

**Good Neighbors or Bad Neighbors?  
Hungarians and Serbs during the centuries.**

By Károly Szilágyi

Reviewed by Ferenc Pece, D.Sc.

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## Foreword

During the illustrious dictatorship of Tito, a Vojvodina poet, Ferenc Fehér, happened to refer to his beloved motherland Bácska as “in these southern parts”. Some days later he was summoned to the police for a little friendly talk. (Whether it was because the police of Ujvidék had a great propensity for reading the poems of minority poets or because they were doing their jobs will never be known.) The fact was that a policeman in civilian clothes explained to him that while geography was a serious thing, he had better note that history was even more serious, and that those *southern* parts are actually *northern* parts...

Sometime later, after Tito, a teacher in one of the villages - again in Vojvodina - at a general meeting, made the following statement in a tone like this: “Why are the Hungarians so arrogant when everyone knows that they only settled here in ’56”, meaning 1956 - and he was supposedly an educated person.

On another occasion, Milošević’s favorite courtier - otherwise an internationally wanted criminal - came to Subotica (Szabadka) to give a speech. On the stage of the sports arena started extremely theatrically with the following words, amidst the hysterical ovation of the paid audience (there was not one local resident among them): “This is Serbian land and it will remain one!”

Similar events took place - and not only in Vojvodina.

It is not surprising that things like this happened when the historical truth was simply a forbidden topic for several decades. First it was forbidden by the secret police, then by the communist party, later by the prophets for Greater Serbia, and finally by the Serb people’s innate sense of self-preservation.

Nor was history treated any better on this, the northern, side of the border; while people were not very fond of their southern neighbors, it was strictly forbidden to hurt or provoke them. People who might, rather recklessly, dare to say or write, for example, the word ‘Trianon’ in public were invited down to the police station and detained for a while.

In this way, generations grew up on both sides of the border without having heard about certain events or, if they had, then they heard only half-truths or lies.

Nowadays, people are free to say or write about our common affairs. The question is what is actually being heard on the other side and who will feel offended when faced with data contradicting the history he learnt, read or believed to be true.

Human sensitivity, the sensitivity of nations is a very important matter and when two neighbors get to a point where fateful decisions can or must be made regarding the future of both of them, then they are critical matters. The author of this booklet is convinced that it is timely now, in these days or months when a critical turning point has been reached. It should be decided now whether both nations choose the same road towards Europe together, helping one another, or each one follows his own separate path and later, if these attempts bear fruit, then so be it; if not, so much the better.

When the author wrote this book, his intention was to reveal a great deal of historical facts for those who are potential participants in decision making and, naturally, for the younger generations, in order to help them evaluate in a more realistic way individual facets of the Serbian-Hungarian common past. The facts listed here have been taken from both Serbian and Hungarian historiography – which may be a novelty for some people, mostly those who have not been accustomed to listening to the arguments of the other party patiently and attentively on the delicate matters. Furthermore, the historians and writers who had the courage to add critical remarks about their own nations are cited here with particular deference.

To the question whether it is possible, or even realistic, to plan a common Hungarian-Serbian future, this book may not provide a definitive answer. However, if we at least reach a conclusion that good neighbors are important (regardless of the way one or the other nation chooses), we may say that this book has not been written in vain.

A short review will be given to give the background of the foundation of the Serbian state. The Turkish conquest that ruined the medieval Serbian state and divided the nation into two will also be discussed, as well as the motives for part of the nation to leave its homeland from 1690 and settle in Hungary.

This offers a good opportunity for outlining some chapters of Hungarian history. Starting with the conquest of the Magyars that lead to the original settlement of this nation in the territory of

Hungary, through the creation of the Hungarian state, to the period of the Turkish occupation. Finally, the period when the Serbs and Hungarians came into close contact with each other in large numbers.

Furthermore, a detailed survey of the privileges granted to the Serbs will be given and how these privileges and other reasons led to the first bloody conflicts between Hungarians and Serbs, first during the Rákóczi uprising and later during the 1848 Revolution. The Serb national awakening will be dealt with, as well as the first demands for territorial autonomy. An attempt will be made to summarize the rights and special treatment the Serbs could enjoy within the framework of their ecclesiastical and educational autonomy in Dualist Hungary.

Mention will be made of the efforts for Magyarization and assimilation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an emphasis on their historical and social context. By referring to the background and events of World War I that concerned the fate of both nations, we reach the Treaty of Trianon and we will try to list the losses Hungary had to suffer owing to the unjust revision of its borders. We will attempt to show, with some specific examples, the relationship between royal Yugoslavia and the national minorities living in the annexed areas.

Among the events and conflicts of World War II, we emphasize two tragic episodes: the 1942 massacre in Ujvidék and Zsablya and the bloody revenge of Tito's partisans when the Serbs retaliated inflicted at least a ten-fold reprisal on the Hungarians of Vojvodina. Following these ignominious events of our common history, we will outline the situation of Serbs living in Hungary and Hungarians living in Vojvodina, from the end of World War II to the present day.

A separate chapter deals with the chances and preconditions of future peaceful coexistence of the two nations. Without striving for completeness, we will try to give a list of laments, namely for what these two nations can reproach each other. If we want to live together in peace and friendship (or merely next to each other), it is high time we face our historical shortcomings. We must investigate how they may burden our further good-neighborliness, so that – after setting up some monuments to serve both as memento and as symbolic compensation – we may be able to open, in good conscience, a new page in our history. This list covers not only the considerable bloodletting on both sides but some other delicate matters, as well, that have greatly contributed to the deepening of mutual mistrust and hostility. We think, primarily of the drastic interference and acts whose aim was the alteration of the ethnic composition of the annexed territories, the

ethnic and nationalist myths, and the rebirth of the idea of Greater Serbia in the recent Balkan wars.

Finally, we shall express the opinion that the representatives of Serbs living in Hungary and Hungarians living in Yugoslavia should have a major role in the preparation and implementation of future co-operation. In this spirit of positive discrimination, on the basis of the principles prevailing in European countries, the healthy survival of ethnic groups on both sides of the border would be assured. To avoid any misunderstanding, the example is not France, Spain or Romania but rather Finland, Switzerland, Southern Tyrol and Slovenia.

Károly Szilágyi

Budapest, October 25, 1999.

## Serb Settlement in the Balkans

The first Serbian tribes are said to have arrived in the Balkans around 626, at the time of the Avar-Slavic attack against the Byzantine Empire. It is a generally accepted fact that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century a number of Slavic tribes settled down in the Balkan Peninsula. Among these - as far as the degree of organization is concerned - some soon became significant, like the Bulgarians, who settled down in the region of the Balkan Mountain, the Croats, who occupied the north-western part of the Peninsula and the Serbs, who established their home along the rivers Tara, Lim, Drina and Ibar, as well as on the slopes of the Golija and Durmitor mountains.

The basis of the family and social life of the Serbs, from ancient times through the centuries, was the extended family community, the *zadruga*. A family remained together over several generations in one house, or group of houses, sometimes with more than a hundred members in one community. At the same time, the extended community also represented communal wealth. Each adult member had exactly the same rights; they jointly elected the leader, the *starešina*. The *starešina* - in most cases the eldest man of the community - if he was found to be suitable for leadership, was the omnipotent head of the family. He distributed the work and everything they needed, making decisions in the matters of issue; he rewarded and punished. In case the *starešina* was no longer suitable to lead, the members of the tribe elected, unanimously or by majority, another leader for themselves with completely equal rights.

When the number of a house-community grew too large, some "brother branches", called *bratstvo*, separated and established a new community in the vicinity. The communities that originated from the same clan established a clan area, called *župa*. From the leaders of these *župas*, the leaders of the communities elected a common clan leader, the *župan*. A certain number of *župas* made up a *županija*. The *županija* was governed by the council of *starešinas* with the presidency of the *župan*, all in the spirit of full democratic equality.

The *županijas* were completely independent of each other for many centuries. As they did not have the full authority of a state, their independence was rather relative and their political status changed frequently. By and large, the *županijas* acknowledged the supremacy of the Byzantine Empire, however, taking advantage of recurring power conflicts and changing power relationships, they waged wars and tried to win their independence.

In the meantime, first from Rome, then from Byzantium, an increasing number of missionaries arrived to preach the idea of Christianity to the Serbs, with scant success. The majority of the Serbs consistently insisted on the religion of their ancestors, fanatically protecting their age-long traditions. As they professed, the acceptance of Christianity would have meant for them the end of democratic equality, the acceptance of alien authority and slavery for hundreds of years.

### **The First Attempts at Founding the Serbian State**

In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantium - as the only Great Power in the Balkans - started several military expeditions against the Saracens, the Venetians, the Bulgarians and the Franks. In these endless conflicts, depending mostly on the personality, the strength and power of the ruler, Byzantium won or lost territories, her influence in the region ebbed and flowed, tightened or loosened the ties linking the Slavs to her.

Starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century - taking advantage of a military defeat or political weakening of Byzantium - some attempts were made to establish an independent Serbian state. Serbian sources pinpoint the time of such an historical event as the third decade of this century, mentioning Vlastimir as the leader. It is difficult either to prove or to refute this statement, yet it can be stated that the short-lived, weak, state-like creation of Vlastimir meant a milestone in Serbian history as they became christianized at this time and, in return, they could enjoy a certain degree of self-government. The beginnings of the history of the Serbian Christian Church are from this date.

In the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, two missionaries appeared among the Slavs, Cyrill (his original name was Constantine) and Metod. The former is considered to be the father of Slavic written literature, the creator of the so-called Glagolitic alphabet, while the latter, by translating the Serbian church books from Greek into Slavic, was among the first to initiate the use of Slavic into Church liturgy. It is a historical fact that the Serbian Church was among the first to have used the vernacular during its ecclesiastic ceremonies and, as a consequence, it evolved into a national Church which, from time to time, could withdraw itself - to a certain extent - from the direct authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Kliment, Naum, Gorazd, Angelar and Sava, the followers of Cyrill and Metod, had established several ecclesiastical centers that evolved to become the centers not only of religious life but also of the Slavic written literature of the time.



During the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, the feudal system began to take root among the Serbs, and the tribal leaders - who now became the new lords - became more and more interested in the establishment of a stable feudal state. As a result of internal and external conflicts, as well as tribal polarization, two power centers emerged. One was Duklja, which was the predecessor of the Zeta in the south; the other was Raška, in the north. For a while the two mini-states developed in parallel, independently and in rivalry with each other - as more or less satellite states of Byzantium. By the 1170's, it became clear that Raška was the more vigorous of the two and it began to exhibit all the characteristics of the essence of the later, real Serbian feudal state.

### **Stevan Nemanja and the First Independent Serbian State**

In 1168, following the defeat of a rebellion against Byzantium, Emperor Manuel Komnenos divided Raška among the sons of an old Serbian leading family. The youngest boy, Stevan Nemanja (Steven Nemanja), realized that the Serbs were too weak to gain their independence by means of arms, so he set out to strengthen their territorial autonomy and endeavored to win over the respected and powerful families to the cause of independence. As he had also enjoyed the confidence of Emperor Komnenos, he soon surpassed his brothers and became the great *župan* of Raška.

After the death of Emperor Komnenos, Nemanja started an armed attack, occupying Zeta and Dalmatia, and he even entered into an alliance with the Hungarian king, Béla III, to attack Byzantium, as well. Having learnt that Frederick Barbarossa I initiated a crusade to liberate Jerusalem and that his way led across Raška, Nemanja organized a majestic reception for him in the town Niš, offering to become Barbarossa's vassal and promising 20,000 Serbian soldiers if he attacked Byzantium. In return, Nemanja asked Barbarossa to acknowledge his power in the conquered territories. Frederick Barbarossa, however, did not wish to jeopardize the goals of the Third Crusade by a new war, so he only partly fulfilled Nemanja's request.

At this, Nemanja decided to start an attack on his own against the weakened Byzantine Empire and, after strengthening the independence of his state, turned his energies to the settlement of the internal matters of Raška. He had roads, bridges, churches, cloisters and charitable institutions built. He did not adopt any new measures in connection with administration; he still remained the head of the country as a great *župan*, while his brothers and sons governed the larger territorial

units. It was under the reign of Nemanja when a process that had begun earlier, came to an end; the focus of the medieval Serbian state was slowly shifting eastwards, from the Mediterranean region to the internal, continental parts of the Balkan Peninsula.

Nemanja was closely connected to the Church. He is recognized to have been among the most outstanding of Serbian rulers, also as a church founder and the generous benefactor of the monastic orders. He was cognizant of the fact that the dense network of churches and cloisters, even the most remote locations from the center of royal power, could be involved more effectively into the state's organization. It was at this time that the Bogomils appeared in the Balkans, preaching heretical ideas that were unacceptable to the Catholic Church. Nemanja took energetic measures against them, punishing them mercilessly: burning at the stake, confiscation of property and banishment.

Nemanja also has some personal reasons for supporting and protecting the Church: one of his sons, named Sava, became a friar. Nemanja and his son had the Hilandar cloister built in Athos in the Holy Land which was to remain, for centuries, the center Serbian literature and its national Church. In his old age, Nemanja retired there after he relinquished his power to his son, Stefan.

### **The Flowering of the Arts**

The tradition of founding and supporting the Church, first established by Nemanja and continued by the Serb nobility, subsequently enriched Serbian cultural history with numerous architectural marvels and works of fine arts. Compared to the simple lines of the Roman architectural style, Serbian architects of this era began to employ with increasing frequency the attractive forms of Byzantine church architecture: the three nave floor-plans, the impressive facades and gracious domes.

The architectural masterpieces of Visoki Dečani, Gračanica, Sudenica and similar churches were being built all over Serbia, one after the other. Stone masons, carvers, icon and fresco painters came to Nemanja's country from far away and decorated the newly built churches with beautiful stone-lace portals, windows, icon-walls, icons and frescoes. The frescoes painted during this time, like the wonderful angel covered in a white drapery in Mileševo cloister or John the Apostle in

Sopočani, the birth of Blessed Virgin Mary in Studenica, or John the Baptist in Gračanica, have all grown to become symbols of the medieval Serbian Church and of Serbian fine art.

### **Stefan Prvovenčani**

Nemanja delegated the power to his second born son, Stefan. He compensated the first-born Vukan with a showy title and significant properties, while reminding Vukan to obey his younger brother. During his reign, Stefan enjoyed considerable support from Byzantium, however, later Vukan would form an alliance with the Hungarian King, Imre, to overthrow Stefan and gain the throne. (From this point on, Serbia is mentioned as one of the Hungarian crown's domains.) After the crusaders sacked Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade and ended the Byzantine Empire in the year 1204, or by the end of 1205, Stefan would recapture the Serbian throne. He realized the changed power relations in religious matters and decided to try to gain Rome's support by turning to the Pope for a crown. After some delay, he received one and, in 1217, had himself crowned as king, becoming the first crowned Serbian king. In Serbian sources he is generally mentioned as Stefan Prvovenčani ('First Crowned' Steven). With this action, his flirting with Catholicism had more or less come to an end, partly because of the protestations of his people and partly because of the pressure from his brother, Sava. Stefan later on turned to the Orthodox Church, once again. During his reign, the first Serbian archbishopric was established, Sava was consecrated as its archbishop and he began his church building.

The beginning of the golden era of the medieval Serbian state can be traced to Stefan. After his death in 1223, King Uroš I made further progress by opening mines, with minting and coinage and with subordinating the power of the Church to religious tenet. King Uroš Milutin II defended his country against the Tartar attacks, occupying Western-Macedonia, strengthening the country's economy and boosting handicraft and trade. His son, Stefan Milutin, who reigned under the name Uroš III, expanded the borders of Raška by occupying some further territories. Consequently, as far as her significance and influence were concerned, the Serbian state achieved the same level of power as Bulgaria, and furthermore, by defeating their archrival in 1330 at Velbuzsd, Serbia became the leading power of the region.

## The Golden Age of Serbia

In the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantium revived again, surviving numerous crises. Hungary, the northern Great Power of the region, was meanwhile engaged with her own internal problems and Bulgaria was still nursing her wounds from the defeat at Velbuzsd. Conditions were ripe for the establishment of a new, strong Serbian empire. The son of Uroš III, named Dušan, who had already shown signs of outstanding ability in the wars against the Bulgarians, did not intend to miss the historic opportunity: he rebelled against his father and seized power. In 1331, he had himself crowned as king and started a military expedition against Byzantium, conquering significant territories. Emboldened by his rapid successes, in 1346, he had himself crowned in the town of Skopje as 'Tsar of the Serbs and Greeks'.

He then clashed with the Hungarian king, Louis the Great, but was not able to make any further territorial gains. After this setback, he focused his attention on the internal affairs of his country, writing, in 1349, the first statute book of the Serbs. The code of Dušan gives an excellent description of the makeup and internal structure of contemporary Serbian society. The state was headed by the Tsar (emperor), enjoying absolute power. The feudal ruling strata consisted of the successors of the old tribal leaders, the *vlastelines* (nobles) and the smaller landowners, the *vlastelinčićs* (petty nobles). They had only one obligation towards the Tsar: they had to provide troops, depending on the size of their properties, and had to engage in battle, in person, on the orders of the ruler. However, they enjoyed many privileges: they could be put on trial only under certain conditions, their judges could only be from among their peers, they had the right to order the people living in their lands to work, and so on.

The main occupation of the bulk of the population (i.e., the peasantry) was agriculture and animal husbandry. One could hardly find artisans and merchants among them (these trades were pursued mainly by foreigners or newcomers), so the statute book made no reference to them. The tax burdens on the population of the so-called 'hereditary estate' were bearable (as they were released from paying the state taxes), while on the other hand, the landless serfs were burdened with several kinds of taxes. There were two types of serfs according to the statute book: the *meropch* and the *otrok*. The former lived on the properties of the clerical and secular landlords, did not have any freedom of movement right and were obliged to work on his landlord's property three days a week; the latter lived like a galley-slave. He was owned by his landlord and had to accomplish what he was commanded.

The so-called chancellery played an important role in state administration: the deeds of grants and judgments were issued by this office, furthermore, the court judges also had great influence since they made judgments in matters belonging to the king's jurisdiction. The court dignitaries, a title taken over from the Greek 'household', also had significant power. Two types of regional functionaries were mentioned by the statute book. The first ones were the *župan* and *kenezes* (in some sources they were mentioned as village judges), who were appointed by election. The other one was the tsarist functionary called *kefalias* or *čelniks*.

