Refugees and the "Other Hungary": The Historiography of the Reception of Refugees in Twentieth-Century Hungary

Ágnes Katalin Kelemen

ABSTRACT

This article surveys the historiography on refugees in twentieth-century Hungary (both works written by Hungarian and foreign researchers) to provide a critical overview of "refugeedom" in the Hungarian context. It identifies a need for future works on the topic to deal with conceptual history. The country's twentieth-century history is divided into four parts for the purposes of studying the history of refugees: World War I and its aftermath until World War II; the escape from Nazism; the period of state socialism; and the period of transition to democracy. Within the Hungarian-language historiography, research on refugees has tended to support a positive national narrative in which Hungary has repeatedly functioned as a shelter for people who had to escape from somewhere due to real or feared persecution. As far as the two World Wars and the interwar period are concerned, historians pay attention to refugees and connect their reception to the grand questions of those periods (the origin of the interwar period's antisemitism, Hungary's relationship with the Third Reich). When it comes to the Cold War and the post-socialist era, however, research on refugee history is dominated by sociologists. This article argues that the refugee history of the Cold War period has remained marginal in historical works due to a widespread insistence on a link between migration and ethnicity that prevents researchers from giving as much attention to political refugees as to refugees who suffered persecution on account of their ethnicity or nationality.

KEYWORDS: Hungary, refugees, historiography, twentieth century

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Introduction

Remembering Hungary's role as a refuge for Poles after Poland was occupied by Germany and the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II, József Antall Jr. noted in 1989 that the Hungarians who helped the refugees demonstrated what "the other, the eternal Hungary was capable of."[1] "The other Hungary" was a popular phrase that denoted a better, difficult to attain version of the country, but one that was at least conceivable. That alternative Hungary is represented by the few Hungarians who differ from those who hold power at a given moment. The "other Hungary" stands in opposition to the actual official authorities. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the representatives of the other Hungary (who included Antall's father, József Antall Sr.) sided with the Poles, unlike the Hungarian government, which sided with the Third Reich. In the defense of the Hungarian government, the most that can be said is that at least it did not prevent the other Hungary (in the form of opposition parties and citizen organizations) from privately aiding Polish refugees.

History written and disseminated in the Hungarian language has tended to support a positive image of the country as historically benevolent, not only toward refugees but also immigrants in general, ever since the foundation of the medieval kingdom. Yet more controversy emerges with regard to the period since the nineteenth century, when incomers' ethnicity and their potential (or willingness) to assimilate began to matter as nationalism gained ground. Ulf Brunnbauer's remark in 2017 that "the region still appears to be obsessed with the connection between migration and ethnicity" applies to all of East Central Europe, including Hungary.[2] Such obsession even impedes putting refugees in the center of historical attention with regard to periods when the country's welcoming of refugees could support a positive national narrative. Hence, the refugees to state socialist Hungary, who were identified by their politics rather than nationality, have thus far remained marginal in historical scholarship.

In 1988, when the government was considering signing the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, governmental and non-governmental organizations in Hungary fiercely debated whether it was better to prioritize ethnicity or to commit to an impartial human rights regime and accept international obligations in the reception of refugees. In the end, Hungary signed the convention in March 1989. In 2008, as the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the convention approached in an atmosphere of growing xenophobia, academics who had closely followed and researched the development of refugee

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1 József Antall Jr.: Gondolatok a lengyel menekültügyről [Reflections on Polish Refugee Affairs], in: Károly Kapronczay (ed.): Magyarok és lengyelek: Menekültügy, 1939–1945 [Hungarians and Poles: Refugee Affairs, 1939–1945], Budapest 1991, pp. 13–19, here p. 13.

2 Ulf Brunnbauer: Introduction, in: Hungarian Historical Review 6 (2017), 3: Migration and East Central Europe—A Perennial but Unhappy Relationship, pp. 497–501, here p. 498.

policy noted the silence that surrounded the anniversary and called for further research about its meaning.[3]

The present article is inspired by their call, and by the passing of the thirtieth anniversary of the signing—met with even more silence. Indeed, there is even less now to celebrate in Hungary's treatment of refugees than in the past. The country's express commitment to respect human rights and international obligations in its reception of refugees has faded, not to mention putting that commitment into actual practice. Historians cannot avoid asking the question, why is that so? What processes have led to the current state of affairs?

We can speak of history and historiography specifically about refugees because refugees are a particular type of migrant. The definition of a refugee is more elusive than that of an immigrant, especially when we examine periods when international conventions on the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees did not yet exist, or states where they were not yet ratified. When writing about the history of refugees, historians must take into account changing temporal and spatial contexts and the political and legal meanings the term "refugee" carries with it.

Are we to write the history of people who were perceived as refugees (*menekültek*) by their contemporaries, or should we limit our efforts to people who meet the definitions found in conventions that were not in force (or not ratified by Hungary) at the time? The first option makes our work imprecise, the second runs the risk that it will be full of anachronisms. The tension between the two approaches to historical writing can be resolved if we instead apply a third one, namely, conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), and scrutinize the shifting meaning of the concept of "refugee" across time and place.[4] By creating an overview of historians' choices as to whom they regard as the subjects of refugee history, what interpretative frameworks they apply, and also the positionality (the social and political context) in which they worked, we can develop a conceptual history of "refugeedom." "Refugeedom" is a historical construct that incorporates moral principles, legal frameworks, and actual practices adopted by governments and others to deal with people who have escaped from somewhere else. It is a translation of the Russian term *bezhenstvo* and has been popularized in history writing by Peter Gatrell.[5]

This article is an attempt at such a historiographic overview. In it, I focus on works written about refugees to Hungary in the broadest sense: people who arrived in Hungary after being forced out of their previous residences by persecution or the fear thereof. Following the main refugee moments identified by historians, I have divided twentieth-century Hungarian history into four relevant periods: World War I and its aftermath until World War II; the escape

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3 Endre Sík, Judit Tóth: Introduction, in: Regio—Minorities, Politics, Society 19 (2008), English issue, pp. 5–7.

4 Reinhart Koselleck (ed.): Historische Semantik und Begriffsgeschichte, Stuttgart 1979.

5 Peter Gatrell: Refugees—What's Wrong with History?, in: Journal of Refugee Studies 30 (2017), 2, pp. 170–189.

from Nazism; the period of state socialism; and the period of transition to democracy. As will be shown later on, as far as the two World Wars and the interwar period are concerned, historians have shown interest in refugee history and how it is connected to the grand historical questions of those periods (the origin of the interwar period's antisemitism, Hungary's relationship with the Third Reich). When it comes to the Cold War and the post-socialist era, however, research on refugee reception has largely been conducted by sociologists.

