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**Borderland situation  
As It is Seen by a Sociologist**

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## INTRODUCTION

The definition of border has two opposite implications. One is that a border runs between two areas and in this way it has a separating function. On the other hand, those different areas that are situated along the same country border may form a homogeneous region or different areas with the same features may be linked. The first function of border dominates in war-time, while the other one in peace. Furthermore, borders fulfil their function on three different levels:

- local,
- regional,
- national.

There are different interactions among these different territorial units. In war-time inter-state relations are dominating. In peace economic and cultural relations are in the focus of public interest and microregional relations become important. In war-time inter-state military interactions are dominating above all. Naturally, the problem of borders becomes a key issue during wars and regional conflicts, e.g. peace treaties.

I would like to present the problems of the Hungarian borders from sociological aspects.<sup>1</sup> The sociological aspects of borderland situation become more and more important because during the last 40 years of peace the Hungarian border has had the same functions that a border has during war: it was separating and confronting different nations. What are the reasons? This paper is going to give an answer for this problem.

First, I would like to stress on the point that the essence of Hungarian borderland situation lies in the historical and macro-economic elements of its origin.

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE HUNGARIAN BORDERS

The present Hungarian borders have a 70 years old history. During this short historical period various stages may be determined. At first the origins of the present Hungarian borders should be mentioned.

Before the present Hungarian borders having been formed in 1920, Hungary had different borders. The history of country borders is the history of the country itself. Although, there is no need for a sociologist to study the history of his home country the subject itself needs some historical background.

In 1867 the *Habsburg Empire*, that consisted of Hungary, Austria and other nations, was functioning in a dualistic form and since then the Empire consisted of two – independent – parliamentary states, i.e., Austria and Hungary. Apart from the common emperor these two states were linked through their foreign affairs, national defence, finance and the customs union, which was reinforced in every 10 years. In the following year there was a similar agreement between Hungary and Croatia. Croatia-Slavonia became an associated member of the *Austro-Hungarian Monarchy* and was given some autonomy. This means home affairs were guided by an independent territorial government headed by the Governor of Croatia in Zagreb while 29 representatives were delegated to the Hungarian Parliament for participation and the management of common affairs. There was a Croatian minister among the members of the Hungarian government.

Thus, from the point of administration Hungary was divided into two parts:

- Hungary in its original size had a population of 18,264,533 on the area of 282,870 km<sup>2</sup> (these figures refer to the 1910 census, being the last on the original territory of Hungary),
- Croatia-Slavonia with a population of 621,954 on the area of 42,541 km<sup>2</sup>.

In 1910 Hungary had a territory of 325,411 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 20,886,487. This was *Ancient Hungary* the sixth in population and the seventh in territory among the countries of Europe. After 1920 Hungary fell back to the fifteenth rank in population and to the eleventh in territory.

For a few years before and after the *Trianon Peace Treaty* the territory of Hungary was constantly changing. Some areas belonged to one and then to another country (for example, *Sopron* town and its eight surrounding villages were rejoined to Hungary at the 1921 referendum; until then they belonged to Austria). In 1920 Hungary had a population of 7,990,202 on the area of 93,073 km<sup>2</sup>. Although, on world scale Hungary was a small country but it was not reflected by the Hungarian's opinion of their country. The first formation was taught in schools as „*Great Hungary*” while the other as „*Dismembered Hungary*”. After the First World War the Trianon Peace Treaty has completely restructured the country's territorial, population, economic, transport, settlement and other structure. The whole country has completely changed because it has lost two-thirds of its former territory and one-third of its Hungarian population. From the former territory of Hungary 106,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 1,658,000 of the Hungarian population was joined to Rumania, 63,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 568,000 Hungarians were joined to Yugoslavia, 62,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 1,066,000 Hungarians to Czechoslovakia (or better to say Slovakia) while 4,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 20,000 Hungarians to Austria (*Figure 1*). I would like to emphasise that these figures are based on the 1910 census data.

The census taken after the First World War in Hungary's neighbours indicates 20–25 per cent less Hungarians. This difference may have various reasons, for example, after the definition of new border intelligence, clerks and middle-class families left their homes in a great number and moved to Hungary, which resulted in a decrease of the Hungarian population in these new countries. On the other hand, it is also possible that Hungary's neighbours were interested in indicating less Hungarian population than it was in fact. At the same time they say that the 1910 census was for the favour of Hungarians but one thing is sure: during the Trianon Peace Treaty natural ethnic borders were completely disregarded at the definition of Hungary's new borders. Thus the present borders of Hungary are not natural but artificial borders.

The Hungarian and non-Hungarian population of the Carpathian Basin should have been separated so that ethnic points could have been disregarded only in case when ethnic fusion demanded it to do so. However, in Slovakia, Rumania and Serbia areas with homogeneous Hungarian population were joined to the other side of the Hungarian border. A

smaller part of border was an ethnic border but the greater part was serving only for the separation of Hungarians from each other.

Apart from the 10 million Hungarians who were living in Hungary there are still 3 million Hungarians who are living on the other side of border even after 70 years after Trianon. Thus, the state border of Hungary is still separating natural ethnic regions and sometimes this is manifested in open or hidden conflict situations.

The Hungarian system of production and labour division failed after 1920. The customs union within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy ceased and the most important sites of natural resources remained on the other side of border while a more proportionate rate of agricultural territories remained in the new territory of Hungary. These losses were coupled by the damages and expenses of war. Thus, the economic situation including living conditions decrease for several years.

Between the two world wars it was the question, why the new borders of Hungary were defined in their present form with motivations, which was the central issue of public press and opinion in the years of 1919–1920.

After the Second World War the government tried to clear this problem from public opinion and all the scientific researches on this problem were banned. As the historical background of the definition of the Hungarian border in the past was the subject of different scientific researches, in the 1980s this problem aroused a great attention. There are three publications that are worth mentioning such as *Ormos, M. (1983)*, *Raffai, E. (1989)* and *Palotás, Z. (1990)*.

The opinion of *Palotás Z.* seems true for me, stating that the main motives of border definition were connected with the structure of the Hungarian railway system. It had mainly a radial system starting from *Budapest* capital but there were some connections between the main routes in some distance from Budapest. The author points out that there is a circular system along the other side of the Hungarian border following the eastern area of *Luzenec* in Slovakia, *Oradea* in Rumania and the northern part of *Vojvodina* in Yugoslavia. These three surrounding countries formed a military alliance of *Little Entente*. They were striving for forming a system that was used for eliminating the need of transporting goods to each other through Hungary. Thus, being a sovereign system it served as a potential background for different military actions against Hungary.

After 1920 Hungary had to build some direct connections between the radial lines to fulfil the needs of railway transport.

The loss of the only seaport (*Rijeka*) was also very disadvantageous for the Hungarian transport system.

Having a closer look at the changes in public administration I would like to point out that during the definition of new borders the aspects of historical regions were disregarded. The new border was cutting districts, boroughs and villages into two and sometimes into three. Among the 63 counties in 1910 there were only ten where the territory and population remained the same both in the past and the present. Thirteen countries lost their territories with their county seat. All the remaining (29) counties belong to another country.

County seats in borderline areas have lost most of their previous contacts and their borderland situation created a handicapped regional position for them. Cities getting to the other side of border were great losses for the surrounding villages in the full length of border. Settlements belonging to the gravity zone of the former county seats lost their administrative, market, cultural and educational centres, and it was very depressing for the inhabitants in a psychological sense as well.

