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István Riba

# Minority Self-Governments in Hungary

In 1910 half the population of Hungary had a first language other than Hungarian. This ratio declined to 5-8 per cent after the Treaty of Trianon, the First World War settlement which led to Hungary losing two thirds of her territory, and with it one third of the ethnic Hungarian population. The largest national minority in post-1920 Hungary were the Germans. The German population, which had considerably grown through immigration in the 18th century, approached half a million. They lived in Western Hungary, centred on Sopron (Oedenburg), in villages in the environs of Budapest and the Bakony hills, and in Danube riparian Southern Hungary. In the mid-19th century, Buda and Pest were still reckoned to be German towns, both burghers and industrial workers being predominantly Germans. *Fin-de siècle* development and population growth (including many Slovak immigrants, who did not maintain their identity in the second generation) meant that Budapest lost its German character. Like some other East and Central European countries, between 1945 and

1947 Hungary expelled its Germans, some 260,000 in all.

Many Slovaks also migrated to the present territory of Hungary, but they were soon largely Magyarized. In 1920 close to half a million claimed to be able to speak Slovak, but only 150,000 indicated Slovak as their first language. Between the wars most Slovaks lived in County Békés, but also in villages along the northern frontier. Post-1945 population exchanges between Czechoslovakia and Hungary meant that 70,000 Slovaks crossed the frontier.

Of other minorities, few of their number remained in the present territory of the country. There used to be more than two million Romanians, in post Trianon Hungary this number had shrunk to a few thousand; this was true of the South Slavs as well. The Serbs, moving north as the Turks advanced, settled in just about every Danube riparian town and village, forming a majority in many. A greater number of Croats settled along the southern frontier and in a number of villages in western Hungary. There are a few Slovene villages in County Vas, and Ruthenes and Ukrainians in a village or two in northern Hungary. The greater part of Poles are Second World War refugees who settled here, or are their descendants. Armenians are divided between those who settled in Transylvania in the 17th century, and

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*István Riba*

*is on the staff of Heti Világgazdaság, an economic weekly.*

those who fled the massacres in Turkey early this century. Greek merchants have long been settled in Hungarian towns, the present small Greek community, however, are Communist refugees from the Greek Civil War and their descendants.

The largest minority are the Gypsies. They first appeared in Hungary late in the 14th century, and have been moving in steadily from the Balkans ever since. Some speak Hungarian, some Roma, and some a dialect of Romanian. Gypsies are found just about everywhere in Hungary, but mainly in Budapest, North Eastern Hungary and County Baranya.

The Communist regime wished to assimilate the national minorities. By 1961 there were no schools or classes with a national minority language as the language of instruction, albeit bilingual teaching survived here and there. Often enough the parents themselves preferred Hungarian elementary schools, since further education in a national minority language was well nigh impossible. The Gypsies had to put up with additional oppressive regulations. They were not even recognized as a national minority, nor was there any teaching in any of their languages. Right up to the mid-eighties there was no national Gypsy organization, although all the other national minorities had one. This situation was radically changed by the 1993 National Minority Act, and by the national minority self governments which it made possible.

The Hungarian word for the representative bodies *önkormányzat*, literally "self government", was specially created to avoid the term *tanács* (council), which was compromised by overuse and too close an association with Communism, being the translation of the Russian *soviet*.

The Minority Act of 1993 made it possible to create every four years local and national minority self governments simultaneously with the election of local govern-

ments. The earlier associations that represented minorities were of doubtful legitimacy and were viewed widely as organizations imposed from above. They were not able to halt the assimilation of minorities. The local and national self-governments provided for by the Act are legitimately elected representative bodies, intended to be partners to regional governments, and at the national level, to the legislation and the executive.

The Act recognizes thirteen minorities as empowered to establish minority self-governments. Special provisions facilitate the creation of these bodies. For example, to nominate a candidate it suffices to put forward 5 persons professing affiliation to a particular minority group, without offering evidence of minority identity by membership in any minority organization or association. For inclusion on the ballot paper, a candidate needs to be nominated by only 5 constituents.

