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Emigration from Hungary in 1956 and the Emigrants as Tourists to Hungary*

This essay examines the history of visits made to Hungary by a group of first generation 1956 refugees. The members of the group attended middle school together in Austria. Some of the refugees, who were teenagers at the time, were put into schools by the Austrian authorities in 1957. Temporary schools were established with Hungarian as the language of instruction, and the refugees were able to complete their secondary school studies without even as much as a year's delay while also learning German. Some of these students went on to seek livelihoods elsewhere, but many of them settled permanently in Austria. In the first section of the essay the author offers a survey of the statistical features of emigration from Hungary following the suppression of the 1956 revolution. This is followed by an examination from the perspective of the social sciences of the reception of the wave of 1956 emigrants. Then, on the basis of interviews, the essay analyzes how the identities of the emigrants changed, the social situations in which these changes were palpable, and how their images of Hungary changed in the wake of their visits to their homeland.

keywords: emigrants, 1956, tourism, images, oral history

Following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 some 200,000 people left Hungary. The vast majority of them settled abroad permanently, and proportionally very few returned. Given its scope, this sudden wave of emigrants could be considered one of the great traumas of twentieth century Hungarian history, at least if one were to remember it as such from the perspective of the present. The territorial losses suffered after the First World War, the material and human losses of the Second World War, and the turbulent events of the 1956 Revolution, however, have somewhat obscured the fact, significant both in the short term and in the long term, that in the space of only a few months almost two percent of the population of the country essentially vanished. In comparison with the tragedies of the wars, of course, one cannot speak of terrible losses of human life. Nonetheless, from the perspective of the national life of Hungary it would perhaps not be an exaggeration to contend that the citizens who left were “lost souls.”

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Their departure created a void that had to be filled and completely altered and in some cases severed the individuals' relationships with the country and its people. They became the newest wave of Hungarian refugees, referred to in the discourses in Hungary as "dissidents," and later, as they were called in many places, English, German, Australian, American (etc.) Hungarians.

People found opportunities to leave the country in the wake of the events of the Revolution up until the spring of 1957, though admittedly with increasing difficulty and risk, and the countries in which they sought refuge were accommodating, which is to say that they met the basic preconditions according to migration theories that are based solely on economic considerations.¹ These theories, however, are inadequate in this context, since in the twentieth century history of Central Europe the chance to cross an international border had proven something of an exception, and an exception that was likely only to be temporary.² On both the eastern and the western side of the Iron Curtain this opportunity to cross the western border of Hungary was seen as fleeting.³ The willingness among those who welcomed the refugees to offer humanitarian and economic assistance grew. Had the borders actually opened for the long term or had there been any prospect of protracted emigration, the countries of the West would have had to consider limiting the number of immigrants they would accept, but in 1956 this was not a serious concern. Aristide Zolberg makes this argument in his influential essay, *The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World*. Zolberg examines the policies of the socialist states regarding travel in general and the liberalization of travel in the 1980s.⁴ As would be expected of autocratic states, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries within its sphere of control did not simply obstruct travel abroad, but also declared

1 For a critique of the theories of migration based on economic premises, see Gábor Gyáni's essay in this issue.

2 One cannot really speak of leaving the country legally, since the vast majority of the emigrants (refugees) took advantage of the weakness of the authorities or their silent consent when they ventured to and crossed the border.

3 Csaba Békés, "Die ungarische Revolution 1956 in der Weltpolitik," in *Die ungarische Revolution und Österreich 1956*, ed. Ibolya Murber and Zoltán Fónagy (Vienna: Czermin Verlag, 2006), 47–70; László Borhi: "Liberation or Inaction? The United States and Hungary in 1956," in *Die Ungarnkrise 1956 und Österreich*, ed. Erwin A. Schmidl (Vienna: Böhlau, 2003), 129–46.

4 "Adoption of an immigration policy welcoming defectors carried little cost, since most people could not get out. Except for Hungarians in 1956, those who did emigrate were largely Germans who were absorbed by the Federal Republic." Aristide R. Zolberg, "The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World," *International Migration Review* 23, no. 3. (1989): 403–30, 414.

those who left or intended to leave enemies of the homeland.⁵ The prohibition of travel abroad had both political and economic reasons. From the political perspective, departure could be interpreted as a form of resistance, while from the economic perspective, because of the dearth of labor, in exchange for the education and social benefits it had provided the state expected young people to enter the work force as they reached the age of majority. At the same time, in some of the more strained moments of the Cold War—for instance at the time of the Cuban missile crisis or the demonstrations across much of Central Europe in 1956 or 1968—the decision to allow people to leave the country was a means of easing internal tensions. As a measure of lack of support for the regime, illegal flight from one of the communist countries, in other words dissidence, remained one of the delicate questions of the era.⁶ The willingness of the countries of the West to accept immigrants from communist countries palpably decreased with the easing of international tensions. Dissidence lost some of the value it had had as a propaganda tool. Thus the immigrants arriving from Central Europe were seen less and less as heroes, victims, or refugees and more as “normal” immigrants, subject to the same strict stipulations and expectations as all immigrants.

Statistical Sources

The number of people who left Hungary between 1945 and 1953 is estimated at somewhere between 100,000 and 110,000 people, in comparison with roughly 340,000 people in the period between 1953 and 1989. Of this 340,000 people, approximately 200,000 left in the space of only eight months after the 1956 Revolution. The actual task of reaching and crossing the western border of the country was trying, in particular by December 1956. It nonetheless seemed possible, at least in comparison with conditions in previous years, since in the

5 Alan Dowty, *Closed Borders: The Contemporary Assault on Freedom of Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 68.

6 As of the 1960s the number of illegal emigrants shifted between 1,000 and 4,000 people in Hungary. The largest number of people, more than 4,000, left the country in 1980 and 1981. Péter Pál Tóth, “Népességmozgások Magyarországon a XIX. és a XX. században” [Population Movements in Hungary in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries], in *Migráció és Európai Unió* [Migration and the European Union], ed. Éva Lukács and Miklós Király (Budapest: Szociális és Családügyi Minisztérium, 2001), 36. For one of the first public statistical reports of the number of emigrants see György Gyarmati, “Politika és társadalom, 1945–1989” [Politics and Society, 1945–1989], in *Magyarország a XX. században* [Hungary in the Twentieth Century], ed. István Kollega Tarsoly (Budapest: Babits Kiadó, 1996), 235.

summer of 1956, as one of the signs of international political rapprochement, the various technical apparatuses with which the borders had been sealed at the end of 1947 had been taken down.⁷

In 1957 the Central Statistical Office issued a report that remains one of the most important sources of statistical data on emigration from Hungary, and a source that was treated as secret for some 30 years.⁸ Excerpts from the report were included in a publication of the Central Statistical Office entitled *Statisztikai Havi Közlemények* [Monthly Statistical Publications] (1957.4), but the state did not allow it to be published in a forum for the larger public. The official migration statistics compiled by the countries that welcomed the refugees provide relevant data that was available before 1989, even if in some cases it was examined only much later. These are kept for the most part in the Austrian Central Statistical Office, the Austrian Ministry of Interior, the UN Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), and the office for Hungarian refugees in Austria, the so-called *Ungarischer Flüchtlingshilfsdienst*.

