

TAMÁS STARK, *Population movements in Hungary during the War years*, in «Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento» (ISSN: 0392-0011), 27 (2001), pp. 619-632.

Url: <https://heyjoe.fbk.eu/index.php/anisig>

Questo articolo è stato digitalizzato dal progetto ASTRA - *Archivio della storiografia trentina*, grazie al finanziamento della Fondazione Caritro (Bando Archivi 2021). ASTRA è un progetto della Biblioteca Fondazione Bruno Kessler, in collaborazione con Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati, Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino, FBK-Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico, Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra (Rovereto), e Società di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche. ASTRA rende disponibili le versioni elettroniche delle maggiori riviste storiche del Trentino, all'interno del portale [HeyJoe](#) - *History, Religion and Philosophy Journals Online Access*.

This article has been digitised within the project ASTRA - *Archivio della storiografia trentina* through the generous support of Fondazione Caritro (Bando Archivi 2021). ASTRA is a Bruno Kessler Foundation Library project, run jointly with Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati, Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino, FBK-Italian-German Historical Institute, the Italian War History Museum (Rovereto), and Società di Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche. ASTRA aims to make the most important journals of (and on) the Trentino area available in a free-to-access online space on the [HeyJoe](#) - *History, Religion and Philosophy Journals Online Access* platform.

Nota copyright

Tutto il materiale contenuto nel sito [HeyJoe](#), compreso il presente PDF, è rilasciato sotto licenza [Creative Commons](#) Attribuzione–Non commerciale–Non opere derivate 4.0 Internazionale. Pertanto è possibile liberamente scaricare, stampare, fotocopiare e distribuire questo articolo e gli altri presenti nel sito, purché si attribuisca in maniera corretta la paternità dell’opera, non la si utilizzi per fini commerciali e non la si trasformi o modifichi.

Copyright notice

All materials on the [HeyJoe](#) website, including the present PDF file, are made available under a [Creative Commons](#) Attribution–NonCommercial–NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. You are free to download, print, copy, and share this file and any other on this website, as long as you give appropriate credit. You may not use this material for commercial purposes. If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.



Population Movements in Hungary during the War Years

by *Tamás Stark*

1. *Introduction*

East-Central Europe has long been a troubled part of the world, the scene of the two most terrible dictatorships of the twentieth century, and the site where two world wars started. These basic facts are the background to much of the historiography of the period, and the vast population losses the region suffered because of the Second World War and the Holocaust are well known. However, scholarship has devoted less energy to the attendant population movements in which more than twenty percent of the region's population changed its residence during this unhappy decade from 1939 to 1949. Gregory Frumkin was one of the first scholars who attempted to elucidate war-related European population movements, but since the most important sources were unavailable, he gleaned the greater part of his information from newspapers. Later, A.T. Bouscaren, J. Vernan, M. Proudfoot, L.W. Holborn, J.B. Schechtman, and M. Marrus published fundamental works on the subject. Each work, however, concentrated on only one aspect of the population movements. Consequently, migratory movements in East and East-Central Europe, which dramatically changed not only the region's political map, but also its ethnic map, have remained in the shadow of other post-World War II research for decades. In Eastern Europe, Communism did not favor research on war-related forced migrations. After the fall of Communism, however, a new generation of scholars in the humanities began basic research on the twentieth century in general and on the problem of nationalism in particular. On the question of war-related population movement, Károly Kocsis, Ágnes Tóth, and József Kugler published the most important works in Hungary. Stefan Sutaj, Dusan Kovac, and Katalin Vadkerty in Slovakia, György Dupka in Ukraine, and Viorel Achim in Romania have all dealt intensively with the history of World War II-related forced migrations.

The Hungarian Scientific Research Fund supported this project on war-related population movements in Central Europe (Otká T 034 143).

In this essay, I used the works of these authors intensively, in addition to my own research. In East-Central Europe, there is a long list of those factors, which contributed to the population changes. In my opinion, however, intimate relationships exist among all forms of human loss, forced migrations, and various refugee movements. These phenomena are inseparable. In a broader sense, nationalism constitutes a common denominator in the justification of war, genocide, and population transfers. Genocide, ethnic cleansing, population redeployment, and even dictatorship were justified as necessary responses to the threat of national security and survival. In addition, war offers an unwitting opportunity for the dominant ethnic group to carry out ethnic cleansing against minorities.