World War I and the Interwar Period

The violence of World War I resulted in the arrival of numerous refugees in Hungary. As early as the autumn of 1914, between six and eight thousand refugees, mostly Jews, had fled (Austrian) Galicia for the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy. Over the course of the war, twenty five thousand arrived, and nearly every Hungarian town hosted some of them.[6] From the end of 1914, they were a topic of constant discussion in the Hungarian parliament and in the press.[7] The pre-existing antisemitic stereotype of the unassimilable, untrustworthy Galician Jew was updated with new ones: the cowardly Jew avoiding service at the front and the Jewish "military millionaire" who made a fortune selling overpriced, low-quality goods to the army. The simultaneous presence in the public discourse of these new *topoi*, which targeted both the most integrated and least integrated Jews, intensified the hostility toward Jews in Hungary during the war, as it did in most of Central Europe. Even though the refugees arriving from Galicia were not all Jews, the Jews became the focus of the Hungarian historiography on the refugeedom of the period. This is because historians are haunted by the question of when the antisemitic movement that became the mainstream of Hungary's post–World War I politics originated: was it during the war, or later, at the time of the 1919 Hungarian Commune? Hence, when historians research the reception of Jewish refugees during the "Great War," they are in fact addressing one of the most pressing questions in interwar Hungarian history. Tamás Stark demonstrates the continuity in the discourse about Galician Jewish immigrants. That discourse played a role in antisemitic atrocities from the nineteenth century up to 1941, when the first mass murder of the Shoah for which Hungarian authorities bear responsibility took place. That act was the deportation of 22 000 foreign-born and stateless Jews (along with Hungarian Jews who could not document their citizenship).

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6 Rebekah Klein-Pejšová: Beyond the "Infamous Concentration Camps of the Old Monarchy": Jewish Refugee Policy from Wartime Austria-Hungary to Interwar Czechoslovakia, in: Austrian History Yearbook 45 (2014), pp. 150–166, here p. 156.

7 Péter Bihari: Lövészárkok a hátországban: Középosztály, zsidókérdés, antiszemitizmus az első világháború Magyarországán [Trenches in the Hinterland: Middle Class, Jewish Question, Antisemitism in Hungary during the First World War], Budapest 2008, p. 152.

The majority of them would be murdered in Kamianets-Podilskyi by German police forces and Ukrainian militia.[8]

Péter Bihari dates the antisemitic turn taken by mainstream public discourse to the second half of 1916 and the beginning of 1917. At that moment, even the newspapers that had up to then not taken much notice of the Jews started to publish antisemitic articles on a daily basis. Bihari points out that although Orthodox Jewish Galician refugees were conspicuous in downtown Budapest, they were only 2.2–2.6 percent of the city's population, and Galician Jewish refugees constituted 3.5–4.0 percent of the population of Vienna.[9]

Like Bihari, Rebekah Klein-Pejšová probes the refugee history of the Great War for explanations of interwar phenomena. In particular, she points to wartime Austro-Hungarian practice as the model for the interwar Czechoslovak refugee management system. She also describes the odyssey of Galician Jewish refugees to other Austrian provinces and back to Galicia. Some of their paths led through Slovakia, which belonged to the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy. Klein-Pejšová describes the difficulties arising from the monarchy's policy of linking aid and resettlement with citizenship. Austrian citizens (including Galicians) were entitled to state aid, but only from the Austrian treasury and only when sojourning on Austrian territory. Hence, Galician refugees who spent time in Hungary and had insufficient means to provide for themselves (which was the majority of them) had to rely on local Jewish communities. The local communities unsuccessfully lobbied the Hungarian authorities to provide the Galician refugees in Hungary with the same aid they would have been entitled to in Austria.[10]

Extending the earlier Budapest-centered scholarship, Robert Nemes examines how the residents of Oradea (Nagyvárad) responded to the arrival of Jewish refugees in that town. He agrees with Bihari that 1916 was the turning point in the history of Hungarian antisemitism. To support this argument, Nemes makes the case that after August 1916, when Romania attacked Transylvania and forced many Hungarians to flee from eastern Transylvania to Oradea, the local newspapers routinely contrasted two groups of refugees: the agreeable Hungarians and the alien, suspect Galician Jews.[11] In contrast, Kamil Ruszała analyses intellectual discourse in the press and finds a diversity of attitudes, not all of them unsympathetic. One strain of discourse called for humanitarian concern (in the form of both material and moral support) and viewed the

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8 TAMÁS STARK: A hosszú út az "idegen" zsidók galíciai deportálásához [The Long Road to the Deportation of "Alien" Jews to Galicia], in: Századok 147 (2013), 6, pp. 1461–1496.

9 BIHARI.

10 KLEIN-PEJŠOVÁ.

11 ROBERT NEMES: Refugees and Antisemitism in Hungary during the First World War, in: ROBERT NEMES, DANIEL L UNOWSKY (eds.): Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics, 1880–1918, Waltham 2014, pp. 236–254.

refugees as victims of the war.[12] To underline his point, Ruszała quotes an emotional article appealing for help for the Galician refugees, written by the well-known Hungarian poet Dezső Kosztolányi.[13] It is noteworthy, however, that Kosztolányi's article appeared in a Jewish weekly. Presumably it addressed its appeal for aid to native Hungarian Jews rather than society as a whole. Later, between 1919 and 1921, the very same Kosztolányi worked as an editorial writer for the radical right-wing journal *Új Nemzedék,* which published several anonymous antisemitic feuilletons that have since been proven to be Kosztolányi's own writings.[14] Finally, Ruszała calls for an investigation of the churches of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary in the public discourse about the arrival of the Galician Jewish refugees. In his view, the churches might have mitigated the hostility shown to the refugees. As for Hungary, Péter Bihari has already examined the situation and shown in detail how the churches intensified anti-Jewish hostility and kept it alive. Two of the main organizers of the antisemitic movement of the time were Roman Catholic theologians, Ottokár Prohászka and Péter Bangha.[15]

While research on refugees during World War I has focused on the Galician Jews, the main theme of research on the postwar period is the escape of Hungarians from territories Hungary lost to neighboring countries after the war. Although their flight began as Austria-Hungary disintegrated in 1918, they are referred to as the "Trianon refugees" because they fled to the territory of the diminished postwar Hungary as subsequently delineated by the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. István Mócsy, a Hungarian-American who published a monograph on the topic in the 1980s, estimated their number at 426,000.[16] In 1988, Éva Kovács was one of the first historians in Hungary to write about Hungarians' expulsions and escape from newly independent Czechoslovakia, events that ultimately involved every tenth Hungarian inhabitant of that state.[17] The most recent studies, conducted by the "Trianon 100" research team set up in the years leading up to the centenary of the treaty in 2020, suggest the true number was

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12 KAMIL RUSZAŁA: Intellectuals and the Galician Refugees during World War I in Austria-Hungary: Disparate Attitudes, in: TOMASZ PUDŁOCKI, KAMIL RUSZAŁA (eds.): Intellectuals and World War I: A Central European Perspective, Kraków 2018, pp. 133–147.