The sources agree on the numbers of emigrants from Hungary. Approximately 194,000 people left the country, and by the summer of 1957 some 11,500 had returned, in part because of the amnesty that had been offered by the Kádár government. Some 5,000–8,000 remained out of the country only temporarily (first and foremost in Austria) and returned without the knowledge of the authorities. In May 1957 the Ministry of Interior permitted 12,345 people to leave the country legally, primarily to enable them to be reunited with family members.

Statistics on the Emigrants

The Central Statistical Office gathered personal information on 151,731 people on whom forms for departure were prepared at the order of the Ministry of Interior. If one also considers the 827 forms that arrived later and were not taken into consideration in this assessment,⁹ the results essentially agree with the

7 Between May 11 and August 15, 1956 mines were cleared and barbed wire fencing removed. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archives] MOL M–KS 276. f. 53, cs. 275, ó. e. The March 9, 1956 sitting of the MDP PB [Politburo of the Hungarian Communist Party]. Also MOL XIX–B–10. 1956–VI–107 0783/Szolg.–1956. BM HP (May 16, 1956).

8 “KSH jelentés az 1956-os disszidálásról” [KSH Report on the 1956 Dissidence], *Regio–Kisebbségtudományi Szemle* no. 4 (1991): 174–211.

9 The roughly 10,000 children who left the country without their parents, (most of) the 11,447 people who returned to the country legally by May 15, and the group, estimated at roughly 3,000 to 4,000 people, that had escaped from penitentiaries and fled the country.

Austrian data. Referring to sources from the Austrian and Yugoslav Ministries of Interior, the report asserts that 193,885 people left the country illegally. Of these, 174,704 fled to Austria and 19,181 to Yugoslavia. The report, which is divided into ten chapters, breaks the data down according to place of dwelling, date of departure, gender, age, marital status, occupation, actual whereabouts following flight, and whether or not the person returned to Hungary. It also examines the demographic effects of this emigration (or flight) on the remaining population and gives data concerning those who left the country legally. As the report makes clear, the majority of the people who left the country had been inhabitants of urban communities (half of the émigrés came from Budapest), and most of them came from Transdanubia or counties in the western part of the country, near the border with Austria. Two-thirds of the refugees were men, and half of them were less than twenty-five years of age. The percentage of people who had been gainfully employed is also surprisingly high, again two-thirds of the total number of refugees. 63.5 percent of them had been manual laborers (34.6 percent of this group has worked as skilled laborers) and 25 percent had had academic or intellectual occupations. 3,200 of the dependents had been college or university students, a number that at the time represented more than 10 percent of the student body in higher education.

According to a study done in 1960 and commissioned by the United Nations, most of the refugees settled in the United States (44,110), Canada (39,190), Australia (15,390), West Germany (14,400), Great Britain (13,670), and Switzerland (10,480).¹⁰ It is worth noting that according to the summaries that were prepared in 1957 there were far more refugees in Europe many of whom in subsequent years left to settle in other continents. This explains how in comparison with its population at the time Canada welcomed the largest number of Hungarians (0.25 percent), but Switzerland (0.21 percent), Australia (0.16 percent) Austria (0.14 percent) and Sweden (0.1 percent) also took in far more than the average. It is also interesting to note that the historically close ties between Hungary and Italy do not seem to have played much role in the decisions of the 1956 refugees regarding the countries in which they settled. In 1960 there were only 120 Hungarian refugees registered officially as living in Italy. The countries that welcomed the refugees showed solidarity and humanitarian compassion, but they also kept their own economic interests in mind. It was a

10 Report of the Statistical Office of the UN High Commission for Refugee Affairs. Published by Peter Hidas, "Arrival and reception: Hungarian refugees, 1956–1957," in *The 1956 Hungarian revolution: Hungarian and Canadian Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Adam et al. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2006), 223–55.

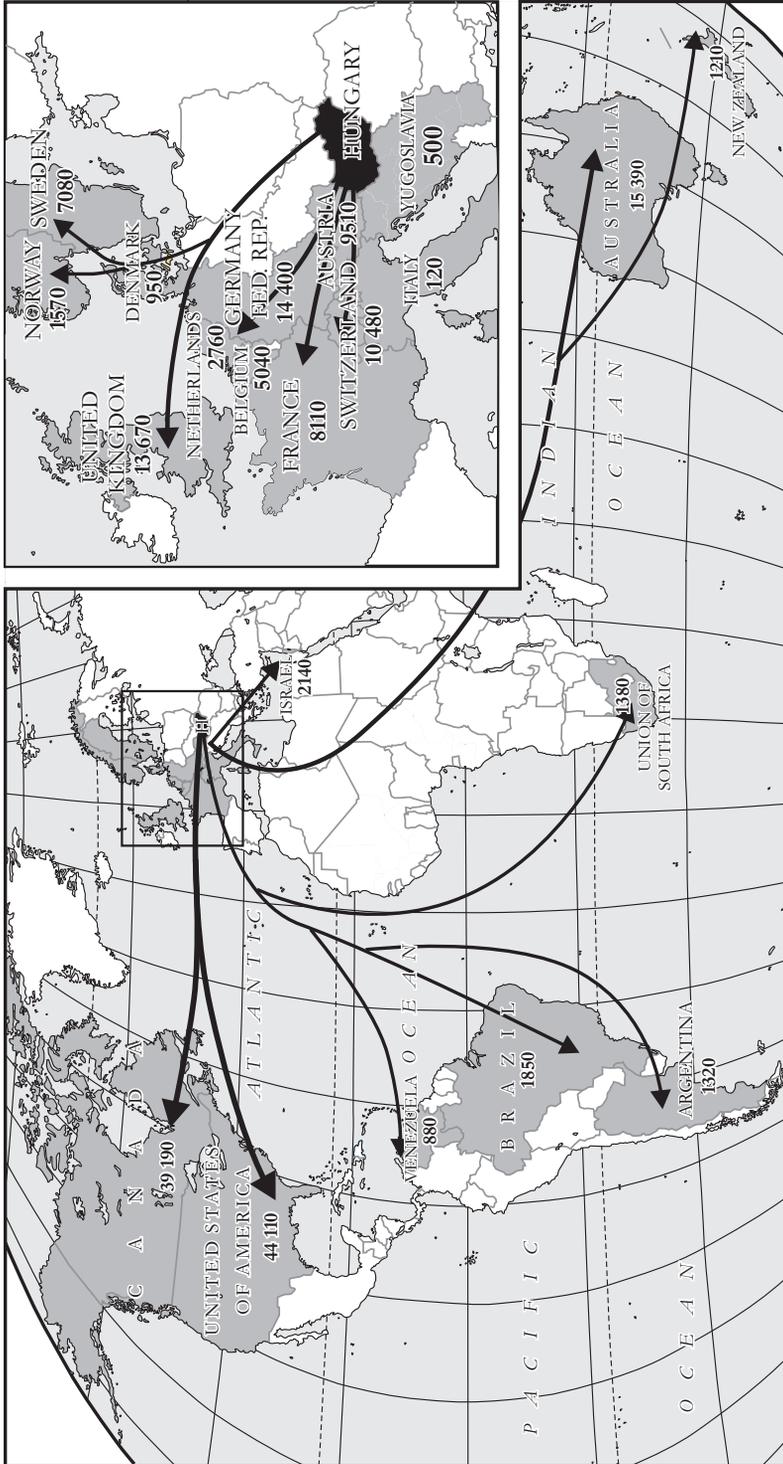


Figure 1. Arrival and reception: Hungarian refugees, 1956–1957
Source: Peter Hidas, *Arrival and Reception: Hungarian Refugees, 1956–1957*, 233.

time of global economic growth, and the countries were eager to entice young people who could join the work force.

