

THE FAMILY IN THE PROCESS OF RE-EMIGRATION TO SLOVAKIA FROM 1946 TO 1948

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Abstrakt: *V príspevku sa venujeme úlohe rodiny a premenám v rodine v procese reemigrácie, z Maďarska na Slovensko v rokoch 1946 – 1948. Sledovali sme príbehy rodín, ktoré sa zúčastnili výmeny obyvateľstva z oblastí juhovýchodného a severného Maďarska do južného, a banských oblastí stredného Slovenska v období pred presídlením (1. polovice 20. storočia), v čase presídlenia (1946 – 1948), a v začiatkoch života po presídlení na Slovensku (do 60-tych rokov 20. storočia).*

Kľúčové slová: *reemigrácia, reemigrant, Dolná zem, oral history, Maďarsko, Slovensko.*

This article¹ will deal with the role of the family and transformations in the family and family relations during the process of migration. We are also interested in the families of resettled people (or re-emigrants) who took an active part in re-emigration² (population exchange) from the southeastern part of

¹ The author originally published this paper as: MOLNÁROVÁ, K.: Rodina v procese presídlenia na Slovensko v rokoch 1946 – 1948. In: DIVIČANOVÁ, A. – UHRINOVÁ, A. (eds.): *15 rokov Výskumného ústavu Slovákov v Maďarsku*. Békešská Čaba, 2005, pp. 155-170. ISBN 963 86573 5 9. The work is based on the author's diploma thesis (Molnárová 2004), which was completed in consultation with Prof. PhDr. Marta Botiková, CSc.

² We will use the concept of "re-emigration": a "re-emigrant", according to M. Paríková's definition, is based on the designation of "returnees" to Czechoslovakia pursuant to the legal standards of the Czechoslovak state valid in 1945 based on the standards valid in 1938. The main criterion for designating "returnees" was whether the resettlers had Czechoslovak citizenship before 1938. Re-emigrants were inhabitants of Slovak and Czech origin who had left

Hungary (specifically from the village of Nagybánhegyes) to the southern part of Slovakia (the villages of Vlčany, Neded and Žihárec) from 1946 to 1948.³ For a comparative view of the question, we used the results of research carried out in June 2004 in the northern parts of Hungary (the former Nógrád County) as part of the Ethnography Camp organised by the VÚSM (Research Institute of the Slovaks in Hungary) with its headquarters in Békéscsaba.

Over the course of one week, we were able to study, at least partially, the situation of the resettlement of Slovaks from this area from 1946 to 1948. We compare the results of both surveys in the conclusion to this article. Based on the oral history⁴ method used, we obtained testimonies from respondents on the course of their lives, which were affected in many respects by the exchange of populations. We were able to follow the family in each individual testimony. This serves to confirm the fact that the family is the fundamental reference group, even in a migration process. Our attention was focused on respondents of Slovak origin despite the fact that the process of re-emigration also had unfortunate consequences on the lives of Hungarian populations resettled from Slovakia to Hungary. The respondents we chose were bilingual and considered Slovak (or a specific dialect of it) to be their mother tongue. They spoke Slovak in their family circle. Overall, the research captured the life of the population in a Slovak enclave in Hungary before resettlement (the first half of the 20th century), the resettlement itself (the preparation and the actual realisation of the exchange of populations from 1946 to 1948) and the beginnings of a new life after resettlement in Slovakia (until the 1960s).

Czechoslovakia for social reasons long before 1938, or who were born abroad as the children of Czech and Slovak emigrants (Paríková, 2001: 40). Furthermore, we will use the designation “resettlement” as used in historical materials concerning the exchange of populations and as the designation used for this event by the respondents themselves.

³ We conducted the research at the Slovak sites (Neded and Žihárec, Šaľa district) in August 2003 and at the Hungarian site (Nagybánhegyes) in March 2004. Overall, we collected material from interviews with 44 respondents. This material was the main background documentation for the above-mentioned diploma thesis: *Rodina v procese reemigrácie v rokoch 1946 – 1948 (The family in the process of re-emigration to Slovakia from 1946 to 1948)* (Molnárová 2004) in consultation with Prof. PhDr. Marta Botíková, CSc. In this paper, we do not list the whole bibliography for reasons of space. In the case of other sources used, please refer to the diploma thesis in question.