13 "We, the twenty-five thousand miserable souls from Galicia, sick and tired orphans, direct our exhausted words to you, Hungarian peasants […] See a human being in our face and a brother in our eyes." The article originally appeared in the weekly magazine *Egyenlőség*. DEZSŐ KOSZTOLÁNYI: Mi huszonötezren ... [We, the Twenty-Five Thousand...], in: Egyenlőség from 1916-08-26, p. 1.

14 ZSUZSANNA ARANY: Kosztolányi Dezső élete [The Life of Dezső Kosztolányi], Budapest 2017.

15 BIHARI.

16 ISTVAN I. MOCSY: The Effects of World War I: The Uprooted: Hungarian Refugees and Their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics 1918–1921, Brooklyn 1983, pp. 10–12.

17 ÉVA KOVÁCS: A hontalanság örödik éve: 1922. Kassa [The Fifth Year of Statelessness: 1922. Košice], in: Medvetánc 8 (1988), 4. pp. 35–48, here p. 39.

even larger.[18] This must be considered in light of the fact that post-Trianon Hungary had fewer than 8,000,000 inhabitants.[19] The most comprehensive work on the plight of the Trianon refugees is István Dékány's *Trianoni árvák*, which deals with the immediate aftermath of their arrival, their reception by Hungarian officials, and the poverty of their living conditions.[20] To his credit, Dékány identified 20,000 individual refugees and published their names, professions, and known movements in a massive database.[21]

The sad figure of the "railway car dweller" (*vagonlakó*) personified the plight of the refugees in a defeated Hungary that had been humiliated by the Trianon peace treaty. Most of those who abandoned their homes in the formerly Hungarian territories came from middle class families, many of them headed by public servants and intellectuals. They brought what few belongings they could with them in railway cars. Their misery was the most visible aspect of the changes in power relations and social status wrought by the disastrous war. As the leader of the Trianon 100 research team, Balázs Ablonczy, has shown, however, only slightly more than 10 percent of the Trianon refugees actually lived in railway cars.[22]

The movement of hundreds of thousands of Hungarians across the newly drawn state borders had such an impact on society that the term "refugee" came to be associated with ethnic Hungarians—as opposed to its prior association with Galician Jews during World War I. In the increasingly mainstream anti-semitic discourse of the early 1920s, "Hungarian" meant "non-Jewish." As one might expect, however, some Trianon refugees happened to be Jewish. In fact, based on István Gergely Szűts's study of the resettlement of Hungarians from beyond the new state borders in three cities of post-Trianon Hungary, one can assume that the proportion of Jews among the postwar refugees matched the proportion of Jews in the country's population as a whole.[23] Ilse Josepha La-

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18 BALÁZS ABLONCZY: "Kétéltűek"? A Trianon utáni menekülés és annak rajzai a korszak irodalmában ["Amphibians?" Escape after Trianon and Its Representations in Contemporary Literature], in: Korunk 31 (2020), 5, pp. 110–122, here p. 110.

19 According to the 1920 census, Hungary had a population of 7,900,000. IGNÁC ROMSICS: Magyarország története a XX. században [Hungary's History in the Twentieth Century], Budapest 2000, p. 186.

20 ISTVÁN DÉKÁNY: Trianoni árvák [The Orphans of Trianon], Budapest 2018.

21 The database had been republished by the Trianon 100 research project: ISTVÁN DÉKÁNY: Menekültek [Refugees] in: Trianon 100, http://trianon100.hu/menekultek (2021-06-09). The project has also published a new anthology on this topic: BALÁZS ABLONCZY (ed.): Úton: Menekülés, mobilitás, integráció Közép-Európában és Magyarországon az első világháború után [On the Road: Escape, Mobility, Integration in Central Europe and in Hungary after World War I], Budapest 2020.

22 ABLONCZY, "Kétéltűek"?, p. 113.

23 ISTVÁN GERGELY SZŰTS: Optálási jegyzőkönyvek mint a trianoni menekültkérdés forrásai [Registries of Option of Citizenship as Sources for the History of Trianon Refugees], in: Századok 152 (2018), pp. 1237–1260, here p. 1237.

zaroms's research on Jewish railway car dwellers[24] has opened up a promising path for future studies, since this intersection can show us how a circumstance that made one seem needy and worthy of state support (i.e. a railway car dweller) and a circumstance that led to the same person's being deemed undeserving of support (being Jewish) played out in interwar Hungary. Her research ultimately reminds us that the different, and very differently received, refugee categories were in fact not separate but rather overlapping groups.

A comprehensive examination of the Trianon refugees' lives and their integration into Hungarian society after 1924, when Hungary's National Refugee Office (Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal, OMH) was closed down, has not yet appeared. Nevertheless, there are promising studies with regard to specific cities and regions.[25] On the whole, scholars agree that the economic consolidation of post-Trianon Hungary in the 1920s enabled it to absorb the refugees, but a comprehensive social history would reveal how many of the refugees suffered downward social mobility in the diminished country's smaller labor market. It would also reveal the extent to which Jewish Trianon refugees had different experiences of integration in Hungary than non-Jewish refugees.

Generally, historical works on interwar Hungary (like the documents produced by Hungarian state authorities themselves) tend to focus on one of two categories of refugees: Hungarians who left the territories split off from Hungary by the Trianon treaty or foreign Jews escaping Nazism starting in 1933. Exploration of Croatian and Italian sources, however, as well as some Hungarian documents, has brought to light the lesser-known case of the Croatian separatists who received protection in Hungary from arrest (or worse) by the Yugoslav authorities. Their story has been explored by Petra Hamerli,[26] who argues that the Hungarian politicians' protection of the Croatian separatists was clearly motivated by their own foreign policy interests rather than humanitarianism. Hungary's leaders favored the dissolution of Yugoslavia because it had emerged after World War I at the expense of the former Greater Hungary. Consequently, between 1931 and 1934, a refugee camp in Jankapuszta hosted political emigrants from Yugoslavia and even offered them military training. The welcoming of the Croatians, who were being pursued by the Yugoslav authorities, accorded with the anti-Yugoslav sentiment behind the conclusion of the Italo-Hungarian treaty of friendship of 1927. Hamerli's study suggests that a

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24 Ilse J. Lazaroms: Jewish Railway Car Dwellers in Interwar Hungary: Citizenship and Uprootedness, in: Wlodzimierz Borodziej, Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.): Immigrants and Foreigners in Central and Eastern Europe during the Twentieth Century, London—New York 2020, pp. 53–72.

25 For instance, István Gergely Szűts: Sikerek, kompromisszumok és kudarcok a felvidéki menekültek integrációs folya-mataiban [Successes, Compromises and Failures in the Integration Process of Asylum-Seekers from Former Upper Hungary, Today's Slovakia)], in: Fórum—Társadalomtudományi Szemle 12 (2010), 4, pp. 3–24.

