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THE GERMAN AND HUNGARIAN IDENTITY MANAGEMENT AND NATION BUILDING: EXAMPLES FROM THE WESTERN BALKANS

This paper shed light upon the identity management of the Germans and Hungarians in Slavonia (CRO) and Vojvodina-area (SRB). It gives examples of the present ethnic groups' societies. It gives further examples of the culture of remembrance (monuments, memorial-parks, ceremonies, etc.) and their specific role in Croatian – and Serbian nation-building processes since 1989/90. These topics are strongly connected with minority questions, too.

Furthermore the paper will also give insights into the identity management coming from abroad, mainly from Germany, Austria or Switzerland for the German ethnic group and from Hungary for the Hungarian ethnic group.

Finally, one tries to answer the question, whether the above mentioned commemorative activities lead to an establishment of a more positive relationship between the respective majority (Croats and Serbs) and the respective minority (Germans and Hungarians) groups..

Keywords: Identity Management, Western Balkans, Minorities, Culture of Remembrance, Germans, Hungarians

OBLIKOVANJE NEMŠKE IN MADŽARSKE IDENTITETE V IZGRADNJI NACIJE: PRIMERI Z ZAHODNEGA BALKANA

Članek obravnava oblikovanje identitete pri Nemcih in Madžarih v Slavoniji (Hrvaška) in Vojvodini (Srbija), pri čemer navaja sedanje primere oblikovanja identitete v državah obeh etničnih skupin. Navaja tudi primere kulture spominjanja (spomeniki, spominski parki, proslave, itd.) in njene specifične vloge v hrvaškem in srbskem državotvornem procesu po letu 1989/90. Te teme se navezujejo tudi na manjšinska vprašanja.

Članek nadalje obravnava tudi oblikovanje nemške identitete v Nemčiji, Avstriji in Švici, kakor tudi madžarske na Madžarskem.

Avtor se na koncu sprašuje, v kolikšni meri omenjene dejavnosti prispevajo k bolj pozitivnemu odnosu med večino (Hrvati in Srbi) in manjšino (Nemci in Madžari).

Ključne besede: oblikovanje identitete, Zahodni Balkan, manjšine, kultura spominjanja, Nemci, Madžari

INTRODUCTION

In the main focus of this paper¹ is the identity formation of the German and Hungarian ethnic group in Slavonia (CRO) and the Vojvodina-area (SRB). It gives examples of the present *identity management* from the societies of the two minority groups. Since 1989/90 the activities of the minorities' *identity management* have consequently interacted with processes of Croatian and Serbian nation-building: nation building affects the living conditions of ethnic minorities *and* identity management of ethnic minorities' also influences nation building. Furthermore, the identity management of the Germans and Hungarians in Slavonia and Vojvodina is strongly related to minority issues, too.

The historical frame of the paper covers the last two decades resp. the times of transition. In connection with history and tradition, the paper will illuminate the 'culture of remembrance' (Assmann 1999; Wischermann 2002): in which way do Germans and Hungarians remember their own history? Where are the specific 'lieux de memoires' (Nora 1996; Csáky and Stachel 2001), and which 'cultural text' (Geertz 2000) and/or political text do they contain?

According to the current status of knowledge we have to be aware of the two identities (Bindorffer 2005) of a minority group as a starting point: There is an ethnic and a national identity to distinguish – in our case we may find the German² or Hungarian ethnic identity and the Croatian national identity in Slavonia and the German or Hungarian ethnic identity and the Serbian national identity in Vojvodina. These two identities certainly show different local implementations and individual graduations.

ASSUMPTIONS

Since the break-up of Yugoslavia, the processes of Croatian or Serbian nation building (Greenberg 2007) have been pursued very thoroughly. During the Yugoslav war the arc of the various ethnic interrelations in the Western Balkans reached from loyalty to hostility. At the same time, the German and Hungarian minorities took advantage to build up ethnic group societies and parties, which were forbidden during the communist period. Moreover, they erected memorials or affixed memorial plaques in public space to commemorate the German or Hungarian victims of the 1944–1948 periods when Yugoslav-communists came to power.



1 This paper was presented at the 13th Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (April 10–12 2008 at Columbia University, NY).