In order to understand the complexity of modern nationalism we have to go back to its roots. The idea of a 'nation-state' was not a new phenomenon. The French encyclopaedists introduced it in the mid-eighteenth century. And the Great French Encyclopedia states that those individuals who were subjects of the same sovereign made up a nation. The 1791 French constitution declared that the state was indivisible, and that each citizen of the state was a member of the French nation. In other words, those persons belonged to the French nation who lived within the territory of France. The idea of nation-state established itself in a time when France was actually a multi-language state, and only a small fraction of the newly created «French people» spoke the Received Standard French. The idea of a «nation-state» became one of the most powerful principles of policy-making in Europe during the nineteenth century. Great and recently formed states such as Germany and Italy, and traditional empires such as Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire broke up in the name of this principle. The former minister for foreign affairs of Austria-Hungary, Gusztáv Gratz, portrayed modern nationalism the following way in his book on world policy in 1920s:

«The nationality principle still has a powerful sway over large numbers of people, probably more than ever before. They are able to make sacrifices for it, which they would never be willing to make for anything else. There was a time when people threw away their lives, accepted exile or being burned at the stake for their religious beliefs, today national awareness governs their souls just as fiercely»¹.

After the collapse of Austria-Hungary at the end of World War I, the region was reorganized roughly along national lines. Unhappily, the newly

¹ G. GRATZ, *A jelenkor politikai fejlődése* [The Development of Contemporary Political Ideas], in G. KORNIS - G. GRATZ - L. HEGEDŰS - E. SCHIMANEK (eds), *A mai világ képe* [The Face of Today's World], vol. 2, Budapest n.d., p. 290.

emerged states were actually far from resolving the nationality problems that plagued the region as never before. According to most of the East-Central European demographers and politicians, the ideal state was ethnically homogeneous. A great territorial and, consequently, ethnic rearrangement began after the Munich Agreement of 1938, in the name of creating ethnically homogeneous nation-states. Before Germany's campaign against the Soviet Union, several basic territorial changes took place in the region. Hungary regained the southern part of Slovakia, a territory inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, Carpatho-Ruthenia, the northern part of Transylvania, and Voivodina. Not only Hungarians lived in the territories that Hungary regained. In Carpatho-Ruthenia and in Voivodina, Hungarians constituted a minority, while in Northern Transylvania Hungarians and Germans together constituted a majority with respect to the Romanian population.

Exploiting its military success, National Socialist Germany began a massive population resettlement policy in Eastern Europe. Between 1939 and 1943, Germany concluded nine agreements with Eastern European states on the transfer of ethnic Germans to the newly annexed territories. National Socialist Germany, however, was not the only state in Europe, which wanted to permanently solve nationality questions through massive population transfers. Leading Romanian statistician, and personal advisor of Marshall Ion Antonescu, Sabin Manuila, worked out a detailed plan on how to make Romania «more Romanian». According to the plan, which was submitted to Antonescu in October 1941, it would be necessary to uproot 6,2 million citizens in order to create an ethnically homogenous great Romania². It was a long-range plan, since its implementation involved territories that were not under Romanian control. In the war years, only a small part of the plan was effectively carried out, with the deportation of about 300,000 Jews and Romas from Bucovina and Bessarabia to «Transnistria», a territory situated between the Dnester and Bug rivers.

More or less simultaneously with the appearance of Manuila's plan for Romania, the head of the Czechoslovak government in London, Eduard Benes launched his campaign for the solution of ethnic problems through the removal of Czechoslovak-resident minorities, namely, the Germans and Hungarians.

² Z. SZÁSZ, *Tévtutak keresése* [Being on the Wrong Track], in «História», 21, 1999, 8, pp. 17-20.

2. 'Hotheaded' Hungarian Ideas about an Ethnically Homogeneous Nation-State

Hungary also had its supporters for the concept of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state. In a memorandum to Nicolas Horthy, the regent of Hungary, Henrik Werth, the chief of staff of the Hungarian army, recommended the forced removal of non-Hungarian ethnic groups from Hungary. The plan was released in August of 1941, after the above-discussed territorial enlargement of Hungary. László Bárdossy harshly criticized the plan. In a report to the regent Horthy, Bárdossy commented the plan as follows:

«The idea described in the chief of staff's memoirs are so absurd, a practical application is utterly unthinkable, and its implementation – considering Hungary's strength – would not serve the country's interests in the least»³.

