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The motives for Emigration of Hungarians in Vojvodina²

Introduction

The main reasons for the half-century-long Serbian emigration are as follow: continuous changes in social structure, unemployment, the oppressive status of the domestic economy and family incomes have resulted in the growth of emigration (as well as crises such as the South Slavic wars). Finally, career-building (the brain drain) has taken its toll. At present, the host country decides who can migrate into the country (degree, profession, age, guarantee of self-maintenance, language knowledge). The host countries are both in Europe (78%: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France), or on other continents: USA, Canada, Australia (approximately 22%).³ Most current emigrants are experts in their field (IT specialist, programmer, engineer, inventor, microbiologist, professionals with PhD degrees, medical workers, artists, sportsman), those who speak foreign languages and those who have capital at their disposal. The consequences of emigration are mostly negative: financial loss (capital distraction, non-refundable educational costs), the absence of experts, demographic deformation, and a reduction of the population (the absence of young men).

Divided by type, refugees from Vojvodina before the civil war (1989-91) comprised guest-workers and those who left at the beginning of the war. Those emigrating during the hyperinflation (1992-93) were mostly entrepreneurs, and those who aimed at escaping from the civil war (1992-95) were refugees, illegal workers and students. The readiness of Hungary to act as a host country indicates that positive attitudes towards refugees have declined, because the population gradually loses its patience as it sees the number of refugees. Towards political refugees a more sympathetic behaviour can be noticed; however, it is less towards economic refugees.

According to the hypothesis of the present paper the main reasons for the half-century long, continuous Serbian migration are the slowness of change in the social system, the quest for a new road on the part of the disadvantaged actors of the transitional processes - in other words, the emigrational toss that has been nourishing the Serbian crisis (war, hyperinflation) for two decades - as well as the career quest of youngsters that has seriously contributed to the brain-drain. These emigrational waves did not affect Hungary so much as the developed Western European countries and countries overseas.

1. Emigrational waves

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According to experts, a country's openness enables migration. However, the incapacitation of travelling abroad may also encourage migration, namely, when societies are relatively closed. For fifty years that the population of either Tito's Yugoslavia or the Milošević era has been emigrating from the country; however, the motifs are different. The Serbian economic crisis, the slowness of transition, the high ration of unemployment still nourishes the migration inclination today.

Following World War II, the number of migrants from Yugoslavia proved to be usual in comparison with other East European countries; for the most part, those who emigrated did not agree with the new, communist regime. Approximately 30,000 Hungarians left the country, but according to some data 20,000 Hungarians fell victim to blood feuds, many of them innocently. Since 1961 there has been continuous foreign migration of the population, the number of workers working abroad (guest workers) also having increased. In the beginning the economic migration of the Yugoslav population did not receive social support: the politicians of those times often labelled the phenomenon of migration as a very interesting element in the social development of a socialist country. Non organized and spontaneous migration was allowed, but unexpected. However, after 1965 the economic migration became organized due to the massive departure of the active labour population hoping that the prevailing unfavourable economic processes could be balanced, that demographic pressure would be controlled and that the country would benefit from the profits of the returning guest workers. The first emigrational wave began just after the economic reform of 1965. The announced aim of the economic policy was to intensify the economy, to abolish unproductive work in employment, to decrease the influence of the state's economic developmental plans (e.g. light industry) and to introduce supply-and-demand market conditions as well as new credit and financial reforms. Western European countries were enjoying a relatively high economic boom at that time, and the demand for a both unqualified and trained cheap labour force was high. to the idea of the Yugoslav reform force was that through the departure of an unqualified and unemployed population, agricultural over-population would decrease, the quality of labour would mend and through the return of the guest workers the imbalanced economic status of the region's countries would moderate.