2 In Slavonia there is also an Austrian cultural heritage to distinguish within the German ethnic identity constructions (see further footnote 21).

At present Croatia is applying for membership within the enlargement of the European Union. In Serbia, the parliamentary elections in May 2008 have decided the direction for an EU-candidature. In the new EU-member states of South-Eastern Central Europe or among the candidates for EU-enlargement from initial to advanced stage, political discussions are dominated mainly by ethnic criteria.³ Regarding the identity formation of German and Hungarian minorities, we raise the question if there are – among the diversities in governance, law and administration between Croatia and Serbia – similarities between the *identity management* in both countries. Furthermore, we shall not forget the importance of *identity engineering from the outside*. Financial and ‘ideological’ aid comes from kin- and patronage-countries: From Austria, Germany and Switzerland for the Germans and from Hungary for the Hungarians.

At first sight, the German and Hungarian *realms of memory* provide an important basis for strengthening their own respective ethnic identity. In addition, the research into memorials and memorial ceremonies of the Germans and Hungarians has observed the interrelations between the ethnic and the national identity of the minority groups. Finally, we want to raise the following question in this context: to what extent may the German and Hungarian commemoration services in the Slavonia and Vojvodina areas help to establish a more positive relationship between the cultural heritage of the respective majority (Croats and Serbs) and the cultural heritage of the respective minority (Germans and Hungarians)?

APPROPRIATE LOCAL EXAMPLES FROM VOJVODINA AND SLAVONIA

1) THE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT OF THE GERMANS AND HUNGARIANS

VOJVODINA

The German ethnic group was nearly totally displaced from Yugoslavia at the end the Second World War and in the immediate post-World War II years.⁴ This period of suffering is historically well documented, particularly during the last two decades (Stefanović 1999; Četković and Sindelić-Ibrajter 2000; Četković et al. 2001; Janjetović 2003; Maticki 2004; Stojković 2004).

In Serbia a minority status has been denied to the German ethnic group (Marko 1996: 201–286) for the time being. In February 2002 the Serbian govern-



3 In connection with the recent unilateral independence of the Kosovo stronger ethno-national developments could be expected in neighbouring countries too: e.g. in Bosnia or in Macedonia.

4 The census of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1941 shows 558.000 Germans; the census of Serbia from 2002 shows 3.901 Germans for Serbia (<http://www.arhiva.srbija.sr.gov.yu>, 4. 9. 2008).

ment passed a law for the protection of minorities.⁵ However, the local political influence of the German ethnic group is still weak and the public schools in Serbia do not offer bilingual classes for Germans.

The *identity management from the inside* of the German ethnic group in Vojvodina awakened after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Even though Yugoslavia was ruled by Slobodan Milošević at that time a few ethnic groups' societies were founded during the decade of the 1990's: e.g. In Subotica/Maria Theresiopel the "Deutscher Volksverband"⁶ society was founded in 1996 and the appropriate Serbian ministry recognized it in March 1997. Consequently, the German radio broadcast "Unsere Stimme"⁷ in Subotica celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. For the self-confidence of the small German ethnic group in Serbia it was an important occasion for it to be aired every Friday from 7 to 7.30 p.m. (UKW 89,6 MHz) in the German language. It happened after decades, when the public use of the German language had been totally forbidden in communist Yugoslavia. In a broader regional context "Unsere Stimme" is part of the "Funkforum", a supra-regional editorial department for radio broadcasts in the German language in Hungary, Romania and Serbia.⁸

Other important German societies (selection) in Vojvodina are: "Deutscher Verein Donau" (Novi Sad/Neusatz) and "Deutscher Humanitärer Verein Gerhard" (Sombor). Above all it has to be mentioned, that the "Nationalrat der Deutschen in Serbien" (National Council of the Germans in Serbia) was recently founded on December 15 2007. According to the Serbian minority law the German National Council is equivalent to a minority's self-government for Serbia. It will further candidate on a joint list, which is supported by 94% of all Germans in Serbia. This political unity is a fortunate event for the German ethnic group in Vojvodina, where the largest percentage of Germans live in Serbia.⁹ The main importance of the national council of the Germans in Serbia results from the regulations – mainly Art. 17–23 of the Serbian law on national councils from 2002 – helping this small minority group to implement their minority rights above all in the domains of using spoken and written language, education and media.