Consequently, the Prime Minister dismissed the chief of staff, who often interfered in political questions, in September 1941. (Despite the differences in political ideas and aspirations, Bárdossy and Werth shared the same fate. The People's Tribunal sentenced both to death after the war.)

Some fantastical plans appeared in the press. At the beginning of the war campaign against the Soviet Union, a Hungarian writer, Péter Vida, in his article entitled «Let's make the Carpathian Basin Hungarian», recommended the «repatriation» of those ethnic groups from the Soviet territories who were considered related to ethnic Hungarians⁴. In the February 1943 issue of «Erdélyi Szemle» (Transylvanian Review) another fanatic, Sándor Dessewffy wrote the following:

«Either we have to bar our ethnic minorities from the country in order to preclude any attempt for their existing along ethnic lines, or, and much more preferably, we have to create conditions under which they will assimilate of their own accord».

Dessewffy recommended the forced concentration of non-Hungarians in one or two counties of the country⁵. In order to replace them, Dessewffy also advocated the settlement of Hungarian-cognate ethnic groups from the eastern territories.

³ M. SZINAI - L. SZÜCS (eds), *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* [The Secret Papers of Nicolas Horthy], Budapest 1965, p. 307.

⁴ P. VIDA, *Magyar Kárpát medencét* [Let's Make the Carpathian Basin Hungarian], in «Kárpátmedence», 1941, p. 5.

⁵ Dessewffy's essay is evaluated and cited by G. JUHASZ, *Uralkodó eszmék Magyarországon, 1939-1944* [Ruling Ideas in Hungary, 1939-1944], Budapest 1983, p. 172.

3. *The Hungarian Concept of a Multiethnic State*

The Hungarian governments during the war did not corroborate the radical, idealist views with a declared policy. The Hungarian policy rejected the concept of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state. Even forced assimilation was considered a practice contrary to Hungarian tradition. I should explain the origin of this attitude. At all times throughout its history, Hungary was a multiethnic state. Since the seventeenth century, «Hungarians» were in the minority in Hungary. Hungarians reached a very slim majority in their country only at the end of the nineteenth century. Under these circumstances, in order to counterbalance the lack of Hungarian ethnic dominance, the Hungarian national elite emphasized the cultural and economic unity of nations in the Carpathian basin under the Hungarian crown, which was on the head of a Habsburg.

In the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, Hungarian politicians argued against the Trianon peace treaty, not on an ethnic but on a cultural and economic basis. Hungarian politicians emphasized the historical right of truncated Hungary to the lost territories. Based on ethnic argumentation, the Hungarian government could claim only those territories populated by Hungarians, and not the whole territory of greater Hungary. The predecessor of László Bárdossy, Pál Teleki, who was Prime Minister between 1939 and 1941, worked out the theoretical foundation of Hungary's policy towards the non-Hungarian ethnic groups. Teleki refused the «one nation-one country» concept. Instead of forced assimilation, he insisted on the introduction of different forms of autonomy. The form of autonomy would depend on the cultural level of the ethnic groups and on the topography of the lands they lived. Apparently, this concept aimed for creating normal relations between the Hungarians and the minority groups.

Teleki's concept met with the consent of the majority of the members of the House of Representatives. Only the representatives of the Arrow Cross party had critical comments. The position of the Arrow Cross movement towards the non-Hungarian nationalities was outlined in the Bill «About the autonomy of the ethnic groups in the territory of the Hungarian Holy Crown», which was presented to the Parliament by two leading personalities of the party, Kálmán Hubay and Pál Vágó, on July 7, 1940. Contrary to Teleki's ideas about the territorial autonomy, the champions of the extreme right propagated autonomy to each non-Hungarian ethnic group independently of whether those groups lived *en masse* or were dispersed all over the country. Arrow Cross representatives argued that each ethnic group except Jews should get the right to organize itself. Although the

idea of «ethnic group autonomy» directly served the interests and the aims of the German ethnic group, the official German policy did not support the plan. The implementation of the plan would have deepened the rifts among the ethnic groups and could lead to the destabilization of the country, at a time when Germany needed stable allies. Nevertheless, the appearance of the position of the Arrow Cross party generated vehement public debate inside and outside Parliament which ended with the expulsion of the presenters, Kálmán Hübner and Pál Vágó, from the House of Representatives.

