

ETHNIC-HOMOGENIZATION PROCESSES IN THE MOST DEVELOPED REGION OF SERBIA, THE MULTIETHNICAL VOJVODINA.

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Abstract: Vojvodina, or known as Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the northern province of Serbia which bordering with Hungary, partly an area inhabited by Hungarians and administratively an autonomous region. Vojvodina existed under the authority of several state formations over the past centuries which made it mainly due to migrations one of the most colorful ethnic and multiconfessional areas of Europe. When Vojvodina was judged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes created in 1st December 1918, the power of Belgrade started to settle Serbs from the underdeveloped southern parts of Serbia. The homes of fleeing Hungarians and Germans mostly in Banat in the last month of World War II had been taken up Serbs derived from Lika, Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo. In this time shaped the absolute majority of Serbs. Several migrants moved to Vojvodina considered to political changes from the 1990's until today. Decreasing number of Hungarians got into minority in several settlements due to demographic cases, emigration and the immigration of Serbs. In this study we analyse fully the changes of the ethnical spatial structure, particularly focusing on the expectancies and the questions of minority existence of Hungarians.

Keywords: ethnic-homogenization, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary, multiethnic and multiconfessional region.

INTRODUCTION.

The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina – the northern province of Serbia – became one of the most colorful multiethnic areas of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Today's ethnic structure is determined by the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the third Balkan war and one of the most important consequences of these, migration and the demographic „behaviour” of minorities. Like the other states of the Balkan region, the ethnic-homogenization process began in Vojvodina too.

This study shows the changes, transformations of the ethnic spatial structure in one of the most significant ethnic areas of Hungarians outside the borders of the motherland using statistical data from the Second World War until today. In addition to analyzing historical geography of the ethnic groups we discuss in details the minorities of the region, particularly the largest minority, the contemporary situation and minority rights of Hungarians.

Vojvodina¹ is the only autonomous region of the Republic of Serbia. Its area is 21.500 square kilometres and its population is more than 2 million people. The multiethnic and multireligious structure of richest province of Serbia and the multiethnic character of multiconfessional, ethnic and religious variegation has faded during the last twenty years. This manifests of an ethnic homogenization process. Vojvodina existed in

the past centuries under several state authorities and in different state forms. Up to the middle of the 19th Century its history was connected to the Hungarian statehood, and was only temporarily under Austrian control between 1849-1860 as Serbian Vojvodina and Temes Banat. From the First World War until today Vojvodina has been the province of Serbia (in the 20th Century the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and from 1946 as part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

Figure 1: The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina



Edited by: András Mérei, 2011

1. THE HISTORY OF VOJVODINA TILL 1920

The three units of the area – the Banat, Bačka and Srem – in nearly a thousand years of history was part of the historical Southern Hungary. Especially the Srem and the southern part of the Danube and Tisza became the richest, most densely populated and ethnically pure area of the Hungarian population in the Kingdom of Hungary. Rearrangement of the regional ethnic composition began by the settling of fleeing Serbs in the end of 14th Century².

One of the most densely Hungarian-populated areas lost a significant proportion of its Hungarian population in particular for more than two centuries due to the Dózsa's Peasants War in 1514, the Ottoman (Turkish) invasion-related campaigns and the destruction of Crni Jovan's (Nenad) Serbian troops in 1527³. In the next centuries many ethnic groups came to the landscape. The Romanians' massive

immigration started also during the Turkish occupation. After the retirement of the Ottomans the area was populated by migrations and organized settlements. A new Serbian influx also reached the countryside. Serbs fleeing from the Turkish counterattack joined to the liberating Christian armies and later moved to the areas in Slavonia and Southern Hungary.

Arzen Čarnojevič, the Patriarch of Ipek settled tens of thousands of Serb families in the liberated areas. Some researchers believe that the Serbs lost Kosovo ethnically through this withdrawal from the south – the cradle of Serbian nation – and Albanians had immigrated into the region⁴. The ruling Leopold I. in 1690 obligated the privilege granted Serbs to military service and border protection. Catholic Germans were settled primarily during the reestablishment in the Banat of Temes.

After the expulsion of the Turks in the first half of the 18th Century a so called 'third settlement' began in the Banat, where after the peace of Pozarevac a special administration evolved under the Habsburg Empire's hegemony existing in Hungary. Banat was one of the last liberated areas of the former Kingdom of Hungary which then – based on the population decimated by the battles and tribulations and the role of bulwark against the Ottomans – became a symbolic area of the Habsburg resettlemental policy. Among the relocated population Germans deriving mainly from Elzass, Westphalia, Luxemburg, Württemberg, Bavaria, Frankland, Saxony and Silesia emerged.