Although authorities were making efforts for creating new centres as a compensation for the backward situation of frontier regions, these new centres were smaller with less advanced infrastructure and they were missing that urban bourgeois style atmosphere that former county seats had. People coming to these new centres for official affairs did not like them. There was only a small amount of financial resources for their development. Thus, in the next few years there were only a few towns that had real chances for development such as *Mátészalka* and *Berettyóújfalu* towns.

The change of borders had rather negative consequences on small county seats. The development of *Balassagyarmat*, *Sátoraljaújhely*, *Komárom* and *Esztergom* towns stopped, for the new border deprived them from their former gravity zones. On the other hand, the former administrative bodies preserved their earlier functions and even their staff increased with newcomers from the other side of border. These created new social tensions (shortages in flats, jobs, struggle for better positions) in frontier regions.

The new border deprived Hungary from nearly all of its regional centres such as *Bratislava* (the Hungarian name is *Pozsony*), *Kosice* (*Kassa*), *Timisoara* (*Temesvár*), *Cluj-Napoca* (*Kolozsvár*), *Oradea* (*Arad*) and *Su-botica* (*Szabadka*). They were cultural, commercial, administrative and market centres of historically interrelated regions.

However, things had to go on. The new borders had to be considered as reality. „How to live with new borders?” – that was the main problem at that time.

In the middle of the 1980s it could be seen from publications that in the years after Trianon borderland situation was very disadvantageous for all Hungarian border towns. We were interested if this was true in the case of rural settlements, too. We paid special attention for the role of borderland situation in the backwardness of rural settlements. Based on our results we can separate 3 types of border in the period starting from 1920 and ending with our present period. These types are as follows:

- easily traversable, less guarded borders,
- hardly traversable, strongly guarded borders,
- open borders.

## **EASILY TRAVERSABLE, LESS GUARDED BORDERS**

The first period started with the signature of Trianon Peace Treaty and ended with the beginning of the Second World War. In that time foreign policy was characterised by the bad relationship of Hungary with its neighbours (Slovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia). The Hungarians' demand for the revision of borders and the neighbours' efforts for the preservation of the *status quo* were the dominating elements of foreign policy.

### **1. Border cities as full and border villages as partial losers**

The word *border* itself had some negative implications then. By losing one-third of their country Hungarians living on the present territory of Hungary had a feeling of isolation and limited freedom.

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter urban settlements lost some of their gravity zones and they had a smaller degree of their previous administrative, cultural, trading and economic functions, i.e., those very functions that give a town's rank to a settlement.

Villages were also the losers of this process, for they were separated from their former centres. Thus, they had a lower level of industrial, commercial services but at the same time local markets lost their good customers coming from cities. To solve this problem rural residents had to seek for new centres where they could sell their goods. For all that villages maintained some of their former contacts because the legal status of state borders was formal, i.e., they were easily traversable and less guarded.

Some villages could make some benefit from the change of borders. Landowners who had some land on the other side of border (most border villages belonged to this category) had a possibility to cross the border for land cultivation. They were following the earlier old village paths that are called now as „green borders”. They were doing this because there were only a few legal border stations lying very far from villages. This phenomenon, i.e., if someone had a land on both sides of the border was named „double possession”.

Residents could make some economic benefit from borderland situation. Many of them having the right of crossing the green border could make some use of their mobility and the differences between the price



system of the two neighbouring countries. This means they were buying goods for reasonable prices, and they could buy such goods that were not available in their home country.

The possibilities of crossing the green border were different at that time. There were large differences within the same border, like on the Yugoslavian-Hungarian border. In cases when the border was separating Hungary from Croatia, Hungarians were free to visit Croatian weekly markets, while on the Serb-Hungarian border there were far more strict restrictions, for the border was separating Hungarians on both sides.

It was the Austro-Hungarian border that was the most easily traversable. Apart from crossings for visiting regular weekly markets, Hungarians were doing day-labouring in Austria, mainly in agricultural sector. They were using there more advanced technologies and tools and these were adopted by them in Hungary. On the other hand, Hungarians who were living in *Burgenland* were studying at the secondary schools of *Sopron* and *Kőszeg* towns. Jewish retail dealers who were living in Austria regularly visited villages on the border two or three-times a week to purchase fruits, such as red currant, raspberry, chestnut, cherry, eggs, etc. and to sell them at the markets of Vienna.

It was the Rumanian border that was the most strictly guarded, for it was separating the largest areas with homogeneous Hungarian population. It was impossible to maintain traditional relations between the two sides of border. In countries with homogeneous Hungarian population at both sides there was a much more fear of territorial reintegration than in those, where official borders coincided with natural ethnic borders.

Smuggling was usual at every part of border. People were smuggling not only salt, this very scarce and indispensable item but they were bringing horses as well through Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian borders. Thus, we can see that borders in this period were easily traversable and less guarded, so people could maintain their earlier contacts on both sides of the border. That's why the old generation keeps a good memory of these years. Middle and young generations have no personal experiences of this period.

## **2. Borderland situation being advantageous for one and disadvantageous for the other village**

*Szentpéterfa* is a village with Croatian population lying close to the Austrian border. After the Trianon Peace Treaty it belonged to Austria but at the end of 1922 as a result of border revision Hungary got it back.

Many of its residents went out to America between 1890–1910 for they could not get a job and live in Hungary. When this area belonged to Austria there was another period of mass emigration. After the First World War emigration was a usual phenomenon in that part of Austria where *Szentpéterfa* belonged, while it was impossible to emigrate to America from Hungary. After the return of *Szentpéterfa* to Hungary this emigration process stopped until 1956 when, compared to earlier periods, a larger emigration process started. (The second generation of emigrants was the descendants of the first generation, so they were only following their aunts and uncles who were living in America.) According to local researches there are as many families in America originating from *Szentpéterfa* as live in *Szentpéterfa* itself. Every second American family having gone there from *Szentpéterfa* has relatives whose mother or father or both were born in *Szentpéterfa*.

These would not have happened if after the First World War this area had not belonged to Austria for a short time. Nevertheless, this situation has resulted in emigrations leaving their marks up to the present period. Today this village is richer than any of its surroundings because emigrants were giving important support to the community of their home settlement. Houses, equipment and the fact that every second family has a car and 70 per cent of car proprietors got their car as a present from their American relatives may prove this hypothesis. Although local residents are not aware of the fact, but according to the research team leader a much lower amount of support is expected to come to here in a short time. This is because most families born in Hungary have died, their brothers and sisters are about to retire while second or third cousins are forming a loose relationship with Hungarian families. Apart from material support American families in *Szentpéterfa* give an additional help by the purchase and reconstruction of their father's or grandfather's old houses. They spend their spare time or return here after retirement. Pensioners coming from America even with the smallest income are considered rich in *Szentpéterfa*.

Most residents of *Vállaj* – another border village involved in our research – was German whose ancestors came here in the 18th century. There was a settlement group consisting of 24 German villages having a

strong interrelationship with its surroundings before the definition of the new border. After all it was Vállaj and another village that belonged to Hungary while the rest of the group joined to Rumania. After 1920 Vállaj lost of its relations with its natural parent region.

### 3. The first period of borderland situation

Hungary was among the losers of the First World War and in 1920 the definition of the new border brought a significant reduction both in the territory and in the population of Hungary. These aroused a national feeling of isolation and limited freedom. For those who were living on the border it was easier to cross it and the feelings mentioned here were less intensive in their case. In other words, the word *border* had generally a negative implication but those who were living close to the border did not experience it so intensively than others living inside.

