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### **Hungarians in Czechoslovakia: Changes in Their Population and Settlement System from 1918 to the Present Day**

The first census in the territory of the Slovak Republic—independent since 1993—was held at the census moment of May 25, 2001. It differed from the previous ones in several respects. (Instead of trying to present all of the aspects, only those will be emphasised that concern the subject of the study.) This was the first time that the poll—with the questionnaire filled out by the respondent, a method inherited from the Czechoslovak tradition—was anonym. That is, the name of the answering person does not figure at the questionnaires and it is (would be) possible to identify the polled persons only indirectly. Also the nationality list of the survey form fails to resemble that of 1991 or even an earlier version of the questionnaire. Six nationalities are itemized in the final version (Slovak, Hungarian, Roma, Czech, Ruthenian, Ukrainian) beyond the 'else' category. It was the third time (after 1970 and 1991) in the history of (Czecho)slovak censuses that the mother tongue was polled and, similarly, it was the third time in the history of censuses subsequent to World War II that the denominational affiliation was questioned. The processing of the questionnaires, too, would be carried out with a new technique. The majority of the data would be recorded with an optic procedure, which would make the publication of the results faster.

The question arises what the demographic and socio-structural composition of the Hungarians of Slovakia was like in the 1990s and what changes are to be expected in the first decade of the new millennium. For the sake of its analysis, let us examine the tendencies of the number of Hungarians living in Slovakia in the Czechoslovak era and then take a look at the development of their most significant demographic and socio-structural characteristics in comparison to the national figures.

#### **Ethnicity-related aspects of Czechoslovak censuses**

The Czechoslovak Republic was a variegated, multinational state formation. Beside the 6,7 million Czechs, 3 million Germans, 103.000 Polish, 13.000 Ukrainians and the few other nationalities, only 7000 Hungarians lived in the Czech part of the country. Although the number of Hungarians increased steadily in the following decades, it still did not reach 20.000 in 1991.

The 1921 census in Slovakia indicated 650.000 Hungarians, almost 90.000 Russians, Ruthenians, and Ukrainians, moreover more than 140.000 Germans and 73.000 Jews beyond the 1,95 million Slovaks (Table 1). The changes of minority distribution of the population of Czechoslovakia between 1921 and 1991 are converted to the post-World War II territory, and presented in Table 1. The proportion of Czech and Slovak persons increased to a great extent already in the period between the two wars: from 67,65% to 69,42% between

## Conditions of Minorities

Table 1.

Distribution of the population of Slovakia on the basis of nationalities between 1910–1991

Year**	1910**	1921***	1930***	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991****
Czech	7,489 0,26%	72,635 2,24%	121,696 3,65%	40,365 1,17%	45,721 1,10%	47,402 1,04%	57,197 1,15%	52,884 1,00%
Slovak	1,688,155 57,82%	1,952,368 65,06%	2,251,358 67,61%	2,982,524 86,64%	3,560,216 85,29%	3,878,904 85,49%	4,317,008 86,49%	4,519,328 85,69%
Hungarian	884,309 30,29%	650,597 21,68%	592,337 17,79%	354,532 10,30%	518,782 12,43%	552,006 12,17%	559,490 11,21%	567,296 10,76%
German	198,304 6,79%	145,844 4,86%	154,821 4,65%	5,179 0,15%	6,259 0,15%	4,760 0,10%	2,918 0,06%	5,414 0,10%
Ukrainian+Russian	97,162 3,33%	88,970 2,96%	95,359 2,86%	48,231 1,40%	35,435 0,85%	42,238 0,93%	39,260 0,79%	30,478 0,58%
Polish	10,069 0,34%	6,059 0,20%	7,023 0,21%	1,808 0,05%	1,012 0,02%	1,058 0,02%	2,053 0,04%	2,659 0,05%
Other+Unknown	34,306 0,17%	84,397 2,82%	107,199 3,22%	9,678 0,28%	6,621 0,16%	10,922 0,24%	13,242 0,27%	96,276 1,83%
<b>TOTAL</b>	2,919,794 100,00%	3,000,870 100,00%	3,329,793 100,00%	3,442,317 100,00%	4,174,046 100,00%	4,537,290 100,00%	4,991,168 100,00%	5,274,335 100,00%

\* Population considering the post WW II territory of Slovakia. The 1921, 1930, and 1950 figures refer to the present population, the 1961, 1970, 1980, and 1991 figures to the resident population.

