo entrapped Miklós Horthy Jr. and how an SS-commando caught the boy under the leadership of Otto Skorzeny. Furthermore, he continued with a discussion of the failed Hungarian attempt to change sides in the war. However, in the biography nothing is revealed about how this serious disaster influenced the governor, and what he thought in that particular situation. In light of the

²² Dávid Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2011). The new extended issue: Dávid Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2014)

²³ Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós*, 12.

above, Turbucz's Horthy biography can be located within the genre of political biography similar to the biographies of István Bethlen, Imre Nagy, János Kádár, and others.

Although, to a certain extent all of the above authors attempted to extend the framework of the genre of political biography, it was György Kövér's monograph of Géza Losonczy, which discarded the conventions of Hungarian historical biography writing.²⁴ György Kövér, when discussing the creation of the Losonczy biography, writes:

I did not attempt to write a "political biography" about Géza Losonczy, which is fashionable in Hungary but a so-called "total biography." It is not because a politician is also a man, but first of all, because I thought that being a politician cannot be interpreted from the perspective of political-history reductionism. The actions of a politician cannot be explained without the knowledge of his social origin, milieu, and leeway, and in a similar vein, without the exploration of his career motives and characteristic features, it cannot be solved why a person made a particular decision in a particular situation.²⁵

Furthermore, he claimed in the Losonczy monograph that:

We intend to regard "total" biography, which comprises character and career, as exemplary. We aim to sum up the wholeness of the history of personality and life-roles. Therefore, we could not undertake to limit the biography neither from a political nor from a psychological perspective.²⁶

Therefore, György Kövér wished neither to present the relationship between the person and the political nor to outline a form of contemporary history through the main character of the monograph, but he was primarily interested in the changes Géza Losonczy's personality and ideas went through at certain stages of his life. This leaves us with the question as to what kind of biography the author wrote then. How can you classify a biography which separates itself both from the definition of political biography and the traditions of Hungarian history writing regarding life writing? Kövér offered a possible genre category coining the term "total biography," which transcends the political and historical reductionism of political biographies and psychohistorical biographies. He aims to maintain a certain balance between the two and therefore the biography becomes a blend

²⁴ György Kövér, *Losonczy Géza, 1917–1957*. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1998).

²⁵ György Kövér, *Biográfia és társadalomtörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2014), 9–10.

²⁶ Kövér, *Losonczy Géza, 1917–1957*, 85.

of political history macro analysis, social history, microhistory, and psychoanalysis.²⁷ With his novel approach, the application of exact and complex sources and his use of theory, Kövér introduced a new approach to Hungarian history writing. He not only enriched historiography with this particular outstanding biography, but also tackled what had been a serious theoretical problem in previous biographical works. Kövér, then, was probably the first to produce a systematic and widespread overview and interpretation.²⁸

“The earlier volumes about János Kádár primarily discussed his political career or appreciated him; however, this book is about the ordinary János Kádár,” writes György Majtényi in the introduction to his book on the Hungarian politician.²⁹ Then he continues: “For me and for everybody this work is supplementary and fills a niche – the aim is to understand and change the Kádár image, if it is possible.”³⁰ That is, the author did not produce a classical biography but intended to present his career and life trajectory in detail, and thus put major emphasis on the man who is the focal point of his work. The everyday life of János Kádár, where he lived, what he ate, his attitude towards his environment, and the habits he had are presented to the reader. The history of events and his political career appear merely as complementary threads in his portrayal. Majtényi investigated Kádár in

²⁷ György Kövér wrote extensively on the Losonczy monograph and through its example on the methodology of life writing: first in the Losonczy biography and then in two shorter theoretical works (György Kövér, “Biográfia és történetírás,” *Aetas* 15, no. 3 (2000): 150–156.; György Kövér, “A biográfia nehézségei,” *Aetas* 17, no. 2–3 (2002): 245–262.), and finally in the methodological work based on his own experience and on the above studies: Kövér, *Biográfia és társadalomtörténet*, passim. See also Gábor Gyáni, “Tragédia két felvonásban. A kommunista identitás metamorfózisai,” in *Emlékezés, emlékezet és a történelem elbeszélése*, by Gábor Gyáni (Budapest: Napvilág, 2000), 161–175.

²⁸ In the present study – due to space constraints – does not undertake to present and analyze in detail the theoretical works on the methodology of biography writing, in addition to the previously cited works I only cite a few that deemed remarkable examples of international and developing Hungarian historiography: Giovanni Levi, “Az életrajz használatáról,” trans. Gábor Czoch, *Korall*, no. 2. (Winter 2000): 81–93.; Ágnes Botond, *Pszichobistoria – avagy a lélek történetiségének tudománya* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1991); William McKinley Runyan, “Vita a pszichobiográfiáról,” in *Történeti és politikai pszichológia*, ed. György Hunyady (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), 305–340.; a thematic issue of the journal: *Clio & Psyche. Korall*, no. 21–22. (November 2005); Mihály Lackó, *Széchenyi elájul. Pszichotörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: L’ Harmattan, 2001); William Todd Schultz, ed., *Handbook of Psychobiography* (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Pierre Bourdieu, “Az életrajzi illúzió,” in Pierre Bourdieu, *A gyakorlati észjárás. A társadalmi cselekvés elméletéről*, trans. Balázs Berkovits (Budapest: Napvilág, 2002), 68–77.; Patrice Gueniffey, “A biográfia a megújuló politikatörténetben,” trans. Csilla Szabó, *Aetas* 15, no. 3 (2000): 136–149.

²⁹ György Majtényi, *Vezérsél. Kádár János mindennapjai*. (Budapest: Libri–Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 2012), 8.

³⁰ Majtényi, *Vezérsél. Kádár János mindennapjai*, 8.

three contexts: home and private sphere; office and work; and everything else. When the monograph was published, it was regarded as a seminal accomplishment and it is exactly because of its uniqueness and novelty that this work is viewed as exceptional from among the many thick and multi-volume biographies.

Finally, some thoughts will be offered on László Karsai's Szálasi biography. Karsai undertook to write the biography of Ferenc Szálasi, perhaps the most reviled and hated character in 20th-century Hungarian history. Prior to Karsai it was only Rudolf Paksa who had attempted to write about the personality of Szálasi, the Arrow Cross leader, from the perspective of his career and life. The young historian had investigated the history of the extreme right, and published an informative micro-monograph with scientific exactitude, detailing Szálasi's life and his "legacy."³¹ The four most significant topics of Paska's biography are as follows. 1. the military years, during which he not only attracted followers but also made valuable connections. This was also the period in which his ideology and philosophy developed in response to various experiences he underwent. 2. He also dealt with the politician and ideologist, who – while gradually distancing himself from the governing party and building the Hungarian extreme right camp (he builds a cult, a cult is built) – often had to fight for his own survival. That is, as the leader of the Party of National Will and the later Hungarist Movement, as well as the author of various political pamphlets, he managed to attract the constant attention of the authorities. Therefore, he had to remain a powerful person during the period of legal proceedings against him and the time he spent in prison. 3. Paksa also dealt with Szálasi as the leader of the nation, who did everything to become the head of the nation. During his brief reign he led the nation he was responsible for deeper and deeper into political, economic, and moral quagmire. 4. The author also touches upon Szálasi, the war criminal, whose judgment deserted him following his brief career as Hungarian leader. As a result, the cult of personality that had emerged around him waned and he became public-enemy number one. Thus, Paksa provided an overview of Ferenc Szálasi's political journey, locating the soldier, politician, and ideologist at the center of his work. Consequently, he only briefly mentioned the most momentous events of Szálasi's private life (birth, family, origin, and marriage).

In contrast to Rudolf Paksa, László Karsai presented the results of his extensive research in his extensive biography published in 2016.³² Similar to the Hungarian biographical classics, he indicated in the subtitle that his monograph's primary aim was to present Szálasi's public career in detail. However, it is revealed in the introduction that the author

³¹ Rudolf Paksa, *Szálasi Ferenc és a hungarizmus* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2013).

³² László Karsai, *Szálasi Ferenc. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Balassi, 2016).

interpreted the biography genre in a broader sense. Unlike Miklós Horthy, János Kádár, István Bethlen, or Imre Nagy, Ferenc Szálasi influenced the fate of the country for but a few months. As Karsai writes:

A Hitler or Stalin biography can also be the history of the Nazi Germany or the Bolshevik Soviet Union at the same time. Concerning Szálasi's political career, it can be stated that he merely looked forward to seizing power from the 1930s.³³

Therefore, the author did not (or could not) narrow the focus of his monograph to merely Szálasi's career in public life, as Rudolf Paksa had already published an excellent summary of this period. Karsai's aim was to investigate and analyze the man. He wished to determine how Szálasi, one of the children of a deprived family with complex origins, could go on to become the leader of a nation, a war criminal, and one of the most reviled historical figures in public discourse. The fact that it was not only him but also Szálasi's contemporaries who were interested in this issue is demonstrated in a letter written by Hugó Payr to Miklós Horthy in 1938, and which is cited by Karsai, also:

How has this otherwise unremarkable captain become a significant factor of present day Hungarian political life? Since he cannot make speeches or write, he does not have press, nor party, nor the ability of party leading; moreover, he does not even have clear thoughts, either.³⁴

The merit of Karsai's biography is that it presents a life trajectory from which a realistic Szálasi image can be created. The space afforded by the monograph genre allowed Karsai to cover relevant areas of Szálasi's private life in depth, like the issues of his origins, family background, and even his relationship with his wife. Furthermore, Szálasi's motivations are also examined (for example, why he chose a political life, which was less stable than that of his former military career). Thus, although Karsai categorized his work as a political biography, his investigation was on Ferenc Szálasi as a complex individual, and focused on his dominant role in public life as well as some more pertinent aspects of his private life and personality. The investigation of this dimension of Ferenc Szálasi's character is important because of his influence on posterity. That is, Rudolf Paksa and László Karsai took the attributes (madman, prophet, martyr, demagogue) which were primarily appended to him by historians as points of reference.

³³ Karsai, *Szálasi Ferenc*, 9.

³⁴ Karsai, *Szálasi Ferenc*, 10.

Emil Borbély-Maczky – political or total biography?

Emil Borbély-Maczky was born in Heves on September 6th, 1887. His father, Emil Maczky, Sr., pursued a successful career in public administration in Heves County (*vármegye*). He was an assistant sheriff (*segédszolgabíró*), a sheriff (*főszolgabíró*), and then served two terms as an MP in the early 20th century. His mother, Róza Fáy of Fáj, was a descendant of one of the most ancient aristocratic families in the region and, on her mother's side she was related to the Borbély family of Léva. Of his siblings the older, György Maczky, had a successful career in public service, which was cut short by his premature death. His younger brother, Béla Maczky, also worked for the County, but had an unexceptional career partly due to his taking early retirement.

In 1902 Borbély-Maczky began a military career and gradually moved up the ranks. He fought as a member of the National Defense Hussar Regiment Nr. 9 of Marosvásárhely during the First World War. Except for a few weeks between August 1914 and December 1917, he was a constant presence on the frontlines (first the Eastern frontline, then the Transylvanian stage, and finally the Italian frontline). In 1919 he retired from the military in order to follow the family tradition of a career in public administration. He was MP for the town of Ózd between 1920 and 1922 and then for the town of Miskolc between 1926 and 1930. In 1922-1923 and subsequently between 1930 and 1944 he was the County Head (*főispán*) of one of the largest counties, Borsod County, in Hungary. Emil Borbély-Maczky and Gyula Gömbös were best friends; moreover, their careers took the same direction until Gömbös's death in 1936. The strength of their friendship is perhaps best illustrated with the following: 1. When Gyula Gömbös and Gábor Bethlen ended their political relationship, Borbély-Maczky resigned from his position as Head of County (1923). 2. Borbély-Maczky joined Gömbös's Race Defender Movement early on. After the formation of the Race Defender Party in 1924, he was its unsuccessful nominee in the interim elections in the town of Miskolc and then, in the General Election of 1926 he was successful as an Race Defender nominee. 3. The Hungarian National Service People Association was a mutual forum for Gömbös and Borbély-Maczky, and after Gömbös' resignation in 1928 Borbély-Maczky became president of the Association. 4. When Gömbös returned to the Unified Party, his friend Borbély-Maczky followed him. While Gömbös was appointed as a secretary of state and then as a minister, Borbély-Maczky became the leader of his beloved Borsod County again. 5. In the 1930s the media reported on several occasions that Gömbös facilitated Borbély-Maczky's career progression. First, he appeared as the applicant for the position of superintendent of Budapest, later his name emerged as secretary of state for the Ministry of Defense, minister for the Home Office, and the Ministry of Defense. 6. They often met in their private lives, too. In Borbély-Maczky's mansion in Bóta, there was a furnished room maintained

for the exclusive use of Gömbös. This close relationship ended with the death of the Prime Minister in 1936; however, Borbély-Maczkó continued to advance his career. The inhabitants of Borsod County acknowledged and admired their Head of County and his colleagues respected him, but at the same time they were somewhat in fear of him. His superiors acknowledged him and gave him a free hand. In 1939 he became a mobilization commissioner and then one for public supply. In 1944 he was appointed the Head of County of the Municipality of Miskolc. He was the leader of Borsod County until the Arrows seized power and removed him from his position. Subsequently, he returned to his home in Bóta. He was regarded as *persona non grata* by the Arrows, the Soviets, and then by the newly consolidated state power, too. The old Borbély-Maczkó was considered their hated enemy. He was arrested twice and, on the second occasion in the spring of 1945, he died under mysterious circumstances. His death was not investigated then nor later and various stories circulated about his fate among the inhabitants of Miskolc and the surrounding settlements. However, the new regime soon declared the former Head of County an enemy. He was considered an undesirable and soon faded from public consciousness. Even local historians ignored him and his career. In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s he was occasionally mentioned in local historical works. Efforts by authorities to condemn him to obscurity appeared to succeed meaning Emil Borbély-Maczkó had no influence on posterity. Furthermore, since he did not have any children, and most of his nephews and nieces were exiled, there were no significant memories of him left in Hungary. He was remembered neither as a decorated soldier from the First World War nor as one of the prominent, outstanding figures of political and public service sector between the two world wars.

The above short biographical review reveals Borbély-Maczkó's career, which although not well-known, influenced the political life of both Borsod County and the country for almost two and a half decades. His impact as well as the historiographic niche resulting from the change in the political and historiographic discourse of the second half of the 1940s are motivating factors to undertake the writing of a Borbély-Maczkó biography.

The question is, however, whether in the case of Emil Borbély-Maczkó it is possible to write a complete and detailed biography, as the political biography is only partly about the main character, albeit that is the central element. However, the contemporary milieu and era can be developed alongside the political theme. Concerning Borbély-Maczkó, it is possible to touch upon the military events of the First World War, the political and social changes between 1918-1920, the operation of Hungarian Parliamentaryism between the two world wars, the activities of various social organizations (*MOVE*, *Frontbarcos Szövetség*/*Frontfighters Association* etc.), as well as the political economic, social, and cultural

circumstances of (the administratively united – temporarily) Borsod, Gömör, and Kishont Counties (from 1939 called Borsod County). All these together – alongside the exploration of a wealth of literature – could furnish a complete monograph, the title of which, following Hungarian historiographical conventions, could be: Emil Borbély-Maczky: A Political Biography.

The issue is whether the remaining and available resource base makes it possible to write a complex biography, one not only restricted to the relationship between the individual and the political. Although according to Giovanni Levi, when writing the life story of a person “the lack of sources and resources is not the only and not even the main difficulty,”³⁵ still it predetermines the limits and the framework of the biography in question. To be able to investigate the person, his/her ideas, mentality, decision-making, and feelings, and to conjure the image of a complete personality or at least to extend the limits of the political biography genre, it is also crucial to have subjective sources and resources through which it is possible to uncover the layers of the main character or at least to draw conclusions. Such sources and resources can be, for example, contemporaneous memoirs (see János M. Rainer and Imre Nagy), the author’s personal experience (see Tibor Huszár and János Kádár) or the subject’s propensity for writing, which would allow for the study of personal correspondence, articles, diaries, books, and studies (see Mária Ormos and Miklós Kozma). Regarding Emil Borbély-Maczky, none of the above sources are available. Since he did not have any lineal descendants, personal/family anecdotes could survive only in the memory of distant relatives if at all. In the case of Emil Borbély-Maczky there are some living relations, but due to their age at the time – most were 5-6 years old when their uncle, who lived several hundred kilometers away, was murdered – they have scarcely any personal memories. Still the family stories recounted to me are useful from the point of a biography, too, despite the fact that we cannot know their uncle’s philosophy or motivations for certain decisions, yet they can help construct a picture of him, which is grounded in how his family saw him and what kind of a man they considered him to be.