After 1939 there was a great migration process to Rumania. As Hungary got back *North-Transylvania* for a short time, there was a greater participation of migrants from border regions than from central ones. Those who came from inside spent some time at their relatives living on the border. After 1945 with the restore of border this process repeated but in the opposite direction and with a greater intensity at the Slovak-Hungarian border where the exchange of population was forced by the Slovak government. These events brought a great shock for local residents. The older and middle generations had a general opinion saying borders are always temporary and it is impossible to do anything about changes.

However, we are much more affected by the consequences. This brings a feeling of uncertainty and defencelessness. From this psychological point life on the border was much more difficult than inside.

## HARDLY TRAVERSABLE, STRONGLY GUARDED BORDERS

The borders of Hungary were quite different after 1947 – the year of Paris Peace Treaty after the Second World War – than before. This is explained by Hungary's position in world economy.

Hungarian historians and politicians were making large efforts to define Hungary's portrait of the last five-hundred years. Among them *Bibó, I. (1986)* and *Szücs, J. (1983)* should be mentioned. There is a strong correlation between their and *I. Wallerstein's* opinion (*Wallerstein, I. (1974)*). Wallerstein, a famous author for English readers says that modern civilisation was already been formed in the sixteenth century. It consisted of core regions (such as England, the Netherlands with their surroundings), semi-peripheral regions (countries of the Mediterranean Sea) and peripheral regions including Hungary. These three regions are forming a social system with a homogeneous economic unit, while cultures and political systems have preserved their heterogeneity and autonomy.

Wallerstein said that this civilisation was balanced by different forces struggling against each other and this balance was maintained by the continuity of these struggling forces. The efforts to change this common civilisation for the members' individual benefit were working against this balance. There was some division of labour between core and peripheral regions as a smaller rate of the economic surplus was redistributed to core regions than their proportionate size, otherwise the whole system would have collapsed. Thus, for a long time the exchange rate of goods was for peripheral regions. Periphery and core had quite different features which were manifested mainly in labour types (labour cultures). Activities within core and periphery needed a different practice. A group with strong economic position could survive only in peripheral regions.

It is important that according to Wallerstein's interpretation there were empires outside this common civilisation like Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Empires were functioning on different basis than civilisations and this created a vacuum between them. An empire was a homogeneous political unit ruled by a centre. It was an autonomic economic system and in this way isolated from the world. A modern civilisation – according to Wallerstein's interpretation – is joined to world economy but without any transition into an empire. (Here he refers to a non-English

type empire because it's a different organisation.) The borders of a world civilisation are always in move, i.e., they always change.

Wallerstein's definition of Hungary as a peripheral region was based on its position in the 16th century. He did not study Hungary's economic situation after 1947 but if we apply his theory for this period, we can define it as a type of „*modern empirism*”. The word *modern* is used only for the separation of Wallerstein's interpretation from the second half of the 20th century. Socialism, following the Soviet model, was a type of modern empirism because member countries were ruled by a centre and their national and cultural characteristics were disregarded. The features of modern empirism are very similar to the author's description of Russia and of the Ottoman Empire as homogeneous political systems are ruled by a centre and isolated from the world. By world system we mean the developed world countries in the period of modern empirism.

### **1. Bad times of living on the border**

The second period in the history of border started in 1947 and ended in 1989, the year of the removal of the *iron curtain* on the Austro-Hungarian border.

Naturally there are great differences and there is a possibility to define some subperiods within the whole period but the main features such as disregarding national characteristics and the monopoly of political power were maintained during the whole period. Compared to the previous period, here the possibilities of crossing the border and of the maintenance of earlier contacts were far more less.

In 1947 *double possession* was abolished so if anybody had some land on the other side of border he was not allowed to cultivate it any more and his land was taken. Since then crossing the border was possible only through legal border stations that were strictly guarded. Sometimes people had to take long roundabouts to get into a neighbour settlement on the other side of border. Neighbour settlement contacts that sometimes looked back to hundreds of years were still partly maintained after 1920.

During the Second World War (1939–1944) Hungary got back some of its earlier territories and as a result of this, earlier inter-settlement contacts were reinforced. That's why the introduction of rigid, strictly guarded and hardly traversable border was a great change for borderland popula-

tion between 1947–1968. While so far borderland situation was only a psychological problem, the new features of the border had political and regional development implications as well.

The intensity of the supervision of border depended on the political relations with our neighbours. During the 1950s the Austrian and Yugoslavian borders were the „most critical”. Neither Austria nor Yugoslavia belonged to the *Warsaw Pact*, while Hungary was its loyal member. The relationship with Yugoslavia worsened when it was disclosed from the organisation of *Informburo*, an alliance of communist parties in 1948, and Yugoslavia was declared as its major enemy. *Stalin* found a good partner in *Rákosi* because he was ready to introduce Yugoslavia to the world as the most hostile and traitorous nation being the source of „any kind of evil”.

While between the two world wars, compared to the population of inside areas, borderland residents had a feeling of more freedom and less restriction, after 1947 nobody wanted to live on the border and everyone was happy to live as far from the border as he could. Borders were lined by mines and there was a barbed wire fence along the Austro-Hungarian border, named as the „iron curtain”. Frontier zones were defined and marked along both sides of border. That means, in Hungary certain documents were needed to enter these zones. Those who were living outside this zone and wanted to enter frontier zones, e.g., to visit their relatives, they had to apply for it. In this sense there was another border within Hungary. Visitors had to show their documents for control and they could not continue their way until the frontier bar was opened for them. Separate buildings were built for staff which after all served as an inner border station.

This was the time of building labour camps in Hungary. At first only rich but later any people who were *persona non grata* for the political regime were taken to these places. They had to live and work in terrible conditions there.

There was also a labour camp in *Hortobágy*, which had „residents” from the Yugoslavian and Austrian border. A documentary film was made about survivors by the *Gulyás Brothers* under the title „Violation of Law”. The film gives a dramatic picture on the high price of living on the border.

Our research has proved that these families having been taken to *Hortobágy* were not allowed to return their homes even after the shut-down of the camp. These tensions had negative consequences on regional

development policy and investment sources. Although it was border towns that were mainly affected the limitation of private housebuildings had some consequences on border villages as well.

*Velem*, a village on the Austrian border, one of the sites of our research, had a well functioning village tourism, offering job opportunities for the people. After the Second World War this business could not be maintained, for „visitors” were not allowed to come to this place. Tourism was banned here until the 1980s.

Before the Austrian border it was the Yugoslavian border that was „liberated” (in the 1960s). When entering the Austrian frontier zone some loose and formal procedures were still in use until the 1980s.

In the 1970s and rather in the 1980s it was the Soviet-Hungarian and the Romanian-Hungarian borders that became the most „critical”. Although there were no inner frontiers, mines, iron curtains, etc. , i.e., there were no fortifications and the neighbours were in the same military alliance with Hungary, these borders were rigid, strictly guarded and hardly traversable.

Every third Hungarians have relatives or friends in Rumania. Rumania had a falling tendency of living standards in the 1970s and 1980s. There were shortages in a lot of essential commodities. Hungarians were travelling to there in masses to help their relatives. These trips were very troublesome, for they had to wait 12 or sometimes 24 hours on the border and officers were very rude during strict customs controls. Traffic was slow through the Soviet border as well because of the large traffic of goods and the strict and illogical customs control procedures.

Thus, we can conclude that the definition of the Hungarian border slowed the development of border towns. This process reached border villages after 1947 when the period of modern empirism came to Hungary. It was a special period from the point of the way villages were cut from their mother towns, for they belonged to another country. They had limited contacts with Hungarian settlements as well.

