

### MIGRATION IN HUNGARY DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY\*

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In the course of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, the population of the historical Hungary had been decimated by the Turkish occupation lasting for nearly 150 years and the lesser or greater wars and guerrilla warfare accompanying it almost continuously, as well as by plagues – arriving from the East – devastating the country. According to earlier studies the size of the population decreased, although recent studies<sup>1</sup> modified the picture. On areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, not only the increase of one and a half century was lost, but also the absolute number of the population diminished by about 30 percentage point. However, within the total area, this was partially balanced by the population increase of some western and northern parts of the country inhabited mainly by non-Hungarians. Consequently, the share of the Hungarian ethnic groups within the Hungarian Kingdom decreased from about 70 per cent at the end of the fifteenth century to about 50 per cent by the end of the seventeenth century. The changes in the number of inhabitants during the war periods between 1520–1700 – especially as regards to the Hungarian population – may be paralleled with the impact of the Thirty Years' War exerted on the German Empire. However, there was a difference between them, as the depopulation of the indigenous inhabitants was followed by a series of immigration waves lasting for several decades and resulted basic shifts also in the ethnic structure of the Carpathian Basin. Nevertheless, the significance of the latter had become really obvious only in the course of the twentieth century.

Needless to say, a historian's general approach concentrating exclusively on the total number of the population and its ethnic composition is not satisfactory for a historical demographer. Although concerning the studied epoch and the migrations during the eighteenth century, the historians of the first half of the twentieth century examined mainly the problems of resettling and immigration as well as the changes in the ethnic composition. Beside settlers coming from the West in the framework of organized settling movements, large spontaneous internal migrations occurred involving persons mainly of home origin. Migration movements did not aim exclusively at areas

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<sup>1</sup> *Dávid, G.*: Magyarország népessége a 16–17. században. In: *Magyarország történeti demográfiája (896–1995)*. Millecentenáriumi előadások. Ed.: *Kovácsics József*. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Budapest, 1997. 141–171. p.

depopulated in the course of Turkish wars, but also massive movements could be observed toward towns. Behind individual migrations, rather different motivations could be found (marriage, inheritance, settling, change of occupation, learning, entering into service, etc.), and even in this epoch not all migrations might be regarded as final change of habitation.

In the following study, an attempt is made to cover some of these factors by analysing the main state organised population conscriptions between 1770–1790.

#### DIMENSIONS AND DIRECTIONS OF MIGRATIONS

Population censuses – like those introduced in Hungary from 1784 to 1787 – were carried out several times in the other provinces of the Habsburg Empire already from the 1770s on (see Table 1). From these data it becomes evident that in the less developed regions of the Empire – thus in Galicia, Transylvania and in Hungary – the extent of migration (the crude migration rate) was significantly smaller, hardly more than the half of that in the more developed western provinces (Bohemia, Styria, Kraina) and their balances did not show large amplitudes either to positive or negative directions.

Table 1

*Crude rate and balance of migration in some provinces of the Habsburg Empire*

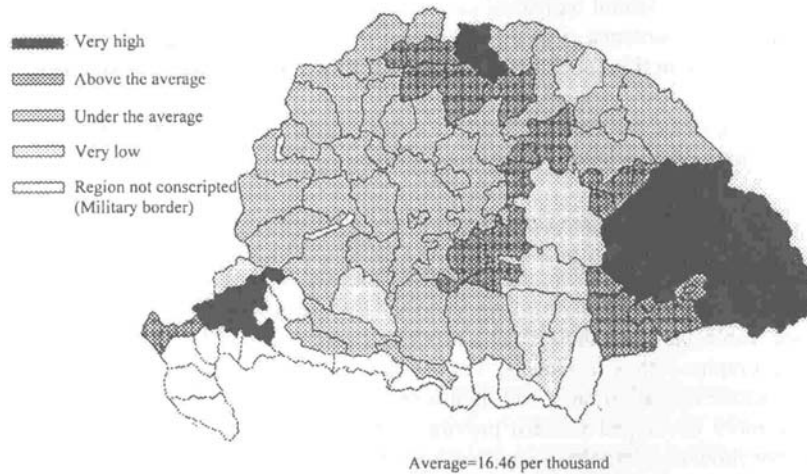
Province	Absentees	Foreigners present	Crude rate	Net flow
			of the migration	
(per 1000 males)				
Bohemia	51.7	41.4	93.1	-10.3
Styria	65.9	70.6	135.5	+ 4.7
Krain	62.8	44.1	106.9	-18.7
Galicia	26.6	29.1	55.7	+ 2.5
Hungary*	34.1	35.0	69.2	+ 0.9
Transylvania	31.8	28.0	59.8	- 3.7