Similar to contemporary memoirs, there was no significant documentary heritage left by Emil Borbély-Maczky. The main reason for this is that he did not like writing and, in most cases, he expressed himself in speech. Despite his extensive relationships, he did not often correspond in writing. The exception was a brief period during the First World War. In August 1914 during his mobilization and front command he kept a diary, a copy of which can be found in the Military History Archives (*Hadtörténelmi Levéltár*). This appears to be the only period of his life from which his first-hand experiences survive. Despite his

³⁵ Levi, “Az életrajz használatáról,” 82.

entries being terse, it is possible to gain an insight into how he experienced the first weeks of the war. His diary also reveals that he was in regular correspondence with his fiancée, Erzsébet Pálinkás, who lived in Ákos. He also appears to have communicated on some occasions with his father and brothers. However, these letters, except for few pieces, are probably lost. Emese Kerkay, the daughter of Emil Borbély-Maczký's godson, believes the reason for this was the Soviet occupation and the ransacking of her uncle's mansion. According to the family, it was only a few days after the murder that the mansion at Bóta was robbed several times. Most of the contents were stolen and carried away, and his relatives were able to salvage only a few keepsakes. It is possible that any correspondence and documents – if they existed at all – were damaged during this time.

*

20th-century Hungarian historiographical biographies, in particular those produced at the turn of the century, were of a high, scholarly quality. Over the decades defining personalities of the 20th century including Mihály Károlyi, Béla Kun, István Bethlen, Imre Nagy, Géza Losonczy, Miklós Kozma, János Kádár, Gyula Gömbös, Pál Teleki, and Ferenc Szálasi all had (in some cases two-volume) biographies dedicated to them. In addition, accessible and informative micro-monographs of a scholarly standard provided portraits of Gyula Gömbös (József Vonyó), of Miklós Horthy (Dávid Turbucz), and of Ferenc Szálasi (Rudolf Paksa). Giovanni Levi in his study (2000) poses the (poetic) question: “is it possible to write down a man's life?”³⁶ If one of the most significant problems, that is, a lack of sources and resources does not hinder the work of historians, then the biographies of figures of historical significance can still be written as the above examples demonstrate. Modern Hungarian historical biographies can be placed on a historiographical spectrum: at one end are the complete, complex biographies (i.e., the public sphere and private sphere are interpreted as both complementary and explanatory scenes); at the other one can find the political biographies with their focus firmly fixed on their subject's public role. Modern Hungarian historical life writing is essentially “politicocentric” encompassing both the subject and the milieu in which they operated.

The biography of Emil Borbély-Maczký, which is in the making, appears to be unable to escape the framework of political biography. There are no subjective sources nor resources available that shed light on the main character: there are no contemporary memoirs, the living members of the family have few personal memories, and therefore, it is impossible to “know” the person of Emil Borbély-Maczký. Documentary heritage, as

³⁶ Levi, “Az életrajz használatáról,” 82.

we know it today, has not survived. However, according to Levi, it is not a lack of documentary sources that poses the greatest difficulty in writing a person's life story, as the example of Emil Borbély-Maczky demonstrates, rather it is an absence of personal and subjective sources and resources that ultimately determines the genre categorization of the biography.

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GERGELY PÉTERFFY

Railway Traffic in Southwest Hungary After World War II

Pro&Contra

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Abstract

Immediately after World War II, the only transport available in Hungary was the railways and this was despite the heavy damage incurred by the rolling stock and tracks. By utilizing service reports, meeting minutes, and articles from local newspapers, this study attempts to present the Hungarian State Railways' (MÁV) regional directorate of Pécs's efforts to reconstruct their railway infrastructure and service. Not only is this research's focus on the railways' operation processes—e.g., the eradicating of inefficiency, the reconstruction of rolling stock, and the establishing coal reserves, but also the impact of the political, economic, and social arenas on railways and vice versa. As the most influential company in Hungary, the importance of MÁV's operation was not only a reflection of its role as an economic tool in the government's hands, but also that it proved to be the most powerful employer in the country with thousands of families directly depending on it.

Keywords: railway, economy, Hungary, efficiency, reconstruction

As in other countries in Europe, World War II wreaked large-scale destruction in Hungary.¹ The combat lasted more than half-a-year in the territory of present-day Hungary. The human and economic loss suffered during these six months and, indeed, over the course of the entire war has been the subject of many books, theses, and articles. Some have focussed on the damage caused to the transport system, and within them there is data detailing the serious losses of the Hungarian State Railways – which at that time was the backbone of the country's transport system due to a lack of roads, automobiles, and trucks – one of the most important pillars of the economy.²

Why, then, was the condition and capacity of the railways of such importance? Due to the absence of alternative transport, the railways were the primary conduit for the raw materials, goods, food, and stock required by Hungarian businesses. Another way the railway impacted on the economy was its operating of commuter-trains in the vicinity of the three largest conurbations. These trains allowed workers, students, and costermongers to access local centers. Hungarian State Railways (Magyar Államvasutak - MÁV) was not just a means of transporting freight and passengers, it was one of the biggest employers in

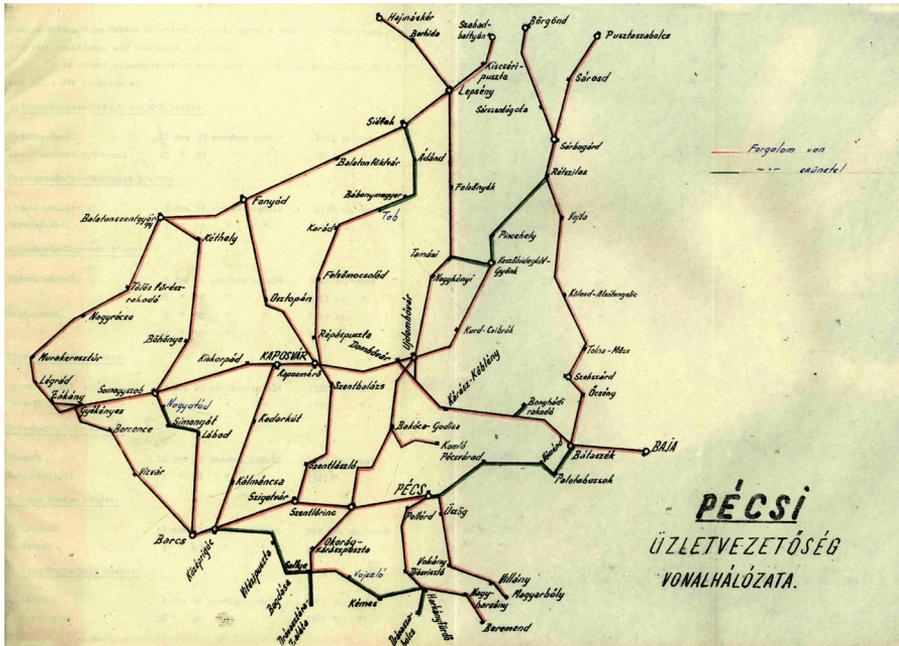
¹ The author's research was supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 ("Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University").

² In 2013 a book was published on the occasion of the centenary of the Regional Directorate Pécs. Unfortunately, the essays focus on the services from the end of 1950s to present-days, the post-war years were not mentioned. *Mozaikek a pécsi vasútigazgatás 100 éves történetéből*. eds. Lászlóné Imre and János Majdán (Pécs: MÁV, 2013).

Hungary, and its operation helped provide for more than one hundred thousand families through employing one or more members. In addition, the government often ordered preferential tariffs conducive to reconstruction, for example, the waftage of coal, wood, cereal, or goods of restitution.

The main purpose of this study is to present the operation of the MÁV Regional Directorate Pécs – one of the six regional directorates – in the four years immediately following the war, from the end of 1944 to 1948.³ The sources are primarily the regional directorate's monthly presentations, and the central directorate's monthly operational reports. Unfortunately, the documentation of the regional directorate has proved to be incomplete for the first two years. Articles from local daily newspapers are often valuable resources for our type of research, providing information about the habits, rules, and circumstances of travelling, therefore, the local newspaper "Új Dunántúl," which was published in Pécs, where the head office of the regional directorate was located – was utilized in the research. At the end of 1944 three articles focusing solely on the railways were published, in the following year twenty-five, in 1946 fourteen, and in the last two years of our study period, nineteen and seven, respectively. In addition, many articles were published concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war or the deportations of local people of German extraction to Germany's American zone in 1946, and to the Soviet zone in 1947-1948.

³ The Hungarian State Railways' network extended more than 7900 km. From 1946, only the Győr-Sopron-Ebenfurth Railway Company had a 200 km network beside the MÁV in the country. Six regional directorates worked on with the headquarters in the following cities: Budapest, Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs and Szombathely. Pécs Directorate had a 1541 km long railway-network, so it took 19,44 per cent of the total. Pécs controlled the railways in Baranya, Somogy, and Tolna counties, and the southern parts of the counties Fejér, Veszprém, and Zala.



Picture 1. Traffic map of the directorate, April 1945. (MÁV Archive)

The Condition of Railway Lines

The Soviet troops' swift advance came to a halt at the beginning of December 1944 on the Székesfehérvár–Fonyód–Barcs line. The front remained here until the German counter-strike at the beginning of March 1945, which was repelled within ten days. After a few weeks, the Soviet army forced the Axis troops back into Austria. The combat movements impacted on the region's railway system, as bridges, cisterns, water towers, and railway yards were destroyed by the retreating German units, especially in the western part of the area.

After the restitution of the pre-war borders and the reorganization of the railway network in the spring of 1945, the length of the regional directorate's network fell from 1,699 kms to 1,514 kms. According to the directorate's report, in July 1945 the Danube-bridge in Baja, seventy-nine small bridges and culverts with lengths between 1-14 meters, twelve bridges with lengths between 15-49 metres, and four more than 50-meter-long bridges were destroyed or too damaged to use.⁴ Due to destroyed bridges, the two

⁴ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. d. Summary report on the wartime operations of the regional directorate Pécs, July 1945

shire-town Kaposvár and Pécs were left without direct railway connection to Budapest. Until December 10, 1945, when the bridge over the River Sió was rebuilt in Simontornya, travelling to the capital and back was only possible by taking several detours.⁵ The most important lines were the north-southwest direction: Budapest–Székesfehérvár–Murakeresztúr, Budapest–Dombóvár–Kaposvár–Gyékényes rail lines with international traffic, (Budapest–)Dombóvár–Pécs–Mohács line with its significant inland traffic, primarily because of the coal mines within its proximity, which provided the highest quality coal in Hungary, as well as the Pécs–Barcs–Gyékényes and Dombóvár–Bátaszék–Baja transversal lines. To replace the destroyed Danube-bridge at Baja, the Soviet military engineers constructed a pontoon railway bridge, primarily for the demands of military transport, POW-transport, and war plunder. According to some railwaymen's reminiscences, only a few civilian trains ever used this bridge.⁶ Beyond the bridges, culverts, and yards, the tracks and sidings were also destroyed by the retreating Germans, as well as the communication infrastructure. Besides the mainlines, many branch lines also suffered severe damage.

The Soviet and Bulgarian troops pushing towards the west immediately started rebuilding the necessary railway lines. These reconstructions were provisional, some of them had to be rebuilt only a few months later. In order to ensure quick progress nearby inhabitants were ordered to work on the rebuilding of the railway lines.⁷ The reconstruction – naturally – began without any overall military command on other lines, depending on the availability of labour, building materials and tools. In the first couple of months, this reconstruction work was overseen at the local level, without any central planning. Only on June 6, 1945, was the state-wide reconstruction program initiated by the Trade and Transport Department, with respect to the demands of the occupying army.

Minister of Trade and Transport Ernő Gerő's speech at the Hungarian Communist Party's Pentecostal conference introduced significant dynamism to the reconstruction of the railways and communication systems with the slogan: "Head for the Railways!" The railwaymen's trade union announced a competitive project in June involving every service post. Due to this competition, 7 coal-feeders, 14 water towers, 66 kilometers of track, 391 sidings, and 106 bridges were restored in the directorate's network. One of the bridges was at the Hungarian-Yugoslavian border, Murakeresztúr, across the River Mura, so inter-

⁵ December 10-től Simontornyán át közlekednek a vonatok. Új Dunántúl, 1945. december 2. 1.

⁶ Gyula Lovas, Újra gurulnak a vonatok (Budapest: MÁV, 1996), 59–63, 73–75, 75–76. The pontoon bridge was installed in the spring of 1945, and it was operated until March 1946. From the autumn of 1945, some squadrons of the Hungarian 1st engineer division took part in the bridge's service. HL. MN. IX/61. 6. 1. Összefoglaló jelentés az 1. honvéd műszaki hadosztály, később Műszaki vezetési törzs 1945. október hó 15-től 1947. október hó 1-ig való működéséről. 23–36.

⁷ MÁV Arch. KS. 1. 24. Track reconstruction works carried out by the Red Army.

national aid shipments – landing in Trieste harbour – could arrive directly into Budapest, saving time and materials.⁸

Due to the destruction of the Danube-bridges, Hungary was split in two, and the sole, useable railway bridge was in Budapest. The detours necessary not only caused significant delays, but also increased the cartage, although MÁV covered half of the difference of the extra drayage.⁹ Furthermore, the only railway bridge over the Danube, which connected the two parts of the country, was also only a temporary construction with a very low speed limit of 10 kph. It was only 18 months after hostilities ceased that a semi-permanent bridge was built to accommodate the increased traffic, and on September 8, 1948, the second track of the railway bridge was reopened. The detour to the capital remained in use until 1950, as it took more than five years to rebuild the bridge in Baja connecting the southern parts of the country over the Danube.¹⁰



Picture 2. Rebuilding the Danube-bridge in Baja, 1950. (Fortepan, No. 91383)

⁸ István Szakács, “Murakeresztúri Mura határhíd,” in *Vasúti hidak a Pécsi Igazgatóság területén*, ed. József Hillier (Pécs: Vasúti Hidak Alapítvány, 2012), 74–81.

⁹ László Varga, president of MÁV mentioned an example at the first national railway congress on August 11, 1946. The distance between Dombóvár and Kiskunhalas is 155 kilometers through the Danube-bridge at Baja, but with the bypass to Budapest, the shipping increased up to 290 kilometers. Special issue of the Bulletin of Transport, August 11, 1946. 4–11.

¹⁰ Ernő Tóth, *Duna hídjaink* (Budapest: Közlekedésfejlesztési Koordinációs Központ, 2009), 29.

Due to the slow rail traffic, in the winter of 1945/46 enormous logjams formed, so the Pécs–Budapest direct freight trains often rested at suburban stations for more than ten hours, and in four cases, for more than twenty hours.¹¹ It caused a crucial problem; the all-important anthracite from Pécs could not reach the factories and railway stokeholes, coal consumption surged, and MÁV cancelled several trains from October because of the shortage of coal.

The rapid reconstruction did not mean that railway services returned to their pre-war status. Due to the lack of rails, nails, screws, and tools, the tracks were rebuilt with different rails, causing many difficulties later with maintenance. Most of the capacity of the ironworks was being utilized for the Soviet and Yugoslavian atonement, and some parts were provided for the reconstructions of the bridges and factories, so the railways' needs remained unfulfilled. The central distribution was not enough to allow for the rebuilding of the most important lines, moreover the allocated delivery of rail and steel equipment often delayed or fell off. Therefore, the maximum speed was limited to 70 kph on the main lines, and 30-40 kph on the branch lines.¹²

It is also noteworthy that the rail lines of the directorate were built on a hill-country, so their maintenance – especially the branch lines, which were built on shorter technical parameters – was more problematic. In addition, these tracks had deteriorated through excessive use by military transports of World War I and II and there had been no serious modernisation program. MÁV did not have the financial resources to repair all of the lines, some reconstruction was realized in the second half of the 1920s, and some only on the eve of World War II. Therefore, it is scarcely surprising that according to the reports on temporary speed limits, the Pécs Directorate was second in 1946, after the Szeged Directorate, but two years later had slipped to fourth.

The speed limits not only led to longer travelling times, but in this context, the limitations also decreased the line's capacity. Furthermore, the consumption of coal was increased through braking and acceleration, and more trackmen were required to observe for signs of wear.

¹¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Memorandum on the problems of traction service at the regional directorate Pécs. Monthly operational record, January 1946.

¹² Endre Bory, "A hazai vasutakon elért menetrend szerinti sebességek történeti áttekintése" in: *Vasúthistória Évkönyv 1992*. 403–413. Budapest: MÁV, 1992.