⁴ This method, also known as “narrative interview”, allows us the opportunity to find out about subjectively experienced events affecting personal lives with an accent on the distinctive memories of each respondent, which are evaluated from the viewpoint of the present. The fundamental rule is to develop the narrative line of the respondent. Gabriela Rosenthal, Fritz Schutze and Elena Mannová and others have already dealt with this method.

About re-emigration

Until now articles on re-emigration have been founded on historical research and sources. The question has been dealt with mainly by Hungarian and Slovak historians (Bobák, 1982), sociologists (Kugler, 2000), and to a lesser extent by ethnographers. Ethnographers focused more on life in Slovak enclaves in Hungary (Divičanová, 1998, 1999) or concentrated on shedding light on ethnic relations between Slovaks and Hungarians living in southern Slovakia (Jakubíková, 1992, Michálek – Puškárová, 1992). The first person in Slovak ethnography to deal with the process of re-emigration as one of the processes of migration and partly the role of the institution of the family in this process was Magdaléna Paríková (2001).

Re-emigration, or the exchange of populations in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War, was carried out against the background of decrees made in the government's Košice Programme, when Czechoslovakia was to again become a national state of Czechs and Slovaks. The violent displacement of the German minority from Czechoslovakia immediately after the Second World War took place in this context. The solution to the question of the Hungarian population consisted of a population exchange initiated by Czechoslovakia. It was an alternative to the unilateral displacement of Hungarians, since no Western powers agreed with this original solution to the ethnic question in the Czechoslovak Republic. On the other hand, the Slovaks living in Hungary felt a great desire to return to the country of their ancestors. The exchange of populations was organised with the cooperation of the Antifascist Front of Slovakia in several stages lasting from 1946 to 1948. The agitations of Slovak compatriots carried out by political representatives and spiritual, cultural and educational figures from the former Czechoslovakia were an intrinsic part of these events. The high-profile and emotional campaign of recruitment was intended to attract as many compatriots as possible back to their "homeland".⁵ The resettlement of the Hungarian population did not take place on the basis of voluntarism like it did for the Slovaks living in Hungary. This fact significantly impacted the whole process of the exchange of populations, which was lengthy and did not meet with much comprehension among Hungarian state representatives.

⁵ The operation was carried out according to a slogan used for agitation operations in accompanying pamphlets and notices with the wording "Mother Slovakia is calling you" (Paríková, 2001: 70).

The methodology of the research into the family during the re-emigration process

During our research we were interested in how the individual fates of Slovak families could map out this choice (which was not simple) of being resettled. We perceive the institution of the family in the definition given by Soňa Švecová: “Family as the closest group of relatives is defined in relation to the circle of other relatives by the particular relationships between its members resulting from the family’s biological and social function” (Švecová, 1975, 2-3).

We followed the family, taking into consideration individual determinants which have a significant influence on this institution. In the first instance, we took notice of the family structure, which is one of the indicators of the life of a community as well as of the cultural model preserved by the community. In Central European countries, basic types of family structure were created based on P. Laslett’s classification of family households. M. Mitterauer defined basic areas – ecotypes – for which certain types of family households⁶ are characteristic. On the basis of these theses, we assumed that families were mainly influenced by socio-economic conditions combined with natural conditions. According to this, a certain method of making a living, the employment of family members, the social status of family members, and, last but not least, denomination⁷ are all characteristics of a family. Just as the family and its structure point to a certain preserved cultural or ethno-cultural community model, socio-historical events also have a significant retrospective impact on the family’s life and its structure. We focused on the impacts of these events on the family life and structure of Slovaks from Hungary in the process of re-emigration to Slovakia from 1946 to 1948. In order to define the basic determinants generally influencing the development of the family in Hungary and in Slovakia during the period in question, the almost radical commencement of the industrialisation and modernisation of society after resettlement in Slovakia is of great importance. Thus, when examining the community, two family models appear which were influenced by differing circumstances: whereas in Hungary the continuing pre-industrial way of life, changing only slowly, was characteristic of families, in Slovakia the situation was different. The rapid onset of modernisation also defined the main source of livelihood: people migrated to industrial towns in Slovakia. Mitterauer sees industrialisation as one of the fundamental processes

⁶ Juraj Langer has worked on the study of ecotypes in Slovak and Czech ethnology (Langer, 1994).

