

From emigration to expulsion

For many years the ethnic-religious ties and identities in the border region cut into two by the Trianon border served as a link between Burgenland and Western Hungary, between the Germans, the Croats, the Jews, the Roma and the Protestant religions. At the same time, being an ethnic minority involved numerous difficulties in this new situation. The Hungarians of the territories annexed from Hungary following World War I were shocked once again as a result of the mass moving of people, which mainly affected those living in the towns and those scattered around in the countryside. Some 10 thousand people moved from the territory of Burgenland to Hungary, especially after the province started to discourage the use of the Hungarian language in education.⁶³ As a result, according to the Austrian census, the 25 thousand Hungarians recorded in the Hungarian census of 1920 had dropped to 15 thousand by 1923 due to mass migration to Hungary.⁶⁴

Initially the Croats did not really feel at home in the new province, and the propaganda expecting them to declare their loyalty was a great burden on them. However, the Croats were not even unified in the question of their allegiance at the time Burgenland was created, and later neither when their political division rose to the surface: the majority of the Croats in the north, close to Vienna were industrial workers, and therefore had become socialist voters and pro-Austrian, while the Croats of Southern Burgenland remained mainly pro-Hungarian and Christian democrat voters.⁶⁵

Transatlantic emigration also represented a great setback for the population of the new Austrian province. Initially, agricultural overpopulation was the main factor, as after the serfs were liberated land ownership had become rather fragmented. However, the proportion of large estate farms remained high, which, coupled with a high natural reproduction rate, increased land-hunger from the nineteenth century up until the first half of the twentieth century. In the interwar period the economic slump and recession added to all this, and so many thousands, mainly Germans and Croatians searched for a new home, primarily in the New World. Even before World War I about 27 thousand "Burgenland residents" had left their homeland, many of these, however, later returned. In the interwar period, especially at the beginning of the 1920s, multitudes of people

63 Baumgartner, "Burgenland tartomány," 115.

64 Berlin, "United States," 40.

65 Burghardt, *Borderland*, 256–59.

left their homes, with those settling in the USA, Canada, Argentina and Brazil exceeding 20 thousand. Because of this process larger communities were created in Chicago and New York than in any of the towns in the present province.⁶⁶

Burgenland's Lutheran population found themselves in Catholic Austria. Paradoxically, even still these Lutherans had wished for the merger of Western Hungary into Austria, while the Catholic clergy of Burgenland, some of whom had Hungarian roots, had later worked in support of Hungary. As a result of their minority position, the Lutherans developed a strong anti-Catholic sentiment, which also influenced which political party they supported; they voted for the peasants' party and not for the Christian party. Religious life in Burgenland was particularly unbalanced at the time of *Anschluss*. Driven by fear of Bolshevism or by anti-Semitism the Catholic and Lutheran Church leaders welcomed the Germans, but this was to no avail as they too were subjected to persecution later on. The Lutherans, apart from being positive about the union with Luther's country, also supported the *Anschluss* because in the Third Reich the Lutheran Church had become the largest denomination. Naturally, the Hungarian and Croatian peoples did not only suffer at the time of the *Anschluss* because their church life had been repressed, which was so important from the point of view of the survival of their language, but instead because the Nazi ethnic policy enforcing assimilation had restricted the use of their language and closed numerous ethnic group schools. All this was despite the fact that many Hungarians, particularly among the poor, had joined the Nazi party, the NSDAP and supported the *Anschluss*.⁶⁷

As discussed in the section on the *Burgenlandatlas*, the persecution of the Jews before World War II and the Roma at the end of the war had led to mass deportations. Already in 1934 there were only four thousand Jews in Burgenland due to the constant persecution (Fig. 100). The literature writes of 3000 deported Jews, but we also should not forget about some seven thousand Roma who were interned in a camp next to Lackenbach.⁶⁸

In Hungary the horrors of the war were followed by relocations. Roughly 35 thousand Catholic and Lutheran Germans living in the border region in Hungary were expelled from Győr-Moson-Pozsony, Sopron and Vas counties, with about 15 thousand being relocated from each of the two former counties. Eight thousand Germans were expelled from Sopron alone, where whole town

66 Kirnbauer, "Bevölkerungs- und Siedlungsgeographie," 132; Dujmovits, "Die Auswanderungslandschaften"; Brettl, "Landwirtschaft," 206.

67 Burghardt, *Borderland*, 268–71.

68 Baumgartner, "A burgenlandi magyar kisebbség," 180–81.



Fig. 100. Kobersdorf (a Jewish center in middle Burgenland), forest mill with Pauliberg mountain in the background, circa 1930. Picture postcard.

quarters died out for a time. This deportation was especially tragic for Sopron because those Germans and their descendants were also forced to leave their homeland who had voted to stay in Hungary in 1921. Sopron's political leaders were powerless to do anything. Such lofty arguments had no effect against Volksbund membership, German nationality admitted in the 1941 census, or against those eyeing the valuables of the houses of the rich.⁶⁹ However, there were some locations, such as Vaskeresztes and Pornóapáti in Vas County where relocation only affected a small German population. The large majority of those deported were sent to West Germany, with fewer going to East Germany, nevertheless, there were some who returned, at least to the Burgenland side of the border. As a result, the German population dropped to a fraction of its former level on the Hungarian side of the border; in this way too the return of Sopron to Burgenland became devoid of purpose.