### **The Break-up of the Mediaeval Serbian State**

The nobles loyally served Dušan since they were interested in military conquests and for their services they received bountiful endowments; they could significantly expand their lands. A firm ruler like Dušan could curb or break up rebellious activities and could superimpose the state interests over the private interests of the nobles. Nevertheless, when Dušan died in his prime, his son Uroš was unable to hold a country together that had been rather more heterogeneous from national, regional, cultural and political points of view. Within ten years, the vast empire of Dušan collapsed. The conquered territories were lost, what remained broke into small pieces. In Macedonia, Vukašin came to power; in the territory between the Western and Southern Moravia, Prince Lazar assumed power; in the region of Kosovo Polje, Vuk Branković; in Zeta, the Balšić brothers; while in the region of Rudnik and Zlatibor, Nikola Altomanović became the ruler.

All these events in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century led to a collection of weak, small states in the Balkans, while the ominous shadow of the new great power began to appear and was to have a decisive influence in the region for the next five hundred years: the Ottoman Empire.

This new world power had some specific traits: a vast mass of people permeated with religious fanaticism, a well-organized and disciplined army, a strong central power and an expressed ambition for conquest. When Sultan Murad I occupied the town of Adrianople in 1363 and moved his administrative center to Europe, the brothers - King Vukašin and Despota Uglješa - who ruled most of the southern part of Dušan's former empire, clearly realized that they would be the targets of the next attack. Eight years later, in 1371, this attack actually took place. The

decisive battle occurred at the upper course of the River Marica. The Turks completely routed the Serbian army, and King Vukašin also lost his life.

The battle at the River Marica proved to be fatal; the Turks gained a foothold in the Balkan Peninsula. The territories south of the Sar Mountain were occupied by the Turks, the ruling dynasties of this region became vassals of the Sultan, not only having to pay taxes to him but also to lend support in military expeditions.

As a response to the direct threat, Prince Lazar tried to establish an alliance against the Turks. He achieved this partly by suppressing the dissident nobles who were only looking after their own interests and partly by drawing them to his own side. He sought external allies with the help of family ties, as it was traditional in these times: he married his daughters to Serbian, Bulgarian and Hungarian potentates who could be expected to offer military support.

Sultan Murad I invaded Raška during the summer of 1389. Prince Lazar, together with Vuk Branković and Vlatko Vuković, were waiting for the Turkish army at Kosovo Polje. The battle seemed to develop favourably at the outset, from the Serbian point of view: on the right wing, Vuk Branković forcefully drove the Turks back and a quick victory seemed possible. Moreover, a soldier, Miloš Obilić, managed to enter the Turkish camp and kill Sultan Murad. Nonetheless, the sultan's son, Bajazid, concealed the fact of Murad's death from the army and simultaneously initiated a lateral attack against Vuk Branković, breaking up the Serb army in a fierce fight. After this, he annihilated the central forces under the command of Lazar, followed by the left flank under Vuković, winning the crucial battle. Prince Lazar was taken captive by the Turks and was executed by Bajazid following the triumphant celebration. In practical terms, the battle at Kosovo Polje marked the beginning of the more than five hundred year Turkish rule of Serbia.

### **The Origin of the Hungarians and Their Conquest of Hungary**

Several theories exist regarding the origin and settlement of the Hungarians. The common thread of these theories is that the Hungarians (Magyars) originated from Asia, however, opinions differ as to the precise location of their original homeland. According to scholars, their original home was somewhere around the middle of the river Volga, in the region of the Ural mountains, north

of the river Kama. Others believe that it was on both slopes of the middle part of the Urals, while a third theory poses that it was further east, somewhere in the heart of Asia.

According to the Finno-Ugrian theory of origin - which has until recently been the most widely accepted one - archeological findings prove that up to the year 2000 BC, the Hungarians lived together with the so-called Finno-Ugrian peoples in their original homeland. Then the western Finnish branch separated because of over-population, and moved first towards the river Volga then the Baltic Sea. The Ugrian branch, which included the ancestors of the modern Hungarians, wandered towards the southeastern slopes of the Ural mountains, towards the plain divided by large rivers. The Hungarians, who earlier made their living by fishing and hunting, became acquainted with land cultivation and animal husbandry, and for centuries they became a horse- and sheep-breeding nomadic people, moving from pasture to pasture.

The process of becoming a nation took place sometime after 500 AD. The tribes, calling themselves Magyars, separated from the Ugrian community and by crossing the Urals they arrived at the territory of the modern-day Baskiria. The name Magyar, according to the philologists, can be derived from the words „*mon*”, that is „speak” and „*er*” that is „man”, meaning „*speaking man*”. The explanation of this theory is that in their new country the Hungarians came in contact with Persian and Turkish tribes and, considering the fact that the Hungarians could not understand their language, they called the members of these tribes mute while themselves a “speaking” nation. Similar examples exist in other groups’ histories.

The Hungarians adopted the use of the plough from their neighbors in the new territories. They learned the skills of viniculture; they bred not only sheep and horses but also pigs, poultry and some other small livestock. During summer, they lived in their nomadic tents, moving to wooden huts for the winter, usually built on the banks of larger rivers. Since they were surrounded mostly by foreign, rather belligerent people, the Hungarians had to be constantly prepared for self-defense. They formed permanent groups consisting of riders equipped with bow and arrows, and swords. These groups were responsible not only for defense but also for counter-attacks. Already, these troops earned their living not from the cultivation of land or animal breeding but from the spoils of the fights and from the work of the slaves they had taken captive.

Some people named these tribes with words like *ungar*, *ungroa*, *venger* and others. The reason for this probably was that the Hungarians had belonged to the so-called *Onugrian* tribal

confederation that had been under the control of the Kazars and had lived along the river Don. One part of the Hungarian tribes shook off the yoke of the Kazars and, around the year 800 AD, moved to Levedia, then from there - squeezed out by the Pechenegs (Besenyők) - to the territory between the river Dnieper and the Lower Danube, called Etelköz.

As attested by written document, in 895, the Pechenegs crossed the Don and made a surprise attack on the Hungarians while the majority of their warriors were absent, away fighting in an alliance with Byzantium and Moravia, against the Bulgarians. The defenseless Hungarians tried to find shelter in the forested valleys among the Transylvanian mountains. After returning from the theatre of operations, their chieftain Árpád, together with *kende* Kursan, called upon the Hungarian tribes to form an alliance. Together they wrested Transylvania from the Bulgarians, the region of the Bodrog and Tisza rivers, then the Transdanubian (southwestern) region from the Franks and the western portion of the Carpathian Highlands from the Moravians - establishing the pre-conditions for the final settlement of the Hungarians.

As a matter of curiosity, we mention that the Hungarians consider the year 896 as the year of the settlement and not 895. This has a rather unusual explanation. When the country was preparing to celebrate the millennium of Hungarian settlement, the Parliament issued tenders for several different projects and programs. Time and cost consuming, these great plans were implemented, among them the Millennium Square, the Andrassy Boulevard, the Houses of Parliament, the Basilica, the Opera House, just to mention only some of the most spectacular and important ones. Therefore, the judgement of the Preparatory Committee of the Millennium was that these works of such magnitude could not be completed by the year 1895, so Parliament postponed the celebration of the settlement's anniversary to 1896. Consequently, the date of the original settlement was also 'back-dated' to a year later, with the approval of historians.

This date is still controversial, even today, from another perspective. On the basis of the archaeological researches of Gyula László, as well as of his memorable theory of the dual conquest, several authorities now believe that the Hungarian tribes settled in the region sometime at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Kursan fell victim of a Bavarian conspiracy in 904 and Árpád became his successor. In 907, after a sweeping victory over the Bavarians, he not only took revenge for the death of Kursan, but in reality completed the process of the Hungarian conquest, as well.



## Settlement and the Foundation of the State

The European situation in the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century was very unsettled. The Carolingian dynasty, a previous powerhouse, fell into pieces. In Germany and in Italy the nobles were busy with their internal power struggles. Occasionally, even the Hungarian tribes participated in these fights at the invitation of one or other of the western European combatants. The reason for such invitations was that it became known that the Hungarians were skillful riders, quick and agile, and the shooting range of their arrows was much greater than that of the ones used by the contemporary European armies. Not only their weapons but also their military tactics proved to be extraordinarily effective. During the fierce fighting, they pretended to retreat and, when the enemy thought they had won the battle and started in disorderly pursuit after them, the Hungarians turned back in their saddles and showered arrows upon the enemy. Then their seemingly retreating mob would separate into two parts, wheel around and counter-attack from both sides.

Oftentimes considerable pillaging and looting followed the triumphant battles. No wonder that in the cloisters of Italy, Germany and France a new prayer came into usage at this time: *Save us, O Lord, from the arrows of the Hungarians.*

The Hungarians retained their traditional organization in their new home, too. The clan was headed by the *bő*; his respect was based on his property obtained in the western military expeditions. In order to expand his property, he would sever some lands from the common estates and have them cultivated by slaves taken captive in the wars. His other form of support came from the fighting men he could muster in his district.

A tribe consisted of five or six clans, headed by the *lord*, in most cases he was the military commander, as well. The tribes united into a so-called tribal federation. Within it, the main authority was divided among three dignitaries: *kende* (prince), *gyula* (captain) and *harka* or *horka* (the equivalent of a justice of the peace), although the tasks of the *gyula* and *harka* were sometimes confused. The former acted mostly in the eastern, the latter in the western parts of the country and in their own territories one sometimes performed the tasks of the other, as well.

In due course, certain tribal leaders tried to wrest power from the *kende*. Naturally, sooner or later this would have led to the break-up of the tribal confederation and would have been fatal to the survival of the Hungarians since they were surrounded by peoples of different origin, speaking foreign languages, having different religions and customs. The *kendes* were aware of the fact that, while on the one hand, they had to consolidate their own 'central' power but, on the other hand, they had to adjust themselves to the state of affairs and ethical standards of their new situation. Furthermore, they had to choose which of the neighboring powers would be their ally, the Holy Roman or the Byzantine Empires. With the help of his definite 'domestic' and clever 'foreign policy', Prince Géza was able to unite the divergent forces, to strengthen his power and begin the period of adaptation. This adaptation, in fact, was to join the community of Christian European nations. Géza - and his court - converted to Christianity, however, he did not commit himself too deeply to either Empire.

Géza's son, Vajk, who had received the name Stephen (István) after being baptized, followed his father in 997, and succeeded in continuing Géza's work. He effected radical changes both in the social structure and in the relationship between the ruler and the nobles. He took away the castles from the tribal leaders, together with about the two-thirds of their estates and subordinates, and established the so-called 'royal counties'. Stephen introduced a regional organization instead of the previous social structure that had been based on blood relationship - with this he achieved that practically every Hungarian became his direct subordinate. He invited German, Italian and Czech friars into the country and continued to spread Christianity. He ordered that every ten village should join and build a church and keep a resident priest. He founded ten episcopates, two of which were raised to archbishopric status. He himself also became a significant benefactor, had several churches built, not only in Hungary but abroad, for example in Jerusalem, Constantinople and Ravenna. New cloisters were built all over the country. Pannonhalma was among the first ones; its building had already been started during the rule of Prince Géza, in 997. The most ancient Hungarian ecclesiastical school started its operation in Pannonhalma at this time. In these churches and cloisters, significant Latin literature started to develop, and this meant not only ecclesiastical texts but political and legal ones, as well. The first ecclesiastical writer was Bishop Gellért (court cleric and tutor to the crown prince, *ed.*). Stephen himself also left an important literary work behind. He wrote a book to his son, Imre, in which Stephen exhorted him to keep his Christian beliefs, to strengthen the Church, to maintain the good bond with the nobles and knights, to be always just and patient. Further, he recommended that Imre accept newcomers in a friendly manner and not to do anything without asking for the advice of wise men, to respect his

parents and to exercise charity and grace towards his supporters. The moral principles expounded in these exhortations later became an integral part of Stephen's statute book and determined legal relationships of Hungarian society in accordance with the system prevailing among contemporary Western powers of the day.

By reorganizing his nation and by the strengthening of its central authority, Stephen, in practice, became the founder of the feudal Hungarian state. By spreading Christianity and the adoption of the prevailing moral standards in Europe, he placed the fledgling Hungarian state on such a legal and moral foundation that determined its fate both as a state and a nation for a millennium. The personal integrity of Stephen soon gained legitimacy in both Europe and the world: to acknowledge his role in the foundation of his state, Pope Sylvester II sent him a crown with which he was crowned in 1000 AD as the country's first anointed king. The house of Árpád - named after the leader of the original conquest - became a royal dynasty by virtue of Stephen's ascent to the throne. The deeds of this royal house are forever recorded in golden letters in the annals of history for it gave in total more saints of the Catholic Church than all the other royal families of Europe combined.

### **Development of the Feudal Hungarian State**

Stephen died in the year of 1038. His death was followed by a short, turbulent period in the life of Hungarians, ending with the accession of László I to the throne in 1077, the year when war broke out between the Pope and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. László took a position on the side of the Pope, managing to reduce the German influence, while at the same time not allowing the Catholic Church to exercise too strong a power. While Byzantium was busy with beating back the Seldjuk attacks, László managed to occupy Croatia and Dalmatia, becoming the founder of the archdiocese of Zagreb. In subsequent years, he concentrated on the consolidation of internal order. He continued Stephen's law-making activities - his laws became known for their extraordinary stringency - and made strides in the further development of Latin literature. He invited several lawmakers, legend-writers and chroniclers to his court; he was a great benefactor of the Church with donations, had some churches built, and developed in Hungary the Roman style of religious buildings, comparable to a European level. During his rule, he paid close attention to foreign policy: as a sign of his approach to Byzantium, he married his daughter, Piroška, to the Byzantine Emperor. By his diplomatic and military successes, he achieved a

measure of deference for Hungarians. According to the words of a Byzantine chronicler, the Hungarians had good horses and weapons, their number was countless, more than the grains of sand on the beach, their bravery was without equal, they were unconquerable, undefeated in battle. Furthermore, they were an independent, free people who could walk with heads raised high, liked freedom and were the masters of their own fate.

László I was followed on the throne by Béla III, who brought about significant social and economic changes. During his rule a great number of French and German colonists came into the country, who left their countries because of overpopulation, and brought with them the skills of vine cultivation and methods of deep ploughing. Owing to the rapid growth in the success of agriculture and the appearance of tradesmen, the population of individual settlements swelled and towns began to develop. The first Hungarian towns were Esztergom and Székesfehérvár, which became, at the same time, the first capitals of the country.

Mining - mainly gold and salt - and trade was booming. Increased production brought about the expansion of the money supply. However, the extravagance of Béla III emptied the treasury, which weakened the king's power. The nobles, on the other hand, grew stronger and gained political influence. This shift in stature resulted in the issue of the Golden Bull in 1222, during the rule of Andrew II, which confirmed the nobles' privileges vis-a-vis the ruler. During wars, nobles were still obliged to raise an army but only if the campaign took place within the borders of the country. The king's right to the minting of coinage was limited to once a year, and it forbade the ruler to collect tithes in money. Finally, this document granted the nobles the right of opposition, even taking up arms, should the ruler and his successors fail to adhere to the precepts of this law.

### **The Mongol Invasion and the Revival**

Andrew II (Endre) was followed on the throne by his son, Béla IV, who is usually mentioned by the historians as the second founder of the Hungarian state. Some years after his accession to the throne, Hungary experienced an immense catastrophe: in 1241, Batu, the Mongol Khan, attacked the country. At Muhi, he defeated the Hungarian army and wrought enormous devastation in the whole Carpathian basin, the like of which it had never experienced before. Massacre, destruction looting and arson lasted for more than a year, during which time the number of the approximately two million strong Hungarian populace was virtually halved. The number of victims reached 60%

in some places in the central regions of the country. Béla IV, with his family and court, had to flee, too. He sought shelter first in Dalmatia, near Zagreb. The Mongols - or, as they were called in Europe: the Tartars - chased him to the coastal town of Trau (Trogir), where they suddenly stopped and withdrew to whence they came, leaving the lands of Hungary.

The true greatness of Béla IV as a ruler emerged following the Mongol invasion and was demonstrated by his rebuilding of the country. He donated the scorched and devastated royal and county estates to his followers, at the same time obliging them to reconstruct the country by settling down freed serfs and foreign settlers on these lands. A great number of people of German, Moravian, Serb, Russian, Romanian and Kuman (Kun) origin arrived in Hungary at this time. Economic activity began to boom, not only in the regions that had been lying derelict earlier but also in areas of the mountains and forests that had previously been uncultivated. Shortly, a solid peasant component developed from the domestic population, namely from the liberated servants and from the newcomers, who enjoyed same rights. They had a right to move, the right to self-regulating farming, while fulfilling their obligations towards their nobles by rendering to them a certain proportion of the harvest. Béla IV obligated the nobility to build castles on the borders of the country to prevent possible renewed Mongolian attacks. Some of the most noted mining centers developed under the protection of these fortresses. In short order, Hungary became the largest silver producing country in Europe.

As a result of the growth of mining, trade, industry and crafts, a civic middle class began to emerge, neither nobility nor serf. With the decentralization of economic clout, central authority was weakened, while the independence of the nobles increased, as well as their desire for power and property. The successors of Béla IV proved unable to stop this process, which led to the disintegration of the country. The internecine warfare among the nobility contributed to the further weakening of Hungary, as a whole.

In 1301, the dynasty of the House of Árpád died out and a long power struggle began for power and the Hungarian throne. Robert Charles, member of the Anjou-dynasty, the offspring of an old Neapolitan-Sicilian family and a distant Árpád relative, emerged as the eventual winner. When he ascended the throne in 1308, with the help of the Pope, he immediately set out to rebuild the economic supremacy of the crown. In return for the income derived from royal properties, he introduced taxes and duties, especially on the monopoly in the production and trade of precious metals such as gold and silver. He developed gold mines in Körmöcbánya and Nagyvárád and

laid the basis for the minting of the Hungarian golden forint. This coinage proved to be one of the most stable currencies in Europe for many centuries.

Through military and economic reforms, Robert Charles restored order in the country, while with the help of his alliance with the Czech and Polish kings, he also strengthened Hungary's international position. His son, Louis, ascended the throne in 1342, with enormous ambitions. Claiming his dynastic rights to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and supported by his well-organized army, he set about to enlarge his kingdom. He managed to recapture Dalmatia and Croatia, expanded his power over certain Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, Polish and Romanian areas and managed to increase Hungary's territory to the largest size in its history. According to the chronicles of the time, three seas washed Hungary's coasts: the Baltic, the Adriatic and the Black Seas. Because of his mighty empire, King Louis received the title "Great" attached to his name. Furthermore, he was the founder of the first university in Hungary in 1367, in Pécs. Although some new studies mention that a college had already operated in Hungary since 1254, in Veszprém, making Pécs's claim doubtful, nevertheless, this does not diminish Louis' achievements in the least.