⁷ M. Sigmundová has written about the single-child system among Slovaks in southern Slovak areas with a Calvinist (Lutheran) denomination (Sigmundová, 1983).

of social change and thus changes in family life in the 20th century: “Old family and economic structures lost their significance and industrial, salaried work took its place. Changes in family structures cause changes in the organisation of work of greater importance” (Mitterauer, 1996, 109).

According to Mitterauer, migrations are a further process affecting family life. When researching the family, we must take particular notice of economic and cultural motivations and ties concerning the target location of the migration (in our case, resettlement), which cause different problems for all members of the family – men, women and children – and which the family as an independent unit must overcome. Thus, according to Mitterauer, there arises a differing view on migration from the point of view of the individual and that of the family: “In contrast to the original family, problems of contacts, financial support and an eventual return – or a definitive solution – arise. When founding a family, bi-culturalism may become a problem. This can become an important factor with a growing sense of burden as the differences in the cultural background of married partners expand” (Mitterauer, 1996, 113-114).

Other factors were also examined in the research, such as the change in the ethnic and denominational environment of our respondents, which had an influence on the life of the family and community after their arrival in Slovakia. The resettlers mainly came to villages with a Hungarian population, whose denomination was Roman Catholic and Calvinist. On the other hand, the population of this area (Hungarians) had lived here for several generations and found it very difficult to leave their homes, particularly since it was a non-voluntary displacement in their case. This was also one of the reasons why they declared their nationality to be Slovak instead of Hungarian just to avoid resettlement. In this context, respondents remembered the process of adapting to a new environment after resettlement in Slovakia (this includes the period of the 1960s). In terms of this process, we noticed the preservation of family cohesion, ethnicity and denomination during the first years of the new life of re-emigrants in Slovakia.

The family in Nagybánhegyes

Before dealing with the outlined question, it is important to know the background to the formation of the community of Slovaks living until the period of re-emigration in south-eastern Hungary. The area under scrutiny – Békés county – was settled at the beginning of the 18th century by a homogenous ethnic (Slovak) and religious (Lutheran) population, and the settlement was of an agricultural nature. Nagybánhegyes was settled from existing Slovak hamlets: in this case, the important agricultural towns of Békéscsaba, Tótkomlós,

Nagylak and Orosháza. As stated by Anna Divičanová, this fact had an impact on certain inherent contexts and influences which were expressed in the culture of Nagybánhegyes. As Anna Divičanová writes, while characterising important Slovak linguistic islands in the south-east of Hungary (Békés county): “Prospering livestock breeding and arable agriculture ensured self-government in the sphere of state administration (peasant autonomy), and a relatively independent development in the area of cultural institutions, which bore an ethnic significance” (Divičanová, 1999, 21). In this sense, we must not neglect the significant influence of these larger agricultural towns on surrounding Slovak settlements, which might have been different in terms of socio-professional structure, but which had a common foundation in the origins of the population. This influence was reflected in the economic, educational and particularly the cultural spheres. In terms of family life, the conclusion of marriages between the inhabitants of these towns and smaller settlements was of importance, having a regenerating effect on the settlements (Divičanová, 1999, 21).

A further characteristic element of our region was the high ratio of the agrarian proletariat from the second half of the 19th century. This fact resulted from the social structure of this area; on the one hand there was a class of rich farmers owning 100 to 300 *jutro* of land, and on the other there was a relatively high number of middle-ranking peasants. A further important factor which influenced how society was shaped was denomination; the population was Lutheran. In terms of language and culture, the society was connected to the culture of Slovak incomers originally from the Slovak counties of Hont, Novohrad and Gemer (Divičanová, 1999, 32), which also affected the use of a specific dialect with roots in the central Slovak dialects of the Tekov, Hont, Zvolen and Novohrad regions as well as partially the Gemer region (Štolc, 1971, 33-34).

In the first half of the 20th century, the main form of subsistence for the population of Nagybánhegyes was livestock shepherding combined with agriculture. In terms of farming, it was characteristic to form certain farming units composed of numerous secluded farmsteads: the *sálaš*. This type of farming at first created a situation whereby men, and later on whole families or married couples, had two residences. In connection with the development of agriculture as a second source of subsistence, the *sálaš* became a permanent dwelling for whole families, even for all the family’s relatives. The founding of a *sálaš* demanded permanent care for the livestock living in the *sálaš* as well as work in the surrounding fields.

