

HUNGARIAN RUSSIANS ON THEIR WAY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION AS A
NATIONAL MINORITY

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Introduction

After the collapse of the USSR several millions of Russians found themselves as a minority in all post-soviet successor states as well as in other countries dominated by the Soviet ideology. Extensive academic discussion has been dedicated to that issue, especially to the Russians in the Baltic States, their cultural and political loyalty and potential mobilization. Nevertheless, some other cases related to the new Russian minorities are still underdeveloped and in the scope of this research the attempt to shed some light to one particular example – the Russian community in Hungary – was made.

The research on this topic is interesting also due to recent changes taking place in the Russian community in Hungary, namely the attempts of its activists to gain the official recognition of the Russians as one of the minorities. These goals go in parallel with the very low interest from the rest of the group side what makes the recognition very difficult process. At the same time, the Russians in Hungary are actively involved into the preserving and maintaining of their culture, language and identity in different ways.

In the present work I make an attempt to consider Russians as a socially and politically constructed group within Hungarian state following the theories of Rogers Brubaker¹. In order to complete this task I employ two major methods – analyses of the secondary sources and conducting surveys. The first part of the thesis is dedicated to the overview of the major theories on minorities, identity and group construction; that exercise allowed implementation of the second task – completing the questionnaire and analysing received information.

¹ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 2004)

In order to investigate the problem from different angles several issues are examined. Different chapters of the thesis are dedicated to such issues as Hungarian legislation on minority rights and their protection; historical presence of Russians in Hungary; comparison of the community with other non-recognized minorities residing in Hungary; minority media as a tool for group identity construction and its role in the community life; the triadic homeland-Diaspora-host country relations and some others. In literature review the discussion on whether it is possible to consider Hungarian Russians as a minority, group and community is presented.

Chapter 1: Theoretical grounds of the research

Despite the fact that Russian community is quite visible in Hungary, there is almost no research on it or on the way how the members of the community identify themselves. Therefore I hope to make the first step in this direction and contribute to the understanding of the existing group identity and ties within the Russian community in Hungary, in other words, to answer the question if the Russians themselves have the feeling of being part of the group or wish to maintain boundaries. To certain extent these findings will reveal why the overall support of the bid for the minority recognition is very low and why this initiative started only in the recent years.

The overwhelming majority of literature on the Russian presence in Hungary is dedicated to historical issues or interstates relations. Just occasionally Russians as a separate group started to be included into the scholar articles and researches on migration and employment as a subgroup among third nationals in the recent years. With just a couple of exceptions such issues as minority recognition, the place of Russian minority in the Hungarian society and their integration are not touched upon, especially in the comparison to the attention paid to other non-recognized minorities in Hungary such as Chinese, for instance. Partly, this situation might be explained by the fact that the Russian community is not an official minority and it is not numerically large.

Only one serious work of Aristov was dedicated to the Russian presence in Hungary from early history till 2000s². This book has a guided by a historical approach, with several attempts to distinguish between various groups among the Hungarian Russians; the thorough examination of different waves of migration and therefore existence of several categories were truly useful for the purposes of this research. This volume contains important collection

² Vadim Aristov, *Russian world of Budapest and Hungary*. (Budapest: Arvado Kft, 2003).

of factual materials about many aspects of the Russian life in Hungary in different periods of time. The issue of recognition as a minority is also touched upon, although mostly from the legal point of view rather than sociological. Additional contribution into the understanding of Hungarian Russians was made by Angelina Zueva in her research “Engendering migration from Russia to Hungary in the 1980s-1990s”³. By examining a number of qualitative interviews, the researcher came to a conclusion that so-called „Russian wives” very often came to Hungary not only as dependents, but as full members of the families with their own initiatives and aspirations. This gender-sensitive approach is important since the majority of the Hungarian Russians are women.

Since the research reveals a very marginal status of the Russians in Hungary as a group along with the existing difficulties among scholars to define who actually belongs to Russians in general, the guiding questions for the literature review will be the following: What are the characteristics for the group of people to be considered a community and do Russians in Hungary constitute one? How these salient features correspond to the group identity and the construction of a political minority? In the process of finding answers to these questions the Brubaker’s discussion on ethnic groups and groupism is necessary. Although there is a proven record of Russian presence in Hungary, the Russians nowadays are still a new emerging minority with unclear future; therefore it is important to consider the institutionalisation as a lasting process of community construction and the whole group not as a stable, but constantly changing experience. In this regard another question emerges – what does it mean to be a Russian in contemporary Hungary? Is this group only a vestige of the past, with no future and inevitable assimilation of the first generation descendents, partly due

³ Angelina Zueva, Engendering migration from Russia to Hungary in the 1980s-1990s. CEU Gender Studies Department master theses collection. (Budapest: CEU, Budapest College, 2005)

to a high number of intermarriages or this group will transform itself into a political unity with a concrete goal to preserve its culture and language by exercising the rights of minority? How do the present Hungarian minority policy and other outside forces affect the processes currently taking place within the community?

The internal dimensions of group transformations are central in the present research and a number of sociological approaches to national identity construction within the Russian community have been applied in order to investigate them. Naturally, it is impossible to deny the general definition of the minority as “a non-dominant” group whose members must “possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics different from those of the rest of the population”; and they should also demonstrate a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religions or language⁴. At the same time this definition does not reflect a lot of extremely important characteristics of the minority as being socially inferior to the majority population of a given state; ability and willingness to maintain boundaries and preserve their culture; groupism, self-awareness, belonging, identity, etc.

While speaking about Russians in Hungary there is a tendency to use what Brubaker calls categorical model of identification, in other words, to identify the whole group by membership in a class of persons sharing different categorical attributes such as language or nationality⁵. Such practice is absolutely understandable for the purposes of generalization, estimation of approximate number of Russians living in Hungary. But when discussing the connections within the group and their characteristics, it is more useful to apply relational mode of categorization. In this regard it is important to ask the question on what is the connection in case of Hungarian Russians between collective identities and ‘groupness’ or

⁴ Francesco Capotori, World directory of Minorities. Minorities Right Group International. London, 1997.

⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, „Beyond „identity”, in *Ethnicity without groups*, edited by Rogers Brubaker. (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2004), 42

even do those two concepts are actually taking place in the case study? Is there any “cognitive entity that is meaningful for the individual at a particular point of time”⁶? Is it possible to exercise effectively minority status’ rights in any given state if there is no distinct minority consciousness? On the one hand, the categorical commonality is evident, while relational connectedness is still in question. The latter requires feeling of solidarity, unity with fellows along with “a feeling belonging together”. To my mind, the latter concept cannot be passive especially in the combination with the feeling of being different from or antipathy to local majority population. The analyses of relations between different categories of the Russians living in Hungary, the frequency of joint activities and the expression of the solidarity should reveal the answers to those questions. The term ‘solidarity’ is also present in the Brubaker’s definition of the group which is crucial for this research:

“a mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action”⁷.

Another field to be examined in order to get a full picture of Hungarian Russians’ social identity is group beliefs and group goals in particular. The objectives of the community are definitely an insufficiently addressed question, while the group goals determine in fact the very existence of the group and its boundaries⁸. Although there are certain difficulties in the literature on determining who exactly should be called Russian (this issue will be touched upon below), relation to the Russian language, culture and descent creates quite clear

⁶ Henri Tajfel, Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. Chapter 12 in Henry Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories*. (Cambridge University Press. 1981), 254

⁷ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, „Ethnicity without groups”, in *Ethnicity without groups*, edited by Rogers Brubaker. Chapter 1, 12(Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸ Daniel Bar-Tal, „Group beliefs as an expression of social identity” in *Social identity*, Chapter 7, 98, edited by S.Worchel, J.F. Morales, D.Paez, J.C. Deschamps SAGE Publications, London, 1998.

boundaries separating the group from the general Hungarian society and consequently the awareness of being a separate minority group and being part of it⁹.

