

## *Yugoslav-Hungarian Border 1948–1953*

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The border between Yugoslavia and Hungary came about as the result of WWI. It was set by the Peace Treaty of Trianon, but neither party was satisfied with it: the Yugoslav powers-that-be regretted that it did not extend so far as to include the Baranya coal-mines and most of the Southern Slavs in Hungary, whereas the Hungarian authorities wanted to abolish it altogether, i.e. push it back to the South where it had been until 1918. Like most European borders it was the fruit of a war and not of a friendly agreement between the two countries. It was also one of those European borders that did not correspond with the ethnic make-up of the local population, i.e. it left sizable minorities on both sides. In that respect it could have been more equitable, leaving less people on the wrong side of the border, but due to great mixture of people of various nationality, there could never have been a clear-cut ethnic border.<sup>1</sup> Historical enmity sharpened by the war, nationalist appetites and intolerance, economic and strategic considerations led to opposed political goals of the two neighbouring countries, making the border question one of the most disputed. It epitomized the bilateral relations: life on this or that side of the border was construed as the ideal worth striving for, or as national and social dungeon. This latter view was held particularly by members of national minorities. At the same time, disobedient or pesky members of national minorities were shoved off across the border into the country of their origin if their documents were not in order.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for some border was the gateway to paradise, and from some the dreaded entrance into banishment.

Most members of the newly created Hungarian national minority in Yugoslavia, but considerably fewer members of Yugoslav minorities in Hungary did not like the Trianon border that separated them from their fellow-nationals, relatives, national culture and past. Although Hungary's revisionist goals were aimed primarily against Romania and Czechoslovakia, Hungarian elites were not averse to revising the border with Yugoslavia too. The opportunity presented itself in April 1941 when Germany and Italy attacked Yugoslavia.

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<sup>1</sup> MITROVIĆ, Andrej (1975), *Razgraničenje Jugoslavije sa Mađarskom i Rumunijom 1919-1920*, Prilog proučavanju Jugoslavije na konferenciji mira u Parizu, Novi Sad; SZARKA, László (2011), "Hungary at the Peace Talks in Paris," in BÁRDI, Nándor – FEDINEC, Csilla – SZARKA, László (eds.), *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century*, New York, 43–51.

<sup>2</sup> JANJETOVIĆ, Zoran (2005), *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, Beograd, 2005, 226; A. SAJTI, Enikő (2003), *Hungarians in the Vojvodina 1918–1947*, Boulder, Col., 20; MESAROS, Šandor (1981), *Položaj Mađara u Vojvodini 1918-1929*, Novi Sad, 88, 93–94; VINAVER, Vuk (1971), *Jugoslavija i Mađarska 1918-1933*, Beograd, 274; A. MOCSY, István (1995), "Partition of Hungary and the Origins of the Refugee Problem," in KIRÁLY, Béla K. – VESZPRÉMY, László (ur.), *Trianon and East Central Europe. Antecedents and Repercussions*, New York, 242.

Although prime minister Teleki committed suicide over Hungary's participation in the aggression,<sup>3</sup> the Hungarian regent Horthy, foreign minister Bárdossy and other top-brass, did not let the opportunity for border revision slip by: the more since in their eyes revision of the border was not just rectification of the unsatisfactory border, but also restoration of the glorious past. Hungarian troops entered Yugoslav parts of Baranya and Backa as well as Međimurje, and after a period of military rule, the territory was annexed to Hungary in December of that year.<sup>4</sup> However, just as the wheel of history could not be turned backwards, the redrawing of the border was only temporary. By October 1944 German power was on the wane and the Hungarian boat was sinking together with the German ship to which it was tied. With the help from the Red Army Yugoslav partisans re-conquered the Vojvodina and other lost territories, and even started making incursions into the pre-war Hungarian territory. It is clear that these were the expression of the new rulers' wish to acquire the territories Yugoslavia was denied in 1920. They even intervened in Moscow so as to get the Soviet go-ahead.<sup>5</sup>

However, the old border was re-established at the end of the war. The concerned parties could probably influence the political facts even less than after WWI: Yugoslavia was a faithful satellite of the USSR who needed Soviet help in securing its borders in the West and its economic recovery and development, whereas Hungary was the defeated country under allied control on its way to becoming a Soviet satellite. When it came to the mutual border it remained unchanged but the new international situation worked toward easing tensions – both countries being part of the informal Soviet empire.