The inhabitants’ employment in the period before resettlement can be followed in the 1941 population census.⁸ The total number of inhabitants

⁸ See Table 1. The main source was statistical data processed by the National Institute for Statistics in Budapest. We mainly followed the social classes in the village of Nagybánhegyes

employed in agriculture made up approximately 85% of those employed overall. Using statistical data, we can follow the high number of independent farmers in the village or tenants farming a surface of land of 1 to 3 cadastral holds (in total 462 = 31 % of all those farming). The number of agricultural seasonal workers was 1298 during that period, making up 40.6 % of the total number of those employed in agriculture. According to the memories of our informers, only large landowners or wealthier farmers who owned larger amounts of land could employ servants in the village. In the first half of the 20th century, there were six large landowners in the village who employed servants and employed poorer families for work in the fields and around livestock. Inhabitants who worked as seasonal agricultural workers earned money hoeing corn, scything, beating and harvesting for the landowners. For their work, they were then paid in kind according to a ratio of the work carried out. These agricultural workers were called *ríseši*. They did not usually own a *sálaš* but lived in the village (they owned less than five cadastral holds). The population was also employed in more distant agricultural towns and villages as seasonal and daily agricultural workers.

Independent farmers usually only farmed their own land or else rented church land. They tried to use their own family as their workforce. Larger farmers hired permanent helpers/servants called *bíreš* (*komenciós*) to help with livestock as well as for agricultural work on the *sálaš*. Such domestic staff usually lived with their family in the owner's *sálaš*, negotiating every year for a position with the owner. Generally the employment of domestic staff and decisions on their position took place once a year based on an oral agreement. Children were used as working hands to help the family's farming. Families in particular who could not employ a *bíreš* used their own resources to carry out their work. From the age of 12, boys used to graze swine (swineherds) and girls used to tend geese. Children from large poor families used to be employed as servants in the household and on the farm, usually all year round. According to the memories of our respondents, in the first half of the 20th century there were many children in the village who went to work for richer farmers.

An important indicator of family life is its structure. During the research, we were not able to capture the precise characteristic of the family structure in the period studied (in the 1940s). The informers' interviews showed that family households mainly consisted of a married couple with children and grandparents, and variations of this type. There were also nuclear families of

as well as data on the ownership of agricultural land from 1941. Az 1941. Évi népszámlálás. I. Foglalkozási adatok községek szerint. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal könyvtár- és dokumentációs szolgálat. Budapest, 1975, pp. 208–209, 522–523.

a married couple with children. According to the observation by Soňa Švecová: "... nuclear families were a permanent part of the social make-up of villages in every municipality and in every period ..." (Botíková – Jakubíková – Švecová, 1997, 27) and were thus a certain transitional step to the extended family (whether new nuclear families were created in the process of the cyclical change of the composition of the extended family once the sons' families had been divided up, or whether these families grew). Based on this observation, the occurrence of nuclear families was not specific to the village. The so-called joint family⁹ mainly appeared in the memories of those informers who lived on a *sálaš*. In this context, informers remembered the life and farming of several married brothers and their families with parents (middle-earning farmers) on the *sálaš* until their sons built their own *sálaš* and became independent (the period when several families cohabited lasted two to three years). According to a study of ecotypes and their definition based on criteria defined by the researchers,¹⁰ we might characterise the area of Nagybánhegyes as being a transition between a cereal and livestock ecotype. There is an overlap between farming on the *sálaš* and looking after livestock, necessitating the permanent presence of domestic staff – *bíreš* – hired for the whole year. On the other hand, in the village there were a lot of seasonal and daily agricultural workers (*ríseš*) employed directly on the site or in more distant agricultural towns. Further analysis of the question was not, however, the main objective of this research.

We examined the family and family relations in Nagybánhegyes in the first half of the 20th century to see how the latter were expressed in the roles and statuses of individual household members, the position of individual members in the family, kinship terminology, the selection of a spouse, the number of children and the passing on of family property. We were able to record an interesting kinship terminology preserved by the community which corresponds to a great extent with the terminology preserved in other Slovak settlements in Hungary.¹¹

⁹ According to P. Laslett's classification of family households, these are multiple-family households of two or more married couples with or without children living together and in various configurations. We applied the classification according to work by Botíková, M.: *Roľnícka žena v rodine a spoločensve*. Doctoral thesis. Bratislava : Comenius University, 1984; and Herzánová, E.: *Rodina – jej štruktúra a hospodárenie v súvislosti s prírodným prostredím*. Diploma thesis, Bratislava : Comenius University, 1999.