\* Including Croatia.

Source: *Gürtler, A.*: Die Volkszählungen Maria Theresias und Josef II. 1753–1790. Verlag Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, Innsbruck, 1909. 152 p.; Obyvatelstvo českých zemí v letech 1754–1918. Ed.: *Šekera, V.* Český Statistický Úřad, Praha, 1978. Vol. 1–2.; *Thirring, G.*: Magyarország népessége II. József korában. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Budapest, 1938. 192 p.

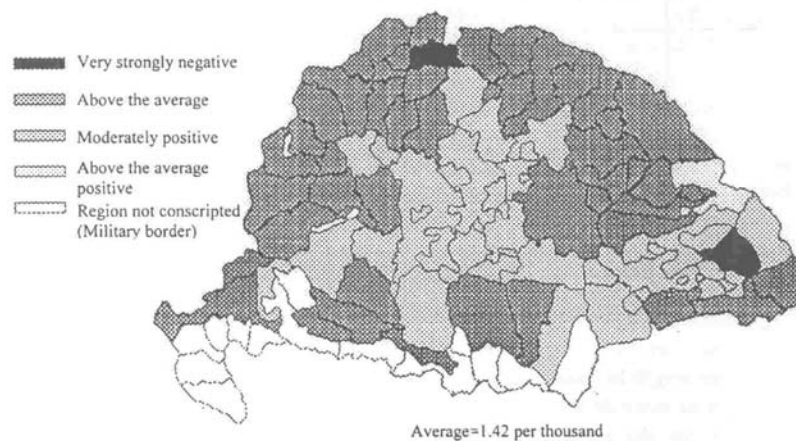
A peculiar picture might be gained by trying to examine the crude migration rate in Hungary on the basis of more detailed data, namely those gathered by municipalities. All towns experienced above the average crude migration rate, while counties – with a few exceptions – showed much lower values. Looking exclusively at the counties (see Map 1) only four areas excel from the others in a higher than the average crude migration rate (Transylvania, the eastern margin of the Hungarian Plain, the middle of the Highlands and Croatia). Another exceptional region with very low migration can be found between the Borderland and the mountains separating Transylvania from Hungary. (Worth mentioning that the larger part of the latter region was resettled only a few decades later, because its southern part remained under Turkish rule up to 1718.)

Map 1. Crude migration rate in counties of Hungary, 1787



Examining the balance of migration – the gain or the loss coming from the totals of emigrations and immigrations (see Map 2) – quite a different regional distribution can be observed.