However, despite the tendency that pointed in that direction, at the beginning the border was very palpable indeed. Undesirable Hungarians (wartime settlers, officials etc.) and Ethnic-Germans were shoved across the border into Hungary.<sup>6</sup> It was felt most keenly by the Volksdeutsche refugees who were trying to return to Yugoslavia after the end of the war.<sup>7</sup> They were taken off trains, or their carriages were derailed and sent back. If they

<sup>3</sup> TILKOVSKY, Loránt (1974), *Pál Teleki (1879-1941). A Biographical Sketch*, Budapest, 59–60.

<sup>4</sup> UNGVÁRY, Krisztián (2021), "Die Rückgliederung der Batscska und des Baranya-Dreiecks unter ungarischer Herrschaft 1941-1944," in ARENS, Meinolf – BITUNJAC, Martina (eds.), *Massengewalt in Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Motive, Abläufe und Auswirkungen*, Berlin, 189–192; A. SAJTI, *Hungarians in the Vojvodina*, 205–227, 298–305; KASAŠ, Aleksandar (1996), *Mađari u Vojvodini 1941-1946*, Novi Sad, 33–65, 82.

<sup>5</sup> A. SAJTI, *Hungarians in the Vojvodina*, 458–459; PETRANOVIĆ, Branko (1991), *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948*, Brograd, 116; HORNJAK, Arpad (2016), "Pitanje granica i Jugosloveni u Mađarskoj u mađarsko-jugoslovenskim odnosima posle Drugog svetskog rata," in HORNJAK, Arpad – JANJETOVIĆ, Zoran – BIRO Laslo (eds.), *Mađari i Srbi sa dve strane promenjive granice. Tematski zbornik radova*, Budimpešta, 294–297.

<sup>6</sup> A. SAJTI, *Hungarians in the Vojvodina*, 435–439. Part of these started leaving already in October 1944 as the partisans and the Red Army approached. Ibid. 393–394.

<sup>7</sup> The Yugoslav government decided on May 22, 1945 to deny the escaped Volksdeutsche permission to return. "Ministarstvo socijalne politike Pretsedništvu Ministarskog saveta i Ministarstvu inostranih poslova," Beograd, August 14, 1945, AJ, F. 642, 10/33; "Ministarstvo socijalne politike Ministarstvu inostranih poslova," Beograd, September 25, 1945, AJ, F. 642, 10/33; DIZDAR, Zdravko – GEIGER, Vladimir – POJIĆ, Milan – RUPIC, Mate (eds.) (2005), *Partizanska i komunistička represija i zločini u Hrvatskoj 1944–1946. Dokumenti*, Slavonski Brod – Zagreb, 156–157; GEIGER, Vladimir (2003), "Heimkehr. Povratak slavonskih Nijemaca nakon Drugog svetskog rata iz izbjeglištva/prognaništa u

came on their wagons, they were stopped by Yugoslav border guards and sent back into Hungary. On the Hungarian side of the border, they were refused admittance into the country, so it often happened that Ethnic-German refugees wandered for weeks on no-man's land looking for an opportunity to slip into Hungary – either to continue their journey to the West, or to stay with relatives and fellow-Germans in Hungary.<sup>8</sup> At first Hungarian refugees who wanted to return to Yugoslavia were treated no better by the Yugoslav authorities. Unlike the return of ethnic-Yugoslav POWs, concentration camp inmates and overseas emigrants from the inter-war period, return of Ethnic-Hungarians was not encouraged.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, due to policy of integration of the Hungarian national minority return was allowed, but on condition that the returnees were sifted through and suspect war criminals and other political undesirables separated and detained.<sup>10</sup>