The Hungarian ethnic group is the largest minority group in Serbia and of course in Vojvodina. The Hungarian ethnic group was the ethnic majority group



5 See: http://www.fuev.org/pdfs/20030422RUESNM_D.pdf

6 See: <http://www.dvstimme.org.yu/>

7 See: www.radiosubotica.co.yu

8 See: www.funkforum.net

9 The census from 2002 shows 3.154 Germans for Vojvodina (<http://www.arhiva.srbija.sr.gov.yu>, 4. 9. 2008).

in Vojvodina¹⁰ until the end of the Habsburg monarchy and during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.¹¹

In the year 1990 during the break-up of Yugoslavia the formation of ethnic organizations of the Hungarians started. Besides an NGO-structure of ethnic societies, it was allowed to create ethnic-based political parties. At present, the VMSZ (Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség – Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians) is the largest party, representing the majority of the Hungarian voters.¹² Two smaller Hungarian parties VMDK (Vajdasági Magyar Demokratikus Közössége – Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians) and VMDP (Vajdasági Magyar Demokrata Párt – Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians) ran together for the last Serbian elections on January 21st 2007 and formed the *Hungarian Union*, but they did not win a seat in the Serbian parliament.

In comparison to the German minority in Vojvodina the Hungarians had already established the MNT (Magyar Nemzeti Tanács – National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority)¹³ on October 19 2002. The Hungarian council was a role model for all other ethnic minority councils in Serbia. The National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority provides a more effective means for minorities to raise issues of concern with authorities. It is financially supported from Serbia and from Hungary.

The Hungarian ethnic group in Vojvodina owns a widespread net of multimedia concerns: in May 2006 the Radio Television of Serbia was officially divided into two public broadcasting systems with headquarters in Belgrade (Radio Television of Serbia) and Novi Sad (Radio Television of Vojvodina), which broadcasts in ten languages.¹⁴ Furthermore there is Hungarian TV broadcasting: Mozaik-TV (Újvidék/Novi Sad), Pannon TV (Szabadka/Subotica) and Duna TV (from Hungary). There are three radio transmissions, which broadcast in Hungarian all day: Radio Novi Sad/Újvidéki Rádió, Radio Subotica/Szabadkai Rádió and PM Rádió. The important daily newspaper in the Hungarian language is named *Magyar Szó* (Hungarian Word).¹⁵

10 The census from 2002 shows 293.299 Hungarians for Serbia and 290.207 Hungarians for Vojvodina (<http://www.arhiva.srbija.sr.gov.yu>, 4. 9. 2008).

11 In 1919 lived 28% Serbs in Vojvodina; in 2002 lived 68% Serbs there.

12 During the elections in Serbia in January 2007 the VMSZ lost voters and holds only 3 seats in the Serbian parliament.

13 See: www.mnt.org.yu/en/frame.php?content=1_cimoldal

14 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_Television_of_Vojvodina, 4. 9. 2008).

15 (<http://magyarszo.com>, 4. 9. 2008).

Owing to the fact that the Hungarian ethnic group is the largest minority group in Vojvodina¹⁶ there are many primary and secondary schools teaching in the Hungarian language: "For instance, between 2000 and 2002, more than 40,000 books about the Hungarian language and Hungarian folklore were imported to Vojvodina from Hungary in order to serve the needs of Hungarian-schools, at all levels of education, throughout the province."¹⁷ Regarding folklore adjacent to media and education, the multitude of ethnic groups' folklore societies is another basis of the *identity management* of the Hungarian ethnic group.

Moreover, the Hungarians in Vojvodina receive financial or material support from Hungary. This *identity management from the outside* concerns the above named political and educational institutions, media, NGO's and the cultural societies of different minorities. Support comes from the Hungarian government as well as from private foundations.

SLAVONIA

In Yugoslavia, after the Second World War the German ethnic group in Croatia nearly suffered the same fate as the German ethnic group in Serbia. Even the present number of official minority members is similar: The 2001 census in Croatia shows 2,902 Germans – declaring themselves German or Austrian – of which 964 live in Slavonia-Baranja.¹⁸ The times of suffering and being displaced are – compared to Serbia – also historically well documented. There are monographs and articles written in a Croatian-Yugoslavian context (Geiger 1997, 2002) as well as in a local Slavonian context (Geiger 2003: 161–174).