The relocation of Germans deriving from South-West Germany and Austria into the Habsburg Monarchy's spaces emptied by the Turkish wars, was one of the greatest neolithic 'population policy' events. This German colony, which was methodically resettled by caesarean governance from the end of the 17th century, is known historically and ethnographically as Danube Swabians. Previously in the Dualism, the Germans were mentioned as 'native Germans of Hungary' or 'native Swabians of Hungary'. Their ethnic area extended in the Carpathian Basin from the mouth of River Raba to the Vaskapu Strait, where till the end of World War II more than 1.000 settlements and about 1.5 million inhabitants existed.

This list above also shows that an ethnic study could not consider the Germans to be ethnically homogenous, therefore the name 'Swabian' or

'Danube Swabian' is incorrect. The Banat lost its Hungarian majority during the Turkish occupation, and mostly merchant Serbs fleeing moved to north from the Turks, and mostly shepherd-life Romanians migrating from the Carpathians towards the Great Plain appeared. If we take into account all ethnic groups, the Banat became one of the most mixed-populated areas in Europe. In this situation, the coexistence of people and the geographical capability of the landscape gave a specific role to every ethnicity which characteristics have not changed substantially, but have improved technologically.

After the grace of Regulation (1782) during the post-Protestant the Protestant majority of Hungarians, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Germans also came to this country. Hungarians repopulated the area along the Tisza, from the two Kanizsa to Óbecse, from Csóka to Torontálvásárhely. A growing number of German, Slovak and Hungarian Protestants, Greek Catholic Ruthenians and Jews found home in the region. At the end of the 19th Century Ukrainians came from the historical area of Halicz (or Galic) and settled down in Indija, Srijemska Mitrovica and Kula. Until the end of World War I with less breakage like the events in 1848/49 and the following ten years the proportion of Hungarians increased to be a significant population and Vojvodina underwent through economic development⁵.

2. HISTORY BETWEEN 1920-1991

After the Treaty of Trianon 6.5 % of the historical territory of Hungary (without Croatia and Slavonia), became the part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS). Those areas of Vojvodina which were previously part of the Kingdom of Hungary like Bacska and 1/3 of the former Temes Banat, became part of the new state.

Hungarian (1910 – 55,4%, 1921 – 51,4%) and German majority in Vojvodina suffered disadvantages in several ways within the new states (such as: industry and transport development stopped, and an agrarian reform hampered the agricultural production on ethnic basis). This forced the people to internal migration and emigration. However a significant number of Serbs around 80.000 people settled in Vojvodina. The increasingly difficult political situation urged thousands of officers to escape, officials, intellectuals fled to Hungary, so the

Hungarians in Vojvodina remained without intellectual basis. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a lack of minority rights took place, the Hungarian, German etc. employees had been eliminated from series of state institutions, especially Hungarians suffered a lot. Mother tongue education was only in primary schools of lower grades of 4 or 6 grade; only in Szabadka was allowed to run a Hungarian-language high school. Almost a half-million of Hungarians had been secluded from the higher education, only 1‰ of them managed to obtain a degree in the inter-war period.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, or its successor state Yugoslavia did not preach the idea of yugoslavism, but rather enforced its dominance along the interests of the Serbian policy, economy etc. Despite the fact that the Belgrade Agreement required to maintain the demarcation line between the Hungarian public administration, the Serbian army headquarters and the National Board of Directors Serbian nationalization started and Serbs were resettled in the former Southern Hungary. From the beginning of 1919, which coincided with the start of the negotiations about the new Yugoslavian state boundaries in Paris, the dismissal of non-Serb officials became more and more widespread, who were mainly blamed with the refusal to swear allegiance.

Contracting peace treaties included minority protection clauses not only for the loser states of the World War I, but also the newly formed States were obligated by the major powers to sign. After lengthy negotiations on 5th December 1919, in connection with the acceptance of the Austrian peace treaty Yugoslavia declared to admit the minority protection agreement which was contracted unreservedly between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the major powers⁶.

The contract covered the whole area of Yugoslavia, with the exception of the 9th clause, which was valid only in areas gained after 1 January 1913, and was not regarded to the Albanians and Macedonians. This clause obligated the government to ensure the minority language education, and ordered the educational, religious or charitable purposes of the state budget to provide proportional share for racial, religious and linguistic minorities enjoying the same rights. The minority protection contracts included also the rights of minority optation. This meant that individuals could choose

whether they wished to take up the new nationality, or keep the old one, the new states could have not decide whether to grant citizenship or not.