The border remained closed for the Volksdeutsche still remaining in Yugoslavia, most of whom were put to concentration camps by mid-1945. The aim of the Yugoslav authorities was to “resettle” (i.e. expel) them to Germany, but the Allies would not allow it.<sup>11</sup> In order to get rid of the members of the national minority that was collectively declared treasonous, the Yugoslav authorities tolerated or even organized escapes from concentration camps into Hungary and Romania. Several tens of thousands of Ethnic-Germans left the country in that way. However, while coming to the border was comparatively easy, crossing into Hungary was not. Again groups of people often roamed the border area for days or even weeks before grabbing the opportunity to slip into Hungary and then, further West.<sup>12</sup>

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zavičaj i njihova sudbina,” *Scrinia slavonica* 3, 522, 525; KARAKAŠ OBRADOV, Marica (2014), *Novi mozaici nacija u “novim poređcima”*. Migracije stanovništva na hrvatskom području tijekom Drugog svjetskog rata i poraća, Zagreb, 295.

<sup>8</sup> GEIGER, “Heimkehr,” 522–523, 528–530, 536, 543; GEIGER, Vladimir (2001), *Nijemci u Đakovu i Đakovštini*, Zagreb, 173–174; KARAKAŠ OBRADOV, *Novi mozaici*, 297–301; SCHIEDER, Theodor (ed.), *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Jugoslawien*, Augsburg, 177, 179, 190; *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*, II, München, Sindelfingen, 1991, 279; TONE, Ferenc (1998), “‘Nemci’ na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno,” in NEČAK, Dušan (ed.), “*Nemci*” na Slovenskem 1941–1955, Ljubljana, 130; REPE, Božo (1998), “‘Nemci’ na Slovenskem po drugi svetovni vojni,” in NEČAK, “*Nemci*” na Slovenskem, 166; RILL, Helena, Helena (2017), “Podunavski Nemci – Istorijski pregled od kraja Drugog svjetskog rata,” in RILL, Helena – STOJČIĆ, Marijana (eds.), *Na tragu Podunavskih Nemaca u Vojvodini*, Beograd – Sarajevo, 62–63, 71; AJ, F. 97, 3/35; F. 110, 2, dok. 450.

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, majority of Ethnic-Hungarians who had served in Hungarian armed forces eventually returned home to Yugoslavia. Mađarska nacionalna manjina, I, Bileća, February 1, 1954, DAS, BIA, VIII/13; Mađari 1918–1955, DAS, BIA, VIII/9.

<sup>10</sup> A. SAJTI, *Hungarians in the Vojvodina*, 437–438; KARAKAŠ OBRADOV, *Novi mozaici*, 348–350; DIZDAR – GEIGER – POJIĆ – RUPIC, *Partizanska i komunistička represija*, 156; PORTMANN, Michael (2008), *Die kommunistische Revolution in der Vojvodina 1944–1952. Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, Wien, 273.

<sup>11</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers* 1945, II, Washington, 1967, 1323; *Bilten MIP*, 1, January 20, 1946, 6–7; *Ibid.*, 7, June 4, 1946, 13; KARAKAŠ OBRADOV, *Novi mozaici*, 298–299; DIZDAR – GEIGER – POJIĆ – RUPIC, *Partizanska i komunistička represija*, 311; REPE, “‘Nemci’ na Slovenskem,” 167; RILL, “Podunavski Nemci,” 53–55, 61; PORTMANN, *Die kommunistische Revolution*, 263–265; GEIGER, “Heimkehr,” 524, 532–533; JANJETOVIĆ, Zoran (2005), *Between Hitler and Tito. The Disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans*, Belgrade, (2nd ed.), 287–289.