¹⁰ For further details, see Langer, 1994.

¹¹ The words for addressing father – *apo*, grandfather – *apouka*, grandmother – *mamouka*, sister-in-law from the husband's side – *and'ika*, brother-in-law – *šógor*, older brother – *bá'ta*, *bá'čí*, etc., significantly correspond to the terminology used for relatives in Szarvas. Compare with Pančuhová, 1996.

For the subject in question – re-emigration – the criteria for choosing a spouse and the reclusiveness of the community in *sálaš* farming turned out to be significant in the life of a family. When choosing a spouse, the fact that the villages were “related” to the surrounding villages and larger agricultural towns came to the forefront as an important determinant. A common culture and ancestral origins were then expressed in the conclusion of a marriage. The criterion of ethnicity and denomination in the partner were thus guaranteed. In the area around Nagybánhegyes, such “related” villages were Tótkomlós, Pitvaros, Csanádalberti, Ambrózfalva, Medgyesegyháza and Békéscsaba. On the other hand, daughters-in-law or sons-in-law who had “married in” from another village were looked at in a different way than locals. Daughters-in-law from Tótkomlós, for example, were considered “proud”, which was associated to the growing bourgeois nature of the culture of Tótkomlós from the middle of the 19th century.¹² A comparison of registry records from the village and testimonies from informers from the first half of the 20th century show that the economic point of view was of primary importance when entering into marriage. Women were married relatively young, at the age of 16 or 17, to provide labour for the family. The average marriage age for men was 20 to 23 (influenced by military service in the 1930s and 1940s). We also recorded a significant number of second marriages, when a widow or widower married for a second time. It was not unusual in this case for children from both marriages to be brought up in the marriage. There were also marriages between divorced people.

A larger number of children in families only confirmed the necessity to provide labour from within one’s own ranks. Having a connection with the generation of grandparents played an important role in the children’s upbringing. Children whose parents worked all year on a *sálaš* went to live in the village for the school term, where they were looked after by their grandparents. Sometimes children from two or three brothers met up in this way. Once they had finished school, the sons in particular were the main labour on the family farm. In the first half of the 20th century, a relatively high mortality rate was not unusual, including mortality among newborns. In the case of poor, daily agricultural workers we noticed many orphans who went into service for the whole year. Older siblings also participated in their upbringing.

¹² A. Divičanová mentions Tótkomlós in this context as follows: “From the second half of the 19th century, a Slovak bourgeois (elite) culture was present in the Tótkomlós community alongside popular and religious culture received and borne, cultivated and passed on mainly by the classes of moderately wealthy farmers and craftsmen” (Divičanová, 1996, 9).

A family from Nagybánhegyes in the process of re-emigration to Slovakia from 1946 to 1948

From the point of view of motivations playing a role in the decision to resettle for individual families, we were able to follow an overlap of several factors related to the long-term development of the family and the social and economic life of families in Dolná zem.¹³ Social motivations were also a factor. The opportunity to obtain land and a house when resettling in Slovakia met with approval particularly among less wealthy social classes. From this point of view, it was mainly propertyless and seasonal agricultural workers and middle-ranking farmers who resettled from the area in question. Since we are following the post-war period, the release of men from Russian captivity (as promised by government representatives) played an important role to ensure they could resettle with their families.

National motivations were another important consideration for the population, mainly out of fear of assimilation in the post-war Hungarian environment. For resettlers, the possibility of resettling in a Slovak environment, where they assumed they would be able to use Slovak freely (or a particular dialect) and preserve cultural customs was an important factor. For pragmatic reasons, the better economic conditions of postwar Czechoslovakia were of particular importance. The gradual focus on industrial production and the casting off of the agrarian way of life in Czechoslovakia also contributed to this fact. In relation to the above, the compactness of the resettlement of families and communities of Slovaks from Dolná zem also came to prominence as a distinctive demand. Family cohesion was seen intensely in all criteria, with the decisive argument for resettlers being the intention and decision to resettle near their relatives.¹⁴ For the re-emigration of Slovaks from Nagybánhegyes, it was typical for whole families to resettle. Overall, 80% of the population of Slovak origin left.