Although Pál Teleki's concept was basically fair, it would not have completely satisfied the Serbs, Romanians, and the Slovaks, even if it had been executed correctly. These three ethnic groups wanted to live in their own national state. They did not trust the Hungarian government, and wanted their mother countries to represent their special interest against the Hungarian state. The mother countries took revenge on the Hungarian ethnic groups living within their territories for the real or supposed injuries and disadvantages that their compatriots suffered in Hungary.

In reality, the Hungarian concept to appease the nationalities did not work. In general, the government wanted to restore the pre-1918 ethnic composition of the newly acquired territories. This was why the Hungarian government refused all initiatives related to changing the ethnic map of the Carpathian basin. For this reason, the Hungarian government did not accept the Romanian offer of a population exchange between the two countries at the negotiations, which took place in Turnu Severin some days before the Second Vienna Award in August 1940. In 1942, the Hungarian government also turned down the initiative of the Croatian government for a population transfer along the Hungarian-Croatian border. Although the government had no plans to colonize the territories Hungary regained, the Hungarian ethnic groups living in the Hungarian basin increased between 1940 and 1941.

Hungary had two ways to restore its pre-1918 ethnic make-up. First, the Hungarian administration tried to neutralize the consequences of the population resettlement policies of the «successor states» (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia) during the nineteen-twenties and -thirties. In other words, Hungarian authorities wanted to get rid of the non-Hungarian colonizers who had moved to these territories (Northern Hungary, Northern-Transylvania, Backa) after 1918.

Another way to restore Hungary's pre-1918 *status quo* was to promote the emigration of Hungarian public employees to its regained territories. After 1918, about 300,000 Hungarians, mainly public employees and their

families, had left their homeland and moved to «smaller Hungary». After 1938, new out-migration began in the opposite direction. The Hungarian government sent thousands of public employees to rebuild the new administration. This migration was an important element in the process of reconstructing the pre-1918 Hungarian appearance of the Carpathian basin.

4. *The Expatriation of Colonizers*

There is only a very limited amount of numerical information on the fate of the non-Hungarian colonizers of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Serbia. Moreover, the available information in the scholarly literature is contradictory. Even the evaluation of the nature of this migration differs widely in the published material, ranging from the «voluntary withdrawal» to the «expulsion».

The Hungarian expert on the subject, Lóránt Tilkovszky, revealed that after the declaration of the First Vienna Award 647 colonizer families moving to «smaller» Czechoslovakia left behind 20,000 cadastral acres of farmland. Before the arrival of the Hungarian administration, 36,500 additional cadastral acres of land became uninhabited due to the exodus of Czechoslovak farmers. Based on these miscellaneous figures, the total number of colonists who moved to Czech and Slovak lands lies somewhere between 5 to 10,000⁶. An overwhelming majority of Czech and Slovak public employees also left territory ceded to Hungary in an organized way, with the active assistance of the Czechoslovak state. According to contemporary Czechoslovak sources 11,625 persons moved to the truncated state. The source do not reveal whether public employees are included in this number or not⁷. The new Hungarian administration expatriated about

⁶ L. TILKOVSKY, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon, 1938-1941* [Revision and Policy Towards the Nationalities in Hungary, 1938-1941], Budapest 1967, pp. 74-75. Hungarian authorities expatriated 5,000 persons from the territory Hungary annexed due to the First Vienna Award; see K. KOCSIS, *Telepítések és az etnikai térszerkezet a Kárpát-Medence határvidékein, 1944-1950* [Ethnic Settlements and the Ethnic Structure of the Borderlands of the Carpathian Basin, 1944-1950], in S. ILLES - P.P. TOTH (eds), *Migráció, Tanulmánygyűjtemény* [Migration, Collection of Studies], vol. 1, Budapest 1998, p. 126; see also K. JANICS, *A hontalanság évei* [Years of Homelessness], München 1979, p. 206.

