
"Should We Leave or Stay?" Notes on Recent Hungarian Outmigration

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Abstract: *This preliminary study is based on Hungarian electronic media sources, informal interviews and similar personal communications, as well as statistical data provided by kind and cooperative colleagues in Hungary. Addressing the recent, massive outmigration from Hungary, the article explores some of the primary push-and-pull factors, and then discusses responses to the emigration phenomenon itself and its likely long-term demographic, social and economic implications, by scholars as well as by politicians from both the governing party and the opposition. To give the emic perspective, I cited and translated from my conversations with a few young emigrants, would-be-emigrants, and mothers' of these young people, and thus illustrate the issue from those most involved. Then, by also citing scholars, authors, columnists, and politicians my aim was to offer the etic, or outsiders' view, but – since for various reasons – they also appear to be involved in and concerned with the problem of outmigration, theirs is still an emic perspective, though of a different order. Realizing that the present attempt is merely a quick snapshot of an ongoing, potentially volatile and dynamic process, further research and a multidisciplinary attempt to interpret and analyze the recent emigration from Hungary are needed.*

Keywords: Hungary, outmigration, emigration, Schengen Agreement, European Union,

Biography: Éva V. Huseby-Darvas received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. She has taught part time at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Ann Arbor campuses and at E.L.T.E. in Budapest. Her areas of scholarly interest include looking at the relationship between identity and radical social change and the ramification of migration on gender. Specifically, she has published some fifty articles on East Central European culture and society, kinship networks and gender politics, and the regional development of nationalism and ethnicity, refugees, migrants, and immigrants. She has also published *Hungarians in Michigan* (2003). In recognition of her research in contributing to the understanding of Hungarian historical, cultural and social development in the homeland and abroad, as well as for her continuous efforts in promoting research cooperation between the U.S. and Hungary, in 2008 Huseby-Darvas was awarded the Knight's Cross Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary.

In the early 2000s I wrote a paper about migration to and from Hungary. It was entitled “*Extra Hungariam Non Est Vita? The Relationships between Hungarian Immigrants and Their Homeland,*” and was published as a chapter in a collection about homecomings in 2004. That chapter, preceding this article here, shows various types of homecomings, both actual and virtual/symbolic remigrations to the homeland.¹ Unlike there, in the following notes I discuss neither homecomings nor various related ideologies. As far as I can tell, at this time mostly retirees compose the majority of recent returnees. Many find that their pensions from the West, frequently with the addition of their Hungarian pensions, will go considerably further in their natal land than in their adopted countries. For example, a 63-year old divorced woman with dual (United States and European Union) citizenship took early retirement after nearly 30 years of manual labor in the United States. She told me that making ends meet with her \$600 monthly Social Security pension would be nearly impossible in the USA, but she hopes to live comfortably in Hungary, where, in addition to her monthly minimum amount of retirement pension (60,000 Forints, which translates approximately to \$270.00 in the Summer of 2012), she will get free healthcare and – other than paying for seat reservation on train travel – free public transportation within the country. Depending on a number of familial and socioeconomic factors, many other folks who left Hungary in the late Kádár regime (partly to improve their economic situation) either returned or spend part of the year in Hungary and part in their adoptive countries. But this, along with the many advantages and many difficulties of immigrant life, is a topic for another paper. Rather, in the following pages my primary focus will be on recent patterns of outmigration from Hungary (outmigration and emigration will be used synonymously in this paper, see Hein de Haas, 2010). According to a recent study (GVI, 2012), the fall of 2010 was the turning point for the massive outmigration, and -- so far – its peak was in January of 2012. After glancing at some of the push-and-pull factors, particularly the contemporary motivations that induce the new wave of emigration, I will continue with a few illustrative “voices” of emigrants and would-be emigrants, as well as of mothers of emigrants. I will conclude with some reactions and prognostications to these phenomena by a few scholars, and selected politicians in the government and in the opposition.

