

HUNGARIANS ABROAD

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Introduction

Hungary's history can be traced back to the late ninth century AD when the Magyars abandoned their nomadic lifestyle to settle near the Carpathian Mountains. Under the rule of the Árpáds, the Magyars became a powerful dynasty in Europe. However, following the death of King Stephen I (997–1038), the fifth generation of the dynasty, the Árpáds slowly lost their influence. Hungary was subsequently conquered by the Mongols, then the Ottoman Turks, and finally the Austrian Habsburgs. In 1848 Hungarian nationalists attempted a revolution ("Hungary"), demanding autonomy after living under the governance of these foreign powers. The revolution failed, but a compromise between Austria and Hungary was eventually struck in 1867. Under the compromise, a dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary was established. ("Important Dates...") This arrangement limited Austria's control over Hungary's internal affairs, enabling Hungary to enjoy real independence and self-governance for the first time since the Turkish invasion in the fourteenth century. However, due to the Austrian-Hungarian relationship, Hungary was inevitably plunged into World War I when Archduke Franz

Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was assassinated in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. (Duffy)

Hungary lost huge amounts of her land and people as a result of losing World War I. These losses crippled Hungary's economy and created new political tensions between Hungary and her neighbors. The country had barely recovered from the first war when the second one struck. At the end of World War II, both the retreating Germans and the invading Soviet armies stripped Hungary of what little wealth it had left.

This article examines how Hungary's defeat in the twentieth century's two world wars led to the emergence of the problem of Hungarians outside Hungary's borders, a problem that continues to plague Hungary today. It then explores the efforts by different parties to re-incorporate these countrymen into the fold. The final section discusses various solutions that have been proposed to address this issue and examines the future status of the problem.

The Treaty of Trianon (1920)

The conclusion of World War I left Hungary in serious economic and political tur-

moil. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in October 1918 hurled Hungary into what was probably the most politically unstable period in her history. From 1918 to 1920, the country went through a democratic revolution, a communist revolution, the Romanian occupation of Budapest, and the occupation of various parts of the country by neighboring armies. Four types of government systems were also tried, along with eight cabinets and two rival governments. The political instability concluded with the Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, imposed on Hungary as a defeated nation in the war. (Szarka, pp. 30–31)

The Treaty was one of the five treaties prepared at the Paris Peace Conference, an international conference created by the Allies to negotiate peace treaties with the defeated Central Powers. (“Paris Peace Conference”) As stipulated in Clause II, Articles 27–35 of the Treaty, Hungary lost two-thirds of her territory, mainly to Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. (Pastor, p. 165) Figure 1 shows the extent of Hungary’s dismemberment caused by the Treaty. This re-drawing of borders caused Hungary to lose 3.4 million inhabitants, which

amounted to a third of her population. (Vigh) Along with the loss of population came the loss of 61 percent of her arable land, 88 percent of her timber, 62 percent of her railroads, and Hungary’s access to the sea through Croatia. Additionally, Hungary’s army was limited to 35,000 men, whose role was restricted to maintaining domestic order and border defense. (“Hungary”) The winners of the war clearly took full advantage of their victory. Almost all of the new country of Czechoslovakia was carved out of former Hungarian territory. Romania alone received land compensation that was larger than what was left of Hungary. (Imre) Hungary was the most severely penalized country among all the defeated nations of the war. For example, Turkey was able to retain most of her empire, losing only outlying portions. Bulgaria lost only 8 percent of her land, while Germany lost 13 percent. Oddly enough, Austria, which was also one of the losers, ended up gaining parts of Hungary. (Imre)

The severe territorial loss suffered by Hungary was mainly caused by political interests. The Allies, particularly France, needed new allies in the East to curb the growing threat of

Figure 1
Hungary Before and After The Treaty of Trianon



Source: Binnendijk and Simon.

Russia's Bolshevism. Czechoslovakia, known for its anti-Bolshevik stance, took the opportunity to demand more land as compensation. Similarly, Romania, which was expected to follow Czechoslovakia's role in helping to resist Russia, also took advantage of the situation to demand more territorial compensation. (Ádám, p. 18) Since both Czechoslovakia and Romania were strategically situated in the event of any Russian advance, their territorial claims were given special consideration by the Paris Peace Conference at the expense of Hungary.