## **2. The stratification of the local community of villages participated in research**



As it was mentioned our empirical research was carried out in ten border villages (*Figure 2*). Most of our questions indicated on a questionnaire was put for the definition of local community hierarchy.

I have defined five groups within the income and property rank of families. During the stratification groups of families I have summed up their income and property indexes and based on the results I divided them into five categories. They are as follows (for 5.6% of families the grouping was impossible for the insufficient amount of data):

- poor families (9.5%),
- families with poor conditions (35.6%),
- middle-class families (29.7%),
- families with good conditions (15.3%),
- rich families (4.3%).

*Poor families* live below the minimum subsistence level, they work mainly in state farms or co-operatives and have no private farms. Old pensioners, single persons and gypsies belong to this category. Almost all poor families consist of the descendants of servants, day labourers and farm labourers.

*Families with poor conditions* live on the Western European standards of minimum subsistence level or social subsistence level. They can fulfil their cultural, transport, etc. needs on a minimum level. They do not completely lag behind the social level that's differentiates them from the previous group. Half of these families belong to the worst and half to the next income category. Most of their food is grown on their private farm. All family types belong here but the rate of old and childless families is the largest here. The majority is a descendant of small and dwarf holders or share croppers, tenants or day labourers.

*Middle-class families* have an equal representation in industry and services. Although they have no more wage incomes than the members of the previous group, private stock-breeding brings a better situation for them. The majority is a three generation family where the oldest generation takes care of the animals. Among them there is a great variety of ancestors, ranging from beggars and farm labourers to landowners of 20 hold<sup>2</sup>. The group of different craftsmen should be mentioned here who apart from their traditional profession were running agricultural farms as well. Thus, getting incomes from various sources was a tradition in these families.

*Families with good conditions* had much more wage incomes than any of the previous groups. A new element here is the role of non-agricultural private economy. People belonging to this group do not run stock-breeding farms in a larger scale than those in the previous group, it is plant cultivation they do in larger scale. Some of them work in industry but the majority is employed in agricultural and services sectors. Among their ancestors we can hardly find any servants or day labourers, most families are the descendants of middle-class or rich peasants.

By *rich families* term we mean the rural economic elite. They have much more properties and incomes than the others. We can find servants or small landowners among their ancestors only in extreme cases, for most of them are the descendants of rich peasants and intellectuals.

The average social stratum index of families involved in our research is 2.7. This means it is somewhere between the group of middle-class families and families with poor conditions.

Now I am going to introduce villages participated in research in a descending order of their social stratum index, and I am also going to explain the reasons of their positive or negative deviation from the average.

*Pusztamérge*s has the best social stratum index (3.3). This village is in a slightly better economic situation compared to the others in almost every aspect. In other words, it is in a complex advantageous situation. Here the number of the poor is half and the number of the rich is twice of the average. The majority of the sample group came from the surrounding scattered farms. That's why the number of first generation families is more than the number of families of the earlier generation.

Most parents of the people interviewed belong to the two extremities: the category of big landowners and poor families. Now the number of the most wealthy families here is three times more than the average. 61.8% of family heads interviewed is employed in agricultural sector. This had a great impact on the decrease of workers in the other two sectors but first of all in industry. This should have resulted in smaller incomes but it didn't, for there is a greater representation of the fourth category – the category of families with good conditions – among wage earners. Extra, non-agricultural incomes are below the average but it has a „stimulating effect” for poor families. What is really stimulating for them is private farming, including plant cultivation, gardening, wine growing, tobacco planting and greenhouse farming.

Among the 89 families that were interviewed eight families belonged to the best (the fifth) category in plant cultivation. This category consists of farmers making large incomes from private farming. There were 61 families who belonged to the previous (fourth) group.

Apart from large-scale plant cultivation local residents may have a great advantage from the great number of young families. The representation of family types largely differs from the average. Here the number of small families including parents and children is relatively high while the number of multiple generation, childless and old families is relatively small.

This young population is full of complaints about the missing local industry, the shortage of job opportunities, the poor condition of transport and provisional service facilities and about the standstill of general local development. In fact, compared to the others, this village has a relatively rich population.

Our next village is *Öttömös*, in a short distance from Pusztamérgeš. The average social stratum index is 3.1. Only the rate of poor families corresponds to the average while the next two categories have a smaller and the top two categories have a greater representation than the average. The number of rich families is three times more than the average, it is even higher than it was in Pusztamérgeš. The rate of female immigrants (56.3%) and the first generation of native male residents (19.7%) is high. Thus, here the rate of multiple generation families is smaller than in Pusztamérgeš. Like in Pusztamérgeš immigrants came from the surrounding scattered farms and they built new houses here.

The proportion of families who had big land properties in 1945 with craftsmen without land property is large. The living conditions of local residents corresponds to the population of Pusztamérgeš. Here only 4.2 per cent are employed in industry while the rate of agricultural workers (59.1%) almost the same with that of in Pusztamérgeš. The rate of people employed in services sector is also more than the average. Wage incomes are not better than the average but their distribution has resulted a greater representation of both extreme categories.

Private stock breeding and plant cultivation are both important in *Öttömös*. 32.4 per cent of stock breeders belong to the fourth category while 12.7% to the fifth, i.e., the best group. In the field of plant cultivation 60 and 15.5 per cent of farmers belong to the top two categories. They

grow and sell asparagus, potato, paprika and tomato. This community has a similar model to that of in Pusztamérgeš; there are only some multiple generation and childless families here. Local residents are more satisfied with their home settlement that can be explained by the smaller size of the settlement and the greater cooperation of local residents.

The next in social stratum rank is *Velem*. The average index here is 3.1. It is the same as in Öttömös. There is a smaller representation of the two lowest and even of the middle categories while the top two have a greater representation than the average. The number of immigrants is higher here than the average. This is especially true for female immigrants.

The majority had large land properties in 1945. According to the families' property situation there is a smaller representation of the last two categories, while the representation of middle and the top two categories is greater than the average. More than half of the people who were interviewed is employed in services sector that resulted in a downfall in the workers' rate in the other two sectors, especially in industry.

It is the incomes of second economy that bring success for local residents. Half of the local population has a possibility of getting extra incomes while one quarter makes money from private accommodation. The number of people who do not deal with private agricultural farming, both in plant cultivation and stock breeding is twice of the average. At the same time there is an extremely great – more than double – representation in the top two categories of agricultural farmers. (They grow and sell red currant, raspberry and chestnut.) The remaining three categories' rate is smaller. This is a place of real extremities in private agricultural farming for it is done in specialised form or not done at all. Three generations live together in more than a quarter of families while the number of small and childless families is far more less than the average.

Local residents are satisfied with their home settlement for it has a clean and fresh air and tourists return here every year.

The average social stratum index is 2.9 in *Szentpéterfa*. Here the rate of families in bad conditions is 10 per cent less while the number of families with good conditions is 10 per cent more than the average. The property index of families shows a greater representation in the top two and middle categories while it is smaller in the bottom two categories than the average.

Half of the people interviewed belonged to the category of small landowners having 6–14 hold of land in 1945. The rate of craftsmen having some land property in 1945 was 10 per cent. This resulted in a reduction in the remaining categories.

This is a small village of Croatian nationality. It has a very religious population. Ethnic identity and religion have a great cohesive power in local community. Parents of 82 per cent of male and 73 per cent of female population were also born here. The rate of male immigrants is half of and in case of female immigrants it is somewhere below the average. The representation of people who were interviewed by economic sectors corresponds to the average. In wage incomes it is only the representation of the lowest category that is below the average.

Extra non-agricultural incomes are more than the average and this resulted in a reduction of the lowest category and in an increase in the number of families with good conditions.