While in several ways Hungarian outmigration today is similarly motivated -- by economic despair, hopelessness for the future, sense of helplessness, desire for more humane working conditions -- as was the great exodus from the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. In other ways, particularly in the intentions of the actors, it is very different today, in the era of rapid mass media and instant communication. Hungary went through radical changes after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. First becoming part of the European Union in 2004 and then three years later, one of the internally borderless Schengen Countries of Europe (see BBC Q&A Schengen Agreement). Today, roughly two decades after these radical changes began people are able to travel freely, observe lifestyle at home and abroad, then compare and contrast what they have and what they would like to have. In addition to the economic problems already mentioned, there are serious and increasing complaints about the nation’s health care, education, and other social services. With the global

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economic crisis there is wide unemployment and rising prices in Hungary as well as elsewhere, and it is increasingly difficult for the Hungarian middle class to stay afloat. The obvious distance is growing between those who are visibly well to do and those who are trying without much success to eke out a living. Moreover, a relatively small but visible social stratum has developed that is composed by the political and/or economic elite of the country. More often than not, members of this stratum spend only parts of the year in the homeland; they send their offspring to universities abroad; and take both their families' health issues and their money outside the country. As professor of the Ethnic and Minority Studies at Eötvös Lóránt University, Mária Székelyi, emphasized:

... members of this stratum essentially consider Hungary, where their money is made and status created, as a colony. A country whose middle class is rapidly shrinking, whose elite buy those services abroad that are for the less well-to-do supposedly "free" at home, further ruins the standards of these services, and in so doing thrust the country to the periphery (personal communication, 2012).

In today's world of mass media and internet information travels almost instantly. Particularly for those who feel helpless and hopeless and who desperately want to better their existence internet communication - regardless of the of the information's source, value, or validity - is often interpreted as a convincing lifeline. Not only are there heaps of often unmoderated material available on the internet, but many are very angry and passionate, encouraging people to leave (see, for example, <http://uton.postr.hu/aki-itt-marad-arrol-elvelenyuzzak-a-bort> (*Útrakelő*, 2012. 6. 7:08:00) ("those who stay here will be skinned alive" I suppose this is not meant to be taken literally, but tries to express that those who stay at home will be mercilessly exploited). For a less extreme, widely read and frequently visited blog is Border-crosser, or *Határátkelő*, with many participants worldwide.

My sources in these notes are from popular electronic media as well as from statistical and other data kindly provided by Hungarian colleagues. In addition, I am drawing on oral and/or written communication with some people who already left Hungary; a few who are ready and actually prepared to leave; and some who would like to and tentatively plan to leave. In several cases I include the informal communication I had with mothers of a few out-migrants as well.

Once again: In the late Spring of 2004 Hungary has become a member of the European Union. Three years later it was also accepted as one of the Schengen Countries, countries whose internal boundaries were essentially abolished. It became considerably easier than it had ever been to relocate, move around without a visa, and even find jobs in selected countries within Schengen Europe. While recent Hungarian outmigration has been ongoing since 1989-1990 (the end of the so-called socialist regime) (Hárs 2001), it was not at the scale and proportion it became in the past few years. For a relatively small country with an already shrinking birthrate and a shrinking population of just under 10 million, the fact that within one year forty thousand Hungarians immigrated to Germany alone is reason for alarm (ATV.hu 2012:05.17; Gödri, 2012). The total number of those who left is difficult to calculate, but estimates for 2011 vary from at least 100,000 to 200,000 (Eidenpenz, 2012). According to statistics from the late spring of 2012 (Matalin, 2012), in addition to the actual exodus, there is a growing number of Hungarians who are seriously considering to leave the country, although, of course, it remains to