According to some estimates⁴, in 1964 approximately 100,000 Yugoslav citizens were living abroad. On the basis of the 1971 census, the number of migrants was 750,000; in 1973 this number reached 1.1 million⁵. The first so-called "oil-shock" of 1973 resulted in changes in the economy of the West European countries since the era of recession which had caused unemployment in the middle/end of the 70s. As a consequence, the guest workers were sent home. According to the census of 1981, the number of those who worked abroad with their family was 874,966⁶. En masse migration to another country started out from the most developed republics (Slovenia, Croatia), later reaching Vojvodina. Between 1968 and 1979, the number of those who lived abroad was the highest among the population of Serbia, approximately one-third from Slovenia and only one-tenth from Kosovo⁷. Later the number of migrants from Kosovo was ten times higher than between 1968 and 1979. The dynamics of working abroad can be illustrated by using data: in 1970 2.5 times more people left the territory of Serbia than in 1969. The number of people living abroad slowed down, but

⁴ The census of the Yugoslav population is conducted every tenth year: in 1921, 1931, 1948, 1953, 1971, 1981, 1991, but the number of workers temporarily working abroad is registered only from 1971.

⁵ Source: Stanovništvo i domaćinstva SR Srbije prema popisu 1981, In: Statistical Institute Serbia 1984, p.141.

⁶ Yugoslav Statistical Almanac 1986: 466. In 1981 the population of Yugoslavia was 22,424,711.

⁷ Source: Stanovništvo i domaćinstva SR Srbije prema popisu 1981, In: Statistical Institute Serbia, 1984.

continuously grew, except for the most developed region, Vojvodina, where the number of emigrants decreased to 33,957 in 1991. In the 90s the proximity of the war and its dangers resulted in further waves of massive and rapid migration, both within the borders of the country and abroad. Tragedies of whole nations and ethnic groups forced many families to leave their country, some families even for good. At the end of the twentieth century, the antecedent and consequence of NATO bombing (poverty, military mobilization, insecurity) generated massive migration. According to a moderate estimation, during the last decade approximately 50,000 Hungarians migrated from Vojvodina, but some experts consider the number of Hungarians living abroad even higher.

2. The emigrational movement of Yugoslavs and Hungarians in Vojvodina

Between 1918 and 1924, 45,000 Hungarian intellectuals, bureaucrats, farm-owners and capitalists were deported from the country (Gábrityné Molnár, 2001: 115-162). Between 1921 and 1929 14,442 people moved to America. The farm-less farmers (44% of the Hungarians) became seasonal workers, pick-and-shovel men and servants. Thousands of Hungarians moved to towns or even to Belgrade from poor villages (at one time 30,000 Hungarians lived in the capital) (Mirnics, 2001: 9-76). In their quest for work, Hungarians even reached mines and tourist centers, while one part of the intellectuals was employed in the center or south part of the country. 100,000 Serbian farming families were settled in Vojvodina, this being justified as the result of the agrarian reforms of 1920 and 1941 (they received 5 hectares of farmland that had formerly belonged to Hungarian farmers). In contrast to this, the deportation of South Slavic “colonists” and the settlement of Hungarian Csángós began during World War II. Afterwards, those who did not agree with the new, communist regime left the country. Approximately, 30,000 Hungarians left Yugoslavia.

Migration on the part of the Yugoslav population (including Hungarians) has been taking place for fifty years. Its first wave started after 1965, the target countries including developed capitalist countries. The state opened the borders, introduced new economic and system actions in order to prevent overpopulation of the agricultural population and to solve the problem of unemployment and an unskilled labour force. The destinations of migration were the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Austria and France. From the second half of the 1960s when migration became organized, the active labour population migrated en masse. The system expected a recovery in unfavourable economic conditions and to reap benefits from the returning guest workers.