Hungary's large territorial loss was also caused by the lack of communication among the three committees set up by the Paris Peace Conference to resolve border issues in Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. (Ádám, p. 19) As Ádám points out in his article "Delusions about Trianon," the committees were each assigned different sections of Hungarian frontiers to deal with. Each committee, working independently, recommended that small parts of Hungary be given to the victors in the war. Although individually each seemed to be a reasonable price for Hungary to pay for its defeat, the three areas in the end amounted to two-thirds of Hungary's territory.

Not surprisingly, the Treaty of Trianon was received with much hostility by the Hungarians. The border revision determined by the Treaty was deemed unjust because Hungarians did not feel adequately represented in the Peace Conference. It was true that the committee members were social and economic experts on the region, but they consisted only of Czechoslovakians, Romanians and Yugoslavs. (Ádám, p. 19) In fact, Ádám argues that the acknowledged expertise of the committee members might have hurt, rather than helped, the Hungarians, because as experts the recommendations of the committee were never questioned by the Peace Conference.

In addition, the Treaty of Trianon was denounced by Hungarians because it placed millions of Hungarians outside Hungary. There were now approximately two million Hungarians in Transylvanian Romania, 600,000 in Slovakia, 400,000 in Vojvodina Serbia and 200,000 in Ukraine. (Binnendijk and Simon) According to the new demarcation lines, at one

stroke Hungarians became the largest minority group in Europe. (Nagy, p. 11) Hungarians could do nothing but watch helplessly as their countrymen were placed under foreign governments and forced to live with other ethnic groups that would have otherwise never lived together.

Many Hungarians felt that the Peace Conference took advantage of Hungary's political and economic breakdown immediately following the war to safeguard the post-war interests of the Allies. The new borders, drawn on the basis of political considerations rather than ethnic distribution, turned the Hungarian minority issue into a major lingering source of resentment. The issue became a problem that Hungary grappled with for decades to come.

World War II (1939–1945)

Paralyzed by poor economic conditions and motivated by the desire to regain some of its lost territory and people, Hungary cooperated with the Nazi government of Germany before and during World War II. At first, Hungary's decision paid off handsomely. The First Vienna Award was signed in 1938 between Hungary and Czechoslovakia with Italy and Germany acting as arbiters (Wojatsek, p. 163). Through this agreement, Hungary gained 4,600 sq. miles of southern Slovakia (Binnendijk and Simon) that was 86.5 percent ethnically Hungarian. (Deme) Soon after, the Second Vienna Award, signed in 1940 between Hungary and Romania (Kertesz), awarded northern Transylvania to Hungary. This returned another 16,500 sq. miles to Hungary. (Binnendijk and Simon) Transylvania's population was made up of 51.4 percent ethnic Hungarians. (Deme)

However, Hungary's border expansion was short-lived. The defeat of the Axis powers in World War II was followed by a new peace treaty concluded in Paris on February 10, 1947. The Paris Peace Treaty re-established the borders outlined in the Trianon Treaty. Hungary was further penalized with a hefty U.S. \$300 million indemnity, and her army was also once again limited in size. ("Hungary")

For the second time in the twentieth century, Hungary was severely punished for being on the losing side in war. It is important to note

that her second crushing defeat was a consequence of the first. Had Hungary not received such severe treatment in the Treaty of Trianon, she might not have been so easily enticed into cooperating with the Nazis in World War II.

The Condition of Hungarians in Neighboring Countries

As Hungary's economy worsened after each war, so did the living conditions of her people, especially Hungarians outside the country. Overnight, some 3.4 million Hungarians living in areas such as Transylvania (Romania) and Vojvodina (Serbia) found their social status changed from being a majority population in Hungary into a minority group. The presence of Hungarians in these states was also not well received by the locals. Hungarians were considered outsiders and were often viewed as agents of the Hungarian government. As a result, they were ill-treated and regarded with suspicion.