Private agricultural farming is below the average. This is not true in plant cultivation for 72 per cent of families belongs to the fourth category which produce some more goods than they consume. The representation of all the other categories is smaller than the average. They deal with greenhouse farming and grow cucumber and herbicides. Twenty-three per cent of families does not deal with stock breeding but the number of families of the middle categories, i.e., which produce meat only for their private needs is more than the average. In both areas the group of private agricultural contractors is missing. Like in Velem here the rate of three generation families is also high (25%). The representation of single persons, childless and small families is smaller here. The number of female residents who do not work outside their homes is high. Local residents do like their home settlement very much than any other places. Their ethnic identity and religion bring together and separate them at the same time.

The next village is *Murakeresztúr* which according to its social stratum index takes a central position among villages involved in our research. There is a smaller representation of the upper and lower categories and a greater representation of middle categories.

In 1945 there were two social classes here. They were workers including peasants working in industry (their number is four times more than the average) and poor peasants.

There was a shortage in big landowners here. Two-thirds of people interviewed was employed in services sector. The majority was employed at *MÁV* (the Hungarian Railway Company), only 17 per cent was making their living by agriculture. Wage incomes are a slightly above the average. Local residents draw some more incomes from non-agricultural second economy but some smaller incomes from private farming. One quarter does not deal with stock breeding and in both areas of agricultural farming the rate of agricultural contractors is very small while the rate of farmers with subsistence farming is very high.

There is a smaller rate of single persons, childless families and small families here. The more than double rate of three generation families than the average can be explained by the resident's Croatian nationality. However, ethnic identity does not play such an important role here than in Szentpéterfa. It is because local residents were very poor here before the Second World War. Murakeresztúr had a very important development since then that is seen and expressed by its local residents.

There is a smaller difference among social stratum indexes in villages below the average than in those having been mentioned so far. Among them it is *Vállaj* that is in the most advantageous situation. The average social stratum index is 2.6 here. This village is not very poor for the representation of poor families is two-thirds of the average and the representation of rich families corresponds to the average. However, the representation of families with good conditions is half of the average. There are more families with bad conditions and middle-class families than the average because of their property conditions.

Our research results give some evidence that *Vállaj* was a rich (Swabish) settlement in 1945. Here the number of families with private land of 24 hold and the number of craftsmen including those (mainly bricklayers) having some land was very high. Parents of 75 per cent of people interviewed were born also here. They are in good financial conditions while the houses of emigrants or evacuated Swabish residents are inhabited by gypsies who do not take care of these houses having been new a few years ago.

Fifty-three per cent of people interviewed are employed in agriculture, 30 per cent in industry and only 19 per cent in services sector. Wage incomes are better than the average and the number of families belonging to the lowest income category is half of the average.

Extra incomes of non-agricultural sector and private agricultural farming are above the average. In stock breeding and plant cultivation the representation of middle-class families and those in good conditions is above, while the representation of lower categories is below the average. There are only a few contractors here. Among the total 103 families 39 are childless and 17 are single persons. From this point they are far above the average. The number of small families is very small. Thus, these indicators show a strongly ageing population. The tragic memory of taking many of local people to Soviet labour camps after the Second World War is still living here.

The next place is *Nyírvasvári* situated not far from Vállaj. The average social stratum index here is 2.5. The representation of middle-class families is below while the representation of poor families is above the average. The rate of the top two categories is smaller than the average but the great number of the poor and gypsies has a domination. The property index of families indicates the lack of middle class and bad condition categories.

There were a lot of peasants and craftsmen without families and land property here. What is interesting here is that there were no workers here in 1945, while today it is a typical village of workers. Local residents do not work here, for the lack of industry. They work as daily or weekly commuters. Incomes are slightly below the average, for the large number of poor families and the lack of middle class and poor conditioned families.

The rate of non-agricultural extra activities is below the average but private farming is more intensive here than the average. The rate of contractors corresponds to the average in plant cultivation and stock breeding activities (this is especially true for cow farming) but the representation of farmers producing more than subsistence level is below the average.

Almost one-third of families is childless. That's far beyond the average. The number of small and multiple generation families is slightly smaller than the average. Local residents are not satisfied with their home settlement. They think that the development of their home settlement is slow and they explain this by their being servants in the past.

The next in the rank is *Bódvászilás* with the social stratum index of 2.4. The number of the poor is not more than elsewhere, the trouble is that there are no rich families here and the number of families with good conditions is less than half of the average. However, the representation of

families with poor conditions and of middle class families is by ten per cent more than the average. The living conditions of about 66 per cent of families are below the average. In full sample the rate of this category is 30.4 per cent. This category has a complete predominance over each category in Bódvaszilas.

In 1945 there were more craftsmen with land property than small landowners. The representation of native residents, immigrants and those employed in services sector corresponds to the average. There is a 14 per cent rate of agricultural workers, and a 52 per cent rate of people interviewed is employed in industry, especially in mines. Wage incomes are below the average with the predominance of the lowest category. The income index of agricultural second economy is below the average and the income index of private agricultural farming is the last among the ten villages having been participated in our research.

There is a far greater representation (63%) of small families than the average while the representation of single persons and childless families is small here. These facts indicate that most local residents belong to the young generation and this is the only positive factor in the settlement's future development. Local residents feel some attraction towards the landscape but they feel that life is very difficult in their home settlement.

*Biharugra* has an equal social stratum index with Bódvaszilas. All the three lower categories have greater while the top two ones have smaller representation of the average. The rate of immigrants and native residents corresponds to the average. Biharugra is in the most backward region of Hungary. Its population lives in very poor living conditions. Among the people interviewed 47 per cent belong to the lowest income category.

The representation of the lowest category is above the average while the representation of all the other categories is below the average. In 1945 there were more peasants, small and middle landowners than the average. This place was exclusively an agricultural settlement, there were only few craftsmen and industrial workers and the number of servants was also smaller than the average. Now two-thirds are employed in agriculture, ten per cent in industry and the rate of family heads employed in services sector is also less than the average.

In wage incomes the representation of the two extreme categories is greater while the representation of the other three categories is smaller than the average. The role of non-agricultural second economy is not sig-



nificant while it is in private farming. From this point it is the first among the ten villages having been participated in our research. However, it is not contractors but farmers who produce more than subsistence level, they form a majority here. For example, 80 per cent of farmers dealing with plant cultivation belongs to this category. In case of stock breeding a large variety of animals was kept in farms which was traditional after the war, such as a stock of 15 pigs, 100 chickens, 2 sows, 50 ducks, etc. but there is some tendency towards specialisation now like in a case of a farm with a stock of 300 rabbits, some pigs and poultry.

The population here is older than in Vállaj. Here 44 per cent of families are childless and 16 per cent are single persons. They are all old people. There is only one three generation family represented in sample and the representation of small families (31) is also below the average.

It is evident here that families with more animals had also large land properties in the past but they were rich neither in the past nor in the present. Stock breeders are not satisfied with their position for they were always working more and getting smaller incomes than the others.

As we have seen in Nyírvasvári when local residents are poor they do their best for their children's support in order they could live in better conditions. Local residents do not like the idea of living in a remote site like their own but they feel some satisfaction for there are no gypsies and other „dirty folks” in their village.

The last in the rank is *Hídvégardó*. Here the average social stratum index is 2.3. Here and in Nyírvasvári is the largest the number of poor families but there are no rich families at all here. We can hardly find any families with good conditions as well. If we look at the property condition index of these families we can see that the representation of the lowest category is small but the representation of families with bad conditions is very high: half of the people interviewed belong to this category.