<sup>12</sup> [Aleksandar] Ranković [Karl] Mrazoviću, May 14, 1947, AJ, 507, II D/278; PORTMANN, *Die kommunistische Revolution*, 265–266; JANJETOVIĆ, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 278–281; NEČAK,

However, for normal travel and commerce the border remained fairly permeable. It seems it was also the case with illegal crossings of smugglers and people who had plots of land across the border.<sup>13</sup> The same went for would-be emigrants. According to the data of the Yugoslav police 2.384 Ethnic-Hungarians escaped from the Vojvodina into Hungary from the end of WWII until the resolution of the Cominform. The police regarded 562 of these emigrants as political, which would imply that the majority emigrated for professional, economic, family and other non-political private reasons.<sup>14</sup> During the first post-war years, this was normal for all Yugoslav borders with the countries within the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>15</sup> The major attention was devoted to borders with the capitalist countries outside of it, especially Italy with which territorial dispute was raging.<sup>16</sup>

By the time split between Tito and Stalin occurred in mid-1948, the Yugoslav-Hungarian border was not even 30 years old but it had a lively history of changes. The one that set in after the Cominform resolution condemning Yugoslavia was passed on June 28, 1948 would be one of the greatest – not because of the changes of the borderline itself, but because of the changes in practical life in a wider border area. Ostensibly a conflict between communist parties, it affected not only population living in the concerned countries or in the frontier area, but had much wider social, political and military repercussions – as far as the world stage.

To be sure, most of the consequences were felt most acutely exactly by the local populations. Once again, just as during the tense Yugoslav-Hungarian relations of the inter-war period, the border was closed swiftly and tightly.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the number of illegal crossings increased, but now this became a much more serious offence than previously.

Among the first to cross were political emigrants – usually communists who accepted the Cominform resolution.<sup>18</sup> Most of them were not Ethnic-Magyars but Yugoslavs, which means they just crossed the closest border available. For the Ethnic-Hungarians national reasons played important part in the decision where to flee – as can be seen from the number of escapes into other countries.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the members of the Magyar national

“Nemci” na Slovenskem, 224–225; RILL, “Podunavski Nemci,” 57. The total number of the Volksdeutsche who left the country is not known, but by mid-May 1947 it was around 11.000.

<sup>13</sup> Posleratni razvitak nacionalnih manjina: Mađari, Rumuni, Bugari i Šiptari, 1957, AJ, 507, XVIII-k, 5/1-43.

<sup>14</sup> Mađari 1918-1955, DAS, BIA, III/9; SABO, Ida [Godišnji izveštaj o delatnosti i stanju partijskih organizacija u toku 1947. godine, Senta, December 30, 1947], DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 114.

<sup>15</sup> TASIĆ, DMITAR (2021), *Korpus narodne odbrane Jugoslavije (KNOJ) 1944-1953*, Beograd, 241, 245. The number of illegal crossings was the higher on border with Hungary – presumably because the terrain was flat.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. MILKIĆ, Miljan (2012), *Tršćanska kriza u vojno-političkim odnosima Jugoslavije sa velikim silama 1943-1947*, Beograd, 49–185.

<sup>17</sup> HORNJAK, “Pitanje granica,” 308–311.

<sup>18</sup> On them cf. VUKMAN, Peter (2016), “Jugoslovenski politički emigranti u Mađarskoj (1948-1949),” in HORNJAK – JANJETOVIĆ – BIRO (eds.), *Mađari i Srbi*.

<sup>19</sup> According to analysis in a police document, most members of national minorities emigrated for national, economic or family reasons, and not for political ones. (IB emigracija, [1957], HAD, 1561, SDS RSUP SRH, šifra 1, 10/1.) Some reasons were paltry indeed, and it seems only 25% of emi-

minority were not very active in politics. The number of Hungarians in the Yugoslav communist party was not high because it was perceived as predominantly Slav affair, because of retribution by the partisans at the end of WWII and religious influence among the Hungarians.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it seems the Magyars made up larger part of smugglers or people with property on the other side of the border. Under new conditions these followed not only their economic interests, but became also bearers of political propaganda – not so much for ideological, but rather for nationalist reasons.<sup>21</sup>