Until the 1980s, migration had been economically motivated (economic migration). In contrast with inner migration, the migration of Hungarians abroad caused a more serious loss for the Hungarians of Vojvodina than did assimilation. On the basis of the calculations of Károly Kocsis, total Hungarian emigrational loss was 69,193 between 1948 and 1991 (25,228 Hungarians left the country in the 1980s). The first wave of departure to the West (between 1965 and 1970) to get a job seemed to be only temporary: 16,627 Hungarians (27.5% of the regions guest workers) (Bukurov, 1977: 135–156). Most of these Hungarians came from the municipalities of Subotica, Novi Sad, Topola, Sombor and Ada, mostly from the linguistic islands of Banat and Bačka. The reason for migration changed in the 90s: it was now political and psychological, the fear of war and military mobilization. The narrow confines of socio-cultural minority life and developmental area disabled any adequate cultivation of traditions and reduced the possibility of education in the mother tongue (from pre-school to university). Political migrants appeared at the beginning of the 90s, mostly due to their refusal to answer military call-up, since they felt that their basic civil rights were

being violated as members of a minority group. The majority of Hungarians did not feel the need to take part in the South Slavic conflict. Migration was large-scale, and young professionals and families moved to countries that were willing to receive refugees or political and economic migrants (Canada, Australia, Germany, Hungary, etc.). Migration of Hungarian professionals was encouraged because of their knowledge and talent, while a lack of appropriate and complete conditions for scientific research, inadequate investment in reform and inventions and their low financial recognition made them eager to move abroad. At the same time, Europe welcomed new, creative ideas and our experts could hold their own in the competitive environment.

The Hungarian migrants from Serbia first moved to European countries - Germany, Austria, Sweden and France - fewer Hungarians travelling to non-European countries (Canada, USA). Lately, since European countries have been inundated by refugees and guest workers, migrants have not had the opportunity to choose their destination, but to go to a country that welcomed their arrival, such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

3. Types of migration⁸

Today the majority of migrants are young specialists (IT specialists, programmers, engineers, inventors, microbiologists, professionals with PhD degrees, medical workers, artists and sportsmen) who have/can master foreign languages and have capital as well. Our region faces serious disadvantages as a result of a “brain-drain” and the migration of businessmen and their capital. There follows an analysis of migration types according to the length of migrant stays over the last decade:

a) Temporary foreign employment

Employment targeted at the west has been officially registered by the state for half a century. The most highly qualified employees work abroad during the whole year (generally with their families) and return only occasionally (significant holidays, visiting relatives two or three times per year). They will usually maintain their foreign status for as long as they have their jobs or till the amendment of Serbia’s status, but it is also possible that this group of people will return only after Serbia’s admission to the EU.

b) Entrepreneurs, businessmen

At the end of the 80s a small number of enterprise-oriented private tradesmen, privately-owned small factories and suppliers appeared in Yugoslavia and Vojvodina. The nature of their business activities resulted in the establishment of various relationships with foreign business partners. Groups of new businessmen have tried to launch enterprises again and again, either during the years of critical economy since the state jobs were vulnerable to the economic reforms or during the years of economic boom as a result of gaining new motivation. The new class of entrepreneurs in Serbia continues to change its economic activity, trying to benefit from cross-border economic opportunities. The average life cycle of firms is usually short, but diverse as regards their business activity and is characterized by perpetually travelling businessmen and managers.

c) The economic migration of the unemployed

During the 90s (during the civil war) the “technological labour excess” of state firms became the new unemployed population, who tried to look for new jobs abroad. They tried to find

⁸ Source: SCOPES (2009-2012) research project: Integrating (trans)national migrants in transition states (IMIG)

jobs in the neighbouring EU states that reflected their qualifications. Alongside this group of unemployed, surplus agricultural workers (from villages) also went abroad to find seasonal work.

d) Daily or weekly cross border commuters

Following the Second World War, rapid industrialization resulted in internal migration. First, people commuted between villages and towns; later (from the 90's), people who lived near the border started commuting to their schools or workplaces on a daily or weekly basis. This resulted in periodical, but permanent commuting and absence from their home country. There were construction and industrial workers who travelled home every 2nd or 3rd month, secondary school and university students (Gábrity Molnár, 2008), but also smugglers who commuted daily. Many of them were black marketeers, but there were shopping tourists as well.