The story becomes more complex with the group beliefs about itself and its place in the Hungarian society since there are several sub-groups within Hungarian Russians who significantly differ from each other. Therefore, all Russians in Hungary are separated by the others into a group based on their language knowledge, descent and other characteristics, but this external division does not influence significantly the strengthening of in-group affiliations. At the same time, some subgroups considered in this research as community representatives or activists wish to maintain and further develop existing boundaries, emphasizes the whole group's cultural, historical and social differences. At the present time they are also making attempts to change the existing status of the whole group within the Hungarian society, for example, by preparation for official recognition, but those attempts are mostly targeting the outsiders than other group members. These attempts on the community construction very well fit into the symbolic work which Hobsbawm called "the invention of tradition"-i.e., the construction or reconstruction of rituals, practices, beliefs and customs. According to the author, invented traditions serve three related purposes: a) to establish or symbolize social cohesion or group membership, b) to establish or legitimize institutions, status, and authority relations, or c) to socialize or inculcate beliefs, values, or behaviours¹⁰. Current developments and aspirations of the community activists also suit the concept of what Cohen calls "the symbolic construction of community"¹¹. Besides important tasks of history and culture construction, the Russian community is also committed to another

⁹ Henri Tajfel, „The social psychology of minorities” in Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories*. Chapter 15, 314. (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, „Introduction: Inventing traditions”, In *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, 9. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

¹¹ Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. (New York: Tavistock, 1985).

necessary work on constructing the historical continuous presence in Hungary what is particularly important for the new emerging minority. This process of cultural and historical construction can also serve the purposes of ethnic and political mobilization of the community.

On contrary, considerable part of the Russians residing in Hungary prefer not to put the emphasis on their differences and salient features or at least not to be associated with their compatriots in Hungary, in other words, they do not wish to be part of the new local “Hungarian Russian” identity. The “activists” in their turn so far did not gain necessary positive acceptance for their programme towards recognition from the majority of Russians living in Hungary or considerable number of Hungarians. Again, it is important to underline that the present situation occurred due to the absence of any strong forms of resistance, attempt to implement assimilation policy from the outside. In other words, there are no conditions for Russians not to assimilate: from the inside the community did not impose any restrictions, e.g. endogamy, while from the Hungarian state side there are also no salient visible features of social exclusion which would stimulate the boundaries’ maintenance.

The discussion above was dedicated to different aspects of the group identity. Still it is necessary to mention about the existence of the multiple identities and their hierarchy when we are speaking about an individual¹². Moreover, according to the situational theory, one identity might prevail over the other one, in Brubaker’s words it is a process or an event rather than stable and solid category¹³. Therefore, Russians who are currently living in Hungary might have various identities and the importance of each of them is changing in accordance with the issue or the situation. Barth examined the notion of ethnicity as mutable, arguing

¹² Peter J. Burke et al., *Advances in identity theory and research*. (New York: Kluwer academia/Plenum publishers, 2003).

¹³ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, „Beyond „identity”, in *Ethnicity without groups*, edited by Rogers Brubaker. (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2004).

that ethnicity is the product of social ascriptions, a kind of labelling process engaged in by oneself and others¹⁴. According to him, one's ethnic identity is a composite of the view one has of oneself as well as the views held by others about one's ethnic identity. Throughout the daily life individual and group ethnicity changes several times to adopt to different situations.

Having touched upon the issue of the internal forces it is necessary devotes more attention to external ones which considerably influence the developments within any minority, they shape individual ethnic identification, the options, feasibility, and attractiveness of various ethnicities¹⁵. The main thesis of the articles collection under the common name "The construction of minorities: cases for comparison across time and around the world" edited by A.Burguiere and R.Grew says that minority identity tend to emerge and develop in those states which pursue assimilation and minority suppression policies¹⁶. If the contrary is true than in the states with a comparatively favourable minority legislation there are less external factors for the minority identity to emerge and the community has to find enough internal reasons and power to stand as a political entity. It might be the case of Hungarian Russians who in fact do not experience the inequality partly due to support from the kin state, partly due to Hungarian legislation allowing them to have cultural and religious institutions even without official recognition.

It was useful to examine if the Russians of Hungary can be seen as a part of Russian Diaspora. Obviously, Russians residing abroad usually are not considered as a classical Diaspora such as Jewish or Armenian, but its current marginal status might be interpreted in

¹⁴ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969).

¹⁵ Joane Nagel, *Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture* Social Problems, Vol. 41, No. 1, *Special Issue on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America* (Feb., 1994), 161. University of California Press on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3096847>

¹⁶ *The construction of minorities: cases for comparison across time and around the world*. Edited by A.Burguiere and R.Grew. University of Michigan Press. 2004.

different ways; therefore, the application of Diaspora studies' approaches makes things more clear in this case. Russian migration to Hungary is characterised by several waves and the absence of one single dramatic event that would cause the exile from Russia and then serve as one of the identity construction elements¹⁷. Despite the fact that there were no big gaps between these migration waves, the continuity between generations and their close interaction was not always a case due to the different background of the migrants, their political affiliations, etc. Loosening ties with the kin-state and the process of assimilation can be also seen in the re-orientation towards the host country rather than strengthening ties with Russia. Nowadays one of the main goals is a minority status in Hungary, not return to Russia (i.e. one of the main requirements in Safran's definition¹⁸). At the same time, Russian presence in Hungary and their culture are not separatist – one the points of James Clifford¹⁹.

The case study of Russians in Hungary is very well fit into the Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus theory between "nationalizing" state (Hungary), national minority of this state (although still not officially recognized Russian minority) and homeland of national minority (Russia)²⁰. Nowadays Hungary presents an example of national, but not nationalizing state which ensures specific minority rights for its thirteen minority groups. The Russian Federation as a homeland plays a monitoring and protective role for its kin in Hungary, but at the same time does not introduce any immigration programmes for returnees. Russian community also corresponds to the Brubaker's definition of a dynamic political stance since the group has expressed their public claim to membership in the Hungarian society; it made the first steps towards state recognition in order to obtain cultural and political rights. At the

¹⁷ Exile is one of the central notions in the Diaspora studies that usually make the difference with migration.

¹⁸ William Safran, „Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return”, *Diaspora 1:1* (Spring 1991), 83.

¹⁹ James Clifford, Diasporas, *Cultural Anthropology* 9:3 (August 1994).

²⁰ Rogers Brubaker, *National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homeland in the new Europe*. *Daedalus* 124(2), Spring (1995): 107-132.

same time the research revealed that Hungarian Russians do not constitute a unitary group, but its members have differentiated positions on the questions related to the status of the whole group in Hungary (recognition as a national minority).

The latter issue – the endeavour to gain a minority status – was chosen as one of the central topics for this research due to several reasons. First of all, in case of success, the recognition will become an important landmark not only for the Hungarian Russians, but for the whole Russian Diaspora since there are not so many countries in the post-Soviet territory where Russians can enjoy specific minority rights. Secondly, the attitudes of Hungarian Russians towards this issue serve as a good platform for the investigation of the whole range of opinions, existing ties and connections within this group. It reveals the development level and the maturity of the community, their aspirations and contradictions. Do the activists want to obtain minority status just because they can do from the legal point of view and because the other minorities did or because it is necessary for the survival of the group? In this case ethnicity can be seen as a rational choice²¹, since the construction of ethnic boundaries and attempts to gain minority status might be considered as a strategy to receive personal political and economic advantage via representation of the whole group and financial governmental support. Finally, the discussion around minority status facilitates the examination of minority-host state-kin-state triadic relations.

²¹ Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Chapter 2: Russians in Hungary

General characteristics of the community and important issues of Russian historical presence in Hungary

The first part of the chapter is dedicated to a closer examination of the Russians currently residing in Hungary and the questions on their interconnectedness. Who are those people? Do they constitute a community or part of Russian Diaspora? Or they are just a group of people with somewhat common background and language knowledge who happen to live in the same host state, but who do not construct any unity and do not make any attempts to communicate and interact with their country-fellows? It is possible to raise two major groups of questions in this regard. The first one is who to consider Russian, the issue of belonging. It is closely related to historical presence of Russians in Hungary and to several waves of migration. The other one is the stratification among Hungarian Russians which to a large extent determine the relations between different groups.