In Burgenland after World War II the 30 thousand Croats and 5 thousand Hungarians, according to their admission, were stigmatized because of the communist regimes in the home countries and suffered political disunity and the process of assimilation partly deriving from this. The emerging economic recovery following the signing of the Austrian State Treaty and the withdrawal

69 Krisch, "A soproni németek."

of the occupying Soviet troops accelerated the migration processes and the relocation of people from the villages to the towns. For the ethnic minorities all this led to cultural transformation, cultural exchange and, finally, to assimilation. The State Treaty only gave rights to the Slovenian and Croatian minorities, although the higher school education guaranteed for the Croats never saw light of day. Indeed, the 1962 schools act reduced the duration of the ethnic schools from eight years to four, in other words the 10–14-year age group no longer received education in their native language. The Hungarians and the Czechs were only recognized as minorities in the nationalities act of 1976, which brought about some improvement in the lives of the two ethnic groups (but the Roma were omitted on this occasion too).⁷⁰

The assimilation process accelerated as urbanization progressed in Burgenland, and the emigrants of 1956 hardly increased the numbers of the Hungarians living here, and so by 1981 their total population had dropped to just four thousand. However, the favorable processes taking place in Hungary, like the beginnings of the political and economic changes were beneficial for the self-identity of the Hungarians of Burgenland: in the census of 1991 some 6,700 people declared their native language as Hungarian. By the turn of the millennium the population of Hungarians in the province had become essentially stable, however, the processes behind this include the 21% drop in the rural population of Hungarians in the district of Oberwart and the immigration from the other side of the border compensating this, i.e., from Hungary primarily into the towns. At the time of the 2001 census there were just two settlements with a Hungarian majority: Unterwart and Siget in der Wart, in addition to these there were larger communities living in Oberwart, Oberpullendorf, where the Hungarians had lost their language majority already in the 1950s, and in Eisenstadt and Frauenkirchen.⁷¹

The population of Croats had dropped to 26 thousand by 1961, and then to almost 19 thousand by 1981, after this there was a temporary increase in their numbers, with their population being stable in the decade of 1991–2001. A phenomenon like that occurring with the Hungarians happened to the Croats: the drop in the population of native Croats was concealed by immigration from the mother country. In 1910 there were 55 Croatian majority settlements, in 1991 27 and in 2001 just 23. Their largest communities (with populations of

70 Münz, "Zwischen Assimilation," 34; Szeberényi and Szeberényi, *Az őrvideki magyarok*, 12–18.

71 Szeberényi and Szeberényi, *Az őrvideki magyarok*, 9–19.

700-1000) may be found in Siegendorf, Klingebach, Wulkaprodersdorf, Güttenbach, Stinatz and Trausdorf.⁷²

Based on language affiliation in Burgenland before the war there were approximately 6,500 Roma, but, as I mentioned above, most of them were deported. In 2001 just 303 people spoke one of the Roma languages. Their main settlement area was around the Hungarian ethnic group, primarily in the district of Oberwart. In Hungary Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas counties are not among the main settlement territories of the Roma, but this situation is changing as the level of development of the territory within Hungary is having the effect of attracting those from poorer regions, including the Roma.

The Trianon borders did not leave the Land of the Wends untouched either. According to the public administrative position valid today six villages remained in Hungary, Alsószőlőnk, Felsőszőlőnk, Orfalu, Kétvölgy, Apátistvánfalva, and Szakonyfalva, the others are now in Slovenia.⁷³ In addition the peace treaty placed numerous Hungarian villages in Slovenia from the Muraszombat district of Vas County and the Alsólendva district of Zala County, so the new borders did not entirely follow the ethnic dividing line here either. The six villages listed above, with the exceptions of Szakonyfalva and Alsószőlőnk, even today have a considerable, about 50% Slovene population, and to this day are a very closed community and mix little with other nationalities. Alsószőlőnk, mentioned above, had a unique ethnic structure, as it was a German-Wend-Hungarian village, with none of the nationalities having an absolute majority before the world war.

It may be stated that a few decades after the Trianon borders were drawn the language border nature of the state border had been reinforced because of the relocations and assimilation. The ethnic structure became more homogenous; now perhaps only the Croatian villages can be seen on the ethnic maps. A total of 4/5th of the Croatian population of 25 thousand live in Burgenland and 1/5th on the Hungarian side; the number of German villages in Western Transdanubia and the number of Hungarian villages in Burgenland are negligible.

72 Since the census in 2011, language data is no longer available. Kocsis, *Az Órvidék*; Kocsis et al., *Etnikai térfolyamatok*, 139–48; Kocsis és Wastl-Walter, "Ungarische und österreichische Volksgruppen, 194–99.

73 I might add that originally there were nine Wend villages, as Újbalázsfalva was attached to Apátistvánfalva in 1937, and Rábatótfalu was merged with Szentgotthárd in 1983, and Ritkaháza and Permise were combined between 1944 and 1946 (with the name Vashegyalja), then after separating they merged once again in 1950 and took on the name of Kétvölgy.