26 Petra Hamerli: Croatian Political Refugees in Emigration: The Hungarian Case, in: Hungarian Historical Review 6 (2017), 3, pp. 624–646.

closer look at Hungary's refugee history may reveal similar untold episodes in its past.

Refugees from Nazism

Kinga Frojimovics is the only historian currently working on the reception of refugees who escaped Nazism prior to the outbreak of World War II, and not only as a prelude to wartime events.[27] Her monograph shows how Jewish refugees were discriminated against in the 1930s compared to non-Jewish Hungarians coming from neighboring countries. Frojimovics's findings are based on a systematic overview of documentation on migrant affairs produced by the National Central Alien Control Office (Külföldieket Ellenőrző Országos Központi Hatóság, KEOKH). This office—established to control foreigners residing in Hungary—regarded Jews as a special category of persons from the moment of its foundation in the early 1930s. During World War II it became a major instrument of antisemitic persecution. Based on Frojimovics's research, one can make the case that the primary act of generosity extended to Polish war refugees in 1939 was exempting them from KEOKH's scope of authority. However, Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi-occupied Poland later on and were not soldiers in the Polish army but civilian fugitives from the ghettos and concentration camps were handled by KEOKH, which meant expulsion and death for many. Another important finding in the monograph is that Jewish refugees from Poland and Slovakia played an important role in organizing Zionist rescue activities in Hungary during the war due to their awareness of the ongoing Nazi genocide and their experience in escaping from it.

The history of the Catholic Polish refugees of 1939 is a more popular topic among both historians and the general public. The historiography on the topic dates back to 1946, when József Antall Sr. published a booklet about his wartime activities as a government official handling refugee affairs in the interior ministry.[28] In that capacity, he organized social care for the Poles and education for their children. Importantly, he took over the infrastructure created in the 1920s to take care of Hungarian Trianon refugees and added his own experience in organizing financial aid for the poor, providing for the 50,000–60,000 Polish refugees who arrived in Hungary in 1939.[29]

The history of Polish refugees to Hungary remained to a large extent produced by authors like Antall who had been personally involved. The writers of

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27 KINGA FROJIMOVICS: I Have Been a Stranger in a Strange Land: The Hungarian State and Jewish Refugees in Hungary, 1933–1945, Jerusalem 2007.

28 JÓZSEF ANTALL [SR]: Lengyel menekültek Magyarországon a háború alatt [Polish Refugees in Hungary during the War], Budapest 1946.

29 This is the most common estimate found in Polish historiography. Hungarian historians tend to estimate their number between 110,000 and 140,000. ANDRZEJ PRZEWOŹNIK: Polacy w Królestwie Węgier 1939–1945 / Lengyel menekültek Magyarország területén 1939–1945 [Polish Refugees in Hungary's Territory 1939–1945], Budapest 2006, p. 50.

these memoirs were either refugees or rescuers of refugees, and historians of the topic. New contributions to the historiography of Hungarian refugeedom must thus consider both, personal memoirs as well as more traditional works of historical scholarship.

After the communist takeover in Hungary as well as Poland in the late 1940s, the topic of wartime refugees to Hungary was relegated to oblivion. The emerging Stalinist regimes allowed space only for criticizing the pro-Nazism of the wartime Hungarian political elite and worked to suppress any memory of deeds that shed a favorable light on that elite—most notably the support given to Poles and other refugees (French, British, Dutch, Soviet, Czech) escaping Nazi concentration camps. Beyond that, the Hungarian political elite of the interwar period was depicted as a monolithic group of "reactionary," pro-German politicians, when, in fact, some of the opposition parties and the parliament, and some ministry officials, had opposed Hungary's alliance with Germany. For example, the Independent Smallholders' Party, which formed an opposition to the government as a proponent of the interests of peasants (and whose platform was based on a pro-Catholic, conservative value system), fiercely opposed the government's pro-German foreign policy. It is no wonder that among the main supporters of the Polish refugees in 1939 were politicians of the Smallholders' Party, most notably József Antall Sr. and Béla Varga (who was also a priest).

The year 1956 brought de-Stalinization and a reevaluation in Poland of the Poles' role in World War II. This led to increased interest in the idea that wartime Hungary had been a place of refuge for Poles, reflected in part in a groundbreaking novel by the Polish author Adam Bahdaj, who drew in part on his own experiences.[30] The timing of the publication of Bahdaj's Hungarian-themed novel—in the context of mutual friendship and aid—may have been influenced by the outbreak of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and its suppression by a Soviet invasion.

It nevertheless took another decade until the topic of wartime Polish refugees could be openly discussed in Hungary. Following a 1966 visit by János Kádár (the leader of the Hungarian Workers' Socialist Party after 1956) to Kraków, censorship of the topic was loosened. The thaw also had to do with the somewhat more lenient atmosphere of the new economic mechanism in Hungary (1968–1971), which had an impact on cultural policy, as well. In those years József Antall Sr., who was living an isolated life in Hungary, was often visited by Polish friends and journalists who had been refugees themselves. Their visits may have encouraged him to write his memoirs, which nevertheless remained unpublished for almost three decades thereafter.[31]

During the 1970s, discussion of the experiences of wartime Polish refugees began to appear in some provincial local history journals and archives' yearbooks, albeit not in widely distributed scientific journals. Following the publi-

30 ADAM BAHDAJ: Droga przez góry [The Road through the Mountains], Warszawa 1959.

31 JÓZSEF ANTALL SR.: Menekültek menedéke: Emlékek és iratok [Asylum of Refugees: Memories and Documents], Budapest 1997.

cation of a monograph on wartime Hungarian–Polish relations (couched in dogmatic Marxist-Leninist and pro-Soviet discourse),[32] a debate exploded about whether the "reactionary" pro-Nazi leadership of Hungary received Polish refugees in 1939 out of generosity or in its own self-interest. Historians as well as other intellectuals took part in this debate, which played out in the columns of the journals that were the most widely distributed among the educated public: the weekly *Élet és irodalom* (Life and Literature) and the popular magazine *História* (History).

By the end of the 1970s, and especially after the introduction of martial law in Poland in late 1981 (an act of which the ruling Hungarian Workers' Socialist Party approved), wartime Hungarian–Polish relations again were marginalized as a topic of interest to scholars. István Lagzi, who published a number of studies during the 1970s about local and military historical aspects of the reception Poles received during the war, tried to publish a comprehensive monograph on the subject in 1980. He succeeded in getting it published in Poland, but not in Hungary.[33]

Károly Kapronczay, another important historian of the Polish refugees, knew József Antall Sr. personally and edited his memoirs for publication.[34] Kapronczay's work focuses on the welfare and social policy aspects of refugee affairs. He points out the continuity of the policies for caring for refugees between the interwar period and the last, post-socialism decade of the century.[35] The Hungarian state consistently treated refugees as a social issue (a question of providing support for their housing and living costs) based on the experience of absorbing the Trianon refugees Hungary after World War I. The treatment of the Polish refugees was also seen as a social issue, even though the international legal conventions of the time required separate treatment for military and civilian refugees. In the autumn of 1939, at least 50,000–60,000 Poles reached Hungary, the majority of whom (40,000) were ex-military refugees.[36] The government treated the latter group on the basis of the conventions resulting from the second peace conference in The Hague in 1907 (ratified by Hungary

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32 Ágnes Godó: Magyar-lengyel kapcsolatok a második világháborúban [Hungarian–Polish Relations during World War II], Budapest 1976.