The proclamation of the royal dictatorship on 6th January 1929 brought significant changes in the rights of minorities. The revolution fulfilled the complete change of elected lower and middle level administrative officials. Rallies had been dismissed in the province, the mayors had been replaced with military commissioners, the elected local bodies had been abolished, and the suspension of the association right made it impossible for the minority cultural associations to work. The dictatorship, as known, was not a result of an anti-minority policy, but it was born as 'solution' a the Serbian-Croatian conflict. The temporary acquittance of the Serbian-Croatian conflict – the Cvetkovič-Maček agreement signed on 23th August 1938 created a favorable atmosphere for the minorities. The centralist system turning into a „dualism” significantly loosened the more than two decades existing pressure of power, which granted the minority rights based on momentary political interests. After the organisation of Vojvodina, the Serbian population increased enormously which could not be explained with the higher natural reproduction of the urban Serbs. The new government wanted to execute the agrarian reform in rural areas to increase the number of Serbs. A significant number and size of land became the property of the so called dobrovoljacs⁷.

The 'agricultural reform' which had to standardize the agricultural structure of the state hurried to generalize the small peasant lands to the newly acquired territories. The Serbian army by the right of the agrarian reform published 25-27th February 1919 confiscated the estates of the Catholic Church, and the non-parochial lordships. The lands owned by Hungarian banks had been also suppressed⁸. The majority of the lands was formerly cultivated by German owners or day laborer German peasants but during the agrarian reform only the Serbs could be given lands (ploughlands, vineyards etc.).

The Serbs, who came mostly from the region of Lika, settled in the former Hungarian villages along the border (the Hungarian population migrated mostly to Hungary). The Serbian policy wanted to execute the 'role of hostile propaganda the coming from north' with the help of these settlers, not without success.

Until the subscription of the Trianon Peace Treaty the policy of Hungarian governments was to leave no doubt about the legal situation of the Serb-occupied areas. The governments also invariably formed a right for public administration, legislation, maintenance of the education, tax collection and military conscription law in this time in the vain hope that no more southern areas will be taken from Hungary except Croatia.

In this period Hungary continued to maintain the so-called revision policy – revision of the Peace Treaty of Trianon. One side of this policy was to regain the lost parts of Great Hungary as soon as possible. The other side of the revision – the question of the population – brought up much more problems. Prime minister László Bárdossy described this with the following word: 'Under alien authorities outrage and lawless confiscated possessions, gains and benefits will never be the subject of minority right protections.' Immigrants, settlers were considered as 'non-indigenous residents' who settled from 31st October 1918 in the Southern Region. In 1941, having taken advantage of the changed political conditions, Hungary reoccupied the Bačka, Southern Baranja inhabited by the Croats, and Muraköz (Prekmurje) inhabited by the Slovenes.

The II. World War, however, severely affected the Hungarians, blood loss was close to 60 thousand people, the loss of Hungarian-speaking Jews were 16 thousand. The Serbs took retaliatory action against the Germans who were considered as the fifth column and against Hungarians also. After the war the deportation or expulsion of Germans started, the ethnic group (with refugees), almost disappeared from the region (There are 3154 Germans in Vojvodina and 410 of them live in Novi Sad according to the 2002 census). The area during the Tito regime was characterized by a significant number of Serbian immigration, caused by the development of the province, and because of this more than half a million Serbs moved in between 1950 and 1973⁹. This process continued in the 1990s, the Kosovo crisis caused a new wave of migration of the Serbians into Vojvodina. The non-indigenous Serbs did not integrate integrated tolerant into the multi-ethnic space, especially the atrocities committed against the Hungarians made coexistence complicated.

Table 1: Changing ethnical structure of Vojvodina 1921-2002

Ethnics	1921	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2002
Serbs	502	1051	1017	1089	1107	1151	1322
Croats			143	159	108	74	57
Slovaks	49	72	76	73	70	63	57
Ruthenians	11	21	25	20	19	18	16
Hungarians	376	435	443	424	385	341	290
Germans	317	35	11	7	3	0	3
Romanians	69	58	57	53	47	39	30
Others	15	39	77	153	297	326	257
Total	1346	1712	1855	1953	2035	2013	2032

Source: Josef Wolf (ed.) 1994. Deutsche Minderheiten in Südosteuropa im Umbruch. Die Volkszählungen 1990-1992. p. 121.