⁷ J. GEBHARDT, *Migrationsbewegungen der tschechischen Bevölkerung in den Jahren 1938-1939. Forschungsstand und offene Fragen*, in D. BRANDES - E. IVANICKOVA - J. PESEK (eds), *Erzwungene Trennung, Vertreibungen und Aussiedlungen in und aus der Tschechoslowakei*

5,000 former Czech citizens. Here it is reasonable to note that the same thing happened in the «independent» Slovak Republic. Most of the Czech public employees left under the pressure of the new regime. Following the directive of the Slovak ministry of interior affairs, the Hlinka guard expelled about 120,000 Czechs⁸.

According to German sources 7,500 Ukrainian nationals left Carpatho-Ruthenia for Slovakia with the assistance of the German consulate in Huszt/Hust⁹.

In the Upper Land – territory Hungary regained due to the First Vienna Award – and in Transylvania, the Hungarian governmental policy towards the colonizers was mitigated by the fear of possible retaliatory measures by Slovakia and Romania against Hungarian ethnic groups who remained under the administration of these countries. Since truncated Serbia was under German control, Hungary did not have to be afraid of any kind of reprisal. Backa was the only territory among Hungary's regained lands occupied by force within the framework of a military campaign. Under these circumstances, the Hungarian administration worked in a *quasi*-marshal law situation.

Hungarian occupational forces were commanded to expatriate those Serb nationals who had moved to the Backa region after 1918. On April 21, 1941 General Elemér Gorondy-Novák, the commander of the 3. Army, the bulk of the occupation forces, issued a directive to set up internment camps for Serb colonizers who were supposed to be expatriated. Colonizers of Croatian origin and those with Hungarian or German spouses, however, were exempted. Arrested and interned Serbs were illegally transferred to Croatia, and to territories under German military administration.

Available figures on the number of the expellees are contradictory. According to Hungarian sources, 15,000 settlers were expelled¹⁰. Contemporary

1938-1947 im Vergleich mit Polen, Ungarn, Jugoslawien, Essen 1999, p. 22. Ladislav Deák – without mentioning his sources – put the total number of Czech and Slovak refugees from the territory Hungary annexed, at 100,000, see L. DEÁK, *Viedenska arbitráž-«Mnichov pre Slovensko»*, Bratislava 1998, p. 43.

⁸ I. DAXNER, *L'udáctva pred Národnym súdom 1945-1947*, Bratislava 1961, p. 73. Daxner is quoted in K. KOCŠIS, *Telepítések és az etnikai térszerkezet a Kárpát-Medence határvidékein*, p. 126.

⁹ L. TILKOVSKY, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon*, p. 164.

¹⁰ On the policy of the Hungarian occupational forces see P. GOSZTONYI, *A magyar honvédség a második világháborúban* [The Hungarian Honved Army in World War II],

German documents spoke about 35,000 expatriated Serbs, while the Committee for Refugees, an organ set up by the Milan Nedic-led pro-German puppet government, put the number of the expelled population at 56,000¹¹. In the Serbian scholarly literature, the number of expelled Serbs oscillates between very wide limits. The bottom level of estimations is 30,000, while the top level is 150,000¹². The source of this latter figure must have originated from a report of the German headquarter in Serbia released in the spring of 1941, shortly after the Hungarian occupation of Backa. The German document states that the Hungarian administration planned to expel 150,000 Serb colonizers to Serbia in the near future¹³.

Hungarian plans to expel Serb settlers, however, did not materialize, due to the resistance of the German administration in Serbia. Although German-Hungarian negotiations on the fate of the uprooted Serbs went on, by the spring of 1942 the German authorities opposed the population transfer, for two reasons. First, the German administration in Serbia was not prepared to settle tens of thousands of displaced persons. Secondly, the expelled former colonists would have enlarged the potential human resources of the partisan forces.

Partisan activity was also a great problem in the territory under Hungarian administration. Both Hungarian and Serb scholarly literature dealt in detail about the massacre that the Hungarian armed forces committed in Backa in early 1942. In order to annihilate partisan activity, the Hungarian chiefs of staff/general staff in Budapest ordered a police raid in the region. The

Budapest 1992, p. 55 and C.A. MACARTNEY, *October Fifteenth*, vol. 2, Edinburgh 1961, p. 13. On the directives of the Hungarian army, see J. CSIMA, *Adalékok a Horthy hadsereg szervezetének és háborús tevékenységének a tanulmányozásához (1938-1945)* [Contributions to the Studies on the Structure and the Operations of the Horthy Army (1938-1945)], Budapest 1961, p. 59.