33 István Lagzi: Uchodźcy polscy na Węgrzech w latach drugiej wojny światowej [Polish Refugees in Hungary during World War I], Warszawa 1980.

34 Antall Sr., Menekültek menedéke.

35 Károly Kapronczay: Akkor nem volt Lengyelország ... [Then There Was No Poland ...], Budapest 1992; Károly Kapronczay: Lengyel menekültek Magyarországon, 1939–1945 [Polish Refugees in Hungary, 1939–1945], Budapest 2009.

36 István Lagzi: Adatok az 1939 őszén Magyarországra menekült lengyel katonák evakuációjának történetéhez 1939–1941 [Data Pertaining to the Evacuation of Polish Soldier Refugees in Autumn 1939 from Hungary, 1939–1941], in: Hadtörténelmi Közlemények 20 (1973), 4, pp. 691–719, here p. 692.

in Act No. XLIII/1913) and the 1929 Geneva Conventions (ratified by Hungary in Act No. XXX/1936).[37]

Kapronczay argues that Hungary's generosity toward the Poles extended to Polish Jewish refugees, as well. To support his contention, he draws attention to several unknown episodes in which Hungarian public servants helped foreign Jewish refugees to continue on to other countries.[38] Kinga Frojimovics, on the other hand, has documented how selective Hungarian generosity actually was in her English-language monograph on Jewish refugees in Hungary.[39] She introduced the most provocative argument of her book in an article published in *Századok*, one of Hungary's premiere academic history journals, but her book has regrettably not yet been published in Hungarian. Frojimovics deconstructs the dearly held personality cults around József Antall Sr. and Erzsébet Szapáry, two central figures in the safeguarding of wartime Polish refugees. Their efforts earned them the title "Righteous among the Nations." While Frojimovics acknowledges Antall's and Szapáry's rescue of many Poles, including some Jews, she proves that, among the Jews, they regarded only soldiers of the Polish army and their family members to be as worthy of rescue as Catholic Poles.[40] The majority of Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Poland ended up in KEOKH's hands, even though Antall and Szapáry knew that this meant likely expulsion and death.

Most scholarly publications on wartime refugee history acknowledge that besides Poles, French, British, Italian (Badoglionist), Dutch, and Soviet refugees and escaped prisoners of war found shelter in Hungary. However, almost all works focus on the Poles and treat the rest as a sidebar.[41] A notable exception is *Ego sum gallicus captivus*, an edited volume of recollections by French

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37 1907 Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, 1907 Hague Convention for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the Principles of the Geneva Convention (referring to the Geneva Convention of 1906 on Wounded and Sick), 1929 Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field, 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

38 For instance, in June 1939, Hungary's interior ministry organized the transit of 900 German, Austrian, Polish, Czech, Subcarpathian, Slovak, and Hungarian (from Slovakia) Jews down the Danube to the Black Sea, where they boarded the *Noemi Julia*, a Panamanian cargo ship, for Palestine. In 1940, Hungarian authorities made it possible for a Bulgarian riverboat to transport hundreds of Jews from Bratislava to the Black Sea. KAPRONCZAY, Lengyel menekültek Magyarországon, pp. 14–15.

39 FROJIMOVICS, I Have Been a Stranger.

40 KINGA FROJIMOVICS: Egy embermentő példája? Id. Antall József és a lengyelországi zsidó menekültek Magyarországon a második világháború idején [Example of a Rescuer? József Antall Sr. and the Jewish Refugees from Poland in Hungary during World War II], in Századok 148 (2014), 4, pp. 931–957.

41 For instance, KAPRONCZAY, Lengyel menekültek Magyarországon, includes the other nationalities in an appendix.

wartime refugees published in 1980.[42] Hungary turns up as a waystation on the itinerary of escapees from other Nazi-occupied territories, in publications that focus on the territories from which they had to flee.[43] In conclusion, it can be pointed out that the topic of refugee reception during the war is important for historians because narrating it contributes to a favorable national narrative and because it is closely connected to the central question of Hungary's commitment to the alliance with Nazi Germany.

State Socialism: Comradery Solidarity and Cold War Logic

In both academic and popular discourse about the state socialist period of Hungarian history, the refugees from the Greek Civil War are by far the best known. Although they are referred to in common discourse as "the Greeks," most scholarly works recognize that a significant number of them were Slavic Macedonians. Since the 1970s, ethnography, local history, and sociology have been the most important fields in the scholarship examining the Greek and Slavic Macedonian refugee community. The prominent position of these disciplines stems from Beloiannisz, a village in Hungary founded in 1950 specifically for settlement of political refugees from the Greek Civil War. Beloiannisz was initially referred to as Görögfalva (The Village of the Greeks), but in 1952 its inhabitants renamed it in honor of the Greek communist martyr Nikos Beloyannis. Beloiannisz is unique not only in Hungary but in all of East Central Europe, because it has remained a Greek diaspora community with Greek institutions until today.[44]

An example not so much of historiography, but of a genre one might call lyrical sociography, is *Piros szegfűk és cédrusok*. It is the first book written by a Greek refugee with the aim of familiarizing the Hungarian public with the lives of the refugee community.[45] As one reviewer of the book noted, it is "a lyrical work beyond authentic sociographic representation."[46] Published in 1978, the tensions of the Cold War are palpable in the narrative. The author, Vangelió Caruha, emphasizes that the refugees enjoyed better living conditions

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42 László Antal (ed.): Ego sum gallicus captivus: Francia menekültek Magyarországon [Ego Sum Gallicus Captivus: French Refugees in Hungary], Budapest 1980.

43 For instance, Peter Heumos: Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938–1945, München 1989.

44 One of the first scholarly publications about the village was: István Hetényi: Beloiannisz, in: Fejér Megyei Történeti Évkönyv 14 (1980), 1, pp. 125–149. The most recent one is: Xénia Vincze: Az első 70 év. Beloiannisz falu története [The First 70 Years: The History of Beloiannisz Village], Budapest 2020.

45 Vangelió Caruha: Piros szegfűk és cédrusok [Red Carnations and Cedars], Budapest 1978. Caruha had published an earlier novel based on her personal history as a refugee: Klára Szőllősy, Vangelió Caruha: Az Olimposztól Angyalföldig [From Mount Olympus to Angyalföld], Budapest 1969.