\*\* The nationality distribution is given on the basis of mother tongue in 1910.

\*\*\* The Other category of the 1921 and 1930 censuses include also those of Jewish nationality. Their number was 73,211 (2,44%) in 1921, and 72,026 (0,22%) in 1930.

\*\*\*\* The Moravians 6,037 (0,11%), Silesians 405 (0,01%), Romas 75,802 (1,44%), Ruthenians 17,197 (0,33%) figured first at the 1991 census. They are presented in the Other+Unknown category. The Ukrainian+Russian category includes the sum of the figures of the Ukrainian and Ruthenian minorities in 1991 (without Russians).

## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

1920 and 1930. The ratio of the non-'Czechoslovak' population of the post-WW II Czechoslovakia decreased by about 80% due to the measures aiming at the establishment of a Slav nation-state after 1945. The changes in the nationality composition were different in Bohemia and Slovakia.

It is not easy to make a numerical definition in connection to the nationality composition of Slovakia which formed a part of the new state formation born after 1918. The nationality figures of the 1910 Hungarian and 1921 Czechoslovak censuses differ from each other to a great extent. The population of the territory of today's Slovakia was 2,9 million in 1910 with 884.000 Hungarians (30,3%), 1.688.000 Slovaks (57,8%), 198.000 Germans (6,8%), 97.000 Ruthenians (3,3%), 10.000 Polish (0,3%), 7.000 Czechs (0,3%), 34.000 of those of other and unknown mother tongue (1,2%). The number of those of Hungarian nationality dropped to 651.000 (21,7%) in 1921, while that of Slovak nationals rose to 1.952.000 (65,1%). The number of the other nationalities of Slovakia decreased as well. The arrival of a significant number of officials and military officers increased the Czech population to 73.000 (2,4%). (Table 2). The 1910 census recorded the ethnicity on the basis of belonging to a mother tongue, so the comparison of its results to the later censuses is certainly problematic in this respect. The expansion of the Czechoslovak element in a merely two-year period indicates, on the one hand, the results of migrations of a magnitude of hundreds of thousands of people and, on the other, the changes in the census categories. Not only the new recording procedure which replaced the one taking the mother tongue as its basis, brought about substantially diverging distribution. Also the addition of Jewish ethnicity in the questionnaire decreased the number of those of Hungarian nationality by the tens of thousands.

Between 1921 and 1991, the population of Slovakia increased from 3 million to 5,27 million (by 75,6%).<sup>1</sup> The number of inhabitants of Hungarian nationality decreased by 12,9%, from 651.000 to 567.000, and their proportion within the resident population of Slovakia was reduced to its half, from 21,7% to 10,8%. The lowest level, measured in 1950, was followed by significant growth in 1961, moderate growth in 1970, and a minimum rise in 1980 and 1991. All this was accompanied by the constant decline of the proportion of Hungarians.

The number of Slovak nationals grew by 131,4%, from 1.953.000 to 4.519.000, and their proportion within the population of that part of the country from 65,1% to 85,7%. In the 1920s, the number of inhabitants of every nationality but the Hungarians' increased in the Slovak parts: according to the figures of the 1930 census, the number of Hungarians fell by 10%, from 651.000 to 585.000. Two primary factors contributed to the drop of

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, the figures of the 1921 are given converted to the current territory of Slovakia. The data of 1921 are slightly different from this. Certain border changes were carried out only after the first half of the 1920s, and the territory of Slovakia extended also after 1945, due to the annexation of three villages south of Pozsony. Besides, the administrative border of Transcarpathia and Slovakia differed from the current one as well. There is a divergence in the figures of Slovakia together with Transcarpathia of an order of magnitude of some hundred thousands. Beyond the fact that the data refer to varying territorial extensions, the ethnicity figures of the first Czechoslovak considerably diverge depending on the number of persons whose citizenship was in order and those whose was not or were foreign citizens. Popély, 1991. p. 59.

Conditions of Minorities

Table 2.