### **The Turkish Occupation of Hungary**

Neither the external nor the internal political conditions existed for the long-term survival of Louis the Great's enormous empire. The quarreling nobles weakened the country's unity further. The next king, Sigismund (Zsigmond), was initially busy with protecting his own crown. Later - as the successor to the title of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire - his energies were taken up with battling the religious heresy of Jan Hus and resolving the internal conflicts of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, the Turks appeared along the southern border of the country and attacked Croatia and Transylvania, killing the people, plundering, scorching the villages and driving off the livestock. Sigismund tried to organize military expeditions against the Turks but met with little success. His successor, Albert, entrusted the excellent military leader János (John) Hunyadi with the protection of the southern borders. Hunyadi was still a child when he was taken to the court of Sigismund. He learned the rudiments of military art from Italian mercenaries and, even in his early years, showed great skill in the battles against the Turks. He was richly rewarded by the king for his merits and when Albert's son, László V, came to the throne, still a minor, Hunyadi was appointed as regent. By this time, Hunyadi was the richest man in the country.

Unlike the other nobles, he understood the imminent danger posed by the Turkish attacks and pledged all his power, and personal wealth, for the protection of the country. His greatest victory took place in 1456 when he successfully defended Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) against the Turks. With his action, he delayed the Turkish invasion of Europe for a hundred years. It was recognized as a victory of universal significance. To commemorate it, Pope Calixtus III ordered that the bells should ring every day at noon in all the churches of Christendom. Unfortunately, at the time of the battle, an epidemic of the Black Plague broke out in the Hungarian camp and the disease killed Hunyadi. Hunyadi is well known to the Serbian people by the name of Janko Sibirjanin and is respected by them as much as the great hero, Marko Kraljevic.

The crown prince, László, died unexpectedly in 1457 and struggles for the throne broke out, yet again, in Hungary. Supported by the lesser nobility, Hunyadi's son Matthias, still a minor, was elected to be the next king and, because of the raven (*corvus* in Latin) in his family crest, he is known in history as Matthias Corvinus (Corvin Mátyás, *ed.*). Matthias was brought up in a humanistic spirit, was well read and spoke four languages. He was able to negotiate, without an interpreter, with the delegations arriving from the Slavic countries. He took energetic steps immediately after his accession to the throne to strengthen the central authority. He appointed members of the lesser nobility to important positions of state administration, in some cases even members of the lower social class, as well. With the help of astute advisors and a compliant administration, he reorganized the state's finances and its administration, strengthened the tax laws, thereby establishing a sound economic base as pre-condition for both external and home policy. He disbanded the private armies of the nobles, organized a standing army of his own instead - the famous *Black Army* (named after the color of their armor, *ed.*) - and commenced an attack against the Turks. In 1464, he occupied Jajce in Bosnia, then Szabács in 1476. Realizing that Hungary - alone - was too weak to stop the Turkish advances, King Matthias tried to unite the people and nations of the Danubian basin in an alliance, forming a strong empire. To gain time, he concluded a cease-fire with the Sultan, which resulted in a period of truce from Turkish attacks. He made several attempts, both diplomatic and military, to bring about an alliance with Bohemia and Poland, but his efforts led to few results with either the Jagellonian kings or the Austrian Emperor, Frederick III. While he was proclaimed King of Moravia and Silesia in 1478, and occupied, and later transferred his court to, Vienna in 1485, he ultimately failed to prepare the country for a prolonged conflict with the Turks.

On the other hand, he became celebrated all over Europe both as a ruler and as a patron of the arts. With his second wife, Beatrice, the daughter of the king of Naples, he welcomed in his court Renaissance painters, architects, book illustrators, musicians and other artists. Matthias adorned the palace in Buda with renaissance-style gates, windows, sculptures, fountains and gardens. With his collection of illuminated texts, he established the famous Corvina library and opened his own majolica workshop in the castle, creating a beautiful and ornate palace in Buda which rulers and other dignitaries, from all over, were delighted to visit. The name of Matthias Corvinus was indelibly etched into the people's memory: he was the 'Good and Just' King Matthias, the embodiment of the protector of the poor, who frequently traveled the country, disguised as a common wanderer or hunter. Having gathered first hand experience and information, he would sit in impartial judgement, rewarding and punishing according to merit or crime.

Following the death of King Matthias, the nobles again gained strength and the misery of the common people increased. Because of the poverty, not only of the landless peasants but also of the merchants and tradesmen, a great Peasant Rebellion broke out in 1514, led by György Dózsa. Dózsa planned to lead his peasant followers to Transylvania, to conclude an alliance there with the dissatisfied (Székely) people and, as a result of their joint efforts, to achieve 'people's power' in Hungary. The nobility was terrified at the sight of the enormous, tattered army and quickly organized a counter-attack led by János Szapolyai, who at the time was also a claimant to the throne. Szapolyai defeated the rebels near Temesvár, had Dózsa put to death on a fiery throne and subjected the other leaders of the rebellion to torture and cruel death. The peasantry also received their punishment: they were divested of their rights to move and to own property. Furthermore, they were permanently attached to their lord's lands, a condition that lasted for several hundred years.

Moreover, the Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, occupied Nándorfehérvár in 1521, and in 1526 began an attack against Hungary. King Louis II, who was unable to prepare the country against the Turkish threat during his ten-year rule, met the superior Turkish army that outnumbered the Hungarians four to one. The battle took place at Mohács, on August 29, 1526; defeat was inevitable. Half of the Hungarian army fell in the battle, the cream of the nobility, along with the king who, when he tried to flee, drowned under the weight of his armor in a small stream.

The defeat at Mohács meant the same for Hungary as at Kosovo Polje for medieval Serbia, or very nearly so. The Turks occupied a significant portion of the country, dividing her into three



parts. In the eastern parts Szapolyai, the Vojvode (Vajda) of Transylvania proclaimed himself king as the candidate of the nobility, in the West a smaller group of the barons supported a counter-claimant king in the person of Ferdinand Habsburg. The center of the country, roughly the triangle of Pécs - Esztergom - Szeged, including Buda that was captured in 1541, formed the Turkish wedge.

The next 150 years saw several attempts to unite the two parts of Hungary, East and West, and organize a joint attack against the Turks. However, the influence of the Habsburgs had become dominant in the western parts of the country and since this area was considered by Austria to be a buffer zone, they were not greatly interested in resuming fighting against the Turks. The focus of political life shifted to the eastern parts of the country, to Transylvania. István Báthory, Prince of Transylvania - later to become king of Poland - tried to maintain the independence of Transylvania both against the Turks and against the increasingly frequent Austrian incursions. His efforts brought success, however, his successor, Sigismund Báthory was forced to yield power to the Habsburg dynasty.

In 1604, István Bocskai, with the help of his foot soldier (hayduk) army, liberated Transylvania and imperial Hungary. Moreover, he even received an offer from the Sultan to be crowned King of Hungary - under the Sultan's protectorate, of course. Bocskai, however, refused and was content with the title of Prince of Transylvania. His successor, Prince Gábor Bethlen continued the fight against the Austrians, standing alone in all of Europe. Under his leadership, Transylvania became a small but flourishing state, almost independent of both the Turks and the Habsburgs. The golden age of Transylvania lasted up to 1657, when György Rákóczi II began a campaign for the Polish crown, without the formal permission of the Sultan. For his actions, he incurred the wrath of the Sultan, who, in revenge, sent Mongolian armies against him. The armies defeated the army of György Rákóczi II and captured him. They occupied and destroyed Transylvania - the last bastion of Hungarian independence fell.

### **Settlement of the Serbs in Hungary**

#### **Life in the Occupied Territories During the Turkish Occupation**

Following the battle at Kosovo Polje, attempts were made to stem the Turks advances; the most important of these was the above-mentioned victory of János Hunyadi over the Turks at

Nándorfehérvár in 1456. However, after the death of Durad Brankovic, the last ruler of the medieval Serbian state, in 1459, the Turks occupied the castle of Szendrő, together with the remaining Serbian territories, and so the Serbian state practically ceased to exist.

The general situation in Europe, in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was not very promising with regards to the future of the Balkans. The Vatican and the Byzantine Empire were busy with clarifying problems of religion. The interests of the Byzantine Empire and the Venetian Republic clashed over the territories of the Levant; Hungary and Venice were fighting over Dalmatia, and at the same time the appearance of the Hussite movement significantly sapped the strength of the Catholic Church, as well. All in all, there was not much of an opportunity to establish an alliance against the Turks.

A long, complex process began in the occupied territories. The Turks introduced their own system of administration and property rights. Lands were transferred to the ownership of the state, while the disposition and administration of property were subjected to the jurisdiction of the state and the Church. Individuals could possess land only as a reward for services rendered. The small and mid-sized holdings thusly created became the basis for what were called "*Sipahi* estates". The *sipahis* were not the owners of these estates but they reserved for themselves two other source of enrichment: booty and war tax. The territories of the Ottoman Empire were constantly increasing, leading to a further loosening of control by Constantinople over local governors. As a result, the parts farthest from the *Porte* (the Sultan's throne, *ed.*) became uncontrollable areas of boundless greed and lawlessness. A part of the Serbian nobility - notably in Bosnia - embraced the Moslem religion, thereby becoming part of the system of oppressing the poorer classes. Although the Serbian Church retained its independence and championed Serbian unity for centuries, its influence was limited to spiritual support of its people in the face of all these incredible burdens.

There were enormous burdens imposed by the state and church - some lawful, some not. The deepest impact made on the Serbian psyche was the so-called *blood tax* or *child tax*. This meant effectively that, in early childhood, boys were separated from their parents and taken to Turkey where they were brought up as Moslems and trained, with strict discipline, to become Janissaries - the cruelest fighters of the Turkish army. It became increasingly harder for the people to bear the constantly mounting burdens; therefore, collecting the different taxes became more difficult. The *Porte* tried to solve this by leasing out the right of tax collecting. The local tyrants paid a certain amount of money, in advance, to the treasury in Constantinople and, in return, they

obtained the right to collect the local taxes. Naturally, they enforced their rights by all means, even resorting to violence, amassing enormous wealth in a short period of time. Considering the fact that the extortion by the *sipahis* could not last indefinitely, it seemed almost inevitable that they would prove to be very imaginative in exploiting the population.

The people subjected to a total military-feudal anarchy protected themselves as best as they could. In the Dinari mountains, at the border of the Ottoman Empire, appeared the Uskoks who usually fled into the territories of Venice and organized into troops. Then, in alliance either with the Venetian Republic or with Austria, they raided the Turkish territories, causing enormous damages to the Turks both in human lives and material goods. Another form of opposition developed on the continental parts of the Balkan Peninsula around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century called the *hayduk* movement. Men left their homes, went into the mountains and organized into various sized, armed groups. These groups raided the Turkish *pashas*, *beys* and their tax-collectors, robbed them of their money and arms, then returned to the mountains and laid low with their loot.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the first signs of the decline of the Ottoman Empire could be seen. The central administration grew weaker, the fate of the country came under the influence of a clerical, administrative class, and the power of the provincial governors, the *beys* and *pashas*, increased. At the same time, the *sipahi* property system weakened. Consequently, it became obvious that the military power of the Empire was also in decline. Almost the whole of the 17<sup>th</sup> century passed in a series of internal and external wars and fights. At the end of the century, Austria began a concentrated attack against the Turks and gained the alliance of the Serbs. Carnojevic II, the Patriarch of Ipek, won over by the Austrians, called upon his people to fight. In the meantime, France started an attack against the Habsburg Empire, therefore, Austria was forced to yield the Balkans. As a consequence, the Serbs - exposed to the danger of a Turkish revenge - decided to leave their homes and, led by their Patriarch, move into Hungarian territory.

### **Privileges of the Serbs in Hungary**

Immediately prior to the arrival of the Serbs in Hungary, namely at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the balance of power changed in Europe. The Turks started a comprehensive attack against Vienna in 1683; however, they failed to conquer the Austrian capital. Realizing the decline of Turkish

fortunes, the European nations established the Holy Alliance and initiated a significant counter-attack. Three years later, in 1686, the combined troops of the Holy Alliance liberated Buda, two years later Nándorfehérvár. Following the decisive victory at Zenta in 1697, by Eugene of Savoy, they concluded the Treaty of Karlóca and practically the whole territory of Hungary was liberated from Turkish oppression. Encouraged by these military accomplishments, the Emperor of Austria, also holding the title of King of Hungary, Leopold I decided to abolish the independence of Hungary and incorporate the country as part of the permanent Austrian provinces. The Hungarian Parliament was forced to make a concession: in 1687, they renounced the right of electing the king and deleted the stipulation from the Golden Bull entitling the nobility to the right of opposition. Thus, Hungary acknowledged the 'petitio hereditatis' (hereditary right to rule, *ed.*) of the House of Habsburg to the Hungarian crown and divested herself of all means of resisting any unlawful actions of the emperor-kings.

The country became impoverished as towns and villages were scorched and destroyed; the population sank into poverty and declined in number. In order to speed up consolidation, the imperial court of Vienna settled Germans, in large numbers, on the Plains and the Transdanubian part of Hungary, and invited Serbs to settle in the country.

The Serbs who settled in Hungary during the time of Carnojevic were not the first ones in this area. Some Serbian tribes had lived here, even at the time of the original settlement of the Hungarians, namely at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. However, they were soon assimilated. The Serbs who moved to Hungary during the rule of the kings of the house of Árpád were not the offsprings of these old Serbian tribes but immigrants who left their fatherland in the Balkans for various reasons. The kings of the Árpád dynasty established not only military and political but friendly, even family, relationships between the Serbs and the Hungarians. Under the rule of the kings Sigismund and Matthias, masses of Serbs immigrated to Hungary. As far as their social influence and their numerical proportion are concerned, they played a significant role in the life of Hungary, mostly in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of the attacks against the Turks. In the spirit of collaboration against the Turks, the Serbian ruler became the vassal of the Hungarian king and Nándorfehérvár, and the castles of the Macsó banate, were placed under the protection of the Hungarian armies.

At the same time, the Hungarian rulers made significant donations to the Serbian rulers, for example, Stevan Lazarevic and his successor Durad Brankovic, were given a great palace in the Castle of Buda and considerable properties in the region of Tokaj and Debrecen.

The Hungarian kings granted free exercise of religion and tax privileges to the settlers. Before the battle of Mohács, the Serbs had not enjoyed any collective privilege and territorial local government.

Most of the Serbs were farmers, some were artisans, as well. They played an especially important role in the navigation on the Danube and in trade. In the famous Black Army of King Matthias, there were approximately five thousand Serbs in the light cavalry - the hussars. Matthias also maintained a fleet on the Danube of 330 ships and 10,000 men, among them a great number of Serbs. They settled mostly in the southern parts of Hungary, in Sirmia (Szerémség), in the neighborhood of Csongrád and along the Danube. Later on they also settled in the central and northern parts of the country, e.g.- Ráckeve, Buda, Pest, Szentendre, and even in the region of Győr and Komárom. It is an oddity but they even reached Transylvania and it is of interest to note that there were Catholics, and later Calvinists, as well, among the Transylvanian Serbs.

It is not known precisely how many Serbs settled in Hungary during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to some sources, the number of Serbs arriving under the leadership of Arsenije Carnojevica was 30,000, according to other sources they numbered between 50,000 and 70,000. As far as their journey was concerned, it was recorded that they had started in the spring of 1690, stayed in Belgrade for a short while, then crossed the rivers Sava, Drava and the Danube. A smaller number came by ship, while the majority by travelled by wagon, horseback and on foot, driving in front of them their domestic animals that they managed to save from the Turks. A number of them settled along the way: in Bácska, Bánát (Bánság), and Baranya and between the Danube and the Tisza. Some reached Buda and from there: Szentendre, Esztergom, Székesfehérvár, Eger, Gyöngyös and other towns.

According to a registry from 1693, six thousand Serbs made a new home for themselves in Buda. They settled on the slopes of the Tabán (a hilly section of the city, *ed.*) where, over time, a bona fide Serb city emerged, named Rácváros (Serb city). In Pest they usually lived between the medieval town walls, in the streets between the Kecskemét and Nándorfehérvár gates, where they built a church of their own.

Arsenije Carnojevica III selected Szentendre as both his residence and headquarters. The town attracted a large group of Serbs, numbering about 10,000, becoming the spiritual and religious center of the settlers. The relics of Prince Lazar were brought and kept here for a period of time. The friars of the Serbian monastery in Szentendre organized a school and a famous book copying and illustrating workshop. As well, the International Capital School, one of the best Serbian schools, was established here in 1796. Between 1812 and 1816, the first Serbian teachers' training college was operating here. Several famous artists were born in Szentendre, e.g.- Gavriilo Stefanovic Venclovic writer, poet, illuminator, churchman and preacher, Avakum Avakumovic, the inventor of the musical instrument called avacumicum, Jakov Ignatovic, one of the most prolific Serbian writers, Pavle Sofric, the first chronicler of Szentendre, and many others.

The inhabitants of Szentendre adapted themselves well to their new circumstances and grew extremely rich within a short period of time. This enabled them to build the beautiful baroque city of Szentendre, erecting seven baroque churches, harmonizing in style and richly ornamented.

In April 1690, when King Leopold I invited the Serbs to join forces against the Turks, he promised them exemption from all taxes. "When we rid ourselves of the Turkish yoke, everything will be restored to the old form and order, in accordance with your wishes and to your satisfaction. The freedom of religion will be granted again to everybody, together with favors and freedom from land taxes. Everyone will get his rights and we will show our mercy, sympathy and paternal protection towards everyone."

The king reconfirmed his promise during his negotiations with Archbishop Isaije Dakovic, in August of the same year, as well as in his Document of Protection, issued on December 11, 1690. He endorsed the same privileges issued on August 20, 1691. Archbishop Dakovic demanded the right to the free exercise of the Pravoslavian religion for the Serbs, and the free election of the Patriarch. As Dakovic said, "A Patriarch who appoints metropolitans, bishops, pontiffs and priests in accordance with the old Serbian traditions". The demands of the Archbishop included, among others: that pontiffs and priests should be exempted from paying taxes and only their own ecclesiastical courts could sit in judgment of them. As well, the full power of the Patriarch, with jurisdiction over the Serbs was to cover both sides of the Danube and Sava rivers, as it used to be during the Turkish rule.

Leopold I, in the first document about these privileges, acknowledged the authority of the Patriarch but only on the left bank of the rivers Sava and Danube, namely in the territory of Sirmia, Slavonia, Baranya, Croatia and Hungary, significantly decreasing the jurisdiction of the bishopric in Ipek. Consequently, its cohesion also weakened. As a result of the persistent demands of Dakovic, the Emperor at last acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Patriarch over the whole Serbian people, as it used to be during the Turkish era. Thus, the Serbian Church still remained the guardian and protector of national unity, as a surrogate and proxy for the medieval Serbian statehood.