After Croatia became an independent state and since the new legislation was established the German ethnic group received full minority rights (Marko 1996: 9–119; Eicher 1998; Vlada Republike Hrvatske: Nacionalne manjine 2004).¹⁹

16 In fact that the Hungarian ethnic group is the largest minority group in Vojvodina, there were during the last years many criminal acts committed against them – mostly initiated from Radical Serbs – because of their ethnic identity. Examples you will find in the following publications (selection): Árgus, ed. (2005) *A vajdasági kisebbségek zaklatása* (2003/2004) Sajtójelentések alapján; Gábrity Molnár, Irén and Zsuzsa Mirnics, eds. (2008) *Regionális erőnlét. A humánerőforrás befolyása a Vajdaságban*. Subotica/Szabadka: Magyarágkutató Tudományos Társaság.

17 Petsinis, Vasilis, *Vojvodina's National Minorities: Current Realities and Future Prospects* (http://www.yorku.ca/soi/_Vol_3_3/_HTML/Petsinis.html, 4. 9. 2008).

18 (http://www.dzs.hr/Eng/censuses/Census2001/Popis/E01_02_02/E01_02_02.html, 4. 9. 2008).

19 (http://www.vlada.hr/hr/adresar_i_linkovi/vlada_rh_i_uredi_vlade_rh/ured_znacionalne_manjine, 4. 9. 2008).

Together with 10, other small ethnic groups²⁰ the Germans (and Austrians)²¹ formed one minority self-government, which has one seat in the Croatian parliament in Zagreb. After the last elections on November 25 2007 this seat was given to a representative of the Croatian Roma.

In Slavonia, two German minority societies have been established:²² the major society in Osijek/Esseg was founded in 1991 and is named “Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft – Landsmannschaft der Donauschwaben in Kroatien”. Before 2007, during a four-year legislation period of the Croatian parliament, the president of the Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft Nikolaus Mak held a seat in the self-government. Therefore, the German ethnic groups’ identity managers worry nowadays, whether the present constellation also guarantees as high a degree of the implementation of the requests of the German ethnic group as before autumn 2007. For 16 years every October, this society has organized a small annual research convention regarding Austrian and German issues within the Croatian culture area.²³ Furthermore, since 1992 the Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft has published a quarterly paper in the German/Croatian languages named *Deutsches Wort/Njemačka Riječ* (German Word).

The other German-Austrian society in Osijek/Esseg is named “Verein der Deutschen und Österreicher in Kroatien“ (Society of Germans and Austrians in Croatia). The female president of the society does not want to be represented in the above named Croatian umbrella organization. This society prospered in the establishment of a German primary school in Osijek/Esseg named “Heilige Anna”. It is more or less one German class divided up in different school levels of education with about 120 pupils. Most of them are Croats with no affiliation to the German-speaking minority. It is not indisputable that the leaders of the society “Verein der Deutschen und Österreicher in Kroatien” stand politically very close to the Croatian right wing party HSP (Hrvatska stranka prava – Croatian Party of Rights) and above all the office of the society is on the same floor in the same building as the office of the HSP.



20 In this self government there are put together the following ethnic groups: Austrians, Germans, Roma, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles, Rumanians, Russians, Ruthenes, Turks, Ukrainians and Vlachs.

21 In Slavonia there will be the Austrians explicitly named, because the German speaking minority defines itself as “descendants of the Germans and Austrians”.

22 Altogether six German-Austrian societies in Croatia form up the umbrella society named “Gemeinschaft der deutschen und österreichischen Minderheitenorganisationen” (Alliance of German and Austrian Minority Organizations).

23 Characteristically the language at this convention is Croatian and the articles in the yearbook are Croatian, too (with German summaries). It mirrors the language situation of the Germans speaking ethnic group in Croatia very well, because the members of the ethnic group are entirely bilingual.