Map 2. Net flow of migration in counties of Hungary, 1787

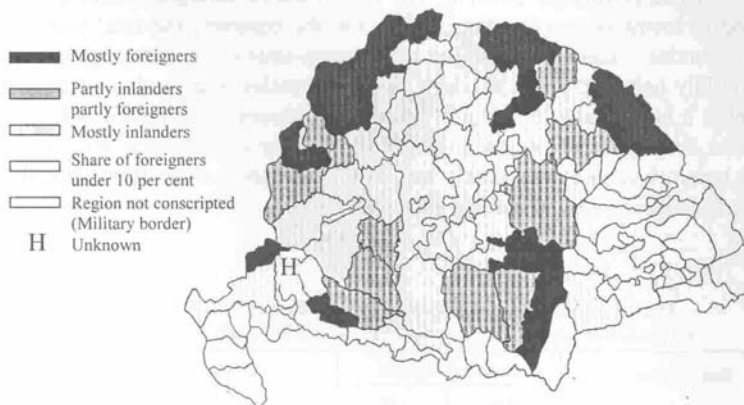


A migration gain is characterizing the geographical basins with more favourable economic possibilities (the Hungarian Plain, a part of the North–Western Plain, the Transylvanian Basin) and some resettled areas, as well as Borsod and Gömör counties. (In the latter territories the pull effect of an early industrial development cannot be excluded.) A migration loss can be seen in areas with disadvantageous natural resources, in marshlands and in areas endangered by floods, as well as in borderlands on the northern and western parts of West-Transdanubia lying not far from the Austrian lands

and being considered as the most developed region of Hungary. This means that from among areas of high crude migration rate the Mid-Highlands and Croatia may be characterized rather by migration losses, the margin of the Plains by migration gains, while in the case of Transylvania both emigrant and immigrant regions can be found, often neighbouring each other.

An interesting and important question is the place of origin of the migrants. Despite the less informative nature of our sources, the share of natives and aliens can be determined (see Map 3.).

Map 3. Regional rates of immigrants of home and foreign origin in counties of Hungary, 1787



Accordingly the share of persons of foreign origin is very high in border counties, as well as in the line of counties Temes–Torontál–Szatmár and that of Varasd–Szerém. With a closer look at this distribution, the conclusion which can be reached is that here probably not the invasion of foreigners is the main characteristic, but rather the relatively short distance migrations. The counties mentioned above, in fact, may be considered as borderlands (the population lists categorised both Transylvania and the Military Border as foreign places), therefore immigrants coming from the neighbouring settlements located on the other side of the border were registered as foreigners. The case is different for the higher rates of foreign immigrants to counties like Tolna–Baranya. Here really long distance migration may be suspected. Being aware of the fact that large, organised settling programs in these areas were mostly over, we have to suppose that spontaneous immigration of relatives and acquaintances was continued to the communities founded mainly by German settlers.

Drawing conclusions concerning the direction of emigrations seems to be a much more dubious task. However, four characteristics might be established:

- a) along the borders there are relatively many missing persons who 'emigrated abroad';
- b) from the North–Western Plain there is a rather significant emigration movement toward Austria–Bohemia;
- c) in the Transylvanian Basin and in the Mid-Highlands hardly any emigration tended abroad;

d) although the migration balances are generally close to zero in 1786 and 1787, nevertheless, the majority of towns show a significant migration gain and counties experience migration losses. The conclusion which may be drawn is that the main migration flow is not the immigration any more, but a levelling process can be seen within the country (movements mainly from the North-West to South-East and from villages to towns) at the end of the eighteenth century.

### TYPES OF MIGRATION

It is worth examining separately the differences between towns and the country-side (counties). (See Table 2) The crude migration rate calculated on the basis of censuses carried out in the period of Joseph II., was nearly four times higher in towns than in the counties, and its balance is strongly positive. The proportion of foreigners among the males enumerated in towns is exactly 7.5 per cent. On the contrary, the total size of migration in the counties – namely in villages and country-towns – is rather low, and their balance is mildly negative. Here the share of foreign males is only about 1.5 per cent, and in number it is generally less than of those being absent. With regard to these observations it can be said that more than 70 per cent of the country-side migration looked domestic type, while in towns, nearly half of the foreigners came from abroad, and half of the persons absent went to foreign countries.