Natural growth of the Hungarian of Slovakia  
1990–1999



their number. First, a great part of the civil servants, officials, and other intellectuals emigrated to Hungary and second, a part of the population, which was uncertain regarding its ethnic identity—who indicated themselves as Hungarians before—joined the majority. It deserves attention that the results of the census carried out under Hungarian authority after the re-annexation of territories in conformity with the Vienna Awards, did not confirm the demographic transformations indicated by the 1921 and 1930 censuses. At the same time, they all reveal that polling one’s belonging to an ethnicity through censuses does not give an objective picture at all on the transformations of the ethnic composition of the population in territories inhabited by such groups. The admitted, or rather, demonstrated ethnic composition of multinational state formations greatly depends on the policy of the state authority that has the power over the given territory towards national minorities.

The results of the 1941 Hungarian census—at the territories re-annexed to Hungary after the Vienna Awards—manifest the wholeness and recovery of the Hungarian language area. A census took place in the territory of the Slovak state as well in the same year but no figures were made public in a depth of results broken down to the level of villages. The ethnic composition revealed in 1951, reflects the most tragic—objective and subjective—changes of the history of Hungarians in Slovakia up to the present day.

The development of the fate of the Hungarian part of the nation was determined irreversibly by the few years following the war: 31.780 persons who had moved in from the territory of Hungary defined at Trianon were banished from the country, about 70.000 Hungarians were deported in the framework of a Hungarian-Czechoslovak population exchange, some 6.000 persons fled to exile in fear of persecutions. The number of those deported to the Czech part of the country was presumably about 50.000. Morally, the ‘re-slovakisation’ afflicted the Hungarians of Slovakia the most. 410.820 re-slovakisation applications had been submitted

## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

before the end of 1947 and half of the applicants were indeed declared Slovaks. The settlement structure of the areas inhabited by Hungarians which had been homogeneous in the period between the world wars, broke up and changed under the influence all these measures. They were increasingly turned into territories of a more or less mixed population.

Thus, barely two years after the afflictions striking the whole of the Hungarians, the 1950 census could have hardly revealed else but the decrease of a broken, humiliated ethnic group which was made unsure about its identity. (The recorded 354.532 Hungarians—10% of the population of Slovakia—did not indicate the real number of the Hungarians of Slovakia. The result expressed, above all, how many persons declared their Hungarian ethnicity such a short time after the adversities.)

From the end of the 1940s on, a significant change took place in the handling of the national minority—first of all Hungarian—issue. The Stalinist regime of Gottwald succeeded the system aiming at the formation of a Slav nation-state. The deprivation of the Hungarian population's rights ended (from another point of view, the population of the country as a whole can be regarded as a people deprived of their rights), and the reintegration of Hungarians into the political, economic, and social life commenced. Neither the Soviet interest which welded the East European countries into a union nor the national minority policy of Lenin risen to the rank of official ideology made the continuation of the practice of earlier years feasible. Nonetheless, the vision of creating a Slav nation-state remained among the long-term goals of the Czechoslovak political power.

The census of 1961 indicated a 150.000 increase in the number of Hungarians. Their number was 518.782 in Slovakia at that time, 12,4% of the population of Slovakia. The figures of the census disproved the calculations and predictions of the demographers. The relevant scientific literature questioned the objectivity of the 1950 figures afterwards but only very carefully and in a restrained tone. It was evident that not even the 'most positive national minority politics' would be able to exert an influence, which could increase the population of a minority in such an extent (an increase of 46,3% in one decade). On the other hand, the rise of the number of Hungarians of such proportions strengthened the sense of security and the weakened identity of Hungarians in Slovakia.

The nationalist manifestations parallel to the fermentation of 1968 did not fall back with their rhetoric behind the ones prevailing in the second part of the 40s. It proved that the idea of the formation of a homogeneous nation-state had lived on during the twenty years that passed in between only that it could come to the surface. The coexistence of the nations and nationalities proclaimed to be exemplary in the years of consolidation was characterized by circumstances divergent from what was included in the propaganda texts. The school policy of the 70s, which abolished the small primary schools and created district schools, made a cut possible in the Hungarian school network. On the instructions of the highest level party and governmental leadership, an effort was made to render the Hungarian school network gradually bilingual and degrade it into schools teaching (also) the Hungarian language.