The Act also sets the threshold for valid election very low: for a municipality with a population under 10,000, no more than 50 (elsewhere 100) votes are needed, and all voters are entitled to vote for the minority list. This latter concession is disputed by a number of mainly Gypsy-minority politicians, who argue that minority self-governments are not being elected by those immediately concerned; on the other hand, all the national minorities refuse to participate in compiling a separate "verified" national minority electoral register. For communities numbering only a few thousand, the current practice is acceptable; for instance, the nearly five thousand-strong ethnic Serb minority (the figure includes minors) attracted 16,000 votes in the 1994 elections, and Greek or Armenian self governments would probably not even have come into existence had there not been "sympathy" votes. In municipalities with a population numbering less than 1,300, the

representative bodies of minority self-governments may comprise at most 3, in other places a maximum of 5, individuals (even in towns with a population of a hundred thousand, where the duties of a representative are likely to be more taxing). According to data published by the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKH), 738 ethnic municipal authorities were functioning of the 817 created during the 1994 and 1995 local government elections. In the autumn 1998 local government elections, 1364 minority self-governments were created. Certain individuals, however, clearly took advantage of the electoral law to make a mockery of the system. Jenő Kaltenbach, the Minority Ombudsman, initiated an investigation stating that "a number of complaints have reached us concerning the minority elections and for this reason we have decided to launch a general investigation regarding the issue." (One of those who appealed to the Ombudsman was Tosho Donchev, the President of NEKH.)

The Ombudsman was trying to discover how non-minority candidates in a number of municipalities came to run in the colours of the ethnic minorities; some of them even successfully driving out locally well-known minority representatives. The national leadership of ethnic Greeks in Hungary had learned from the experience of the previous elections, when a Greek minority self-government was established in the Ferencváros district of Budapest that had absolutely no contact with the Greek community in Hungary; accordingly they began organizing and selecting their candidates in good time. To no avail, as they were unable to prevent the nomination of self-styled candidates, some members of the Greek community standing as independents and, as in the case of the self-styled candidates, the only way they could be identified was through their family name. It is characteristic of the chaos that Ferenc Sárközi, one of the candidates in Újpest for the Greek self-government, "confessed" to

| National Minorities<br>in Hungary | According to<br>first language* | According to<br>ethnic allegiance** |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Gypsy                             | 48,072                          | 400,000 = 600,000                   |
| German                            | 37,511                          | 200,000 = 220,000                   |
| Croat                             | 17,577                          | 80,000 = 90,000                     |
| Slovak                            | 12,745                          | 100,000 = 110,000                   |
| Romanian                          | 8,730                           | 25,000                              |
| Polish                            | 3,788                           | 10,000                              |
| Serb                              | 2,953                           | 5,000                               |
| Slovene                           | 2,627                           | 5,000                               |
| Greek                             | 1,640                           | 5,000                               |
| Bulgarian                         | 1,370                           | 3,500                               |
| Ukrainian and Ruthenian           | 674                             | 2,000                               |
| Armenian                          | 37                              | 5,000                               |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>137,724</b>                  | <b>840,000 - 1,080,000</b>          |

\* estimates

\*\* estimate of minority organizations

his Gypsy identity by standing as a Roma candidate in another district. (Since he could be a member of minority self-government only in one constituency, he withdrew his Gypsy candidacy, but failed to secure enough votes as a Greek.)

A candidate from one of the Roma organizations, called Rom Som, was better acquainted with the electoral law; he did not enter the minority elections in various guises, but reserved one of his identities for the regional self-government elections. Thus, József Abházi, who ran as a candidate in Rom Som colours in the 5th district of Budapest, became a self-government deputy in the 15th district—as a German candidate on the compensation list. Rom Som had candidates who also tried their luck either as Greeks or Armenians.