In the year 2003 a weekly thirty minute radio transmission in the German language was established. It broadcasted every Wednesday at 9 p.m. via Radio Slavonia, the most important radio station in this area. Unfortunately, it has been suspended in the year 2006 because of a lack of financial support.²⁴

The Hungarian ethnic group in Slavonia-Baranja started the formation of ethnic organizations of the Hungarians after the break-up of Yugoslavia: in Osijek/Eszék in the year 1992, the ethnic-based political party HMDK (Horvátországi Magyarok Demokratikus Közössége – Hungarian Democratic Community in Croatia) was established.²⁵ Since that time the HMDK has been the largest Hungarian party in Croatia, representing the majority of about 70% of the Hungarian voters.²⁶ The HMDK works as an umbrella society and covers more than 40 base societies in various fields of cultural interests.²⁷ Moreover, in Osijek/Eszék the HMDK runs a printing house named HunCro, where different papers in the Hungarian language are produced, primarily the weekly magazine named *Új Magyar Képes Újság* (New Hungarian Picture News).²⁸

In Osijek/Eszék there is also the Magyar Oktatási és Művelődési Központ (Croatian Hungarian Educational and Cultural Center), which was established in 1999 by the Hungarian Government according to a bilateral Hungarian-Croatian act, signed in 1992; it should be subsumed under the category *identity management from the outside*. Together with the HMDK the Center runs a bilingual educational center reaching from kindergarten up to high school level. The cultural events taking place in the Center are usually connected to the school.

Regarding mass media in the Hungarian language, one should mention the thirty-minute radio transmission in the Hungarian language. It will be broadcast every day at 6:30 p.m. via Radio Slavonia.²⁹

The other major Hungarian society in Slavonia is MESZ (Magyar Egyesületek Szövetsége – Community of Hungarian Societies). It was established in the year 1997 in Pélmonoster/Beli Manastir, which is a small town in the heart of the Baranja area. This society also serves as an umbrella organization covering interests of 35 base societies reaching from arts to folklore. Strategically MESZ has



24 See: http://www.funkforum.net/index.php?page=radio_slavonski

25 See: <http://www.hmdk.hr/index.php>

26 The 2001-census shows 16.595 Hungarians for Croatia and 9.784 Hungarians for Slavonia-Baranja. (http://www.dzs.hr/Eng/censuses/Census2001/Popis/E01_02_02/E01_02_02.html, 4. 9. 2008).

27 The HMDK holds one seat in the Croatian parliament, which is guaranteed to the Hungarian minority. The official census 2001 counted 17.000 Hungarians in Croatia. See further: (http://www.inst.at/trans/16Nr/14_4/hervanek16.htm, 4. 9. 2008).

28 See: <http://www.huncro.hr/>

29 See: <http://www.hrt.hr/hr/radioosijek/Emisije.htm>

the good fortune, that in the Pélmonoster/Beli Manastir area more Hungarians live than in Osijek/Eszék and that the Hungarian language is much more used in comparison to Croatian in everyday life and not only within the rooms of the Hungarian cultural societies. MESZ has recently established the Sztárai Mihály educational center, where a dormitory for pupils and students is attached. These activities are co-financed by, among others, the Hungarian *Illés* foundation.

II) CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE

VOJVODINA

Two important examples of the German ethnic group's memorial places associated with the commemoration services in the Vojvodina area shall be given:

Between 1945 and 1948 in Gakovo/Gakowa, a former German village of 2,500 inhabitants, was transformed into a forced labor camp for German civil prisoners. Prisoners came from about 120 villages in Yugoslavia. More than 30,000 Germans passed through the two camps of Gakovo and nearby Kruševlje/Kruschiwl, of whom 12,000 died.³⁰ In the year 2004 in Gakovo, which today belongs to the municipality of Sombor, a memorial was erected and on May 22nd 2004 the tall metal cross was consecrated. It commemorates the German victims, and the memorial plaque is written in German, Serbian, Hungarian and English. On October 1st 2005 a memorial place was consecrated in Kruševlje.³¹ We may observe a worldwide interest from those who survived these camps, as well as from organizations of displaced Germans. It is closely connected with the financial support of the memorial, which has been largely donations from Danube-Swabian compatriots from abroad.