According to the figures of the 1970 census, the Hungarian population amounted to 552.006 persons (12,2% of the population of Slovakia). This increase (by 33.000 persons) surpassed the demographic calculations by 2.000. It is probable that a few thousands of those re-slovakised persons, who declared themselves to be Slovak in 1961,

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## Conditions of Minorities

now turned back to Hungarian ethnicity and this resulted in the somewhat higher figures of the Hungarian population. Beside the national composition, also the picture of the population distribution—examined on the basis of the mother tongue—was relatively more objective in 1970. The phenomenon known already from before repeated itself: more declared themselves to belong to a minority on the basis of belonging to a mother tongue than on the level of national, nationality identification. The number of Hungarians was almost 10% higher according to the mother tongue than on the basis of ethnic identity.

The number of Hungarians in Slovakia rose by 7.500, to 559.490 by 1980. Their proportion among the population of Slovakia decreased from 12,2% to 11,2% in ten years. The results of the 1980 census surprised both the Hungarian inhabitants and the demographers. It became clear that this minimal increase, practically stagnation, was due to the nationality change, or rather, the assimilation of a growing stratum of Hungarian population. More factors played a decisive role in this. The scarcer school network; in part because of this, the increase in the number of Hungarian students who did not receive an education in their mother tongue; and the gradually increasing rate of mixed marriages, which was probably the most significant factor in provoking the nationality change and assimilation. Neither the urbanisation process can be ignored nor its indirect consequences—like e.g. moving into the cities. Certain internal mechanisms, false beliefs, propaganda phrases, and defence mechanisms laid the foundations of the effects of these factors. In any case, the signs of the slow wearing away of the 70s, the questioning of the sense of accepting minority state, the resignation, and the apathy became manifest in the numbers of the 1980 census. The aging of the Hungarian population continued, just as its unfavourable distribution according to school qualification: the continuation of the disadvantageous schooling—and as a consequence—and employment structure. The renewed attempts of the 80s to eliminate the Hungarian school system brought about the opposition of a wider stratum of the Hungarian population. Due to this, the problem of consciously accepting one's ethnic identity became more and more of an integral part of the public opinion of Hungarian minority society in the period preceding the changes of 1989.

The 1991 census took place in the ambiguous atmosphere of the times following the transformations in 1989. 1991 was the first possibility since decades for the organisation of the census in freer and more democratic circumstances. However, also the intolerant anti-minority—and, first of all, anti-Hungarian—atmosphere of instigation and hatred could be felt. The way the census of March 3, 1991 was carried out was different from the practice of previous censuses. The question on the religious, denominational affiliation was on the questionnaire for the first time since 1950 and the mother tongue was there again after 1970 (It was missing in 1980). The fact that the question options delineating the ethnic affiliation were changed significantly, had a relevant influence on the developments of the nationality composition. The censuses of 1961, 1970, and 1980 carried out the examination of the nationality distribution with a series of questions drafted roughly in the same way. The question figured in the 1991 questionnaire in a form, which was markedly different from these. First, the Czech nationality was 'widened' with the Moravian and Silesian nationality categories, the Ruthenian was added next to Ukrainian, and a few scattered nationalities appeared. A separate reference is due to the fact that the Roma

## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

ethnic group was included in the form as a nationality, for this had a certain influence also on the officially disclosed results of the number of Hungarians.

The total population of Slovakia was 5.274.335 on March 3, 1991. From this, 4.511.679 were of Slovak, 567.296 of Hungarian nationality. The very low rate of increase—by 7.800 persons—had in part a sobering influence to those who tended to be too optimistic, and it also revealed some probably irreversible demographic changes. The increase in the number of those of Slovak nationality was six fold the growth of the Hungarian population between 1970 and 1991. The number of Hungarian inhabitants grew by 2,8%, that of the Slovak population by 16,7% in the same period.

#### **Distribution according to the mother tongue**

The question on one's mother tongue figured twice among the questions—beyond the inquiry on one's nationality—in the history of Czechoslovak censuses: in 1970 and 1991. With the exception of the population of Czech and Slovak nationality, the number of inhabitants of every nationality on Slovakia is greater on the basis of their mother tongue linkage than their nationality affiliation. Certain changes can be demonstrated between 1970 and 1991 with regard to the distribution of the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality on the basis of their mother tongue. The number of those of Hungarian nationality increased from 552.006 to 567.296. 98,1% (556.447 persons) was of Hungarian mother tongue among those who declared themselves to be Hungarians, while their proportion was somewhat greater (98,6%, 554.654 persons) in 1970.