Strange results also surfaced in the village of Pomáz near Budapest. Sándor Erdélyi became a member of the German minority self-government; in the municipal self-government—to which he was elected via the minority compensation list—he represents the Slovene minority. József Czink, the notary of Pomáz, remarked “until now I was unaware that Slovenes lived in the municipality.” Representing the Slovaks in Pomáz, Erzsébet Csabai became a member of the Pomáz governing body, despite running as a German in the minority self-government elections. The most striking case was that of the Romanian minority in Hungary, a case the Ombudsman specially investigated. The Hungarian Romanian Democratic Federation (MRDSZ), formed just before the elections, scored a sweeping victory in the minority self-government elections in the autumn of 1998. According to the leaders of the long standing Romanian Cultural Society of Budapest (BRKT) its members “up to this time had never appeared at any Romanian social or cultural function.” BRKT fielded candidates in the minority self-government elections purely

because they observed that civil minority associations are now being allotted less and less money by the local authorities. They would have liked to form self-governments in three districts; they found however, that in 15 districts candidates were running in Romanian colours. Thus, the MRDSZ gained 58 minority self-government deputies.

The BRKT and the National Self-Government of Romanians of Hungary turned to several authorities “in order to pre-empt further consequences of the humiliation of our community”. The Ombudsman replied that “I am not in a position to take legal action in this respect,” at the same time he found the situation absurd. He also noted that the dispute made “the whole purpose of the minority self-government system questionable.” The MRDSZ succeeded in preventing the constitution of a national federation of Romanian self-governments in Hungary, since the election meeting lacked a quorum. Due to the high quorum imposed—a minimum of 75 per cent of those elected locally had to participate—MRDSZ candidates (who accounted for 40 per cent of the total) were thus able to prevent the creation of the national federation. (The leader of the MRDSZ, Zoltán Papp, who had, for four years, been president of the Gypsy minority self-government in one of the Budapest districts, was willing to form an election alliance with former representatives of Romanians in Hungary but his offer was rebuffed.) Toshō Donchev, the NEKH President, also turned to the Ombudsman, signalling that the current legal framework makes it impossible for the administration to exclude cases similar to those of the Romanians.

The legislation respecting the election of minority self-governments is worthless in its entirety, the Minority Ombudsman Jenő Kaltenbach concluded. Abuse was suspected in many cases in the autumn 1998 elections: apart from those competing in

Romanian, Greek, Serb, Slovene and German colours, persons whom particular minority organizations reject and do not recognize as community members, also gained self-government mandates. According to the Minority Ombudsman, two articles in the Constitution contradict each other: one paragraph of article 68 stipulates that nationalities have a basic right to self-government, but article 70 guarantees the right for all adult Hungarian citizens to vote in minority self-government elections. Jenő Kaltenbach argues that the right to self-government must take priority; therefore it must by definition restrict "basic constitutional right to the free choice of identity." There is one case that speaks for the urgency of prompt intervention: in the course of the Interior Ministry investigations called for by Jenő Kaltenbach, it was revealed that two members of a group professing to be Romanians during the elections, had preferentially received Hungarian citizenship earlier by claiming to be ethnic Hungarians resettled from Transylvania.

All ethnic leaders questioned agreed that the current electoral system cries out for modification as regards the qualifications needed for standing as a minority representative. However, the views on the question of who is entitled to vote were at variance. Minority leaders, virtually without exception, reject the proposal offered by the Ombudsman as a solution, namely that voting for ethnic candidates should be restricted to those who register beforehand their affiliation to a particular minority (obviously this would apply to candidates as well). Among the minority politicians only one Gypsy leader, Jenő Zsigó, supported the proposal, the leaders of the other minorities, on various grounds, all reject the idea of a register.