be seen how many of these will actually do so. A much publicized and apparently widely alarming study by the independent Social Research Institute Inc, TÁRKI, found that the intention or actual plan to leave Hungary has never been as high as in 2012, with 19% or every fifth Hungarian adult claiming to want to leave the country either for short or long term work in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom, or to emigrate to the United States or Canada. Furthermore, almost one half of those under 30 years of age (i.e. those between 19 and 29, and particularly those without jobs, and the Roma) plan to leave. In addition to the 48% of those under 30 years of age, other groups intending to leave are: 35% of people who are satisfied with their health; 32% of those who vote for the far-right Jobbik Party; 31% of people between 31 and 40 years of age; 30% of Hungarians with a high school diploma; 28% of people out of work and 28% of those belonging to the Roma ethnic group (TÁRKI, cited in http://Nepszabadsagonline.hu/belfold/20-120611_honvagyuk_van_es_duhosek). Particularly noteworthy here is the 32% of those who voted for or plan to vote for the far-right, strongly nationalistic and xenophobic party, Jobbik, intend to leave Hungary. Endre Sík, senior researcher in TÁRKI, maintains that the strong nationalist sentiment of this group apparently does not override their individual economic interests. However, the intention of the pro-Jobbik is to leave the country, but not making a permanent life and career elsewhere, but rather to make ends meet. Within less than 24 hours of the publication of these data by TÁRKI, many hundreds of often-impassioned, along with a few sober and sobering responses appeared on the Internet. For example, many people wrote about their personal experiences and about what they experience about emigration in their social network (http://www.gyakorikerdesek.hu/politika_magyar-politika_2970470-mekkora-a-kivandorlas-magyarorszagrol-ki-mit-lat-a-kornyezeten).

Although some who leave to work abroad proclaim their intention to return, in fact, it appears that fewer and fewer Hungarian guest workers actually remigrate to Hungary. The reason, according to Index.hu (2012/a), is that even worse conditions than they faced before they left await those who return to Hungary from working outside the country. One vivid example are the wages, where, for example, in Austria hourly wages are four times what they are in Hungary, particularly in the metal trades. Even seasonal workers, those in the restaurant and service industries and in agriculture leave Hungary in the spring and who are expected back at the end of the summer, are returning less and less often.

Some graduating seniors were interviewed on Index.hu in Budapest's Berzsenyi Gimnázium, a high school in the capital's 13th district, with a reputation of being a good school mostly of middle- and upper middle-class students. It was found that there are senior classes where a third of the students already have solid plans to leave the country to study in the West after graduation. The primary reason given by some of the teens, particularly the ones interested in humanities, is that in Hungary they are superfluous (the six minutes forty seconds long video can be seen on Index.hu, 7th of May 7, 2012 6'40"; Az utolsó kapcsolja le a villanyt! - tömegesen lépnek le a magyar fiatalok [Last one [out] turn off the light! – Hungarian youth leave in masses, ATV.hu (2012):06.02). Of course a number of the statutes involving tuition hikes and limited university and college enrollments enacted and the talk about signing „tying down contracts” and others that are announced by Rózsa Hoffmann, the Secretary of State for Education of the Ministry of National Resources since June 2010, do not help these high school graduates to feel like they would want to remain either.

Four months after the already mentioned video, Enikô Eszenyi, director and actor of the Vígszínház, a major Budapest theater, commented that theaters aspire and aim for the young to stay in the homeland and watch plays there, not on Broadway. With her colleagues she asked high school students to write short scenes about why they would want to stay or not to stay in Hungary. In the brief video, in which the best scenes were acted by third year drama students, we hear that the assignment initially included the statement, "my work and dreams are here!" and that many students would indeed like to stay at home if they would only see a promising future. But we hear conflicting statements like "I will go to England. That is the only place I can be happy." We are told that a frequent motif in these scenes is that often it is the parents who are actually encouraging and sending their children abroad. According to one young woman, 80% of the seniors picture their lives elsewhere, away from their homeland either already during university studies, or after (Index.hu/c 2012.09.27).