46 András Lukácsy: Vasárnapi level: A görög asszony könyve [Sunday Letter: The Greek Lady's Book], in: Magyar Hírlap from 1978-12-17. p. 6.

in Hungary than they did in Greece. Arguing against Greek right-wing propaganda that claimed the refugees were pressured to assimilate in the communist countries, Caruha highlights the liveliness of folk traditions in Beloiannisz, which were imported from over two hundred villages in Greece that these individuals had called home. Importantly, Caruha carefully differentiates between what interviewees tell her and her own thoughts and explanations, which are meant to benefit Hungarian readers. She belongs to the village but simultaneously assumes the role of a cultural intermediary.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and the collapse of state socialism, all works on recent history, but especially those relating to Greek Civil War refugees, had to acknowledge the impact of the communist regime and ran the risk of being caught up in political disputes. This was the fate of the study on this refugee community published by the Greek-Hungarian sociologist Archimédesz Szidiropulosz.[47] His work applies theories of social psychology and diaspora studies to the group of which he was a member, having arrived in Hungary as a child, the son and younger brother of partisans. His book is based on empirical sociological research conducted during the 1980s among refugees who had returned to Greece and reported on the difficulties they had in integrating there. In his research and writing, Szidiropulosz focuses on the meanings of emigration and the related phenomena of diaspora, identity, and repatriation. The book received little attention from social scientists and Greek-Hungarians but did garner a reaction from Hungarians who had suffered imprisonment after the suppression of the 1956 revolution or emigrated in fear of imprisonment or execution. They did not criticize the book directly but pointed to (perceived) Greek involvement in the suppression of the revolt, most memorably as prison guards.

This prompted Szidiropulosz to research the actual extent of Greeks' employment as prison guards in the late 1950s and examine the variety of Greek reactions to the 1956 uprising with archival research and interviews.[48] In his book's introduction he argues that Greek-Hungarians needed to face their "past with 1956." He also suggests, however, that it would be easier and require less time to eliminate the bias against Greek communist partisans in Hungarian public opinion. Szidiropulosz's purpose in writing the book was to explain why many Greek Civil War refugees were more afraid of the rebels in 1956 than they were of the communist regime. Based on detailed interviews and archival research, Szidiropulosz argues that the refugee community, tightly controlled by its own communist leaders, was too isolated from the majority of Hungarians to understand the intentions of the insurgents of 1956. The refugees were understandably afraid of expulsion if the communist regime that had taken them in were to fail.

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47 ARCHIMÉDESZ SZIDIROPULOSZ: Ithaka partjai: A kisebbségi lét dimenziói [Ithaca's Coasts: The Dimensions of Minority Existence], Budapest 1990.

48 ARCHIMEDES SZIDIROPULOSZ: 1956—Görögök a forradalomban [1956—Greeks in the Revolution], Budapest 1997.

The social sciences continue to dominate the scholarship on Hungary's Greek community. Most recently, during the 2010s, testimonies by the now elderly generation of Greek Civil War refugees have come to the forefront of attention in the literature.[49] The historical context provided in social scientific works is still dominated by the conventional view, which frames state socialist Hungary as a Soviet satellite with no agency of its own. This view persists even though historians have been refining that perspective over the past two decades and have suggested that there was more space for maneuver in communist-era Hungarian foreign policy than sometimes assumed.[50] The adaptation of this trend to the topic of Greek refugees may change the thinking on government decision-making about the reception and allocation of the refugees.

Although the Greek Civil War refugees are the most well-known, they were not the only immigrant group to be resettled in Hungary at the turn of the 1950s as an act of comradely solidarity by the country's Stalinist regime. The split between Stalin and Tito opened a new frontline in the Cold War, excluding Yugoslavia from the alliance of countries that had officially committed themselves to building Soviet-style communism. This rupture led to the persecution of numerous communist party members in Yugoslavia who sided with the Cominform against Tito and the ensuing Cominformist (anti-Tito) political emigration from Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union and other locations across Southern and East Central Europe. Approximately a tenth of the refugees sought asylum in Hungary.[51] Péter Vukman has researched their history, with a focus on the few prominent Yugoslav communists who were officially designated as political emigrants by their comrades in Hungary's ruling communist party.[52] Vukman explains the social composition of the group[53] and recounts its members' biographies. He puts the story of the communists who chose Stalin over Tito into a larger historical perspective. Although they were exiled for their opposition to Tito, some of them were nevertheless caught up in the spiral of Stalinist show-trials in the early 1950s in Hungary.

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49 The most recent collection is: ÁDÁM BALOGH, LYKOURGOS CHRISTOFORATOS et al. (eds.): Meneküléstörténetek: A görög polgárháború során gyermekként Magyarországra került görögök visszaemlékezései [Stories of Escape: Recollections by the Greek Civil War's Child Refugees in Hungary], Budapest 2020.

50 CSABA BÉKÉS: Európából Európába: Magyarország konfliktusok keresztтüzében, 1945–1990 [From Europe to Europe: Hungary in the Crossfire of Conflicts, 1945–1990], Budapest 2004.

51 In other words, 455 of the 5,000 Yugoslav political émigrés. PÉTER VUKMAN: "Harcban Tito és Rankovics klikkje ellen." Jugoszláv politikai emigránsok Magyarországon (1948–1980) ["Fighting Against the Tito Clique and Ranković": Yugoslav Political Emigrants in Hungary (1948–1980)], Budapest 2017, p. 86.

52 VUKMAN.

53 Also known as *Ibeovci*, the 455 Yugoslav Cominformists received political asylum in Hungary. However, the Hungarian government only counted 132 of them as political émigrés because they were the only ones who had an official relationship with the Hungarian Workers' Party and lived in Budapest or its proximity. VUKMAN, pp. 86–87.

The reception of refugees due to persecution for anti-capitalist politics was taken up again in the 1970s, when Hungary received another group of socialist refugees, namely, a few hundred Chilean refugees. James Mark and Balint Tolmar have analyzed the Hungarians' role in the international movement for solidarity with Salvador Allende in Chile and the experience of Chileans in socialist Hungary. Their focus is not on the refugees who escaped the Pinochet coup, but on the circulation of ideas between geographically distant parts of the socialist world in the 1960s and 1970s. They examine the ways in which left-wing Chileans in exile inspired the revival of old, faded concepts of revolution and socialism in Hungarian culture.[54]

Besides accepting refugees from capitalist countries deemed hostile in the Cold War context, Hungary received a small but noticeable group of young people from "friendly" countries, as well. Vietnamese, Cubans, and Africans arrived in Hungary as students and laborers, not as people persecuted in their home countries. Péter Apor makes the case that their story is relevant prehistory with regard to the rejection of refugees by the Visegrád Countries since the mid-2010s.[55] As Apor argues, the relationships of the East Central Euro#pean socialist states with the Global South were not as innocent as they are often portrayed. They recruited workers from the Global South, predominantly from Vietnam and Cuba, to fill low-paid, unskilled jobs and thereby reproduced the exploitation of foreigners for which they condemned the "imperialist" and capitalist West.