Table 2

*Main characteristics of migration movements of towns  
and the country-side in the Hungarian Kingdom, 1786–1787*

Denomination	Hungary and Croatia		Of which	
	1786	1787	counties	towns
	Per 1000 persons			
Foreigners present	34.1	15.6	12.0	74.7
Absentees	35.0	17.4	16.7	28.0
Crude migration rate	69.2	32.9	28.7	102.7
Net flow of migration	+0.9	-1.8	-4.7	+46.7
	Migrants born in the Hungarian Kingdom (in the percentage of all )			
Between foreigners present	86.1	67.6	72.0	56.3
Between absentees	83.6	68.4	70.3	49.7
	In the category of foreigners present (per cent)			
Women's share	15.6	14.4	13.6	15.6

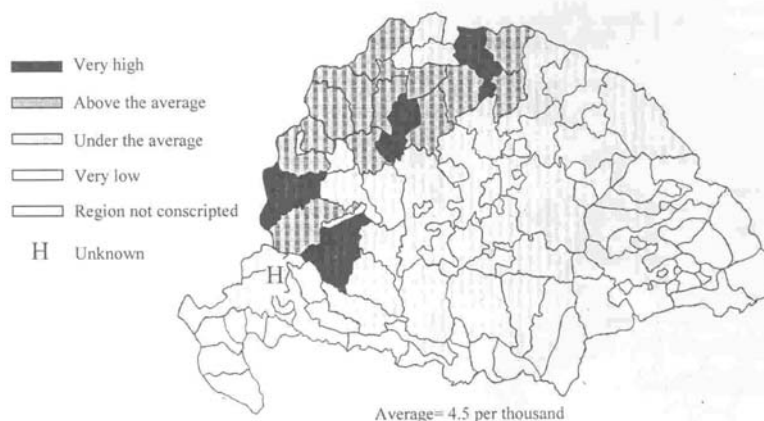
Source: See Thirring, G. at Table 1.

However, examining the towns individually, the picture becomes even more differentiated. Fourteen towns show rather high migration gain. In these developed cities with more than 10 000 inhabitants the proportion of immigrants (foreigners) can be as high as 15-20 per cent of the total male population, and the migration gain can reach even 150 per thousand. On the contrary, in the 1780s, we can also find four types of

towns where the intensity of migration is relatively small, its balance is mainly negative, i.e. a part of the inhabitants is constantly emigrating:

- a) most of the mining towns belong to this type (probably due to the stagnation of traditional mining of precious metals);
- b) the royal free boroughs situated along the western borders, small in size, living mainly on viticulture;
- c) the large agricultural towns of the Great Plain;
- d) some commercial towns in the Highlands established during the Middle Ages having been involved in the declining trade directed to Poland.

Map 4. Ratio of persons entering into service as compared to the total population in counties of Hungary around 1778



As a next point, let us examine the regional differences according to the motive (the purpose) of migration. Naturally, this problem can be covered only partially. On the basis of data gained from the enumerations carried out in the 1770s (in the so-called *Conscriptio Animarum*), two aspects can be studied: entering into service and settling down.

The data of Map 4. indicate high migration rate in connection with entering into service in the middle and western regions of the Highlands, as well as in West-Transdanubia and in the counties of the North-Western Plain. On the contrary, in other regions of the country the number and the proportion of persons entering into service are markedly small. The difference is so great that one may suspect that two different but coexisting, economic- and work-organisation types produced the above described peculiar regional distribution:

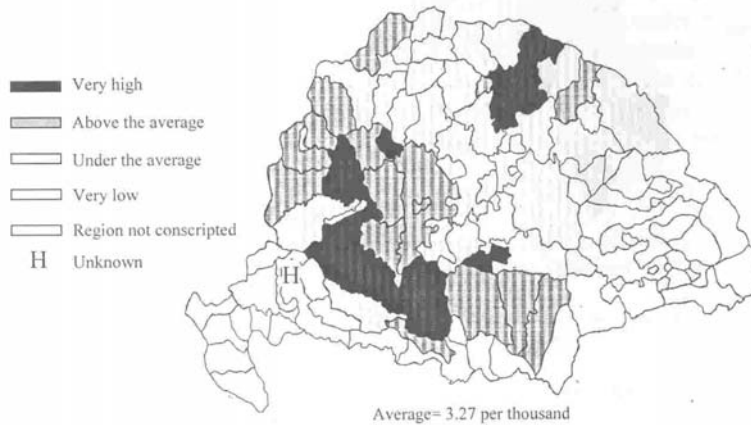
a) in West-Transdanubia and the Highlands mostly such peasant farmsteads and manorial estates were located which employed regularly servants, and according to the natural rhythm they needed people entering into service continuously;

b) referring to the above line of considerations, in other regions of the country, farming was built mostly on the labour force of the family members/relatives and most of the estates employed few paid-workers (they were based exclusively on the *corvée* – labour service of serfs –, or they did not establish seigniorial domestic economy at all).