¹¹ The figure of 35,000 expatriated Serbs originated from Karl Frahne, the second secretary of German legation in Budapest. Sajti gives detailed analysis on the contemporary German and Serb sources in her book: E.A. SAJTI, *Délvidék, 1941-1944* [Backa, 1941-1944], Budapest 1987, p. 43.

¹² The source of the lowest estimations of the number of expelled Serbs is the book by S.D. MILOSEVIC, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije, 1941-1945*, Beograd 1981, p. 276. On the highest estimations, see A. KASAS, *Madari u Vojvodini 1941-1946*, Novi Sad 1996, p. 39.

¹³ G. RÁNKI - E. PAMLÉNYI - L. TILKOVSKY - G. JUHÁSZ (eds), *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország, Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933-1944* [Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary, German Diplomatic Correspondence on Hungary 1933-1944], Kossuth Könyvkiadó 1968, p. 581. The document does not mention the realization of the plan.

police raid turned into a bloodbath, with 3,340 men and women killed, including 743 Jews. In 1943, the Kállay Miklós government brought to court the major culprits. Before the release of the verdict, however, the accused generals escaped to Germany. Serbian history books portray the action of the Hungarian armed forces in Backa as genocide¹⁴. It was not genocide, though, since on the Hungarian part there was no intention to destroy the Serbian population. It was mass murder.

In Hungary today the word «genocide» is reserved for the fate of the Hungarian Jewish community. Although the National Socialist racist mentality was alien to the traditional Hungarian concepts of nation and people, the Hungarian legislation more or less followed the German practice in relation to the Hungarian Jews. After the introduction of the anti-Jewish laws between 1938 and 1941, Jews were excluded from the Hungarian nation. In legal terms, Jews were no longer considered Hungarians. The history of the destruction of the 800,000-strong Jewish community goes beyond the subject of this essay on population transfers. An indication of the irrationality of the 'racial' policy is that by excluding Jews from the Hungarian nation and subsequently murdering them, the number as well as the economic and intellectual strength of Hungarians in the re-annexed territories, i.e. the very groups whose reinforcement had been the primary goal of Hungarian governments during the war, was diminished.

Since Romania was also an ally of Germany, the Hungarian government was not in the position to transfer Romanian colonists to their mother country. Nevertheless, a massive population movement existed between the two countries, based on voluntary relocation. In the framework of the Second Vienna Award, there was an agreement between the two countries that Romanians in Northern Transylvania could move to Romania, while Hungarians in Southern Transylvania had the right to leave their homeland for the now-enlarged Hungary. This agreement channeled the spontaneous refugee movement, which began right after the announcement of the Second Vienna Award and before the arrival of the Hungarian armed forces. According to Hungarian statistics, 190,000 Hungarians left Southern Transylvania while 220,000 Romanians moved to Romania from Northern Transylvania¹⁵.

¹⁴ L. KLAIN, *Genocid i kazna*, Novi Sad 1991; S. KURDULIJA, *Atlas ustaskog genocida nad Srbima 1941-1945*, Beograd 1994, karta Br. 6; A. KASAS, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 215.

¹⁵ The figures of the Central Statistical Bureau were published in «Magyar Statisztikai Szemle» [Hungarian Statistical Review], 22, 1944, 9-10, p. 397. See also: J. SCHECHTMAN, *European Population Transfers, 1939-1945*, New York 1946, p. 430; E. KULISCHER, *Europe on*

According to the figures of the Central Authority for the Control of Aliens, out of 190,000 Hungarian refugees, 106,000 settled in Northern Transylvania, 70,000 people moved to the present-day (Trianon) territory, while the others found new but temporal homes in Northern Hungary and Carpatho-Ruthenia.