Demographers have also studied the mass emigration that took place following the suppression of the 1956 Revolution. In a study published in 1996 and in expanded form in 2006, László Habcicsek and Sándor Illés examined the long term effects of 1956 on demographics and population growth in Hungary. Simply put, they sought an answer to the question of what would have happened had the refugees not left the country.

The short-term consequences were already apparent at the time. The departure of 200,000 people who left the country in a period of only a few months clearly had an influence on the make-up of the population. On February 1, 1957 the population of Hungary numbered only 9,788,000, 1.7 percent less than the figure (9,954,000) one would have arrived at according to natural rates of population growth. Since two-thirds of the refugees were men, the surplus of women in the remaining population returned to the post-war, 1949 levels. Distribution of the population according to age also shifted, since most of the refugees had been young (86 percent of them had been of working age, and 45 percent of those of working age had been between fifteen and twenty-nine). Given this, not surprisingly the distribution of the population according to marital status also shifted. The number of unmarried men and women dropped as a percentage of the total population.

Concerning long term consequences, scholars using the method of projection based on past trends have arrived at five different possible (but unrealized) scenarios, produced by various combinations of changes in fertility and mortality and in the impact of emigration that followed the revolution. Taking the population of the country in 1955 as the starting point, they contend that as of the 1980s Hungary would have born witness to an inevitable decline in population even had the refugees (and their descendants) remained. In other words they conclude that the 1956 emigration had little effect on the fundamental tendencies of later decades (two of the most hotly debated questions of public discourse today, population decline and demographic aging of society).

The Columbia University Research Project on Hungary

Scholars using qualitative methods, or more precisely institutes that studied totalitarian regimes (and which themselves were not free of political predispositions), were also intensely interested in the fates of the 200,000

refugees, who in the immediate aftermath of the revolution were living for the most part in refugee camps.

The intense propaganda against the communist states was based on incomplete information, primarily because after 1948 the states of Eastern Europe had been almost hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world. Only politically reliable people were allowed to travel internationally. The Western press and even intelligence networks were often compelled to base their assessments on unreliable information, and they knew little about everyday life in the communist dictatorships. Within the framework of the Columbia University Research Project on Hungary, perhaps the best organized research program on the subject, 365 interviews were done in European and American refugee camps. Most of the interviews were recorded over the course of two or three days, and the typewritten texts were on average between fifty and seventy pages. Henry L. Roberts and Paul E. Zinner, two noted Kremlinologists, worked together with social scientists, including philosopher Siegfried Kracauer (associated with the Frankfurt School) and sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. By offering refugees a chance to speak of the events of the revolution, the incidents of everyday life, living conditions in general, conditions in the workplace, social changes, and the persistence of religious and traditional beliefs and customs, they sought to give a more nuanced picture of the influence of a totalitarian regime on the individual. They hoped to uncover the secret mechanisms of the Stalinist system, and thereby gain some insight into the question of how to bring about its collapse.

In his summary prepared for the Ford Foundation in 1962 (which consisted of several hundred interviews, publications, etc.), Roberts mentioned the organizational difficulties the project encountered and also emphasized that there was no appropriate scholarly methodology on which to base a comprehensive assessment of the vast sea of texts. The information that had been obtained through the surveys done in the refugee camps and later did not constitute a point of departure for any long term study. Furthermore, the materials of the extensive study, which was under the direction of leading American empirical sociologists at the time, had not been brought together in such a manner so as to further a deeper understanding of the Eastern European regimes or the lives of the people living under them.¹¹ The deep

11 György Csepeli et al., "Menekültek és elméletek" [Refugees and Theories], in *Évkönyv VI. 1998*. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 1998), 253–86.

structured interviews, which in their entirety stretched to several thousand pages, could hardly have been considered representative, neither from the perspective of Hungarian society nor from the perspective of the refugees themselves as a group. Thus with the exception of a few case studies, the lengthy corpus was left essentially untouched, and until 1990 simply gathered dust in the manuscripts archive of Columbia University.

The Average Emigrant from the Official Perspective

The state sought to besmirch the emigrants, presenting them in the official propaganda as traitors or at the very least gravely misguided people. The political refugees were dissidents, who had betrayed socialism, thrown the authorities off guard, and fled to join the capitalists. In 1956–57 many decrees were passed regarding the prohibited border crossing, and those who had left before December 1 were promised amnesty. This date was later changed to January 31, but people were allowed to return up until March 31, 1957.¹² In principle the “misguided” were given the chance to return without fear of reprisal, but as several cases make clear, the state unsparingly took vengeance on insurrectionists who had fled. For a time the dissidents were regarded as enemies of the state, indeed to such an extent that the Ministry of Interior created a separate subdivision devoted to tracking their activities. The “state propaganda machine” assiduously gathered information on Hungarians living abroad and Hungarian organizations outside of Hungary. Later the refugees, who had been stripped of their Hungarian citizenship, were considered potential agents of attempts on the part of the West to incite unrest, but by the latter half of the 1960s emigrants who returned to visit Hungary and in some cases spent longer periods of time in the country were no longer seen first and foremost as political threats, but rather as tourists who brought in revenue and even potential economic partners. In the 1960s the number of people to travel from and into Hungary rose significantly, and this growth continued almost without any break until the end of the socialist era.¹³ Most of those traveling into Hungary came from other socialist countries, but there was an increasing demand for tourists from the West as well, who

12 “1956/27,” és “1957/24. törvényerejű rendelet” [Legally Binding Decree 1956/27. and 1957/24], in *Hatályos Jogszabályok Gyűjteménye 1945–1958* [Collection of Provisions of Law in Effect], ed. Ferenc Nezvál et al. (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1960).