The number of Hungarians whose mother tongue was Hungarian rose from 600.249 to 608.221, while its proportion within the Slovak populating fell from 13,2% to 11,5%. Also the nationality composition of those of Hungarian mother tongue went through perceptible transformations.

The comparison of results broken down to the level of villages would greatly enhance a better understanding of the relationship between mother tongue and ethnic identity. Neither the 1970 outcome nor the 1991 results concerning the other tongue composition were made public broken down to the level of villages. The distribution according to the districts provides some point of reference and thus, it helps us understand it better given projections of the census.

The number of inhabitants whose mother tongue is Hungarian is greater than the number of ethnic Hungarians in all of the 15 administrative units of southern Slovakia. The differences between their figures decreased in the majority of the districts between 1970 and 1991. That is, also those who earlier declared themselves to be Slovaks but of Hungarian mother tongue contributed to the small increase of the Hungarian population according to the census. The greatest differences in the distribution according to mother tongue and nationality can be seen in the districts (cities) of a lower proportion of Hungarians. At the same time, the variances are significant according to the geographic position of the given areas as well.

The changes of the distribution of the Hungarian population on the basis of mother tongue and nationality can be ascribed to more factors. It can be concluded from the

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## Conditions of Minorities

past years' continuously increasing number of mixed marriages and Hungarian students studying in schools where Slovak is the language of teaching, that the population of dual linkage, identity, and roots will grow. That is, the distribution difference on the basis of mother tongue and nationality will increase within the Hungarian population. The fact that the census results turned out to be divergent has various reasons. It is very likely that there were some who were prompted to answer differently thanks to the favourable circumstances of the 1991 census, while others did so because of the changes that the society underwent with respect to the policy toward national minorities. Also the fact that the identity and its acceptance had intensified somewhat had a role in the decrease of the proportion of those of Hungarian mother tongue and nationality.

In those areas that often differ from each other even within districts, where the ratio of these two categories of belonging and linkage do not diverge to a great extent, the perspectives of nationality-psychological and demographic developments are more auspicious. We can understand the ratio of nationality and mother tongue in the various areas as a certain—not precisely defined—index of dual linkage. The greater proportion of their presence in an area alludes to the greater presence of processes disadvantageous to the nationality.

### **The territorial distribution of Hungarians in Slovakia**

The districts inhabited by Hungarians in Slovakia delineate a sometimes narrowing, at other places widening, but mostly coherent language area stretching from Bratislava as far as the Slovak-Ukrainian border. The Hungarian language area shrinks to the territory of one village in the Nagykürtös (Veľký Krtíš) district of Central Slovakia and then breaks for a longer section of a few dozen kilometres in East Slovakia. The third, geographically separate Hungarian language area, is the enclave formed by the villages in the surroundings of Nyitra (Nitra).

The extension of the Hungarian language area has significantly decreased in the past 70 years. The two fastest and also largest territory shrinkages came about at the beginning of the 20s and in the second part of the 40s.

Czech, Moravian, and Slovak populations were settled in the Hungarian language area between the two world wars. In part, new settlements were formed, but 'Czechoslovak' population was moved into the Hungarian villages as well in a scattered from or with the formation of new settlement sections.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These settling strategies aimed at the formation of corridors in order to divide the more or less compact extension of the Hungarian language area into smaller territories. Thus the utilization of further assimilation strategies would have become easier with the gradual evolution of the Hungarian language area into a mixed language area.

In the period of the first republic, we can find a relevant number of Hungarians living at settlements of urban character north of the quite closed language area. The decrease of the number of Hungarians in these areas north of the language border was significant even in that period, partly due to migration and partly because of those who were multilingual and had a dual or multiple identity but earlier had declared themselves Hungarians.



## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

The extension of the language area has scarcely changed since the 50s.

The few years after WWII determined the evolution of the Hungarian part of Slovakia in a lasting way: the settlement structure of Hungarians who suffered deportations, population exchange, exile, and re-slovakisation, changed to a great extent. (Although the erosion of the Hungarian language area had started in the period between the wars, the ethnic character of the majority of settlements remained the same.)

The transformation can be evaluated along several dimensions. The territory settled by Hungarians contracted significantly and at the same time, the number of Hungarians above the language border (outside the language area) decreased considerably. Thus, the earlier mostly compact Hungarian language area lost its solidity and most of the inhabitants of the settlements became more or less mixed.