According to the latest available data the number of Russians legally residing on the territory of Hungary estimates more than 5000 people²² or 10 000 people according to P.Khudorenko²³. At the same time there are some other opinions on the actual number of the Russian community which might reach more than 20 000 people. The recently hold census should shed some light on this issue since for the first time the respondents got the chance to indicate „Russian” nationality in the questionnaires instead of „the other” in the previous versions (this new possibility was also given to the Chinese, the Vietnamese and the Arabs).

²² Tamas Frank, Bevándorlók – mellettünk. January 15, 2011. Kitenkinto.hu
http://kitenkinto.hu/eia/2011/01/15/bevandorlok_-mellettunk/

²³ Speech of P.Khudorenko – acting manager of Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation mission to Hungary at IV All-Hungarian Conference of the Russian Compatriots, May 12 2012, Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Budapest, Hungary.

But the problem of counting Russians is more complex than that and has many layers in itself while those layers are also intermixed.

1. First of all the issue of belonging is connected to a formal issue of past and present citizenship including former Soviet Union citizenship. Very often expatriates from the former Soviet Union republics who are currently living in Hungary prefer to call themselves Russians, although in reality they might have different ethnic background.
2. Second group of those who might be count as Russians is large group of Russian-speakers from the former USSR. According to a widely-spread point of view belonging to Russian nation is primarily the issue of the language knowledge and cultural affiliation rather than ethnic belonging.
3. Third group is neither more obvious and very disputable – ethnic Russians, although there is no nationality line in Russian national passports.
4. Another potential group to be included is the holders of the Russian citizenship
5. Children of mixed marriages and descendent of Russian migrants.

The world of Russian speakers of Hungary is obviously much larger than the number of those who consider Russian as their nationality. In the past the status of Russian speakers could be applied to Hungarian ex-prisoners of war; Hungarians prisoners of the Soviet camps; Hungarians studied in the Soviet universities since 1947 who started to come back with Russian wives from early 1950s²⁴. In particular, from 1947 to 1974 more than 3000 Hungarian citizens got their degrees from Soviet universities. Usually they came back already married to Russian women and in the 1970s-80s the number of Russian wives in Hungary

²⁴ Vadim Aristov, *Russian world of Budapest and Hungary*, (Budapest: Arvado Kft, 2003), 216.

increased because more and more Hungarian students came to Russia to get university education. At the same time, the so-called „Russian wives” (orosz feleségek) married not only students, but also engineers, technically qualified persons, entrepreneurs.

In other words, the multiple interpretation and understanding of such terms as Russian as well as Russian citizen (*ruszkij and rossijanin*) makes it very difficult to estimate the amount of people who potentially can be referred to as Hungarian Russians. While the precise amount of Russians living in Hungary is not very important for the purposes of the present research, the cohesion within the group is much more important issue, especially in the light of high level of stratification within the group. It is also possible to distinguish a separate group of the community activists who voluntary self-appointed themselves to conduct different activities dedicated to Russian culture, but in reality they claim privilege of representing their community as well as actively propagate for the institutionalization of the community life in Hungary. The first step in this direction has been already made and nowadays 14 Russian associations are registered in different Hungarian cities. On the other hand, there are other members of the minority who just occasionally participate in the community life or those who do not have any contacts with it all. Those Russians who are already successfully integrated into the Hungarian society very often do not understand the necessity to apply for a minority status. Besides, nothing or really little have been done by the community activists to explain the potential benefits of this status; no certain program or the agenda were presented to the wider public. A lot of Russians are still trying to avoid any memberships or participation in any kind of organizations. Others are afraid of negative reaction from the Hungarian society side, since official recognition might have ambiguous connotation, for example, as a confrontation towards Hungarians.

The situation becomes even more complex since Hungary often serves as an interim country for the Russians striving to move further to the West. Therefore can one expect that

Russians in Hungary would turn to local or global Russian Diaspora? Is it necessary or even useful in practical terms at all to belong/to identify with Russians living abroad?

One might speak about Russian Diaspora in general, but the interactions within it are comparatively very poorly elaborated. It would be more correct to speak about quite isolated Russian communities/minorities throughout the world with several institutions which still cannot be compared to ones of Armenian, Jewish, Ukrainian Diasporas organizations, not mention about the absence of any Birthright educational/ travel programs. Hungarian Russian is not the exception from this trend and rather proves and illustrates it very well. Therefore, the processes within the Russian Diaspora do not go in parallel with, for example, Armenian Diaspora which according to Khachig Tololyan transformed from exilic nationalism to diasporic transnationalism²⁵, although some similar changes might be found within the Russian minority in Hungary. First of all, it is the institutionalization of political culture in Diaspora; an idea to gain the official recognition of Russian as a minority is one of the arguments. Applying Tololyan's terminology there are "impulses toward institutionalization". At the same time no visible challenges of the agenda occurred. Moreover, the whole goal to collect 1000 necessary signatures failed partly due to inability of the community activists to compose the agenda, crystallize the needs of the minority and propose the ways to deal with them or simply explain to the wider public the pros and cons of the official minority status. In addition, in several articles in Russian minority media the community representatives addressed very general issues (preserving of language, culture, religion) rather than local (e.g. that minority status would make Russian school tuition free or less, etc). The overall small support and disinterest in acquiring the status of the minority shows as well the applicability of another feature – "diasporic cultural identities are at most partially autonomous from

²⁵ Khachig Tololyan, „Elites and institutions in the Armenian transnation”, *Diaspora* 9:1 2000

<these> organizations in the community”. All in all, Russian community might serve the example of emergent, not dominant part of Russian Diaspora.

Another issue related to stratification and diversity of the group concerned is the historical presence of Russians on the Hungarian territory. In this regard it is important to keep in mind that at different points of history the territory of both Hungary and Russia were significantly different from current state of affairs as well as the relations with other neighbouring countries such as the Ukraine and the Balkans. In addition, it is important to notice who considered themselves Russians in different periods of time and how different states treated those peoples²⁶. It is extremely sensitive question since according to the 1993 Law, in order to gain the minority status it is necessary to prove the settlement of that minority on the Hungarian territory for a century although in a new version of Law on National Minorities which came into force on January 1 2012 this requirement is not mentioned. Nevertheless, the year of 2014 was set by the community activists as a date to gain the minority status since the first significant resettlement was marked by the migration of Russian wives married to Hungarian prisoners of World War I, although a significant number of documents from the Hungarian archives prove the presence of Russians in Hungary centuries before World War I. Them and their descendants constituted the first category of Russians in Hungary. Another category is the descendants of Russian prisoners of war who chose to stay on the Hungarian territory after the liberation. Another large group comprised Russians moved from Yugoslavia after the World War II. Soviet students were allowed to study in Hungary from 1960s and there were some of them who stayed after the graduation.

²⁶ For example, in the Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Science there is a document dated back to 1867 on the equal rights for Hungarian peoples where Russians are mentioned among the other peoples. But at that time Russins were called Russians by themselves and some other states while Russia preferred to call them Ukrainians due to political reasons. – Those remarks were taken from the speech of F.Gemesi, former State Secretary on minority and national policy issues, during the IV All-Hungarian Conference of the Russian Compatriots, May 12 2012, Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Budapest, Hungary.

From the late 1940s many Soviet citizens worked in Hungary. They were politicians, members of the state security, military experts and specialists in industry, trade, and transportation. In 1959 an agreement between Hungary and the Soviet Union was made to exchange technical support and other services, legitimating the migration of the Soviet specialists to Hungary and Hungarian experts to the Soviet Union for business purposes²⁷. Soviet specialists with their families worked at 152 objects of Hungarian national economy in the 1970s-80s. Married workers also brought their families with them and their wives came as dependents for the purpose of family reunification. As for the most recent migrants, Russian speaking business from 1980s started to penetrate to Hungary, more and more students come to study. So in general state's appointment, family reunification, marriage were among the major factors of migration before the collapse of the USSR. But besides there were also other reasons for migration such as political, economical, social factors, ecological issues, and established networks in Hungary.