4. The consequences of migration

Mass migration in Serbia has economic, social and psychological consequences. The economic migration of the population caused damage to both society and economy at a number of levels:

1. Lack of experts, human loss (lack of young men, lack of experts, and the irreplaceability of key jobs⁹),
2. A serious economic deficit (withdrawal, lack of repayment of the investment in education/qualifications),
3. Demographic deformation, decrease in population (desertion of villages, decrease in birth rate, decrease of the number of marriages, the increase of the number of divorces and juvenile delinquency as well as alcoholism, drug consumption, etc.)
4. The powerlessness of the region (the lack of developmental potential and innovation). According to data from 1971, eight out of every hundred employees changed their residence. This shows that the fluctuation of the labour force is very high, but its direction is neither rational nor appropriate. The emigrational territories (from where the labour force emigrated) were not the most developed regions nor the most densely populated ones where living circumstances were harsh. Unemployment and dissatisfaction with social-financial standards encouraged migration. The rate of migration from the present territory of Serbia was the highest in Vojvodina, though this part of the country is the most developed. Within Vojvodina the most intensive emigrational regions were the relatively underdeveloped South Banat and North Bačka, which on the other hand was economically and culturally the most developed.

One phenomenon disadvantageous to the country is that the qualifications of those who work abroad are higher than that of those who work in Serbia. Nowadays, the situation is even worse since target countries are not in need of a non-qualified labour force any more. One element of the damage caused by the migration of labour force is financial loss, resulting from the absence of those experts in whose education the state invested money. At the same time the rhythm and quality of economic development of countries that face human and financial loss has slowed down. Countries of high migration to a great degree depend on foreign capital investments that they spend on the replacement experts missing from the

⁹ Between 1990 and 1993 719 registered scientists (who had a doctoral degree) left (Small) Yugoslavia. Their number comprised 67% of the migrants of those years. At the beginning of the Yugoslav war 200,000 youngsters left the country: escaping from military conscription, war dangers, ethnic cleansing or because they did not feel their future to be safe.

labour force. Labour market competition will also be less since posts that should be occupied by experts are filled by a less qualified workforce.

5. Integration into the new atmosphere

We are faced with contradictions when analyzing the state and behaviour of those who live abroad and wish to return. As time passes, those who have left the country with their families become less attached to the living circumstances and work habits of the country they left behind. When immigrants want to bridge their integration difficulties they make efforts to identify themselves with the new mentality, living circumstances and work habits. Guest workers usually aim at living rationally by providing their maximum achievement and earning as much as they can. However, the differences (cultural, ideological, and historic-genetic) between the domestic and foreign workers of the target countries are obvious (Tanić, 1972: 441–461). Communication difficulties between the indigenous workers and newcomers are not only linguistic (easier to overcome), but rather different attitudes and value systems, which can cause misunderstandings. Immigrants usually arrive from villages or regions that are either culturally or economically under-developed. The majority of guest workers consider their foreign employment to be temporary and do not make any effort to acquire new socio-cultural customs. Those who leave their home country for economic reasons are negatively discriminated from several aspects, primarily by not being considered as organic members of the target country's working class. The situation of immigrants worsens by the fact that they compete with the workers of the target country on the labor market (what is more, foreigners are potential strike breakers).