13 Very few crossed the border for traveling abroad or to enter in Hungary up until the middle of the 1950s, according to statistics roughly 1,000 people.

were compelled to change money and thereby helped boost the country's always dwindling reserves of hard currency. From this perspective, tourists from the other socialist countries were considerably less useful, and the tourist industry in Hungary was never nearly as enthusiastic about them.¹⁴

Many of the visitors to the country from the West were not simply pleasure-seeking tourists, but rather were linked to Hungary by family ties or sentimental connections. Leaders of the tourist industry and of course leaders of the party as well were very well aware that the tourists from the West with Hungarian origins constituted a separate group: "a significant share of the tourists have come with the intention of visiting family. [...] It is typical of those who have come to visit family that they spend relatively long periods of time [in the country] and very few of them need lodging in hotels. This lessens the profit that is to be gained from them. [...] They spend 74–85 percent of their days in private apartments or other quarters not monitored statistically. This share of the tourist traffic offers significantly less revenue for the national economy. This suggests that we should strive to promote more profitable proportions."¹⁵ The regime and the administrative apparatus treated the emigrant Hungarians with some suspicions, since their knowledge of language and their personal relationships enabled them to find their bearings within the system easily. They almost never had need of the luxury services intended for tourists from the West. State officials felt that as tourists these people could cause harm to the national economy by changing money illegally and also by bringing in commodities and prohibited intellectual products from the West. In the end, however, they accepted this risk, and emigrants who were not seen as engaged in hostile or subversive political activity were allowed to travel into and from their one-time homeland freely, with the exception perhaps of some minimal harassment or inconvenience. Emigrants who had obtained citizenship abroad and who were in possession of an entry visa did not have any grave cause for fear or concern.

14 "Politika vagy kereskedelem..." [Politics or Trade], *Idegenforgalom* 7 (1967): 5.

15 Az Országos Idegenforgalmi Tanács iratai [Documents of the National Tourism Council]. MOL XIX-G 28. 10. In 1976 the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP PB) put the question of emigration policy on the agenda. During the sitting it was noted that the number of emigrants considered politically indifferent who were returning to visit Hungary had been continuously growing, while the number of emigrants moving back to Hungary was continuously declining. MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/704. ő. e. (November 2, 1976). Cited in Péter Bencsik and György Nagy, *A magyar útiokmányok története 1945–1989* [The History of Hungarian Travel Documents] (Budapest: Típico Design, 2005), 75.

The Image of Hungary in the Accounts of the Emigrants Who Returned to Visit the Country

In my view, because it involves many and varied processes of acculturation, emigration itself cannot be interpreted as a whole within a single, unified analytical framework. One of the reasons for this is simply the diversity of social strata from which emigrants themselves come. Another is the cultural differences in the countries in which emigrants settle (such as Austria or the United States). And naturally in the course of their journeys emigrants themselves adopted various strategies, oriented sometimes around distinctive individual goals and (or) sometimes around the maintenance of group identities.

It therefore seemed simpler for scholars to focus on questions such as the numbers of people who left or the countries in which they settled, as well as the actions they took abroad and institutions they created (such as political parties, associations, cultural organizations, and publications), and the symbolic significance of these institutions. While numerous studies have been published on the waves of Hungarian emigrants and refugees, with some exceptions (for instance the work of Julianna Puskás, Zoltán Fejős, Tamás Kanyó and Nóra Kovács) they have been primarily statistical in nature.¹⁶

Scholarship on emigrants is fertile ground for historical, anthropological, and sociological analyses, since simply by leaving their countries of origin emigrants become “others.” They become “others” from the perspective of the communities they leave behind and remain others from the perspective of the communities in which they settle. At first they often feel like strangers in their new homelands, and later they may come to feel like strangers in their countries of origin. This duality may last a lifetime.

Emigrants become inhabitants and participants in two political systems, two countries, two cultures, and (at least) two languages. At some moments the emigrant’s liminal status is better characterized by Georg Simmel’s bridge metaphor, as someone who links two divergent worlds, while at others the metaphor of a door as something that isolates and does not diminish difference

16 Júlia Puskás, *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban, 1880–1940* [Émigré Hungarians in the United States, 1880–1940] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982); Zoltán Fejős, *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke, 1890–1940* [Two Generations of Chicago Hungarians, 1890–1940] (Budapest: Közép-Európai Intézet, 1993); Nóra Kovács, *Szállítható örökség. Magyar identitásteremtés Argentínában (1999–2001)* [Transportable Heritage. The Creation of Hungarian Identity in Argentina, 1999–2001] (Budapest: Gondolat–MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2009).

may be more fitting. Emigrants play a role in cultural transfer, since they have dual (or even more complex) identities. The refugees who settled in Austria in 1956 did not sever their ties to Hungary. As of the mid-1960s they began to return to Hungary, and in circles of family members and friends they became informal intermediaries, bringing with them consumer goods and items of cultural interest.

In my research I have studied the identities of several members of a specific group of 1956 refugees who were teenagers at the time they fled and settled in Austria. I used the interviews conducted with them in order to examine identity as a social construct that changes over the course of time and is bound to several different groups (such as refugee identity, local identity, and Hungarian and Austrian national identity).

In the secondary literature on migration one reads of first, second, and third generation immigrants on the basis of place of birth and national origins. In my view it is a bit problematic to classify first generation youths who came of age and entered the work force in a foreign country in this terminology on the basis of place of birth. They were, however, mature enough to leave the country by themselves or with groups of peers (and often without their parents' knowledge) knowing that they would have little chance of returning. For this reason I regard the teenagers who fled Hungary in 1956–57 as members of a “first-and-a-half” generation. They left the country at so young an age that their integration into another culture was much less jarring for them than it was for older first generation immigrants.

In the course of the work I attempted to combine two different approaches, the methodology of the biographical narrative interview on the one hand and that of the problem-centered interview, used in social history on the other, since the central question of my research was how the refugees who had fled to Austria in 1956 as secondary school students related to Hungary, their homeland, and the socialist system. I endeavored to further an understanding of how, because of their decisions to emigrate, their lives developed differently from the lives of their peers who had remained in Hungary, and how their everyday lives differed from the everyday lives of people in Hungary. One of my presuppositions was that in their life-courses they would emphasize other elements of identity than those considered important by their former classmates who had not left the country. I was curious to see whether their accounts strengthened the Austrian national identity, which had successfully incorporated the memory of the assistance offered to 1956 refugees into the mythos of the modern Austrian state. I was

also interested in the question of how people who shared a similar background and lived in close proximity, but on either side of the Iron Curtain, related to one another. Was this proximity enough to allow for significant relationships that crossed the political divide, or were there no such interconnections? Did the refugees who settled in Austria and their family members who had been left behind seek opportunities to bring the family together, or did they simply attempt to make their own way in their separate communities? Did the Hungarians who had laid new roots help (or perhaps hinder) friends or acquaintances back in Hungary who also hoped to emigrate, or did the question simply not come up? One of my principal goals was to raise new questions regarding an area (Vienna) that was relatively new in the secondary literature on the 1956 refugees, taking advantage of the life story interviews as fertile primary sources on a group of emigrants whose common experience, the foundation of their collective identity, was their years spent in secondary school.

I met with emigrants who had left the country either alone or with their families as secondary school students and who had completed their secondary school studies in the Hungarian language schools that had been created for refugee children. It was difficult to compile precise statistics on the refugees because often they were constantly moving, so—depending first and foremost on the date of the interview—there is more data available regarding distribution based on age. According to a report by Willibald Liehr, the head of the division of the Ministry of Interior entrusted with addressing the issue of the Hungarian refugees, at the beginning of May 1957 there were 3,665 Hungarian refugees between the ages of fourteen and eighteen in Austria, many of whom clearly did not remain in Austria or did not continue (or even begin) secondary school studies. Between 1957 and 1963 almost 1,000 pupils studied at the Hungarian language secondary schools, and 815 of them completed the maturation exam at the time.¹⁷ I conducted interviews with twenty-five of these people in 2005. I sought not to assemble a history of the events of their flight or their assimilation into Austrian culture, but rather to glean some understanding of how they look back on their lives and how they recall their experiences. For the most part I raised general questions in order to exert as little influence as possible on their accounts. I included a short questionnaire on biographical data following the interviews.