Therefore, currently the status of the Russian minority remains very unclear and marginal not only from the formal point of view, but also in terms of structure and existing ties within the group. Very often various categories of group members have no interaction between each other, or even demonstrate unwillingness to start a dialogue concerning important community issues where the unity and common actions are necessary. Taking into account comparatively small number of Russians residing in Hungary and the existence of special community institutions which in theory should stimulate the interaction, the general nature of the group might be characterized as very diverse, without common interests and goals.

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 179.

The role of the homeland for the Hungarian Russians

This paragraph of the thesis examines diasporization practices through which homeland and Russian Diaspora community engage each other. The exploration of the homeland-Diaspora relations serve the purpose of looking at the process of nation-building and the formation of national belonging. Although different possibilities of communication between these two parts might occur, in case of Hungarian Russians there is only limited number of channels through which members of Diaspora negotiate their position towards national homeland movements. In turn this limited amount of interdependence and interactions with the homeland produce the current state of Russian community in Hungary and its attitudes towards homeland.

The case of homeland relations between ethnic Russians in Hungary and the Russian Federation is interesting due to two moments. On the one hand, the resettlement patterns of Russians to Hungary were in general similar to other ex-Soviet Union republics, although the scale of the population exchange between Hungary and the Soviet Union republics was not so mass. On the other hand, nowadays Hungarian Russians are excluded from the larger picture of all those Russians who found themselves in newly independent states after the collapse of the USSR. Consequently, the formal status of Russians Hungarians is closer to the Russians residing in the USA and Western Europe than to compatriots living in the so-called “near abroad”. It means that those special programmes for compatriots living in the CIS region do not hit the Hungarian Russians as a target group; usually this category is not considered “problematic” when the issues of the Russian language, citizenship or resettlement are being discussed. Clearly, such Russian governmental attitude could be explained by the opportunity to have Hungarian and Russian citizenship simultaneously and the comparably small number

of Russians in Hungary (important distinctions from the Baltic States). The latter reason and the widely-spread mixed marriages encouraged a good integration of Russians into the Hungarian society. These factors make ethnic return migration of Russian descendents almost non-existent²⁸.

Still Hungarian Russians can benefit from several laws adopted by the Russian government, namely *The State Program for Assistance to the Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots Living Abroad to the Russian Federation* as well as Basic Directions of the Russian Federation's State Policy toward Compatriots Living Abroad. The notion "compatriots abroad" comprises four categories of people: citizens of the Russian Federation living abroad; individuals that used to have Soviet citizenship; individuals who emigrated from the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation; and descendents of compatriots "with the exception of descendents of individuals representing titular nations of foreign countries."²⁹ There is also a governmental program on the work with Russian compatriots for 2012-2014 which envisages the allocation of more than one billion roubles in order to help preserve Russian ethno-cultural space abroad, humanitarian aid and support to young people³⁰. In addition the Foundation for Support and Protection of Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad started its work on January 2012. The Foundation is primarily seeking to provide conditions, "under which Russian compatriots will enjoy fully the rights of citizens in those countries, where they live."³¹

²⁸ Discussion on the ethnic diasporic return – Diasporic Homecomings. Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective. Edited by Takeyuki Tsuda. Stanford University Press, 2009. P.1

²⁹ Igor Zevelev, „Russia's Policy Toward Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union”, *Russia in Global Affairs*, № 1, January - March 2008. http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10351

³⁰ Govt commission to discuss legal position of Russians abroad. 09/04/2012 ITAR-TASS News Agency. http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c32/386803_print.html

³¹ *ibid.*

The practical implementation of these initiatives is taking place through different organizations, in case of Hungary it is the Budapest Centre of the Russian language and culture at ELTE University founded in 2009 by the Russian World Foundation (“Russkij Mir”), The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation („Rossotrudnichestvo”) which runs the Russian Cultural Centre in Budapest and supports the community centers in throughout the country. Other important institutions of the Russian Federations in Hungary are the Trade Mission as well as the Russian Embassy and the school belonging to the latter.

So from the formal point of view, the “physical presence” of both state and civic (organized by community activists) Russian institutions is evident. But no real efforts have been made neither from the Russian government side nor from the Russian Diaspora side in Hungary in order to improve the currently existing homeland-Diaspora relations, move them to a qualitatively new level and make them more sustainable. The reasons behind are complex and interconnected. The official point of view might be illustrated by the extract from Vladimir Putin’s article who argued that “... ethnic Russians have never formed stable ethnic diasporas anywhere, even though their representation – both in numbers and quality – has been significant. The reason is that our identity is based on a different cultural code. The Russian people are state-builders, as evidenced by the existence of Russia. Their great mission is to unite and bind together a civilisation³²”.

As for the Diaspora side, the activities of the community or in the majority of cases its members individually are presented in the Table 1. It clearly shows the prevalence of cultural and economic ties while political ones are practically non-existent. This imbalance could be potentially overcome by the official recognition of the Russian community as a Hungarian

³² Vladimir Putin, Russia: The Ethnicity Issue. Archive of the official site of the 2008-2012 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.
<http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/>

minority since it would lead to the creation of representative bodies which most probably could be influenced by main Russian political parties.

Table 1: Types of Russian Diaspora Networks in Hungary with Homeland

Economic	Political	Social	Cultural	Religious
Remittances Tourism Businesses Property investments	Elections	Community associations Educational support	Cultural events Educational exchanges Internet websites Forums Printed media Visual media Satellite TV Art/Scientific exhibitions Theatre	Building religious edifices Religious pilgrimages Religious ceremonies Religious education for children and adults

It is also impossible to speak neither about the existence of Russians political lobbying groups in Hungary – the classical diasporic tool of influence, nor about any influence on the Hungarian foreign policy formation. Therefore the Presidential and Parliamentary elections remain the only one form of homeland-Diaspora relations. The results of the Parliamentary and Presidential elections did not reveal a strong opposition towards current government among Russians residing in Budapest, although there might be several explanations for that. In Budapest during Parliamentary elections in December 2011 United Russia party got 242 votes (~30%); Communist party of the Russian Federation 185 votes (23%) and Yabloko 179 votes (22.29%) while the general number of voters in Budapest only was 803 (compare with average Russian results – United Russia - 49.32%; Communist party – 19.19%; Yabloko – 3.43%; the threshold is 7%). Presidential election in March 2012 resulted with the following

figures: 1096 voters in Budapest; votes for Putin (United Russia) – 527 (48%); votes for Prokhorov (Independent) – 314 (28.6%); votes for Zyuganov (Communist) – 154 (14%) – compare with the average turnout of the elections – Putin – 63.64%; Zyuganov – 17.18%; Prokhorov – 7.94%³³.

It is also important to mention the place of the Orthodox Church in the life of the community, identity preservation and construction. In Hungary there is Orthodox parish (although in very bad economic conditions), Sunday school for children, special classes on religion for adults. Currently a new church is being built next to the cemetery where many Soviet soldiers were buried. In general, Russian church plays an important role in preserving Christian traditions, the Russian language, shapes to certain extent cultural and social life of congregation. At the same time the church also serve the function of maintaining ties with homeland due to frequent visits of priests to Hungary and pilgrimages. Besides, Russian Orthodox Church also creates special connection with other religious communities and other peoples in Hungary, especially with Ukrainians, Greeks, Georgian, Armenians and the others. It is rather difficult to estimate the role and the impact of the church on the life of the Russians community in Hungary and in Budapest in particular, nowadays about 60-70 people constitute the congregation (with the majority of “Russian wives”), while in the middle of 1990s more than 100 peoples attended Sunday masses regularly³⁴. Despite the raise of the church importance as an institute in the modern Russian society and its Diaspora, the Orthodoxy still plays minor role in the identity formation for the middle-age people.