As for the integration difficulties, foreigners live separately from the domestic population. Some districts become exclusively Turkish, Polish or Yugoslav as a result of mass migration, with even clubs and schools being established for the children of guest workers. The living and housing conditions of immigrants depends on their income and financial status. Since immigrants usually arrive with no capital, they depend to a great extent upon each other. Their residential and cultural isolation gradually becomes ghetto-like, aiming at the preservation of their national and cultural identity. Relatively successful cultural and social communication between the domestic and foreign workers may also occur. This is usually possible among young, well-qualified experts as a result of their modern life-style and their capacity to adjust to change. More educated groups consciously accept the new behaviour patterns and preserve only the most crucial elements of their identities. Research conducted among guest workers returning to their home country for holidays shows that they are much disciplined in the new workplaces, they are aware of their class and social status and are less rebellious than in their home country. Those who are highly qualified and come from towns/cities are more willing to accept the new conditions but keep themselves away from the political and institutional life of the target country. Those who migrate for economic reason are not privileged at their workplaces. Their desires are usually confined to a higher income, a better workplace and better living conditions. Foreign workers may confront those who are in power and the state bureaucracy, especially when prolonging their residential or work permit. Conflicts, however, are rare on the immigrants' side since they know that should they demand the same rights and conditions that the domestic population enjoys they risk their residence in the target country. One small group of conformists (those who wish to accommodate) put up with any working conditions and are satisfied with the mere fact that they have a job and income and by that also acknowledge that their future depends to a great extent upon their employers.

The majority of guest workers belong to the third behaviour group, who are reluctant to be pessimistic. They are the most dissatisfied with their lot, their ambitions decrease and they accept any kind of job. Should their dissatisfaction reach a critical level they change employers or consider returning to their home country. This behaviour is characteristic of those coming from villages and for older workers as well. The behaviour models of immigrants are as follow: (1) Assimilation: when immigrant social attraction is low, while that of the target country is high; (2) Isolation positioning: both are low; (3) Autonomous integration: both are high.

Within the category of adaptation we can distinguish three different levels, although their borderlines are difficult to identify. The first step is contact and facing the otherness. The second is crisis, which can be resolved in two radical ways: by assimilation or resistance and withdrawal. The third step is adaptation: the assimilation of immigrants into the new environment is always difficult because of cultural, linguistic, ideological, historic-genetic differences.

Until the beginning of the 1990s no significant migrations were registered of Vojvodina Hungarians between Hungary and Yugoslavia/Serbia. Several demographers and anthropologists in Hungary have written about the Hungarians of Vojvodina who left for Hungary. Most studies analyzed and compared the data of immigrants in the Carpathian Basin during the regime change (Tóth, 1996). The statistical data of those arriving from Yugoslavia show that it was rather young men of military age who left for Hungary in 1991. In 1989 95% of immigrating men were between the ages of 14-19. Until 1993 there were more immigrating men than women; later, however, the ratio of immigrating men and women was balanced and the number of immigrating children rose which indicates the departure of families. Between, 1988-1994, Yugoslavia had the second highest number of migrants: 10,404 people left Yugoslavia compared with the 74,298 who left Romania.¹⁰ 8,934 people came to Hungary from the former Soviet states. The number of immigrants from other countries is negligible. More immigrants applied for Hungarian citizenship from Romania (45,021) than from Yugoslavia (3,845) (Tóth, 1996: 111). We can conclude that Yugoslav immigrants did not intend to leave their country for good, rather wanting to stay abroad until the war ended.

During the South Slavic war, a self-organized closedness was markedly more noticeable than integration. This can be proved by the destination choice of the group under analysis: what played a significant role when deciding upon the destination of migration was, firstly, the presence of relatives and only secondly the presence of friends. Following the first wave of migration the new-comers were supported by those who had already established their standard of living. Immigrants from Yugoslavia were called “Yugos” by the domestic population of Hungary. During the critical phase of integration immigrants were supported by their Hungarian friends from Hungary or relatives and friends who arrived earlier.

The types of groups who emigrated to Hungary (Gábrity Molnár, 2010):

- a.) Before the civil war (between 1989 and 1991), Hungarians of Vojvodina were not refugees, but migrating guest workers. Hungary often served only as a transitional country for further migration to more developed capitalist countries in hope of well-paid work possibilities.

¹⁰ The most Yugoslav and Romanian citizens-immigrants were of Hungarian nationality. At that time, more than 1,6 million ethnic Hungarians lived in Romania (20% of the total population.), and in Serbia about 300 thousand (4% of the total population of Serbia).