3. HISTORY FROM 1991 UNTIL TODAY.

Today's ethnic structure is determined by the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the third Balkan war and the therefore increased migration, assimilation and the ageing of certain ethnic groups are also significant factors. In the period between the last two censuses the increasing number and rate of Serbs is spectacularly perceptible, in 2002 compared to the census 1991 a very significant increase – over 178 thousand people – in their number could be recorded and thus their proportion rose to 65.1%. A mass escape of Serbs can be observed in terms of the Balkan wars – especially in Kosovo, but also the Serbian-Croatian or the Bosnian war. Particularly Novi Sad and its surroundings, the Srem and the settlements near the Croatian border and to a lesser extent Subotica were the scenes of the resettlement of migrants.

In the intervening period since 1991, the change in the number of ethnicities of Vojvodina have been determined by migrations with different motivation and changing direction that took place in the war period or after that. During the war in Croatia and Bosnia Serbs fleeing from there appeared in the province of Vojvodina, while among ethnic minorities thousands fled abroad to avoid military conscription. From this perspective, the biggest loss was suffered by Hungarians¹⁰.

Because of a small UN embargo against Small-Yugoslavia (30 May 1992.) an economic downturn and inflaming inter-ethnic relations occurred and as a result of this not only minorities, but also a large number of Serbs moved abroad. After the collapse of Krajina

Serb Republic proclaimed on the territory of Croatia and the defeat and withdrawal of Bosnian Serb troops by the spring of 1996, nearly a quarter million Serbian refugees arrived in Vojvodina, three-quarter of them to Southwest Bačka and to Syrmia. The main aims of the period between 1945-48 were to settle Serbs in villages of Croats expelled from Syrmia, and cities offered favorable living conditions (24.500 Serbians were settled in Novi Sad, 6-8 thousand went to Ruma, Sombor, Pancsova, India, Mitrovica). In the Tisza region Serbian refugees generally settled in urbanized areas and cities but this is only 2% of the total number of settlers. The proportion of Hungarians also fell below 50% in Bajmok, Temerin and Törzsudvarnok due to the settling of Serb refugees and the moving away of local Hungarians, and as a result of the already high natural decrease by 1996. As a result of the resettlement of Serbs and the growing assimilation and emigration of minorities the number of Serbs increased from 56.8% to 65% in Vojvodina between 1991 and 2001 while the minority ratio decreased accordingly! This decrease in the percentage is mainly due to 178 thousand settled refugees.

During the Serbian census in March 2002 the population of Vojvodina was 2,031,992, out of this 93% declared his/her ethnic affiliation, 2.5% simply declared themselves as Yugoslavians. 65% of Vojvodina's population is Serbian which is 1.65 million people. 76.6% of the total population is Serbian-speaking. The ethnic uptake of Serbs is mainly presented along the Belgrade-Novı Sad-Subotica axis due to the relatively good living conditions! In contrast, by the Tisza and its tributary streams and the Banat, the population of Serbs more or less stagnated

and in some places decreased. Among the 45 opštinas (44 + Novi Sad) 33 opštinas have an absolute majority of Serbs, while 22 possess 70% of Serbs (in Syrmia, South Bačka, and in a substantial part of the Banat)¹¹.

Among the 475 municipalities in Vojvodina 343 have a Serb majority. The district and township centres possess the largest Serbian population in particular (Novi Sad 141 thousand, Pancsova 61 thousand, Zrenjanin 56 thousand, Sombor 33 thousand, Kikinda 31 thousand, Mitrovica 31 thousand Ruma and Versec 28-28 thousand).

In terms of our scale of activities, which also includes transborder relations, it is also important to address other minorities that can be found in Vojvodina: the Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Bulgarians and so on. Such a ratio is of no great importance, yet it is worth outlining their position, as each minority is indigenous in Hungary. In building our cross-border the connections a number of project possibilities is given as a result of the presence of nationalities. Let's take the first look at the Croats. In terms of the Serbian-Hungarian border following ethnic groups should be mentioned in Croatia: the Šokci ethnic group, Southern Slavs (Bunjevci) and Croats speaking the "kaj" dialect¹².