³³ Central election commission of the Russian Federation.
http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100031793509&vrn=100100031793505®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100031793509&type=226

³⁴ Interview with archpriest Kadar „The church should not turn into Russian club”. („Церковь не должна превращаться в российский клуб”). Hungarian eparchy of Moscow patriarchate. February 2, 2010 <http://www.budapest.orthodoxy.ru/history/history4.html>

So the Diaspora-homeland relations in case of Russians in Hungary are not intensive and not very well developed. The overwhelming majority of contacts between the two sides are related to formal citizen issues or the cultural sphere. Another exception is Orthodox Church which serves as an important connecting link and plays also educational role in terms of the language and culture. At the same time, poor financial situation of this institute does not allow it to have its own temple, for example. Obviously, both the Russian Federation and Hungary have bilateral economic interests regulated to certain extent by the Russian Trade Mission, but these connections taking place more on the intergovernmental level and almost do not influence the life of the Russians in Hungary, the development of the community and ties within it. The political interactions between the homeland and the Diaspora are also minimized and expressed mostly during the elections. Political lobbying groups, human rights defending organizations or participation in protest movements by Russians in Hungary are practically non-existent.

Russians in the context of other Hungarian non-recognized minorities and minority legislation

This paragraph of the research is dedicated to the comparison of the Russian community of Hungary with other unrecognized minorities such as Chinese and Vietnamese as well as the overall attitudes of the Hungarian society towards migrants and Russians in particular. Besides, the most important aspects of the Hungarian minority legislation are examined such as the potential benefits of recognition and financial issues.

Nowadays there are thirteen officially recognized minorities in Hungary in the accordance with the 1993 Minority Law: Armenians, Bulgarians, Croats, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Roma, Romanians, Ruthenes, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes and Ukrainians. Its definition

of a national and ethnic minority is the following: “every national group that has been native on the territory of the Republic of Hungary for at least a century, that has been in numerical minority within the population of the state, whose members are Hungarian citizens, who are differentiated in their own language, culture and traditions from the rest of the population, who exhibit a spirit of togetherness in order to preserve all of these and in order to express and protect the interests of their historically developed communities”³⁵. This definition serves as a starting point and a framework for further minority legislation. One of the most important provisions of the Act is the opportunity for the recognized minorities to establish Minority Self-Governments which safeguards minority interests at state level in such areas as culture and education. For the latter activities each minority also receives special budget. Besides a number of laws on minority rights, a specialized Ombudsman for the protection of minorities was established.

So from the formal point of view the official recognition and minority status can bring a lot of benefits for the community’s members such as legal protection and support to exercise cultural rights. Therefore there are a lot of potential opportunities for the representatives of Russians regarding their existence in Hungary and to a large extent they match with desired opportunities of the representatives of the minority. But in order to be eligible to use all these benefits the official recognition and the whole related procedure are essential. The first steps towards the recognition have been done, but the community activists did not undertake important steps on the overall engagement of many Russians into this process.

At the same time the amount of financial resources in accordance with the Minority Act to be used in order to implement all the given opportunities very often considered as not sufficient - in 2011 the aid provided for all thirteen national minority self-governments and

³⁵ Act LXXVII: 1993, Paragraph 1(2) on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities.
www.regione.taa.it/biblioteca/minoranze/ungheria2.pdf

media amounted to HUF 1,219.5 million, while the support granted with respect to institutions operated by national minority self-governments amounted to HUF 463 million.³⁶ The experience of Hungarian recognized minorities proved the fact that those minorities with a better financial support from their homelands are able more fully exercise their rights. In this sense Hungarian Russians are in ambiguous situation. On the one hand, they receive financial means from both Russian governmental and non-governmental organizations that in fact assist the preservation of culture and language even without an official recognition from the Hungarian government side. Partly, this support prevents the community from more active actions towards recognition since the main functions are fulfilled through educational and cultural programmes with the exception of political representation in Hungary. In the context of Miksell and Murphy's framework of minority-group aspirations the Russians in Hungary constitute group with a desire for recognition and participation and those non-territorial aspirations might be completely fulfilled through the Minorities Act of 1993³⁷. To certain extent it also indicates that the minority in question is not eager to assimilate.

In the previous paragraph the issues of approximate numbers of Russians and the difficulties on counting them were touched upon. In this regard it is interesting to draw some parallels with two other emerging migrant communities in Hungary, namely Chinese and Vietnamese, especially since those two nationalities along with Arabs were included into the 2011 census as separate categories. So far it is possible to rely on the statistics available from Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality for recent years. According to its data, there were 122 Russian and 116 Vietnamese residence permit applicants for Hungarian citizens' family members with third country nationals in 2010. Together they constituted

³⁶ Fifth periodical report on Hungary presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. 5 March 2012 P.17

³⁷ Marvin M. Miksell and Alexander B. Murthy, A framework of comparative study of minority-group aspirations. In: *Annals, Association of American Geographers*, 1991. Vol.81, 581-604

approximately 11% of all applications³⁸. Besides, 111 Russians in 2009 (2.38% of all applications) and 131 Russians in 2010 (2.28% of all applications) applied for permanent resident cards. There were 3340 Chinese citizens holding immigration permit in 2011 (Vietnamese - 1037) and 6660 Chinese had residence permit in 2011 (Vietnamese - 1321). Chinese are coming to Hungary mostly due to gainful activities – 4096 (~31% of all applications in 2011) and family reunification – 1245 (~28% of applications in 2011), in comparison to Vietnamese – 220 (~5% in 2010), Russians 161 in 2011. Expulsions ordered by the immigration authority affected 65 Chinese and 33 Vietnamese citizens in 2011. The estimation of Chinese citizens in Hungary was 14 345 persons and Vietnamese - 3790 persons³⁹. At the same time researchers from the TÁRKI Social Research Institute argue that „Xenophobia ... can be related to (1) the over-estimation of national-ethnic groups ratio, (2) the expectation of mass migration and (3) the support of authoritarian political views.⁴⁰” According to their representative survey, 52% of respondents answered Chinese and 9% chose Russians as potential migrants to Hungary in the future (Table 2).

Another group to compare Russians with is the Jewish community of Hungary. Several thousand of Jews are currently living in Hungary, but an initiative to gain recognition of it as an ethnic or national minority in accordance to the Minority Act have failed due to insufficient support from the community itself⁴¹. The community activists were also unable to collect the required number of signatures in the support of the recognition bid.

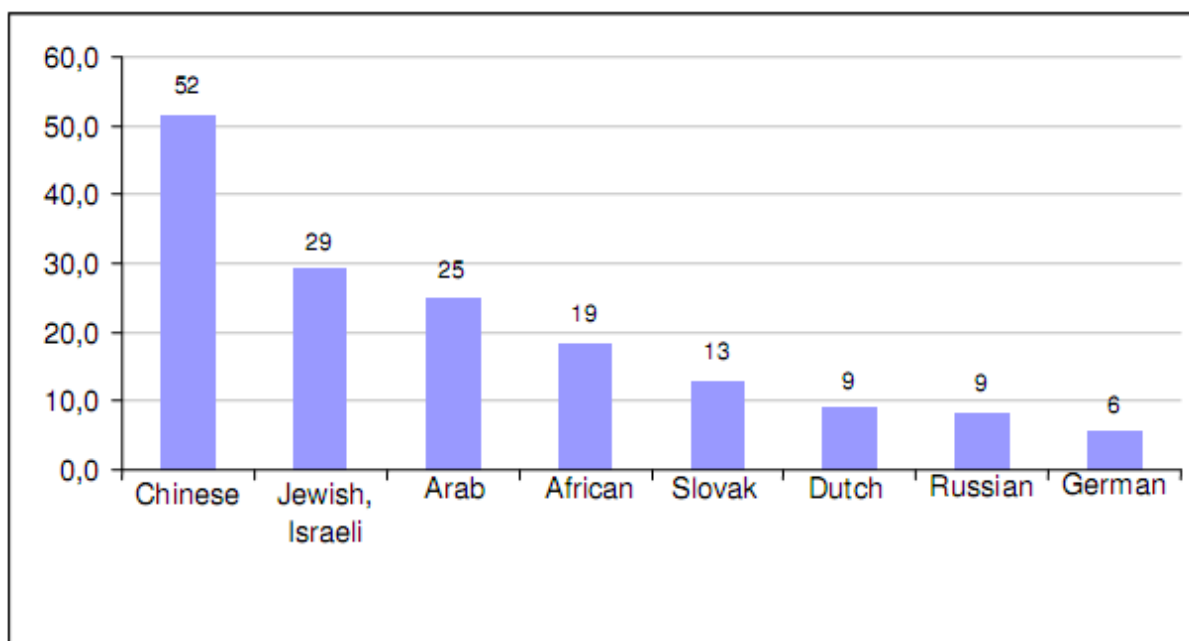
³⁸ Office of Immigration and Nationality. Statistics for 2010-2011. Bevándorlási és Állampolgársági Hivatal. <http://www.bmbah.hu/statisztikak.php>