Smaller ethnic communities, understandably, oppose the register, for the

number of votes lost thereby would in all probability prevent the constitution of minority-specific local self-governments in several municipalities. (Even though the law stipulates that in municipalities comprising over ten thousand inhabitants only a hundred, and in smaller places as few as fifty votes are needed for the creation of a minority self-government). The leader of the national Serb self-government agrees that, in theory, elections based on a register would undoubtedly be the most transparent, but the Serb community in Hungary also rejects it. Similarly, the leader of the Greek minority is of the opinion that sparsely populated and dispersed minority communities would face serious problems. In the end the consequence of all this might be that the financing for minority self-governments would depend solely on their size, as the Gypsy community requests, and not on their performance. One of the ad hoc committees of Parliament debated the issue of registration a number of times; it decided to abandon this solution, but instead revise the operational regulations for elections. In an attempt to avoid the introduction of a register, several ideas have been put forward. According to some, affiliation to a community could be proven, for instance, by activity in the community over a period of time. (This would virtually prevent independent candidates from standing, which in turn would raise constitutional problems.) The staging of minority and regional self-government elections on different days was also proposed. In that case in all probability, only those with a particular interest would participate. This was rejected earlier by the Interior Ministry on cost grounds. It was also suggested that staging the two elections on consecutive days, with the electoral apparatus thus in place, would incur relatively little extra cost.

In the view of the Ombudsman, the 75 per cent participation ratio required for a

quorum at electoral assemblies is too high. If it is not attained, a new national minority self-government cannot be created and the old one ceases to exist. In one instance a voter hoping to become a member of the self-government failed to arrive in time as he was held up by traffic. The law stipulates that only those present in person at the assembly can be elected. This led the Ombudsman to appeal to the Constitutional Court with a request that this article be deleted from the Minority Law and from the Interior Ministry decrees that regulate national self-government elections.

Separate regulations govern the constitution of Budapest municipal and national self governments. Two modes govern the election of self-government bodies comprising 9 members in each and every case: at electoral assemblies, or assemblies called for by the constituents. The electors are the Budapest district minority deputies (the city comprises 24 districts), members of elected self governments; if a district cannot field any of these there can be chosen electors. The second mode is applicable when a minority lacks district self governments; in this case on the initiative of 10 constituents an electoral assembly must be called and with the participation of at least hundred eligible voters the Budapest municipal minority self government may be chosen.

It is only the voting of electors that can create national self government. At the electoral assembly, minority representatives of local self governments, minority self government members, minority advocates, as well as chosen electors from municipalities that have neither of the above, can cast a ballot. Depending on the number of electors, national self governments may have between 13 and 53 members, to be elected according to the regulations set out under the "small list" system. A minority may elect one national self government, thus, if

a community is dissatisfied with its government, it has to wait patiently for the next elections, to be held four years later.

So far, it has been only the governing body for the largest minority group, that of the Gypsies, that created complications at national self-government elections. Expert opinion is that only the representational disproportion in the electoral law allowed the Flórián Farkas-led Lungo Drom organization to fill the 53 places on the National Gypsy Self-Government in 1995, and to do so again this year. Bearing in mind that every municipal minority self-government deputy is an elector, a huge number had to be mobilized to ensure a quorum. Thus in 1995 some 2000, and this year over 3000 electors had to be present. In 1995 the then government, referring to a lack of a suitable venue, decided to stage the elections not in Budapest, but in the less accessible city of Szolnok—the headquarters of Lungo Drom. As a result, only eighty per cent of the electors turned up in the sports hall of Szolnok and several, lacking accommodation, could not stay for the ballot that extended well into the night. 62 per cent of the electors voted for the 263 candidates on the list—the 75 per cent quorum refers to presence and not to voting—and only Flórián Farkas received over half of the votes. Afterwards, the 53 self-government members were elected, in practice, in an open ballot: the electors, tumbling over one another, filled in the ballot papers. Finally—with the support of one third of eligible voters—Flórián Farkas's candidates received all of the mandates. In this year's spring elections, just as four years ago, the Flórián Farkas-led Lungo Drom and its associates gained all 53 of the national self-government general assembly mandates. The elections were held in one of the pavilions of the Kőbánya Trade Centre in Budapest, out of

the 3,613 delegates (satisfying the 75 per cent quorum), 2,798 were present (but only 2,262 stayed for the constituting resolution). It was conspicuous that the voting was carried out openly, electors filled in the ballot papers, not individually, in the designated cubicles, but each sitting in his place, in full view of other delegates.