When it comes to propaganda materials, Hungary was one of the leading countries in terms of quantity. Probably two reasons were decisive for this: on one hand, the population in the Vojvodina (Magyar and non-Magyar) at which the propaganda was aimed had one of the highest literacy rates in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the flat terrain facilitated crossing the border with larger quantities of print matters. The fact that there were Hungarians on both side of the border enabled the Cominform and Hungarian institutions to use many Ethnic-Magyars for transportation of propaganda materials. The Yugoslav authorities estimated the results of Hungarian propaganda were poor, due to its detachment from reality.<sup>22</sup> The propaganda by letters or by people who spread it by word of mouth was more convincing than officially approved publications that Yugoslav authorities could refute, because oral propaganda was often spontaneous barren of ideological coating and addressing national feelings that already existed.<sup>23</sup>

Together with disseminators of propaganda, the border was crossed illegally also by a number of spies. According to the Yugoslav data, during 1948 and 1949 the largest number of secret agents came from Hungary.<sup>24</sup> They met with friendly reception on part of the bulk

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grants had political motives. FNRJ, DSUP, UDB I odeljenje, Jugoslovenska emigracija u IB zemljama 1952-1953. godine, Beograd [after 1952], HDA, 1561, SDS RSUP SRH, šifra 1, 10/33.

<sup>20</sup> Problemi ideološko-političkog i kulturno-prosvetnog rada kod nacionalnih manjina u Vojvodini, [1949], DAS, Đ2, Agitprop komisija, k. 10; Izvodi iz godišnjih izveštaja o nacionalnim manjinama, [1952?], DAS, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK KPS, k. 1; Stjepan Krtanjek, Milan Martinović, Godišnji izveštaj MK KPS za Suboticu 1949, Subotica, January 3, 1950, DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 195.

<sup>21</sup> Mađarska nacionalna manjina, [1953], DAS, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK KPS, k. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Posleratni razvitak nacionalnih manjina: Mađari, Rumuni, Bugari i Šiptari, 1957, AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 5/ 1-43; Problemi ideološko-političkog i kulturno-prosvetnog rada kod nacionalnih manjina u Vojvodini, [1949], DAS, Đ2, Agitprop komisija, k. 10; Milan Martinović, Stjepan Krtanjek, Godišnji izveštaj Mesnog komiteta KPS za Suboticu 1949, Subotica, January 3, 1950, DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 195.

<sup>23</sup> Milan Martinović, Stjepan Krtanjek, Godišnji izveštaj za 1948 godinu Mesnog komiteta KPS za Suboticu, Subotica, December 2, 1948, DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 116. Even Hungarian intellectuals blinded by wishful thinking were prone to accept the most unrealistic rumors. Bilten o pojavama istupanja članova KP na liniji rezolucije IB u toku meseca aprila 1951 godine i o držanju i radu ranije isključenih članova Komunističke partije, DAS, Đ2, Kontrolna komisija IB, k. 14.

<sup>24</sup> TASIĆ, *Korpus narodne*, 288. Since early 1950s the number of agents who came from Hungary was lower than that of spies coming from other neighboring countries. In 1953 Hungary was only on the third place, after Bulgaria and Albania. FNRJ, DSUP, UDB I odeljenje, Jugoslovenska emigracija u IB zemljama 1952-1953. godine, Beograd [after 1952], HDA, 1561, SDS RSUP SRH, šifra 1, 10/33.) By mid-1950s the number of agents coming from Hungary was 11 times lower than that from Bulgar-

of the Hungarian minority.<sup>25</sup> Many of the agents of the Hungarian secret service also belonged to the Hungarian national minority and relied on their family and friendly connections. However, this was the game two could play at: the Yugoslav authorities also sent numerous spies across the border into Hungary – the majority of them being Ethnic-Hungarians from Yugoslavia.<sup>26</sup> One can presume that in both cases people with roots in the frontier zone were preferred, but this remains to be explored.

Tense relations between Yugoslavia and the Cominform countries made lives of ordinary people along the border more difficult in a number of ways. It was not only that crossing the border became increasingly more difficult. The whole frontier area became militarized.<sup>27</sup> This did not only mean increased military presence on both sides of the border, together with anti-tank trenches, bunkers, barbed-wire fences and other physical obstacles. The number of troops on both sides was increased and they did not sit idle: border incidents were quite frequent and they comprised exchange of fire, illegal crossings of military personnel or over-flights.<sup>28</sup> Yugoslav border organs also complained of unusual way of disturbance applied by Hungarian military: pointing search-lights into the depth of Yugoslav territory.<sup>29</sup> Such incidents made life stressful not only for soldiers, but for civilians too.