		31 Dec 1946		31 Dec 1947		31 Dec 1948	
		Country-wide	Pécs	Country-wide	Pécs	Country-wide	Pécs
Speed limits	5 kmph	136	23	130	18	110	16
	10 kmph	3		1		2	
	15 kmph	157	17	126	11	128	21
	25 kmph					152	41
	Total	296	40	257	29	392	78
Railways network's length (km)		7992,9	1547,1	7997,4	1551,6	8006,0	1551,6
Average distance between two speed limits in the network (km)		27,0	38,7	19,0	23,8	no data	19,9

Chart 1. Numbers of speed limits at the end of the year.

Vehicles

As well as the tracks, MÁV also suffered heavy losses regarding its rolling stock: locomotives, railcars, carriages, and wagons. According to the first report, which was written immediately after the war, 186 steam locomotives remained on the directorate's network – 22 per cent were Italian, Romanian, or German. From this, only 115 were in good working order. Before the Russian occupation, the regional directorate had had 199 locomotives, 14 railcars, and seven leased locomotives from Italy.¹³

As already mentioned, many necessary appliances for the procurement and storing of water and coal were destroyed; the damage to the water towers, pipes, and pumps was especially problematic and caused significant and long-term problems, resulting in the decrease of the railway line's capacity. All of the major railyards were damaged, the heaviest losses occurred at the train depot in Nagykanizsa.¹⁴

¹³ The Soviet troops took most of the vehicles as trophies, because of this, MÁV had to lease its own wagons and steam-locomotives. In 1948 Moscow gave back the vehicles with the treaties on February 2 and June 2. Zsuzsa Frisnyák, *A magyarországi közlekedés krónikája 1750–2000*. (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 2001), 197–198.

¹⁴ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. Summary report on the wartime... Chapter Traction. 74-95.



Picture 3. Dombóvár station after German air strike, 1944. (Fortepan, No. 15595)

Depo	Number of locomotives	Wreckage or lay aside without repair	In repair	In service on the lines	In service at stations
Pécs	34	8	11	14	1
Nagykanizsa	39	6	2	29	2
Dombóvár	56	10	9	35	2
Kaposvár	36	12	10	13	1
Bátaszék	20		3	16	1
Barcs	2	1			1
Total	187	37	35	107	8

Chart 2. Steam locomotives in June 1945.¹⁵

62 steam locomotives, 102 passenger carriages, 34 baggage-wagons, and 387 freight wagons vanished or were destroyed, most of which were driven to the west by the retreating German and Hungarian forces. Many vehicles were destroyed on the line between two stations, or on the sidelines of a station, in order to obstruct rail traffic and slow down the

¹⁵ See previous footnote. The additional locomotive in the chart may be either an error, or the result of instant modification that escaped the notice of the compiler. From the locomotive depot Pécs two steam locomotives were transited and five locos arrived.

Soviet advance. Immediately after combat ceased, railwaymen began to repair the damaged cars, wagons, and locomotives. During the first six weeks of the railway development competition referred to above, 139 steam locomotives, 239 passenger cars, 483 closed freight wagons, and 770 opened freight wagons were rebuilt in the Pécs directorate.¹⁶

At the end of the period under study, 246 steam locomotives and 12 railcars were in use in South Transdanubia, 19-19 per cent of the locomotives and railcars of MÁV were in use on the directorate's network.¹⁷ The increasing number of locomotives was a result of locomotive buying: Hungary bought 513 American war-locomotives – these were the USATC S 160 type locomotives – from the US Army's surplus and they arrived in Hungary from May 1947.¹⁸ Out of these engines, 63 were transferred to the directorate until the end of 1948.

In those years, railway traffic relied on steam energy, and therefore coal and water were essential for the network's operation. As already mentioned, the water supply system was eventually but sometimes only provisionally restored. On the other hand, the coal supply remained irregular until October 1947 due to insufficient coal-mining, transportation problems, the enormously increased coal demands of reconstruction work, compensation payments as well domestic heating needs. Furthermore, due to wartime exploitation, the quantity, as well as the quality of coal was reduced.¹⁹ Every year, the coal supply from August to December decreased, so in the last days of the year train depots had enough coal for only a day, or less. After the shortages of the winter months, April signalled an increase in the coal supply at least until the end of the summer.

Hungary's best coal mines were near Pécs, even so, as on all of the network, train services were intermittent from October 16, 1945, to January 17, 1946.²⁰ Traffic was chaotic even on the main lines; only the relief trains at Christmas and some governmental

¹⁶ Naturally, not all of the rebuilt vehicles returned to the directorate, many of them were transferred to other directorates.

¹⁷ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, December 1948.

¹⁸ István Mezei, ed., *A magyar vasút krónikája a XX. században*. (Budapest: MÁV ZRt, 2009), 169. Each locomotive cost between ten and twenty thousand US dollars, depending on technical conditions and the fuel system. Prof. Csiba József's presentation on 3rd National Railway-History Conference, 21th April 2017, Debrecen.

¹⁹ Gyula Erdmann and Iván Pető, *Dokumentumok a magyar szénbányászat történetéből, 1945–1949*. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1975), V–XIII.

²⁰ Coal mines were in Pécs, Nagymányok, Komló and Szászvár.

trains ran in these three months.²¹ At the same time, the anthracite from the Mecsek mountains was not suitable for locomotives' boilers, it had to be mixed with lignite. Before the war, MÁV's standard coal had 4,800 calories per kilogram, but after the war, the railways had to be satisfied with an average calorific value of 3,800 calories per kilogram – the calorific value was typically even lower. Because of these issues, the railwaymen in the Pécs directorate also complained just as in the other directorates; however, in Southern Transdanubia, the coal supply was better than in other regions, especially the Szeged and Debrecen directorates. The next chart illustrates how important the quality of the coal was and the location of the anthracite mines. Railways use many indicators to calculate the efficiency of their traffic. One of these is the burden-ton-kilometer indicator, which shows how much coal is needed to move a hundred tons' burden (vehicle and freight or passengers) for one kilometer. Due to the increased heating needs highlighted above, from October to March, coal consumption differences always ran higher than 10 per cent. In the hard winter of 1946/1947, the locomotives of the regional directorate used 20 per cent less coal than the average.

Kg coal for 100 burdenton-kilometer	1938		1946		1947		1948	
	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs
January	14,57	13,84	23,64	21,20	20,19	15,97	14,86	13,05
February	12,55	12,42	23,75	19,06	22,11	17,57	13,50	12,53
March	12,06	12,22	21,11	16,36	16,47	12,02	14,03	12,14
April	11,82	12,26	17,77	13,70	12,91	10,48	12,25	10,82
May	11,07	10,93	16,84	13,12	11,77	10,16	11,28	10,01
June	10,52	10,62	15,39	12,53	11,69	10,40	10,82	9,38
July	10,29	10,15	15,30	12,67	11,56	10,22	11,02	9,87
August	9,92	9,48	15,08	12,94	11,80	10,42	10,38	8,99
September	10,17	9,83	14,83	11,91	11,89	11,18	10,59	9,12
October	10,55	10,24	15,24	12,70	12,43	11,56	11,05	9,64
November	11,64	11,36	17,23	13,98	13,09	11,93	12,01	10,61
December	11,93*	11,97	16,84	13,58	13,75	12,21	13,85	12,12

Chart 3. Coal-using efficiency: coal consumption for moving 100 tons one kilometer.

* December 1937.

²¹ "Szénhiány miatt országosan vonatforgalmi korlátozások lesznek" Új Dunántúl, October 14, 1945, 2. For the causes of the lack of coal, see: Gergely Péterffy, "A vasúti közlekedés újraindításának nehézségei a II. világháború után. Pályaállapot – járműpark – szénhelyzet." in *Trauma és válság a századfordulón*, ed. Béla Bartók (Eger: Líceum, 2015) 13–17.

As the chart illustrates, coal consumption in the depots of the Pécs directorate was slightly better than the national average before the war, but after the war, the difference grew significantly, primarily in the first two years.

Despite the improved coal consumption, other factors broke down the expected capacity. General technical failure or, in rare situations, a lack of water or coal stopped some trains. In 1938, there were altogether 20 occasions of failure in the Pécs directorate's – ten per cent of the total network – with 230,000 train kilometers per case. Eight years later, every fourth train broke down on the Pécs network, with a much shorter distance than the total. In the following years, the figures improved, while in the last year of the time period under study the number of breakdowns fell to 18 per cent.

The above-mentioned duality clearly represents the complexity of railway services, which are influenced by many factors. The close proximity of a quality coal source did not guarantee a better service; besides, the technical dependability of the rolling stock remained less than the network's average – presumably, the demanding geographical environment could have been responsible for this.

	1938		1946		1947		1948	
	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side	Pécs	Country-side
Case	20	202	75	292	72	349	56	305
Distance between two case (1000 trainkm / case)	230	177	41,54	58,92	95,94	128,96	134,32	187,22

Chart 4. Breakdowns of locomotives.

The passenger and freight wagons were also a vital issue. Due to the lack of passenger carriages, the daily one train pair put into service often occurred impossible, so, closed freight wagons doubled up as passenger cars. As the ministry and the head directorate foresaw that the commandeered vehicles would not be returned in the short term, orders were given to make the freight vehicles more comfortable with small modifications, such as benches, doors, smaller windows, heating stoves in wintertime, and oil or electric lamps.²²

Until the end of the war in Hungary, railway traffic depended on how many vehicles the Russian military administration could spare. On many lines, just the one train ran, on other lines a service was available only every other day. In the middle of April 1945, the

²² Béla Pálmány, ed., *Dokumentumok a magyar közlekedés történetéből (1945–1949)*. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1981), 279–280.

Russian administration relinquished command back to the regional directorate; however, the carriages had to be claimed from the Russian military administration.²³ The patchy wagon park was further reduced by Russian military commanders, therefore no trains ran along the Dombóvár–Veszprém branch line in the summer of 1945, due Russian troops' unprompted actions in the vicinity of Veszprém.

The Pécs directorate required 150 closed and 200 open-freight wagons for domestic traffic in the first summer – in order to satisfy the demands of the coal mines. Due to these vehicle shortages, it was often the case that the railway directorate had to work with whatever was at hand. Besides from May 22, the Pécs Directorate had supply their wagons to the Budapest–Pécs line. Despite their largesse only eight cars in total could be gathered for the purpose of forming this important passenger train.

Types of carriages	Total	From these were		
		Available	Repairable	Wreckage
Passenger cars	124	107	12	5
Baggage cars	34	33	1	
Closed freight	969	889	22	58
Opened freight	1551	1483	42	26
Flat-wagon	461	449	10	2
Tank-wagon	142	135	7	
Total	3281	3096	94	91

Chart 5. Carriages of the Pécs directorate, June 1945.

The lack of passenger cars and closed freight wagons was an ongoing challenge, yet as the country's economic development continued, the difficulties eased, although the lack of rolling stock continued to have an impact over the following decades. MÁV had lost 79 per cent of its carriage park due to war, or the Soviet's and other allied troops' arbitrary actions. Years before the conflict reached Hungary, Berlin had begun the removal of vehicles from the Hungarian railways in exchange for German wagons or rolling stock from the occupied territories, to take effect on Hungarian economy and policy. As a result, MÁV lost control of its wagons, while having to lease cars from the German railways. When the allied troops occupied Hungary, the German army and the far-right Hungarian administration gave the order for the plundering of Hungary; the loot included industrial

²³ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. Summary report on the wartime... 51–73. General Kossov, in the name of Allied Control Committee gave back the command on the railway network to the Hungarian government on 22nd October. „Az orosz hatóságok magyar kezelésbe adták át az Államvasutakat” *Népszava*, October 24, 1945, 3.

assets, raw materials, food, works of art, and others – all to be primarily transported on the railways.²⁴ Some of the remaining vehicles were requisitioned by the Russians, first for transporting troops and supplies, then to bring POWs and “trophies” back to the Soviet-Union – a significant number of these trains remained outside Hungary. One of the aims of the “Head for the Railways!” project was to repair 500 locomotives and 10,000 freight wagons by the end of 1945, but only 6,477 freight cars and 571 passenger cars had been restored within seven months.²⁵

In the warm season, the trains without windows, doors, and heating systems were not an issue, but in autumn and winter they became one. It proved not just an inconvenience, it was life-threatening. Freezing to death on a journey of a few hours was a distinct possibility, especially if someone travelled alone and fell asleep.²⁶ The management ordered for the openings to be covered so as to protect the passengers from the cold. Even so, in some cases, MÁV had to deploy open freight wagons due to the lack of passenger trains, and in these, the nearly 250 km Kaposvár to Budapest journey took four days in November 1945.²⁷ One year later, the heated and windowed carriages were removed from the branch line trains to replace them – foreign passenger cars were put in use to provide at least a certain amount of comfort on the more important mainline passenger trains.²⁸

Although MÁV tried to repair the passenger cars as well, the exiguous number of them, the infrequent traffic, and the large number of passengers resulted in the cars’ being overcrowded, which led to them being damaged. In January 1946, László Varga, the president of MÁV, saw the condition of the passenger cars: “If the public protect the cars from dilapidation, there will be no obstacle to putting in service windowed and heated, albeit for the time being wood-seated, cars.”²⁹ But the expected improvement did not come to fruition. As the vice chairman Károly Kopasz stated in August:

²⁴ MNL OL. M-KS. 283/32. 69. German organization of the Hungarian economy. Backward Summary. Chapter Transport. 61–72.

²⁵ György Gál, ed., *A vasút újjáépítése. Tanulmányok a Magyar Államvasút másfél éves helyreállítási munkáiról* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946), 120, 122, and 124. From Dombóvár railway junction Bulgarian troops engaged 26 restored wagons, so the railwaymen were uncertain about the restoration. PIL-SZKL. 1/6. 135. Secretary of the Council of Trade-Union, Isván Kossa’s letter to the Minister of Trade and Transport, Ernő Gerő, 21st June 1945.

²⁶ Károly Martinkó, “Gyalog a sínek mentén,” *Vasút* 37, no. 6 (1988): 2., Lajos Szabó, “Egy mozdonyvezető visszaemlékezései,” in: *Vasúthistória Évkönyv 1994* (Budapest: MÁV, 1994), 408. Articles from the newspaper Új-Dunántúl, October 7, 1945, 4, and October 11, 1946, 2.

²⁷ Jenő Madaras, *Hamvaszószerda* (Budapest: Mikes, 1993), 171–173.

²⁸ MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, October 1946. Advice of the Department of Traction.

²⁹ László Varga, „Helyzetkép az Államvasutakról”, *Közlekedési Közöny* 2, no. 2 (1946): 9–10.

The State Railways has spent a lot of money on repairing and maintaining its passenger cars. Unfortunately, the people did not take care of the vehicles, moreover, ruined them on purpose. The windows are broken, sometimes disassembled, even the seats are carried off. Our duty is to protect the benefits of the railways, and therefore the crew have to prevent any kind of vandalism in any possible way – even calling the police forces.³⁰

In spite of all this, the condition of the passenger carriages had improved by 1947 but was still far from pre-war standards. In these times, the modified closed freight wagons used for passenger transport became nicknamed “calf-chair cars.”³¹

The freight wagons were in a better state of repair due to the governmental instancy for repairing them. Another significant factor in this process was that after the summer of 1946 Russian military transports were reduced, meaning non-military traffic could increase, even though it was only the Kaposvár–Siófok branch line had some occasional freight traffic beside the main lines. As the consolidation improved, a salvage program started. Many carriages were lying near the tracks and were cannibalized by residents, or by railwaymen trying to keep other vehicles in service. This project started at the end of the summer of 1946, but there is only data from the regional directorate from April to October 1948, when three moving repair teams delivered 407 closed and 204 opened freight wagons to the repair garages and 239 wagons were dismantled.³²

As discussed above, the chaos and general disorder at the war’s end had resulted in Hungary’s rolling stock being dispersed far and wide, and it soon became an imperative for railway companies to recover their locomotives, railcars, and wagons as soon. To start this process – which was a primary requisite for every railway company in Europe – Hungary had to first regain its sovereignty from the Allied Control Commission in September 1947, when the peace treaty took effect. Two months later in Belgrade, the Central European states’ railway companies held a conference centered on the challenges faced by the railways, at which they assigned a contract for the method of use and returned foreign railway vehicles. The first known transport of foreign carriages from the Pécs directorate departed in January 1948 – 297 wrecked cars were exchanged for 55 MÁV wagons. In

³⁰ Károly Kopasz’s presentation on the First National Railway Congress. Special issue of Bulletin of Transport, August 11, 1946. 12. The minister had to mention – on the debate of the budget of the Ministry of Transport in February 27, 1947 – the critical conditions of the trains. “We have to carry an enormous mass of passengers with very few vehicles, thus the public have to miss the minimal criterion of the civilized travel. On the other hand, this kind of surfeit of cars is also not good for the carriages.” *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*. Volume VI. 1952, 72.