³⁹ Hungarian project on migrants „Bevándorlók – mellettünk” supported by European integration fund. January 2011. http://kitekinto.hu/eia/2011/04/11/az_oroszok_szama_magyarorszagon

⁴⁰ “*Migrant Chances and Experiences in Hungary*” – Summary. Report of the TÁRKI Social Research Institute. 2011. Page 1. www.tarki.hu/hu/research/migrants/20120307_summary_en.pdf

⁴¹ Hungary overview. World Directory of Minorities. Minority Rights Group International. <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5804&tmpl=printpage>

Table 2: Do you think that we can expect the large number of ... people will settle down in Hungary in the future? – Those who agreed (%). Source: “Migrant Chances and Experiences in Hungary” – Summary. Report of the TÁRKI Social Research Institute. 2011. Page 1. www.tarki.hu/hu/research/migrans/20120307_summary_en.pdf



Another important issue concerning Russians in Hungary is the overall perceptions of them by the Hungarian society. This is another large field for the separate research, but in this chapter it is necessary to give some available information to make the picture more complete. According to the survey of the TÁRKI Social Research Institute the general opinion about Russians is below average (in comparison to attitudes towards Swedish, Germans, Americans and only attitudes towards Romanians are worse than to Russians) and 56% of the Hungarian society (especially young people) considers the Russian influence on the Hungarian history as very negative. Despite that fact, the Russian language is still considered as very important and a lot of people would support its teaching as well as further development of economic and

cultural connections⁴². In another research Hungarian's position towards Russian is characterised as a "the Acquiescent Partner" meaning that the business interests prevail over political goals⁴³. On the one hand, the answers were about Russia and Russians living in their homeland rather than about potential migrants or moreover part of the Hungarian society and recognized minority; on the other hand, it is possible to expect similar attitudes to Hungarian Russians since the perception will stay the same.

From the discussion above it is possible to conclude that current Hungarian legislation grants a lot of rights to recognized minority groups to preserve their culture and languages as well as establish Minority Self-Governments, but as the practice has shown those laws are effective only on the condition that kin-states support their actions financially (although it is not a formal condition) since available recourses from the Hungarian budget are limited.

Russians constitute a significantly different group in comparison to other large unrecognized communities currently living in Hungary. First of all, the former has a longer recorded history of presence in Hungary dated back several centuries while such groups as Chinese or Vietnamese are considered as new migrants without any certain goals for institutionalization so far. Secondly, the analyses of visa applications helped to reveal the reasons of migration. In case of Russians the main purpose is family reunification while for two other groups gainful activities prevail, so to large extent they still continue to play the role of the middle man in the country and involved into retail business. Thirdly, the majority of Hungarians are opposed to Chinese immigration, although the number of Chinese in the country is significantly over-estimated by the population (the current share of Chinese in

⁴² *The Russian language in Hungary*. The OMNIBUSZ report of TÁRKI Social Research Institute (<http://www.tarki.hu>). 2007

<http://www.russtudies.hu/Aindex.php?menu=56&dir=&lang=r>

⁴³ Stefano Braghiroli, Caterina Carta, *An Index of Friendliness toward Russia: An Analysis of the Member States and Member of the European Parliament's Positions*. Electronic Publications of Pan-European Institute 15/2009. Page 14. www.tse.fi/pei

Hungary's population does not exceed 15 000 (not even 0.5% of the overall population) and Vietnamese 4 000 people). The attitudes towards Russians are much more favourable in comparison to those groups, although the influence of historical heritage on the perception of Russians is clearly seen in public opinions poll. At the same time the negative image of criminals are typical for both minority groups. Next point of comparison is mobility between different countries due to economic reasons and diasporic ties. As it was said above, considerable part of Hungarian Russians does not consider Hungary as a final destination, but the mobility still remains low in comparison to Chinese migrants. Moreover, Russian community keep only symbolic ties with compatriots in other countries even in Europe while Chinese are actively involved in international communications and interactions with other Chinese Diaspora members. Finally, Russians are better integrated into the Hungarian society, partly due to a large number of intermarriages and historical past. Despite significant differences, the official status of those ethnic groups in Hungary remains marginal.

Chapter 3: Role of Russian minority media in Hungary in the identity formation and community mobilization

The goal of this chapter is to investigate the role of two main Russian minority media resources in community identity construction in Hungary; reveal their commonalities and differences in their approaches towards the audience; examine their salient features and effectiveness. It is important due to several reasons. First of all, minority media might be considered as a tool in constructing local cultural identity, namely Hungarian; according to M.Gillespie, “the media and cultural consumption ... play a key role in constructing and defining, contesting and reconstructing national, “ethnic” and other cultural identities”⁴⁴. As a next step, community activists with access to the existing newspaper in the Russian language developed a political agenda towards institutionalization and official recognition as a minority. By doing so the newspaper started to play a representing role for the whole community both within itself and to outsiders to certain extent. Since the language traditionally is central in Russian culture and for Russian different peoples as well as for the migrants from the post-Soviet territory, the minority media plays an important symbolic role for numerous Russian speakers in Hungary and creates a platform for sharing information.

Speaking about Russian language minority media of Hungary it is important to distinguish between the newspaper “Russian courier” which is a private newspaper and produced by community activists on the one hand, and Internet-based newspaper/news portal “Hungary. Look from inside” with forum for the registered users, on the other hand. Although both of the editions are written and produced by minority and for minority, they have different goals, formats and themes. Therefore, a comparative analysis of these two minority media

⁴⁴Marie Gillespie, *Television, ethnicity and cultural change*. (Routledge, 1995), 11.

resources will reveal how community activists are trying to construct national identity using minority media, which tools and approaches are applied and how their attempts are reflected in alternative, Internet-based media portals.

Since both editions chosen for the analyses have their Internet-based versions with the possibility of commenting for the users, it is possible to refer to them as to a so-called “new media”. Without going into the discussion on the new media, it is still necessary to underline the most significant characteristics which can be found in the case of the Russians in Hungary. First of all, the site “Hungary. Look from the inside” “encourages a large group of deinstitutionalized activists appear”, quoting the work of Ch.Atton. It means that “ordinary” members of the community who are not involved into the process of gaining the official status of the minority for the Russians in Hungary and who consequently will not have personal financial benefit from it can express their opinions and by doing so contribute to the general community life equally with those who voluntary took the role of representatives (i.e. those who created community institutions). The evident advantage of this media and forum is the ability to apply “collective approaches to policy-making and consensual decision-making” and to “work together with almost no hierarchical formation and an absence of bureaucracy”⁴⁵. Interesting fact is that the minority media is not homogenous and some editions are closer in their format to mainstream media than to alternative one. This conclusion might be drawn from the difference in the selection of news and in the way the selection is made. In case of “Russian courier” commercial dependence on advertising is evident as well as editorial dependence on local community activists, in fact, the editors and the owners are considered to be one of the leaders propagating for the minority status recognition. On the contrary, “Hungary. Look from inside” is first of all news portal, but due

⁴⁵ Christopher F. Atton, *Alternative media*. (Sage publications, 2002), 5.

to its neutrality and the availability to use forum it is much more popular than main minority newspaper which is also available in hard copies.

Nowadays in Hungary there are several physical places where the Russians gather to talk and share stories, as well as to obtain food, news, and other culturally specific items. These “rhetorical gathering places” typically take the form of émigré-owned stores, cafes, and churches, but in case of Hungary it is also Russian cultural centre in Budapest and community centres in different cities throughout the country. With the proliferation of the Internet, more and more community members prefer cyberspace to such places.