Democratic Transition and Refugee Affairs

The question of refugee affairs served a catalyst for Hungary's transition from state socialism to democracy, as historians have argued.[56] In March 1989, Hungary was the first Warsaw Pact member to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This fact, and the debate that led up to Hungary's signing and ratification of the convention (and of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees), made it impossible to handle the influx of

54 JAMES MARK, BALINT TOLMAR: Hungary: Connecting the "Responsible Roads to Socialism?" The Rise and Fall of a Culture of Chilean Solidarity, 1965–89, in: KIM CHRISTIAENS, IDESBALD GODDEERIS et al. (eds.): European Solidarity with Chile: 1970s–1980s, Bern et al. 2014, pp. 301–327.

55 PÉTER APOR: Socialist Mobility, Postcolonialism and Global Solidarity: The Movement of People from the Global South to Socialist Hungary, in: BORODZIEJ/VON PUTTKAMER, pp. 113–126, here pp. 125–126.

56 VERONIKA KASZÁS: Erdélyi menekültek Magyarországon 1988–89: Út a menekültkérdés tagadásától az 1951. évi genfi menekültügyi egyezményhez való csatlakozásig [Transylvanian Refugees in Hungary 1988–89: The Road from Denying the Refugee Question to Joining the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees], Budapest 2015; ANDRÁS OPLATKA: Egy döntés története [The Story of a Decision], Budapest 2008.

refugees from fellow communist countries in the traditional framework of "socialist solidarity" and Cold War logic. Theoretically, nationality and ethnicity did not matter in socialist societies. In practice, Nicolae Ceaușescu, for example, built a national communism in Romania that went hand in hand with persecution of Romania's Hungarian minority. As a consequence, by 1988 more than 13,000 ethnic Hungarian asylum seekers with Romanian citizenship were living in Hungary.[57] At the same time, bilateral agreements with Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union obliged Hungary to forcibly return citizens of those countries who crossed the border illegally or overstayed a permitted visit. Acceding to the Geneva Convention seemed advantageous to the Hungarian government, which was beginning to take on a more liberal, humanitarian outlook, because it prohibits refoulement before an asylum seeker's case is evaluated and because, as a multilateral treaty, it takes precedence over bilateral agreements.

Hungarian collective memory associates the refugee policy of the transition years with the arrival of East German refugees. However, Veronika Kaszás argues that the key episode motivating change was the arrival of the Transylvanian Hungarians from Romania during the 1980s.[58] In the beginning, these ethnic Hungarians were not officially defined as refugees at all, but rather as "resettlers" (*áttelepülők*), because Romania was an allied country in the Cold War context. Nevertheless, the general public considered them refugees persecuted for being Hungarian and hence persons to be aided. This popular view was too strong for the state socialist regime to ignore. Kaszás makes the case that Hungarian leaders' decision to sign the Geneva Convention was shortsighted and that the subsequent obligations required Hungary to host "all kinds of refugees."[59] Indeed, the news that Hungary had signed the Geneva Convention—and to an even larger extent the news that Hungary had removed the electrical fences along its border with Austria in May 1989—increased the number of East Germans requesting passports for travel to Hungary. For several decades, vacations at Lake Balaton had been occasions for East Germans to reunite temporarily with their West German relatives. However, in 1989 the disappearance of the Iron Curtain sparked hope that they might be able to leave Hungary for Austria and West Germany after their vacation rather than return home.

A celebrated episode in the history of the fall of the Iron Curtain was the Pan-European Picnic, which took place on 14 August 1989 near Sopron, Hungary. It was an unofficial initiative—permitted by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party—that brought together nearly two thousand Austrians and Hungarians who had been separated for decades by the fortified border.[60] At the picnic, the border to Austria was symbolically opened for a few hours. Several hundred

57 KASZÁS, pp. 48–49.

58 Ibid.

59 VERONIKA KASZÁS: Diplomatic Way to the 1951 Geneva Convention, in: Regio—Minorities, Politics, Society 19 (2008), English issue, pp. 67–95, here p. 90.

60 OPLATKA, p. 174.

East German citizens took advantage of the moment to flee through Austria to West Germany. The temporary border opening was in part a test by the Hungarian government to see whether or not a step so strongly opposed by the German Democratic Republic (GDR) would lead to Soviet intervention.[61] To the relief of Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Németh, it did not.

The excitement over the successful escape of the East German tourists, who were subject to persecution by the GDR for failing to return home from their vacation and therefore could be considered refugees by the UNHCR and West Germany, turned attention away from the refugees coming from Romania. Nonetheless, the ethnic Hungarians continued arriving. They were, of course, more likely to settle in Hungary than the East German refugees. By this time "the long year of 1988" (from late 1987 to mid-1989)—which Endre Sík has called the "age of innocence"—was over.[62] During that short period, curiosity about refugees and a willingness to help them was widespread in Hungary. Civil organizations,[63] common people, and churches created structures to provide for the welfare of the refugees and compensate for the shortcomings and insufficiency of the state's institutional system. However, when unemployment hit the population hard in the early 1990s, large segments of society became unable and to some extent unwilling to aid refugees. In public perception, the Transylvanians turned from martyrs into scapegoats almost overnight; they were blamed for "betraying" the Transylvanian Hungarian community in Romania by leaving home, and for taking jobs away from locals in Hungary. In 1991 Sík diagnosed competition for scarce resources as the main reason for indifference and growing hostility toward the refugees.

Research done by Sík and other social scientists during the 1990s suggest that many people were unwilling to admit that their feelings of solidarity with the Transylvanian Hungarians had evaporated. Instead, they justified their loss of sympathy with the belief that the share of ethnic Hungarians among the arriving refugees was declining with the passage of time.[64] All non-Hungarian Transylvanians were assumed to be ethnic Romanians and less educated than Hungarian refugees. The prevalence of this belief prompted sociologists to look into the social demography of the refugees. They found that the great majority of Transylvanian refugees were still Hungarians, even among those who arrived after 1989. In addition, they pointed out that, in addition to those who

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61 Ibid., p. 169.

62 ENDRE SÍK: Az érdektelenség és a komorodás kora: Menekültek Magyarországon [The Age of Disinterest and Incipient Sombreness: Refugees in Hungary], in: Beszélő 3 (1991), 10, pp. 8–9. On the same topic, see also in English: ENDRE SÍK, JUDIT TÓTH: Loss of Innocence—The Sociohistorical Aspects of Hungarian Refugee Policy, in: Migration (1991), 11/12, pp. 119–132.

63 Meaning organizations not belonging to the apparatus of the state, including forerunners to Western-style NGOs. Not all such citizen organizations developed into actual non-governmental organizations after the change of regime in 1989.