The 1970 and later census figures contain a few useful reports on the distribution of settlements with a proportion of Hungarian inhabitants greater than 10% and on the number of Hungarians living at them. Also the general thinking of Hungarians in Slovakia considers those territories inhabited by Hungarians where the proportion of the Hungarians is more than 10%.

We can conclude from the figures of the 1961 and subsequent censuses that no fundamental changes occurred between 1950 and 1991. However, the ethnic composition of the Hungarian language area changed: the proportion of Hungarians decreased both among those living in the Hungarian language area and those living at the settlements with a Hungarian majority.

In 1970, the number of villages belonging to the Hungarian language area was 534, while 486 in 1980, and 523 in 1991. The number of Slovak villages changed simultaneously (3099, 2725, and 2825 in the indicated years).

The almost homogeneous ethnic composition of settlements inhabited by Hungarians has gone through considerable changes in the past decades: in the official terminology, they have assumed a character of 'mixed population'. However, there are certain regions and areas where the marked signs of ethnic composition, characteristic decades ago, can still be found.

The settlements of Hungarian majority make up more than 82% of the villages of the Hungarian language area and this ratio has not really changed in the last decades. In 1991, 432 villages of the Hungarian language area were of Hungarian majority and there was a relative majority in only 5. A proportion of Hungarians greater than 20% could be established in 503 villages.

The ratio of villages of mostly Hungarian character (in which the proportion of Hungarians is more than 80%) is decreasing but they continue to form the majority of the settlements belonging to the Hungarian language area. (There were 286 villages where Hungarians made up more than 80% of the inhabitants in 1970, while 258 in 1980, and 272 in 1991.)

The number of settlements with a Hungarian majority of 50–80% increased somewhat, from 156 to 160, and their proportion—due to the numerical changes of the villages of the language area—went from 29,2% to 30,6%. The number of localities with a Hungarian minority of 10–50% decreased from 92 to 91 and their proportion increased from

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## Conditions of Minorities

17,2% to 17,4%. Thus, one can observe a slight erosion of the settlements inhabited by Hungarians. The villages of (almost) pure Hungarian population has dropped markedly, the localities with a Hungarian majority but densely populated also by Slovaks, remained more or less the same, and the number of villages of Hungarian minority stagnated.

The distribution of localities inhabited by Hungarians—on the basis of the proportion of the Hungarian population—is a significant indicator of the ethnic changes occurring in the structure of settlements. However, the transformations of the last decades which were often the results of settlement structure changes of contrary direction (the merger of villages and then the regained independence of a part of them in our days), cannot always be interpreted directly from these data.

The more subtle correlations of the Hungarian language area's modifications related to nationality are presented by the changes of the number and proportion of Hungarian population living at the settlements of Hungarian inhabitants. The two series of figures reveal transformations of similar tendencies, both chronologically and according to the ratio of nationalities. In 1970, the Hungarian population gradually increased in number together with the rise of their proportion among the Hungarians living in villages. In 1991, this increase was far from being so smooth.

91,8% of the Hungarians of Slovakia lives in 523 villages of the Hungarian language area (520.968 persons). (In 1970, 95,4% of the Hungarian population, 528.548 Hungarians were living in 534 villages.) The number of Hungarians living at settlements with a Hungarian population of less than 10% doubled (from 25.362 to 47.328), and also their proportion increased almost twofold (from 4,6% to 8,2%). 83,1% of the Hungarians of Slovakia lived in localities of Hungarian majority (460.488 persons) in 1970, while only their 78,0% (437.788) in 1991.

The greatest number of Hungarians inhabits the most homogeneous settlements. 52,2% of the whole of the Hungarian population lived at settlements with an 80% Hungarian majority (289.327 Hungarian inhabitants) in 1970. However, only 44,5% of them (252.296) in 1991. This decrease is one of the results of the 'regional development policy' of the past decades, which has gradually withered most of the villages. Also the village unifications that took place mostly in the 70s decreased the proportion of localities of Hungarian inhabitants. Moreover, the majority of settlements with a proportion of 80% or more Hungarians, are made up of smaller, diminishing localities, which fact has shaped the above-depicted tendency to a great extent. The number of Hungarians living in enclaves outside the southern Slovakian districts has dropped as well.