In Romania, for example, Hungarian minorities were given only second-class citizenship status, denied of their rights to use their mother tongue in official matters. In January 1921, shortly after Transylvania was handed to Romania, one of the Romanian Ministry of Justice offices required all court correspondence to be carried out only in the Romanian language. (Biro, p. 445) Hungarian was no longer recognized as an official language. The banning of the Hungarian language was just the start of many other discriminatory acts against ethnic Hungarians. Under the tyrannical leadership of President Nicolae Ceaușescu from 1965–89 (“Nicolae Ceaușescu”), the Romanian language slowly displaced the Hungarian language in schools. In 1986 the U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee, an international organization protecting human rights, reported that Hungarian schools had been systematically removed. (Newall) In 1989 about 7,000 Hungarian villages were threatened with destruction. The proposed liquidation of these villages included plans to demolish churches and historical monuments. (Newall)

Hungarians in Czechoslovakia faced similar actions. The use of the Hungarian language was banned by Slovak government. (Kardos)

The government also shut down most Hungarian schools (Janics) and denied Slovakian citizenship to ethnic Hungarians. (Kardos)

The discrimination aimed at Hungarians in neighboring countries arose for a variety of reasons, such as the rise of nationalistic sentiments in those countries and the fear that the Hungarian minorities might destabilize local governments. These discriminatory acts, while clearly in violation of human rights, went unresolved for years during the Soviet era because the communist countries had a tacit agreement not to criticize each other's policies toward minorities. Therefore, Hungary could do very little to protect her minorities in neighboring countries.

Hungary under the Communist Regime (1949–1989)

The Soviet Union was given the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the Paris Peace Treaty signed at the end of World War II. As a result, a large Soviet military contingent remained in Hungary. Through careful planning, the Soviets systematically removed democratic leaders from office, gradually leading to the formation of the communist Hungarian People's Republic in 1949. (Hungarian Government Portal) Under the communist regime, most sectors were heavily regulated, especially agriculture and education. Peasants were forced into government cooperatives, and all means of communication were severely limited. The limitations on freedom of speech meant that Hungarians were not allowed to try to resolve the persecution and discriminatory acts against Hungarians in neighboring countries. (Deme)

The stifling conditions in Hungary finally led to a revolt in 1956. The demands made by the revolutionaries included the right to own and farm land, the freedom to manage their own workplaces, and the freedom of speech. The revolution was started by a group of students who assembled in Budapest and were later joined by workers and other Hungarians. The demonstration, initially a peaceful one, turned violent when the authorities fired the first shots. The uprising ended tragically with

the death of at least 20,000 Hungarian workers and the escape of about 200,000 refugees. (“Hungary 1956...”)

Although the revolution failed, conditions for peasants and intellectuals slowly improved. The Stalinist regime gradually loosened its iron grip, giving workers’ councils more control over factories and mines. Agricultural cooperatives also began to follow a more free-market model. (“Hungary”) These changes, derided as “goulash communism” by hard-line socialists, eventually led to a political changeover shortly before the imminent implosion of the USSR in 1991. In 1989 Hungary formally renounced communism, proclaiming itself a free democratic republic under the new name, Republic of Hungary. (“Important Dates...”) A new foreign policy encouraging more contact with Western Europe was adopted. Hungary’s separation from the Soviet bloc also paved the way to greater freedom of speech and thought. (“Hungary”) Combined with the granting of the freedom of the press and Hungary’s new voice in the international community, the issue of the millions of Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries since 1920 resurfaced.

Nationalism

Hungarian minorities abroad became a hot topic for debate in Hungary’s domestic and foreign politics after 1989. The progress of this issue from backstage to centerstage mirrored the changing face of Hungarian nationalism. In order to understand how this transition happened, some discussion of the evolution of Hungarian nationalism is in order.

Under the Austrian Habsburg rule in the seventeenth century, Hungarian nationalism was equated with the struggle for national sovereignty and independence from Austria. (Csepeli and Orkeny) In the aftermath of the Trianon Treaty and the period between the wars, nationalism took on a new meaning. Hungarian nationalists fought for the reincorporation of ethnic Hungarians back into Hungary. They also demanded return of the lands that were taken away from Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon. This new nationalistic spirit greatly disturbed Hungary’s neighbors, who viewed territorial claims as a threat to their sovereignty.