³¹ These calf-chair cars remained in service until the beginning of the 1960s.

³² MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, from April to October 1948.

total that year 457 Italian, 300 German, 25 Belgian, 19 Austrian, 17 Czechoslovakian, 5 Romanian, 2 Polish, and 2 Bulgarian wagons were returned by the regional directorate, while 231 cars arrived from Italy, most of which were freight wagons.

These positive steps still did not satisfy the rising demand for freight wagons, thus the directorate had to reduce turnaround time (time of loading, delivering, and unloading a wagon, measured in days). As the president of MÁV explained at the first National Railway Congress in August 1946, the railway and the customers together had to halve turnaround times from 14.5 to 7 days: the only way to double the number of railcars available, or the fragile economic situation which had begun to stabilize would collapse. Two years later, even this seven-day period looked insufficient, and it had to be reduced to four and a half days to satisfy demand.³³

Traffic

As the front moved toward, the first “scout-trains” ran along the lines, to check the tracks, sidings, bridges, and water-supply systems. The first passenger trains were given permission by the Soviet Military Command on December 19, 1944, to run on some important and useable lines, one pair of trains on each line. Trains operated with only one class, so fares were the same throughout. People were informed about the train schedules in local newspapers, of course these “timetables” served only as indicators; in reality, civilian traffic depended on military needs and possibilities. As the local reconstruction began making progress, further trains came into service until March 1945. However, for a few weeks, due to the German counter attack and then the Soviet attack, no passenger trains could operate. Non-military traffic recommenced at the beginning of April, when a three-way system came into effect. On the more important lines, one train-pair ran a day, on others – generally branch lines – every second day had a train-pair and finally on many lines traffic was still suspended.³⁴ At the end of April, the lines in the proximity of Kaposvár

³³ Imre Oláh, “A forgalmi szolgálat erőpróbája: az őszi forgalom,” *Közlekedési Közöny* 4, no. 50 (1948): 614–615.

³⁴ “Itt az új vasúti menetrend,” *Új Dunántúl*, April 19, 1945, 1.

re-opened and once again the two chief towns of the county were connected with a direct train.³⁵

Due to the infrequent rail services traffic, freight trains were also used for passenger travel which is why conductors were ordered to collect fares. However, these fares could not keep pace with the world's highest inflation, neither with the weekly stated tariff-coefficients; for example, in May 1946 a ticket cost 5,220 times more than a fare had in August 1936.³⁶ Often on a longer trip, people were unable to buy a return ticket because of the hyperinflation, which caused prices to rise on an hourly basis. As a result, from June, the state railways introduced the round-trip fare to earn some money – in these months, the train-jumper was a general phenomenon. As the economy stabilized, and the new currency, the Forint, was introduced, a new fare was announced on August 1. In the prevailing economic environment it was too expensive due to the low level of wages, and therefore, because of the new fares, passenger turnover decreased. To halt this, the ministry cut the fares by twenty per cent and - in contrast to the previously planned strict monetary program – new reductions were introduced on a social basis.

Due to the infrequency of rail traffic, many did not have any other opportunity to travel other than on a freight train. The government announced a number of limitations from May 1945 so as to reduce the number of travellers – especially on main lines – because of the railway's insufficient capacity. The constraints were in force until the end of 1946. These restrictions depended on the cooperation of the police, as three or four conductors could not enforce them against hundreds of embittered, desperate men travelling to look for food in order to feed their families. The police were also required to stop passengers travelling on the roofs of the wagons, or holding onto doors, acts which caused numerous accidents. Transport police were stationed in December 1945 at Pécs's railway station. In the first months they served only at the station and the neighboring area and did not venture onto the trains to protect the passengers and cargoes from robbery and pillage, a common occurrence during the first two years.³⁷ These violent incidents were

³⁵ „Közvetlen vonatjáratot létesítettek Pécs-Kaposvár között Szigetváron át,” *Új Dunántúl*, June 9, 1945, 3.

³⁶ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational record, May 1946. It is important to note that hyperinflation caused a profoundly serious deficit to MÁV. The value of the Hungarian money, the Pengő was so low that it could not be used, thus dollar or jewels replaced money, and in many cases barter remained the only means of exchange. As people departed from Budapest or bigger towns to find food, the non value-follower railway fare was not meant a real expense.

³⁷ „Pécsett megalakult a vasúti rendőrség,” *Új Dunántúl*, November 18, 1945, 1. For travelling on roof see: „A részleges vasúti személyforgalom sikeres visszaállítását követően sor kerül a teherdarabáru-forgalom felvételére is,” *Új Dunántúl*, January 12, 1946, 2.

often instigated by Soviet soldiers, but sometimes the perpetrators were Hungarians in Soviet uniforms. In addition to the police force, a guardian battalion of the 1st Engineer Division barracked next to the main railway stations of Dombóvár, Nagykanizsa, and Pécs, in order to protect important coal stocks and certain freight trains carrying coal and foodstuffs.³⁸

Railway traffic was greatly curtailed in the autumn of 1945 due to a lack of coal, even the workmen's trains were suspended for some days, the long-distance trains provided an intermittent service for months, although a new schedule took effect on November 1, when the use of the Moscow time zone was ended – it had been in force from the middle of August, so railwaymen, passengers, and customers had had to add two hours to the local time.³⁹ During these months, governmental messenger trains ran between Budapest and the county towns. These trains comprised only one or two carriages and were tasked with delivering important governmental documents, mail, official delegates, and if there was available space, civilians could buy tickets at half-price.

As the coal supply increased, more and more trains were added to the schedules, which were published on posters, noticeboards, and in journals; the first railway guide, a short, simplified brochure, was published for the new winter schedule on November 1, 1946.

Railway traffic restarted on the branch lines as well, although only with one daily train pair except for Pécs, where two train pairs ran on the neighboring lines. Despite the schedules including considerable reserve times, delays often occurred because the branch line trains carried freight not just passenger cars. For that very reason, the mainline trains observed connections from branch lines and thus were also delayed. When fast trains appeared, initially between Pécs and Nagykanizsa connecting the region's two important railway junctions, the 148 km trip took six and a half hours. Between the capital and Pécs, express railcar was placed in service which provided rapid and comfortable travel for the time. In contrast to the passenger trains' nine- or ten- hour-long journeys, the express completed the 245-km-long distance in five hours.

³⁸ 1st Engineer Division, 1st railway regiment, 3rd battalion's 1st and 3rd squadron served on the railway's network of southwest Hungary.

³⁹ "November 1-től ismét közép-európai időszámítás lesz a magyar vasutakon," Új Dunántúl, October 31, 1945, 4.

After the stabilization of the monetary system and the resultant overturning of the twenty per cent fare reduction, revenues began to increase due also to some political meetings, not only in Budapest, but in the larger towns as well.⁴⁰

By the end of 1946, coal supplies were at a critical level again but this time trains were not cancelled, even though the winter of 1946–1947 was extremely cold. Snowstorms were followed by a late snowfall in March, leading to the suspension of traffic on many lines for five to eight days; with the ensuing thaw, floods damaged many bridges and railroad embankments, and once again the long-distance trains between Budapest and Pécs had to be diverted. On top of this, the tight passenger carriage park and locomotive park reached its end of capacity, it was not able to run more passenger trains. Public security also improved as the reconstruction continued.

On May 4, 1947, the first schedule which was not dissimilar to the pre-war peacetime timetables came into effect. Twice a week the Budapest–Trieste–Venice international express ran on the southern railway line of Lake Balaton. One was able to travel in sleeping cars on night trains, and some Balaton-bound trains were equipped with restaurant wagons too. In addition, direct cars ran to Keszthely and Harkányfürdő, two popular spa towns. Most of the domestic trains ran exclusively with third-class carriages, but fast trains had second class as well, only the Budapest–Trieste express had first class. With the new timetable, not only were the comfort and the quality of services improved, but the number of trains also increased.

One year later, on May 9, 1948, the first peacetime timetable took effect, although the priorities had changed slightly. The primary goal was to serve the transport needs of workers and students. The quality of travel was also greater, more restaurant or buffet cars could be found in long-distance trains. In the summer, many special “bath trains” arrived at the stations around Lake Balaton, and some direct trains to Harkányfürdő, too. Besides these special domestic trains, twenty-two Czechoslovakian – Čedok-trains – seasonal train pairs ran through Hungary headed to the shores of the Adriatic Sea and back.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For example, the 3rd Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party or the biggest party, the Independent Smallholder Parties organized Peasant-days in September 1946. Both were held in Budapest, where the parties fought it out over significant fare discounts and charter trains. MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, September 1946.

⁴¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Summary report on the output of the regional directorate in 1948. Between Budapest and Lake Balaton, 93 train-pairs ran in 1948, without the relief trains at the significant feasts. On other relations 36 train-pairs ran in the summer. A special train of workers of the Weiss Manfréd Industry arrived to Siófok in August 1948: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6846>

Until the summer of 1946, basic foodstuffs, coal, and some international aid deliveries constituted freight traffic, and general trade only restarted after the economic stabilization. As mentioned earlier, the autumnal harvest caused serious transport problems, especially sugar-beet delivery. Besides, from October 1946 significant quantities of iron ore arrived from Yugoslavia, which demonstrated that international transport had reopened in the region. Freight traffic only ran on the main lines between the county towns, or between the capital and the larger towns. Transport required an excessive amount of time, the average speed of freight trains was terribly slow, and due to the lack of locomotives the mainline fast freight trains had multiple duties, coupling and decoupling wagons at the stations. From autumn 1946, to achieve faster freight deliveries light collector freight trains came into use gradually on the mainlines. These swifter train collected the wagons from smaller sections at railway junctions so the fast freight trains had only to stop at the junctions.

The rebuilding of former economic routes accelerated in 1947. For example, from May the Yugoslavian-Czechoslovakian iron ore trade continued through Hungary, just as it had done before the war.

As freight traffic improved month after month, some railwaymen could not resist the temptation to steal from the delivered goods to gain some extra income and feed their families. MÁV issued severe directives to protect the goods, and its own fair name, but even so, until December, the compensation that the railway had to pay for the stolen items continued to increase.⁴²

Besides, it was not only the quantity of delivered goods that was growing, but its structure also changed. For example, new fruits and vegetables appeared within consignments in the region. It is a matter for further research to determine whether this change was due to the economic and agrarian reforms, or was caused by changes in the region's population, or maybe both.⁴³ Nevertheless, the volume of transported products in autumn 1947 was greater than the autumn prior to the war's outbreak, and this growth continued the following year. This positive tendency emerged not only as a result of

⁴² MÁV Arch. PG. 2. Minutes of the meetings of regional directorate's leadership, October and December 1947. To achieve some extra incomings legally, most of the railwaymen took on some additional work. Especially in summer, e.g., taking part in the harvest or other agricultural-work, others undertook manual work; employment depended on personal qualifications and possibilities within the neighborhood. That is why most tried to take holidays in the harvest-period. If they could not, they often reported sick. To prevent this, the regional directorate employed a patient visitor status with tighter affirmation for four months in summer of 1948 the check and filter out fakers.

⁴³ MÁV Arch. PG. 2. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, September 1947.

the war compensation and reconstruction program, but also the state’s “three-year plan” program.

Year	Transported paying passengers		
	MÁV Total	Directorate Pécs	
	passenger	passenger	%
June-Dec 1945	38 707 128	3 995 324	10,32
1946	80 811 421	4 759 566	5,89
1947	91 515 843	12 192 660	13,32
1948	113 701 501	9 815 366	8,63
Total	324 735 893	30 762 916	9,47

Chart 6. Number and rate of transported paying passengers.

Period	Train-kilometers			Compound-ton-kilometers			Freight-ton-kilometers		
	Total	Pécs	%	Total	Pécs	%	Total	Pécs	%
June-Dec 1945	6 931 237	1 247 010	17,99	3 077 549	434 584	14,12	916 901	124 397	13,56
1946	17 604 354	2 572 311	14,61	6 752 013	805 182	11,92	2 074 764	251 067	12,1
1947	22 457 629	4 482 342	19,95	10 720 043	1 506 692	14,05	3 237 282	484 888	14,97
1948	40 739 410	6 278 446	15,41	14 022 093	1 917 346	13,67	4 053 331	580 558	14,32

Chart 7. Traffic-output of the Pécs directorate.⁴⁴

The charts above display an antinomic status of the regional directorate’s traffic performance. The two high-points of recorded paying passengers are 1946 and 1947. The negative downturn in 1946 was probably caused by those seeking food and taking trips from the capital city and larger industrial towns – the problem of passengers’ registration and the round-trip tickets causing a modifier effect on statistics. The following year’s outstanding data was a result of summer vacation travelling, especially the cheap, low-cost trips organized by trade unions. It is also probable that migration both outward, i.e., Hungarian Germans’ deportation from the country, and inward, i.e., the Czechoslovakian Hungarians’ banishment into Hungary had an increasing effect on the number of passengers. Poor peasant families from the east in 1945–1946, and expelled Hungarians from Czechoslovakia in 1947–1948 arrived in the region’s wealthy Swabian villages. The fall in

⁴⁴ Train-kilometers: travelled distance of all trains. Compound-ton-kilometers: product arithmetical of train-kilometers and total weight of trains. Freight-ton-kilometers: product arithmetical of transported freight and the distance of delivery.

passengers in the last year is puzzling, perhaps the nascent conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet camp and the interior political changes this caused were to blame.

The high rate of kilometers in 1945 was a result of Russian military shipments, the establishment of a filter camp in Kaposvár for those returning from the west, and the trains from and to Budapest which were diverted. Two years later, the deportations and immigration had an upward effect which can be explained by the fact that the region traded mainly agricultural products that generated freight traffic during the July–November period, while industrial activity trailed behind the national average, despite the importance of the coal in Mecsek. Although important international railway lines ran through the directorate, international traffic could be considered low on the whole.

Moreover, we have to mention the surprising changes in the population that significantly transformed the demographics of South Transdanubia. Only the railroad could be used to cope with the population change, which caused a serious social shock after the war. The regional directorate was affected by all three organized settlements. Before that, however, a considerable number of the Seklers expelled from Moldavia (Romania) to Bácska in 1941–1942, and fleeing from the Yugoslavian partisans in autumn 1944, found shelter in the counties of Baranya and Tolna.⁴⁵

In the summer of 1945, the government organized a settlement campaign for the overpopulated eastern regions, and consequently poor peasant families were moved to Hungarian Germans' houses, in most cases – as a collective punishment – the new householders were set upon by the indigenous families.⁴⁶ These domestic settlement processes in Southeast Transdanubia continued until the autumn of 1946, when the settlement campaign was stopped in order to reserve places for the persecuted Czechoslovakian Hungarians. Until December 4, 1946, 16,297 families were given new land in the three counties, which translates into nearly 62,000 people moving into the region within one and a half years, assuming that an average family constituted 3,8 members.⁴⁷

The deportation of Hungarian Germans started on January 19, 1946, when the first train with 40 wagons departed from Budaörs, a village near the capital. Approximately a thousand people were transported by train and, according to the Hungarian Telegraph Bureau's report, 30 people were accommodated in bunk beds in cattle cars. The depor-

⁴⁵ Bácska: a fertile agricultural area in northern Serbia, between the rivers of Danube and Tisza.

⁴⁶ Besides other neighboring countries, 172,000 people fled to Hungary from Rumania, USSR, and Yugoslavia. We still do not know the influence of these movements upon the regional directorate's territory. Tamás Stark, "Háborús népességmozgás a Kárpát-medencében (1938–1948)," in *KSH Történelmi Demográfiai Évkönyve 2001* (Budapest: KSH Népegyetudományi Kutatóintézet, 2001), 389–410.