In the recent past medical doctors and other young professionals moved from Hungary to improve their working conditions and financial opportunities. In early May, 2012 I talked with a 30-year-old medical doctor in Budapest, who was just a week away from leaving Hungary with her fiancé. They were going to a Western European country's bio farm to work for three months in order – as she said -- "to refresh our language". She was positive and hopeful that as a pediatrician she could get a job within six months of arriving there, and that they could settle down. She told me that – other than occasionally visiting their parents, relatives and friends -- they have no intentions of permanently returning to their homeland. The young doctor was convinced that they will succeed, in part because they have friends and colleagues who tried this strategy and are doing very well in the West. Actually, I was told that even before the three months on the bio-farm was over, in response to her resumé she got several offers and accepted a job she found ideal. Her fiancé is still looking for an opportunity (personal communication with K.F.; see also Nemes, János. 2011).

Subsequently I talked with a medical doctor in her late fifties, who feels she herself is too old to leave. She said that

Everyone who was able to leave and was fluent either in German or English left. The [medical] equipment is so much better elsewhere... besides it is hard to take the Prussian style authoritarian medical system here. Only the professor can do the most profitable surgeries. And now this system is mixed with something else: a healthcare system that is totally broken down.... A friend's son who is an orthopedic surgeon left for Northern Germany where not only can he do surgeries but makes in two weeks what here would take him a year to earn (personal communication in 2012 with K.T.)

While this woman does not feel that she is young and flexible enough to start a new life elsewhere, one of her two sons moved to Western Europe less than a year before our conversation took place. She encourages his stay there because, as she told me, "there is no future for him in Hungary." A divorced professional woman, in her 60s, whose only child is a doctor, maintained:

I believe that it makes rational good sense that I want the best for my child. Therefore I would not hold him back. I even helped by encouraging him to try

elsewhere after it became clear that he could neither make a decent living here, nor be appreciated and advance in his career. Even though as a parent, the geographical separation causes me pain... the fact that we can travel and visit with each other, we can even be in virtual visual contact puts a different light on this. It helps. (personal communication in 2012 with K.Zs).

Of course, not all parents accept their children leaving, even when the children feel it is a necessity. In contrast to the women above, a woman in her early 60s who recently lost her lower administrative job in a bank is trying to keep her only child from leaving, a son, who is 32, single, works as a paramedical clerk, and speaks English. She said to me:

...Sure, I told him, I know the outlook is bleak here. There is no future, no hope now. Sure, I said to him, I know there are lots of young people who leave [Hungary], but for what? Many return, too. It is not all that wonderful elsewhere either (personal communication in 2012 with Sz.A.E.).

An unmarried young man in his late 20s with a degree in economics from a university in Budapest wrote me from Switzerland the following e-mail on March 8, 2012:

...To answer [your] questions it turned out that my girlfriend got a job here... She is working at the [x] pharmaceutical company. Earlier we would have debated considerably more whether to leave or not to leave [Hungary], but in the present circumstances it did not even come up between us to stay home. On the one hand, the morale at [my place of employment] was horrible because of the constant sackings. On the other hand I / we have a pretty bleak view of Hungary. In addition – as a pessimist – my assessment is that nothing ever really changes there. Perhaps when the economy is prospering the many insufferable idiots there are less unendurable... (e-mail communication in 2012 with D.D.)

Similar to the view held by the young female doctor who is hopeful about her emigration, András Boda (2011) writes in „Sarkkőri praxis ([Medical] Practice on the Arctic Circle)) how a young medical doctor from a rural Hungary town made an often difficult yet satisfying life for himself and for his small nuclear family in the northern Norwegian city of Alta. He and his wife, who is a teacher, like the friendliness and helpfulness of the Norwegian town folk, and they are particularly comfortable with the leisurely, casual, non-hierarchical relationship between people. Boda also mentions that some friends and colleagues of this couple in the rural Hungarian town blame them and others who left the country, maintaining that Hungary spent time, effort and money on their education and yet they are profiting outside the country when they are needed at home. The fact that even those doctors whose medical specialty is badly needed at home migrate out of Hungary discussed in ATV.hu 2012:02.21.