¹³ Means “Lowland” in literal translation; in Hungarian it is also known as Alföld. It is a historical-geographical name for the Great Hungarian Lowland that is situated in the Danube and Tisa river basins. It includes all regions situated in the area south of the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic border (the territories of modern-day Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria that created the southern part of the former Hungarian kingdom) that were settled by Slovaks in the 18th and 19th centuries as the result of the Ottoman defeat and the recolonisation of these areas (Botik – Slavkovský, 1995, 100).

¹⁴ An 80-year old respondent explained this situation as follows: “Would my sister, brother and brother in law re-emigrate? Would I stay here alone? Then the Magyar people came here ... and this was how families re-emigrated together to Slovakia.” For more, see Molnárová, 2004, 50.

We followed the family structure in the actual process of resettling in the registration documents for resettled inhabitants to the initial village of Neded.¹⁵ It has been shown that resettlement affected the family structure to the extent that the frequency of nuclear (individual) families increased. This fact resulted from the opportunity for young married couples to become independent by being allocated a flat (house) formerly belonging to displaced inhabitants of Hungarian origin. In this context, re-migration made many couples enter marriage more rapidly. The overall course and organisation of re-emigration by the Czechoslovak state was of great importance in making a decision on resettlement. The question of the existential provision for families in the new environment was important. One of the advantages for re-emigrants was that families could take all their movable property with them and thus survive during the provisional period of the first and most testing moments in Slovakia. Thus the family played an important role in the new environment on a psychological level and from the point of view of any existential support. In several cases, resettled relatives could not move into their allocated house immediately on their arrival in Slovakia, since the Hungarian inhabitants had not yet been displaced. However, they could rely on their relatives who had already moved into their allocated house. Such situations occurred because of the unbalanced process of the stages involved in resettling individual joint economic units of Slovak and Hungarian families.

Resettlement affected not only the lives of resettlers confronting a new environment with a different ethnic and denominational group but also broke up the hitherto rather isolated and mainly homogenous cultural island in Hungary in terms of ethnic group and denomination. On the other hand, the importance of the compact resettlement of families of re-emigrants was confirmed after their resettlement in Slovakia. Re-emigrants were resettled in several villages, causing further breaks in family connections. They arrived in villages with a predominantly Hungarian population of Catholic and Calvinist denomination. This made them an ethnic and denominational minority in their new environment. During the initial period of their lives in Slovakia, there was a preference for endogamy among resettlers themselves or among resettlers of Slovak origin from

¹⁵ 422 families from Nagybánhegyes were resettled in the village of Neded, totalling around 1500 people. The families were recorded in the registration documents by the head of family, most frequently the father of the oldest generation, followed by his wife, their children, any married children, their partners, grandchildren and any parents of the head of the household who were still alive. Further personal information in the documents contained the date of birth of each family member and, in some cases, the maiden names of married women or widows, the number of the matched house in Neded and the date of resettlement. We evaluated the families according to P. Laslett's classification of types of family households.

other areas of Hungary who were resettled in surrounding villages in southern Slovakia (around the research location, these were, for example, people from Pitvaros resettled in Tešedíkovo and people from Tótkomlós resettled in Horné Saliby). When concluding mixed marriages with the local Hungarian population, the important criterion was denomination.

After their arrival in Slovakia, farming conditions proved to be significantly different. Whereas in their original environment farmers farmed large areas in *sálaš* settlements, in their new environment in Slovakia they were allocated parcelled fields. The conditions for the economic and social development of resettlers in Hungary and in Slovakia also differed. Whereas in the isolated environment of Hungary, we encountered traditional ways of farming and family life, due to the industrialisation and modernisation of society in Slovakia there were new conditions for making a living and in family life as well. In this case, industrialisation and modernisation had a distorting effect on the life and cohesion of the widened structural type of family. There were also new migrations within Slovakia as a result of the advantages and opportunities for young families employed in industry in central and western Slovakia to become independent. When maintaining contact between resettlers in Slovakia with those Slovaks in Hungary who had not resettled, this was mainly on the initiative of the oldest living generations who had emotional ties to their previous way of life and relatives who had not resettled. Subsequently the generations of their children who grew up in the new conditions limited this contact significantly. One of the reasons was that their direct relatives in Hungary gradually died out.

Re-emigration of Slovaks from Nógrád county

Thanks to the Ethnographic Camp organised in 2004 by the Research Institute of Slovaks Living in Hungary, we were able to examine how the exchange of populations affected the lives of families in the Nógrád county villages of Lucfalva and Sámsonháza in Hungary.