5. *The Migration of Public Employees*

Having surveyed the consequences of Hungary's policy to remove the Czech, Serbs, and Romanian colonists from the newly acquired territories, I would like to concentrate on the population movement inside enlarged Hungary. I have already mentioned that thousands of Hungarian state employees moved to the annexed territories to build the Hungarian administration. Unfortunately, we have only indirect sources on the number of the settlers. These sources are the documents of the Central Statistical Bureau and of the Ministry of Public Welfare on the number of ethnic Hungarian refugees who moved to the present-day territory of Hungary at the end of the war and in the early post-war period. From the puzzle of monthly reports, head-counts and the minutes of the Council of Ministers, I sketched the following picture: in the period between the fall of 1944 and 1947, 64,000 public employees and their families moved to the present-day territory. The distribution of these refugees according to the regions they left is the following: Czechoslovakia (Northern Hungary): 21,000, Soviet Union (Carpatho-Ruthenia) 5,000, Romania (Northern Transylvania) 24,000, Yugoslavia (Backa) 14,000¹⁶. These figures, however, do not precisely cover the actual number of public employees and their families who moved to the newly acquired regions in the years between 1938 and 1941. The real number must have been a bit smaller, since released figures include children who were born during the war.

6. *The Only Organized Population Transfer*

Earlier, I emphasized that the Hungarian government was not interested in organized population transfers. This was the general policy, but there

the Move. War and Population Changes, New York 1948, p. 159; J. SIEGEL, *The Population of Hungary*, Washington 1958, p. 35.

¹⁶ KSH Levéltár [Archives of the Central Statistical Bureau, Budapest], «Barys hagyaték» [Barys documents]. The relevant documents of the Department for Refugees, Prisoners of War and Deportees in the Ministry of Public Welfare are the property of the author.

was one exception. This was the transfer/repatriation of the Seklers from Bucovina. This Hungarian group moved to the eastern part of the Carpathians in the eighteenth century. Consequently, they lived outside the historical boundaries of Hungary. The fate of this group turned to be critical when the Soviet army occupied the northern part of Bucovina in the summer of 1940. Romanian refugees from Northern Bucovina were resettled in the houses of those Germans who left this region, within the framework of the Romanian-German agreement on the transfer of ethnic Germans. This agreement was concluded on October 22, 1940. Since there were more Romanian refugees than vacant German houses, Romanian authority began to confiscate the properties of Sekler-Hungarians. It was a time when tension between Romania and Hungary reached a climax due to the Second Vienna Award. Plundered Seklers began to move to Hungarian territories seeking shelter. In order to channel this exodus, the Hungarian government decided to repatriate the endangered group with the consent of the House of Representatives. Prime minister Pál Teleki upheld the decision of the government in the following way:

«We have to do everything in our power to bring home from the Regate area of Romania, to which Hungarians are not native, first those Hungarians who are not tied to the land and then those who are but can sell the land»¹⁷.

The agreement about the transfer was concluded with the Romanian government, which eagerly wanted to eradicate non-Romanian ethnic groups, on May 11, 1941. Since the fertility of the Bucovinian Seklers was high, the government wanted to settle them in a strategically important region, where the Hungarians constituted a minority. This region was Backa, the land often endangered by Serbian partisans. In the framework of this colonization project, 17,700 Sekler-Hungarians were settled along the Southern borderland of Hungary¹⁸.

Another endangered group of Hungarians «returned» to Hungary in 1942. In the fall of 1942, the government undertook the repatriation of a small group of Hungarians (1,400 persons overall) living in four scattered settlements of Bosnia: Gunja, Vučijak, Brčko, and Bijeljina. They were also resettled in Backa.

¹⁷ *Minutes of the House of Representatives*, Budapest 1940, p. 345.

¹⁸ J. ÖSI OBERDING, *A bukovinai székegyek dunántúli letelepítése* [The Resettlement of the Seklers From Bucovina in Transdanubia], in «Agrártörténeti Szemle» [Review of History of Agriculture], 9, 1967, 1-2, p. 185; J. SCHECHTMAN, *European Population Transfers*, p. 436.

Between 1938 and 1944, approximately 210,000 Hungarians – almost exclusively from Romania – moved to territory the country comprised during the war years. The greatest number of newcomers resettled in Northern Transylvania and in Backa. The Hungarian ethnic group grew even stronger with the arrival of public employees whose number – including family members – reached 50,000. On the other hand, at least 270,000 colonists who were public employees escaped or were expatriated from the territories Hungary regained between 1938-1941.