Minority leaders have long objected to the lack of legislation guaranteeing their parliamentary representation, despite the stipulations of the Constitution. Parliament's failure for the past eight years to meet this demand is a continuing violation of the Constitution, for the Constitutional Court has already ruled on the necessary legislation. The debates over the years have focused on whether each of the listed national minorities should simply delegate one representative to parliament or that elections, perhaps with an element of positive discrimination, should take place. Gypsy leaders would only support delegation on condition that they were offered more seats. "We would like to see the realization of representation in proportion to numbers, instead of having to delegate one representative per national minority to Parliament" said Flórián Farkas, the President of the National Gypsy Self-Government. His proposal, however, fell upon deaf ears: without exception the parties reject the idea that minority organizations should gain parliamentary mandates for their representatives by delegation. "A solution must be found for minority parliamentary representation that does not destroy the unity of the electoral system, nevertheless, the mandate gained by the minority candidate must mirror the unequivocal will of the given electorate," stated parliamentary deputy Peter Hack (Alliance of Free Democrats), expressing the view of constitutional lawyers. The conditions set out by the Free Democrats are not new: they formulated them during

the autumn 1993 debate on the electoral law. At that time they prepared a recommendation which stipulated a reduction to half of the minimum number of votes needed to obtain a "normal" mandate which would have enabled one candidate each from the minority lists to enter parliament. In 1998, the Socialists would have liked a minority candidate to need no more than one third of the minimum votes required. (In 1994, for example, 24,000 votes were enough to enable a candidate from the Nógrád County list to succeed, thus 8-12,000 votes would have to be gained by each minority list.) This, however, would keep smaller minorities out of parliament, and they accordingly argue that this would violate the Constitution. The wariness of the political parties concerning large numbers of minority members who may have gained preferential access to parliament is understandable, for there are many draft bills whose adoption often turns on one or two votes, and voting by minority deputies might upset the delicate balance among the parties. At the same time, it must be taken into account that in the European Union's country report on Hungary, minority representation is featured as a key requirement. It also draws attention to the fact that the absence of minority parliamentary representation violates the Constitution and the 1993 Minority Act. Hungarian governments have been reminded by neighbouring countries that there are Hungarian members in their parliaments. They therefore asked for reciprocity. But in Slovakia as well as Romania, Hungarians were elected to parliament as members of political parties without any form of positive discrimination.

Faced with the wrangling in parliament, the leaders of the German, Slovak and Croat minorities decided to form a party called Nationality Forum for the parliamentary elections. They fielded 62 candidates.



the majority of them German. They failed to gain a mandate. A former Alliance of Free Democrats member for the Kőszeg electoral district, Vilmos Horváth, an ethnic Croat, pointed out that in minority colours his chances would have been minimal. Horváth, who frequently used his first language in parliament is also active in local Croat affairs, being a member of the Croat minority self-government in Szombathely. Still, some of the Croat electorate did not vote for him in his electoral district. "The Croats are deeply religious Catholics and provide a strong electoral base for the Christian Democratic Party, I only managed to secure their votes in my birthplace, Horvátzsidány," said the former deputy.

**A**t present, minority representation is not on the agenda of parliament; indeed, the debate focuses on how to create an electoral system reducing the seats in Parliament, while still maintaining the ratio between the parties. In these circumstances, the question of minority parliamentary representation is of low priority, even if the Constitution is violated as a result.

The rights of minority self governments are guaranteed by law; they express an opinion and have veto rights respecting issues pivotal to minority life (education and culture). The majority of existing self-governments consider their scope to be unsatisfactory, for they have only a very small fund granted by the state to cover all their expenses. This state grant is virtually the sole income for a large proportion of self-governments, which, in 1996 totalled 240,000, in 1997, 380,000 and 350,000 forints (about \$1500) in 1998 annually.