It is not only the “white coat professionals” who are leaving or would like to leave their homeland. ***A woman in her early thirties, with three advanced diplomas (although, none of them would help her across cultures and languages), a husband who has been out of work for nearly a year, and with a pre-school age child, wrote to me the following:***

It is tragi-comical what is now happening in Hungary. We are just shaking our heads. They pass shocking new laws. My dad is very ill but no longer gets any help. He is unable to work, but because of the economic situation, he does not get any financial help. It was only 40,000 forint per month (about \$185.00 at the time of our communication) but they still miss that tremendously. Another example of the ridiculous new laws effects my brother: he signed a contract that for his university studies he will need to serve four years in the army. He is now serving his last half-year. They just decreed a new one-sided law that modifies this so now he will have to serve eight years. I ask you: does this attest to fair law? To force people retroactively?

The woman's e-mail continued:

There are millions of similar [unjust, difficult to live with] things. Our acquaintances are literally escaping, they are moving out of the country, wherever they are able to go. Germany, England, Cyprus. Only to get away from here. I am not surprised because we are also desperately futureless. Our apartment loan is killing us, we are unable to sell the apartment, and we have no choice the cost of our loan is in high heavens. The apartment at its present value is not worth as much as what we now owe because of the change in the value of the Swiss frank (see Bodnár and Molnár, 2010:797). I don't know how much further this crisis will expand, but people's patience is declining along with their reserves. We are trying to come up with ideas... trying to stay on our feet. We must be positive or else we will be swept away by these events...(e-mail communication in 2012 with S.V.)

Péter Benei, who studied at ELTE, is now in his early 30s emigrated from Hungary in 2012, and lives and works as head of Social Media at Them, in London. While as an immigrant he is obviously not unbiased about the issue, his comments about the reasons and likely outcome of massive outmigration of the promising, professional young Hungarians who speak languages sound like Hungary's death knell for the not too distant future. Benei (2012) writes that in his homeland there is now "an ever-present, all-embedding provincialism and cynicism that poisons the thinking of creative and intelligent young." While some leave, he continues, because of financial problems, there are many additional contributing reasons. The relationship between people in all daily interactions of life is tense. "The very air we breathe is strained," he laments. While still in Budapest, with his wife they were contemplating to have children, and asked themselves "are we certain that we would like to raise children in this country? ... what kind of vision would a child have in Hungary for a viable future?" Benei finishes his profound and despondent article with "Nothing is more desperate for a country's future than if its youth imagine their lives elsewhere."

Elment a gyerekem külföldre (My child went abroad) is a relatively new page on Facebook (2012/b), which, as far as I can ascertain, formed only in September of 2012. The motto, or statement of the community, obviously continuing the name of entry, *Elment a*

gyerekeim külföldre “because [he/she] sees the future, the perspectives elsewhere, because we let/wanted [our child] to leave, because we also see his/her future elsewhere.” Among the captivating comments, there are single sentence discussions, for example “Why did we not raise patriots?” “I tried to raise a citizen of the world (*világpolgár*)...” “And the citizen of the world is not the same as not a patriot” (emphasis mine). “What is a patriot?” “...more and more kids today become citizen of the world.” A number of entries are telling and mirror what several mothers of emigrants either told me or wrote to me earlier in 2012. For example, an active, highly intelligent artist in her mid-70s whose only child and grandchildren live in West, wrote to me the following:

... The general morale in the country is awful now, yet my generation is not going anywhere. But ... our children & grandchildren - many even along with their families - leave the country. They speak languages, many have [useful, usable] professions, their stomachs don't go into a nervous spasm when they cross borders, and they are not afraid of officials... (e-mail communication in 2012 with V.K.)