These privileges allowed the Serbs the free exercise of their religion, in accordance with the Orthodox religious ceremonies and the use of the old Julian calendar. The right of appointing the archbishops was also left to them. The archbishops were given unrestricted rights to dispose of the Greek Orthodox churches, as well as consecrate churches, cloisters, and appoint metropolitans, archbishops and priests. They had the right to build churches and schools and enjoyed protection against all kinds of external forces. No one but the king had the right to have them apprehended, or to arrest them, and only the special ecclesiastical courts could sit in judgment over them. Serbs were exempt from the payment of tithes to the Catholic Church, from forced labor, taxes including the lodging tax (meaning an obligation to provide billets and food for military units in case of wars). Moreover, the children of the poor and orphans did not pay any school fees in several localities.

With these privileges, Leopold I approved, from March 4, 1695 onwards, the spiritual organization of the Serbian Church, confirmed the archbishops and guaranteed the earlier privileges, rights and favors, as well.

These privileges granted to the Serbs only an ecclesiastical autonomy based on the principle of personal autonomy: they did not ask for, nor did they receive, any territorial autonomy. It was quite obvious to them that the promises of Leopold I, in connection with the election of vojvodes and with the establishment of the Serbian vojvodship, applied only to those Serbian areas that would, at some point in the future, be liberated from Turkish rule. They had no illusions that they would be able to establish their own, autonomous vojvodship in Hungary, in a land that was totally alien to them. While they had asked for autonomy only on an ethnic basis, they were able to construct a complete system of Serbian autonomy in the whole area of Hungary, Croatia and

Slavonia. If they restricted their demands to a given territory, they would have deprived the Serbian masses living outside of this territory, from enjoying the benefits of these privileges.

Although these privileges concerned only the newly settled Serbs, their importance was universal because, in a certain sense, they represented the foundation of Serbian autonomy developed within the territory of Hungary. It was obvious that these privileges - seemingly ecclesiastic in nature - were valid practically for all Serbs who had settled here. And in spite of the fact that the Turkish sultan had abolished the bishopric in Ipek in 1766 - in effect, he ceased the functioning of the Serbian Church - this did not impact Serbian Church activities in Hungary. This Church, with a center in Karlóca - had an acknowledged autonomic bishopric - directed the activities of the Serbian ones within the territory of historical Hungary.

It was one of the strong characteristics of the Serbian Orthodox Church that it became independent very early from the central (i.e., foreign) direction. It always identified itself with the aspirations of the Serbian nation and since it had dominated not only Serbian ecclesiastical life but also everyday life of the Serbian people, it became a solid anchor for the whole nation. Purely the fact that the ruler's deed defined and regulated the autonomy of the Serbian Church acting in Hungary created the basic conditions for every Serbian anywhere within the territory of Hungary to have the right to self-government. From the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the Serbs lived along the border in parts of Slavonia, Sirmia, Bácska and later Bánát. Considering the fact that the whole military frontier region was exempted from the jurisdiction of Hungarian legislation, this kind of isolation gave the an impression of self-government. The Serbs enjoyed such apparent territorial self-government during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the region of Kikinda, along the Tisza and Sajka, as well as Ujvidék, Zombor and Szabadka.

The economic power of the Serbs at this time was represented - beside agriculture - mainly by the merchants, artisans and grape-growers. The merchants had significant privileges and commercial advantages even at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Joining in favored trade groups, these merchants exported hides, wool and spices from the southern regions, and fine textile and other industrial products from Austria and Bohemia. Some specialized in animal trade - they drove their livestock to Venice and Vienna - while others earned their living from the wine- and brandy-trade.



There were also numerous Serbs among the artisans: tailors, quiltmakers, cobblers, tanners, furriers, shoemakers, soap makers, smiths, coopers, hat makers, butchers and bakers. All these trades had strong guild organizations and they enjoyed significant imperial privileges.

Viniculture (grape growing, wine making, *ed.*) was the main occupation of the population, mostly in the areas of Buda and Szentendre. Some of the wines from these territories - like *szkadarka*, *szlankamenka*, and the sweet-smelling *muscat* - became well known in distant parts under the name of the "Wines of Buda".

The privileges granted by Leopold I considerably facilitated the Serbs in the process of adaptation to their new conditions and in the organization of their lives in Hungary. At the same time, these privileges generated some tension between the Serbian and the Hungarian populations. This topic will be discussed later in a separate chapter.

The introduction and the historical role of the Serbian privileges enjoyed in Hungary could be summarized briefly as follows: the social and political processes taking place at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to the ethnic separation of the Serbian people into two parts. One part lived under the Turkish yoke, without its own statehood, civil society, intellectual class, isolated, in poverty, and suffering from the most serious tribulations in their history. The other part, which left their fatherland, tried to live in a foreign land, to strike roots in Hungary - and, although they had to fight daily for their national survival, they could enjoy considerable privileges and managed to survive. This separation into two parts weakened the social, cultural and moral strength of the Serbs. At the same time, it shifted the focus of political, ecclesiastical and cultural life of this nation to the North, to the territory of Hungary. The economic and cultural conditions prevailing here were more favorable and enabled the Serbs to become acquainted with progressive European ideas. This way - partly influenced by these ideas and partly under the pressure of feeling threatened - the epoch of the Serbian national awakening began.

## **National Awakening of the Serbs**

### **Process of Becoming a Nation**

Up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the nation as a concept, in the present-day meaning of this word, did not at all exist in Europe. Feudal society was characterized by vertical strata, subordination and superordination (divine right to rule, *ed.*), personal dependence, and furthermore, the mostly unregulated legal situation, with individual and collective privileges and territorial divisions. With the appearance of capitalism, a certain kind of legal, political and cultural integration took place; the middle class started to emerge, to strengthen. As a result of this process, new, modern nations were created. This process took several centuries and ended some time between 1789 and 1848.

From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nation, as a new political entity, replaced and pushed into the background the previous forms of polity. Owing to the strengthening of the middle class and the nation - new concepts came into being, such as national market, national economy, national state.

Sociologists divide into two parts, according to their social structures, the people living east of the line of the rivers Laithe (Lajta) and Elbe. One group is called the complete societies, which had their classes of aristocrats, nobles, artisans, intellectuals, peasants and serfs, such as the Russian, German, Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Croatian societies. The other group, the incomplete societies, did not have their own class of aristocrats and nobles; the majority of the population consisted of the peasantry and a very thin, weak segment of civil intellectuals. This category consists of the Slovaks, Ruthenes, Serbs, Slovenes, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Romanians and others.

While in the communities having a developed middle class, the basis of the national identity was determined by political principles; in the middle, eastern and southeastern parts of Europe, where the bourgeoisie was weaker; this kind of nationalistic thinking drew inspiration mostly from history. The glorious history, the glorious past served as a kind of emotional substitute and tried to make up for the lack of national sovereignty, unity or economic development. In certain situations it served well as a political argument, too.

A part of these so-called incomplete societies either never achieved their own statehood (Ruthenes and Slovaks) or the concept of the independent statehood had already been forgotten and remained only in the dogmas of the Church (like the Romanians, Bulgarians and Serbs). The main ideologists of their fledgling nations magnified their historical past by the creation of magnificent myths or a fictitious new history. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, these romantic, national histories and myths played a very important part in the closing stages of becoming a nation.

The first signs of national awakening among the Serbs appeared at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and were manifested in demands of independent Serbian schools and press. Education up to this time had been in the hands of the Church, generally between the walls of medieval cloisters of royal and noble foundations. The curriculum was totally interspersed with nostalgic recalling of the past and was aimed primarily at maintaining the traditions of the Orthodox Church. The language of education first was *Ruskoslovenski*, later the *Slavenoszrpszki*, then finally the Serbian vernacular. At first the secular language was considered undeveloped and unsuitable to express abstract concepts, more complex emotions and the content of the ecclesiastical celebrations; they created a language. This was the *Ruskoslovenski* (an ecclesiastical Slavic language of Russian construction), then, parallel to this, another artificial language, the *Slavenoszrpszki* (ecclesiastical Slavic language with Serbian influence) which became the standard literary language of the Serbs and remained as such until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Such artificial languages survive only in communities where the educational system is operated more or less hermetically, does not embrace the wide range of the population, and where literature is the privilege of only a few. Up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this was characteristic of Serbian society. Then an intensive process of development of bourgeois mentality began among the Serbs living in the territory of Hungary. The new class paid much more attention to education. Slowly, almost unperceived, literature parted from the Church and the priesthood, consequently the Serbian Orthodox Church lost more of its previous influence. The Russian Church and the Russian culture were no longer ideals or models in the public consciousness of the Serbs. The importance of the Russian-Slavic language also diminished and the use of the vernacular became more common. The first champion for the use of the secular language was Dositej Obradovic, an outstanding reformer and intellectual of Serb culture. He wanted to persuade the writers to write in "popular" Serbian and he professed that this was the

only way to draw the wide range of the population into education and culture. Dositej was the first to profess Serb unity regardless of regional and territorial status.

### **Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic**

The ideas of Dositej Obradovic were the logical continuations of the vernacular-linguistic movements that had developed in neighboring Austria and Hungary during the rule of Emperor Joseph II. They were primarily based on the philological, philosophical activity of Schlötzer, Herder and Dobrovsky. With the appearance of the Slovenian Jerney Kopitar, the Serbian Vuk Karadzic, the Slovak Pavel Jozef Safarik, the Czechs Václav Hanka and Frantisek Palacky, this movement had become more national in character and was aimed at the awakening of Slavic national self-awareness with the revival of the glorious Serbian past.

What was begun by Dositej Obradovic with the Serbs, was continued by Vuk Karadzic when he published the first Serbian dictionary and grammar of the colloquial language. This was continued when the first book was printed utilizing Karadzic's Cyrillic script. Karadzic's new way of writing was based on the simplified version of the old Cyrillic alphabet and its main feature was that every sound was marked with only one (and always the same) sign, and furthermore, each letter had the same acoustic value. (The Serbs use this way of writing even today, in the spirit of its founder: "Write as you speak and read as it is written".)

With this action - by enhancing the use of the native language instead of a borrowed one, and further, by simplifying the orthography and bringing it closer to Serbian mentality - Karadzic immediately became one of the dominant figures of Serbian national awakening. His esteem and fame were further enhanced when he published a collection of Serbian folk songs in 1823, presenting a real treasure trove. It turned out that the aesthetic value of these works written in the colloquial language greatly exceeded all the works written by Serbian writers in this entire region.

The folk songs of Karadzic were favorably received all over Europe. In the moral-aesthetic scale of values of Romanticism flourishing at that time, a particular place was given to the innocent peasant, to the ethnic values treasured as heritage for centuries, to the authentic products of folk art. Therefore, the Serbian folk songs were considered to be the most attractive discovery of that epoch in this field. Great poets, like Goethe, Pushkin, Merimée, Mickiewicz by translating and

performing them made them popular, while the great folk-tale writer, Jacob Grimm mentioned them in several of his works.

Ferenc Kazinczy, the Hungarian poet influenced by Goethe, translated the song titled 'The Wife of Azzan Aga' into Hungarian and with it he virtually started a new trend in Hungarian literature that later came to be known as 'serbus manier' - the serbian manner.

### **The Establishment of a System of Educational Institutions**

As a natural consequence and inseparable part of the national awakening, Serbian culture soon became institutionalized. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pest became the primary cultural center for the Serbs. Earlier, all books and newspapers, that were of interest to the Serbs living in Austria and Hungary, were published in Vienna. Owing to the fact that the conditions for publishing had become more difficult due to the tightening of censorship, the Cyrillic press was moved to Buda and with it, simultaneously, the right of publishing Serbian books, also. Nearly 300 books were printed in Serbian in this press up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1835, published by Teodor Pavlovic, the *Serbski narodni list* (Serbian People's Paper), made its first appearance, followed three years later by the *Serbske narodne novine* (Serb People's News). While the former was a publication of literary character and reported on the cultural life of Serbs living in Hungary, the latter - according to its founder's intentions - was issued specifically as a political journal. At first, it published mainly articles from the papers of Vienna and Pozsony (today Bratislava), while later it printed articles with original political content.

Soon after these publications, a new paper appeared, published by Antonije Arnot and Dominik Perlaski, titled *Srbske novine* (Serbian Paper), a magazine dealing with the arts, literature and fashion and recruited writers like Sima Milutinovic Srajlija, Jovan Pacic, Milovan Vidakovic, Adam Dragosavljevic and others. The political paper of Svetozar Miletic, the *Zastava* (Flag), was published in Pest at this time.

In addition to daily or weekly papers, some annual reviews - almanacs - were also published by the Serbs living in Hungary: the *Zorica*, considered to be the forerunner of the Serbian national romance, or the *Danica*, the entertainment paper by Vuk Karadzic, or the *Talija*, the first Serbian

theatrical yearbook, and the *Periodica*, yearbook for youth - were the forerunners of the emerging national romantic spirit in the field of literature. The first book in Serbian language was published in Pest in 1770, titled *Kniga istorografija o narode slovenskom* (Book about the history of the Slavic people).

At this time, Buda and Pest were extremely attractive towns for Serbs. The merchants and tradesmen regularly took part in the fairs in Pest but everybody came here who had to settle any official state, ecclesiastical or cultural matters. Furthermore, the university was also functioning here and the sons of some rich Serbian families attended in great numbers.

At the time Buda and Pest were separate towns, located on the two banks of the Danube. In both towns, there were Serbian colonies with a large population, as recorded in a book by Stojan Vujicic, titled *Serbs in Buda and Pest*. Merchants, tradesmen, clerks, the kaleidoscopic social layers of Serb citizens, nobles and patricians constituted a strong and influential community, well organized in a religious, economic and national sense, too, which showed a considerable unity and, at the same time, an internal interdependence, as well.

One of the favorite meeting place of the Serbs living in Hungary was the inn named 'To the Golden Stag', which stood on the site of the current Golden Stag restaurant in Budapest. The house of Mihály Vitkovic, Serbian Hungarian writer, was considered to be a real literary salon where, beside the Serbian writers and poets, a number of noted Hungarians also paid visits from time to time, the likes of Ferenc Kazinczy, Daniel Berzsenyi, Ferenc Kölcsey, Károly Kisfaludy and Mihály Vörösmarty.

The Serbs exercised their religious festivities on the Pest side, in the Serbian church on the corner of Szerb Street and the current Veres Pálné Street. The construction of this church was begun at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was finished at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On the Buda side, they usually worshipped in the church in the Tabán, built between 1742 and 1751 and which was - unfortunately - destroyed in 1949.

The *Matica srpska* was the most respected cultural institution of the Serbs living in Hungary. It was founded in 1826, in Pest, by the writer Jovan Hadzic with the help of some wealthy Serbian merchants. The purposes and aims of this literary and scientific society were set out in their founding charter in the following way: "Our aim is love and faith of the community and its

values, instilling the love of literature in people, also the enlightenment of the Serbian nation, as well as the publishing and spreading of the Serbian manuscripts from now on, increasingly, forever and ever."

The most significant publication in support of these ideas was the *Serbska letopis*, the first booklet of which was published in Buda in 1824 by Georgije Magarasevic, a historian and man of letters. Magarasevic's aim was to publish in "his" *Letopis* all that concerned – in a literary sense – the Slavs and especially us, the Serbs. The policy of the periodical was not to cause offense and to be as useful as possible for everyone. The *Serbska letopis*, later published under the name of *Serbski letopis*, is today considered to be the oldest periodical in Europe; it has been published without a break since 1856, from the new headquarters of the *Matica srpska*, in Ujvidék (Novi Sad).

The *Matica*, beside its own journal, the *Letopis*, also published other periodicals. It also dealt in books and organized literary competitions. A significant change took place in its image in 1838 when Sava Tekelija (Száva Tököly) was elected as its president. Tököly's ambition was to develop the *Matica* into a solid cultural center, attracting the crème of the Serbian intelligentsia. He succeeded in providing legal and material resources for this project.

In order to facilitate the university studies of the Serbian youth in Pest, Tököly established the so-called Tökölyanum, a college for talented and poor provincial children. The college was operated within the framework of the *Matica srpska*. During the 114 years of its existence, more than 400 young Serbs lived and studied in the Tökölyanum, including not only students of the liberal arts and the law but also those who attended the technology, medical and fine arts faculties of the university of Pest.

In addition, the Serbs had two other important institutions in Buda and Pest. One was established in 1870 and was named *Zaduzbina Nauma i Jelene Bozda*, that is, the Foundation of Jelena and Naum Bozda. The Bozdas had no children and bequeathed their estate to promote public education for Serbs and for ecclesiastical and social purposes. This foundation helped young entrepreneurs, artisans, the ostensible 'machinists' - technicians - to start their careers, young Serb medical students to complete their studies and to start their medical practices, as well as decent Serbian girls to get married and start 'real' Serb Orthodox families.

The other institution was the Serbian Orthodox women's association, named after Saint Angelina, that is, *the Srpska pravoslavna prosvetna zenska zadruga sv. Majke Angeline*. Although it was established in 1898, it could only start to operate in 1904, when Lazar Dunerski a landowner donated 100,000 crowns for the foundation of a young ladies' boarding school. The target of this foundation and association was to facilitate education for girls: it wanted to enable Serb girls to attend, and be able to finish, secondary, college and vocational schools.

Parallel with the developments in Pest, a significant Serbian educational center was also established in Ujvidék. With a population of about 20,000 people, a flourishing center of merchants and tradesmen, a busy port, all were conducive to the development of Serbian cultural life along that of the Hungarians and the Germans. Cultural life began to blossom with the founding of a Serbian grammar school, the Serbian National Theater, and the blossoming literary activity, which became especially marked after the *Matica srpska* transferred its headquarters to Novi Sad. The town was now increasingly referred to as the Serbian Athens.

The third important center for Serbs living in Hungary was Karlóca, with its significant ecclesiastical traditions. In 1791-92, the first important institution of Serbian culture, the secondary grammar school, was opened here. The next institution, in sequence, was the teachers' training college in Szentendre, opened in 1812, followed by the secondary grammar school in Ujvidék, in 1816. Several presses, publishing offices, book stores, reading rooms, cultural associations, amateur groups started to operate one after the other in Hungary, and more and more outstanding Serbian intellectuals took part in the work effort embracing generations. The aim was to raise the cultural level of the Serbian nation.