From the Serbian aspect the Southern Slavs and the Šokci ethnic group must be mentioned first. In 2002 their total proportion in the province of

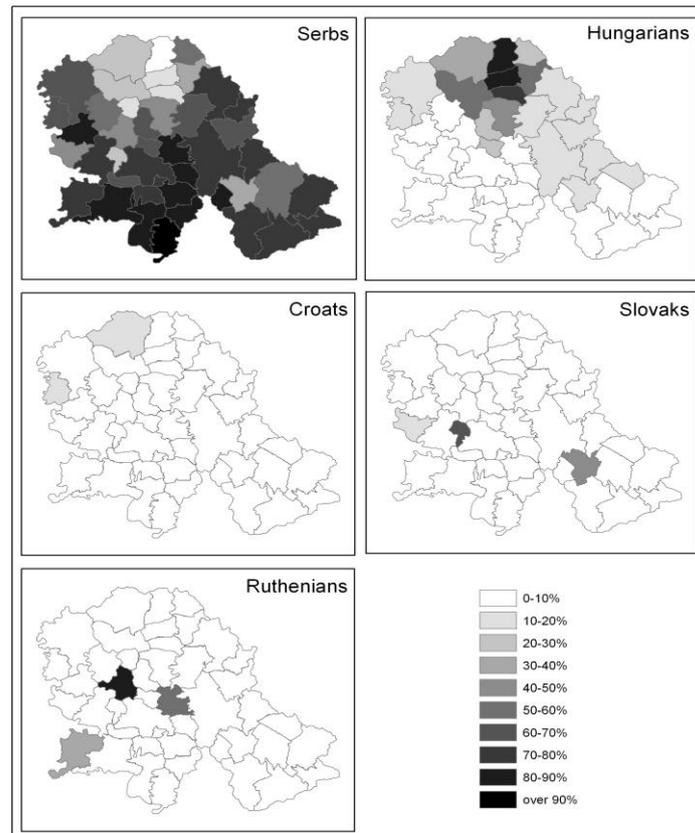
Vojvodina was 76.000 people (according to some data it is 56 thousand people) however three quarters of them identified themselves as Serbs¹³ and as a result the number of Croatian native speakers is 21 thousand people (1% of the total population). Compared to 1991 their number decreased by 22% respectively. Yet, in Bačka they constitute an absolute majority in the following municipalities: Tavankut Gornji, Tavankut Donji, Mala Bosna, Ljutovo, Đurđin, Bikovo, Bački Monoštor, Sonta. Their central settlement is Subotica, they make up almost a third of the population, and they also have a significant proportion in Sombor, Bajmok, Beždan and Svetozar Miletić.

Confirming the above described statements, like other states in the region, in Serbia and in its researched province can be observed a more than half a century ago started ethnic homogenization process. Due to the continued influx of Serbs the even a century ago balanced ethnic relations in Vojvodina gradually came under Serbian majority. All this changed the cultural landscape of the province as well. Abundance of Orthodox churches indicate the correspondence of people and religion. The settlers found it hard to fit in the life of way of the range of Central-European ethnic groups settled in the previous centuries and make this difficult for the settlers to live together¹⁴.

Table 2: National and ethnic composition in Serbia and Vojvodina according to the censuses 1991 and 2002

	1991		2002		Change in % of the total population	
	Serbia	Vojvodina	Serbia	Vojvodina	Serbia	Vojvodina
Total	7.576.837	1.970.195	7.498.001	2.031.992	0,00	0,00
Serb	6.061.917	1.125.317	6.212.838	1.321.807	2,85	7,93
Montenegrian	117.761	44.450	69.049	35.513	-0,63	-0,51
Yugoslav	312.595	170.766	80.721	49.881	-3,05	-6,21
Albanian	74.303	2.513	61.647	1.695	-0,16	-0,04
Hungarian	337.479	333.290	293.299	290.207	-0,54	-2,63
Macedonian	44.028	17.115	25.847	11.785	-0,24	-0,29
Muslim	176.401	5.756	19.503	3.634	-2,07	-0,11
Roma	90.853	23.207	108.193	29.057	0,24	0,25
Romanian	37.818	34.792	34.576	30.419	-0,04	-0,27
Ruthenian	17.795	17.405	15.905	15.626	-0,02	-0,11
Slovak	65.363	62.243	59.021	56.637	-0,08	-0,37
Croat	94.244	72.528	70.602	56.546	-0,30	-0,90

Source: Zsolt Radics 2009: Szerbia – tátonyó lyuk az egyesült Európa térképén. Edit.: M. Császár, Zs.. 2011

Figure 2: The most populous ethnic groups in Vojvodina (2002)

Source.: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. “*National Identity or Ethnicity*”, edited by: András Mérei 2011