Apart from inability to cross the border in order to till the land across the border, buy or sell products, lives of ordinary civilians were affected on more general economic level. Tensions with the Cominform countries made a war with them a distinct possibility. Shooting incidents on the border seemed to warrant that Stalin really had developed plans for an armed aggression in cooperation with his Eastern European vassals.<sup>30</sup> Fear of possible conflict spurred Yugoslav powers-that-be to dismantle part of industrial facilities in those parts of the country deemed endangered. Northern Bačka was an obvious place for such a measure. A number of factories was dismantled and removed deeper inland. The workers had the option of moving together with factories, or remaining at home, but without jobs. Such development hit members of the Hungarian national minority harder than members of other nationalities, since they made up larger proportion of industrial workers.<sup>31</sup> Due to poor knowledge of Serbo-Croat and different living conditions in other parts of the country they were not inclined to pick up sticks and leave.

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ia (327:30). MITROVIĆ, Momčilo – SELINIĆ, Slobodan (2009), “Jugoslovenska informbiroovska emigracija u istočnoevropskim zemljama 1948-1964,” *Tokovi istorije* 1–2, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Mađarska nacionalna manjina, I, KPD Bileća, February 1, 1954, DAS, BIA, VIII/13.

<sup>26</sup> Mađarska nacionalna manjina, [1953], DAS, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK KPS, k. 1; VUKMAN, “Jugoslovenski politički emigranti,” 378.

<sup>27</sup> HORNJAK, “Pitanje granica,” 308–311.

<sup>28</sup> This was the case with all Yugoslavia’s borders with socialist countries. Between 1948 and 1953 there were allegedly 7.724 incidents on these borders in which 17 Yugoslav border guards were killed. ŽIVOTIĆ, Aleksandar (2011), *Jugoslavija, Albanija i velike sile (1945-1961)*, Beograd, 349.

<sup>29</sup> It seems the purpose of this was to blind Yugoslav border guards so that Hungarian agents could cross the border-line unobserved elsewhere. HORNJAK, “Pitanje granica,” 311.

<sup>30</sup> TASIĆ, *Korpus narodne*, 280–281.

<sup>31</sup> Ekonomska problematika područja u NR Srbiji na kojima žive nacionalne manjine, Beograd, October 24, 1959, AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 11/1-34; Neke pojave i problemi u vezi sa odnosima nacionalnosti koje žive u našem srezu, Subotica, January 28, 1958, DAS, Đ2, Organizaciono-instruktorsko odeljenje, k. 170; Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Komisije za nacionalne manjine, Beograd, October 29, 1959, DAS, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK SKS, k. 1.

Danger of military conflict also discouraged the government from investing in frontier zones. This had a bad long-term effects on the Vojvodina whose industry was already lagging behind: most of the factories had old machines (sometimes from before 1918). New facilities with more modern equipment were built in less developed parts of the country (so that they catch up with the more developed ones) and now even those old factories in the Vojvodina were dismantled and evacuated.<sup>32</sup> As for agriculture, communist powers-that-be had always kept it on the back burner. It was constantly under-funded and overexploited: good to supply towns with food and industry with raw materials, but not nearly so important as heavy industry, mining or energy sector.<sup>33</sup> Together with heavy industry, working class was built, whereas peasants were considered intrinsically conservative, religious, bulwarks of private property and opposed to socialism. The combination of such place of agriculture in minds of economic planners with threatened security in bordering regions, brought about even smaller investments. For this reason the areas alongside Yugoslav-Hungarian border suffered economically even more than some other, even those less developed areas on borders with countries such as Bulgaria or Albania where agriculture was underdeveloped, industry practically non-existent and population used to much lower living standards.<sup>34</sup>