⁴⁷ Miklós Füzes, *Forgószeél*, (Pécs: Baranya Megyei Levéltár, 1990) 40–43.

tation of the South Transdanubian Germans began in April in Tolna county, while in Baranya county in late May. The Swabian transports were halted by the Americans in mid-June, but in November six more trains left for Germany: in total 23,058 people were transported to West Germany from the region. The last stage was commenced by the Hungarian-Soviet convention of July 17, 1947, when Moscow accepted 50,000 Germans in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. The first train left on August 19, via Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸ Until June 1948, 63,794 people were relocated from the territory of the directorate to the Anglo-Saxon and the Soviet zones of Germany.⁴⁹

According to the few MÁV records, there were eight relocation trains from Baranya county and one from Szekszárd in September 1947. According to the schedules, the trains arrived via Budapest at the Hungarian-Czechoslovakian border station in Szob. From Szekszárd the journey lasted 17 hours, but from Mohács or the southernmost point of the country, Magyarbóly, the trip took 24 hours.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, only in March-May 1948 was data on the deportations issued for the directorate meetings, on the basis of which can be concluded that a total of 12 trains were sent into Germany, two of them from Somogy county and the rest from Tolna.⁵¹

In addition, the railwaymen were also hit hard by the Danubian Swabians' deportations. The chief of Bátaszék station wrote a letter in August 1947 asking the director for help, reporting a severe problem triggered by the restarted deportations. Approximately two hundred railwaymen in the vicinity were threatened with deportation due to their ancestry. As a result of the ongoing tension, the outcome of the completed settlement processes and their insecurity, a proper service could not be provided by them.⁵²

Besides Hungary, Yugoslavia was also trying to get rid of its German nationals. Those who could not flee in the winter of 1944, were later put onto trains which set off via Hungary to Germany, without food, water, and medical supplies. The number of trains is unknown, as well as how many were received by the US authorities in Germany

⁴⁸ MNL OL. M-KS. 274. 10. 35. Report by István Friss on the negotiations in Prague, August 14, 1947. István Friss, member of the Hungarian Communist Party leadership negotiated between 7–12 August, 1947, with the members of Czechoslovakian government about the crossing conditions of the deported Swabians' trains.

⁴⁹ Füzes, *Forgószél*, 48–50.

Baranya: in 1946: 70,66 people, in 1947: 4,189 people and in 1948: 9,264 people.

Tolna: in 1946: 15,992 people, in 1947: 8,853 people and in 1948: 13,431 people.

Somogy: in 1948: 4,999 people.

⁵⁰ MÁV Arch. DNR. Document No. 113241/1947.

⁵¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, from March to May 1948.

⁵² MNL OL. Z 1523. 69. Minutes of the conference of regional directors, August 11, 1947.

and how many of them were turned back. During the long weeks of travelling, epidemics decimated the “passengers” due to the harsh conditions. It happened in the case of the refusal of the Yugoslavian train from Germany, which was waiting from January 25 to February 10, 1946, at the Murakeresztúr border station, with 1,378 people on board waiting to be handed over to the Yugoslavian railways. During this time, 78 died of enteritis.⁵³

The reasons for the disintegration in post-war Czechoslovakia was caused by nationality, so the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was also declared to be collectively guilty just as the Sudeten Germans. The Anglo-Saxon powers did not support Prague’s unilateral deportation plan for the expulsion of the Hungarian minority, calling on the two governments to negotiate. Budapest was forced to conclude the Hungarian-Slovakian Population Exchange Convention on February 27, 1946, according to which, based on Katalin Vadkerty’s account, a total of 89,660 people was moved to Hungary between April 1947 and December 1948, while 37,885 Slovaks arrived in Slovakia from Hungary.⁵⁴

Until the end of 1948, 2,583 families in 118 villages of Baranya county, 366 families in 24 settlements in Somogy county, and 1,624 families in 53 villages of Tolna county were resettled.⁵⁵ Trains carrying Hungarians from Czechoslovakian territory were recorded for the first time only in the October and November monthly reports in 1947, but only in passing, as a reason for the increase in traffic. On March 21, 1948, however, there were special trains from Baranya and Tolna commandeered to carry the deported Hungarians to their conference in Pécs.⁵⁶ In the final year, the arrival of a total of 147 settler trains was recorded in the annual summary of the regional directorate.⁵⁷

⁵³ MÁV Arch. DNR. Document No. 2546/1946.

⁵⁴ Katalin Vadkerty, *A kitelepítéstől a reszlovakizációig* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2007), 304–305. The first train of deported Hungarians arrived to Szob, border of Hungary, see: <http://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6388>

⁵⁵ Füzes, *Forgászél*, 40–43.

⁵⁶ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, March 1948.

⁵⁷ See footnote no. 41. Only the report of November 1948 contains specific data, according to which the 17 settler-trains received 715 wagons, which brought 365 members of 87 families with their belongings (furniture, agricultural machines, and motorcycles) and with 829 cattle, domesticated animals. The following month, a train with 35 wagons left from Pécs towards Czechoslovakia with Hungarian Slovaks on board.



**Picture 4. Deported Hungarians cooking in front of their wagons, 1947
(Fortepan, No. 32734)**

Summary

This paper has attempted to present the MÁV Regional Directorate Pécs's solutions to different problems and their effectiveness in the years after World War II. The data itself, of course, is unable to reflect the complexity of the processes, and can only be understood if it is viewed against the political, economic, and social circumstances. A national railroad is a huge cobweb, if there is a problem at one end it has implications for the railroad and the railwaymen at the other end. It is not disputed that the reconstruction was conducted in an atmosphere of desperation on the part of the railroads, while railwaymen were affected by redundancies – just as other public servants –, in which 193 officers, 574 auxiliary officers, and 606 ushers were removed from the regional directorate. There were great deprivations that impacted the railwaymen's ability to do their work: not only were food supplies insufficient for their families but the serious shortage of clothing and footwear throughout these years also impacted morale.

In presenting the above processes, this paper illustrated the difficulties faced by the railwaymen and how these issues were gradually overcome allowing for the continuous improvement in rail transport in South Transdanubia, which ultimately helped reintegrate the region into the country's economic circulation.

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HIM HL. = Institute and Museum of Military History. Archive of Military History.

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**Migrations of Hungarian Peasants into and out of a Village at
the Borders of Budapest. Social and Economic Changes in Vecsés in the
Early 20th Century**

Pro&Contra

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Abstract

The Hungarian capital, Budapest, witnessed unprecedented development during the rapid modernization period of the Dual Monarchy. It was also the time period when Austria-Hungary underwent the greatest loss of people in its history to international migration. This paper attempts to analyze this phenomenon in relation to a small town in the vicinity of Budapest. Vecsés had been a peasant village but after the abolition of serfdom and the beginnings of modernization, it lost its previous function and transformed into a residential village. The paper analyzes the growth of the population and the changes in the occupational structure, and briefly examines issues of land distribution in Vecsés based on a variety of archival records. The research demonstrates how at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries a typical agricultural village was utterly transformed by the influence of modernization, the urbanization of the capital city, and domestic and international migration.

Keywords: modernization, urbanization, migration, occupational structure

Migration has been a constant in human history.¹ Individuals and groups seeking better conditions or fleeing war and other threats have been making long journeys since the beginning of human history. Migration is motivated by several economic and social factors. These are widely known as “push” and “pull” factors.

Factors explaining movements of people across geopolitical boundaries, with push factors being aspects of homelands that motivate nationals to emigrate, and pull factors being aspects of other countries that attract immigrants.²

These factors are not confined to the phenomenon of international migration but are also influences driving domestic migration. This essay examines issues related to

¹ The author’s research was supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 („Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University”).

² Carl L. Bankston III, *Encyclopedia of American Immigration* (Pasadena: Salem Press, 2010), 872.

domestic and international migration from the viewpoint of Vecsés, a peasant village situated on the border of the Hungarian capital city, Budapest.³

Vecsés is a rather small town which lies between the Hungarian capital, Budapest, and Liszt Ferenc International Airport. It has a population a little above 20 thousand. Vecsés is considered a Schwab town, although not more than 5 per cent of the population identifies as of German origin.⁴ Despite being small in numbers, the Schwab minority has a strong identity – as they have had since their settlement in the area.

The town used to be a part of the dominium of Gödöllő, which belonged to the Grassalkovichs, one of Hungary's greatest aristocratic families. The inhabitants abandoned the area during the Ottoman era, and it soon became a so called "puszta," a barren land with no inhabitants. Resettlement in Hungary began under the rule of Queen Marie Theresa and was continued under her son, King Joseph II. Vecsés was resettled in the last wave of these relocations, in 1786, by Duke Antal Grassalkovich. According to the resettlement document, 50 serf families received a part of land in the territory that is today's Vecsés. The resettlement contract is the founding document of the village, and provides a glimpse at the composition of the population at the time.⁵ Some of the family names among the signatories can be found in several archival records throughout the 19th century.

Budapest became the capital of Hungary in 1873, when three towns: Buda, Pest, and Óbuda ("ancient Buda") were officially united, creating a 19th-century metropolis. This marked the beginning of an extraordinary period of economic growth. In fact, Budapest was one of the fastest growing capital cities in Europe at the end of the 19th century, with

³ This essay is based on some of my previous works, published in Hungarian over the past few years, such as Eszter Rakita, "A foglalkozásszerkezet elemzésének lehetőségei és néhány aspektusa egy funkciót váltó településen a modernizáció korában," in *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, eds. Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kőmíves (Budapest, 2014), 307–317, and Eszter Rakita, "Társadalmi változások a főváros vonzásában. A funkcióváltás és forrásai," in *Vidéki élet és vidéki társadalom Magyarországon*, eds. József Pap, Árpád Tóth and Tibor Valuch (Budapest, 2016). 443–453. Here I synthesize the most important points of said papers and set directions for the following stages of the research.

⁴ According to the 2010 state census.

⁵ The document was published by several authors, most importantly by Veronika Müller, "Vecsés újjátelepítése és reformkori fejlődése 1686–1847" [The Resettlement and Reform Era Development of Vecsés] in *Vecsés története* [History of Vecsés], ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1984), 67–69.

an immigration rate remarkable even in European terms.⁶ The growing economy, and the proliferation of industry required more and more labor. As a result, swathes of the rural population started migrating towards Budapest from the Hungarian countryside, and they populated not only the capital, but also many of the surrounding settlements. The urbanization of Budapest created a situation in which the smaller settlements close to the capital lost their economic independence and became so called residential villages, a process which will be explained later in this essay.

As mentioned before, and many times in Hungarian academic literature,⁷ in the last decades of the 19th century Hungary witnessed two forms of migration: domestic migration, which primarily consisted of people moving from rural areas to the capital or its vicinity; and international migration, in which a large proportion of the peasantry sailed to the United States in the hope of better wages and living conditions. As seen in both cases, it was those in the rural areas that were most affected by migration. Leaving poverty behind and seeking better conditions for their families was another common feature of these migrations. The abolition of serfdom in 1848 (de facto in 1853) did provide most of the peasantry with lands of their own but did not solve the problem of unequal distribution.⁸ As a consequence of this, the uneven system of Hungarian land ownership created a huge surplus of unskilled labor. People began migrating towards big cities such as Szeged, Debrecen, Miskolc, and, of course, most towards Budapest. But unfortunately, the growing but fractionally developed Hungarian industry was not ready to utilize most of this workforce. So, many of these people needed to find an industry that could provide them with jobs. They found it in America, but most of them did not want to move to the USA for good, rather their aim was to remain there long enough to save enough, and then to return to Hungary.⁹ Usually, their plan was to buy land or start their own business

⁶ Gábor Gyáni, “Budapest története [History of Budapest] 1873–1945,” in *Budapest története a kezdetektől 1945-ig* [History of Budapest from the Beginning to 1945], eds. Vera Bácskai, Gábor Gyáni and András Kubinyi (Budapest, 2000), 142. Gyáni also deals with the modernization of Budapest, and the changes of the city’s identity in Gábor Gyáni, *Budapest – túl jön és rosszon. A nagyvárosi múlt mint tapasztalat* [Budapest through Good and Bad. The Metropolitan Past as an Experience] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2008), 59–85.

⁷ For example, in László Katus, *Hungary in the Dual Monarchy 1867–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 161–164.

⁸ John Kosa, “A Century of Hungarian Emigration 1850–1950,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 16, no. 4 (December 1957): 503.

⁹ See Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 232.; and also Julianna Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide. 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, (New York: 2000), 5–11.

in Hungary something they could never do with Hungarian wages. As Béla Várdy, one of the foremost chroniclers of Hungarian-American history, puts it:

They were driven from their homeland by economic privation and drawn to the United States by the economic opportunities of a burgeoning industrial society. Most of them were young males who came as temporary guest workers with the intention of returning to their homeland and becoming well-to-do farmers.¹⁰

This research explores both domestic and international migration with regard to Vecsés utilizing a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. Due to the space constraints of the article genre, a complete account of the research undertaken is not possible here; therefore, this paper will discuss the domestic issues of migration and the way it impacted on the settlement under study. Particular focus will be placed on the relationship between domestic migration caused by modernization and the social-economic transformation of Vecsés. The questions of international migration will be explored in a later essay.

According to the terminology established by Ferenc Erdei, a noted sociologist in 20th-century Hungary, Vecsés belonged among the settlements in the surroundings of Budapest that were referred to as agglomerative villages.¹¹ This meant that the village was located within the sphere of the capital, and served as a place for those working in the industry in Budapest, such as factories, foundries, and public transport to live. Archival sources seem to confirm this: more than 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Vecsés worked in Budapest, at such companies as Ganz,¹² Hangya,¹³ Beszkárt,¹⁴ and the Hungarian National Railways (MÁV).¹⁵

¹⁰ Steven Béla Várdy, *Magyarok az Újvilágban* [Hungarians in the New World] (Budapest, 2004), 744. The book is only available in Hungarian, but it includes a 30-page summary in English at the end of the volume.

¹¹ Ferenc Erdei, *Magyar falu* [Hungarian Village] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1940). 120–129.

¹² Ganz Works was the biggest group of companies in 19th-century Budapest. Operating between 1844 and 1949, the company built tramcars, constructed electric railways, power plants, etc.

¹³ Hangya (or ‘Ant’) was a Consumer and Sales Association in the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary between 1898 and 1945.

¹⁴ BSzKRt, or Beszkárt was the predecessor of the Budapest Transport Company (BKV). It operated between 1922 and 1949.

¹⁵ Edit Sin, “Vecsés a főváros vonzásában 1900–1945,” in *Vecsés története* [The History of Vecsés], ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1986), 134–136.

Population and Structure of Occupation in Vecsés

Vecsés had been a self-supporting serf village until the abolition of serfdom. But after 1849/1853, due to the growth of Budapest, Vecsés gradually lost its economic independence. While during most of the 19th century, the population of the village both lived and worked in the same place, at the turn of the century, most worked in Budapest, commuting every day. During this time, Vecsés witnessed a huge growth in population due to domestic labor migration, as illustrated in figure 1. The data is taken from the 10-year censuses of 1850 to 1930. The reason this particular time frame was selected is that 1850 was the year when a census was conducted in Hungary, and 1930 is the closest to the years 1934–1936, from which I found archival records for this research.

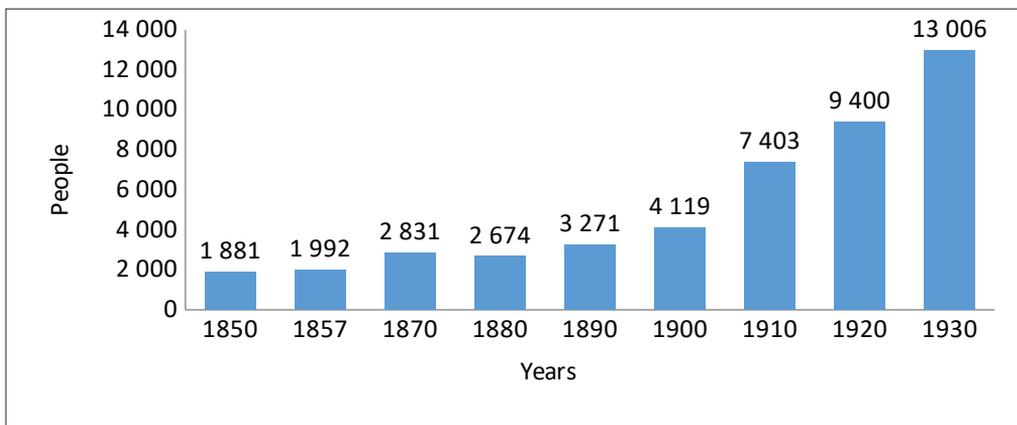


Figure 1: The Population of Vecsés from 1850 to 1930¹⁶

As the chart illustrates, the population of Vecsés displayed slow but steady growth until 1900, with only one small setback in the 1880s due to a cholera epidemic.¹⁷ From 1900, the population grew more significantly every decade. The figures show a moderate shift between 1910 and 1920 which could be as a result of World War One and migration into the United States. What is striking is that during the course of just a century, the population grew five times in size.

¹⁶ All the data were derived from the official censuses of Hungary. Népszámlálási digitális adattár (NéDA). Magyarországi népszámlálások és mikrocenzusok 1784–1996. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, <http://www.konyvtar.ksh.hu/neda>.

¹⁷ Edit Sin, “Az 1848-as forradalomtól a századfordulóig,” [From the 1848 Revolution to the Turn of the Century] in *Vecsés története*, ed. Ernő Lakatos (Vecsés, 1986), 120.