The former result undoubtedly recalls the theory of *Hajnal, J.* describing the East–West dichotomy in the patterns of marriage and household formation and his famous North–East and South–Western dividing line crossing Central Europe from St. Petersburg to Trieste. It seems that this line should be pushed somewhat to the East as compared to the original theory, and that it does not keep away but crosses the societies of the Carpathian Basin. And – what is important and surprising is that – the line does not fit any of the language and denomination borders. It shows a hidden cultural and socio-economic dividing line which poses its significance only in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

The settling (or more exactly: the resettling) movement also shows a special regional distribution (see Map 5).

Map 5. Ratio of settlers as compared to the total population in counties of Hungary around 1778



We find new settlers in proportion well above the average in five regions of the country:

- a) Southern Transdanubia,
- b) Southern Hungary (the Banat),
- c) Along the Danube,
- d) The triangle between West-Transdanubia and the North–Western Plain,
- e) Some counties of North-East Hungary.

The majority of the areas listed above were regions resettled in the first half of the eighteenth century being naturally, heavily involved in long range supplementary migration (North–Western Plain). Therefore we may conclude that these are the regions which can be characterised mostly by spontaneous migration caused either by economic reasons of the Western triangle or by the consequence of earlier settling programs.

The problems of settling are not to be discussed here in details as deeper analysis is required which cannot be performed on the basis of presently available sources.

<sup>2</sup> Faragó, T.: Different household formation systems in Hungary at the end of the eighteenth century: variations on John Hajnal's thesis. In: *Historical Social Research*. 23. 1998. 83–111. p.

Nevertheless, it is worth presenting some partial results related to the settling during the reign of Joseph II.

Table 3

*Estimated settling movements during the reign of Joseph II*

Founder	Original place of the settlers	Period	Number of settlers		Notes
			family	1000 person	
Hungarian Treasury	German Empire*	1784–1787	6500	29	To the Southern Treasury estates (Banat, Bačka)
Hungarian Treasury	German Empire*	1784–1787	1800	8	To other Treasury estates
Private landlords	German Empire*	1780–1788	2000–3000	9–14	To counties Szerém and Arad
Hungarian Treasury	Serbia	1788–1789	..	11	
Private landlords	Slovakian highlands	1780–1789	1500–2000	7–9	To Southern Hungary
Hungarian Treasury and private landlords	Hungarians from the Great Plain	1780–1788	3500–4000	14–18	To the South and to Transdanubia
Organized settling together			17000–20000	78–89	
Spontaneous additional settling**			3500–10000	16–45	
Total settlers		1780–1789	20500–30000	94–134	

\* The number of German families with passports till the end of October, 1786.

\*\* Probably underestimation because the volume of spontaneous additional settlings has reached infrequently that of the organized immigration.

Note: Author's calculations on the basis of the average household size of Hungarian and German immigrants (4.5 persons/household).

The literature estimates the number of people settled by the emperor to be as much as only 30 thousand,<sup>3</sup> however, our estimates suggest that migrations in the course of the settling process from 1784 to 1788 mobilised three-four times as many persons amounting to about 100–130 thousand. The probable number of persons arriving from abroad in an organised manner is about 60 thousand, and that of persons participating in a similar type of domestic resettling may be 20–25 thousand, while the uncertain number of persons involved in spontaneous, regionally and temporally unsystematic 'additional' migration may be estimated between 16–45 thousand.<sup>4</sup>