It is still problematic to claim which role media in the Russian language plays for its audience. As it was noticed above, a lot of Russians/Russian speakers are quite well integrated into the Hungarian society which also means that they speak the Hungarian language and are able to get the local news from Hungarian media sources. Minority media is not very well developed to substitute completely mainstream Russian-language media resources which are available via the Internet today, therefore one might argue that currently existing Russian minority media in Hungary cannot significantly counter assimilation by establishing a news agenda⁴⁶. At the same time minority media cannot remain absolutely neutral concerning the issues of the Russians living in Hungary, their problems, ideas about the future or simply news on their participation in the public life. But as it was said above the approaches of two most popular Russian minority editions are significantly different, although their goal of community consolidation might be the same.

Elite-driven “Russian courier” (RC) has top-down politics of giving the information. On contrary, “Hungary. Look from inside” posts very neutral news on the Hungarian local events, but has several services for its users such as forum; blogs or personal pages/diaries;

⁴⁶ Stephen Harold Riggins, *Ethnic minority media: an international perspective*, (1992. Newbury Park, Calif. Sage)

private advertising; personals for those who wants to find a spouse in Hungary. Both editions have on-line versions, but “RC” also has a circulation of 10 000 copies. As a result of so various politics “RC” became an edition by and for the representatives of the community. No active comments, discussions present on its pages. Quite the opposite situation is on the Forum of “Hungary. Look from the inside”.

The difference between the two sites is easily demonstrated by the example of how the audience reacted on the important development within the community – the bid to collect signatures to acquire a status of the minority. On the pages of “RC” there were several notes on the necessity to gain this status in order to preserve the Russian language, culture and religion, and to give the opportunity to the grandchildren be proud Russians. At the same time there were no explanations on who is going to represent the Russian community in case of success, what is the agenda and priorities, etc. Therefore, the whole discussion (there was no single comment in “RC”) moved to the Forum of the “Hungary. Look from inside” site. Almost immediately the division between “us” and “them” was created. “Us” refers to ordinary members of the community who occasionally participate in the cultural or religious events and who mostly felt frustrated that their opinion was not asked (if the community as a whole needs this status or not?), but we asked to put their signatures in order to get this status (according to the legislation it is necessary to collect 1000 signatures of Hungarian citizens). In turn “them” were those several community representatives who even after the request refused to show their real names and stayed under the nick-names. They were the people who tried to propagate and proved the usefulness of the minority status, but their attempts came too late and were not convincing. Interestingly, but none of the two minority editions have any content in the Hungarian language. But some translations of certain articles could be useful for the better integration of the Russians, involvement wider public to cultural events and simply informing the large audience of the community life. From the practical point of

view, Hungarians can also take part in the collection of 1000 signatures for recognition and therefore content in Hungarian could stimulate this process.

In the scope of this chapter two main Russian minority media editions were examined. It was useful to consider these Internet-based resources as an example of a new media where everyone is both a writer and a reader. At the same time new or alternative media should not be seen as a homogenous body, but rather diverse. Both editions play an important role of local identity construction, but they complete this task in different way. “RC” chose the tactic of one-way communication with the reader while the “Hungary. Look from inside” preferred to create a large platform for its users’ communication. The latter pattern proved to be much more effective in terms of users’ discussions and the exchange of their opinions. In other words, Internet forum incorporated into the news-portal “Hungary. Look from inside” provides a place for “connectivity” among members of the Russian minority. This activity forms a virtual community in the Internet. But interestingly enough, this platform is being used almost exclusively by the Russians or Russian-speakers living in Hungary, while Russians from Russia itself are not frequent guests there. In other words, this platform does not create a transnational activity between the Russian Diaspora and Russia, but serves only for the internal use. To certain extent discussions became more locally-oriented; the Forum appeared as a tool for community consolidation. This means that Russian-language press does not construct the identity of the imperial Diaspora as it could be expected before the actual research.

Besides, the analyses of the available articles revealed a strong prevalence of local events rather than news on the EU or Russia. To certain extent this tendency leads to the creation of a new local identity which combines adherence to the Russian language, history and culture with consideration of Hungary as a new permanent home; some members of the

community are ready to be considered as one of the country's national minorities. In general, the recent past is better covered in the media than the distant past.

Chapter4: Analyses of the field research

Present questionnaire pursued the goal to shed the light to a number of issues examined in the scope of this research. First of all, it was necessary to distinguish several groups within the Russian community according to their age. It should reveal which age group is currently dominating and to certain extent it also shows the waves of migration to Hungary. Another reason behind is to estimate the approximate number of citizens who are able to work in terms of their age (before retirement). At the same time the number of people above 60 years turned out to be not so high and one of the possible explanations is that the questionnaire was put in the Internet. The strategy was to give a link to the present questionnaire in the most common sites where Russians living in Hungary potentially could find it and fill in. Among these web-sites were social networks such as Facebook and its alternative version mostly for Russian-speakers Vkontakte on the special pages and groups such as “Russians in Hungary”; another places were LiveJournal, the Forum of “Hungary. Look from inside” and their pages on Facebook. The gender composition of the community is also an interesting issue to look at since the supposition was that women compose the significant part of the whole community and play an important role in its life.

Question on the residence in Hungary serves several functions. From another angle it presents as well the trends in the migration; in the combination with the question on language skills it helps to collect data on the correlation between the language skills and residence time.

Next group of questions are dedicated to such issues as identity, assimilation, homeland orientation and the attitudes to the community itself. In other words, is it possible to speak about Russian community in Hungary or just about a number not interconnected people with somewhat similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but who do not have anything in

common nowadays? Or one might argue about the existence of the new Russian Diaspora community – Hungarian Russians who in fact are in the process of identity construction on their own? The questions are both personal and general character, about individual preferences and the community, its future.

The last question is dedicated to the media since a special paragraph is dedicated to the role of the community identity building through minority media. The answers for this particular question should demonstrate what role the minority media is playing in the Russian community, what is its influence and significance. Nowadays due to modern technology there is an opportunity to be constantly connected to the major media space. The survey reveals explicitly that the connection with the homeland's events is never interrupted. The knowledge of the Hungarian language cannot change significantly the habits to read news in Russian (hard copies of major Russian periodical editions are available in the library of the Russian cultural centre). Here we might also think of Billig's banal nationalism which constantly penetrates in the everyday life of migrants through media, its language and symbols⁴⁷.

Below the results of the survey are presented. The overall number of the responses is 75. People could select more than one checkbox, so percentages in some questions added up to more than 100%

Questionnaire with results (number of responses):

1. What is your age?

16-25 - 22

26-35 - 20

36-45 - 14

46-60 - 14

above 60 - 5

2. What is your sex?

⁴⁷ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (Sage 1995).

Male - 27
Female - 48

3. For how long do you live in Hungary?

less than 1 year - 12
1-3 years - 16
4-10 years - 18
11-20 years - 15
more than 20 years - 14

4. How many of your friends living in Hungary are Russians?

Nearly all of them - 8
The majority of them - 12
Approximately half of them - 13
A minority of them - 20
Nearly none of them - 22

5. Have the Russians you know here in Hungary changed a lot since they had left Russia?

They have changed a lot - 12
They have changed somewhat - 47
Basically they have not changed - 16

6. What would be the best for Russians living now in Hungary?

Return to Russia - 6
Remain in Hungary and run for the acknowledged minority status with cultural rights - 11
Learn the language, integrate and become brethren to titulars - 45
Move to the third country - 24

7. How well do you know the Hungarian language? Indicate your level of knowledge on the scale from 1 to 5 like in the school: 1= no knowledge at all; 5 = perfect knowledge

1 - 12
2 - 14
3 - 20
4 - 2
5 - 27

8. In what language would you like you children to be taught in school (now or in the future)

Russian - 7
mix - 57

Hungarian - 11

9. Do you participate in the Russian community activities, e.g. in Russian cultural centre?

often - 1
rarely - 12
sometimes - 22
never - 40

10. How often you read or watch Russian newspapers, magazines and TV channels?

every day 30
several times a week 9
at least once a week 5
at least once in a month 7
few times a year 17
never 15