4. HUNGARIANS, THE MOST POPULOUS MINORITY OF THE PROVINCE

We should thoroughly examine the evolution of the Hungarian population from 1910 to 2002 (Table 3). In the last sixty years the gradually decreasing number of Hungarians became the minority in a series of settlements because of the natural decrease, the emigration and the immigration of Serbs. Besides the decadence of fertility indexes the decreasing number of Hungarians are affected by the bilingual people living in the sporadic area, the assimilation, which is explained by an increase in the number of mixed marriages and in conjunction with the fact that many of the inhabitants declared themselves as Yugoslavians in the course of the censuses. In the previous decades the long-term (or eventual) working abroad, then the emigration mainly to Hungary reflected also significantly in the decreasing number of Hungarian population. The majority of young people get enrolled in higher education in

Hungary, and after graduation most of them do not return to his homeland. This leads to the aging and extinction of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. Unfortunately, regarding Serbian average, less than 4% children born, which can be explained with the lower number of 20-39 year-old age-group compared to the same age-group of other ethnic groups in the province, because they constitute the majority of migrants. The emigration of the intellectuals caused/cause huge damages in the life of Hungarian minority, not only in pursuance of demographic and economic term, but in their role of the national togetherness, as well. The full-scale network of Hungarian-language school-system could have a great role in stopping the decreasing of population, particularly the development Hungarian-language would be important in higher education. If all these couple with employment and the opportunity of free enterprise, the young intellectuals could be held in the birthplace.

The loss of Hungarians in provincial seat was the largest thanks to the emigration on the margin of ethnic block – as Szabadka, Óbecse, Bácsstopolya¹⁵. However, in the blockareas like in Zenta, Ada, Magyarkanizsa, in the northeastern part of the Bácska, Hungarians still represent an absolute majority, from there the emigration is low (Figure 1). However, since the 1991 census the migration from the sporadic to

the block areas has accelerated, as well as moving into the cities.

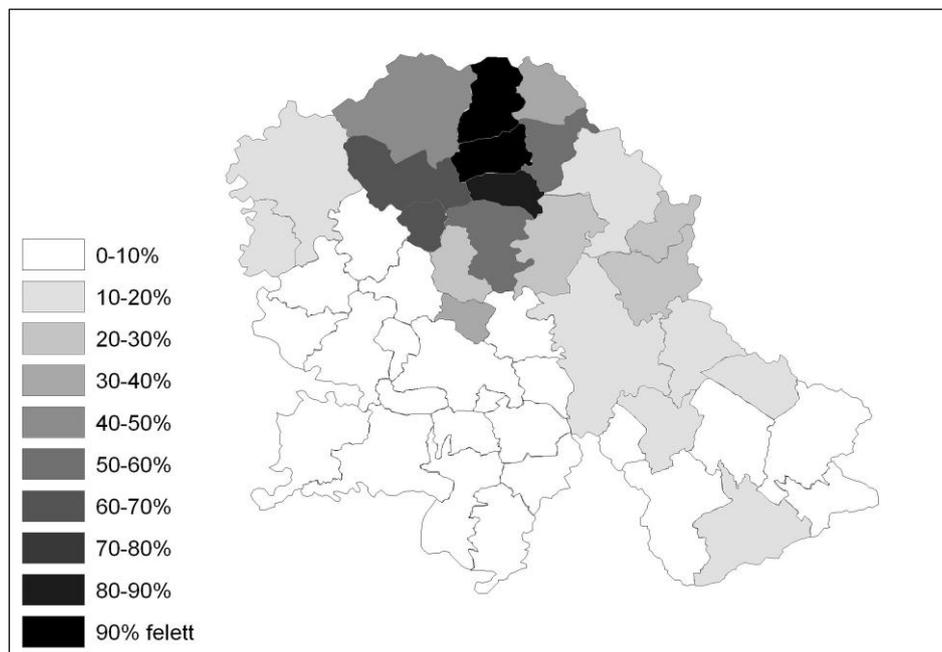
Due to the wars starting up Serbian migration, fortunately less affected the Hungarians living in blocks. The difficulties of subsistences and anti-Hungarian incidents caused by the Serbs inclined and incline today as well the Vojvodina Hungarians to abandon their birthplace¹⁶.

Table 3: Hungarians from the Vojvodina in the focus of censuses

Year	Total population	Hungarians	Rate in %
1910	1.515.983	425.952	28.1
1921	1.535.794	533.466	24.2
1941	1.662.862	473.241	28.5
1971	1.952.533	423.866	21.7
1981	2.034.772	385.356	18.9
1991	2.013.889	339.491	16.9
2001	2.031.992	290.207	14.3

Source: Károly Kocsis: A Kárpát-medence etnikai térképsorozatának (1997-2005) népszámlálási adatai, edited by: Zsuzsa M. Császár 2011

Figure 3: The rate of the Hungarians in Vojvodina (2002)



Source.: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. “National Identity or Ethnicity”, edited by: András Mérei 2011

5. SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF THE RELIGIONS

It is worth to mention briefly that the ethnic map of the region is very closely related to the structure of the religious composition as well.