(“Hungary: Nationalism”) When Hungary became communist, these claims were temporarily suppressed by the Soviets. Good relations among socialist neighbors were given higher priority than territorial aspirations, turning the minority issue into a taboo subject.

During the 1956 Revolution, however, the pre-communist desire for national sovereignty resurfaced (Iordachi), although with some slight changes. The World War II settlements had solidified demarcation lines, rendering claims for border revision infeasible. Hungary’s nationalism focused both on the protection of Hungarian compatriots living beyond the borders and the preservation of Hungarian culture. This new attitude became even more apparent after Hungary renounced communism. Hungary’s Constitution, Article 6 (3), stipulates that “the Republic of Hungary shall have a sense of responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders and shall promote their cultivation of ties with Hungary.”⁷¹ The new protective attitude adopted by Hungary thus went hand in hand with the formation of the Republic. As a new country, Hungary felt a strong need to promote its Hungarian culture.

The Re-emergence of the Issue of Hungarians Abroad

With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the Hungarian government also looked for ways to demonstrate to the international community that the new Hungary was ready to take on a more significant international role. The Hungarian minority issue became a convenient pretext for the Hungarian government to convey that message. An opportunity presented itself in the late 1980s following a large influx of refugees from Transylvania into Hungary. Hungary broke the tacit agreement not to criticize its neighbor’s minority policies by endorsing public protests against Romania, which had planned to relocate many Hungarian communities within its borders. (Iordachi) In 1988 Hungary also co-sponsored a major human rights proposal targeting Romania’s minority

⁷¹Constitution of the Republic of Hungary (as amended by Act No XXXI of 1989). Quoted in Mullerson (p. 800). See reference list for details.

policies at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. (Kardos) Hungary's renewed interest in the human rights issue was the Hungarian government's strategy to indicate to the international community that the new democratic republic was ready to take on a more independent foreign policy than before.

The Hungarian minority issue was also regularly debated inside Hungary. During the first Hungarian Parliament meeting as a democratic country, Hungarian policymakers announced that they wanted "negotiations with the governments of the neighboring countries to formulate bilateral treaties to protect national minorities." (Deme) They went on to emphasize the need to "secure for the minorities individual and collective rights, self-government, cultural autonomy." (Deme) True to its words, the Hungarian government signed a treaty with Slovakia in March 1995 and with Romania in September 1996. Both treaties were signed to resolve border and minority rights disputes. (Binnendijk and Simon) Although none of the parties involved were entirely satisfied with the results, the treaties helped resolve some of the border issues between the three countries.

The Hungarian minority issue was also addressed in public. In April 1990, only months after Hungary became democratic, Hungary's first prime minister, József Antall, declared himself the leader of 15 million Hungarians, even though Hungary only has 10 million inhabitants. Antall's declaration soon triggered criticism from abroad. (Kardos) Although Antall later claimed that he only regarded himself as a "spiritual" leader of the 15 million Hungarians, his declaration showed that Hungarian politicians would use the sensitive minorities issue as a means to rally domestic support.

Viktor Orbán, chairman of the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party and Hungarian prime minister from 1998–2002, was another politician who used the issue to his advantage. Orbán was well known for his nationalistic ideology. ("Hungarian PM Eyes Re-election...") During his term in office, he took a strong stance to protect trans-border Hungarians as a means of popularizing the party's center-right ideals. ("Hungarian Nationalism Fails...") To demonstrate the government's concern for the well-being of these Hungarian minorities, under his

administration the Hungarian parliament passed the Status Law with an overwhelming 92.4 percent majority in 1999. (Nemes) This new law entitled trans-border Hungarians to special identity documents that enabled them to temporarily seek employment, education, and health care in Hungary. ("Country Profile...") This law was met with harsh criticism from Hungary's neighbors; Slovakia and Romania, in particular, claimed that the law encroached on their sovereignty. ("Hungarian Nationalism Fails...")