In 1945 the rate of servants was the highest in Nyírvasvári but the rate of poor families having some land was the highest in Hidvégardó. That's why the number of farm labourers was high here. The number of female and male immigrants is below the average. This indicates a high representation of native residents. There were very few craftsmen and were no industrial workers here in 1945. Now industrial sector (mines) has an important predominance.

Wage incomes are a slightly below the average, the role of second economy is very small. The role of non-agricultural second economy is half of the average, in private farming it is only Bódvaszilás that lags behind this settlement. In plant cultivation half of the families lead subsistence farming and there are no contractors in this village. In the area of stock breeding they belong to the category of subsistence farming and to the category of farmers who produce below their needs. The importance of stock breeding is greater here than of plant cultivation. The local residents' age is not higher than the average. Almost half of the 95 families (45) belong to the category of small families and this is the only positive fact for future development. Villagers do like their home settlement for it has got clean air but they suffer from the small number of jobs and from their remoteness from central settlements.

It is not the number of poor families that determines the social formation of local communities. Although their number is greater in poor villages but their rate is almost the same in every village. It is the representation of other social strata that determines the local social formation. In villages slightly lagging behind the average the representation of rich families is very similar to each other while in villages above the average families with good conditions have a predominance. In villages being on average level the majority consists of middle-class families. In villages slightly below the average there is a decrease in the number of families with good conditions while the number of families with poor conditions is increasing. In poor villages we can see a growing rate of families with poor conditions and a falling number of rich families. The rate of poor families is also growing in the poorest settlements.

## **THE BACKGROUNDS OF BORDERLAND SITUATION**

In the following chapter we are going to introduce some social tendencies for a better understanding of border regions.

### **1. Tendencies in political economy and settlement policy**

In the period starting from 1960 there was a paradoxical situation, for except for the Austro-Hungarian border political tensions decreased but a new trend emerged in economic policy which was very disadvantageous for backward areas. The majority of border regions (including a great part of the eastern, south-western and north-eastern borders) belonged to this category. This was the period of extensive industrialisation and modernisation.

In the earlier period when Hungary belonged to the peripheral regions of the world labour division between towns and villages was following the core periphery model. However, in the period of modern empirism a new exploitation of villages started. It was a complex process starting in the early 1950s with the efforts to move rich peasants and middle-class families from villages to industrial urban settlements. This was followed by the period of „second collectivisation” (in 1959–1960) when co-operatives were in a poor financial situation. Everyone who could was looking for another job. Later, with the modernisation of agriculture the downfall in the productivity of land resulted another emigration from villages.

In settlement policy the 1970s were the years of relative decentralisation. Schools, co-operative farm centres and local councils moved from small places to bigger settlements. They were followed by local residents. It was the young, the skilled and the rich who left small villages so this migration was a selective one. Intensive industrialisation was for big settlements (with the exclusion of villages with special functions) but villages on the border could not fulfil any central functions, for borders at that time were strictly guarded and hardly traversable.

As a part of modernisation the program of infrastructure development was launched in this period. Until then every neighbouring villages were accessible only by horse or on foot following cart roads. The new roads, built at that time, were crossing these villages but in border settle-

ments these roads had a dead end or were only one-way roads. This period was characterised with the increase in the number of border stations. Villages, especially those with busy border stations could get more financial support from government for the realisation of their infrastructure development project than any other places. That's why villages with border stations do not belong to the category of backward settlements.

## **2. Life on the border and backward situation**

Between the First and the Second World War public opinion and scientific researches were focused on problems and disadvantages being the outcomes of the definition of the new borders of Hungary. However, these problems were cleared even from scientific research after 1947. Although there remained a lot of tensions and problems, including the problem of the Hungarian population on the other side of border, there were no public forums (schools, press, etc.) where these problems could have been discussed. Although this problem was cleared from the public, nevertheless, it was still in the air until now.

It was the group of geographers who were dealing first with the problems of border from scientific aspects. By using different methods in the geography of population they have done a comprehensive analysis which served as a basis for their final conclusions. They said there was a significant decrease of population in border settlements. Based on home researches and foreign experiences they formed an opinion saying border regions are in backward situation. They explained this (*Tóth, J. – Csatári, B. (1983), Kocsis, K. (1988)*) by their peripheral situation.

At the same time we can observe a population decrease in the inner backward regions of Hungary, too. Until now no comprehensive studies have dealt with the difference between backward areas on the border and those in the inner part of Hungary. In the middle of the 1980s the problem the border turned up again in press and in public opinion but now in different aspects than in the past.

The evaluation of border depended on the stage of economic development and on the number of Hungarian population in the neighbouring country. Positive associations were linked to the north-western border while new, negative social phenomena could be witnessed on Rumanian and Soviet borders. It was evident that Szabolcs-Szatmár county border-

ed by these two states has the highest birth rate, gypsies, commuters and alcoholists while the average level of education and the number of jobs per capita here are the lowest. These very bad indicators are explained both in literature and public opinion by borderland situation. For a long time I was also influenced by this opinion and I started my researches with the prejudice that borderland situation must be the reason of backwardness.

During my research I experienced that people living on the border did not consider borderland situation to be the reason of their backwardness. Although, these common people are often unable to see the real reason of their backwardness and they can see only the final outcome of different processes, their opinion should not be disregarded during the evaluation of research results. People who have been interviewed told me that it was the leaving of young generation that they considered the greatest problem in their home settlement. Apart from that the old generation was complaining of the small number of children while the young generation was felt some sorrow for the intellectuals who had also left their village.

Talking about everyday problems most villagers mentioned the lack of local job opportunities, while their second major problem was the large distance of their home from the site of employment. The main problem with towns was not their distance but the poor transport facilities to them (i.e., their low level accessibility). Thirty-four per cent of population was suffering from the lack of services. There was a difference of opinions in this problem between the younger and the elder generation. The lack of job opportunities, the long distance from employment site and cities, the low level of services were mainly the young generation's problems. Old age pensioners absolutely not or just vaguely were interested in these problems.

The most critical opinions were told by the residents of the most backward settlements (Biharugra, Hídvégardó, Vállaj). Twenty-five per cent of people interviewed considered their home settlement a backward settlement and 66 per cent did not. There was no difference of opinions among generations in this matter but there was between settlements.

There is no correlation between the levels of backwardness and satisfaction. Local residents are more pessimistic about the future of their home settlement. They see development compared with the past. Residents who find their village in a worse condition than it was 50 years ago, have a sense of panic. If their home settlement is in the same bad situa-

tion as it was in the past they also have a feeling of dissatisfaction. Satisfaction begins when a village is in a relatively better condition compared to the surroundings or it has an average development. Residents of poor villages are aware of the position of their home settlement but it is not always evident for them if it is a rich one.

The results of our investigations have proved that most of the local residents do like their home settlement: 57 per cent would not leave it. This is a fairly good result but it is not so good if we look at the results of another investigation about the same problem within each generation. Seventy per cent of residents under the age of 30 would leave their home village if they had money or could find better employment. In villages with better conditions the situation is better because the young generation likes to live there. It was very important for us to see the parents' attitude towards their children's intentions to find a better place for living.

There was a very high rate – 53 per cent – of family heads who would not insist on living with their children in the same village while it was 41 per cent who would. The younger was the family head's age the less was his insistence. Thus, we can conclude that people who want or being forced to live on the border do not like the idea that they live in a lagging settlement. They think this is an overstatement, even if they see the shortage of job opportunities and the consequences of the deformed demographic structure.

Most villages having been participated in our research has an ageing population. They think that since their earlier life there has been some development in their home settlement.