The relationship between religion and national identity in the East-Central and Southeast European region is very strong and look back at a relatively long historical period to (thinking of the struggles cohesive strength of Christianity against the Turkish, or the anti-Habsburg Hungarian Reformed Church and intensifying

engagement). Particularly in the multi-ethnic areas the strengthening role of the separation of religions can be observed from another ethnicity to their own identities. Several examples of events in the wider region could take to illustrate how national identification used the religious symbols, or the church itself. Not only the ethnic minority groups have found the power of religion, but also the majority created autonomy required the discrimination of minorities in the spirit of religion along with the supporting role of the Church.

In this region contacts the two major branches of Christianity, the Eastern and Western Church, and Islam, but more than half a century ago Judaism was also remarkable.

In the current spatial structure the religion for the majority is the Serbian national Orthodox religion, which also contains the Romanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians and Ukrainians. The two arms of Western Christianity, Catholicism and the Protestantism are present in smaller proportion (22.75%). In both denomination the Hungarians form the majority, but after the third Balkan war remaining inhabitants Croats, Slovaks, and the small numbers of Ruthenians, Czechs, Germans also Western Christians can be found. The number of Islam believers are relatively low, who arrived during the Bosnian war in the past and probably settled with the entire family.

The believers of the Roman Catholic Episcopate of Subotica and Nagybecskerek are nearly 80% (about 290 thousand people) Hungarians, the others are a small number of Croats and mostly Germans, Slovaks and Ruthenians. From the 13 parishes and 38 sporadic of the Reformed Christian Church, the number of believers are 15 thousand people, who are all Hungarians. The remaining small number of other Protestant denominations can be found among further nationalities besides the Hungarians. Interestingly it is noted that in a multilingual environment the worship holds sometimes two or more (in Hungarian, Croatian, Slovak) languages. The Croatian and Hungarian ethnic minority are mainly Roman Catholic. Sometimes in a different language community they alternate with each other, but it happens also that in the same Mass the priest speaks several languages, eg. the diaspora¹⁷.

Finally what can be assessed is that, one of the characteristics of the multireligious area of Vojvodina is the following: the members of the religious groups can be from different ethnic groups but most people are believers of one of the 'big' Churches – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim – and less belongs to 'small' churches. The religion plays a major role in preserving national identity, the ethnic religion is a typical phenomenon of Vojvodina - see Richard Pap's research¹⁸.

Table 4: The confessional distribution of population Vojvodina's (2002)

Total	Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Islamic	Other	Undeclared	Atheist	Unknown
2 031 992	1 401 475	388 313	72 159	8 037	5 376	101 144	12 583	42 876
100 %	68, 97%	19, 2 %	3, 55 %	0,39 %	0, 26 %	4,97%	0,61	2, 11 %

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2002) edited by: Zsuzsa M. Császár 2011

6. PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

In Serbia, thus in Vojvodina, too, new legislations and laws came into force for minority protection since 2000, which was a major step forward compared to previous years. In theory they provide broad tethers for the minorities. The minorities have opportunity to retain their language, culture and preserve their national identity, use their national symbols, the mother tongue education is provided up to

secondary school. However, most of the changes are still maintained at the level of legislation, while the engagement is slow, minority rights are less prevail in practice.

The notion of national minority (national community, nationality) is determined by the „Law of Rights and Liberty of National Minorities” (2002), but the minorities are not appraised. The law allows the official use of minority language and writing in all the local

governments („villages”), where the proportion exceeds the 15%. Minorities over the rate of 2% (Albanians, Hungarians, Bosniak-muslims) can turn to the federal authorities in their own languages. By the „Law of National Councils of National Minorities” the national minorities are allowed to choose their own national council, which applied since 2010, several minorities exploited their entitlements.

The law of national minorities guarantees the protection of minority rights and cultural autonomy and allows them to set up minority bodies which represent their local governments and governmental rights. The supreme arrangements of the law can be caught out in the new Serbian constitution 2006. However, problems emerge apropos of the legal execution narrowed tethers because it usually guaranteed. In the focus of minority grievances in many cases stand everyday problems such as under-representation in state agency, or the increasing unemployment and the obstacles that conflate the execution of cultural and linguistical rights guaranteed by the law. The solution could be the strengthening of the local autonomy¹⁹.