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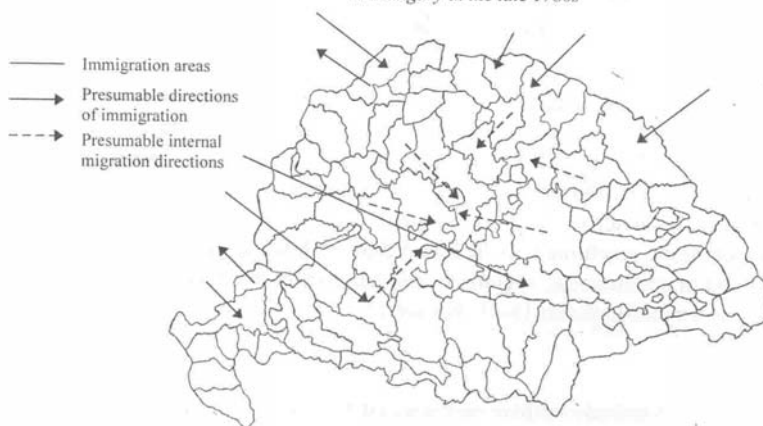
The results of our examinations may summarised briefly as follows. First of all, in order to interpret properly the rates and tendencies established on the basis of macro-data presented, numerous micro-analyses are to be carried out in connection with the

<sup>3</sup> Die Donauschwaben. Deutsche Siedlung in Südosteuropa. Bearb.: Eberl, I. Jan Thorbecke. Sigmaringen. 1989. 328 p.

<sup>4</sup> Czoernig, C.: Ethnographie des Oesterreichischen Monarchie. Band 1–3. Wien. 1855–1857.; Isbert, O. A.: Geschichtliche Untersuchungen über das südwestliche ungarische Mittelgebirge und seine Bauersiedlungen. In.: Ungarische Jahrbücher. 10. 1930. 230–280., 387–425. p.; Jubileumi tudományos ülés a jászkunságiak bácskai kitelepülésének 200. évfordulóján. Ed.: Kaposvári, Gy. – Bagi G. Damjanich Múzeum. Szolnok. 1989. 233 p.; Síráczy, J.: Sťahovanie Slovákov na Dolnú zem v 18. a 19. storočí. Slovenskej Akadémie Vied. Bratislava. 1966. 297 p.; Weidlein, J.: A tolnamegyei német telepítések. Tolna vármegye közönsége. Szekszárd. 1937. 73 p.; Zorn, A.: Német betelepülések a mai Bács-Kiskun megye területére a 18. és 19. században. In.: Bács-Kiskun Megye Múltjából. 10. 1989. 325–390. p. and in Note 3 quoted article.

demographic characteristics, place of origin and socio-occupational structure of the migrants. In general, it seems that additional analysis have to be performed concerning resettling movements starting from the end of the seventeenth century lasting up to the end of the eighteenth century (in certain places up to the early nineteenth century). Namely, two facts may be deemed probable already from the available data: on the one hand, the extent of the spontaneous settling – hardly taken into account previously – could be nearly the same as that of the organised movements; on the other hand neither the ethnic nor the denominational composition of the settlers were identical with those unconscious suggestions in historical literature of settling process of the eighteenth century. That is why the role of Germans and Southern-Slavs as well as Roman Catholics was overemphasized in the examinations of the former decades, while Ruthenians and Romanians migrating in a spontaneous way were mostly neglected. Similarly, up till now, internal population movements have been mainly undetected: the migration of Hungarian and Slovak population surpluses of the more densely inhabited hilly regions toward depopulated territories, or the commencing migration of the peasants into the cities. A deeper analysis of regional characteristics of migration movements would also be important. The conclusion seems to be evident: the towns, the western borderlands, the Carpathian margins, the inner basins (plains) as well as the southern resettled areas can be characterised by different migrational patterns and the composition of migrants by ethnics, denomination and social status varied by region and time period.