7. *Closing Remarks*

Although this essay concentrates on the Hungarian policy of rebuilding the pre-World War ethnic character of greater Hungary, at this point we should sum up the fate of Hungarian ethnic groups in the territories that Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia regained at the end of the war. The victorious powers in the neighborhood of Hungary not only wanted to restore the pre-1938 *status quo* but also took revenge for the Hungarian occupation.

In the fall of 1944, as the Soviet army advanced, migrations of unprecedented scale began from Transylvania in Carpatho-Ruthenia and from Backa. The main motivation of this refugee movement was the fear of both the Soviet Army and of the Serb and Romanian armed units that appeared in the recaptured Hungarian villages during the first weeks of the occupation.

In late August 1944, armed units left Bucharest with the express aim of punishing ethnic Hungarians in Northern Transylvania. The «Maniu guards» – the units named themselves after Juliu Maniu, the legendary leader of the Romanian Peasant party in the inter-war years – committed mass murders in a number of places in Transylvania until, under Soviet pressure, the Romanian government finally disbanded them on November 16, 1944. Recently, original documents and eyewitness reports of the campaign of revenge have become public, but the number of victims is still unknown¹⁹. Yugoslav partisan forces took bloody revenge for the earlier mentioned massacre that the Hungarian armed forces committed against the Serbs in early 1942. Most of Hungarian scholars put the number of victims at 20,000.

¹⁹ *Fehérkönyv az 1944. Őszi magyarellenes atrocitásokról* [White Book on the Anti-Hungarian Atrocities in the Fall of 1944], RMDSZ [Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania], Kolozsvár 1995.

However and without naming his sources, Serb scholar Aleksander Kasas gave a figure of 5,000, describing the victims as «war criminals»²⁰.

Because of the revenge campaign, a massive exodus began from the lost territories to the present-day territory of Hungary. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Public Welfare and the Central Statistical Bureau, in the period between 1944 and 1947, 97,000 refugees from Northern Transylvania, 32,000 from Backa (Seklars from Bucovina included) and 8,000 from Carpatho-Ruthenia moved to where they settled²¹.

Even while the Czechoslovak politicians were in exile, they declared that only a homogeneous Slav state could guarantee the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia. In reality in Eastern Europe, it was Czechoslovakia, which went the furthest in fulfilling the dream of an ethnically 'pure' nation-state.

The Czechoslovak government succeeded in eliminating of its resident Germans. However, plans regarding its Hungarians population did not materialize entirely. Through expatriation and a population exchange agreement, about 15% of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia, namely 90,000 persons were transferred to Hungary²².

In Eastern Europe, the policy of ethnic homogenization continued in the post-war decades, despite the official ideology of proletarian internationalism. Without Germans and Jews even traditionally multiethnic states such as Poland and Romania came the closest ever in their histories to the realization of the so eagerly sought goal: a nation-state.

²⁰ The following works of Hungarian authors refer to the policy of partisan occupational forces towards Hungarians in Backa: M. MATUSKA, *A megtorlás napjai* [The Days of Revenge], Budapest 1991, p. 376; T. CSERES, *Vérbosszú Bácskában* [Vendetta in Backa], Budapest 1993, p. 276; K. KOCSIS - E. KOCSIS-HODOSI, *Ethnic Geography of the Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin*, Budapest 1998, p. 153. For the Serbian side, see A. KASAS, *Madari u Vojvodini*, p. 178.

²¹ KSH Levéltár, «Barys hagyaték»; the relevant documents of the Department for Refugees, Prisoners of War and Deportees in the Ministry of Public Welfare are the property of the author. The figures of the Ministry of Public Welfare, are supported by the statistics of the 1949 census executed by the central Statistical Bureau on migration.

²² According to the 1949 census figures 90,668 Hungarians moved to Hungary from Czechoslovakia after 1944. This number did not include public employees and their families who migrated to the territory Hungary annexed after the First Vienna Award in 1938. Independently, Hungarian statisticians like Károly Miltényi and Lajos Thirring estimated the total number of expelled Hungarians from Czechoslovakia to be 130,000. For their arguments, see J. KOVACSICS, *Magyarország történelmi demográfiája* [Historical Demography of Hungary], Budapest 1962, p. 257 and K. MILTÉNYI, *Magyarország demográfiája* [Demography of Hungary], in «Demográfia», 3, 1959, 2-3, p. 403.