The „horse bus law” 2002 made the areas with self-sufficient entitlement univocal in Vojvodina. This means that the province regulates the use of minority languages and writing in details. It determines the school network and its operating conditions, the curricula, and the organization of minority education. In addition, the higher-level republican educational laws regulate the educational rights of minorities.

In 2002 Vojvodina formally regained its taken autonomy. Although it was just the regaining of some jurisdictions, the biggest problem resides in the lack of financial resources, because without these munitions mostly everything is worthless.

The Statutory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was declared by the Provincial Chamber of Deputies in 14 December 2009. The statute recognizes the variety of nationalities in the area and the nationalities’ right to self-determination. The decision for the future promises even more strengths and positive things. The first and most important that the political positions shall be filled according to the proportion of nationalities. If the situation of disproportion exists on the long run, the Provincial Government shall take measures to

eliminate it. All of the minority languages occurring in Vojvodina are official languages in administration and the Serbian Latin and Cyrillic script as well.

The province may sign international agreements with other states, regions and other administrative units, and may open representations in other countries. In addition, it can also operate a branch office for Foreign Affairs in Brussels, which, of course is equipped with its own coat of arms.

As we have stated above, in addition to the state endowment, the province possesses over 7% of the state budget. But besides we must keep in mind that the approximately 2 million people which gives more than 25% of the Serbian population, produces 40% of the income of the Serbian state budget.

The extension of autonomy to Vojvodina is part of a process and it speeded up with the growing distance between Kosovo and Serbia. In 2004, Serbia has adopted the dual-citizenship. Then, after the secession of Kosovo, the process of autonomization of Vojvodina has accelerated. This further confirms that the Serbian national policy is strongly driven by current foreign policy effects.

The Hungarians created a three-stage autonomy draft. The first step is about a personal autonomy, but this is in principle guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws (see above). The second stage is a communal autonomy, it may have reference to the area where the minority lives in majority, this conflicts a great resistance to the state power (we can experience in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well, where many minorities live in greater proportions). Finally the autonomy of the province is the third step, which is theoretically guaranteed by the Constitution but they lack the conditions for implementation.

SUMMARY

Today, a strong homogenization is observed in the multi-cultural Vojvodina, which is due to state inter-ventions. Now only one third of the province’s population belongs to an ethnic minority. The problem is not the shift in the rates of ethnicities, but also the transformation of the structure of the majority ethnic group. The Serbians in Vojvodina are divided into four parts. One part is the indigenous Serbians who

have been living there for centuries and they have a patient attitude toward other nationalities. This is still typical of the Serbs settled by King Peter after the first World War. The third wave contains the former partisans who got their lands from Tito. The members of the latter two settler Serbian groups are called the “dobrovojac”.

In several cases the areas of the third outbound settling had settlements in Bosnia, so “mountain” people went to lowland areas. This was done by the ‘victors’ who settled into the areas (Hungarians, Germans, Croats), inhabited by the ‘guilty’ nations. Consequently, these settled partisans committed several pogroms against the nationalities together with local Serb residents. In the present situation we can talk about majority of Bosnian and Kosovian settlers who arrived as refugees as a result of the determined presence of another ethnicity (in Kosovo because of the Albanians). The grievance they feel is double. Recent ethnic conflicts come to assault arose from this.

Notes.

* The name appeared in the 1948-49 events for the first time in Hungarian nomenclature, before only the name „Southern Region” was used.

² László Gulyás 2007

³ Károly Kocsis 2009

⁴ Lajos Arday 2002

⁵ Lajos Arday 2002

⁶ József Galántai 1989

⁷ Wartime volunteers, who deserted to the allied Serbian troops. They were mostly Serbs.

⁸ Enikő A. Sajti 2004

⁹ Károly Kocsis 1993

¹⁰ László Gulyás 2005

¹¹ Károly Kocsis et al., 2004

¹² Máté Kitanics 2008

¹³ The Croatian Bunjevac group speaks the Croatian language with a major dialect difference, and the fact that the Croatian and Serbian languages are relatives contributes to this. Maybe as a result of this they suffer from a disorder of identity, therefore they are likely to declare themselves as Serbs.

¹⁴ Áron Léphaft 2011

¹⁵ Károly Kocsis 2006

¹⁶ Zsuzsa M. Császár 2008

¹⁷ Irén Gábrity Molnár 2007

¹⁸ Richárd Papp 2001

¹⁹ Beáta Huszka 2007

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