The proportion of the Hungarian inhabitants does not reach the 10% in three cities (Pozsony/Bratislava, Kassa/Košice, Nyitra/Nitra), that is, on the basis of formal traits (a proportion above 10% among the permanent population). Nevertheless, the significant number of Hungarian inhabitants (several tens of thousands), their historic roots, their position at the border area of the Hungarian language area—understood in a narrower sense—and the continuous immigration from the Hungarian language area has endowed these cities with a kind of intermediate character between the mostly coherent Hungarian language area and the Hungarian enclaves.

## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

The distribution of Hungarian population according to the size of the villages reveals a rural character, the roots of which date back to the period between the world wars. In 1921, the Hungarians had a settlement structure better than the national average: in those days, 17,8% of the population of Slovakia lived at settlements with more than 5.000 inhabitants as opposed to the 18,1% of the Hungarians. (Jewish and German minorities lived at settlements of urban character in the greatest proportion.) The slavisation of the cities started in the 1920s but a Hungarian population of significant number and proportion lived in the cities of Slovak ethnicity above the language border even then. In 1930, the ratio of Hungarians living at settlements of urban character (20,8%) did not reach the proportion of the Slovaks (22,2%). It is quite probable that the gradual, although at the beginning only formal identity change of those who declared themselves to be Hungarians, greatly contributed to the described transformation. The ethnic cleansing carried out in the second half of the 1940s reduced the number of Hungarians living in the cities more considerably than that of the rural Hungarian population. Later, due to the intensive industrialisation started in the 50s, the number of city-dwellers shot up. Although also the urban Hungarian population increased, its proportion was far behind the Slovak average.

More than half (50,16%) of the total population of Slovakia lived at settlements of urban character (more than 5.000 inhabitants) by 1980 and their proportion was above 56% by 1991. 35,6% of the Hungarian population lived in localities of more than 5.000 persons, and only 41,0% in 1991. (In 1991, 56,7% of the total Slovakian population lived at settlements that had the legal status of cities as opposed to the 39,5% of Hungarians.) The Hungarian population living in villages lessened perceptibly (by 25.554 persons) in the 80s. However, from 1990 on, the previously united villages could once more regain their earlier administrative status. Due to the policies of the preceding decades, the population of small villages—with less than 500 inhabitants—decreased rapidly. More than half of the Hungarians in Slovakia (50,91%, almost 290.000 persons) live in villages of 500–5.000 inhabitants. The number of Hungarians living in localities of 5.000–20.000 inhabitants, mostly cities, reduced slightly (from 130.000 to 114.000). More, and among them contradictory tendencies prevailed in the development of the smaller cities. Their population changed only a bit due to the restrained, decreasing construction of flats. At the same time, the migration from these localities to greater cities cannot be ignored either. The population of these places was increased up to the beginning of the 80s by the inhabitants of the villages, which had been joined to them. However, after 1990 a part of these villages regained their former administrative independence. The proportion of Hungarians is very low (6,13%) in the cities of more than 50.000 inhabitants in comparison to the 27,22% ratio of the population of Slovakia.

#### **On the ethno-demographic changes of the 1990s**

We can estimate the developments of the population between censuses by adding the sum of the natural growth (decrease) and the migration difference of the years passed

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## Conditions of Minorities

to the figures of the last census. This approach is suitable first of all for the examination of the population at a national, regional or local level but it is used also for the estimation of the minority population. In this latter case, we have to face a serious problem. The estimate figures can considerably differ from the real data in so far as the examined minority assimilates to a great degree. Given this, also the difference of the balance of the census and demographic figures is used to measure the assimilation of national minorities.

In the following sections, we present the evaluation of the demographic data of the 1990s, taking into consideration the above remarks. The social, economic, and socio-political transformations of the period following November 1989 have significantly affected the demographic processes of the Slovak population. The gradual decrease of the number of births and the slow increase of the number of deaths present already in the 80s resulted in the considerable decline of the formerly very high natural growth. The tendencies of the Hungarian population of Slovakia went parallel to the national trends. Although the demographic indicators of the Hungarians of Slovakia revealed less favourable growth tendencies than the national ones, their growth characteristics were still the best among the Hungarians of the Carpathian Basin. After 1989, the decline of the growth intensified and by the mid-90s it reached such a low value with respect both the total population and the Hungarian population of Slovakia, which had been unimaginable before.