¹⁷ Cited in *Magyar középiskolák Ausztriában 1956 után* [Hungarian Secondary Schools in Austria after 1956], ed. Ernő Deák (Budapest: Ausztriai Magyar Egyesületek és Szervezetek Központi Szövetsége, 1998), 8.

Travels in the West

Most of the interviewees emphasized that when the isolation they had faced first as citizens of a communist country and then in the refugee domiciles and schools in Austria had come to an end they longed to travel as soon as possible. The Austrian state and international relief organizations provided them with lodging, board, clothing, spending money, and schooling, but hardly any opportunity to travel outside the camps. After having completed their maturation exams, the young men wanted not simply to take excursions and loaf and idle, but actually to journey “around the world.” In their accounts of their lives, the interviewees remember these trips as the beginnings of independent adulthood. They all were able to study at universities, either with state scholarships or other kinds of funding, but most of them soon lost their scholarships because of their inadequate knowledge of German, the difficulties they faced in their studies, or the lack of family support. They did not disperse immediately during their years at university. Many of them remained in the same lodgings in Vienna or Innsbruck. For most of the interviewees the memories of the trips they organized and took together abroad were as important elements of their shared identities as the months and years they had spent in the secondary schools for refugees.

At first they set off to discover Europe with only modest aims and very little money. For the most part they recounted positive experiences, and they were always able to count on the assistance of people and even the authorities in the West. This “romance of the adventurous Hungarian” lasted until the early 1960s. According to their recollections, Hungarian refugees were held in high regard all over Europe. A Dutch milkman first had mistaken them for Germans and refused to sell them milk, but later, having learned that they were Hungarians, immediately gave them milk for free. They had similar experiences in Italy. They were given free wine in a restaurant and in exchange were asked to sing Hungarian folk songs in order to entice more customers into the establishment. They emphasized these memories, which throw into question the claims regarding the pervasiveness of anti-immigrant sentiment.

With the passing of years and gradual social integration, the maintenance of the status of “refugee” had less and less allure, both for the Hungarians themselves and for the communities into which they had settled. People no longer felt obliged to offer any particular support, and the emigrants endeavored to shed the admittedly convenient, but nonetheless second-class standing by obtaining citizenship. When seasonal labor was needed in Sweden and Germany

the Hungarian emigrants were seen less as refugees and more as hard-working students.

The people I interviewed first traveled to satisfy their longings for adventure, but later they had to begin to consider how to earn a living. The interviewees presented themselves as hardened freedom fighters who, following the completion of their secondary studies, sought neither to rage nor to caper, but rather strove to win the goodwill of the West Europeans who had welcomed them. The trips by motorcycle and restrained forms of merry-making, where Hungarian gallantry could be put on display without scandal, were ideal contexts in which to strengthen the Western image of the Hungarian revolutionaries. They were still poor, but with meager savings they managed nonetheless to travel extensively. In fact this mentality was common among most of the Eastern European tourists throughout the era, primarily because of their limited access to hard currency. The people I interviewed, however, were youths who had grown hardy in Austria, had at least a moderate knowledge of German, were enterprising in spirit, and were increasingly self-confident, and who moreover also had the courage of refugees who had fled from behind the Iron Curtain. The interviewees continued to expand their geographical horizons throughout their university years, and as they entered the workforce and rapidly began to start their own families they also began to have new goals. The birth of children prompted many to cultivate and nurture ties with relatives in Hungary. In the mid-1960s the political atmosphere made visits to Hungary much easier for the emigrants, but they were also prompted to cast their glances eastward by their familiarity with life in the West, the need to earn income, and family circumstances. Over the course of the years they satisfied their cravings for independence, which found manifestation primarily in travel, and they earned enough money doing seasonal (summer) labor that they were able to complete their university studies and begin to live on their own. Travel became natural to them. They either traveled on official business or simply vacationed over the summers. Their first-hand knowledge of Western lifestyle and culture, and the extent to which they had become part of this culture, became evident to them in the course of their travels eastward.

Travels in the East – Personal Accounts

For the refugees, Hungary lost its significance as a reference point as they integrated into Austrian society. They received news, primarily in their correspondence with family members but also with the increasing use of the telephone, of the gradual

growth of the standard of living in Hungary and the more moderate exercise of power by the regime, but the individuals I interviewed were only able to begin to gather first-hand experience of conditions in Hungary as of the mid-1960s.

When they recounted their trips to Hungary, the interviewees spoke with me more readily of their political views than of the details of their travels. They may well have believed that I was more interested to know what they thought of the political situation in Hungary today and the contemporary political and social phenomena and trends that in their eyes have been regrettable. They had hoped that the change of regimes in 1989–1990 would usher in a moral revival, the spread of democratic thinking, and a national renewal. Many of them strove to expand prospering enterprises they had launched in Austria into Hungary, and others gave charitable donations to members of the Hungarian minorities living in the surrounding states (Slovakia, the Ukraine, Romania, and Yugoslavia/Serbia) or labored to redeem certificates they had been given by the Hungarian government as a form of compensation for the losses they had endured at the hands of the communist regime.

According to the interviewees, they met not with national solidarity, but rather wrangling, fuss, and cumbersome bureaucracy. In their view this was all the consequence of the demoralizing effects of decades of socialism. They offered little assessment of historical processes and phenomena that had begun before World War II, or rather mentioned only their positive aspects. They spoke of the interwar period or the turn of the century in Hungary as normal eras that stood in stark contrast to the first decade of the post-war period, during which most of the families found themselves suddenly members of lower social classes facing an uncertain future.

Two motifs dominated in their narratives of their travels in Hungary. The first, they spoke of how they maintained their relationships with family members back home. Most of them met with family members in Hungary personally after having started their own families, and they then began to return regularly to Hungary. Second, they spoke of their fear of the official authorities and the frequent humiliations they had endured, indignities that had made them anxious and intensified their sense that they had become strangers in their homeland.

Many of them maintained professional relationships with people in Hungary. The one-time emigrant students became Hungarian or in some cases Eastern European rapporteurs for their workplaces, entrusted with initiating or concluding transactions and organizing partner relationships and joint projects. Many of them rented apartments in Budapest or cities in the countryside, and

as their circles of friends and acquaintances grew they also built official and informal business ties. The number of trips any one person took to Hungary varied, depending largely on his or her individual career and family life. Some only went once a year, or only for the more important holidays, while others spent their entire summer vacations in Hungary with their children. When possible, they took advantage of business trips to visit relatives as well. In some cases, for security reasons or simply given a lack of time, an Austrian spouse would spend more time behind the Iron Curtain than his or her Hungarian emigrant spouse.