Although politicians and the followers of each party place emphases and blame for the massive outmigration on the opposition parties, regardless of political or party affiliation, the high rate of emigration clearly appears to be a general topic of concern. In an attempt to address young people to slow down or even stop the vast emigration of that particular demographic group in 2011 a video-film commissioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Policy and the Ministry of National Resources was released in Hungary called “*Minden ideköt*,” which translates roughly as “Everything ties me here [to Hungary].” The little over two-minutes long film was posted to YouTube, among other places. A less explicit, but considerably more widely used and I suspect somewhat more effective site is the Facebook page, entitled „*Szeretlek, Magyarország*” („I love you, Hungary”). It was started in September of 2010 (significantly at the same time when the turn for the recent massive outmigration took place) and two years later it has many visitors, and just under a half million active participants, 78% of the latter are from Hungary, the rest are from Ireland, Serbia, and elsewhere in the world (www.szeretlekmagyarorszag.hu). The two most remarkable features of this page is the exceptionally positive approach to just about everything, and earnestness, i.e. nearly total avoidance of irony and sarcasm. In the statement of purpose the site's owners maintain that „we are not looking for what does not work, but what works well. [We only look for] good programs, good places, good initiatives, good examples....anything that links us together and is proactive can be a theme.” There are carefully selected news segments, recipes with attractive photographs, beautifully presented historical as well as contemporary Hungarian scenes, and a new young Hungarian beauty is pictured each day in rather alluring pose (Facebook, 2012/a).

Particularly skilled outmigrations along with ongoing brain drain worry the politicians of both the present regime as well as members of the opposition (Személyi and Csanády (2011:27-46). With Project Retour Regina Saphier tried to answer this problem as early as 2003. After years of study in the West, Saphier notes (Linked In: n.d.) she got diplomas from:

....Teachers College, Columbia University in New York, USA with a Masters degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Education (also have a Bachelors degree in Marketing Management from Oxford Brookes University Business School, Oxford, England).

Regina Sapier returned home to Hungary in 2002, where she found it very difficult to settle in and find a job. She decided to start an NGO named "Project Retour," aimed at helping highly skilled, highly educated returning migrants reintegrate into the Hungarian workforce. Her intention was to connect returnees with institutions and other potential employers in the Hungarian scientific world. After six years of struggle, in 2009, due to the lack of sufficient funding, Project Retour "temporarily stopped its services" as noted by Személyi and Csanády (2011:32; Sapier and Simonovits, 2004).

The 'brain export' was and is a day-to-day issue in the media, and in scholarly and other conversations regarding economy, science or intelligence as well as a phenomenon in which the majority of Hungarians who participated in higher education have some first-hand experience either personally or through a friend or relative (Személyi and Csanády 2011:32). At the same time, some maintain that the emigration phenomenon also has positive sides. They suggest that the brain drain is not totally negative because people working abroad provide much-needed monetary help flowing into Hungary along with valuable international experience that those who go abroad gain in the West and eventually import back to Hungary, resulting in desirable "brain gain" (30).

Politicians of the current Orbán regime blame the Socialists who held power over the previous eight years for all the present ails of the country and the resulting outmigration, while the opposition condemns the Orbán government for newly instituted laws, introduction of and hikes in university tuition, educational restrictions, poor living conditions, joblessness, lack of reliable social safety nets, and so on. For example, in 2012, Tibor Navracsics (ATV, 2012.06.16. 13:31), deputy Prime Minister of Hungary, maintained:

...there is hope that by 2014 Hungary will be more attractive for the young than it was in 2010. [This] government has made the beginning steps, but it must be even more open for the young.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán explicitly requested those young professionals who left Hungary to return home. Over and again he said that they left because of the mistakes made by Gyurcsány and Bajnai regimes (Frigyes's blog [sic]2011. February 14. 18:21) . At the same time, Péter Pető, 2012) argued that the Prime Minister is "completely out of synch with the values and views of contemporary Hungarian youth." Pető based his diagnosis on Orbán's following response to a question about his opinion about the TÁRKI data when he said:

[The young emigrate], instead of giving birth to [our] grandchildren and we could live as one big happy family.