The second example should introduce the mutual commemoration of Serbian and German victims: between 1945 and 1948 in Kničanin/Rudolfsgnad there was a camp for German civil prisoners, who were incapable of working. As early as November 7th 1997 a memorial service was held in Kničanin and in 1998 memorial plaques in the Serbian and German languages were placed in the cemetery (3.000 victims) and in Telečka (9.000 victims). Since November 11 2001 a stone cross has been standing in Telečka, and in Kničanin the cemetery chapel has been reconstructed.³² Since 2005, the *Association of Serbian-German Cooperation* has organized an ecumenical – Serbian-orthodox, protestant and roman-catholic –

30 (<http://www.3sat.de/3sat.php?http://www.3sat.de/kulturzeit/themen/69963/index.html>, 4. 9. 2008).

31 (<http://www.donauschwaben.net/verbaende/oberoesterreich/download/Mitteilungen%202005-04.pdf>, 4. 9. 2008).

32 (<http://www.rudolfsgnad.de>, 4. 9. 2008).

hour of remembrance in Kragujevac and Kničanin on every May 9 (Europe Day). In Kragujevac the ecumenical ceremony commemorates Serbian grammar school pupils. The *Deutsche Wehrmacht* took them hostage and shot them on October 21 1941. In Kničanin there were a large number of children among the victims. Therefore, an emphasis is placed on the mutual remembrance in Kragujevac and Kničanin of victims who died in their years of childhood. Another emphasis lies on the appeal for conciliation between Serbs and Germans.

At All Hallows, the mainly catholic Hungarian ethnic group in Vojvodina celebrates commemorations for the Hungarian civil-victims of 1944 and 1945 in many municipalities. Especially since the year 2000³³ commemoration services and masses – primarily Catholic, but sometimes ecumenical – have been held at the dedicated places of remembrance in cemeteries, at mass graves or at places, where Hungarians were executed.³⁴ There are of course different *lieux de memoires* of the Hungarians in Vojvodina and other commemoration days, but in this paper one concentrates subsequently on two examples of Hungarian All Hallows commemoration services from November 1 2007: about 100 people went to the Calvary of the small town Senta/Zenta to celebrate the catholic mass and to commemorate “the innocent Hungarians, who were killed in 1944 and all those, who died for the city”. In 1994, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary, a symbolic last home for Hungarian victims was erected. The mayor of Senta underlined the significance of this commemoration as a “national duty for the Hungarians”. Therefore, representatives of the following Hungarian political parties attended: VMSZ, VMDK, MPSZ, LDP as well as from the head organization National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority (MNT). The Vice-president of the Regional Parliament in Vojvodina pointed out that it had only been in the last seven years that it was allowed “to be commemorated freely”.³⁵

On November 1 2007 another service was held at the catholic cemetery of Bečej/Óbecse,³⁶ where in 1997 a *kopjafa* was erected.³⁷ In this context a *kopjafa* is a typical Hungarian symbol, showing at first sight, that the commemorated



33 This is politically connected with the post-socialist and post-Milošević era in Serbia. In Vojvodina already since 1990 after the breakdown of Yugoslavia the Hungarian ethnic group started to erect memorials or memorial plaques regarding Hungarian victims of 1944/45.

34 See further http://www.vmsz.org.yu/hu_new/hazunktaja/2000_11.htm

35 Hszolt, M. M. “Az ősökre való emlékezés kötelez” (<http://www.magyar-szo.co.yu/arhiva/2007/11/02/main.php?l=b9.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

36 (<http://www.magyar-szo.co.yu/arhiva/2007/11/02/main.php?l=b4.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

37 “Kopjafa a Hungarian sculptural art form with a distinct medieval origin as a jousting stick or pole or staff which originally had been transformed from a weapon of war or sport to a memorial or mortuary pole or stick or staff: Therefore the correct etymological English translation would be jousting pole stuck in a grave as a headstone” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category_talk:Kopjafa, 4. 9. 2008).

victims of 1944 had been Hungarians. The bones of the victims are still scattered in this area and therefore the kopjafa is the only precise place of remembrance. Representatives of VMSZ, VMDK and the VMDP (Vajdasági Magyar Demokrata Párt – Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina) as well as the Hungarian youth organization named Hatvannégy Vármegyge Ifjúsági Mozgalom (64 Comitats Youth Organization).³⁸

SLAVONIA

One important example of the German and Austrian ethnic groups' memorial places associated with the commemoration services in Slavonia shall be given:

The Croatian German and Austrian ethnic group commemorate every May 11 as the “*Vertreibungstag*” (Day of Expulsion), because it was on May 11 1945 that the internment of the German speaking population in Slavonia started. In the two internment camps in Slavonia namely in Krndija/Kerndia and in Valpovo more than 2,600 Danube-Swabians died or were killed. After the Croatian state established the legislation for the minority groups on September 14 1997, it was possible in 1999 to erect a memorial in Krndija, which is administered by the above named *Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft* of Osijek. On October 4 2003 the consecration of the memorial place in Valpovo followed. On May 14 2005 a big commemoration service regarding the sixtieth anniversary took place at the memorial site of Valpovo/Walpach. There the members of the society of German and Austrian ethnic groups *Volksdeutsche Gemeinschaft* commemorated the victims. Local Croatian representatives from Valpovo and Osijek participated in this commemoration service as well as representatives from all over Croatia and an envoy of the German embassy.³⁹

The examples of commemoration days of the Hungarian ethnic group in Slavonia given in this paper concern the celebrations of the 1848 revolution on March 15 (Deák 1989; Fischer 1999) on the one hand and the celebrations of the 1956 revolution on October 23 (Murber 2006) on the other, which took place last year.

In March 2007, the above named HMDK organized celebrations of the 159th anniversary of the 1848–49 Hungarian revolution and struggle for freedom. On March 15, a ceremony was held in Csúza/Suza, where several 1848 memorials are situated. In the Calvinist cemetery there was a wreath laying ceremony at

38 Even the name of this organization is a Hungarian national symbol to remember on the Great-Hungary with 64 comitates until 1918/19.

39 (<http://www.vloe.at/presse/berichte/2005/index.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

the grave of Gedeon Ács, who was a military-pastor of Lajos Kossuth. After this another wreath laying ceremony took place at the Kossuth memorial in the cultural center in Suza.⁴⁰ A choir sang, two poems were recited and Árpád Pasza (president of HMDK) gave a speech. Among others, he welcomed a female envoy of the Hungarian prime minister.⁴¹

Another important ceremony was held on Sunday, March 18 2007 in Vörösmart/Zmajevac in the center of HMDK. At the beginning of the ceremony the women's choir of Vörösmart/Zmajevac together with the Alfalusi mixed choir sang the Hungarian anthem. The above named Árpád Pasza welcomed the guests. Then followed a speech from János Andócsi, who is a member of the executive committee of the local Hungarian minority self-government of Hercegszőlös. Guests of the ceremony were Zoltán Balog (Hungarian member of Parliament, FIDESZ), Vladimir Lončarević (counselor of the Croatian president Stipe Mesić), members of the FIDESZ Polgári Szövetség (civil-alliance) of Villány, Miklós Ritecz (prov. Secretary of the Hungarian embassy Zagreb) and many local officials. The closing words of the ceremony were spoken by Sándor Jakab (Secretary of HMDSZ).⁴²

A further wreath laying ceremony took place in the Népkör (name of the Hungarian cultural center) of Eszék/Osijek, where a memorial plaque was endowed by members of the Hungarian Parliament on March 15 2005. It is dedicated to Mihály Antal, who came from Rétfalu, a former village in the Baranja area, today a suburb of Osijek. He was a member of the Hungarian Parliament in 1848 representing the bourgeois as well as the farmers in opposition to the nobility. Since March 2005 the ceremony has taken place annually. On March 15 2007 a female representative of the Croatian mayor of Osijek also laid a wreath in the Hungarian Népkör.⁴³

Regarding the 1956 revolution commemoration ceremonies one Slavonian example will be given from October 23 2007: the Magyar Kultúregyesület of the Eszék-Rétfalusi-Népkör (Hungarian Cultural Association of the Osijek-Rétfalu Népkör) and the HMOM Központ (HMOM Center) from Osijek organized a wreath laying ceremony in the Paulina Hermann villa. This house sheltered the Hungarian refugees, who fled to Osijek during the 1956 revolution. In addition, on October 23 2007 a representative of the municipal administration of Osijek laid a wreath in the Paulina Hermann villa.⁴⁴



40 Hungarian locals have donated money for the Kossuth-memorial.

41 See: Tünde, Micheli "A HMDK március 15-i rendezvénysorozata: tömegesség és nagyszerű hangulat" (<http://www.hhrf.org/umku/0712/lap.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