Map 6. Presumable migration movements and their directions in Hungary at the late 1780s



Illustrating the probable directions of the regional migrations during the eighteenth century (see Map 6), the main flows and types may be supposed as real ones in the Carpathian Basin:

a) a two-directional borderland migration (at the western border to Austria and Moravia, while in the Szerémség and Baranya toward the Borderlands and Croatia);

b) a gradual migration starting from the East (Galicia – Eastern Carpathian regions – Great Plain), mainly among Jews and Ruthenians;

c) a continuous migration from the mountainous and hilly regions toward basins showing more favourable economic conditions;

d) a continuous migration also from villages toward towns;

e) 'additional migrations' of foreigners partly in parallel with the organised settlements, partly following them (as it may be observed in the 1780s among Germans settled in Tolna and Arad counties, as well as in the course of Rumanian wandering to counties Krassó and Arad);

f) considering the migration directions by the cardinal points, at the end of the eighteenth century – however, probably in earlier periods, too – two large migration waves may be observed: one from the North to South, the other from East to West.

It is especially interesting that regions settled earlier in an organised frame are not always identical to those showing intensive migration in the late eighteenth century. For instance, a part of the southern region in the 1780s seems to be an area of definitely low intensity with even a negative migration balance, which means that the great movement during the resettling was followed by relative immobility.

Finally, as the historian is influenced by his/her own time, a question may be brought up: whether the examinations of migration of the eighteenth century can have any other significance beyond the parochial academic results. The answer is a definite 'yes'. Concerning migration – like in the case of other historical problems – there can still be found numerous myths, erroneous data in the public opinion. Not few of them have also a political significance in our days, therefore, clarifying the knowledge of 'professionals', the public opinion and politicians is an urgent duty of researchers dealing with migration history. At the same time, it has to be confessed that no considerable number of serious studies has been carried out during the last 40 years in Hungary on the migration of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, especially not on resettling. It has not yet been clarified how the ethno-cultural composition of the Historical Hungary – or that of the Carpathian Basin – developed during the eighteenth century (which is still valid in many respects today). In the same way, the definitions of 'immigrant', 'foreigner', 'native' and 'ancient inhabitant' have not been analysed from the aspect of their interpretation in the contemporary society and by the present science, politics and the public opinion. Our failures can be illustrated by the fact that estimates given by *Kovács, A.*<sup>5</sup> (1919) – in the period of the disintegration of Hungary, during the preparation for the negotiations of the Trianon treaties, published in 1919 – indicating about one million immigrants – have been kept since that time as no better results have been produced (it was reviewed by *Dávid, Z.*<sup>6</sup> in some respects 40 years ago). These data have not been either proved or denied in the last 80 years, because detailed investigations have not been carried out. The accuracy of these estimates for sure were not promoted by the short time available in the chaotic atmosphere of the peace negotiations following the First World War. In case of modern socio-historical researches, such circumstances can hardly be imagined, namely that hypotheses of a significant problem could remain unchanged, uncontrolled for decades by any reviews or supervisions.

It is sad that in our days the history of migration movements is the subject of historians of politics rather than of demographers. The latter ones are examining almost

<sup>5</sup> *Kovács, A.*: The development of the population of Hungary since the Turkish rule has ceased. Budapest. 1919. 23 p.

<sup>6</sup> *Dávid, Z.*: Az 1715–1720. évi összeírás. In.: A történelmi statisztika forrásai. Ed.: *Kovácsics József*. Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó. Budapest. 1957. 145–199. p.

only the problems of refugees, legal or illegal guest-workers causing daily problems for the state administration and policy makers. Last but not least, this narrow practicumist behaviour might be regarded as the cause of the flourishing of the populist literature again easily recalling national pains and nationalistic emotions of Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Serbians, etc. arguing pro- and contra over the treaties following the First World War. However, it is to be feared that this view of the past does not lead us to the deeper understanding of migrations, settling (and in broader sense of the population- and social history of the Carpathian Basin); and does not promote, but rather hinders the decision-making needed for suitable and well-founded migration, for minority- and regional policies as well as for the better defence of human rights. Furthermore, it contributes to the strengthening of an antidemocratic, xenophobic mentality, as well as to the survival, or occasionally even the development of the ideology of closed nation-state of a nineteenth century type.