In the first half of the 20th century, the area of Nógrád County offered its inhabitants employment opportunities in the mining industry as well as in agriculture. The re-emigration of Slovaks living there was therefore subsequently organised into the mining area in Slovakia around the town of Handlová (the matched locations for the village of Lucfalva were the Mikušovce, Rapovce and later on Lučenec, which resettlers already in Slovakia migrated to afterwards). The resettlers were allocated houses previously inhabited by displaced Germans (a significant part of the population around Handlová had been of German origin) and Hungarians. The mainly farming inhabitants of Sámsonháza were

matched with the village of Jarošovce. From the point of view of research into family life in the first half of the 20th century, we noted the preservation of a certain reproductive model in the village of Sámsonháza. The population preferred one to two children compared to neighbouring Lucfalva, where large families were predominant. This fact was all the more interesting since the inhabitants of Sámsonháza and Lucfalva were of the same (Slovak) origin and of the same denomination (Lutheran).¹⁶ We can thus explain the preservation of this reproductive model as an economic particularity in order to prioritise a single heir and thus avoid dividing up land. This thesis is partially confirmed by the fact that the inhabitants of Sámsonháza were labelled by those from Lucfalva as being “cleverer”: they knew how to make money from every agricultural product. Since our research focused more on the family’s role in the process of re-emigration (our research location was more or less the village of Lucfalva, and we only spent one day in Sámsonháza), we are convinced that research into the reproductive model in Sámsonháza requires particular attention when bearing in mind the factors that might have caused or affected this phenomenon.

In order to compare the conditions in which the communities under scrutiny were formed as part of re-emigration, we need to point out that the Nógrád area is more or less in the northern part of Hungary. This fact resulted in certain differences when comparing the formation of the community compared to Slovaks from the Békés area. We can state as a result of the research that the conditions and the process of the exchange of populations itself were similar in both areas under scrutiny. Social motivations were predominant motives for resettlement in the Nógrád area. Whole families were mainly resettled, i.e. married couples with children, in some cases with grandparents.

When choosing matched locations, the resettlement committee tried to preserve the natural conditions and main source of employment of its population and keep them the same as in their original village. Nevertheless, certain unpleasant situations arose after the resettlement of inhabitants on both sides in Slovakia and in Hungary (Nagybánhegyes). The Hungarian inhabitants resettled from Slovakia to Nagybánhegyes were a new element in a community which was dealing with separation from relatives and neighbours. Unlike Nagybánhegyes, Lucfalva in the Nógrád area remained almost empty. No inhabitants from Slovakia were resettled in the village; the German population living in the matched location in Slovakia had been displaced immediately after the Second World War. This fact enabled many married couples to buy a house formerly belonging to those

¹⁶ Compare with Sigmundová, 1983.

who had resettled and thus become independent. During our research at sites in Slovakia, questions of an inter-ethnic and denominational nature come to the forefront in relation to the arrival of resettlers in villages with differing ethnic and denominational groups. The work of Slovak ethnologists (Jakubíková 1992: 87) pointed out that it was necessary to approach the question of the exchange of populations – whether following family life, social, material culture or the oral literature of inhabitants actively involved in this socio-political event – from the point of view of the life of the community and not only that of the theme being examined.

Conclusion

According to the above mentioned research, following the methodology we could see several social, national and pragmatic motivations for Slovaks to re-emigrate from Hungary to Slovakia during the exchange of populations in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. In contrast to mostly national motivations in Békés district, social motivations predominated in northern Nógrád district. However family cohesion was the main indicator for deciding to re-emigrate in all cases.

The structure of family could be traced from the lists of Slovaks willing to re-emigrate from the village of Nagybánhegyes (Békés district) to villages in Slovakia in 1946. It has been shown that resettlement affected family structure to the extent that the frequency of nuclear families increased. This fact resulted from the opportunity for young married couples to become independent by being allocated a house in Slovakia formerly belonging to displaced inhabitants of Hungarian origin. In this context, re-migration made many couples enter marriage more rapidly.

In order to define the basic determinants generally influencing the development of the family in Hungary and in Slovakia during the period in question, the almost radical commencement of the industrialisation and modernisation of society after resettlement in Slovakia is of great importance. Thus, when examining the community, two family models appear which were influenced by differing circumstances: whereas in Hungary the continuing pre-industrial way of life, changing only slowly, was characteristic for families, in Slovakia the situation was different. The rapid onset of industrialisation and modernisation also defined the main source of livelihood: young families in particular migrated to industrial towns in Slovakia to become independent. In this case, industrialisation and modernisation had a distorting effect on the life and cohesion of the widened structural type of family.