It may be worth noting that during this period, the population of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County was constantly growing. According to the state censuses, 472,744 people lived in the county in 1857. This figure almost doubled by the turn of the century: the census in 1900 showed 825,779 people. The population passed one million in 1910, and in 1930 the county had a headcount of 1,366,089.

In the following figures, the occupational structure of Vecsés from 1900 to 1930 is illustrated. The timeframe is narrower here since Hungarian census data has only included occupational information by settlement since 1900. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, only four of the most important occupation categories: agriculture, industry, commerce, and transport are included. In agriculture, all individuals who were involved in some ways in tillage, livestock breeding, or any other occupation in connection with land cultivation are counted. Within the industry category, people of all craftsmanship are included. The commerce category comprises those working in the field of finance. Finally, the transport category is for those whose jobs involved the fields of passenger and freight transportation, but mostly those who were employed by one of the big transport companies of the time, MÁV and Beszkárt. There is a fifth category, in which all other occupations were included, such as intellectuals (teachers, doctors, etc.), and pensioners. This is called the miscellaneous category, as they are not significant from the standpoint of this research. Servants were completely excluded as the nature of their occupation is in question even among statisticians and demographers, so it is hard to determine whether they belong to the agricultural or industrial category.¹⁸ This is not clearly marked in the censuses and the archival records either.

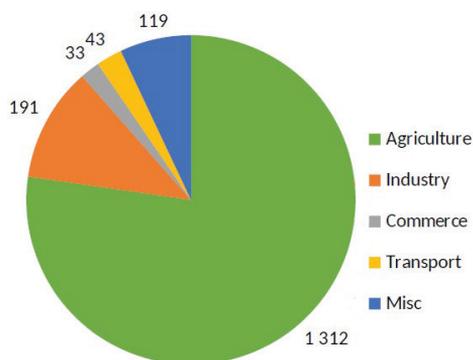


Figure 2: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1900¹⁹

¹⁸ Servants often worked on the estates of noble landowners, but also often for urban middle class families, as wage earners.

¹⁹ Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1900, Vol 1. 198–199.

In 1900, the number of wage-earners was 1,698. (Compare this to the population of the time, which was 4,119.) More than 75 percent of the 1,698, 1,312 people were occupied in the agriculture of the village. Of course, this did not only refer to the landholders, but everyone whose work was related in one way or another to farming: farmhands and shepherds. The other categories of occupation add up to less than one fourth of the wage earners, which means the vast majority of the inhabitants depended on agriculture in some form. This demonstrates that Vecsés remained close to the model of a typical 19th-century agricultural village.

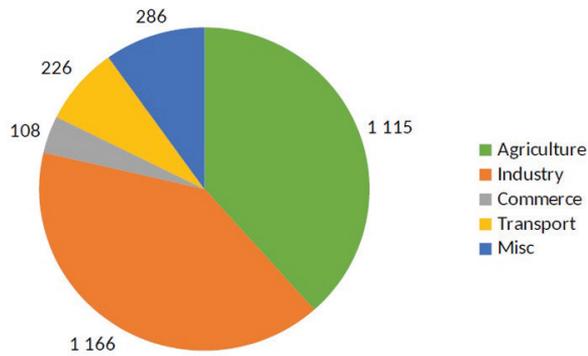


Figure 3: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1910²⁰

Figure 3 illustrates the occupational structure of Vecsés a decade later. What is interesting here is that the numbers working in industry overtook those of agriculture. Of the 2,901 wage earners, only 1,115 were working in agriculture, so almost 200 less than ten years earlier. The population saw a more than 30 percent growth from 4,119 to 7,403, but these newcomers worked in occupations other than agriculture, and the numbers appear to also indicate that existing agricultural workers began looking for employment in areas that paid better.

²⁰ Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1910, Vol 1. 193–194.

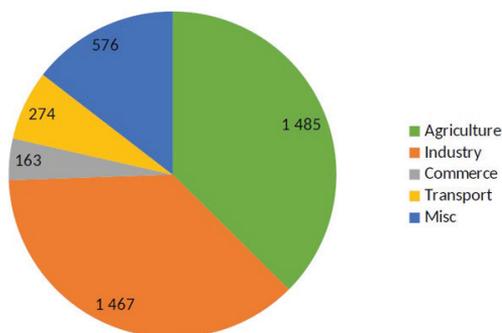


Figure 4: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1920²¹

By 1920 the number of wage earners had grown by more than 1,000. Workers in agriculture and industry were growing at a very similar rate, 1,485 and 1,467, respectively. Beside this, the numbers employed in commerce and transport also grew, and the miscellaneous group more than doubled in ten years.

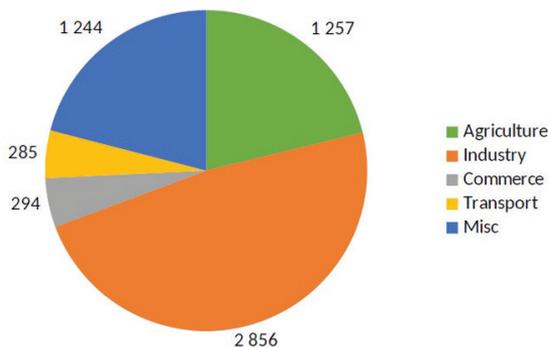


Figure 5: The Occupational Structure of Vecsés in 1930²²

Finally, by 1930 almost half of the wage earners in Vecsés (2,856 from a total of 5,945) were employed in the industrial category. The numbers in agriculture fell from its 1920 high, whereas commerce and transport both showed slight growth, and industrial

²¹ Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1920, Vol 1. 94–95.

²² Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1930, Vol 2. 56–57.

workers almost doubled. The figures of the miscellaneous category also rocketed, more than doubling from the 1920 census. This was also a result of rapid modernization. Over the 30 years under analysis, once rare professions, such as teachers, entrepreneurs, or people living off annuities, became much more common, which explains the significant growth in the miscellaneous occupational category. These professions are not highlighted here because they do not belong within the four classic categories at the center of the current research.

To put the results into context, it is instructive to examine the figures for Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County. The sources are also the official census records, but the time frame is somewhat broader as the censuses contained occupation data in the counties from earlier, 1870. The figure below illustrates the main trends in the occupational structure of the county from 1900 to 1930 but also provides an interesting glimpse at the previous three decades.

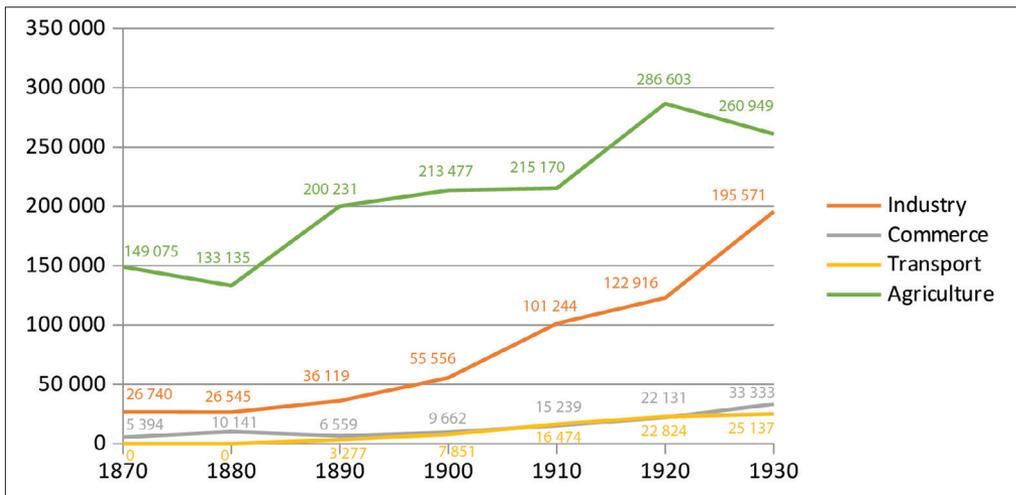


Figure 6: The Main Trends in the Occupational Structure of PPSK County 1870–1930²³

²³ The data was gathered from the following sources: Census of the Countries of the Hungarian Crown in 1870; 1881; 1891; 1900; 1910; 1920; 1930.

As can be gleaned from the figure, all four categories increased in numerical size, although in different intensities. For example, in 1870, a little less than 150,000 people were employed in the agricultural sector, a little more than 26 thousand in industry, and 5,394 people in commerce. At this time, so few people were working in transportation that it was not included as a category in the census data. It first appeared in the census of 1880, still together with commerce, and finally in 1890 it became an independent category. In the following decades, the number of people working in transport doubled every ten years. Almost the same phenomenon occurred in industry. As is clear, the number of industrial workers increased from 36,119 to 55,556 in the period between 1890 and 1900, and it rose to 101,244 by 1910.

1920 saw a huge growth in agriculture: the number working in this area was 215,170 in 1910, and 286,603 in 1920. This increase was most significant among women. Their numbers rose by more than 50 thousand in ten years. The reason for this may have been the outbreak of the First World War. Women who were forced to replace their husbands in the workplace no longer referred to themselves as dependents, rather they professed themselves as wage-earners so they were counted as such in the 1920 census. This was not noticeably present in the case of Vecsés.

Proportionally, the vast majority of working people in the county, more than 81 per cent, was employed in agriculture in 1870. This decreased to around 50 per cent by 1930. The other three categories, on the other hand, showed steady and sometimes rapid growth. By 1930, the number of people employed in industry had reached 40 per cent on par with those working in agriculture.

These figures demonstrate how modernization saw industry, commerce, and transport replace agriculture as the primary source of employment particularly in the vicinity of Budapest. The figures also indicate that Vecsés, the population of which had swollen due to domestic migration, transformed from a once typical peasant village into one inhabited by individuals working in the city.²⁴ Typically, a settlement has to maintain three major functions for its inhabitants. The first is the living function, which means that a settlement provides a place of living for its people. The second is the work function. This means that the settlement provides opportunities to make a living. Finally, the third is the recreation function, meaning that the settlement needs to provide opportunities for its residents to spend their leisure time. Based on these features, the secondary literature

²⁴ The topic is widely discussed in both international and Hungarian literature. One of the best-known books on this is József Tóth, *Általános társadalomföldrajz* [General Social Geography] (Budapest: Dialóg-Campus, 2002), 423–425.

distinguishes between basic and non-basic settlements. Basic settlements provide only these three functions. Non-basic ones, on the other hand, are capable of functioning on higher levels as its infrastructure is developed enough to do so.²⁵

The main problem in Vecsés was that during the time period examined above, the village slowly lost its work function. This is demonstrated in the continuous decrease in the number of people who were employed in agriculture. It meant that a large part of the peasantry, who used to make a living from their own land, could no longer do so. In this sense then, modernization forced these people to leave their families' traditional profession, and seek work in factories, transport companies and other sectors of Hungarian industry. The growth in the village's population through domestic migration was not as a result of the fertility of Vecsés' soil, but simply because of its close proximity to the capital where the higher paying jobs were to be found.

Land Ownership and Occupation as Reflected in Archival Records

A more complete picture of society during this period is provided by the archival records. The primary sources include cadastral documents, land registers,²⁶ feudal court papers,²⁷ tax books, and other documents. The timeframe here encompasses nearly a century, and is limited by the availability of the archival records.

Research on the cadastral documents of Vecsés began in 2011. Archival records of cadastral documents ideally consist of registers, maps, and personal data sheets. In Hungary, the documents were produced during one of the three cadastral surveys organized by the government land administration. A cadaster is a comprehensive land record in which all the real estate and property of a town are recorded and measured in cadastral jugers. There were several cadastral surveys in Hungary, the first in the 1850s, the second was started in 1875 and lasted 10 years. The result of the latter was the most important and, for a long time, the official land registry for the whole county.²⁸ There were more surveys conducted in the 20th century. The records referred to in this paper were produced between 1934 and 1936.

²⁵ John W. Alexander, "The Basic-Nonbasic Concept of Urban Economic Functions," *Economic Geography* 30, no. 3 (1954): 246–261.

²⁶ National Archives of Hungary – Pest County Archives (Hereinafter referred to as MNL PML) 165/c. 246th volume: The Land Registers of Vecsés from 1841.

²⁷ MNL PML V. 165/a. 83rd box: The Documents of the Feudal Court of Vecsés from 1768–1867.

²⁸ István Hegedűs, Péter Várkonyi, "A történelmi Magyarország statisztikai adatforrásai" [Statistical Data Sources of the Historic Hungary] in *Módszertani tanulmányok. Az EKF Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskolájának kiadványai*, ed. Dániel Ballabás. (Eger, 2013), 46–47.

As soon became apparent, there were many problems with researching these records. Cadastral documents have always been controversial among historians due to the difficulties in processing the vast amount of data they typically contain and the little-to-no success that can be reached by working with them.²⁹ Also, on many occasions, the records no longer exist, a countrywide phenomenon.³⁰ The Vecsés records were no exception as most had been destroyed during the course of the 20th century. Some were burnt in World War II or the Revolution of 1956, others were damaged beyond repair when the archive building was flooded. According to the archivists of Pest County, there were occasions when some of the documents were “recycled:” the cadastral records were made on very fine quality paper with only one side written on, so it was only logical for some people to write on the reverse side instead of purchasing new sheets of paper, resulting in the disappearance of many documents.³¹ Consequently, at the time of the research there were only 281 cadastral records available in the Archives, from the time period 1934–1936,³² instead of the more than 5,000 pieces that should have been there. While these, to some degree, were useful in the first period of the research they proved insufficient to be the basis of the work. In any case, all the data from the records was entered into the MS Access database for further use. The cadastral papers, however few there were, provided invaluable information on several of the inhabitants. This data was compared with the official landholder statistics published by the Hungarian Royal Central Statistical Office.³³

The following tables are an attempt to show the differences between the results from the two sources mentioned. The goal with these is to provide a glimpse into the proportion of the missing data of the cadastral records.

²⁹ László Ambrus, “A kataszteri iratok kutatásának, a birtokszerkezet megismerésének problémáiról,” [Problems of Researching Cadastral Records and Discovering Land Structure] in *Tavaszi Szél / Spring Wind 2014*, eds. Imre Csiszár and Péter Miklós Kőmives (Budapest, 2014), 12–19.

³⁰ József Kozári, “Gyöngyös város földbirtokviszonyai a kataszteri telekkönyvek tükrében” [Land Ownership in Gyöngyös as Reflected in the Cadastral Land Registers] in *Studia Miskolcinsensia* 3. (Miskolc, 1999.) 158.

³¹ This information was provided by the archivists at MNL PML.

³² MNL PML V. 1160. C/d. 2–4. Cadastral documents of Vecsés.

³³ Magyarország földbirtokviszonyai az 1935. évben. [Relations of Landholding in Hungary in the year 1935] (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1937)

Territory Category (jugerum) ³⁴	Number of Properties
Under 1 cadastral juger	2,978
1–5	550
5–50	234
50–100	2
100–500	2
500–1000	1
1000–3000	1
3000–	0
Total	3,768

Table 1: Summary of the Data from the Official Statistics of Land Ownership³⁵

As illustrated in Table 1, most privately-owned lands, almost 3,000 properties, fell into the smallest category, those under 1 cadastral juger. These were commonly called “törpebirtok” (“dwarf lands”). This was the result of a process begun in 1786, the year the village was repopulated. The process is referred to as “birtokaprózódás” (“land fragmentation”) in the secondary literature. When a serf father died, he usually divided his property among his (male) children, who then also left their land divided among their children, and so on. This resulted in the gradual deterioration of the soil. A snapshot of this process can be observed in the data above. 550 pieces of land were between one and five jugers, and 234 were between five and fifty. Two of the lots were between 50 and 100, and another two between 100 and 500 jugers. There was only one property larger than 1,000 cadastral jugers. It was more precisely 1,541 cadastral jugers (2,191.4 acres), and it was large enough to be called “nagybirtok” (“large estate”). There was no land greater in size than 3,000 jugers (4266,3 acres) in the village.

This was the structure of land ownership in Vecsés, in 1935. It would be of interest to examine the same figures based on the extremely sparse cadastral documents. The following table shows the findings of the records in a similar distribution as Table 1. But due to the lack of records, it is not complete.

³⁴ Jugerum (in Hungarian: hold) was the official unit of territory in Hungary. Cadastral juger was introduced in 1875 and was counted as 5,755 square meters (1,42 acres).

³⁵ MNL PML V. 1202. Volumes 2 to 7: The Major Tax Book of Vecsés from 1935.