Family life for the emigrants became more complex with the birth of grandchildren or as they began to face the breakup of their first marriages (which was common). Most of the children of mixed couples (in other words one parent was Hungarian) did not learn Hungarian fluently, and later spoke (and speak) German with their spouses and children. Everyday life in Vienna made it difficult and time-consuming to maintain family ties in Austria, not to mention with relatives in Hungary. In part because of this, over the course of the past ten or fifteen years, visits to Hungary became less frequent. Some of the emigrants return to Hungary for months at a time, but only to relax, not in order to visit relatives. Many of them have purchased or rented lodgings not in their places of birth, but rather prefer to spend their time in a rural, village setting.

Having traveled a great deal in the socialist countries for business, Károly, who was capable of speaking and writing in Hungarian, German, Italian, and English, maintained close ties to Hungary and the other states of Eastern Europe. When I asked him to speak about his travels in the East I was given a very thoughtful response:

The fact that I am a refugee played a strong role in my constant awareness of when I was behind, no matter where I might have been, I knew very well whether I was behind the Iron Curtain or not. I was very aware of that. I was a disciplined worker, so I never let my political views enter into conversations or debates there...

In spite of having acquired Austrian (or western) citizenship and born witness to the consolidation of the Eastern European systems, once they had stepped across the border back into Hungary the refugees no longer felt themselves safe. They felt as if they were always traveling incognito in the forbidden zone. People who had been born in the West might well have found Eastern Europe strange or bizarre, but they were in all likelihood less disquieted by the almost constant presence of the police and the authorities. It is worth

noting that Károly characterized himself as “a disciplined worker.” The word “worker” (*dolgozó*) indicates strong self-awareness in comparison with the word “employee” (*alkalmazott*), but it fell out of use in contemporary Hungarian not because of the feebleness of the work ethic or trade unions, but rather because it has become one of the hackneyed terms of the official rhetoric of the socialist era. The use of an expression that could be regarded as somewhat antiquated, however, should not come as a surprise, since, his many return trips to Hungary notwithstanding, Károly nonetheless remains someone who entered his teenage years in the 1950s. His use of the term disciplined, for instance, referred not so much to conscientious attention to deadlines or instructions (though he may have meant this as well), but rather to his deliberate avoidance of topics of conversation related to politics. As he noted, Károly could not risk endangering his travels (and more importantly, his job) by politicizing. He had had difficulty finding employment in the first place (he had both found a job and married later than his peers), and he did not want to risk the stable life he had made for himself.

Károly was always able to avoid situations that in his view were politically sensitive or unpleasant. His accounts of his travels in the socialist countries focused primarily on the various manifestations of economic and political backwardness in Eastern Europe, not to mention differences in mentality. In his mind the socialist countries meant drabness, neglect, constant police presence, limited consumer choice, and the eye-catching Hungarian tourist in Vienna, who “could be recognized from 100 meters away on Mariahilfer Straße, even downwind.”

At the end of the interview conducted with Lajos his wife Ágnes joined us, and the two of them continuously interrupted each other as they recounted their story. Lajos returned to Hungary for the first time relatively late. He began to travel back to his homeland regularly at the beginning of the 1970s. He enjoyed sports and the company of members of a younger generation at Lake Balaton, and also spent time at the home of the parents of one of his friends in the city of Sopron, near the border with Austria. Here he had met Ágnes and the two decided soon to marry. His trips to Hungary, which until then had been without unpleasant incident, suddenly changed because he and his bride were confronted with the arbitrariness of the Hungarian state and the local authorities. The chronology of events was at times a bit jumbled because of the fervor with which they recounted them. First they told of the ordeals they had faced when organizing the wedding and then they related some anecdotes of earlier times.

All the preparations for the wedding had been completed when the authorities made it known that because of errors having to do with some formality they were not going to allow the marriage, more specifically because the names on the various documents were not always identical. The civil wedding was held in Austria instead following a forced postponement of six months. Their church ceremony was held in Sopron, without any official announcement and with a bit of conspiratorial behavior on the part of the guests. After each mass a few more family members would join the congregation and remain in the church until finally at noon the priest joined the bride and groom in wedlock in a brief five-minute period between two services. A few months later the couple took some token revenge for the bother they had faced. After Ágnes had been given Austrian citizenship, they went into the Hungarian embassy and gleefully replied to the administrator's question regarding the date of the wedding that they had been married on October 23: "I will never forget how the woman who was writing the information down suddenly raised her head. October 23? Yes, I said." For them this was a symbolic blow and a form of resistance against the power of the communist state.

This attempt on Lajos' part to present himself as someone who resisted the regime in situations such as those described above can arouse our suspicion: perhaps he did fear encounters with the authorities as much as his friends had, or at least his recollections painted a slightly rosier picture of the events. Independently of the real course of the dialogues it became apparent that very important elements of the identities of the refugee Hungarians in comparison with Hungarians who had not fled were irony, talking back and symbolic resistance against the regime. Their knowledge that they did not face any real threat in some cases prompted them to behave more boldly with official representatives of the communist state, proving their defiance both to themselves and to their acquaintances. Lajos had clearly compiled a sort of small repertoire of similar stories because it was important to him that others (including me) see him as daring and not easily ruffled.

When the interview with her husband had come to an end, Ágnes recounted her life story. She had left Hungary in 1972 with Lajos, having neither any knowledge of German nor any network of friends or family on whom to rely. It took her considerably longer to begin to fit into Austrian society than it had taken the youths who had left in 1956. She had some misgivings about leaving Hungary, because after having endured numerous tribulations she had completed a degree in Hungarian language and literature, and she knew that it would be of little use

to her in Austria. At the same time she had to fit in, because she had burnt all her bridges behind her, as her first visit back to Hungary made evident. Ágnes was a so-called “marriage migrant,” someone who “at first is active, when she falls in love with a strange man, but who at the promptings of love becomes passive when she gives up the life she has known up to that point and almost without thinking follows the man she has chosen into the unknown.”¹⁸ Ágnes took a considerable risk when she left behind the career she had begun and abandoned a future that seemed certain, entrusting herself entirely to Lajos without even having had a civil marriage, in other words without any legal reassurance or recourse whatsoever.

I could no longer have gone home. Hungary looked on me as an enemy. I had to request a visa every time. I had to register myself there every time. At the beginning of the 1970s, if I went to the police station to register myself as an Austrian citizen, they looked on me as an enemy. And when I spoke Hungarian, then as a traitor. This was the mentality. For decades. So I knew that I had to lay new roots here [in Austria].

Every one-time emigrant had to confront this problem in the course of travels back to Hungary. They were “others” not simply because they had chosen to live elsewhere, in another land, but also because they were regarded and branded as others. None of the interviewees cherished any fond memories of the obligation to register or of any of the other administrative burdens with which they were encumbered, but most of them did not mention having been considered enemies or traitors. Ágnes may have felt this way because since her childhood she had always lived in a milieu that had been hostile to her and her family. They had always felt threatened by looming uncertainty. And precisely when she had finally had an opportunity to begin to lead a more tranquil life, she had left behind the achievements she had attained and emigrated. She had spent the first few years in a new uncertainty though this time of her own doing. When she had returned to visit Hungary, she had not had the self-assurance that the 1956 refugees had had. This may be why she was more sensitive to even the possibility of offence, and it may also explain why her husband felt he should always exemplify civil courage, both through his acts and when recollecting the events of his life. When I asked her to compare and contrast the two nationalities,

18 Eszter Zsófia Tóth, “*Puszi Kádár Jánosnak.*” *Munkásnők élete a Kádár-korszakban mikrotörténeti megközelítésben* [“A Kiss for János Kádár.” *The Lives of Female Workers in the Kádár Era from a Micro-Historical Perspective*] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2007), 22.