The word *backward* is mentioned by those capable to leave their home settlement. To do this good material conditions and young age are needed. Those who had both of them have passed this sentence over their home land.

During the analysis of results we have seen that local residents had a stronger criticism about the situation of their home settlement when they were talking about their children's future. As we have seen, 66 per cent do not consider their home settlement a backward settlement and 57 per cent would not leave it at all. However, 53 per cent would not advise their children to live here. As an explanation for this contradiction a large group of people having been interviewed said that it was alright for them to live in their home settlement but it was not so in case of their children.

Thus, they have an ambivalence towards their home settlement which was revealed when speaking of children.

As it was seen from the replies to our questions, people living on the border do not consider borderland situation the main reason of their poor living conditions. They have a realistic impression on their situation and the greatest problem for them is the lack or remoteness of towns and employment sites. I think, the greatest problems here are, on one hand, the lack of contractors and viable economic programs and, on the other hand, poor infrastructure and transport facilities that are coupled by unfavourable local natural conditions. I think these are the main reasons of the backwardness of border regions. Thus, we have seen that borderland situation is not the primary reason of rural backwardness. It may have a secondary or tertiary role in case of extraordinary backwardness but it cannot have a primary role in it. The more advanced a settlement the less negative is the impact of its borderland situation. But if a settlement is a lagging one, its borderland situation may reinforce local negative tendencies.

### **3. Keeping contacts through the border**

In the period of modern empiricism some efforts were made to set up bilateral contacts through the border. These activities were directed by the central government. Setting up or breaking contacts often was a long, difficult and bureaucratic process.

It was the *Gabcikovo–Nagymaros Project* of a hydroelectric station on the Hungarian-Czechoslovakian border which was one of the greatest mutual investments of these bilateral contacts. The contract was signed by *Gustav Husak* from the representation of the Czechoslovakian Party and *Kádár János* from the representation of the Hungarian Party in 1977. At that time its economic advantages – cheap electric power and navigable channel – were the main motivations. However, in the late 1980s more and more was heard about the threat of an ecological catastrophe in case of launching the project.

Before the change of the political regime the Hungarian Parliament said „no” for the realisation of this project. The Slovaks were for the continuation even with the expenses of driving the Danube over to Slovak territories. Nobody can see yet the future of this unfinished project but it

seems to be certain that cooperation in this field is going to face a series of problems.

In the period of modern empirism there were no possibilities for local cooperation for it was the monopoly of the government. Although, major political leaders (government or county chiefs) regularly paid some official visits on both sides of the border these meetings ended without any practical results. These comrades (or these gentlemen in case of Austria) were just showing their face to each other. These meetings were announced to the public as if there had been any serious negotiations and there were constant official of having excellent relations between the two parties.

If a company was going to set up economic relations with a partner on the other side of border it had to get a licence from the Hungarian Foreign Trade Ministry. The government had a full privilege in foreign relations. Setting up spontaneous relations between companies through the border were without or against the consent of central administration. In most cases there were no practical relations or if there were any, they were only isolated cases. Here I am going to mention some of them.

In the area of *Bánát Land* that belonged to Serbia a large number of Hungarians left their village in the 1960s and moved to *Subotica* city. The intensity of their emigration was so great that in some Hungarian villages full streets were left empty. This emigration process was simultaneous with Serbia's industrialisation and urbanisation process. All Hungarians went to Subotica. There are four reasons why they did so. First, they went there because this was the only place where they could educate their children in Hungarian language. Secondly, they themselves could not, or hardly could speak Serb language and for this reason they had a feeling of inferiority. They thought such an „incompleteness” would be better tolerated in Subotica. Thirdly, they could see the Hungarian television programs there, and as a fourth reason, they had relatives in Hungary and living close to the border was good for maintaining intensive contacts with their home country.

Borders had some attraction for ethnic minorities which resulted special regional processes in the case of local communities. Their close situation to the border which was open at that time brought enormous chances for them to maintain their cultural and national identity. Those Hungarians who move to Serb cities will be assimilated there in a few generations' time. Although this example was taken from the other side



of the border it gives a typical illustration about the problems of borderland situation and ethnic minorities.

The second example is about the primary school of a small Hungarian village, *Drávasztára* having 47 pupils. Local residents are of Croatian nationality and some subjects are taught on Croatian language. If *Dráva* river would not separate Hungary from Yugoslavia senior students could travel to the nearest Croatian school on the other side of border every day. They could have an opportunity for learning a better Croatian and could have a better information on the culture of their home country. The school of *Drávasztára* could be maintained only for lower classes. Both Hungarian and Croatian schools could make some benefit from this situation. Until now there no similar methods were used in any other countries.

I hope that as a result of the recent East European changes there will be some possibilities for school boards or parents' delegations to visit the nearest school on the other side of border in order they could establish direct cooperations.

So far different relations have been established, mainly in the field of language and verbal communication but less attention was paid for economic relations. Our research results indicate that the television programs of the neighbour countries can play an important role in the everyday life of these nations. If television programs speak on their native language or give better entertainment, more information or have a different opinion than the television programs of their home country, they may be more interested in them. This results a difference in the number of spectators of the neighbours' television programs. On the Austrian border two-thirds of Hungarians watches the Austrian television program. On the Serb border every second and on the Croatian border every third of the people having been interviewed watches the television program of the neighbour country. On the Czechoslovakian border every seventh while on the Romanian border every ninth belongs to this category.

Apart from the Austrian television programs every second of the residents of *Szentpéterfa* – a village on the Austrian and Croatian border – are watching Croatian television programs as well. A typical answer came from an old man who said: „I watch the Hungarian, Austrian and Yugoslavian news all the time so I always know what happens in the world.”

As it is known, the role of „*Panoráma*”, a Hungarian television program, was very important in the information of residents on the other side of border in the period of Czechoslovakian and Romanian revolution. These people told us that they were passing information to their relatives who were living inside these countries. This method of passing information I think will soon become the past because in the near future by means of satellite broadcasting system the Hungarian television programs will be available throughout the whole Carpathian Basin.

So far until the positive changes in East Europe the maintenance of contacts through the border meant only negotiations between political leaders. Although they are also necessary but the results are relevant for the whole country's territory and they cannot solve the development problems of frontier regions. Bilateral cooperations through the border were too formal and there were a lot of difficulties in their establishment and development.

## OPEN BORDERS

After the beginning of the Central European changes the introduction of an open border system is one of the major political and economic programs. Its political aspects have a greater importance in Hungary than in any countries of East Central Europe. This may be explained by two reasons.

One is that during the *Kádár*' regime – despite or because living conditions were the best in Hungary – Hungarians liked to travel to the countries of Western Europe very much. They wanted to see an economic and political system in Hungary that is similar to the western type.

The other is that during the past 45 years the rate of those who were criticising the political system in semi-public places like employment sites, friends, cafés, etc. and were strongly for the cooperation with Western Europe was the greatest in Poland and in Hungary. Hungarians wanted to open their border not only for Western countries like Austria but for all countries with Hungarian population.

After the beginning of the change of the political system Hungary had the best contacts with Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia. In case of Czechoslovakia the contacts with Bohemia are good but they are bad with Slovakia. Hungary has also bad contacts with Rumania and Serbia. The media and the political organisations of Hungary and these latter two states are paying large attention for each other's declarations and they strongly criticise them if they do not meet their requirements.