Nonetheless, Orbán continued to exploit the trans-border Hungarian issue. In the 2002 election, his Fidesz Party faced serious competition from the Hungarian Socialist Party. The Fidesz Party and the Socialist Party both had very similar economic policies. ("Hungarian Nationalism Fails...") Realizing that his party needed to differentiate itself from the Socialists in order to gain a competitive edge, Orbán once again tried to use the trans-border Hungarian minorities issue to win the voters' hearts. Orbán's political platform included demands for autonomy for Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia ("Ethnic Kin Leaders...") as well as a review of World War II decrees by which tens of thousands of Hungarians were driven out of Czechoslovakia. ("Hungarian PM...")

As in the case of the Status Law, Orbán's campaign demands were met with angry responses from Hungary's neighbors. But unlike with the Status Law, however, Orbán's strategy backfired. The opposition party was quick to tap into the backlash from neighboring countries to accuse the leadership of tarnishing Hungary's image in the international community. ("Hungarian PM...") As a result, Orbán lost the election, and in September 2002 a Socialist government, under the leadership of Péter Medgyessy, was installed as the new Hungarian government.

Although Viktor Orbán did not win the election, results from the polls showed that the Hungarians-abroad issue was a strong one. Had Orbán succeeded, he would have been the first post-communist leader to be re-elected. This in itself would have great significance since governments in Central Europe tend to switch parties after every election. ("Hungarian PM...")

The December 5, 2004, Referendum

Just as the issue of Hungarian minorities abroad began to calm down, however, and just two years after the prior election, the controversy was renewed by the Fidesz Party. In preparation for the upcoming election in 2006, the party tried to rejuvenate the fading issue in hopes of gaining more voter support. The Fidesz Party demanded that dual citizenship status be conferred on ethnic Hungarians abroad, claiming that failure to do so would show a disregard for their kin who were in dire need of assistance.

The Fidesz Party's claims put the incumbent Socialist Party in an awkward situation. Turning a cold shoulder to the issue would cause the Socialists to lose popularity among the voters. On the other hand, conferring dual citizenship could cost the government Ft 500 billion (U.S. \$2.5 billion). ("Dual Citizenship Debate...") The stalemated Parliament decided to turn the issue over to the public by calling for a referendum ("The Public Will Decide"), which was held on December 5, 2004. The referendum failed due to low turnout, with fewer than 25 percent of eligible voters casting ballots ("Socialist and Fidesz...").

The unsuccessful referendum angered the Hungarians abroad. There were reports that cars with Hungarian license plates were attacked in Serbia after the referendum failed. In Romania, Transylvanian-Hungarian store owners began charging higher prices to citizens from the mother country. ("Referendum Fallout...") This backlash was not unexpected. In an interview with this author, Csongor Kuti, a Romanian-Hungarian currently studying in Budapest, expressed his disapproval of the referendum. Kuti felt that the referendum was more an internal political ploy rather than a genuine effort by the Hungarian political parties to protect the well-being of trans-border Hungarians like himself. He substantiated his claim by pointing out that Hungarian politicians often mislead the public into thinking that trans-border Hungarians are severely ill-treated and still living in poor conditions. He felt offended by what he called the deliberate inaccurate portrayal of his people by the Hungarian government. Hungarian politicians

do not convey the much-improved social and economic conditions of these Hungarian minorities in order to keep the issue alive. Kuti concluded that as long as the trans-border Hungarians issue remains a hot topic, politicians will continue to exploit it to garner votes.

Csongor Kuti's opinion toward the referendum is certainly not a rare one. On the contrary, the Hungarian News Agency echoed his sentiments by calling the referendum a "popularity contest" between the prime minister and Viktor Orbán. ("Ethnic Kin...") In a Hungarian daily, *Magyar Hírlap*, an anonymous Serbian-Hungarian expressed the same disgust for the referendum. ("Referendum Fallout...") He felt that the dispute was not really about the minorities, but rather about the goals of the two opposing Hungarian political parties. The fact that the Hungarian minorities were not consulted regarding the referendum substantiated his claims. Like Kuti, the Serbian-Hungarian was also offended that Hungarian politicians portrayed the Hungarian minorities as poor people. His sentiments were supported by István Tokár, president of a Romanian county, who was quoted as saying that Romanian-Hungarians had given up hope of receiving aid from their ethnic brothers. ("Referendum Fallout...") Similar negative sentiments were shared in Slovakia. Miklós Duray, Executive President of the Hungarian Coalition Party in Slovakia, expressed his disappointment over the referendum, adding that the referendum should not have been called in the first place. ("Separating the 'Szar'...") In short, Hungarian minorities abroad supported dual citizenship due to sociological, not economic reasons, because they are no longer in need of economic aid.