64 For instance: ENDRE SÍK, JUDIT TÓTH: Román származású menekültek Magyarországon [Romanian Refugees in Hungary], in: ENDRE SÍK (ed.): Útkeresők, Budapest 1993, pp. 23–38, here p. 23.

were ethnically Hungarian and Romanian, many were ethnic Germans. Common perceptions notwithstanding, the Hungarian and Romanian refugees shared identical socio-demographic and educational backgrounds. The Hungarian host society's distinction between Hungarian and Romanian Transylvanians was anchored in historical hostility toward Romanians. The Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian refugees from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s received more sympathy. Hungarians never expected that only ethnic Hungarian refugees would be received from Yugoslavia, as they did with regard to Romania.

Sociologists who have examined the refugee experience of the 1990s in Hungary have been most interested in their integration in the host society and its attitude toward them. Legal scholars examined Hungary's role in international refugee affairs and how its new refugee reception and aid system was working. On the whole, researchers found that in the early 1990s Hungarians saw Hungary as a lonely bastion of the Western world, protecting the West from immigration. Fulfilling this glorious and yet uncomfortable role was thought to be the price for integration into Europe.[65] The image of Hungary as the "bastion of Christian Europe" dates back at least to the early modern Ottoman conquest of Southern Europe, if not to the medieval Mongol invasion. Hungarians' notion that their country had been left to stand alone or at least had been given insufficient help for the task of receiving and aiding a growing number of war refugees was revived by their experience in the 1990s. International financial contributions were not growing in proportion to the growth of the necessary infrastructure that Hungary had to expand and finance, as the legal scholar Judit Tóth contends.[66]

Tóth is equally critical of the Hungarian institutional system, blaming these institutions for allowing chaos and inconsistency instead of enforcing regulations and the rule of law.[67] As late as 1992, there was no comprehensive law that regulated the process of requesting and granting asylum. The most effective actors on the scene were still the grassroots organizations of civil society formed in the 1980s to help Transylvanian refugees. To a large extent, they were the ones who took care of refugees instead of the state, even in 1991/92 when the refugees from the Yugoslav wars started to arrive. However, the nongovernmental organizations were not powerful enough to exert pressure for new legislation. Tóth warned in the early 1990s that "the voice of refugees and the organizations in society that have solidarity with them is still weak nowadays."[68]

Scholarly knowledge of refugees and their reception in Hungary in the last decade of the twentieth century has primarily been produced by sociologists, political scientists, and legal scholars. Historians have not yet tackled the his-

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65 JUDIT TÓTH: Magyarország mint hullámtörő? Adalékok az elmúlt két év menekültügyéhez [Hungary as Breakwater? Notes on the Refugee Affairs of the Last Two Years], in: SÍK, Útkeresők, pp. 113–125.

66 TÓTH, Magyarország mint hullámtörő?

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., p. 120.

tory of Hungary's refugee affairs during this period. When they do, they will have the benefit of a wealth of sociological studies, interviews, and surveys on which to draw as potential sources for the political and social history of refugees, but they should not rely only on these alone. Historians, with their competence in archival research and contextualizing events in time and place, are poised to contribute in valuable ways to our knowledge about how asylum worked in the late twentieth century in the country that "removed the first stone from the Berlin Wall"[69] by allowing East German citizens to leave the GDR via the Hungarian–Austrian border.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that most of the historiography on twentieth-century Hungary only pays attention to refugees when their migration was motivated by their ethnicity. People whose flight was connected with their political engagement have received significantly less scholarly attention. Refugees are somewhat more prominent in research on World War I and its aftermath, World War II, and the transition from state socialism to democracy, but occupy a marginal position in the historical scholarship on the socialist era because most of them were welcomed because they were communists or connected to communists (for example, the child refugees from the Greek Civil War were the children of communist partisans).

At the same time, it must be said that the lack of attention paid to political refugees received during the period of state socialism can also be explained by their significantly lower numbers than other groups, who are defined in ethnic and national terms. One possible lesson that can be drawn from a diachronic comparison of the ways the Hungarian state dealt with refugees at different moments of the twentieth century is that the integration of refugees can only be successful if measures for dealing with their needs are turned into regular tasks of the public administration apparatus. This was done in Hungary in the 1920s, for better or worse. On the one hand, the country managed to resettle nearly half a million Trianon refugees within a few years, although what proportion of them thrived and how many ended up in poverty and misery still requires more research. On the other hand, the same apparatus discriminated against Jewish refugees during the 1930s. Tens of thousands of Polish refugees, among them 5,000 Jews, were rescued, but most Jewish wartime refugees faced discrimination with deadly results.

State socialism dismantled the previous system of caring for refugees along with other prewar institutions. According to the historian Károly Kapronczay, the new framework for refugee care that was created in the 1990s drew on the experiences of the 1920s. Judit Tóth says, however, that the emergency has become the norm, meaning that the mechanisms for integrating the refugees in

69 Words attributed to Helmut Kohl, the first chancellor of the reunited German state.

the 1980s were not properly institutionalized for use later.[70] One cannot help but conclude that this is due to a lack of political will, which has to do with the fact that there has been no time in the last three decades when the majority of asylum seekers were Hungarians. Legislators are thus less interested in their cause. In other words, although Hungary has been a signatory to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees for three decades, the convention's commitment to human rights—a cornerstone of the democratic opposition to the Kádár regime in the late 1980s—and its international obligations have failed to erase the importance to policymakers of a connection between migration and Hungarian ethnicity.

Not enough time has passed since the last decade of the twentieth century for historians to feel sufficiently removed from it to write its refugee history. This is even more true of the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Besides the lack of temporal distance there is a more significant factor dissuading Hungarian historians from writing the refugee history of the recent past: since 2015 anti-refugee and anti-migrant hostility have been central to government policy. Therefore, any discussion of the topics of migration and refugees is likely to turn political. There is accordingly a great need to historicize contemporary discourse and raise awareness of the historical relationship Hungary has had with immigration and refugees.

It is noteworthy that "the other Hungary" reappeared in 2015, when hundreds of Hungarian citizens rushed to the aid of refugees stuck at the Keleti railway station in Budapest. They brought material donations and organized initiatives to alleviate the refugees' situation, while the government was framing the refugees' presence in Hungary as illegal and a threat to national security. Yet the attractiveness of the concept of "the other Hungary" is exceeded only by its elusiveness. Anyone can find in it their own conception of an ideal country. It often appears in speeches delivered at various festivities, like that of József Antall Jr. quoted in the introduction to this article. Historians, however, must be cautious about using it. Nevertheless, scrutinizing the many meanings attributed to "the other Hungary" in different historical contexts related to refugees is a fresh and useful way to look at refugee history.

70 JUDIT TÓTH: When an Emergency Has Come to Stay—The Birth of the Refugee Administration in 1988–1989, in: Regio—Minorities, Politics, Society 11 (2008), English issue, pp. 96–145.

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