Ágnes estimated the proportion of Hungarians and Austrians in her circle of friends at around 30 percent compared to 70 percent, and she characterized the relationships as qualitatively entirely different.

After so many years, for I have been in Austria for thirty-eight years now, I think that because of this our lives, our problems, our concerns are so different... we have grown apart. We meet, we go out, if we are together we laugh, they come to visit us or we go somewhere there from time to time, but their problems and our problems are not the same. Primarily at first our role when we returned home was to give financial support to those who were still there. From relatives to our own parents. Naturally parents. We still support my father today for instance. It's awkward for him to accept our support, poor man, but it's natural for us to support him, because he lives off his pension. But we always had the role of being those who were well off...

Those who made it to the West were considered the lucky ones who—assuming they had a drop of compassion in their hearts—would bring their loved ones something “western,” something that could not be purchased in Hungary at all, or only at a very high price. The emigrants had to deal with their problems on their own, for they were seen by their loved ones in Hungary as the “western relatives” who shared their plenty with the less fortunate. At the same time with every passing year they grew a bit more distant from their one-time friends, and their meetings consisted increasingly of enjoyable but superficial conversations.

Relationships with old friends were not the only things to change. Though they lived only forty-five minutes from Sopron, Lajos and his wife began to realize that they were slowly growing emotionally distant from Hungary. During the Kádár era the emigrants understandably thought that had there not been a Soviet regime in power in Hungary, then things would have been as good as and possibly better than they were in Austria. The change of regimes was a great disappointment for them, much as it was for many people in Hungary. They equated the new political system with amorality and the loss of values from an earlier time, and everything that had nurtured in them an attachment to their identities as Hungarians, even as they lived their lives in Austria, seemed to waver.

I had always had an idealistic conception of Hungary, how helpful and kind-hearted and welcoming, how... That they would never dupe me. And regrettably that affair with the hotel in Hévíz, the apartment in Hévíz made me realize that after 1989 nice and slowly Hungary was

changing into a country in which we were no longer at home. That we no longer understand the rules, the mentality. Regrettably. [A long silence followed.]

In spite of the fact that they lived only thirty minutes from the border, however up-to-date they were on political affairs or cultural and sports events, however many friends they still had in Hungary, they themselves no longer felt at home in their homeland. Quite possibly the dictatorship concealed many human frailties, and when the political transformation had ended sentiments of attachment and unity faded and a society began to take form that to the emigrants seemed amoral (for Ágnes in a manner that seemed incomprehensible). It is worth asking whether these attitudes and the sense of foreignness and exclusion depended in part on the age of the interviewee. Ágnes and Lajos were always aware of Hungary. Their circle of friends included many Hungarian diplomats and politicians, and they emphasized this in the interviews. Their relationship with the country was the closest in the first half of the 1990s. Since then, the people have changed and their ties to the country have become looser. Today they prefer to gather with Austrian-Hungarian and Austrian friends and acquaintances.

Aladár saw the differences between Austria and Hungary—regardless of era—embodied most vividly in the spectacle of carefully manicured streets on the one hand and neglected cityscapes on the other. While in the West one sees flowers and attentively maintained houses, in the East one is confronted, even to the present day, with rows of unpainted tenements with crumbling exteriors. Aladár mentioned these differences, arguably superficial and noticeable to anyone at first glance, because he took little interest in the political and social issues.

For me that didn't play much of a role at the time, because I didn't visit Hungary to visit Hungary, but rather to visit family. And—how should I say it?—the whole atmosphere for me... it had a kind of, well, homey quality. People had not been accustomed to anything else since my childhood, and this didn't bother me. This only, if I really deliberately compare now, Austria, so we crossed the border into Austria and went through—I don't know—several villages, if one deliberately compares, then you see the differences. But for me this wasn't why I went, and I didn't compare, I just got together with siblings, and everything was fine...

For Aladár only his Hungarian family was important. Hungary was not. He was aware of the differences, but he didn't pay them much mind. And if he did, then he was surprised, but he soon set them aside. The lack of consumer goods in the East may have caused some inconvenience, but it didn't trouble him much, in

part because as a child he had grown accustomed to privations and in comparison with the 1950s the selection of goods had improved noticeably and in part because he had come to Hungary as a tourist. Traveling as a tourist to some extent means forgetting about workaday life and venturing into another environment. Aladár could have seen his travels as excursions into an “underdeveloped region.” For a tourist, the inconveniences (such as the lack of consumer goods or arbitrary local authorities) are temporary, and the warm welcome of relatives and loved ones more than compensates for such tribulations. Or rather more than compensated, because as Aladár grew older and new generations were born he gradually grew distant. After the change of regimes, when he and his relatives could have traveled more frequently—even daily—to see one another they actually made such trips less and less often. While earlier the dreary world of Hungary had made the family members in Mosonmagyaróvár seem so much less fortunate than their relatives in Vienna, in spite of the gradual convergence of the political and social systems the more distant family ties began to lose their significance. In the case of Aladár and his family the explanation for this lies not in the tensions between political systems, international constellations, or the permeability of borders, but rather in the changes that take place as people age. Aladár is simply uninterested in the events in Hungary.

I can hardly read in Hungarian. That’s the truth. Of course I can read, so I don’t have any problem. But, well, what do I actually read? One begins with the “Presse”, the newspapers, then... I only read German newspapers. It’s not often that I pick up a Hungarian newspaper. And about Hungary, not at all. My younger brother was here, he brought—how should I know—some interesting article that he thought might interest me... And often he’s right. But sometimes no. Something that is important to him in Hungary, for me, here, is maybe not, not so important.

One has the impression that for Aladár Hungary was important as long as it was important for him to spend time with his siblings and their families. Ever since his relationships with them began to become less close (which was hard for them to admit to themselves), Aladár has concerned himself less with events in Hungary, and accordingly he avoids emigrant circles that strive to maintain their Hungarian identities. He makes neither accusations nor requests. He simply doesn’t concern himself with Hungary, which he essentially seems to consider a closed chapter in his life.

Summary

Members of the Hungarian minorities in the surrounding states and Hungarian emigrants who had obtained citizenship abroad played a significant role in the tourist industry in Hungary throughout the Kádár era. The organs of power strove to keep visitors to the country under close control, but with the exception of increased surveillance or attempts to enlist them as agents, they were not able to do much to influence their patterns of consumption during their stays in Hungary. As of the mid-1960s politically inactive or indifferent Hungarian emigrants living in the West were able to return to Hungary regularly, and their family members still living in Hungary were able to travel abroad, first only individually, but later as families. The majority of the people I interviewed spoke of a smothered longing for freedom that they were best able to satisfy through their travels in the West. They characterized their first excursions in Europe as trips made with only modest meals, but nonetheless enjoyable adventures imbued with revolutionary (Hungarian) romance. The stories of these trips became, alongside the shared experiences of the refugee schools, the bases of long-lasting friendships (similar for instance to the soldiers' stories that express unity and solidarity). Following the excursions of their youth, their travels to Germany or Sweden during university years formed equally important elements of their identities, and they began to acquire the abilities necessary to gain employment, earn their own livings, and forge their own lives.