By way of comparison, let us mention here that, in the part of the original Serbian homeland, namely in the region located south of the line of the Danube and the Sava rivers, the establishment and growth of the Serbian cultural institutions took place at a much slower pace. The first secondary grammar school was opened in Kragujevac in 1835, the second one in Belgrade in 1838. The first college, the so-called lyceum (secondary school for girls) was established, also in Belgrade, for the school year 1838-39. The first permanent Serbian theatre, under the name of *Knjazesko-srbski teatar*, was opened by Joakim Vujic in 1834. The first press in Serbia started to operate in 1831 in Belgrade.



## **Demands for Territorial Autonomy**

The Serbs had a somewhat broader middle class than that of the Croats, Romanians, Slovaks, and the Serbian Orthodox Church - with its marked nationalistic character - played an important role in the development of national sentiments. In addition to the civic element and the clergy, there was a small intellectual segment of the Serbs, while in the region of the military border the influence of a small caste of military officers could also be felt. (This military border region, specifically a part of it, Slavonian Krajina, situated between the Sava and the Drava Rivers, and Croatian Krajina, from the Drava to the Adriatic Sea, were established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for defense against the Turks. Following the Peace of Karlóca, the Krajinas were extended with the military border region along the Sava and Danube rivers, as well as with the military border region along the Tisza and the Maros rivers. These areas, as already mentioned, were outside the jurisdiction of the Hungarian civil administration, governed directly by the administration of the Austrian Imperial Court war council.)

At an ecclesiastical meeting in 1790, the priests and nobles pressed for the feudal privileges and favored a compromise with the Hungarians, while the class of merchants-intellectuals-military officers demanded modern, collective national rights. In the name of the so-called united Serbian townspeople and Krajinian population, the meeting now came forward with a demand for territorial autonomy instead of the existing ecclesiastical autonomy. It is interesting to note that the proposed territorial autonomy included the Banate in Temes, but did not discredit the fact that Bácska, Slavonia and the Sirmia belonged to Hungary and Croatia, respectively.

Simultaneously, somewhere on the other side of the border, in Belgrade, the idea of Greater Serbia emerged; whose aim was the unification of Slavs led by the Serbs. Without doubt, this idea was based on some romantic and nationalistic demands, which, in unison with the Great Illyrian concept dreamed up by Ljudevit Gaj and his Croatian supporters, ensured that during the Revolution of 1848 Serbs and Hungarians were again on opposite sides from each other.

## **The Revolution of 1848**

The Serbs - primarily the university students studying in Pest, Buda and Pozsony - reacted with great enthusiasm and sympathy to the news concerning the outbreak of the bourgeois revolution

in Pest. Other Serb intellectuals came to the conclusion that here was the golden opportunity to implement their own nationalistic agenda, which, naturally, did not coincide in every detail with those of the Hungarians. At meetings first held in Pest, then later in Ujvidék, they formulated their demands and soon submitted them to the Diet holding its session in Pozsony at that time. In their declaration, they emphasized that they acknowledged the Hungarian nation and the priority of the Hungarian language. Nevertheless, they demanded legal approval of the use of the Serbian language in ecclesiastical administration and public matters, the independence and equality of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as the rights of the Serbs to make their own decisions in the matters of schooling, foundations and other national institutions. They demanded, moreover, the return of ecclesiastical lands, the employment of Serbs in the lower and appeal courts, and that their conventions would not have to depend on the approval of higher authorities; they also requested addressing the problems of the military border region, etc.

The Hungarian Diet listened to their demands and even Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the revolution, recommended that the government negotiate with the Serbs about their demands and to make the necessary arrangements to avoid any possible illegalities. While considering the issues demanding legal resolution, the government should submit its propositions to the Diet.

Kossuth personally received the members of the Serb delegation. According to some historians, the outcome of this meeting decided that the Serbs would take a position opposite to the Hungarians in the revolution of 1848. The meeting apparently went as follows: Dorde Statimirovic, the leader of the Serbian delegation, expressed his wish - in addition to the above demands - that the Diet acknowledge the Serbs as a nation. In his reply, Kossuth stated that he would not acknowledge any other nation but the Hungarians in the territory of Hungary. Statimirovic, in his response, said that, in case their wishes were not fulfilled - to the letter - then they would resort to other means. Kossuth's reply was succinct and terse: Then, let the sword decide the matter.

It would be an error to over-estimate the importance of this - rather reckless - statement (one that Kossuth later refuted) and to believe that it would decide such a fateful historical decision. The real reasons were much more profound:

1. The prevailing Hungarian political decision-makers considered the Serbs in Hungary as (uninvited) guests and made efforts to diminish the privileges that Leopold I had granted to them.

To expect sympathy for the efforts of a potentially rival nation that had behaved disloyally towards the Hungarians several times was out of the question.

2. The efforts of the Serbs, to gain ecclesiastical and national independence, had by their very nature conflicted primarily with Hungarian national interests and encountered Hungarian resistance. This further enhanced the image of Hungarians, in Serb eyes, as their enemy.

3. Vienna and Belgrade had continuously stirred up conflicts - openly and by covert means - between Hungarians and Serbs living in Hungary. Vienna's mode was to hold the Hungarians and Serbs in check with promises and threats, while Belgrade's weapon was to keep the Pan-Slavism and Greater Serbian ideas alive and using them to drive a wedge between the brothers on the other side of the Sava-Danube border.

4. In the meantime, the Croatian-Hungarian conflict became more acute. On the other side, a Slavic (Croatian-Serbian) alliance seemed feasible, significantly increasing the possibility of attaining territorial autonomy and national independence.

Thus, the first attempt of the Serbs to support the revolution and attain their own national rights in this way should be considered rather as the momentary advantage of the pro-Hungarian wing. Their final decision, namely, to turn against the revolution and declare themselves on the Habsburg side should be considered as a logical result of the above circumstances.

Decisions accepted by the Serbs at the meeting in Karlóca in May 1848 already showed a total radicalization and clear opposition. They demanded the establishment of a Serbian vojvodship, under Austrian authority, in community with the Hungarian crown. It would include Sirmia (together with the military border regions), Baranya, Bácska, the district of Becse and the region of Sajkás, as well as Temesköz (with the military border region), and the Kikinda district. The vojvodship to be established had an obvious political aim: to enter into voluntary alliance with the Croatian Kingdom - as an equal. At this meeting, a separate resolution declared the election of Josif Rajacic as Patriarch and Stevan Supljikac as vojvode.

We note here that even Ferdinand, the Austrian Emperor, considered the decisions made at the meeting in Karlóca to be unlawful: he had no intention to acknowledge the Serbs as a nation, only as a community organized on a religious basis, totally dependent on the Hungarian government. However, this fact had no more influence on the events taking place soon after. The „Serbian people loyal to the Emperor", jointly with the Croatians, under the leadership of Josip Jelacic, went to war against the Hungarians. In spite of the fact that their one-and-a-half-year long war ended with total defeat - the Serbian forces had been able to hold only a part of the Titel plateau -

without doubt that these actions of the Serbs played a significant role in the defeat of the Hungarian revolution.

The role of the Serbs in the above events had to be seen in a negative light, not only from a strictly Hungarian point of view. The Serb historians tried to shift the responsibility to Kossuth and the shortsighted minority policies of the Hungarian nobility. They described the first stage of the revolution as an anti-feudal, popular movement and acknowledged its counter-revolutionary nature only from the moment when Austrian pressure significantly increased on them. Nevertheless, facts are facts: the Serbs were not able, or did not want, to realize the continuation of a Pan-European progressive movement in the Hungarian revolution. They allowed the prevailing great powers to use them for their (i.e., Austria's, *ed.*) own underhanded purposes.

It was ironic that the Serbs received the same reward for their support, as the Hungarians for punishment: namely, the cruel absolutism of Chancellor Alexander Bach. It was really a poor consolation that they survived through these ten years, on the territory of the long desired Serbian Vojvodship, attained at the price of such a bitter conflict.

As an epilogue of the opposition of the Serbs and Croatians to the revolution of 1848, let us mention that all Serb and Croatian politician who fought for their own national interest without becoming a mere puppet of the Habsburgs, either shortly retired from political life, or went over to the opposition. However, this time they became the opposition not of a liberal Hungarian government but of a presumptuous, arrogant, conservative, dynastic Austrian power. Rajacic retired from political life, Statimirovic became a sworn enemy of the House of Habsburg, Ljudevit Gaj was even imprisoned. Only the careerists, the loyal servants of the Habsburg dynasty, received high rewards. For example, Jelacic was given a generous amount of money and the title of a count - but no political appointment.

### **The Ecclesiastical and Educational Autonomy of the Serbs in Dualist Hungary**

The Serbian Vojvodship did not meet the Serbs' expectation, either from a territorial or from a political point of view. The total population of Vojvodina (Vajdaság), consisting of the five districts of Temesvár, Beeskerek, Lugos, Ujvidék, and Zombor, was about 1.5 million, in 1860, of

which the Serbs numbered about 300,000, making them a minority again. Their sole achievement was that their official language was not Hungarian -- but German.

The revolution of 1848 abolished serfdom, started to eliminate feudal society and projected the appearance of capitalism. The increased use of railways, both passenger and freight, diminished the position of the Serb merchants, while the slowdown in industrialization reduced the impetus that hitherto strengthened the Serb middle class. On December 27, 1860, the Austrian Emperor dissolved the Serbian Vojvodship. Bácska and Bánát were annexed by Hungary, while Sirmia was attached to Croatia. This, at the same time, meant the final defeat of the Serb reactionaries, which meant that their commitment to the Austrian cause lost all sense.

The liberal wing, led by Svetozar Miletic, came into prominence in Serbian public life, at this time. They urged an agreement between Serbs and Hungarians and opposed the Austrian absolutist efforts towards centralization of power.

In 1867, Austrians and Hungarians signed a 'Compromise', which led to the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Hungary was promoted to become a full partner in the Dual arrangement, while, for the other nationalities living in the territory of the Monarchy, the chance of being acknowledged as independent nations rapidly diminished. The Hungarian ruling circles tried to establish a national state, consequently the concept of the Hungarian political nation was born: Hungary was a uniform national state, her people were the "members of a homogeneous Hungarian political nation", whether their nationality or mother tongue be Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Serb, etc. This theory gained legitimacy in 1868, by the so-called Nationality Law. Although this law did not acknowledge a "state forming" status for the minorities, however, it was liberal to the extent that it granted equality of rights for the members of minorities, free use of their language in the organs of lower state administration, the courts and the elementary and secondary schools. Furthermore, it also granted the right for freedom of association, as well as ecclesiastical autonomy, within the context of educational and cultural autonomy.

The Imperial edict, issued on August 10, 1868, pertaining to Serb ecclesiastical and educational foundations, confirmed the indisputable right of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its Patriarch to decide, not only in ecclesiastical matters, such as the appointment of the sacristans, priests, the remuneration of the priests and bishops, the organization of parishes and school funds, but also in

the disposal of the monastic and community goods and funds. This was significant because it served as the material basis for Serb language education.

Organization of Serb schools had already been started, all over the country, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mostly within the walls of churches and monasteries. These were elementary schools where reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and hymn singing were taught. The teachers were mostly clerics. Later, under the influence of the Greater Russian ideas, Russo-Slavic schools were established in which children learned from Russian ecclesiastical and spelling books. Beside these, there were so-called grammar schools and colleges in which the children were taught, in addition to the above subjects, Slavic grammar, geography, German and Latin, and, in some places, also Hungarian, as well.

The schools were financed by the citizens themselves. The wealthier people paid more, the poorer less, while generally the village paid the school fee for the poorest students. According to the regulations regarding education, every child was obliged to attend school between the ages of 7 and 12; each village had to establish a school and to retain a teacher if at least fifty children of school age were living in its jurisdiction. The village was obliged to provide a schoolroom and an official residence for each teacher, or, in its absence, adequate compensation. Each teacher had a hundred pupils at most. In case the number of pupils exceeded this, the village was obliged to employ another teacher. The villages, where the number of children of school age was below 50, could jointly cooperate with other villages in establishing a common school, with the condition that this was not to be farther than half an hour's walk from the homes of the pupils.

Furthermore, the regulations prescribed that only approved reading and textbooks could be used. The ecclesiastical textbooks were approved by the council of archbishops, while others by the government. One of the paragraphs definitely stipulated that in the Serb public schools, the language of education was to be Serbian. The concept of majority language or state language was not found anywhere.

The mandatory subjects were: religion, Old and New Testament, religious texts, readings from the evangelical legends, hymn singing, Serb language (reading and writing in Cyrillic), mathematics, cursive writing and gymnastics. Religion was taught by Serb Orthodox priests, whose task it was to conduct annual examinations.

The regulations concerning church assets and the community funds emphasized that the national chief curator and representative in these matters was the Serb Patriarch, the Metropolitan of Karlóca, while in the diocese, the bishop of the county-see. One of the paragraphs regulated the way of utilizing the net income and the handling of monastic assets, stating that, following the settlement of the costs, half of the net income had to be deposited into the monastic funds in order to increase the property of the Church. The other half had to be deposited into a clerical fund to support public enlightenment and education. The Patriarch and the Metropolitan of Karlóca handled the two funds directly, one was the clerical or Karlóca school fund established in 1749, while the other was named the inalienable national fund, established in 1769. The two funds had to be handled separately; the Hungarian government merely had a right of supervision over them. The net income of the clerical fund could be used for the maintenance of church and other schools, secondary grammar schools, colleges, while the inalienable national fund could be devoted to the salaries of bishops, upkeep of the bishop's residence and to support village churches and priests.

The directorate was in charge of the administration of the funds; the Synod of the Serb Orthodox Church dealt with matters concerning church schools, culture, education and charities, and the foundations that provided material support for them. The Synod consisted of 75 delegates, 25 of them clerics and the rest from the laity. Owing to their ecclesiastical functions, the archbishop of Karlóca, the Serb Orthodox Metropolitan and Patriarch, as well as the county archbishop were also members of the Synod. The mandate of each delegate was valid for three years, each decided and voted according to his own conscience and conviction, not influenced by his constituents. The Synod held meetings every three years, in cases of emergency, an extra Synod could be convened. The Emperor had to be notified of every Synod and he sent a representative to the meeting. This representative had no right to intervene, either with the progress of the Synod or with the decision making. The meetings were held in public; the maintenance of order and discipline was the responsibility of the chairman. The decisions of the Synod were published by the chairman, the archbishop of Karlóca and the Synod Committee and it was also their responsibility to execute the decisions.

The rights set out in the Nationality Law, and in the Imperial edict, did not satisfy the expectations of the non-Hungarian populace living within the territory of Hungary. Nevertheless, they offered more than the Hungarian laws prior to the revolution of 1848, and much more than the other European countries granted to their minorities. A citizen of the Monarchy, regardless of

nationality, could express his opinion, in his own mother tongue, at the village and state administration and church meetings. He could submit applications and suggestions to the local authorities and to the government, and received the answers all in his own language. Laws were published in the languages of all nationalities living within the territory of Hungary.

In all lower courts, members of all nationalities had the right to ask for the whole procedure to be conducted in their own mother tongues. The supreme courts - in case non-Hungarian parties also took part in the legal action - provided for the translation of the documents, resolutions and verdicts into Hungarian and into the languages of the nationalities.

The villages were free to decide which language to use for recording their protocols and procedures. The Church enjoyed full jurisdiction in the use of mother tongue. Every minority citizen was allowed to learn in his own mother tongue "up to the beginning of his college studies". As far as the jobs held or to be held in the administration was concerned, no one could be discriminated against because of his national status. The state and the government took great care in employing people in the offices of the courts and administration - especially in the county offices - who were fluent in the language of any given nationality.

### **Situation of the Serbs from the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to Trianon**

#### **Policy of Hungarianization and Attempts at Assimilation**

As already mentioned, nations - as understood today - did not exist during the medieval age or between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, therefore, there was no national suppression, forced assimilation, ultra-nationalism or chauvinism. Modern Hungarian nationalism, born at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was aimed at the Imperial Court of Vienna, that embodiment of feudal absolutism, so that it would grant democratic and human rights, as they are known today, for every resident of Hungary. These were gradually attained during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and as a consequence of the 1848 Revolution. There were some anti-nationalist and anti-Serb incidents, as well as efforts for Hungarianization at this time, but they never reached the level of official policy.

By the closing third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, matters changed with regard to Magyarization, as well. Nationalist intolerance became part of Hungarian community life and there were more frequent



attempts of Hungarianization. The reason behind it can probably be found in the fact that the ruling Hungarian aristocratic elite was afraid that the strengthening minorities would attain the right to vote in their fight for their own national rights, and thus the internal power balance of the Hungarian Parliament would change, and with it the dualist structure of the empire. Such fear was further aggravated by the conflicts between the Monarchy and Russia and - to a large extent, and not without reason - by the Greater Russian and Greater Serbian ambitions.

On the other hand, we have to take into account, that the demographic and economic power distribution within the Monarchy changed considerably during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century -- to the advantage of the Hungarians. To illustrate, an example: in 1800, only one fifth of the total population of Pest and Buda was of Hungarian ethnicity (three quarters was German, the remainder made up of Greeks and Serbs). This ratio changed significantly during the next 50 years, to the advantage of the Hungarians: their proportion of the total population increased to one third (the Germans still remained in the majority). Fifty years after that, the proportion of Hungarians reached 86 percent.

According to the data covering the whole Hungary at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, half of the total population acknowledged themselves as Hungarian. (At the same time, their share in the state administration, in the case of the state representatives, was 87.9%, at the county level 90%, and among the village and town officials 75-80%.)

At the same time, the number of the Serbs began to decrease rapidly during the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was caused, in part, by their relocating to the military border region, also because of the losses suffered during Rákóczi's war of independence, and partly because many Serbs fell victims of the plague. Thus, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a total of 484 Serbs were registered in Buda (in 1730, the school in Buda only had 70 pupils). In Székesfehérvár, after a 100 years, a total of 135 Serbs remained out of the 800 who settled there, in Szeged 1477, in Eger 45, in Gyöngyös 38, in Miskolc 26.

If we add that during the closing decade 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hungarians prepared to celebrate the millennium of their original settlement, it becomes easy to understand why their national history, their own importance, was over exaggerated in these euphoric times; why the supremacy of the Hungarian nation was emphasized to the detriment of the other nationalities.

In 1879, the Hungarian language was declared to be an obligatory subject in Serb language schools, too. This measure caused a great deal of indignation among Serbian politicians. The situation was made worse by the fact that in 1907, the new educational law was accepted and became known under the name of 'Lex Apponyi'. Although this law expanded the number of children entitled to free public school education and raised the teachers' salaries, however, it prescribed that the Hungarian language should be taught in the ethnic schools to the extent that, after finishing the fourth grade, the non-Hungarian children should be able to express themselves in Hungarian, both verbally and in writing. As a consequence of this law, a great number of Serb schools had to be closed. The truth is, this action would have happened without the Lex Apponyi, too, as the number of the Serbs living in Hungary decreased further in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This tendency was also continued during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The viewpoint concerning the situation of the Serbs living in Hungary would be one-sided without mentioning the fact that they, like all nationalities, had their own autonomous civic communities, even in these trying times. They had their own reading circles, scientific associations, choirs, amateur associations and women's clubs. Through their legal political parties and their independent paper- and book-publishing activities, they were able to express their views, opinions and aspirations in their mother tongue, while the ecclesiastical and educational autonomy granted to them by law remained an important aspect of their national survival.