The two characteristic indicators of marriage statistics—the number of marriages and divorces—go hand in hand with the decreasing annual values of growth. The nuptiality (in Slovakia; per thousand persons) has dropped significantly (from 7,6 to 4,8) between 1990 and 2000, while the number and ratio of divorces has grown from 1991 up to the present day (from 1,5 per thousand to 1,72). The Slovak Statistical Office stopped publishing the marriage statistics in a breakdown on the basis of minorities in 1992, so we are unable to deal with this in detail. However, the tendencies of Hungarian marriages can be approximately estimated on the basis of the national figures.

Due to the fewer marriages, the already low level of growth continues to drop. The national data on natural growth reveal a striking decline: it dropped from the 25.370 persons (4,8 per thousand) in 1990 to 2.427 persons (0,45 per thousand) by 2000. The data concerning the Hungarian population are parallel to the Slovak values; the growth indicators assume an increasingly lower value. 1990 was the first year when the Hungarian growth did not reach the 1.000 persons (it was 846; 1,5 per thousand). Four years later; decrease replaced the growth. The difference in number of deaths and births was 4 in 1994, 450 in 1995, and 823 in 1999.

Naturally, the decline of the growth has a direct influence on the changes of the number of inhabitants. The population of Slovakia grew more and more slowly in the 1990s: it rose from the 5.274.335 persons counted at the 1991 census to 5.402.547 by the end of 2000. The Hungarian population went from 567.296 to 567.359 persons by the end of 1999.

This really minute increase means, in reality, a decrease as the demographic values cannot include the assimilation losses caused by the nationality change.

## 4 MINORITIES RESEARCH

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### Conditions of Minorities

#### Prospects

What transformations can we expect; how will the population of the Hungarians of Slovakia change by the 2001 census and the years after that? We consider various aspects for the estimation. Beside the demographic figures of the 1990s, we know the balance of the earlier censuses and demographical changes. According to this, only a smaller portion of the natural growth was revealed also in the census data in the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, it is known that the given country's policy toward minorities in the period before the census has a considerable effect on what nationality the inhabitants of various nationalities admit. The relationship between the 'mother-country' and the Hungarians living outside its borders has a similar effect. Another relevant factor is the extent to which the practice of the census regarding the question on nationality appears different than before. Well, there have been quite considerable changes with respect to the above-mentioned factors. Moreover, the situation is complicated by the fact that we do not have indicators with which we could estimate the combined effects of all of these factors.

Mindful of this, we believe the following trends to be probable for the period to come:

- The decrease of the number of Hungarian (and national) births is likely to continue, only the degree of the decline is dubious.
- No great modifications are expected in the migrations. The relevant migration to the Czech Republic, characteristic of the past decade, practically stopped. On the other hand, the number of those who study and work in Hungary increased. Their transmigration will depend on the tendencies of the socio-economic—and, not the least, minority—conditions.
- There were no great changes regarding the direction and proportion of assimilation processes among the generations in spite of the considerable fluctuation of minority policy.
- At the same time, the first signs of a few positive changes have appeared. Among these, the growing rate of children studying in Hungarian primary schools is probably the most important one. Despite this, we believe it unlikely that we could count upon a significant degree of re-assimilation (the 'return' of those, who declared before that they were not Hungarians) which, back in 1991, greatly increased the Hungarian population.
- One of the riddles of the ethnic changes of the future is given by the tendencies of the Roma population. It is probable that the number of those who state that they are Romas will increase but the extent of this is unknown as of yet. In connection to this, we do not have any points of reference neither to what extent this will reduce the number of Hungarian population nor about what formal minority policy and cultural consequences this will entail beyond the identity change.

Considering that we do not have reference points to calculate the figures of the majority of the factors which influence the changes of the Hungarian population—with the exception of the demographic data—we can engage only in subjective estimations. We can infer that as a result of the various demographic factors and those affecting the national

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Conditions of Minorities

identity, the number of Hungarians at the turn of the millennium will not reach the figure of 1991. On the other hand, the decline of the proportion of Hungarians in relation to the entire population of Slovakia will not surpass the drop revealed in earlier decades. If we take into account that also the Slovak natural growth, which was very significant before, will assume a negative value in a few years, this is not such a bad result after all.

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