The anxieties of the Gypsies are far removed from those of the other minorities: "While, understandably, Gypsy self-governments are occupied primarily with social issues, the efforts of the other minorities focus more on the creation of the edu-

cational and cultural conditions essential for traditional minority autonomy," concluded researchers at the Transdanubian Regional Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The researchers questioned minority self-government members in approximately 220 municipalities countrywide, and the findings were published in the spring of 1998.

Although the goal of the legislation pertaining to minorities was primarily the promotion of cultural autonomy, the social problems of the Gypsies have virtually engulfed their minority self-governments. According to researchers, in practice it is only the Gypsies who are concerned with housing and employment problems, and accordingly they have much less energy to nurture their traditions than the other minorities.

None of the self-governments are in the position to provide substantial social support simply because they are not so endowed. The law decrees, in vain, that municipal self-governments must promote the activities of minority self-governments. A quarter of the Romanians, Croats and Slovaks interviewed told researchers that they received neither offices nor furniture, albeit a March 1995 government decree stipulates that municipal self-governments are obliged to provide, free of charge, accommodation for minority bodies and their apparatus. The overwhelming majority of minority self-governments are confined to a single room in the municipal town hall, and there are self-governments which, in infringement of the law, don't even provide them with that one room.

16 per cent of the German and 12 per cent of the Gypsy minority self-governments complained of a lack of resources. Although Gypsy self-governments were not allotted properties, many of them could still count on receiving furniture, free use of the telephone and postal expenses.

But, with the exception of the Poles, all the other minority self-governments also consider their operational conditions inadequate.

**N**ormative state support together with the financial assistance provided by municipal self-governments do not exceed half a million forints for 65 per cent of the minority self-governments. Three-fifths of this goes into operational costs; on an average no more than 14 per cent remains for cultural programmes and 12 per cent for education. For the purpose of the latter, self-governments are attempting to tap other sources and around a quarter of them managed to collect over half a million forints last year. Many sources are unavailable since the regulations of various foundations require that those receiving help contribute some of their own money. This, however, few are able or prepared to do. Of the minority leaders concerned, several argue that local conditions determine minority self-government activity to such a degree that it does not make sense to talk about a system of self-governments. The relevant statutory provisions stipulate, for example, that they may calculate their budget or use their assets solely within the framework defined by municipal self-government regulations—in other words, their financial dependence is virtually complete. There are municipalities where minority self-governments are viewed purely as one of the many civil organizations and are given a pittance; on the other hand, there are municipalities which provide an amount of support to each minority self-government that puts to shame what the national self-governments receive. Nearly one-third of village minority self-governments would be content with a mere half a million forints annual support, the majority would like to receive between 1 and 2 million, and only 6 per cent

ask for a sum in excess of 3 million. At the same time, 45 per cent of existing minority self-governments in municipalities with inhabitants numbering over 50,000 lay claim to more than 3 million. There is no obvious correlation between local assistance provided for minorities and the size of the minority in the municipality.

In a number of respects, the source of conflicts is the lack of clarity over principles dividing the sphere of responsibilities between municipal and minority self-governments. To a large extent it depends on the municipality, what kind of duties are delegated to its "little brother". Though the law empowers minorities to participate in municipal self-government assemblies, it is determined locally whether they are or are not included in decision-making. It is rare to find a place like the 3rd district of Budapest, where minority deputies have even been granted voting rights in three committees. In many places, alluding to bad past experience, they are cautious about granting "too many" rights to minority self-government members. In more than one place members of the Gypsy self-government—stressing their minority rights—wanted to intervene, for example, in the distribution of municipal aid funds. Ferenc Hranek, chairman of the Gypsy self-government in the northern Hungarian industrial city of Salgótarján considers it a success that their proposed method of distributing social aid was taken into account. Some money was reallocated at their suggestion to local schools to feed needy Gypsy children; they also succeeded in dissuading the authorities from evicting nearly a hundred Gypsy families. "During the debate we did not defend the Gypsies in general terms, but offered constructive proposals aimed at resolving the issue. For instance, we asked for a deferred payment scheme for those in debt, as well as for smaller homes they can af