### **Political Circumstances of the Serbs up to 1918**

The focus of Serb political organization shifted to the southern part of the Monarchy in the 1860's and 70's where the majority of the Serbs lived. Svetozar Miletic and his liberal party summarized the demands of the Serbs in the following way:

1. The national status of non-Hungarian people living in the territory of Hungary should be acknowledged.
2. In the counties where the nationalities are in the majority, the language of public administration should be the mother tongue of the given nationality.
3. When counties with mixed populations are established, the principle of nationality, as well as the geographic and ethnographic possibilities should be taken into consideration.

However, in the party of Miletic, opinions differed concerning the way of achieving the above goals. The representatives of the upper class did not accept the radical methods and endeavored to achieve a compromise with the Hungarian aristocracy. The policy of Miletic was later continued by the Liberal Party of Mihailo Polit Desancic, while the Radical Party of Jasa Tomic focused its attention first on the social and economic situation of the lower segments of society, mostly accepting the given framework of the popular-ecclesiastical autonomy and over-emphasizing their loyalty to the Austrian Imperial Court.

In 1871, the socialists in Ujvidék formed their own party under the leadership of Svetozar Markovic and Vasa Pelagic. In Budapest, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party was established in 1890, which set up committees for ethnic agitation in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to improve the organization of non-Hungarian people. The party press was also published in Serbian. The more popular papers were the *Narodni glas* (Voice of People) and the *Narodna rec* (Word of People).

The initiatives of the Serb political parties and of Serb socialists were regularly rejected by the Hungarian ruling circles. The only exception was Lajos Mocsáry, who opposed the prevailing chauvinist policy and made a stand in favor of the equality of the nationalities.

In 1914, World War I broke out. The Serbs - similar to the members of all the other minorities living in the Monarchy - were also called up to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army and were sent to fight. Those who dodged the draft escaped to Serbia and joined the Serb army as volunteers. During the war, every political activity was suppressed, in some places punitive actions were initiated against the civilian population.

In 1918, near the end of the war, the Serbian National Committee was established for the protection of the rights of Serbs living in Hungary. On November 25, 1918, a meeting was called in Ujvidék where it was announced that the Bánát, Bácska and Baranya would separate from Hungary and join the Serb Kingdom. Among others, the following view was declared at this meeting:

“We grant every right to the non-Serbian and non-Slavic people remaining within our borders to enable them to survive as a minority, and to develop themselves. Furthermore, this meeting demands that for the Serbs, Catholic Serbians (Bunevac) and Sokac who still remain outside our borders in other countries, the protection of minority rights, their national survival and the opportunity for success in life to be granted on a reciprocal basis.”

## **The Legacy of Trianon**

Without a question, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was, in reality, a heterogeneous entity considering the languages, religions and the differences in the economic level of the nationalities. However, its ethnic heterogeneity did not in itself cause its collapse. There are quite a few countries (for example the United States of America, Canada, Switzerland) where the stability of the country was not influenced at all by the fact that they were comprised of several nationalities. Differences in the levels of development should not necessarily lead to a collapse (a good example is Italy). In spite of the fact that ethnic heterogeneity and economic differences existed simultaneously in a given region, disintegration was not necessarily a historical consequence, either (consider Spain or Great Britain). The Monarchy didn't fall apart because it was multinational, but because an appropriate political organization was not devised that suited its ethnic composition.

The fossilized political structure of dualism resisted all attempts of reform. Furthermore, the rigid policy of the Austrian and Hungarian ruling elite and the efforts of the minority peoples to establish their own sovereign national states, all contributed to the collapse of the Monarchy (all for internal political reasons). It was not the suppressing force on the one side and the suppressed on the other that formed the background of the conflicts but various, expanding, nationalist forces - mutually disregarding the interests of the other party (from the point of view of their moral quality, Romanian or Serb nationalism did not differ from the Hungarian, only their position was different). As shown by the end of the war, nobody was thinking only of the "ethnically contiguous" state but every party made demands for some territories of the other countries, as well.

The Serb nationalists, for example, already at the very start aimed to establish Greater Serbia. They announced, without any scruples, their demands in addition to Serb territories, ones where other nationalities - Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Slovenes - and furthermore, non-Slavic people, such as Albanians, Romanians and Hungarians lived. To illustrate their ideas, for example, Baja and Temesvár would have belonged to Serbia, too; moreover, some had even drawn a corridor connecting the Serbs with the Czechs and the Slovaks, making the border between Hungary and Serbia along the line of Fertő - Balaton - Mohács.

The idea of establishing a common country for the South-Slavic people outside the borders of the Monarchy had been germinating for a long time and was first expressed in the Corfu convention on July 20, 1917. This convention drafted the establishment of a common Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian state in the form of a democratic, parliamentary monarchy, under the rule of the Karadjordjevic dynasty, granting equal rights to all, regardless of nationality, language or religion. They did not mark exactly the borders of this prospective state, only some references were made that these would be where the Slavic peoples lived in compact, homogeneous blocks.

The implementation of these plans was begun following World War I, with the proclamation of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, on December 1, 1918. This new state (from 1929 onwards called Yugoslavia) included territories in which only Serbia (the territory south of the Sava-Danube line) was an independent kingdom (from 1841, with an area of about 48,357 square kilometers and a population of about two million). Montenegro was an independent principality (with an area of about 9,475 square kilometers and a population of about 300,000), while all the other parts - Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Dalmatia - were carved from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, including, naturally the former Hungarian territories of Bácska, Bánát and Baranya.

The end of the war and the peace treaty concluded on June 4, 1920, in Trianon, simultaneously meant the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as considerably redrawing the map of this part of Europe, brought about a totally new system of economic and political relationships among the people and nations living in this region. In large measure, insisting only on the historical facts, the essence and the consequences of this peace treaty can be summarized succinctly as follows: in place of one multinational state, several multinational states were created. The former situation emerged during several centuries in a dialectic historical process, while this new - unjust - situation was created at the conference table, as the consequence of the unprincipled bargaining of the European Great Powers, totally ignoring the ethnic realities of the region.

The greatest loser of Trianon was Hungary: from her former territory of 282,000 square kilometers, she shrank to 93,000, meaning that she lost two third of her territory. From this Romania gained about 103,000 square kilometers (what historical merits could justify that Romania receiving more territory than what remained for Hungary?), Czechoslovakia received 63,000, the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Republic 21,000 and Austria 4,000 square kilometers.

The situation was similar from the demographic perspective. From her former population of 18 million, Hungary lost ten million (!). From the more than ten million Hungarian-speaking population of the Monarchy, approximately three million (!) were suddenly left outside the new borders. On the other hand, the population of Romania increased by 5.24 million, including 1.7 million Hungarians (according to other sources 1.9 million), more than 30% of the Hungarians living in the Monarchy. Czechoslovakia grew by 3.5 million new inhabitants (of this number, the Hungarians exceeded one million), Yugoslavia by 1.6 million (of this, there were about 465-480 thousand Hungarians). On the territory attached to Austria, about 25,000 Hungarians were affected.

When the politicians of Trianon drew up the new borders, they did not have any consideration for nationality status or ethnic borders at all, as it can be seen from the following data. Let us take as an example of Serbian-Croatian-Slavic Kingdom. From the 12.5 million people, the number of Serbs amounted to about 38% (meaning that they were in the plurality); the proportion of Croats was 32%, Slovenians 9%, Hungarians 7-8%, Germans 7-8%, Muslims 5%, while the rest of the population could be considered as of mixed background. Taking a look at the ethnic map of the detached territories, we can state that in Bácska and in Baranya there were more non-Slavic inhabitants than Serbs and Croats combined! The proportion of the Hungarians in the region was 29%!

These statistics represent, naturally, only the language of mathematics. With their help we can understand what great historical injustice took place against Hungary. We should consider, also, the lost natural treasures: the lands in Bácska and in Bánát yielding rich harvests, the forests and mines of Transylvania, the total infrastructure (the factories, equipment, roads, bridges, electric networks). The material and intellectual wealth that had been evident in towns like Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, Pozsony, Kassa, Szabadka, Ujvidék and others must be added to the final tally of Trianon. And finally - still referring to Hungarian-Serb relations - we must not forget what followed later on: first the dictatorship and the cruel assimilation policy of royal Yugoslavia. Then, following the end of World War II, the bloody revenge taken by Tito's partisans, the treacherous denationalization policy of the communists, as well as the uninhibited manner Milošević and his staff changed the ethnic composition of the region and fanned the fires of Greater Serbian ambitions.

## **Foes Again during the Second World War**

The decline in the number of the Serbs living in Hungary continued even between the two world wars. Many Serb families resettled in Yugoslavia, most of them in Bácska and Bánát. Other reasons for this decline were expressed by Stevan Campraga, the notary of the Buda church district in the following way: "More people died than were born, more moved than settled, more people left the Orthodox religion than converted to it from other religions, the number of mixed marriages increased, there were more and more widows, widowers or single persons - all these facts influenced the development of our numbers unfavorably."

In truth, we also have to add to the above reasons the fact that the Hungarian authorities - bitter about the decisions of Trianon - abolished or rescinded, within a year and a half, all the positive measures of the minority policy guaranteed by the law of 1886. Obviously, this was a contributing factor for Serbs leaving Hungary.

Although the government of István Bethlen passed an act in 1923, regarding the minorities and granting them legal equality, by setting up a minority school system and by the liberal use of mother tongue, the situation of minorities in Hungary was, in fact far worse, too, than what the prevailing laws implied. It also must be stated that under these circumstances, while the proportion of minorities in Hungary did not exceed 20% of the total population (and of these 6.9% were Germans) and the number of Serbs diminished rapidly (in 1924 they numbered 22,452, while in 1928 they totaled 9,109), the latter still had a consequential school system, press and a great number of cultural organizations.

Minority schools were divided into three categories. In category A, all subjects were taught only in the mother tongue; in category B, education was bilingual, while in category C, pupils were taught in Hungarian and the minority language was obligatory. Ninety percent of the Serb schools belonged to category C. We have other data: until World War II, Serb religious and denominational schools were to be found in 29 villages.

To sum up, we can state that this era and the Regency of Miklós Horthy were not favorable for Serbs living in Hungary, from the point of view of the maintaining their national identity. Following the outbreak of World War II, many of them suffered persecution.

## Serious War Wounds

In April 1941, the German army, helped by the Hungarian and Italian armies, attacked Yugoslavia. Subsequently, Bácska was re-annexed to Hungary, followed somewhat later by the Mura region and Muraköz, as well. The military forces introduced a strict system: Yugoslavian officials in leading positions were removed, Serb papers were banned, the totally Serbian schools were closed, and the Serb language classes could operate only in places where the military leadership deemed it essential.

The government decided to relocate all persons who moved to Bácska after December 31, 1918. According to the latest data, about 20,000 persons were relocated or sent to concentration camps. At the same time, 13,000 Székely people from Bukovina were settled here, as well as a further 500 Hungarian "vitéz" (vitéz: decorated military veteran, *ed.*) families.

By September-October, the situation became stabilized. The civilian public administration began to operate, the population prepared for production and cultivation fallow fields. The school network was reorganized and started to operate again. At the same time, the southern parts of Bácska, in villages in which the Serbs were the majority, gun battles, arson and various types of sabotage occurred all too frequently. The actions of the Chetniks and the partisans were, to a great extent, assisted by the local population. One hundred and sixteen saboteurs were arrested and sent to summary court, 64 of them were sentenced to death. In the lower courts, actions were taken against a further 342 persons. In Szabadka, 15 people were executed.

By the end of November, in the Sajkás region, a partisan cell was established, consisting of about 50 people: from then on, acts of sabotage and terror occurred in an organized form. From the end of 1941, these attacks grew by a considerable extent and the government decided to use the army to pacify the area. In January 1942, a skirmish broke out between the partisan cell at Sajkás and the Hungarian gendarmerie stationed in Zsablya. In the confrontation, two policemen and four border guards died on the one side and eight partisans on the other; the Hungarians sustained 11 wounded, as well. Hearing this news, Ferenc Szombathelyi, chief of the general staff, initiated a punitive action: a brigade of the Hungarian army destroyed the partisan cell and started a mopping-up operation in the triangle of Zsablya-Sajkás-Titel. This mopping up, unfortunately, turned into a massacre.



The ill-famed massacre of Ujvidék was committed on January 21, and the whole action was finished with a bloody reprisal in Szenttamás and Óbecse. The raids had many victims. According to the data of the headquarters of the Hungarian Fifth Army Corps, the total number of victims amounted to 3309, mostly Serbs (2550) and Jews (743). The number of men was 2102, women 792, old people 299 and 174 children. The Serb and Jewish populations of Csurog, Ujvidék and Zsablya suffered the most.

The public was not informed, either about the events or about the victims. On learning about the massacre, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, a minister of the opposition, submitted a memorandum to the government describing the events in the Sajkás district with the following words: "Bloody violence, the most barbarous slaughter." He considered the events to be a terrible mistake against which every honest Hungarian should rise in protest, an utter blot on the honor of the Hungarian people, a massacre that "was totally contradictory with the Hungarian character" and demanded a court-martial for the offenders.

About one year after these tragic events, the action against the main offenders - Colonel General Ferenc Feketehalmy-Czeydner, Brigadier General József Grassy, Colonel László Deák and Police Captain Márton Zöldi - commenced at the General Staff court of the Hungarian army. Nevertheless, no sentence was carried out because the accused escaped to Germany with the help of the German general staff and evaded punishment.

In spite of the fact that the Hungarian authorities, following these unfortunate events, did their best to stabilize the situation in the re-annexed territories - they granted ecclesiastical and cultural autonomy to the Serbs, facilitated the return of the persecuted and interned people, organized education in Serb vernacular, commenced the development of agriculture and small-scale industry, and so on - the memory of this massacre left indelible scars in the spirit of the Serbs living here.

It is not difficult to imagine the pain and anger that was still fresh in the people's mind in the autumn and winter of 1944, when Tito's partisans took a tenfold revenge for these events on the Hungarian population of the Vojvodina. However, it is hard to explain why these very people were the targets of such revenge, because, on the one hand they were absolutely innocent in the

massacre, and, on the other hand, they had not organized any sabotage actions and had not resisted the 'liberators', either.

The historical facts came to light only much later. At the end of World War II, the partisans marching into Bácska and Bánát - receiving abundant support from the local population and with the approval of the highest military leadership - collected and executed several tens of thousands of Hungarians, most of them in Bezdán, in Zombor and surroundings, in Szivac, Szabadka, Bajmok, Magyarkanizsa, Zenta, Óbecse, Temerin, Ujvidék and Debelyacsa.

We must state quite clearly: we cannot accept the explanations that this was merely the punishment meted out to war criminals and collaborators. It is obvious that the majority of those who had reason to be afraid of any retribution withdrew with the Hungarian and German armies and had otherwise tried to hide their tracks. Although there were some people who had reason to feel guilty and still remained, their number was obviously not as high that they would represent a significant danger for the authorities. The authorities could have waited until the end of the war and dealt with them in the ordinary course of the courts. This slaughter was the collective punishment of the Hungarian population, a bloody reprisal, the triumph of the blind, revengeful Serb spirit accompanied by some greed and desire for personal enrichment.

Alesandar Kasas was the only Serb author - at least as to the knowledge of this writer - who had also mentioned this massacre, in his book titled *Hungarians in the Vojvodina, 1941-1946* after a general silence of exactly half a century. He himself admitted, "we can speak of emotional reactions and even retort", as well as, that "cases of some personal revenge were also recorded", and that the reprisals were on a mass scale, offering an opportunity to certain people to enrich themselves.

According to the order issued by Josip Broz Tito, on October 17, 1947, a military administration was established in the Vojvodina and from the first day of its existence it radicalized its standpoint against the national minorities, especially against Germans and Hungarians. "Both the Germans and the Hungarians" writes Kasas "are singled out as collaborators and perpetrators of crimes against the Serb people in Vojvodina and, as the groups who were defeated by the anti-fascist coalition, so they have to answer for their actions." Thus, the concept of collective guilt and punishment reigned supreme!

Another witness of these trying times, Jovan Veselinov Zarko, in his book titled *The Birth of the Autonomous Vojvodina* (original title: *We Are All One Party*) changed the point of view somewhat against the Germans and the Hungarians, but he shifted the responsibility for the events from the military and political leaders to "certain individuals". As Veselinov writes,

"The reason for the difficulties was that there had been persons among us who misunderstood and misapplied the party line, especially the policy of fraternity and unity. Some believed, at the time, that the Hungarians had to be treated in the same way as the Germans. Chauvinist elements became prominent, desiring revenge over the whole Hungarian population, thus, in the first days after the liberation, some serious mistakes were made and atrocities occurred that could not be left without any consequences. Instead of calling to account people who had really co-operated with the invaders, who had really committed the crimes, in some places atrocities were carried out against citizens of Hungarian nationality who did not have any connection with the fascist brutality."

Although it is not totally clear whether the concept of fraternity and unity meant that the Germans were massacred in accordance with party directive, while Hungarians only because of individual abuses, it is gratifying that the author at least acknowledged that innocent civilians became victims.

The above quoted passage later informs us that "certain people", certain 'outsiders', were responsible for all this.

" ... certain people from the Yugoslavian central authorities caused us some difficulty, some incompetent ones who had come to Vojvodina in increasing numbers. This included mainly the department of civil defence, whose agents were authorized at one time to make definite arrangements without informing the political leadership of the province or the military directorate of their activity. This was the reason why many individuals were arrested without a cause, because they failed to carry out policy and our stated criteria. There were examples of ordinary people being abused, their property plundered."

Veselinov does not state the number of the victims, while Kasas estimates it to be a modest 5,000. Their real number will probably be only revealed when the Serb Academy of Science finds enough strength in itself to face the facts, and provides honest historians the scope for a full range of investigation of this tragedy. Until then, we are forced to refer to sources like Svetozar Kostic or Petar Reic Cedo, the members of the ill-famed state defence organ, the UBDA. According to them, more than 20,000 people had been killed. Sándor Mészáros, historian in the Vojvodina referred to about 30,000 victims on the basis of his own research. The poet, Gyula Illyés, recorded the number as 40,000, into his diary in 1945. Cardinal József Mindszenty, in 1946, noted in his letter to the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs that the number of the victims was approximately 50,000-60,000.