Thanks to help from the West the Yugoslav regime managed to survive the pressure from the East. Stalin's death in early 1953 opened the possibility to normalize relations with the Cominform countries. This held true for Hungary too. It was not the first, but also not the last country to normalize relations with Yugoslavia. It was a great boon for population living along both sides of the border: people with plots in the other country were able to till them, small trade could be resumed, relatives visited after a long time and pressure on members of national minorities subsided.<sup>35</sup> Soon after the normalization, the border would once again come to play an important role in relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary. After the unsuccessful uprising against the communist regime and the Soviet military intervention, a spate of refugees spilled out of Hungary. Although most of them crossed directly to Austria, when that border was closed, some 20.000 crossed into Yugoslavia and sought the first refuge there. This time the border did not prove so impermeable.<sup>36</sup> The Yugoslav

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<sup>32</sup> Stenografske beleške sa sastanka Komisije za nacionalne manjine, Beograd, October 29, 1959, DAS, Đ2, Komisija za nacionalne manjine CK SKS, k. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ekonomska problematika područja u NR Srbiji na kojima žive nacionalne manjine, Beograd, October 24, 1959, AJ, 507, XVIII – k. 11/1-34; POPOV, Čedomir – POPOV, Jelena (2000), *Autonomija Vojvodine – srpsko pitanje*, Sremski Karlovci (2nd ed.), 100–101; KONČAR, Ranko – BOAROV, Dimetrije – DORONJSKI, Stevan (2011), *Obrana autonomije Vojvodine*, Novi Sad, 242.

<sup>34</sup> Unlike the Ethnic-Hungarians or Albanians, members of the Bulgarian minority attended universities in larger number and also migrated for work more often. Elaborat o bugarskoj nacionalnoj manjini, April 1, 1956, DAS, BIA, III/74; Aktuelni problemi nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji, March 25, 1959, AJ, 507, XVIII –k. 3 /1-36; SUP Pirot, Bugarska nacionalna manjina, [1959?], DAS, BIA, III/81; [No title], March 15, 1956, DAS, BIA, III/ 81. Military conciderations discouraged industrial investments in Kosovo too. Cf. Ströhle, Isabel (2016), *Aus den Ruinen der alten erschaffen wir die neue Welt! Herrschaftspraxis und Loyalitäten in Kosovo (1944-1974)*, München, 85–86.

<sup>35</sup> HORNJAK, "Pitanje granica," 312–313.

<sup>36</sup> KOVAČEVIĆ, Katarina (2003), "Mađarske izbeglice u Jugoslaviji 1956-1957," *Tokovi Istorije* 1–2, 98–117; KOVÁCS, Attila (2007), "Mđžarski eksodus leta 1956-1957 s posebnim poudarkom na be-

authorities condemned the Soviet intervention and feared it could spill over into their country. At the same time, they felt compunction for talking Imre Nagy and his followers into leaving the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest and, while not wanting to disgruntle the Soviets too much, they wanted to seem principled and remain in the good books of the Western powers. For that reason the border was open and Hungarian refugees met with cordial reception in Yugoslavia.<sup>37</sup>

All that was said in this paper goes to show just how important role borders play in international affairs and relations between countries. They can be, and often are, source of disputes and tensions. They can also serve as barriers when relations are bad, but also as bridges when relations are good or if one of the bordering countries finds its interest in keeping its border permeable. The Yugoslav-Hungarian border showed all these features within the space of just few decades. The ups and downs in inter-state relations were felt most keenly by the population of different nationalities living on both side of the border.

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guncih ki so zbežali v Jugoslavijo oziroma v Slovenijo,” *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 1, 173–181. However, the first refugees – civil servants and secret policemen – were turned down.

<sup>37</sup> JANJETOVIĆ, Zoran (2011), “Jugoslawien und Aufstand in Ungarn 1956,” in GRÄF, Rudolf – VOLKMER Gerald (eds.), *Zwischen Tauwettersozialismus und Neostalinismus. Deutsche und andere Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1953-1964*, München, 209–219.