Meanwhile, more mixed sentiments were seen in Hungary, where the contrasting reactions were fueled by the two opposing political parties. Supporters of dual citizenship claimed that the granting of Hungarian citizenship would compensate for injustices towards the Hungarian minorities in the past. ("Dual Citizenship Debate...") On the other hand, a failure to grant dual citizenship would imply an acceptance of the injustices of the Trianon Treaty. On a more practical note, the conferring of dual citizenship would facilitate trans-bor-

der visits between ethnic Hungarians. And it was thought by some that the potential for increased emigration would help compensate for the aging of Hungary's population. ("A Political Stunt...")

For their part, opponents of the referendum pointed out that, while emigration might help Hungary, it would deliver a death-blow to small Hungarian communities abroad, particularly in Serbia. (Kardos) Additionally, the conferring of citizenship to Hungarian minorities abroad, as proposed in the referendum, would place heavy financial burdens on the state budget. In fact, the Socialist government worried that the "new" Hungarian voters would destabilize the political situation in Hungary by throwing their support to the other party. ("A Political Stunt...")

Ironically, instead of putting to rest the issue of Hungarian minorities abroad, the referendum breathed new life into it. When the government called for a referendum, it did not expect a negative reaction from Hungarians abroad. The unanticipated backlash from these trans-border Hungarians landed the Fidesz Party and the Socialist Party in a permanent deadlock.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

Since the collapse of communism, the Hungarian-minority-abroad issue has become a recurring political football. Although the failure of the Fidesz Party in the 2002 election and the failed referendum indicated that Hungarians are no longer as concerned about their ethnic kin abroad, this issue has not faded into the background for several reasons. First, the newly-found freedom of speech after the Soviet days has permitted the issue to resurface, making it possible to raise it in each election campaign. Second, the Fidesz Party has opted to continue using this issue as a campaign tool. In November and December of 2004, representatives of the Fidesz Party visited 13 major cities as part of their awareness campaign to convince Hungarians to vote "yes" in the referendum. ("Fidesz Starts...") Finally, the current Socialist government, although not as nationalistic in its political agenda as the Fidesz Party, feels the need to address the Hungarian trans-border

issue due to pressures from Hungarian organizations abroad. For example, in August 2004 the chairman of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina, Andras Agoston, demanded a clearer policy from Hungary regarding the protection of Hungarian minorities abroad. As a result, the Hungarian government feels obligated to address the trans-border Hungarian issue periodically in order to pacify the leaders of the Hungarian minority associations in neighboring countries and to prevent criticism that the Hungarian government has neglected compatriots abroad. In response to external pressures, the government has also changed its foreign policy with regards to the protection of Hungarian minorities. ("Hungarians of Vojvodina...") Rather than trying to repatriate ethnic Hungarians abroad back to Hungary, the Hungarian government has chosen instead to ensure that ethnic Hungarians abroad are well taken care of in their host countries. ("Dual Citizenship Debate...")

A Way Out via the EU?

In line with Hungary's new foreign policy, the Hungarian government has supported projects cultivating Hungarian culture in neighboring countries and has subsidized projects encouraging the use of the Hungarian language beyond the borders of Hungary. ("The Public Will Decide") Through these efforts, the Hungarian government hopes that helping to promote stability in its neighborhood will guarantee the welfare of the Hungarian minorities in those areas. (Jeszenszky)

The Hungarian government has also renewed its commitment to the EU's enlargement process, recognizing that border issues will naturally dissolve if its immediate neighbors gain access to the EU. ("Socialists and Fidesz...") Furthermore, the establishment of the Copenhagen criteria² will ensure the protection of Hungarian minorities among EU members. Hungary's dependence on an inter-

²The Copenhagen criteria, established by the European Council meeting in 1993, determine a country's eligibility to join the EU. The criteria include preservation of democratic governance and protection of human and minority rights.