Csaba Winkfein, a member of the opposition the Hungarian Socialist Party, who is also concerned about the massive outmigration of the young, maintains that lack of jobs is the main reason for this worrisome phenomenon and he is trying to work out a party plan entitled "Gyere Haza" or Come Home. According to Winkfein, "The government must give solutions for better living conditions, jobs, education of the young" (Mandiner, 2012).

Responding to Winkfein, Gabriella Selmeczi, spokeswoman of the governing Fidesz, (MA.hu, June 10th, 2012) argued that because of the now ongoing reforms in the systems of education, taxation, and in the economic sphere in a few years Hungary will become an attractive country and that the youth will want to return and actually will return. Only five weeks later,

Viktor Orbán also stated his opinion that in four or five years the country's youth will return home in masses, adding that he believes that they merely left either to make money or for an adventure, but not with the intent to permanently emigrate (Orbán, 2012, July 24).

Was Thomas Wolf right with his much-debated claim that "you can't ever go home again"? Returning home is not impossible, but neither is easy. Gusztáv Megyesi (2012) a columnist, and, above all, an impressive thinker, whose daughter lives in Sweden, mused that:

.....it is an enormous self-deception to believe that we can up and leave, make lots of money abroad, then just return home and everything will just the same as before. Once you leave, you are gone, you left, that is irreversible. Be careful: that notion that return is problem-free is still the ties of the old world! The new world has repulsions, not ties. I read that today about 100,000 Hungarians work abroad, anda couple of thousands with [university] diplomas attempt to return home, but they are not really wanted: according to the NGOs that try to help them settle back in, the problem with the [would-be-returnees] is either that they are too well-qualified, or that they are too independent. Employers here are afraid that they will be rivals ... (Megyesi, Gusztáv. *Elmagyar [Away, Hungarian]. Népszabadság online* (2012):06,02.

The history of Homo sapiens in general, including, of course, the history of Hungary in particular, is the history of migrations. Migrations are likely to continue in the future. However, in my continuing research since the late 1970s of various Hungarian in- and outmigrations, I found that -- regardless of the similarity of motivations push- and/or pull factors -- the actors' intentions were most often different than they are in the present time (Huseby-Darvas, 1993, 1994a and b; 1995 a and b; 1996; 1997). Following 1989, the fall of the Iron Curtain, the year many hailed to be the *annus mirabilis*, it might have been unanticipated that -- once again in history -- existential despair will be the primary push factor and that so many who leave will not intend to return home, but permanently build a life outside their homeland. While it is impossible to sharply separate political factors from economic ones, in major waves of emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries it was primarily the political push factor that resulted in an intention to stay away. For example, those who emigrated mainly for political reasons after the revolutions of 1848 and 1919, as well as those Jewish-Hungarian professionals who left between 1919 and 1945 (Frank, 2009), or those who *aliyad* to Israel during & after 1948; and many the Displaced Persons after the Second World War, and the '56-ers who left the country after the Revolution of 1956 would fit the category of wanting to settle permanently away from their homeland. A few examples of those who recently left, motivated primarily by politics and/or a real or perceived sense of danger is the writer Ákos Kertész's 2012 recent move to Canada, and the Nobel Prize recipient for literature Imre Kertész' move to Berlin. The many Roma who asked for asylum in Canada and elsewhere very likely emigrated, as well, without any plans to return to Hungary (Butler, 2011; Cohen, 2012). Regardless of what their futures hold, at least *initially these emigrants have no intention of moving back*. On the other hand, in the past emigrants who left because of economic and existential reasons, like those who were parts of the great exodus from Austria-Hungary between the 1880s and 1914 wanted to and seriously intended to return, though in fact only an estimated 16% actually did (Huseby-Darvas, 1994a). Today, however, few outmigrants state that they want to return and resettle in their homeland. The primary motivation of these out-migrants is an attempt to improve their over-all

existence. Author and social commentator, Attila Csernok wrote that today Hungarians "leave the country to go to the West for higher wages and not for the achievements of civil democracy" (Csernok, 2012).