Territory Category (jugerum)	Number of Properties
Under 1 cadastral juger	692
1–5	13
5–10	5
10–50	0
50–100	0
100–500	0
500–1000	0
1000–	0
Total:	710

Table 2: Summary of the Data from the Cadastral Records of Vecsés from 1934–1936

As seen in Table 2, less than 19% of the total number of lots (710 of 3,768) could be recovered compared to the official statistics. Of the 710 pieces of land recovered from the sources, 692, were dwarf lands, 13 were between 1 and 5 cadastral jugers, and five were larger than 5 jugers but smaller than 10. The 710 lots covered 181.56 jugers (258.2 acres), which is extremely low: only 2,3% of the 7,753 cadastral jugers (1,1025.5 acres) of land surrounding the village. This data shows best how big the problem is with the cadastral documents, and why they are not suitable for reconstructing how the society of the village looked in the first part of the 20th century.

A much more useful group of records is the Major Tax Book (*Adófőkönyv*) from 1935.³⁶ This comprises six thick volumes and is stored in the Pest County Archives. The data from these volumes was also uploaded into the database and analyzed with SPSS Statistics analysis software. The correlations were then analyzed and visualized in tables and diagrams, some of which are included here.

This part of the research was conducted based on a sample of 3,300 people whose data was derived from the tax books. Of the 3,300 individuals, 2,225 paid taxes. There is more information on these individuals in the records, such as place of living, occupation, religion, etc. The most important of these is the occupational data as it shows in what field these people made a living. For 1,076 individuals there is no data in the records except for their names.

The following section shows a few of the conclusions that could be made based on this data, and how they confirm the claims made above concerning Vecsés and the way the town lost some of its traditional functions.

³⁶ MNL PML V. 1202. Volumes 2 to 7: The Major Tax Book of Vecsés from 1935.

Firstly, the most telling data is the difference between overall taxes and land taxes paid by the people of Vecsés. The following bar chart shows the results.

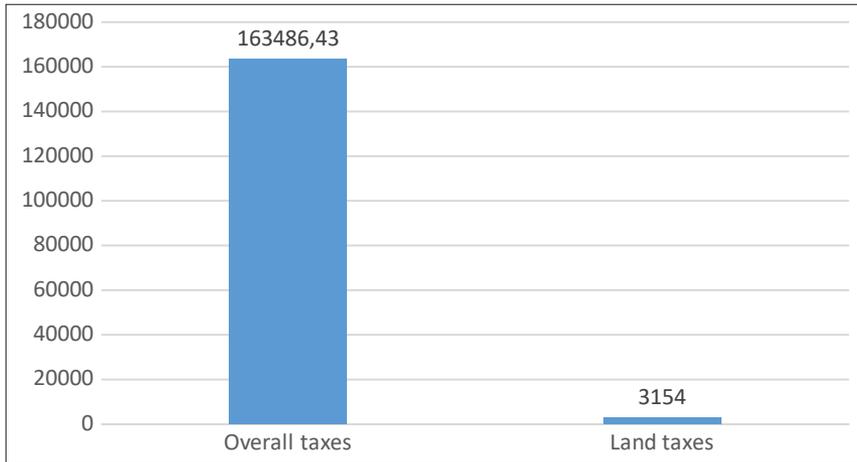


Figure 7: Overall and Land Tax Data of the Main Tax Book of 1935

Overall taxes were 163,486.43 pengős.³⁷ Only 1,92% of this, 3,154 pengős were land taxes, which, again, demonstrates that agriculture had lost its importance as a means of making a living. The amounts paid were generally small: the 3,154 pengős were collected from a total of 1,289 people. The next table contains some interesting figures concerning land taxes.

Category (pengő)	Number of people
0,1–1	810
1,1–2	386
2,1–5	61
5,1–10	16
10,1–25	9
25,1–100	6
Above 100	1
Total	1,289

Table 3: The Distribution of Land Tax Amounts

³⁷ The Hungarian pengő was the official currency of Hungary from 1927 to 1946. It replaced the korona (crown), which was essentially in use from 1892, when it replaced the forint. The Forint was restored as the official currency in 1946.

Table 3 shows that the vast majority (810) of those paying land taxes paid less than one pengő. 386 people paid between 1.1 and 2 pengős, and 61 paid 2.1 to 5. More than 4 pengős were paid in only 32 cases, of which only one occurred where more than 100 was paid. It is interesting that one person paid almost half of the land taxes of the sample that year, 1,482.12 pengős, and it was not even a person. This outstanding amount was paid by Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) after the lands the institution owned in the surroundings of Vecsés.

There is one more aspect of the Tax Book that is worth looking at. Of the 2,225 taxpayers from the sample, we know the occupation of 60 per cent. The following table shows the occupational structure of the village based on the Tax Book. The four main categories mentioned in the first part of the essay are italicized.

Occupation	Occurrence	%
<i>Agriculture</i>	92	4,1
<i>Industry</i>	723	32,5
<i>Transport</i>	171	7,7
<i>Commerce</i>	65	2,9
Post	14	0,6
Law enforcement	36	1,6
Healthcare	7	0,3
State employees	102	4,6
Education	1	0,1
Artists	8	0,4
Self employed	13	0,6
Church	1	0,1
Misc	101	4,5
Unknown	891	40
Total	2,225	100

Table 4: The Share of Occupations in Vecsés in 1935 based on the Major Tax Book

Similarly to the census data from 1930, the Tax Book sample also shows a majority of people working in industry. If the numbers of those employed in industry (723), transport (171), and commerce (65) are added together, it shows that more than 43 per cent of individuals were working in these fields, while only 92 (4,1%) still worked in agriculture.

Closing Remarks and Future Research

So, what can be taken away from these results? Most importantly, it seems clear that the majority of the village's inhabitants worked in the industrial field. What could be gleaned from the census data in the first part of the essay was confirmed by the tax records. Agriculture was no longer a major source of income for the population of Vecsés. The constant flow of people moving into the settlement found employment in the factories and other companies of Budapest, and not in the economy of Vecsés, which led to the village losing one of the important functions. As a result, Vecsés became a residential village, and the majority of its inhabitants lived there but their work did not tie them there. It should be noted that the sudden fall in agricultural employees between 1930 and 1935 is due to the incompleteness of the records. It is safe to say that the actual proportion of industrial and agricultural workers must have been roughly the same in the years 1930 and 1935.

In conclusion, modernization, along with constant domestic labor migration, had a great impact on the economic, social, and demographic structure of the village. The once typical peasant settlement changed beyond measure at the turn of the century and owning a piece of land was marginalized as a source of income. Agriculture soon became ineffective at making a living. This was typical in the surroundings of large cities such as Budapest although not unique to them as it was also extremely hard to do so in the less developed, mostly northern and eastern parts of the country. This was the reason for the enormous emigration occurring in the same period, most importantly to the United States. Vecsés (and Pest County) was not among the areas most affected by emigration,³⁸ nevertheless, hundreds went to the USA from the county, and Vecsés was not immune either.

The first swarm aims for Pest, trying to find livelihood in the newly built factories. But there is not enough bread there either, so they wander further to find work. This is how some head for the mines and some overseas, to the New World of America.³⁹

Although several people did migrate to the United States to find better opportunities, international migration did not have the same impact on Vecsés as domestic migration did. But in order to build a detailed picture of the social processes that occurred, it is required as part of the research. This work is already in progress and a detailed analysis on the opportunities for social mobility, the social networks, and the careers of the emigrated "Vecsésians" based on Hungarian and American primary sources will be undertaken as a part of the author's further research.

³⁸ Erdmann Doane Beynon, "Migrations of Hungarian Peasants," *Geographical Review* 27, no. 2 (April 1937): 227.

³⁹ János Bilkei Gorzó, *Vecsés nagyközség története* [The History of Vecsés] 1786–1936 (Vecsés, 1937), 67.

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PÉTER VÁRKONYI

Kompolt: The Divided Village

Pro&Contra

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Abstract

This paper discusses the history of modern Kompolt, a village in Heves County, Hungary, with a particular emphasis on its social history. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the society of Kompolt was split along a number of lines and this essay focuses on just one of these divisions, that between the Swabians and the Hungarians.

Keywords: Kompolt, identity, Germans, Swabians, Hungarians, society, 19th century, 20th century, immigrants, agriculture, material culture, demography

I. Hypothesis

This research is grounded in a paradox.¹ Swabians have resided in Kompolt since the 18th century but the statistics (for example, the censuses from the 20th century) do not reflect this ethnic reality.

A detailed examination can uncover the reason for this paradox. The settlement structure and material culture (on maps and in today's reality), the sources of Kompolt's economic status, and the self-reflections of the inhabitants (in the personal papers of both the town's inhabitants and the community, as well as in interviews) confirm that Kompolt was indeed divided in the past and thus brings the accuracy of the censuses into question. It is this disconnect between reality and bureaucracy that supplies the hypothesis for this study.

The prime importance of source criticism for the result of censuses is widely accepted. The methodology² adopted, the assessors and external factors (politics³, indiscretion⁴, and beliefs⁵) affect the comparability and usability of the results of censuses. So, if an accurate view of the ethnic situation of the country is to be provided, a micro-level approach is needed. Failing this, some groups in society and certain of their characteristics will remain hidden.

¹ The author's first research was supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 ("Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University").

² Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001), 145, 151.

³ Ágnes Deák, *Polgári átalakulás és neoabszolútizmus 1849–1867* (Budapest, Kossuth, 2009), 23.

⁴ Zoltán Czibulka and Ervin Heinz and Miklós Lakatos, *A magyarországi németek kitelepítése és az 1941. évi népszámlálás* (Budapest, KSH, 2004).

⁵ Györgyi Bindorffer, "»nem tudok jól magyarul, de magyar vagyok, mert ez én hazám...« A hazaszeretet megnyilvánulása Véménden," *Kisebbségkutatás* 13, no. 4 (2004): 556.

Of course, it is impossible to examine every settlement in this way, but case studies can be conducted so as to illuminate the issues. The main purpose of this text is to attempt to present a method for complex and micro-level research which can help clarify and amend the results of the censuses so that a more realistic picture of this town's society can be provided.

II. The method

First, it is important to examine the society of Kompolt from several viewpoints: the origins of the inhabitants, the distinctiveness of the material culture, the economic status, the connections between identity and demography, as well as the distribution of power.

The diversity of the characteristics outlined above requires a variety of methods as well. The information of the inhabitants' origins come from archival sources and collective memory (elements of which have been collected through structured and unstructured interviews). The examination of the material culture in Kompolt is limited because there was no complete, unique folk culture in the village. Only the built culture and burial habits display peculiarities. The fieldwork undertaken has been supported and informed by the literature.

The statistical analysis of the cadastres gives a detailed image of the inhabitants' economic status and can clarify the connections between identity and demography. The protocols of the council refer to the traditions of power distribution in Kompolt.

This method is a mixture of the etic and emic approach. The contemporary definitions and categories are applied but because of the temporal distance and the historical perspective the fashioned concept is necessarily distorted.⁶

III. Origin

After a rich medieval history, Kompolt was abandoned in the 16th century due to the Ottoman conquest. 200 years later, a Hungarian nobleman, Antal Grassalkovich, bought the estate, had a castle built in the Baroque style and repopulated the settlement.⁷ In 1754 several Hungarian and 100 German-speaking families moved into the village. These two distinct ethnic groups became the basis of the division which determined the modern history of Kompolt.⁸

⁶ Henriett Primecz, "Étikus és émikus kultúrakutatások," in *Vezetéstudomány* 37, Spec. issue no. 2 (2006): 4–5.

⁷ Gábor Éble, *A debreceni uradalom birtoklási története* (Budapest: Pfeifer Ferdinánd, 1909), 17.

⁸ Imre Soós, *Héves megye közsései 1867-ig* (Eger, 1975), 331.

The Hungarians became agricultural laborers on the estate, the Swabians (this is the accepted name of the German-speaking settlers) were self-employed farmers with their own land. Grassalkovich's idea was to establish two social factions—a group of low-paid laborers and a group of experienced farmers. Thanks to the Swabians, the more developed Western-European work culture was adopted in the village. Due to it being advantageous for the Grassalkovich manor, the new settlers from German territory received tax exemptions and building materials.⁹

German-speaking people were settled by Grassalkovich in a neighboring village (Aldebrő) too, but in this region of the country there were no large areas inhabited by German settlers. The personal and economic connections between Kompolt and Aldebrő were not significant.¹⁰

According to the written sources, the German-speaking settlers came from Alsace. The oral tradition refers to multiple areas and years. The village elders refer to three waves, 1754 being the year of the third wave.¹¹ During his research, Ferenc Bakó attempted to determine the dates of earlier arrivals. According to him, there were two colonizations, in 1747 and 1748. According to oral tradition, the areas from which they originated were Köln and The Low Countries.¹²

The origin of the Hungarian settlers is unknown. This phenomenon also shows that roots were more important for the German-speaking community and for the researchers, the Hungarians were relegated to the background from the very beginning. As a result of the Hungarians' existential deficit, the society of Kompolt remained divided in multiple ways up until the middle of the 20th century.

⁹ Imre Soós, *Az egri egyházmegyei plébániák történetének áttekintése* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1985), 227.

¹⁰ According to the registers and the memoirs.

¹¹ From an interview with Mrs. I. H.

¹² Ferenc Bakó, "Kompolt község településnéprajzának vázlatja," in *Néprajzi tanulmányok Ikvai Nándor emlékére I.* (Studio comitatensia 23.), ed. László Novák (Szentendre: Pest Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 1994), 174.

IV. Material Culture

From the perspective of the 21st century, the most outstanding difference between the Hungarians and Swabians in the 19th century was the space allocation in the village. During the time under investigation, Kompolt essentially consisted of two streets and a center. The church and the castle were built in the centre. The houses of the Swabians were built south of the center, the name of which indicates its importance, it was called the “Falu” (meaning “village”). The name suggests that it was the “real” core of Kompolt.¹³ The other street was known as the “Sor” (meaning “line,” because originally there were houses on one side of the street forming a line). The “Sor” was located north of the castle; the houses of the Hungarians were located here.

All public institutions and services were in the “Falu:” the city hall, the school, the community center, the cemetery, the shop, and the tavern. (In 1895 there were four licensed liquor stores in the “Falu.”) Local craftsmen were mostly Swabians too, their workshops were found in the “Falu,” at the angles of its two ends, whereas in the “Sor” there were no services, except for some illegal pubs. Thus, when a resident from the “Sor” wanted to have fun, learn, or arrange a case, he had to go to the “Falu.”

This different financial status led to conspicuous differences in material culture. Sites with 3-4 houses were typical in both streets. According to the ethnographers, this was either because of mistrust or geographical features. But the sites of the Swabians were bigger and wider than those of the Hungarians.¹⁴ They owned their own land, they were self-employed, and every Swabian family had a barn for their crops which was typically opposite the house. The houses in the “Falu” were built of stone with greater comforts (for example, wooden flooring and ceramic stoves).¹⁵

The inhabitants of the “Sor” worked in the manor; they did not need economic buildings, so the sites on the street were narrower. The Hungarians’ houses were built from loam, and were more exposed to the floods of the river Tarna.

Originally, the Swabians lived in the “Falu,” the Hungarians lived in the “Sor.” Over the years some Swabian families fell into poverty, leading to several ethnically heterogeneous marriages. Thanks to these processes, the “Sor” became heterogeneous, but the community of the “Falu” retained its ethnic homogeneity, social mobility, then, was a

¹³ Bakó, “Kompolt község,” 174.

¹⁴ Following my field trips.

¹⁵ Ferenc Bakó, “Párhuzamok és eltérések az Eger környéki magyarság és a nemzetiségek településében, építkezésében,” in *Interetnikus kapcsolatok Északkelet-Magyarországon* (Az 1984 októberében megrendezett konferencia anyaga) eds. Ernő Kunt, József Szabadfalvi, Gyula Viga (Miskolc: Hermann Ottó Múzeum, 1984), 106.

one-way movement.¹⁶ However, the degree of the groups' separation is not clear based on the data of censuses.

Not only was the lifestyle of the residents determined by the described social structure, but so was death. There are many tombstones from this period in the cemetery, but most of the grave markers were erected to commemorate Swabian people. Naturally, the Hungarians also marked the graves of their loved ones, but (because of their poverty) were only able to do so with perishable wooden crosses, a difference with economic roots and not primarily ethnographic. It is noteworthy that all the memories from the past are in one way or another connected to the Swabians.¹⁷

V. Economy

Until the middle of the 20th century, Kompolt was an agricultural settlement. The industrial activity only satisfied the needs of the village. For example, in 1900 the sum of employees of the industrial companies was less than 20, although it grew to 29 in 1910 and 93 in 1920.¹⁸

Most of the inhabitants worked in the primary sector. The most typical crops were cereals, but the villagers also produced tobacco¹⁹ and grapes^{20,21} To obtain an accurate picture of the economic sector, we have to use the land registers, especially the registers of the land tax.²² As part of my research I have applied the land tax register of the year 1887 and 1911. In 1887 Kompolt's area was 4076 jugerums, a figure which did not change until the 1950s.