national body to resolve border and Hungarian minority issues has been proven to be a successful strategy. In the mid-'90s, Hungary's bilateral treaties with Slovakia and Romania were signed under the pressure of NATO; none of the three countries (Hungary, Slovakia and Romania) was permitted to join NATO until they resolved their ethnic issues. (Binnendijk and Simon)

However, the "EU solution" will not offer an immediate resolution of the problem because not all of Hungary's neighbors will be joining the EU in the near future. With that in mind, in January 2005 the current Hungarian Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány, proposed a five-point plan to help ethnic Hungarians abroad. ("Five Point Ethnic Plan") The five proposals are:

- (i) issuance of multiple-entry visas to cultivate Hungarian culture, language and national identity;
- (ii) simplification of immigration procedures;
- (iii) continued support for autonomy in former Hungarian territories;
- (iv) economic assistance to former Hungarian territories through a new Ft 1 billion (U.S. \$4 million) budget;
- (v) issuance of EU-conforming passports to ethnic Hungarians.

In addition to the five-point plan, the government has also considered drafting a law on dual citizenship to end the stalemate.

Although Gyurcsány's proposal would give clear benefits to the Hungarian minorities, his five-point plan was heavily criticized by the minority leaders because they were not consulted. ("Five Point Ethnic Plan") It was a new proposal made by the new Socialist Party President, Lázló Sólyom, in August 2005 that pacified the politicians. In his first public appearance, Sólyom hinted at "new legal discoveries" which would grant ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries limited travel rights within the European Union. ("Music...") Although similar proposals had been made in the past, they conflicted with the European Union's Schengen Agreement.³ ("Five Point Ethnic Plan") Sólyom's speech hit home because the government had identified an Albanian-Greek travel document, approved

under Schengen, that appeared to set a precedent that would enable Hungary to accomplish the objective while still conforming with existing Schengen laws. ("Limited EU Travel Rights?") This increased the practicality and likelihood of implementing Sólyom's proposal to grant ethnic Hungarians travel rights within the EU, thus winning the support of different political parties.

Other governments have followed Hungary in trying to resolve the minority issue. In February 2005, the Serbian government decided to grant honorary Serbian citizenship to any ethnic Hungarians occupying areas that had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike Hungarian citizenship, the conferral of the honorary citizenship "symbolizes national cohesion and entails no advantages." ("Hungarian City...")

Conclusion

Hungary's frontiers were formed approximately a thousand years ago following the arrival of the Magyars in the Carpathian Mountains. ("Hungary") Prior to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, these borders showed remarkable stability, with an uninterrupted history dating back to settlement by the Magyars. (Seton-Watson, p. 485) The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, followed closely by the Treaty of Trianon, shut millions of Hungarians out of Hungary. The Trianon provision gave birth to the Hungarian minority issue, a serious problem of national identity that Hungary has had to grapple with for many decades.

Hungary's accession to the European Union seems to offer a promising solution to the perennial minority issue. Hungary hopes that as more and more of its neighbors join the EU, border issues will diminish in importance and with them the minority issue as well. Indeed, Hungary seems to be on the right path towards finding a solution to the problem. Three of Hungary's seven neighbors (Austria, Slovenia and Slovakia) are already part of the

³The Schengen Agreement allows residents within one participating country to move to another without having to show their passports or being checked in any other way.

European Union, while two others (Croatia and Romania) have begun accession talks. (Europa) The two remaining neighbors, Ukraine and Serbia, although showing no signs of accession in the near term, are cooperative neighbors.

In the long run, Hungary's adoption of a new foreign policy as the EU spokesperson in Eastern Europe and its positive diplomatic efforts in the Balkans will work in the country's favor. As more and more of Hungary's neighbors join the EU and Hungarian communities

abroad continue to prosper, the Hungarian minority issue will gradually subside. Hungary's role as a friendly neighbor, its ongoing trade expansion, and its cooperation with both its EU and non-EU neighbors will lead to less suspicion of Hungarian minorities in those countries. This will ensure better treatment of the Hungarian minorities and create greater opportunities for them to participate in national development.

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