## **Serbs in Hungary After the Second World War**

Hungary paid an enormous price for her participation in World War II; among the losses, one must include the 900,000 dead and 600,00 prisoners of war (one third of whom died in the Soviet Union). Forty percent of the national infrastructure was destroyed (especially extensive damage was caused to the roads, the railway network, and housing; for example, in the Buda Castle district, 90 percent of the buildings were destroyed or damaged).

The country was obliged to pay military compensation of \$300 million US. At the same time, she was not allowed to demand a compensation of \$280 million US from Germany against the damages suffered. The loss in self-esteem was inestimable. Propaganda in the neighboring countries branded the whole Hungarian nation as fascist and war criminals.

We must also state the obvious that, from 1945 onwards, Hungary lived under the military and political occupation and domination of the Soviet Union and that Stalin's dictatorship bound Hungary to the eastern block, both ideologically and economically.

The new socio-political circumstances also determined the relationship to the minorities. Soon after the war, a more favorable situation developed for the Serbs. In some villages, elementary schools of Serb language were organized. The first Serb Member of Parliament was elected, in 1947. The Democratic Federation of South-Slavs was established in order to organize the political and cultural life of the Serbs, etc. In 1948, owing to the ill-famed resolution of the Politburo, the situation became worse again between Yugoslavia and the whole eastern block. This had a significant influence on the situation of Serbs living in Hungary. Every cultural and education effort stopped, legal proceedings were instituted against several Serbs - on the basis of concocted evidence; many Serbs were fired from their workplaces or relocated to the other end of the country.

While it is poor consolation, but those illegal measures carried out by the totalitarian authorities affected not just Serbs but other as well. The system punished the disobedience and "unreliable elements" of its own nationals with the same degree of cruelty.

Though the Constitution of 1949 warranted the equality of status for all citizens and education in the mother tongue, some improvement could be observed in the situation of the Serbian minority

only after 1955, following the normalization of the relationship between Yugoslavia and Hungary. From this point onwards, the minority school system expanded gradually and more attention was paid to the maintenance of the cultural and ethnographic values of Serbs living in Hungary.

According to the census of 1970, 155,000 inhabitants were registered whose mother tongue was other than Hungarian. However, according to official estimates, that was substantially higher: approximately 450,000. In 1980, 84,000 inhabitants in all declared themselves as members of a minority, though even then - according to the official estimates again – that number could be close to 320,000.

These are interesting and significant data: Hungary - unlike some of the neighboring countries - does not use statistics to doctor the number of the minority inhabitants, as she does not consider these minorities as potential enemies. These figures reveal the fact that most of the minorities do not want to publicize their nationality status. Possibly they are not excessively concerned about the preservation of their national self-image (or do not show it). Presumably, the expulsion of Germans is still vivid in their memory, together with the distrust of the Serbs. Spontaneous assimilation also played a role. This pinpoints the deficiencies and mistakes of the national minority policies of the communist regime.

Legislation in the 70's and 80's gradually improved the situation of the Serbs. The use of their mother tongue was given legal sanction, as well as education and cultural activities. The names of villages and streets would also be written in Serb where there was sufficient number of Serb speakers among the inhabitants. The Act of 1993, concerning national and ethnic minorities, acknowledged the state-founding status of the Serbs, warranted cultural autonomy not connected to territory, allowed the organization of local-government and free choice of identity. As a consequence, the Serb Democratic Federation started its activity in 1990 and the Serb local government in 1995.

Educational, cultural and artistic conditions are improving and play a significant role in preserving traditions. The radio of Pécs and Budapest, as well as the public service television regularly broadcast programs in the Serb language. The *Srpske narodne novine* (Serbian Popular Paper), the newspaper of Serbs living in Hungary, tries to meet the aims of information with success and at the same time protects the national interests, too. In 1999, in Pomáz, a multilingual

ethnic paper was published, the *Dera*, whose aim is the nurturing of the cultural values of minorities, Serb among others.

The Serb Orthodox Church is operating independently even today within the framework of the Budapest archepiscopacy, serving about forty churches in Buda, Mohács and Szeged.

Education in the mother tongue for the Serb children is offered in Battonya in an elementary school, in Budapest in an elementary and a secondary grammar school. Also, a Serb faculty exists within the University of Sciences in Budapest.

Unlike the Hungarian ethnic blocks over the border, the minorities living in Hungary can be characterized as geographically dispersed. The Serbs live in scattered settlements, mainly in the region of Baja and Szeged, south and north of Budapest along the Danube, and, with the exception of a small area near Baja, their proportion of the local population does not exceed 5.25% in any of these localities. According to estimates from the 1990's, the number of the minority population living in Hungary does not exceed 5% of the total population of the country. They are comprised of 250,000 Germans, 100,000 Slovaks, 84,000 Croatians, 10,000 Serbs, 10,000 Romanians and 4,000 Slovenians.

We are presumably correct in stating that the low number of the minority population and its dispersed nature had an impact on Hungarian legislation in the 1990's when it set out the rights and opportunities of minorities living in Hungary. Every right was granted in compliance with contemporary European measures. However, the law failed to facilitate their representation in the Hungarian Parliament as a gesture towards them. In other words, by means of reverse discrimination, to encourage their regular operation within the privatization and the legal-administrative system from a financial point of view, too, and to facilitate the maintenance of their national identity and culture. The writer of this book is convinced that in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a mutually satisfactory solution will be found even for this portion of the coexistence of the two nations.

## **Possibilities and Conditions of Peaceful Coexistence**

The new millennium, and also the current situation of Yugoslavia, offers an opportunity for both nations to examine their conscience and to decide whether they wish to choose the peaceful and productive coexistence. Are they able to find the common interests and join forces in order to pursue these interests or nurse past injuries into the next centuries and waste their energy to stir up mutual mistrust, hostility, causing permanent tension in this part of Europe?

The decision-makers on both sides must realize that it is our future that depends on the fact whether we are able to overcome these ancient hostilities. In all probability, it has never been so clear as today that, in the world of globalization, our development predominantly depends on the fact whether we are able to join the process of integration, to become an equal member of an international community - equal in economic, legal, moral and every other point of view - without surrendering ourselves, sacrificing our characteristics, and whether we are able to vindicate our national interests within the framework of the general system of rules of this community. At the same time, every instance of isolation, every withdrawal to within the borders of the nation state, every self-complacency may mean that we will eternally lag behind the ones preceding us, and in the best case, stagnation, and in the worst case, hopeless poverty will be our lot.

However, we have to note that as a small nation we are not particularly of great interest to any of the Great Powers: we cannot expect anything as a 'gift' from anyone; we must rely only on ourselves and on each other. Namely, we must find the opportunities for survival and progress in ourselves and in collaboration with our neighbors.

Even the most basic forms of the regional coalition that can be established in the area of Central-, Eastern- and Southern-Europe could take us nearer to European integration. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia could all consider how they could enter into any sort of regional alliance. With whom and on what basis - historical, economical and cultural, in the spirit of what common interests - could it operate to our mutual satisfaction, leading up to our joining the European community?

The idea is not new. It is well-known that, on behalf of Hungary, several politicians - the likes of Miklós Wesselényi, Lajos Kossuth, László Teleki, Oszkár Jászi, István Bethlen, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky - also insisted on such kind of collaboration, in the form of the Danubian Confederation or others. Such initiatives have been proposed by other nations, as well. Perhaps, these should be reconsidered and adjusted to the new circumstances.

The countries listed above are not in the same position as far as their acceptance into the European Union is concerned. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are the front runners, while the most disadvantaged party at the moment is Yugoslavia, still carrying the burdens of the Milošević-regime, the long-lasting wars and the odium of quarreling with the whole world.

We should not entertain any illusions. The process of Yugoslavia joining Europe - if it ever happens - would be long and arduous. Among the preconditions that will have to be met would be a change in the regime and reform of the political and economic systems, economic development, the integrating of their legal system, legislation and jurisdiction to European standards, as well as the democratization of public life. All these require enormous efforts on behalf of the prospective leaders of Yugoslavia and a great deal of work and persistence on behalf of the populace.

It has become more and more obvious over the years that the path of European integration for Yugoslavia leads by means of the above-mentioned regional alliances and via its immediate neighbor - Hungary - preceding her in the 'queue'. Hungary has already declared, several times, that she supports the intention of her neighbor to join Europe and is ready to share her experiences with Yugoslavia with respect to the process of preparation. Thus, good-neighborly relations with Hungary can not be based on a momentary decision but should constitute a very important element in Yugoslavia's own best long-term interest.

The task would now be, in the spirit of good-neighborly relations from both sides, to examine - and not by political but by historical studies - all that had caused deep and slow-healing wounds during our coexistence of several centuries, the reasons for mistrust, anger and hatred; the burden on the sincere friendship of two peoples.

Let the following list of grievances serve as a modest contribution to all of the above. The aim of this list is nothing more than an attempt to point out some historical events, decisions, actions or gestures that have long poisoned good relations on both sides of the border.



## **Age-old Grievances**

### **Hungarians and Slavs**

We have to mention that, of all the minorities living in Hungary, Hungarians have never had any conflicts with the Russians, Slovenes and Germans. We had some with the Slovaks but only during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and with the Romanians and Croatians since the 1848-49 War of Independence. The roots of the hostilities with the Serbs go back to the time of the original settlement of the Hungarians in the Carpathian basin and that mutual animosity is alive and well, even today.

Some Serb historians - Stajone Stajonevic, for example - blamed Hungarians that they, with their original settlement, hindered the union of the Slavic nations, in addition, that in 960, the Hungarians killed Prince Caslav, preventing the Serbs from establishing their own independent state. Nevertheless, the research carried out later proved - supported by historians of such high reputation as Vladimir Corovic - that these accusations were totally unfounded. The truth was, simply put, the Serbs had been too weak to establish their own, independent state at that point in time.

At a meeting of historians held in 1996 in Ujvidék, on the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of the original settlement of the Hungarians, a consensus was reached using the doctoral dissertation of Emil Oman. Oman, who is considered to be the great friend of the Serb people and of Yugoslavia, had analyzed the historical circumstances of the situation and stated that the supposed unity of the Slavs had been broken by the Avars and Bulgarians, well before the appearance of the Hungarians. The dividing line between the South Slavic groups was made by their choice of religious adherence: some chose Rome as their center, some chose Byzantium. Yugoslavian historiography confirmed that Hungarians sheltered the South-Slavs from German assimilation and helped the liberation of the Serbs from the power of the Byzantine Empire. The participants of this meeting also added: During the course of history, the best relationship among Slavic people was formed when they had been separated from each other by the Hungarians, a fact borne out by recent events. Consequently, the settlement of the Hungarians - considered from a historical perspective - had a stabilizing effect on these Slavic groups. (The synopsis of the meeting was published by the Ujvidék Fórum Publishing Office and the Educational Publisher in the form of a book, in two languages, in Ujvidék, in 1997).

## **Progeny of the Marauders and Rákóczi's Uprising**

The next critical point in the relationship of the two people concerned the enormous wave of Serbs settling in Hungary. Serb settlers arriving after the 16<sup>th</sup> century differed from their predecessors in many respects. While the first wave, who had mostly been assimilated in the meantime, consisted mainly of farmers, the more recent arrivals were nomadic herdsmen, long accustomed to Balkan conditions. They did not respect county borders or private enclosures and tried to avoid any obligations regarding work, military service or the payment of taxes. Some of them were mercenaries and 'tax-collectors' - the so-called marauders - who cooperated with the Turks and enjoyed hefty rewards for their services. According to some sources from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were more than sixty such groups and there was even a time when the number of Serbs in the Turkish army exceeded that of the Turks. All this substantially contributed to the image formed in the minds of Hungarians about the Serbs: namely that Serbs were ungrateful; they hardly settled in their new home before turning against the people harboring them.

The overall impression was not improved by the newcomers who arrived in Hungary after 1690, either. A half-score years following their settlement, in 1703, the uprising of Ferenc Rákóczi broke out against the absolutist power of the Imperial Court of Vienna. Rákóczi called upon the Serbs - several times - to join him. However, they stood by Austria and fought against Rákóczi. Without going into who was right or wrong, from a historical perspective - the rebellious Hungarians who longed for freedom or the Serbs who remained loyal to the Emperor - it is clear that, even in those long ago times, Hungarians and Serbs didn't see eye to eye.

However, Rákóczi's uprising had an unexpected, if opposite, effect, insofar as consequences are concerned. Some Serb historians state that, in this struggle, masses of Serbs fell victim and their number can be put as high as 120,000 (!). The authors of this 'historical' data could not be perceived as the benefactors to either nation. Recently, we have experienced that, even after almost two centuries, there are historians and politicians, with agendas of their own, who make use of these 'scientific' figures.

Hungarians and Serbs - in the spirit of good neighbors - sooner or later, will be forced to mull over the victims of the common conflicts and will have to come to a mutually agreed version of events. As part of this process - not an easy task, by any means - the alleged fact of these 120,000

victims should be clarified. According to the latest sources (Fedora Bikar: The Serbs in Hungary, Belgrade, 1998), at the time when the Serbs moved to Hungary, in 1690, their number was approximately 50,000 to 70,000. Nearly 6,000 Serbs were living in Buda, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, namely at the time the Rákóczi uprising, in Szentendre and its surroundings about 14,000, in the northern parts of Hungary 10,000, in the southern and central regions about 40,000 more. In this way, the number of 70,000 is approximately correct. Add to that another 20,000 Serbs who arrived earlier and were not included in these rudimentary statistics; and, not to be seen as splitting hairs: let us round this number up to an even 100,000! I wish to emphasize that these are very generous estimates, based on Serb sources; therefore, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, approximately 100,000 Serbs were living in Hungary. How was it possible to kill 120,000 of them during the Rákóczi uprising? And by 20,000 poorly armed rebels? Enough said.

By the way, let us cite here the well-know historian, Vladimir Corovic, who does not show much sympathy for the part Serbs played during the Rákóczi uprising. Considering the fact, said Corovic, that the Serbs put down roots in Hungary in 1690 and in the following years, they committed a grave mistake by turning against the Hungarians and supporting Austria.

### **Hostility to the Privileges**

After the Rákóczi uprising, a period of consolidation followed, but the privileges granted to the Serbs by King Leopold I still generated hostility among Hungarians. In addition to the fact that the newcomers did not pay tithes or any other taxes - and this obviously irritated the people forced to bear these burdens - the Serbs enjoyed full freedom of religion, while the Hungarian Protestants, being in the majority, did not have the same rights in their own country.

The Serb privileges also disturbed the Hungarian nobility and the county authorities. As already mentioned, the Serbs had been exempted from the jurisdiction of the Hungarian authorities and were ruled directly by the Imperial Court in Vienna. In practice, this meant that the Hungarians had no influence at all on Serb affairs and this was totally unacceptable to the Hungarian nobility and was also inconsistent with the constitution of the country.

In response to the people who questioned the legitimacy of these privileges, the Serbs tried to prove that they came to Hungary by invitation and that they were entitled to the above privileges.

In their counter-arguments, the Hungarians referred – among other things – to the words of Leopold I, who said, while the Serbs were still living in their homeland: "Do not leave your houses and fields there". Consequently, the Serbs were taken to have arrived in Hungary uninvited and thus had no grounds for any kind of special treatment.

The Serbs, naturally, insisted on their privileges and protested loudly any time when someone attempted to curtail them. Attempts of this kind were frequent. In spite of the fact that Leopold I forbade the counties from collecting taxes from the Serbs, the county authorities ignored this prohibition in several places and also some Catholic bishops attempted to collect tithes from them.

### **Conflicts of Interest in 1848**

Hungarians looked upon the events at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely at the time of the Serb revival, with considerable suspicion. On the one hand, the Serbs had the largest population among the minority nations and, on the other hand, this movement had been accompanied with some ambitions for a Greater Serbia. The promoters of this dream had done their best to find allies among the prophets of the Greater Russia, Greater Illyria and other ‘great, fraternal’ collaborations. As the Hungarians were surrounded by Slavic populace on all sides, threatened with destruction, their sense of vulnerability was quite understandable. In this spirit, they tried to strengthen their position against the Habsburg power, and whenever they found any opportunity, they tried to separate from Austria. The outbreak of revolutions all over Europe in the spring of 1848 seemed a very favorable time for this attempt.

Some of the most glorious days and months in Hungarian history happened in 1848. The stirring events at the breakout of the revolution, the ecstasy of joy after the first victories over the Austrians, the responsible decisions of the first independent government, the taste of freedom, the military successes...

Unfortunately, the Serbs supported the wrong side again. They believed the Austrians who had, as always, applied the tactics of ‘Divide et Impera’ - divide and conquer - with success and used the Serbs as strategic allies against the rebelling Hungarians. The result is well-known: bloody

battles at Szenttamás, Szóreg, Zombor and other places, scorched villages, numerous victims on both sides, and again, many-many reasons for hostility.

## **Hungarian Nationalism**

The two nations, Hungarian and Serb, lived the next period of their common history within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serb historians called the Monarchy as "the prison of the nations", the country of national suppression and of enforced Hungarianization.

The previous chapters clearly show that there had not been any tradition of chauvinistic hostility in Hungary until then: there was no suppression, nor forced assimilation either, in the medieval age or in the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Modern Hungarian nationalism had a rather self-protecting nature until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It welcomed newcomers and expanded the national rights to all the people living within the country's territory. Naturally, there were nationalistic and assimilating efforts, too, but these were mostly sporadically.

However, in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nature of Hungarian nationalism changed to some extent. The Hungarian ruling classes - in the process of bargaining with Vienna - shifted more and more towards a truculent form of nationalism and what is more, in the 1890's, even to the direction of chauvinism.

We have already listed the causes of some of the changes, here we can only add the following: the ethnic composition of the Monarchy was as follows: from eleven nationalities only five - Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats and Slovenians - were living completely within the borders of the Monarchy. All the others had homelands in neighboring countries. The prevailing political conditions in Europe did not allow the unification of dispersed nationalities. Naturally, the strong efforts of unification could be felt as they were enhanced by the strengthening of the middle class. From the capitals of the homelands, they urged separation from the Monarchy in every possible way - by newspaper articles, using different political agitators and agents, by provocations, and so on - breeding hatred against the Hungarians.

It was no wonder that all these actions had been considered by the Hungarian ruling classes as an attack against their own positions and of the country's unity. They took drastic measures against

the separatist efforts and against its representatives. In many cases, they used methods that were threatening the national existence and survival of Serbs in Hungary.

