

Kecskés, D. Gusztáv, and Tamás Scheibner, eds. *A Handbook on Post-1956 Hungarian Refugee Relief: From Local Crisis to Global Impact*. Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter Oldenbourg, 2026. 621 pp.

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This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, generating renewed interest in both academia and the broader public in the events that unfolded in Hungary during and immediately after that year. The aftermath of the crushed uprising had major international repercussions as well, including a refugee wave of approximately 200,000 Hungarians who left their country, navigating the policies and attitudes of various states, the procedures of international organizations, and the challenges of reception, integration, and possible repatriation in the longer term. Such renewed interest, tied to the anniversary, calls for both a synthesis of existing knowledge and the integration of new approaches grounded in previously untapped archival and other sources as well as more recent, innovative methodological and theoretical frameworks. While this moment might justify a stronger Hungarian focus, it also necessitates global contextualization and interdisciplinary collaboration. The volume under review successfully addresses all these needs, demonstrating the strengths of international scholarly cooperation and offering a publication that is particularly fitting for and worthy of this anniversary.

The scale (and sheer size) of the publication immediately commands respect, but its true strength lies in its content and its contributors. This more than 600-page handbook is meticulously researched, professionally organized and edited, and is set to serve as an essential resource for educators, scholars, and general readers interested in the history and aftermath of the revolution and its global impact. The chapters provide a systematic and comprehensive examination of what emerged as one of Europe's most significant refugee crises, tracing the migration and subsequent trajectories of approximately 200,000 individuals. At the same time, they demonstrate how these events constituted a turning point not only in Hungary but also globally, influencing refugee policies in the Cold War era and beyond. A wide range of actors—international organizations, governments in the home and host countries, and migrants themselves—shaped these processes, determining how Hungarian refugees were received, assisted, integrated, or, in some cases, exploited. The volume addresses these issues in a way that achieves a careful balance between synthesis and the incorporation of recent, cutting-edge research. The Hungarian version of the book was published a few years ago (*Egy világraszóló történet. Az 1956-os magyar menekültválság kézikönyve*, also edited by Gusztáv Kecskés D. and Tamás Scheibner, Budapest: BTK TTI, 2022), and the present English-language edition makes these insights accessible to an international audience. While revisiting topics already addressed in the scholarship of the past decades, the volume integrates recent findings and introduces themes that have previously received

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less attention and were thus more marginal. The editors position the handbook as a resource for higher education—as a textbook for students and instructors—and it clearly fulfills this role, for instance, through its overviews, statistical tables, charts, and presentation of key data, both within chapters and as a separate appendix. At the same time, it functions not only as a pedagogical endpoint but also as a point of departure for further research inspired by its contributions.

One of the volume's most significant strengths lies in its successful integration of scholars from different countries and disciplines, resulting in a reference work that combines synthesis with previously unexplored archival materials and new theoretical approaches in migration studies and related fields. This achievement reflects the editorial work of Gusztáv D. Kecskés (ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History, Budapest) and Tamás Scheibner (Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, and ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History), who have brought together a diverse group of Hungarian and international scholars. The result is a collective effort that offers nuanced and wide-ranging insights into the global impact of the events.

Given the length and complexity of the volume, it is not possible to discuss each chapter in detail; indeed, several of the thematic blocks could constitute independent publications. Nevertheless, an overview of the structure highlights the breadth and coherence of the work. The book is divided into five major sections, each approaching the subject from different perspectives. The editors' introduction is particularly valuable, outlining the origins of the project, its theoretical and methodological foundations, and its objectives. It also provides a concise overview of the chronology and characteristics of the 1956 Hungarian refugee operation, the Cold War context, and the role of international and domestic politics in shaping perceptions of refugees. In addition, it addresses the legal, economic, and financial conditions influencing reception, resettlement, and integration strategies, as well as diasporic relations. Throughout the volume, chapters offer not only interpretation but also extensive references to archival sources, maps, charts, and further readings, thereby supporting additional research.

The first section, "The Context," serves as an effective point of entry, offering an overview of the revolution for readers who may be less familiar with the events of 1956. At the same time, the chapters situate the refugee crisis within broader global and regional migration processes, particularly those affecting Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War. The second section, "International Organizations," examines the roles of various institutions involved in assisting refugees. Comprising eight essays by Hungarian and international scholars—from the United States to Poland—it examines organizations such as the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, the Assembly of Captive European Nations, the League of Red Cross Societies, NGOs, as well as religious and philanthropic groups. These contributions highlight both the diversity of actors involved and the complexity of decision-making and implementation processes. The third section, "Aspects and Dimensions," brings together six chapters that further contextualize the events through a range of approaches, from statistical analyses to personal narratives of refugees. Topics include the refugee policy of the Kádár regime, the role of Hungarian state security, and the Soviet Union's responses to Hungarian refugees in Austria. In addition, this section addresses issues of integration and repatriation, shedding light on the choices and challenges faced by refugees and offering broader insights into the experiences of

migrant communities and their impact on host societies (the latter explored in even more detail in the next blocks).

The fourth and fifth sections share a common focus but differ in geographical scope, presenting case studies of countries involved in the reception and settlement of Hungarian refugees. The European focus of Section Four includes seventeen case studies, presenting countries ranging from Austria and Belgium to Finland and Portugal. These chapters analyze national responses, exploring why and how different states admitted refugees, as well as the policies, opportunities, and societal attitudes involved. Section five extends this analysis beyond Europe, with twelve case studies covering countries such as the United States and Canada (with contributions by Nora Deák and Christopher Adam, respectively, that might be of special interest for readers of *Hungarian Cultural Studies*), Mexico, Peru, Israel, and Australia. The section further underscores the volume's international scope.

A key strength of these sections—consistent with the volume overall—is the shared structure established by the editors. This uniformity enhances coherence and facilitates comparison, enabling readers to better understand both common patterns and national particularities in refugee reception and integration. Each section concludes with a “Key Sources” component, in which authors identify major archival and press sources, thereby strengthening the research basis of the chapters and providing valuable guidance for further inquiry. From both an educational and a scholarly perspective, the structure of the volume is exemplary, offering not only information but also methodological and theoretical directions for future work.

This emphasis on supporting research and teaching is further reinforced by the appendix, which, unlike in many publications, constitutes an essential component of the book. The editors clearly position the handbook as a resource for higher education, and its features make it particularly suitable for courses on Hungarian history, international relations, migration, refugee studies, and diaspora studies. This is further enhanced by the project’s digital extensions. An accompanying online platform (<https://emigracio.abtk.hu/en/>) provides a thematic bibliography, a guide to archival collections, and a database that contributes to understanding refugee trajectories and networks. Together, the print volume and its digital components offer a compelling model of how scholarly work can be extended into the digital sphere, providing an up-to-date synthesis of research for both educational and more general purposes.

The volume, with its multifaceted contributions, offers an outstanding overview and is likely to become a key reference work on the events of 1956 as well as on broader questions of refugee policy, migration, and integration. It is equally important that the volume encourages further research and fosters dialogue, including comparisons with other refugee movements, thereby hopefully also contributing to contemporary discussions and decision-making. The book may also serve as a model for similar collaborative projects, demonstrating the value of international and interdisciplinary scholarship. It is highly recommended for its intended use in higher education across a range of disciplines, from history to migration and diaspora studies. At the same time, it will be of interest to a wider readership seeking new insights into the global repercussions of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its lasting significance for understanding refugee crises and their impact on societies, institutions, and individuals.