In contrast, their travels back to Hungary seemed more like travels in time, including personal meetings with family members who had been left behind, their childhood surroundings, and, in a word, their past. The trips eastward represented entirely different experiences. For some time the emigrants remained wary, and they were only willing to travel to Hungary for a few days and only within an organized framework, in other words they were only willing to cross the border to the other side of the Iron Curtain as part of trips overseen in some measure by Austria. Later this fear gave way to vexation and anger. As regular visitors to Hungary (many of them entered into business relationships with Hungarian companies and institutions), they found nothing exciting or unusual in the country (in contrast, for instance, with the Soviet Union), but they found the increased surveillance and arbitrary bureaucracy difficult to bear. They noticed that as outsiders they saw (and see) the problems Hungary faced much more clearly than those who had remained in Hungary and had been compelled to adapt to and on some level accept the system. It also became apparent that their

relationships to some extent had stagnated. Even after the change of regimes in 1990 no one sought to return to Hungary of his or her own accord, but there were also hardly any examples of anyone leaving Hungary to join a relative in Vienna. By the 1990s, what once had been “Family in Hungary” visits were becoming simply “Travel in Hungary” excursions, which often involved trips to the world famous thermal and medicinal baths or the purchase of holiday homes in the countryside or apartments in one of the cities, but which were always ventures to a country close by from which one could easily return home to Austria.

The change of regimes came too late for most of the emigrants to consider repatriation. In the three decades since their departure, the 1956 refugees had made their homes in their new homelands. Their networks of friends and relatives had completely changed, and it was not worth giving up their lives in the West. Those who had the means purchased land in Hungary and spent some time there or attempted to maintain their ties to the country of their birth through their descendants. We have no precise figures regarding those who chose to return, but qualitative studies suggest that the successful integration of the emigrants into the West led eventually to a slackening of their ties to Hungary.

In some cases the identities of the emigrants as Hungarian nationals was bound to an institution (such as a newspaper, a club, or a church), while in others it was more a matter of ties to the group of secondary school classmates. They considered themselves different from Hungarians living in Hungary. According to their accounts, when they visited Hungary they noticed differences more than similarities. They experience their identities as one-time refugees first and foremost from a historical perspective: in the actual context of the interviews their identities were much more bound to the Austrian national identity. They regarded their biographies almost as stories of development: one-time poor refugees, they had become Austrian citizens, not “different” in comparison with their milieu. The differences in culture and development between the West and East were recurring symbolic motifs in their narratives of their lives. Although in principle one might think them predestined to play a role as agents of transfer, they did not accept this role in the interviews and emphasized instead their ties to Austria. Not one of the interviewees characterized himself or herself as Austrian, but they frequently emphasized that in the moment of history in which they had lived much of their lives they had only been able to attain a relatively high standard of living in Austria (in other words somewhere elsewhere than Hungary). This was evident, for instance, in their perception of Budapest as

a poor, run down city rife with corruption in comparison with Vienna. Their accounts were strongly influenced by the media. They were aware of the differences in language use in Hungary and Austria, and in their view public discourse in Hungary had become coarse. In the historical and anthropological secondary literature the second generation in general is seen as having a dual identity.¹⁹ My perception in the course of the interviews was that while the emigrants themselves would have liked their children to have maintained some sense of their identities as Hungarians, most of the members of the second generation consider themselves Austrian. Even in the case of the Austrian Hungarians who cultivated close ties to Hungary and Hungarian culture, their use of Hungarian was palpably different from the Hungarian spoken in Hungary. The Austrian Hungarians, most of whom lived in Vienna, produce few cultural products independently, and thus are left with the cultivation of the past and the importation of Hungarian culture, primarily from Hungary, but also from some of the Hungarian minority communities in the Carpathian Basin. The endeavors to this effect notwithstanding, they have no genuinely Hungarian vision of the future. The network of relationships between members of the first generation does not include the second or third generations, and the process of assimilation is accelerating with the passing of the first generation. The cultivation of Hungarian aspects of their identities becomes more prominent when they reach the age of retirement and begin a less active period of life. Two of the fundamental ways in which this takes form are attendance at Hungarian cultural events and attempts to nurture their grandchildren's awareness of their Hungarian roots and compel them to use Hungarian in everyday life.

The wave of emigration from Hungary in 1956–1957 had distinctive characteristics. From the outset the United Nations and the states of the West regarded the emigrants as political refugees, not so much because of their motives for leaving the country as because of the larger historical context. They provided considerable financial assistance and did a great deal to help the emigrants settle and integrate quickly. If this was indeed their intention, my research suggests that with the passing of some fifty years it has been achieved.

19 Györgyi Bindorffer, "Etnikai, nemzeti és kétnemzeti identitás" [Ethnic, National, and Dual-National Identity], in *Változatok a kettős identitásra* [Variants of Dual Identity], ed. Györgyi Bindorffer (Budapest: Gondolat–MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2006), 7–9.

Biographical Details Regarding the Interviewees Mentioned in the Essay

Lajos (1938) and Ágnes (1945)

Lajos is an architect. He crossed the Austrian border with his classmates on November 14, 1956. He completed his maturation exam in the summer of 1957 in Innsbruck and in 1964 completed a degree in architecture at the University of Vienna. In 1966 he found employment in a planning office and in 1975 he opened his own business. His wife, [Ágnes], was a teacher. She left Hungary illegally in the early 1970s after their wedding. In the 1980s and 1990s she was an active member of the Szent István Egylet (Saint Stephen Society) in Vienna. She was an editor for the *Bécsi Napló* [Viennese Journal] and did interviews with emigrant Hungarians entitled *Közöttünk élnek* [They live among us]. The interview was conducted in Baden in 2005.

Károly (1940)

Businessman. He crossed the border into Austria in December 1956. He completed his maturation exam at the Iselsberg secondary school in 1959 and then pursued training in radio engineering and electronics. In 1961 he took part in a peace march in commemoration of the 1956 Revolution. He was an active participant in the scout movement and the Central Alliance of Austrian Hungarian Societies and Associations. The interview was conducted in Vienna in 2005.

Aladár (1939)

Teacher. The child of a poor family of four children from Mosonmagyaróvár. Because of the family's well-known religiosity, he thought he had little chance of ever pursuing university studies under a communist regime and in November 1956 left the country. He completed his maturation exam in Iselsberg. He completed a degree at the University of Vienna in German language and literature. He worked as a secondary school teacher and boarding school teacher, and also held preparatory courses for prospective university students who spoke German as a foreign language. As of 1966 he has traveled regularly to Hungary, first alone and then with his family. He has four children, and they have a moderate knowledge of Hungarian. He is bound to Hungary first and foremost by family ties. The interview was conducted in Vienna in 2005.

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