11. How often you read Russian webpages?

every day 58
several times a week 8
at least once a week 3
at least once in a month 0
few times a year 0
never 3

12. How often you read or watch Hungarian newspapers, magazines and TV channels?

every day 29
several times a week 7
at least once a week 13
at least once in a month 15
few times a year 2
never 15

13. How often you read Hungarian web-pages?

every day 17
several times a week 19
at least once a week 15
at least once in a month 5
few times a year 8
never 6

14. How often you read or watch Hungarian editions in the Russian language (e.g. Hungary. Look from inside; Russian courier)?

every day 15
several times a week 13
at least once a week 11
at least once in a month 10
few times a year 18
never 10

Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of the survey? There is no strong prevalence of one particular age group - this gives the potential for the future of the community to exist if several other factors will also contribute to this process. Also as it was discussed above, Hungary is often considered to be an interim place, but the survey demonstrates that the majority of Russians would stay in Hungary and become more integrated there. Still it is possible to concede that the results of the survey are reflecting more the views of the middle age Russians who constitute latest waves of immigration (in comparison to migration during the Soviet Union time or in early 90s) and the number of years spent in Hungary proves it (the majority of respondents live in the country for less than 20 years).

Answers for questions 4-6 and 9 are particularly interesting for the examining the issues of community ties, gaining minority status and the interconnectedness. The results show that the majority of Russians are well-integrated into the Hungarian society and their environment is not limited to their compatriots. On the other hand it also proves the weak ties, discrepancy of views and large gaps between different groups among Hungarian Russians. The sixth question explicitly illustrates that the Russians in Hungary do not support the idea of becoming a national minority, or at least on this stage they do not see the reasons for it. Instead, the majority prefers to integrate fully into the host society and not to create additional boundaries with official recognition. The level of the Hungarian language knowledge confirms this assumption since more than a half respondents have from intermediate to fluent knowledge of Hungarian (from 3 to 5 on their own estimates). Despite the fact that the

tendency towards integration is higher than the desire to remain in a closer community of compatriots, the overwhelming majority would support bilingual education for their children. Partly it might be dictated by the practical considerations, but the preservation of culture through language is obviously an additional reason. The Hungarian language is also seen as essential since only the tiny minority is planning to return to Russia. The involvement into community activities (mostly cultural in their character) by the majority of Russians is very low, although the programme of those events is very intensive, every week there is an opportunity to take part in several events⁴⁸.

The knowledge of the Hungarian language gives the possibility for Russians to follow the local news in Hungarian, but even those who speak Hungarian keep on actively using media in their mother tongue. Moreover, Russian-language Internet pages are the main source of information for Hungarian Russians while the Hungarian editions are supplementary and secondary. Mostly it happens via Internet sources, but still a considerable number of people watch Russian TV programmes and read newspapers/magazines in Russian. As for the local media editions in Russian, it definitely constitutes part of the Russian world of Hungary. It is important to note here that it plays not only informational role, but also serves as a very practical tool for finding jobs, sales/purchases, and forum.

In general the survey showed that the existing ties among Russians in Hungary are weak and the idea of gaining the minority status is not popular or will not get the wide support at least in the nearest future. The majority of respondents are on their way to full integration into the Hungarian society through the language knowledge and active networking with Hungarians. At the same time the Russian language continues to play an important role in

⁴⁸ The programme of events for each month can be found on the web-site of the Russian Cultural Centre <http://www.ruscenter.axelero.net/>

their lives, especially via the media resources, but also as a means of communication with their children.

Conclusion and summary

In the scope of this thesis several issues related to Russians in Hungary were examined. The main foci were on the existing connections within the community, the interrelations between different groups, the problem of group identity and the future of the group as a whole. One of the questions constantly present throughout the whole work is the aspirations of some community leaders to gain the official recognition for the Russians as a national Hungarian minority. This issue is interesting both from legal and sociological points of view. As for the former, the potential consequences for the community were considered. Mostly they would include wider cultural and social rights, additional financial recourses and rights to vote in the local elections. At the same time nowadays Russians enjoy their cultural rights even without the minority status due to substantial financial support from Russia's both governmental and non-governmental organizations. This factor is one of the various which prevent the whole community from more active mobilization and consolidation.

In turn, the sociological approach showed weak ties among the community members. First of all, there is a high degree of stratification that does not even allow speaking about one single community or integrity of Russians in Hungary in the full sense of these words. Instead it is possible to speak about several groups of people who on the one hand possess common cultural and language background, but who on the other hand do not have any common goals for the future concerning their identity, its preservation and cultivation. One of those groups is trying to gain the official status of the minority in Hungary in order to receive more financial recourses and some degree of power through the voluntarily taken responsibilities of community representatives while not have done almost any work with their compatriots in this field. The other group is keeping distance from "the activists" and prefer better not to emphasize any differences and not to build any additional borders between them and the Hungarian society. It is difficult to find one single broad explanation for the process of

disunity. Partly it is connected to the several waves of migration and age categories of immigrants; partly, it is related to different financial status of the compatriots and their political views. Besides, there is no one single place of compact residing of Russians. Although the majority of them lives in Budapest, considerable amount of all Hungarian Russians is spread throughout the country. The representatives of the communities in different cities are keeping in touch with each other while the “ordinary” members often find it difficult to remain active and involved. One of the difficulties of the research in its initial period was actually to figure out who should be considered Russian. The problem is that there is no commonly agreed definition and confusion between Russian ethnicity and Russian citizens exists. In the questionnaire the respondents were given an absolute freedom and it was based on their self-identification.

An important part of the thesis was dedicated to the questionnaire and the analyses of the received data. The survey revealed a good integration of Russians in Hungary into the society through better connections with Hungarians rather than Russians and relatively good knowledge of the Hungarian language. Moreover, Hungary is considered by many of them as a final destination rather than interim place on the way to the West as many people tend to think. They prefer a full integration to the Hungarian society to the official recognition as a national minority. The Russian language continues to play a very important role in their everyday life as a means of communication and receiving news.

A separate chapter and several questions in the survey were dedicated to media as a tool for identity construction and community mobilization. A case study of two Russian minority media editions was considered. The results show that those two editions are completely different in their nature and the functions they have. The “Russian courier” is more a one-way communication tool with a prevalence of “the activists” position while the

second edition “Hungary. Look from inside” gives its readers the space for communication - Forum, neutral news that makes the portal more popular and more frequently used.

The relations between Hungarian Russians and their kin-state were put into the Diaspora-homeland framework. It revealed that although Hungarian Russians usually cannot enjoy the opportunities given by special programmes for the post-Soviet countries, homeland still plays an important role in legal protection and support as well as financing cultural initiatives and events related to the Russian language promotion and education in Hungary. Economic relations are quite well developed, especially in the comparison to the absence of official political lobbying and any influence of the Russian Diaspora on the Hungarian political events, including human rights protection. Orthodox Church also does not play a significant role in the life of Hungarian Russians and it is experiencing some serious financial problems.

It was also useful to put Hungarian Russians into a broader context of other non-recognized, but emerging minorities. Russians have a better image than Chinese or Vietnamese immigrants in the Hungarian society; they are less involved into profit gaining activities and apply for residence permits in Hungary mostly for family reunification reasons. Russians are better integrated and possess better language knowledge, but they lack the mobility of other minorities and their strong ties with the corresponding Diasporas.

Will Russians gain the status of a Hungarian national minority? From practical point of view of course it is possible to find evidence of Russian presence in the Hungarian territory for a century or to collect necessary 1000 signatures. But for me the question is rather the following – are there any Russian minority, community of people with mutual respect, goals and aspirations? And if no, are there any people who are ready to dedicate their time and power in order to build one and mobilize their compatriots not only for potential status and financial recourses, but for the community as such itself? I guess the whole thesis proves that

so far the answers for both those questions are negative and in the nearest future there will not be any significant changes in this field.

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