## Money for the Gypsies

In 1998, according to government estimates, the Gypsy community received 3.5–4 billion forints of which only 600 million was designated: 120 million for the National Gypsy Self-Government, 250 million for the Social Fund for Gypsies in Hungary and 230 million for the Gandhi Social Fund. Of the 350 million for local minority self-governments, the Gypsies received approximately 180 million; they also received 95.5 million from the Hungarian National and Ethnic Minority Social Fund. Over and above this, funds are allocated for "Gypsy objectives", for instance for education, from the minority total, projects are financed by the Board of Public Works, council apartment construction and agricultural projects. The various ministries will have to carve out from their own budgets the sums needed for the financing of mid-range Gypsy programmes initiated by the government in 1997, but neither the National and Ethnic Minority Office (NEKH) nor the National Gypsy Self-Government (OCO) have clear views on this. It does not transpire from the budget act how the 3.5–4 million forints are to be compiled. Some Gypsy leaders claim that the government includes sums in the Gypsy funds that other minorities also share. For this reason, the Flórián Farkas-led National Gypsy Self-Government, in the hope of access to other financial resources, aims to have the government separate the Gypsies from all the other minorities. According to their reasoning, the only thing in common between Gypsies and other recognized minorities is that their representative bodies are made up in the same way.

ford to maintain", said Ferenc Hranek, adding, "we were also in agreement with the eviction of five families." Indeed, the Salgotarjan self government has provided separate offices for Gypsy representatives, who this year—although they considered the central state support a bit tight—did not ask for financial assistance from an overburdened municipality. On the other hand, in other places municipal leaders endeavour to reject such "interventionist" attempts, hence the activities of minority self governments are practically exhausted by staging a few tradition saving functions and, perhaps, the management of the occasional school minority language class.

Serious conflicts exist between municipal and minority self governments over education. Although the central budget's supplementary aggregate stipulates the provision of additional funds for schools

undertaking the education of minority pupils, there are uncertainties in the provision of this sum to educational institutions as additional income. Although schools receive the money through local self-governments, it transpires from the complaints of minority self-governments that they do not pass on as extra income the additional money designated for minority education.

It is better if the school receives the money. According to Béla Csillei, education specialist at the National Gypsy Self-Government (OCO), in one instance, in an answer to one of their queries, the self-government replied that it had spent the minority education funds on repairing the pavement since the children use that too.

Considerable sums are involved, for the central budget pays 23,000 forints per person participating in minority education. In

the case of the Budapest suburb Budaörs in 1997, this amounted to 27 million and on the national level to 3 billion forints. "This appears in the central budget as the largest item intended for minority purposes, hence it is all the more regrettable there are so many uncertainties in the way the money is used," comments István Karszlán, rapporteur on educational affairs at the National Slovak Minority Self-Government. Local self-governments, from their own resources, add fewer additional moneys to the state subsidies designated for schools which undertake minority education as well. Hence the sum received per capita minority quota is a windfall for self-governments, which they reckon with as part of the state subsidy and only compensate for losses in excess of this sum.

On the other hand, it has not been unusual in recent years for minority leaders to use even this small amount of money received in an unorthodox manner, to put it

mildly. The majority of smaller or greater irregularities and infringements committed by minority self-governments usually don't come to light, but when they do, those responsible are seldom named.

It is not without precedent either that members of the minority representative body award themselves presents and bonuses—which, since they hold honorary offices, they should not receive. There have also been instances of the members dividing up the few hundred thousand forints government subsidy among themselves. The fee payable to the chairman of the representative body—as stipulated in the relevant regulation—can be between 10 to 35 per cent of the current salary payable to a government minister. A widespread practice designed to increase such fees involves the appointment of the chairman to one of the committees—the law on self-government forbids this—and also paying him as a committee member. ■



*The back of photographs prepared in his summer studio, opened at the beginning of the 1880s, feature this picture of György Klösz's, which shows the nearby terminus of the Buda funicular railway.*