- b.) At the beginning of the war and hyperinflation (1992-93) it was mostly entrepreneurs who left the country (their estimated number in Hungary is approximately 500). This group established small and medium-sized private companies (e.g. limited companies) with a positional advantage (having the capital). Most of these companies belong to the third sector.
- c.) Economic emigrants and refugees who left as a result of fear from the civil war (1991-95) had less capital. Their estimated number including their families was more than 10,000. They had to rely on their domestic relationships and also to find a job with the help and support of their domestic relationships (black marketeers). The migrants belonging to this group rarely sold their properties, maintaining the possibility of return. They usually chose seasonal well-paying jobs. Some of them are “refugee entrepreneurs”.
- d.) From 1990, there was a group of students among those emigrating to Hungary (hundreds of secondary school and university students who usually stay abroad).

6. The effects of cross-border migration

Following the fall of the Milošević regime the process of democratization and economic stabilization was slow. Despite this, however, the migration wave decreased and from then on (especially after Hungary’s accession to the EU) the importance of the establishment of cross-border relationships is obvious. The main means and frames of the establishment of cross-border co-operation are frequent subjects of debate in certain economic institutions, local governments and ministry partner organizations. Mass migration has been replaced by regional and cross-border relationships that require the following factors: mutual planning and programs (for instance, regional relationships between the Southern Great Plain and Vojvodina, as well as the synchronization of the local developmental plans of cross-border municipalities), later resource coordination and income effectiveness (for instance, island-like development, regional optimization, the harmony of mutual programs, synergistic effects). The role of spontaneously co-operating organizations that became Europe-regional formations or territorial co-operational groupings bears significant importance to this day (Pál, 2003: 233).

The intensive (though one-directional) migration processes of the last decade need to be reflected from a point of view that brings positive advantages for both countries. Therefore, the elements of the mutual developmental processes of the region need to be established. Between 1991-1999 the number of foreign-interested (especially small) entrepreneurships in Hungary quadrupled (Szónokiné, 2001). “...There are chronological data about the industry’s export-orientation of the county according to which the export ratio of industrial sales between 1994 and 2002 significantly rose, almost doubled (from 27.7% to 55.1%). The increase of export-orientation characterized all regions; however, differences in ratio can be noticed. In 2002 the two most typical export-oriented regions (the export ratio to be higher than 70%) were West and Central Transdanubia. The lowest rate of industrial sale was noted in the South Plain” (Antalóczy – Sass, 2005: 510).

In Hungary the density of foreign entrepreneurships (1999) was 2.6% (the ratio of foreign entrepreneurships in comparison to registered ones), which is only 1.9% in the South Plain, but Csongrád county exceeds the country’s average: 2.9%. 70% of Yugoslav companies were founded in this region (44% of them in Csongrád County). After 1996 the number of Yugoslav firms decreased by 10% in Bács-Kiskun county, while it rose by 32% in Csongrád county (*Source: CD Céghírek, January 31. 1999.*). The territorial movements of Yugoslav entrepreneurships as regards their economic innovational spread describe two directions: a

spread along the hierarchies of municipalities or one spreading outward from municipalities along the border to the cross-border municipalities, thereby significantly influencing the economies of the municipalities of the border.

The entrepreneurial types of Serbian (or mostly ethnic Hungarian) refugee-businessmen were as follow:

1. Successful small and medium-sized entrepreneurships became foreign subcontractors who were experienced and had invested available capital (money, capital, machines that they could take over the border without paying duty). The target settlement of refugee-businessmen was either the nearest cross-border Township or Szeged (Szónoky, 2001: 69).
2. Many fictive companies were founded in the region in order to obtain work permits, property purchase rights or a residential permit.
3. Hungarians from Vojvodina established family companies in villages along the border. These were mostly small factories employing approximately ten employees.

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