We do not intend to justify the assimilation attempts of the Hungarian elite at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We would just like to point out that nationalism of that era was characteristic not only to Hungary of that time. In the majority of the European countries - and here we think not only of absolutist Russian and Turkish Emperors but of such liberal, democratic states as England, France and Germany - minorities lived in much worse conditions than under the Monarchy. It is sufficient to mention the Irish, Bretons, Poles and Ukrainians.

Finally, we should not forget that in the Monarchy, beside the nationalism of the majority, minority nationalism was also very active and equally as strong as the Hungarian one.

### **The Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom and the Minorities**

The Serbs protected themselves, with good reason, against the previously mentioned attempts at Hungarianization. At the same time, in the situation created by the Peace Treaty of Trianon, they did not show the slightest good will in solving the nationality issues of the Hungarians who ended up as inhabitants of the new Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian state. Many Hungarian schools were closed in Bácska and Bánát, the use of Hungarian village names was forbidden, Hungarian officials were fired from state employment and were replaced. Persons declared to be 'undesirable elements' were deported from the country and were simply transported over the border on 24 to 48 hour notice. Those who were allowed to remain in their homeland were limited in their freedom of movement and significant pressures were brought on them to change their names. The operation of the minority language presses and educational institutions was also curtailed, too.

In addition, in 1921, the implementation of the agrarian 'reform' meant that the fertile and rich lands of Bácska and Bánát were turned over to Serb 'volunteers' who, incidentally, were unskilled in agriculture, while Hungarians and Germans were excluded on the basis of their nationality. Thus, minorities were not only culturally and linguistically oppressed and assimilation was forced upon them, but their very livelihood was endangered by such discriminatory measures.

## **Changes in the Ethnic Composition of the Annexed Territories**

Immediately after gaining power, the Yugoslavian authorities consciously and systematically began to change the ethnic composition of the newly acquired territories, thus violating the regulations stipulated in the Peace Treaty of Trianon. Neither Bácska, Baranya nor Bánát have ever belonged to Serbia. There had never been a Serb majority in these areas, not even during the existence of the so-called Serb Vojvodina between November 18, 1849 and December 27, 1860. The 400,000 Serbs made up only 29% of the total population of Bácska, Baranya and Bánát. The Yugoslav intention was clear: to increase the number of the Serbs as much as possible and, at the same time, decrease the proportions of the other nationalities, primarily the Hungarians and Germans. Several methods were used to achieve this end.

### *Manipulations of the census and its data*

The census of 1910 recorded the number of Hungarians as 577,549, in the territories that were later annexed to the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom. The registration carried out by the Yugoslavs in 1921, the number of the Hungarians decreased to 467,658, while the census of 1924 registered only 376,107. It is clear that the magnitude of the decrease was not due to natural causes. The registration forms had been printed in Cyrillic letters which a great number of Germans and Hungarians were unable to complete, thus they were forced to rely on the census-takers who were exclusively Serbs. The data of the census was also subsequently altered in places at the notion of the authorities.

### *Relocation and expulsion*

According to a written record of the Yugoslavian Immigration Office from 1924, between 1918 and 1920, 39,272 Hungarians were relocated to Hungary. According to Hungarian sources, this number was closer to 55,000.

### *Reorganization of public administration*

The royal regime set up on January 6, 1929, ended the previous system of provinces and counties and established the new 'Banates'. The borders of the new administrative units were, naturally, drawn in a way to ensure the majority of Serbs in as many Banates as possible. Bácska, Baranya and Bánát were assigned to the Danubian Banat, which drastically altered the ethnic composition of the area. In the territory of Vojvodina, the numbers of Serbs and Hungarians were similar, but the proportions in the new Banate changed to 57% of the total population in favor of the Serbs and Slovenes (compared to the previous 37.8%), while the proportion of Hungarians changed to 18.3% (from the previous 27.9%). The same proportional changes occurred in the government agencies and the Banate council.

### *Economic measures*

Only a few examples of discrimination are listed here. The properties of 'foreign citizens' were confiscated, until they received Yugoslav nationality status. This meant that Hungarians, who had lived in this area for centuries, suddenly became foreigners without having left their homes. The agrarian reforms between 1919 - 1921 were implemented on the basis of ethnic origin, at the whim of corrupt government officials. Serb volunteers of World War I were favored at the expense of Hungarians and Germans in the allocation of land. Non-Serbs had their official

documents 're-examined' and the trading licenses of Hungarian and German merchants lifted, so they could not export or import goods.

*Other forms of discrimination*

Non-Serb officials were fired from the organs of public administration, every anti-state element was expelled from the country; the movements of those who remained were significantly limited by the introduction of special identification cards. Close to half of the 750 schools that had operated in 1918 were closed and the operation of the others was made significantly more difficult. Hungarian theaters were banned in Szabadka, Zombor, Ujvidék, Zenta and Nagybecskerek; the minority press was subjected to censorship, placed under the authority of the police and the Attorney General. The members of the non-Serb population were completely isolated from contact with their homeland.

The drastic change in the ethnic composition of the population was further aggravated by some other discriminative sanctions, weakening the economic power of the territories where the Hungarians formed the majority (Szabadka, Nagybecskerek, Becse, Magyarkanizsa, Zenta). Between 1945 and 1953 - according to the data from the Economic Institute of Belgrade - about 70 important industrial institutions: factories, mills, electrical power stations, printing presses were dismantled and moved to Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia or Croatia.

In Vojvodina, the process of reconstruction that followed the war was placed on the back burner. In 1953, the combined value of investments in Bosnia-Herzegovina amounted to 20.2% of the national total, in Croatia 20.6%, Serbia 24.5%, while the province with Hungarian inhabitants received 3.6% in this allocation.

The influx of Slavic settlers to Vojvodina started immediately after World War II. Sixty five thousand settlers arrived in Bácska, Baranya and Bánát from the 'less-developed' regions of Yugoslavia. The agrarian reforms of 1945 gave the newcomers the same privileges as had been given to the partisans and the families who had been the victims of fascism, and the volunteers of World War I sometime earlier. The lands were confiscated from churches, or had been left behind by Germans or Hungarians who had been expelled or otherwise persecuted.

The unjust agrarian reform, the process of violent nationalization and other anti-democratic measures carried out by the Yugoslav government were, at first, harshly criticized by the Western Powers in Potsdam, in 1945, because they ran counter to the declarations concerning the liberation of Europe. However, other international events soon overshadowed these attempts, and international protests soon died away.



Tito's Communist Party soon realized that Yugoslavia's consolidation and national success would probably be more successful by easing the totalitarian methods. The forceful change in the ethnic composition of the population was replaced by the more fraudulent methods of the cadre-policy from the 1950's onwards. This soon proved to be a very effective instrument, both at the various levels of political decision-making and in economic, cultural, educational and other fields of existence. While the well-paid positions in the party, state-administration, banks and large companies were occupied by Serbs, Montenegrins and Bosnians, the only way a Hungarian could become an official or director - with rare exception - was to demonstrate that he was a loyal and obedient communist, ready to ignore the national interests of his own people.

In truth, one must add that - in the territories where the power of the communists was not threatened - the prevailing policies were rather liberal. Hungarians were allowed to study in their mother tongue in the elementary and secondary schools, had a faculty at the university of Ujvidék, had their own newspapers, periodicals, book-publishers, radio and television programs, ethnic theaters existed in Szabadka and Ujvidék and could nurture their traditions. Naturally, this had to take place only within the framework of the given 'rules of the game', with an absolute respect for the concepts of dialectic materialism and self-discipline, and absolute loyalty to the communist party and its leaders, primarily Tito (who had become a legend in his lifetime).

The idea of fraternity and unity had become sacrosanct, thus, if any particular national interest was mentioned, it was considered to be an attack against the sacred aims of the Yugoslav nation. The so-called vertical organization was not allowed in minority community, either in public education or in the field of culture. Almost every establishment and institute was ethnically mixed. At school, almost nothing was taught about Hungarian history (with the exception of some half-truths and falsehoods). Books and newspapers were published under the strict control of the party and had to serve communist ideology and brainwashing.

The consequences of these policies soon became evident in the public and educational life of the minorities. An intellectual class slowly developed, consisting of obedient people considered to be politically suitable, who had developed a program of self-censorship and compromise, and whose career depended on their skill to fit into an officially sanctioned Yugoslav mold.

This relatively slow process of transformation in the ethnic makeup of Vojvodina took on a more drastic form again in 1988. As part of his ill-famed, anti-bureaucratic revolution, Slobodan

Milošević first abolished the autonomy of Kosovo, followed shortly by that of Vojvodina. He fought this 'revolution' with paid demonstrators, with refugees from Kosovo and with loud neo-nationalist Serbs who found excellent allies in the offspring of the earlier settlers in Vojvodina. As a reward for their merits in the 'revolution', Milošević granted a number of political appointments and other plum jobs to the people loyal to him, in this way excluding from the political leadership of the Vojvodina, not only the minorities but also the representatives of the local Serbs.

Following the outbreak of the war in 1991, the Belgrade government found ways to strengthen its own position in Vojvodina. The minorities declared almost immediately that this war was not 'their war' and they did not wish to participate in it. The military authorities drafted a disproportionate number of young Hungarians and sent them to Vukovar or Eszék without any adequate military training. Even under the threat of court martial, a great number of Hungarians living in Vojvodina refused to participate in the war as 'volunteers' and fled to Hungary, leaving their homes, workplaces, and property. Their number can be estimated at about 30,000-40,000. Their houses and property were later occupied by Serb refugees arriving from Bosnia and Krajina.

The first wave of these refugees could blend into the population of the province without any special administrative difficulties. Most of them immediately received their new personal identity documents and Yugoslavian national status; furthermore, they enjoyed significant privileges in employment, primarily in the army, police, customs offices and state administration. The next wave of refugees arriving in Yugoslavia, following the termination of the West-Slavonian and Knin 'Serbian state', were again directed to Vojvodina for settlement and not to Serbia proper. Their exact number is not known to this day. Non-official data mentions 150,000 people, 75% of those remained in Vojvodina. It is obvious that they contributed considerably to the change in the ethnic composition of the former autonomous province. At the time of writing, a new wave of some 40,000 refugees is moving from Kosovo towards Vojvodina.

The Milošević regime, with the centralization of the properties and resources, literally plundered the Voivodina. Owing to the new, artificially created regions, he ensured the political and economic dominance of the majority everywhere. Furthermore, in many minority schools, the education in the mother tongue was replaced by bilingual education. He declared the Serbian language as the language of administration, and furthermore, he created a hopeless situation for

the minority language publishers. It is quite clear that this was a well thought-out, unlawful action on behalf of the Serb elite, in order to establish their autocracy.

### **Criticism and self-criticism**

In this incomplete review of the grievances arising from the Serb-Hungarian coexistence, we have to return to the days of World War II. Serbs will probably recall, for generations to come, their losses suffered in this war, resulting from the Serb communists and political prisoners who were imprisoned in the concentration camp of Sárvár, in the Csillag (Star) prison of Szeged or in the prison of Sátoraljaújhely. They, even more bitterly, still blame the Hungarians for the raid in Ujvidék in 1942, when more than 2,000 Serbs and about 1,000 Jews were cruelly massacred.

Although the pain felt by the relatives of the victims will not be lessened and the atrocity can never be morally justified, Hungarian public opinion swung against the perpetrators of the Ujvidék atrocity, almost immediately after it occurred. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, a member of Parliament, reacted immediately, demanding the punishment of the responsible persons. In addition, Hungarian intellectuals also made an unprecedented gesture: Tibor Cseres, a Hungarian writer, wrote a book about this tragic event and a film was also based on his book. At the same time, one has yet to hear of any Serb writer who had taken the trouble to write any self-criticisms about the butchery of Tito's partisans in the towns and villages of Vojvodina after World War II. (The doctoral thesis of Aleksandar Kasas, cited previously, is no more than a modest attempt to raise this issue, and it cannot be considered as a self-critical gesture, at all.) And while the victims of the raid at Ujvidék were recalled in many heroic poems, the Hungarian victims, whose number was at least ten times that of the Ujvidék, were not even mentioned until well into the 1990's. Their graves are still mostly unmarked and the modest crosses set up unofficially, here and there, have been wrecked by unknown vandals - again and again - all over Vojvodina.

### **Roots Run Deep**

As the story of a balanced historical account is compiled, it is evident that the roots of conflict and hostility between Hungarians and Serbs go back to the appearance and settlement of the former in this region. However, one can argue that these differences crystallized as both communities developed their respective national consciousness. This process had begun

somewhat later among the Serbs, and occurred not only in their traditional homeland but also in the area of historic Hungary, under pressure, because of their minority status there. To exaggerate their own value and defend their privileged, Serbs, more by design than accident, tried to 'catch up' in creating their own national consciousness by reviving their historical myths, where facts were freely interpreted tales and outright falsifications.

In an era when new nations were being born all over Europe, these romantic ethno-nationalistic myths played some positive role, as they facilitated the development of national self-consciousness and the strengthening of national self-esteem and pride that was equivalent to the development of the nation and also the middle class. Unfortunately, the Serbs went too far with the overestimation of their own values: their self-glorification led to the belittling and detestation of other people.

They believed that they were the chosen people of God: they preserved their original noble characteristics, and as a consequence, they were exposed to permanent danger and attack by stronger people setting out to destroy the Serb nation. In their efforts, the enemies of the Serbs can always rely on the support of unfaithful blood brothers, bad neighbors and internal traitors. It is the fate of the Serbs to fight to their last drop of blood, braving death for the preservation of the values, the soul, the sacred cross and freedoms - committed to their trust - even by sacrificing their lives.

We have to be aware of the fact that, in this process, the task of the Serb intellectual class is the more difficult. At the moment, the Serbs are in a disadvantaged position. They have lost not only the sympathy and good will of Hungarians but of the whole world. They must pay the penalty now for electing, about ten years ago, Slobodan Milošević as their sovereign leader. It was Milošević who stirred up the various kinds of nationalism and chauvinism, hostility and the violent ideas, who forced his people by political manipulation, promising them that they would become the leading nation of Yugoslavia of the post-Tito era. And when all these promises failed, he set Greater Serbia as a goal for them, provoking a war, sacrificing several tens of thousands of human lives and homes – winning nothing but losing a great deal.

The country hardly got out of the war when came the demonstrations, disturbances and military conflicts in Kosovo, then the bloody revenge and finally the intervention of the international

community and bombing by NATO. According to some estimates, about half of the industrial capacity, the infrastructure of the country, were destroyed, not to speak of human lives.

The more sober part of the world's public opinion is aware of the fact that neither the warmongering, nor the terrorism and massacres in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo by the para-military organizations is part of the Serb psyche, as a people. Nevertheless, we have to note that these actions branded the Serb people, as a whole. The mass graves in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo will constitute an enormous burden on the Serbs for decades to come.

But one can never tell. It may yet happen that the old proverb - every cloud having a silver lining - will be proved true. For the time being, the situation is as bad as it can be. It is up to the Serbs to decide on, and commit to, the direction of their future and elect people who are able to lead them towards Europe.

### **The Role of Minorities**

Serbs living in Hungary and Hungarians living in Yugoslavia should, by all means, play an important role. Hungarians living in Yugoslavia have explicitly and definitely expressed their own ideas about the future by their aspirations for autonomy. They emphasize that it is not their aim to divide the province on a national basis; just the opposite: they stress that in these territories Hungarians and Serbs must live together. They intend to establish a multinational, multi-regional, interdependent community, the members of which all should enjoy human and democratic rights without any limitation, unlike in the old, formal autonomy. Minority inhabitants will have equal rights with the majority inhabitants and, in terms of preserving and maintaining, where the fostering and development of their own national, regional and cultural values, as well as of their historical traditions.

The basic pillars of the future autonomous Vojvodina will be, in line with this concept, the villages and towns. Their inhabitants would establish national communities and elect so-called national councils, whose members would represent the special interests of the minorities. The Hungarians have already elected their own national council in August 1999, and suggest that other minorities and the Serbs should establish such councils, which would represent them in the parliament of Vojvodina.

The same principle would apply to the proportion of people working in public administration, at all political levels. The proportional participation of minorities should also be implemented in the justice system and the police. Resources should be provided for the purposes of the minority information, scientific works, education and culture, in proportion of the taxes paid by the given national community.

Today, nobody knows how many of the above ideas will materialize, if any. The Serb leadership refuses even the thought of autonomy for Vojvodina and of equal rights for the minorities. With this behavior, they incite demands regarding the transformation of this province into a separate republic and the ideas that a Vojvodina Republic could apply for joining the European community with better chances. Those who will be responsible for making decisions on the issues concerning Vojvodina and the minorities should take into consideration the following points:

Firstly: historical experience shows that it is to the benefit also for the majority population if the minorities are satisfied and live in peace and urge the solutions of their problems within the confines of an existing state.

Secondly: as a result of the process of globalization taking place all over the world, the issues of minorities should not be treated as the internal affairs of an individual country any more. The international community will increasingly insist on the respect of general human and minority rights in the future.

Thirdly: perceptions concerning the situation of Hungarians in Vojvodina play a significant role in the formation of public opinion and government policies regarding the relations between Serbia and Hungary.

In short, the satisfactory solution of the minority issue will be one of the most important factors in creating new ways of cooperation.

It would be a great mistake not to utilize the facilities of the minorities: like the command of the language, local knowledge, the ability to solve the communication problems arising from the differences in outlook. The fact that minorities are living in multinational communities, they possess insights that cannot be replaced either by professional or by political skills. They know

what tolerance is; they are aware of the history and culture of the other people. They have become accustomed to the 'rule' that matters are better solved by patient persuasion and not power but debate, and by the gradual narrowing of differences. We have to keep in mind that these inhabitants share not only the grievances but also the joys of their everyday life with their neighbors. They maintain friendly, working relationships with many of them.

It has never been so important to entrust people from minority populations with highly responsible key positions in the further establishment of good neighborly relationship.

### **Moral integrity, first and foremost**

At the moment one can not tell what the new Yugoslavian leadership will be like, as a potential partner in the building of our common future. One thing is certain: with the current political leaders, cooperation is unimaginable. Those who by force dragged the Hungarians of the Vojvodina to the front at Vukovar and Eszék, to fight against the Hungarians of Baranya; who repealed the minority rights of the Vojvodine, can not be partners in future negotiations.

The politicians, the intellectuals, anyone who is granted an opportunity to save Yugoslavia, have to be above reproach. There is no place for the war criminals among them and in public life, or for compromised persons getting their properties or influence in a dishonest way. There is also no place for people, either, who are not convinced that future cooperation can be based only on real democratization, only by respecting human and minority rights, only by acknowledging international moral standards. This is naturally not a decree worded in the name of the other party; this is simply the only way of recovering confidence. Lacking mutual confidence, there will be neither successful negotiations, nor good neighbors in the future.

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