42 Ibid.

43 See: Varga, Jozsef "Koszorúzás a Népkörben" (<http://www.hhrf.org/umku/0712/lap.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

44 See: Molnár, Monika "Koszorúzás a Hermann-villánál" (<http://www.hhrf.org/umku/0741/lap.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

CONCLUSION

The examples of the *identity management* of the societies of the German and Hungarian ethnic groups in Slavonia and Vojvodina illustrate very well the enlargement and the change for the better of these two minorities since Serbia and Croatia were established after the break-up of Yugoslavia. In Croatia, the passage of the minority legislation happened in 1997. In Serbia these legislation processes also happened during the 1990s, but they finally succeeded after the collapse of the socialist dictatorship of Slobodan Milošević in 1999/2000 and after the reform of the protection of minorities in 2002. To put it simply: on the one hand there are two different minority legislations in two different countries, but on the other hand regarding the German and the Hungarian ethnic minority groups we may detect a couple of similarities in both countries. Furthermore, we may observe many similarities between Slavonia and Vojvodina regarding the *identity management* of the respective societies of German and Hungarian ethnic groups.

The fact that the political discussion in the Western Balkans area is in many cases dominated by ethnic criteria, the strengthening of the political power and the political options of the ethnic minority groups, is fundamental, as well as enhancing the prestige of, for example, the German and Hungarian ethnic groups.

Identity engineering from the outside differs between the Germans and the Hungarians: regarding the German ethnic group the greater part of the financial support comes from migrant- or “Vertriebenenorganisationen” (displaced persons organizations) organizations, which are situated in Austria, Germany or in overseas countries.⁴⁵ Some of them are so called “Landsmannschaften” (‘territorial associations’) and within these organizations the argumentation regarding German identity ranges from weak ‘German-ethnic’ to strong ‘German-national’. A lesser part of the financial support comes directly from Austrian or German state run organizations, as well as from Austrian or German local governmental organizations. In relation to that in Hungary a separate ‘Governmental Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad’ has been set up.⁴⁶ The Hungarian state is much



⁴⁵ An exemplary overview is given on the following website: (<http://www.genealogienetz.de/reg/ESE/dschwab-d.html>, 4. 9. 2008). – See the umbrella organizations: For Austria, where further links are to find: (<http://www.vloe.at>, 4. 9. 2008) for Germany (<http://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de>, 4. 9. 2008).

⁴⁶ See: <http://www.hhrf.org/htmh/en/?menuid=0902>

more anxious to give effective support to the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries. It seems to be a national duty.⁴⁷

The erection of memorials and the affixing of memorial plaques, which was not prohibited during the times of transition, are important visible symbols for the respective German and Hungarian identities in Slavonia and Vojvodina. The commemoration services of the German and Hungarian ethnic groups due to various occurrences invigorate the ethnic groups' national identity. In some cases these services may also be abused by some organization or individuals for their own 'national' aberrances.⁴⁸

Finally, one tries to answer the question, whether these commemorative activities lead to an establishment of a more positive relationship between the respective majority (Croats and Serbs) and the respective minority (Germans and Hungarians) groups: Yes, they do! In Croatia the Croatian officials are more closely involved in commemoration services of the German or the Hungarian ethnic groups. In Serbia it will take time until the distance is totally bridged. Of course, the political situation there is more or less unstable particularly regarding the changes of the Serbian national identity because of the unilateral independence of Kosovo. Anyhow, we should not forget that there are efforts regarding a mutual commemoration in Vojvodina and I want to remind you of the example of the ecumenical hour of remembrance in Kragujevac and Kničanin every Europe Day.



47 One should not overlook the fact that within the identity management from Hungary the Hungarian right wing parties FIDESZ and JOBBIK use the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries for their political purposes in a manifold manner.

48 In the report of the October 23 2007 commemoration service in Croatia the 1956-revolution in Hungary was made responsible for "that after the II. World War the again humbled Hungarianhood, which was named Hitlers supporter, achieved the acknowledgement of the world public by his people's love of freedom and his prowess". Andócsi, János "Újabb elrontott ünnep" (<http://www.hhrf.org/umku/0741/lap.htm>, 4. 9. 2008).

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