Still, as many rightly argue, the rancorous political atmosphere, poor general morale and an overwhelming sense of no hope in Hungary's future remain major push factors that encourages some to emigrate (Földes, 2012). Iván Bächer (2012) author, columnist, and remarkable social commentator, is more specific when he laments the country's tremendous long-term loss from massive emigration. He suggests that the ongoing emigration is the fifth time in nearly a century when the Hungarian bourgeoisie, [and] the intelligentsia face the dilemma: to leave the homeland or stay. The first one was in 1919-1920; the second occurred in the late 1930s- early 1940s; the third in 1947-48; the fourth in 1956, and the fifth is ongoing right now. "Each time," he writes, "whenever people's confidence was shaken in the future of the country, of the nation... Whenever the civic order was turned upside down, when there was uncertainty, when life [became dangerous]." He notes that with the first exodus (in 1919-1920) about two dozens future Nobel Prize winners left the country. Bächer maintains that the country suffered immeasurable losses with those masses that it rejected, and pushed away over the past century. Wherever he goes, Bächer stresses, the topic is to leave or stay. Those who have professions that are internationally usable leave. The present is dismal, Hungary is beaten again. The future, he claims, is more than doubtful, more than iffy.

Socioeconomic historian, Zoltán Kaposi (ATV, 2012) maintains that the loss of even one-half of the so-called Y-generation -- those young well-qualified, educated, and comfortable with electronics, speaking languages that are useful in the West -- "might well lead to socioeconomic catastrophe" in Hungary. He warns about the subsequent development of "generational craters, or gulfs" (*generációs lyukak*), which would endanger the maintenance of pension plans; and certain professions, particularly medicine, would be deserted.

Professor of Social-psychology at Eötvös Lóránt University, György Csepeli's (ATV, 2012) diagnosis of the massive outmigration is also bleak. He notes that particularly the talented, educated and ambitious young intend to and actually leave the country. Csepeli argues that massive emigration is self-generating because the more talented young people leave, the more the situation is worsened; fewer and fewer are willing to stay and attempt to improve circumstances at home. According to Professor Csepeli, who was an under secretary of informatics during the Socialist tenure, current Hungarian politics and political leadership are overwhelmingly responsible for both what is happening with the economy and also the unbridgeable chasm between what he calls "international reality and the Hungarian sociopolitical-lead world view." Unlike a number of other social scientists, Csepeli is convinced that trying to figure out the individual elements of emigrants' motivation for leaving is less important than understanding the synthesis of these motives which is that currently there is no perspective, no future, no hope, and therefore these people find it impossible to stay in their homeland. "The decision," according to Csepeli, "is a reverse Szózat" (the poet, Mihály Vörösmarty's famous summons of 1836 that informally became a much loved second anthem of Hungary after Béni Egressy composed music to the patriotic poem). Instead of the poet's words "you must live and die here" (*itt élned s halnod kell*), today's version is "you need not live here and need not die here" (*nem kell itt élned és nem kell itt meghalnod*).

It is even more difficult to conclude this paper than it is to end similar efforts. I am actually convinced that it is impossible to put an end to these notes and observations because they present merely a snapshot of an ongoing, dynamic, and possibly volatile process. As I noted in the 2004 publication, some Hungarians have long been wont to say: *Extra Hungariam non est vita, et si est, non est ita* (Outside of Hungary there is no life, and if there is [life], it is not the same). However, while people might still repeat this saying today, in the current situation, the meaning is often completely twisted and thus altered. For an increasing number of young, educated, mobile Hungarians today -- however sadly -- it appears that the only life worth having is outside of Hungary.

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