¹⁶ Vital records at the parish of Kál and cadastres from 1887 and 1911 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives XV-8/a 282. III/1. 1887.; XV-8/a 282. III/1. 1911.

¹⁷ Following my field trips.

¹⁸ *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása*. Szerk. és kiad. A Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Budapest: Atheneum, 1912–1920.) A népesség főbb adatai községek és népesebb puszták, telepek szerint (1912) 184–185.

¹⁹ Bakó, “Párhuzamok,” 109.

²⁰ Erzsébet Löffler, “Adatok az egri filoxeravész történetéhez,” in *Az egri Dobó István Vármúzeum évkönyve XX.*, ed. Sándor Bodó (Eger, 1984), 153.; József Kozári, “Filoxeravész az egri borvidéken,” in *Eszterházy Károly Tanárképző Főiskola Tudományos Közleményei XIX. Tanulmányok a Történettudomány Köréből*, ed. József Nagy (Eger, 1989), 60.

²¹ *A Magyar Korona országainak mezőgazdasági statisztikája I*. A magyar mezőgazdasági statisztika fejlődése és az összeírás főbb eredményei községenként (Budapest, 1897), 286.

²² Cadastres from 1887 and 1911 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives XV-8/a 282. III/1. 1887.; XV-8/a 282. III/1. 1911.)

The historical Kompolt's structure of agriculture differed from the national data.²³ In 1887 half of the farms were less than 1 jugerum, and the total area of these farms was 1% of the total area of Kompolt, but 59% of the land was in the hands of the Lordship of Debrő-Parád, which was the Károlyi estate. (During the 1800s the Károlyi family bought the manor.) At that time only Count Károlyi owned more than 1,000 jugerums in Kompolt.

49% of the landowners owned farmland of between 1 and 50 jugerums. Almost none of the farmers had more than 50 jugerums.

According to the national data in 1895, 25% of the farmers owned less than 1 jugerum. Proportionally, in Kompolt there were fewer farmers with 1-5 and 5-100 jugerums than in the whole country. The proportion of the farms between 100 and 200 jugerums was similar to the national average. After comparing the local and national situation it is clear that the class of middle-sized family farms was non-existent in Kompolt making this village poorer than the national average.

The farmers can be categorized into several groups. As already established, the biggest landowner in the village was the Károlyi family, the count owning 59% of the area. The remaining 41% consisted of areas owned by the local and state authorities (for example, the municipality, the church, the railway company amongst others) and 290 private farms.

the economic structure was marked by ethnic division too. 210 farmers had German and 80 landowners had Hungarian surnames. 79 Hungarians owned less than 2 jugerums, and that was 98.75% of the Hungarian landowners. Eighty of the Swabians had less than 2 jugerums, which was 42.68% of the Swabian farmers. The private farms larger than 5 jugerums were Swabians' without exception and most of the Swabians owned more than 5 jugerums.

In 1887 there were 117 private landowners with a German surname in Kompolt, and they owned 95% of the private land. The richest farmers were Swabians but among the poorest there were Hungarians and Swabians too. The 72 poorest landowners had nothing but "internal" sites (for example, the house and yard). It is especially important to note that the land registers included only those who had any land in Kompolt. If somebody had sites in other settlements, or he was a craftsman, they are not listed in the cadastres of Kompolt; there was also a landless group in the village which is also not included in this source.

²³ Péter Hanák, Ferenc Mucsi, eds. *Magyarország története 7/I. (1890–1918.)* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1978), 300.

The cadastres also allow for research into the quality of the land.²⁴ The soils of the Hungarians were “Gyalog legelő,” which were of the worst quality. It was perhaps based on a customary law (maybe on ethnic basis), but there is no source which could prove this theory. The differences of land quality resulted in significant income differences.

Beyond land cultivation, the breeding of livestock was an important sector of agriculture. Without accurate sources the owners of livestock cannot be determined. According to the cadastres, the richest farmers had pastures. In 1911 there were 293 livestock owners in Kompolt.²⁵ The most valuable farm animals were cows. The number of cows had stagnated, and at the end of the examined period the proportion of current animal breeds was significant. The villagers also bred horses, mainly German breeds.²⁶ The manor had a great herd; moreover, in the 1880s a British stableman worked with the Count’s horses. He was called “Ferenc” Robinson.²⁷ The number of horses and sheep gradually declined but the proportion of pigs increased—this reflected the national trends of the time.²⁸

VI. Identity and Demography

As stated in the introduction, the focus of this paper is on the ethnic division that existed in Kompolt but which was not recorded in the censuses of the time. Although the censuses from the era show that the Swabians were in a minority in Kompolt, and that those same sources suggest continuous assimilation, other documents, community memory, and contemporary experience identify a group who separated themselves from the Hungarians. These people considered themselves Swabians, but declared themselves Hungarian in the censuses.

²⁴ *Heves vármegye adóközségeinek területe és kataszteri tisztajövedelme mívelési áganként és osztályonként.* Az 1909. évi V. T.-cikk alapján végrehajtott kataszteri kiigazítás után (Budapest: Magyar Királyi Állami Nyomda, 1913), 5, 10, 42, 44.

²⁵ *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak állatlétszáma az 1911-ik évi február 28-iki állapot szerint.* Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények. Új sorozat 41. kötet (Budapest, 1913), 378.

²⁶ Bakó, “Kompolt község,” 109.

²⁷ Vital records at the parish of Kál; protocols of the city council 1877–1895 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives V-248/1)

²⁸ Hanák and Mucsi, “*Magyarország története,*” 329.

In conclusion, it is clear that censuses are not adequate for the purpose of determining who was Hungarian and who was Swabian.²⁹

Marriage was one of the markers of this ethnic division. As outlined above, in Kompolt the wealthy families were Swabians. The coordinates of social value were the residence, the financial status, the position, and the surname. A German surname was necessary but not enough to identify someone as a Swabian; money also played a key role in this demarcation. Based on the analysis of marriages, Swabian-Hungarian inter-marriage was rare. Only the poorer Swabian youngsters chose Hungarian partners. This was the reason for the “Falu” remaining ethnically homogeneous in contrast to the “Sor.”

And there is another association. The Swabians’ self-image was positive, generally thinking of themselves as hardworking, intelligent, and open-minded people.³⁰ From the perspective of the “Falu,” the inhabitants of the “Sor” were poor and unschooled. In the light of such attitudes, on the rare occasion of a Swabian-Hungarian marriage, the Hungarian spouse always came from another settlements and not from Kompolt’s “Sor.”³¹ This territorial and social segregation constructed a barrier between the two groups. During the interviews, the informants mentioned that it would be highly unusual for a boy to go courting to the other part of the village than.

Regarding modernization, Kompolt’s demographic trends reflected those of the nation (number of children etc.).³²

²⁹ *Az 1890-iki népszámlálás főbb eredményei vármegyék és községek szerint* Szerk. Jekelfalussy József (Budapest: Pesti Kvny., 1892), 218–219.; *A Magyar Korona országainak 1900. évi népszámlálása* Szerk. és kiad. A Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Budapest: Pesti Kvny., 1902–1906.) A népesség általános leírása községenként (1902) 531.; *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása* Szerk. és kiad. A Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Budapest: Atheneum, 1912–1920.) A népesség főbb adatai községek és népesebb puszták, telepek szerint (1912) 184–185.; *Az 1920. évi népszámlálás* Szerk. és kiad. A Magyar Királyi Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (Budapest: Pesti Kvny., 1923–1929.) A népesség főbb demográfiai adatai községek és népesebb puszták, telepek szerint (1923) 82–83.

³⁰ Györgyi Bindorffer, *Sztereotipizáció az interetnikus kapcsolatokban. 1.* http://www.mtaki.hu/tanulmányok/bindorffer_gyorgyi/index.html?a=all

³¹ Vital records at the parish of Kál.

³² Gyáni and Kövér, “Magyarország társadalomtörténete,” 145, 151.

VII. Power

There were significant differences in power, administration and local government too.³³

Up until 1945 all mayors were Swabian, representing the richer families. In the lists of the local representatives there are only a few Hungarians. The members of the committees were Swabians. In the local administration, the Hungarians worked only as watchmen, guards, etc.³⁴

In 1919 during the Hungarian Soviet Republic the situation reversed. All members of the directorate and most council members were Hungarians. Of those with German surnames, it was only the poorest who attained positions on the council, and they were invariably inhabitants of the “Sor.” Due to its nature, the new political system was organized not along ethnic lines, but economic ones.³⁵ After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic the Swabians returned to power, and the communists were arrested. According to reports, it was deliberate that the magistrates did not help those arrested.³⁶

After World War II, the Swabians were removed from the important positions. In those years “only” the soldiers of the Soviet Red Army abused the Swabians. It caused much trauma and extended the already existing differences between Hungarians and Swabians.³⁷ The fact that it was only the Swabians who were harassed in Kompolt by the Soviet soldiers indicates that for the Red Army (with the help of a local man) it was clear who was Swabian and who was Hungarian. Because on the occasion of the census of 1941 no one claimed to be German, the deportations to Germany did not affect the village. But more than 70 Swabian people were deported to forced labor to the Soviet Union for years.

VIII. Summary

This paper attempted to reconstruct the social structure of Kompolt. As a result of the research two groups were distinguished: the Swabians and the Hungarians. Differences in economic circumstances, in family life, in the material culture, in the view of history, and in identity can be ascribed to ethnic origins. Such differences did not appear in the national statistics (for example, in the results of the censuses).

³³ Protocols of the city council 1877–1950 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives V-248/1-5, XXII-347/1-2).

³⁴ Vital records at the parish of Kál.

³⁵ Protocols of the city council 1916–1920 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives V-248/3).

³⁶ Protocols of the city council 1916–1920 (National Archives of Hungary – Heves County Archives V-248/3).

³⁷ Oral history interviews.

As noted, all events of note from Komplot's past can be linked to the Swabians. The owners of existing houses and tombstones were Swabians, most names in the sources are German, the famous people from the village were Swabians (for example, János Mayer, Kató Hámán, András Hámán, etc.). Hungarians were merely "supporting actors" in the lives of their German neighbors.

Who was Swabian? Who was Hungarian? Swabians were the inhabitants of Komplot who lived in the part of the village called "Falu," they had a relatively large income and a German surname. These judgements rest on the contemporary ingroup and outgroup local classification evident in the sources. Hungarians were the Hungarian-named settlers and poorer people with or without German names, who lived in the "Sor." Thus, demonstrating that the "Falu" was more closed than the "Sor." This situation of division continued until the middle of the 20th century but in some ways it makes its presence felt even today. It is hoped this research has uncovered the operation of the ethnic groups' identity, especially in relation to concealment and revelation.

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**Beyond Borders: A Review of Jopi Nyman's Displacement, Memory, and
Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing**

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**Nyman, Jopi. *Displacement, Memory, and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing*. Brill Rodopi, 2017. Viii + 251 pages.
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In this volume, Jopi Nyman focuses on mobility and migration, and explores various border crossing narratives in which several cultures come into contact with each other. With particular reference to fictional and autobiographical texts, he investigates the ways in which migrants experience displacement and the transformation the whole process of dislocation generates. He argues that narratives which “originate at border crossings cannot be bound by national borders, languages, and literary and critical traditions” (5). His earlier works also dealt with a variety of cultural narratives of border crossing by diasporic and migrant writers in the United Kingdom and the United States. By focusing on diverse historical and contemporary displacements in Europe and the United States, his book challenges the idea that cultural analysis should focus on one particular nation-state or culture.

Jopi Nyman's volume is a result of, as he formulates in the introduction, “several years of research on postcolonial and transcultural literatures” (VII). He claims that new forms of identities acquired during migration are not always voluntary. The migrant subjects do not choose the journey and mobility but often these are forced upon them. Besides providing new identificatory mechanisms, migration often evokes narratives of displacement, dislocation, relocation as well as memories of loss, famine, and death. Nyman's book examines contemporary Anglophone narratives of global migration with particular focus on three major themes: displacement, memory, and travel. He divides his book into three broad sections. The first part deals with the narratives of displaced persons, especially refugees and forced migrants in the writings of Simão Kikamba, Ishmael Beah, and Jamal Mahjoub. Part Two examines the important role that memory plays in autobiographical and fictional narratives of migration by Madhur Jaffrey, Diana Abu-Jaber, Abdulrazak Gurnah, and Caryl Philips. In the concluding part, Nyman shows how European identities are revised through the encounter with other cultures both historically and in recent times, as explored by the writings of Jamal Mahjoub and Monica Ali.

During migration and travel, attachment to the native land remains important to migrants: as Nyman argues, memory “provides continuity to the individual and the group by linking the past with present” (91). The opening of his work highlights the involuntary character of migration—the experience of the migrants who are forced into migration and displacement in Africa, Europe, and the United States. The occasional successful attempts of migrants to reconstruct a sense of attachment to the host country emphasize that the migrants tend to remain displaced; most of the time they are not fully accepted by their new community.

The texts, comprising both fictional and non-fictional narratives of forced migration that Nyman discusses in the first section, enable the readers to have a glimpse at refugees' problematic adaptation to their new places. Refugees frequently suffer from trauma and lack of agency. Although he explores different modes of writing, ranging from prose to poetry, the focus on forced migration provides a consistent theoretical framework. Through the autobiographical stories and poems, he examines the ways in which the refugees imagine themselves as they travel to Britain. This theme is portrayed in the Angolan-born South African writer Simão Kikamba's novel, *Going Home* (2005), which explores the refugee's journey towards his or her dream place in search of safety and security. The short story, "Last Thoughts on the Medusa" (2008) by the black British/European writer, Jamal Mahjoub, and several other contemporary narratives of forced migration, often focus on the subjects' journey towards Europe, underlining the various ways that the migrants adopt, legally or illegally, to cross borders with the hope of achieving security in Europe. These texts redefine European nation-states as "borderscapes" where the national refugees of the migrants are replaced with transnational identities.

Nyman continues his exploration of the role of memory and history in contemporary migrant writing, with specific attention to effect and emotion. With the help of the readings in the three chapters, in the second part of the book, he examines postcolonial narratives, showing how personal or cultural aspects of the past are affected by memories of home and migration. Memory links the past with the present, giving continuity to the individual and the group. Memories not only express mere nostalgic views of the past but also address the violence, trauma, and racism that have resulted in forced migration. The feeling of nostalgia becomes more intense if the individual happens to be a colored immigrant in a predominantly white society. The immigrants are constantly negotiating between the memories of their homeland and the lives in their new community, both in terms of their cultural identity and the necessity to assimilate into a new space.

The third and final part of the reviewed volume highlights the ways in which cultural encounters are generated by migration and mobility. Nyman addresses this enhancement of cultural encounters in contemporary postcolonial narratives. He pays particular attention to the works of the Sudanese British author Jamal Mahjoub, and British Asian novelist Monica Ali. Their texts represent various forms of mobility which bring different parts of the world in contact with each other. This shows that migration can be both local and global, and also suggests that European as well as national and local identities are transformed during migration. Mahjoub, in his early works, foregrounded questions regarding exile and identity. His 2006 novel, *The Drift Latitudes*, continues to investigate contemporary and historical encounters between Europeans and their Others. However, the book further problematizes issues of history, identity, and belonging. Similarly to

Mahjoub, who uses the tropes of transnational travel and migration, Monica Ali's second novel, *Alentejo Blue* (2006), probes into the ways in which contemporary globalization affects the construction of European identities. Her third novel, *In the Kitchen* (2009), continues to explore the transformation of Britishness. Reading these narratives in the context of the views of cultural theorists like Homi K. Bhaba and Paul Gilroy, Nyman argued for "the urgency to develop a new hybrid form of Britishness" as is required in the era of globalization (157).

Written in simple but articulate language, Nyman's volume is a useful and enjoyable reading for research scholars as well as students of postcolonial and diaspora studies. It is also a necessary guide for enthusiasts who take interest in exploring border-crossing narratives and refugee writings. Though he intertwines multiple themes in each section, such as trauma and memory, among others, he never loses focus on the broader picture of migration, mobility, and cultural encounter. He offers close readings of the texts paying attention to minute details related to displacement, identity, and culture. The book explores both well-known writings by professionals, such as scholars and academics, as well as uncanonized texts by non-professional writers. However, Jopi Nyman does not provide any final conclusion at the end of the book, which suggests that his present volume is part of an ongoing larger research project. Through the readings of the fictional and non-fictional texts, he continues to evaluate both silenced and emerging narratives of cultural encounters.

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