In the 1980s before the change of the political system when Hungarians started to be interested in the living conditions of Hungarians living on the other side of border, a general opinion was formed. It said that minorities living in Hungary should have equal rights with Hungarians and neighbours. Those who were for it thought that following the Hungarian example our neighbours will do the same with Hungarian minorities. The neighbours had a similar opinion from the other end. They said Hungarians should grant the same rights to minorities living in Hungary they demand for Hungarian minorities abroad. For example, it was President *Iliescu* who said that Romanians living in Hungary (their number is 12 thousand) should have the same rights which Hungarians living in Rumania have (their number is 2.5 million in Rumania).

The Serb government is also going to grant only the rights for the education of Hungarians (their number is 400 thousand there) that are granted to Serbs living in Hungary (their number is 5 thousand in Hungary).

This is a false interpretation of the whole problem, for the needs of a community of 12 thousand and of 2.5 million are different. For example, the previous group cannot demand university education on native language because there will not be enough students even for the starting of this program. However, a community of 2.5 million is enough to establish and maintain a university where students are educated on their mother tongue.

Apart from these problems the model of reciprocity is against any bourgeois democratic principles based on international conventions, for they do not demand that any rights granted to minorities should depend on rights granted in their home country. The rights of ethnic minorities should not depend on certain conditions.

The present situation of our region will follow this tendency and there are already some facts that make us believe this. With the introduction of multiple party system in Slovakia, Rumania and Serbia Hungarians have formed their corporate systems there, functioning as parties during parliamentary elections. There are also some of them that have been transformed into a political party. Due to the fact that in these states Hungarians have formed a majority on a certain geographical area that may be easily defined, they have a full representation in the parliament. Representatives can report on the problems, ideas and proposals of Hungarian minorities there.

That's another matter that the most of them are not approved and in some cases get strong criticism. During local elections on the territories with Hungarian population it was the Hungarians who got the majority of votes. Thus, in local government system the Hungarian representatives form a majority. After some time the activity of local governments and the development of local democracy will give a basis to see that instead of thinking of what is good for the majority against minority the central government will have an opposite way of thinking. It will try to consider how the minority wants to live with the majority. Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs will only be happy in their home country if they see that Hungarians are also happy to live there. At this moment it will not be a problem any longer what Hungary wants to do for Hungarian minorities. There will also be no necessity for borders, for everybody will intend to

stay where he has lived so far. However, we must see that before this there will be a lot of troubles and quarrels between Hungary and these states about the problems of Hungarian minorities.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In 1986–1987 the Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences defined a frontier zone consisting of 803 rural and 27 urban settlements. This was a 30–50 km wide zone along the border where different multidisciplinary researches were carried out. Six researchers have participated in the research team of sociology, such as *Judit Berta*, *Zsuzsa Bögre*, *Judit Csoba*, *Éva G. Fekete*, *Ilona Szabó* and *János Tét*.

We have carried out empirical researches in 10 border villages. 890 families have participated in research. The selection of family heads was done by a carefully planned sample. The following villages were involved in research: *Hídvégardó*, *Bódvászilas* (on the Slovak border), *Vállaj*, *Nyírvasvári* and *Biharugra* (on the Romanian border), *Öttömös*, *Pusztamérges* and *Murakeresztúr* (on the Yugoslavian border), *Szentpéterfa* and *Velem* (on the Austrian border). This paper is a summary of research results.

<sup>2</sup> The so-called *hold* is a Hungarian unit of square measure. It equals with 1,42 English acres.

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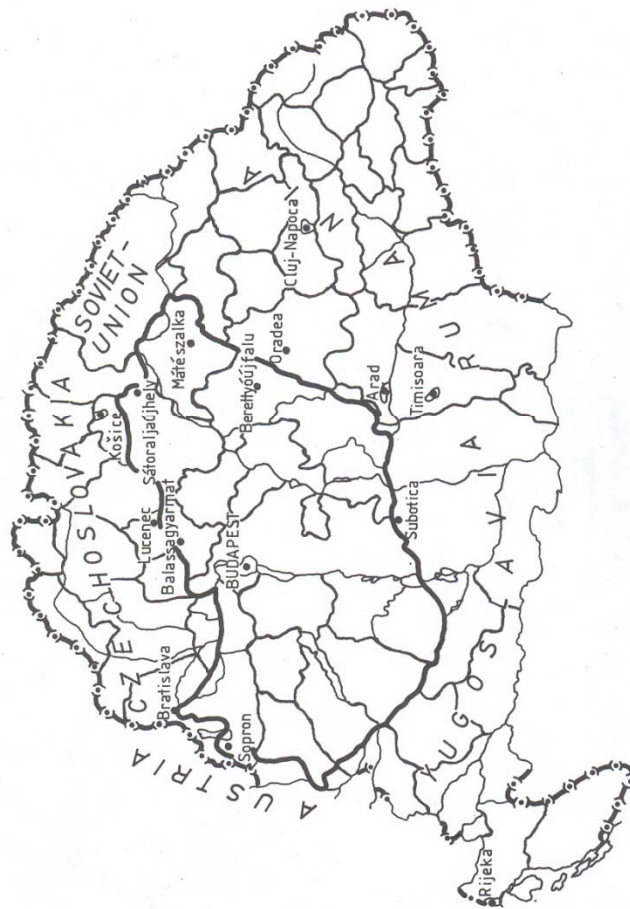
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## FIGURES

*Figure 1*  
State border of Hungary before and after the Second World War  
(towns mentioned in the paper are indicated)



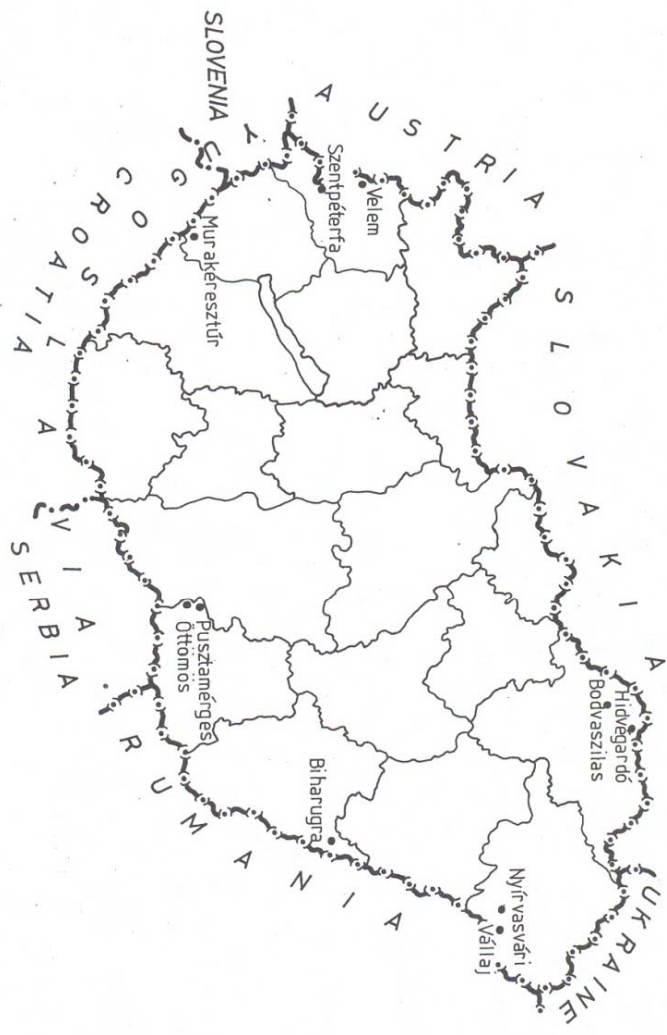


Figure 2  
 The present form of Hungary with county borders  
 (ten villages of the research are indicated)