Focusing on the influence of the migration process on this topic, resettlement broke up the mainly homogenous cultural island in Hungary in terms of ethnic group (Slovak) and denomination (Lutheran) on one hand, and on the other made resettled Slovaks into an ethnic and denominational minority in their new environment after their resettlement in several villages in Slovakia with a predominantly Hungarian population of Catholic and Calvinist denomination. Nevertheless, during the first years of life for re-emigrants in Slovakia we noticed the preservation of family cohesion, ethnicity and denomination.

There are also other sources that were not used in our research – for instance, the correspondence between re-emigrants and their relatives who stayed in Hungary – that can bring more personal attitudes to the researched phenomenon. On the other hand, we are convinced that through intensive research into the families and communities after re-settlement both in Slovakia and Hungary we will be able to better follow the role of the family within ethno-cultural processes in present-day Europe.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Inhabitants of Nagybánhegyes employed in agriculture according to the 1941 census.

Inhabitants	Employed in agriculture	Independent farmers	Helpers	Of which are farming on cad. holds*:			Agricultural workers	Of which	
				1-5	5-20	20-100		permanent	seasonal
3743	3192	1144	345	895	419	175	1703	405	1298

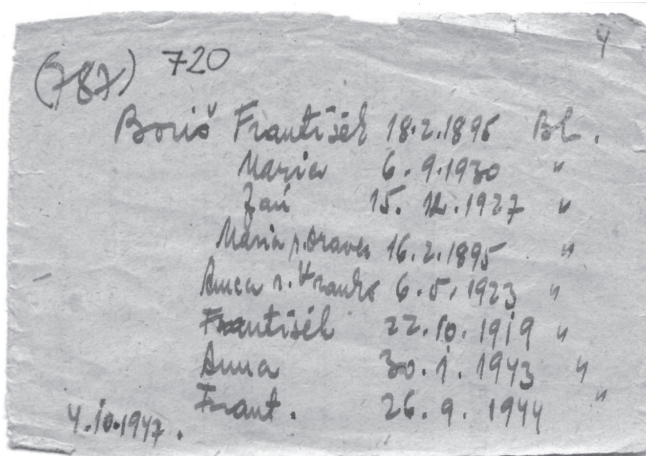
* The surface area of agricultural land owned was calculated in cadastral holds (Hungarian: *jutro*).

Table 2

National data for ČSPK (Czechoslovak Re-emigration Committee) seats in the area of the 16th Tótkomlós district, agricultural immovable property declared by inhabitants for resettlement (Kugler, 2000, p. 157).

ČSPK district	According to the 1941 census					Immovable property for resettling registered people	
	Population	Slovak speakers	Slovak as mother tongue	Slovak ethnicity	Registered for resettlement ***	Total (cad. holds)	Of which private property (cad. holds)
	Number of inhabitants						
XVI. KOMLOS							
Tótkomlós	10933	9162	8296	722	449	3452	1932
Pitvaros	2843	2726	2576	821	2570	2732	1694
Nagybánhegyes	3743	3082	2788	722	2561	2147	1638
Csanádalbertyi	1510	1440	1371	988	1330	1511	1005
Ambrózfalva	1008	924	870	252	576	500	205
Another 36 sites						1068	545
Komlós district total					12975	11411	7019

*** According to the Czechoslovak Re-emigration Committee's 1946 census.



Pic. 1

A re-emigrant's card. A multiple-family household: parents with children, one married son and his children. The private archives of František Boríš.



Pic. 2
Pupils in Nagybánhegyes, Hungary, around 1935.
The private archives of Štefan Molnár.



Pic. 3
The Titíš family, Nagybánhegyes,
Hungary, 1943. The private
archives of the Titíš family.



Pic. 4
A young groomsman. Nagybánhegyes,
Hungary, around 1940s. The private
archives of Anna Marková.



Pic. 5

A family of re-emigrants – the Marko brothers with their families in Neded, Slovakia, 1958. The private archives of Mária Molnárová.



Pic. 6

A wedding of re-emigrants in Neded, Slovakia, 1960.
The private archives of Mária Molnárová.