

Columbia University
in the City of New York

NEW YORK 28, N. Y.

RESEARCH PROJECT ON HUNGARY

605 WEST 115TH STREET

December 18, 1957

Professor Schuyler C. Wallace
School of International Affairs
429 West 117th Street
New York 27, New York

Dear Professor Wallace:

At Professor Roberts' request I am sending you three copies of Alex Dallin's progress report on our Project in the form of a memorandum to Henry.

As you know, the analysis phase of our Project has started. Centered around a seminar which has already met and will continue next month, the work will be carried out both by students participating in the seminar and staff members.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of all of us at CURPH to send you, Mrs. Chalmers and Eliana our very best wishes for the coming holidays.

Sincerely yours,



Andre Varchaver
Assistant Project Director

AV:ef
Enclosure

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH PROJECT ON HUNGARY
605 WEST 115TH STREET
NEW YORK 25, N.Y.

October 1, 1957

MEMORANDUM

To: Henry L. Roberts

From: Alexander Dallin

Since the completion of a more formal report on the progress of this Project may be delayed, it seems indicated to summarize our recent problems and achievements in this form, for you and others responsible for the Project, as a basis for future planning.

The past eight months--since March 1--have seen the completion of the first two phases of the Project, in accordance with the plans mapped out in our initial statement of purposes to the University and the Ford Foundation. At first, armed with the University's blessings and the Foundation's grant, we set out to recruit a staff, lay plans for the summer's interviewing, develop an interview design, draft a questionnaire, pre-test it in the New York area, contact other organizations involved in the interviewing or handling of Hungarian refugees, and prepare the ground for the summer's effort in Europe.

This first phase was, of necessity, somewhat brief and hurried; but, it was understood, this was a case of doing things quickly or not at all; and some methodological perfection had to be sacrificed to the calendar schedule and the limits of available manpower. On the whole, the first stage was successful. Though the "table of organization" might have appeared somewhat cumbersome, actually one of our failures was to underestimate the

administrative and overhead work (and personnel) required. Except for a fairly generous approach to interviewer salaries, economy has been a watchword, since it was realized at an early date that the available funds would suffice for the preliminary and interviewing stages but might well prove inadequate for the completion of research, analysis, and write-up. The Project has, consequently, operated throughout at a slightly lower rate of expenditures than had first been anticipated; it has worked on a very small fraction of what the Harvard Project with Soviet refugees cost the Air Force and the Russian Research Center.

After a pre-test of 38 "A" interviews in New York and Washington, D.C. (a few of these incomplete because of lack of time) during the month of May, and several conferences with consultants conversant with the subject-matter as well as with social research methodology, the standard "A" questionnaire was revised. This revised version was further improved--particularly with regard to question sequence and Hungarian wording--after the initial interviewing experience in Europe and as a result of conferences among the staff there.

Early in the operation, the original hypothesis was confirmed: for several compelling reasons it was essential to take advantage of the summer months to conduct a systematic interviewing effort in Europe. Preparations for this three-months operation involved the recruitment of a staff knowing Hungarian as well as having some acquaintance with the problems of interest and, ideally, interviewing experience--a combination difficult to find indeed. If, as will be apparent below, the personnel proved to be somewhat short of ideal, this was scarcely due to lack of discrimination or failure to survey the available candidates thoroughly. Under the circumstances, perhaps, no better

and staff, inform the interested governments and relief agencies of our interests and plans, recruit a secretarial staff on the spot, procure the necessary equipment and supplies, and--with the aid of one other interviewer who joined him in Germany in mid-May after informally surveying the refugee situation in Italy and Yugoslavia for us--line up respondents for at least the first two weeks of interviewing.

Thanks to the advance work performed, the summer staff left for Europe on June 5 and the next day was "on location" at Feldafing, on the Starnberger See, some twenty-five miles south of Munich. The group worked in Europe for a period of roughly three months; a few interviewers remained for some additional time. As of this date, interviewing in Europe is substantially terminated. Our office there has been closed, and most of the equipment and property are on their way back to New York. Robert Fischelis remains in Germany to complete the necessary liquidation of our commitments and work.

There is no need to question, in retrospect, the necessity of the European phase of the Project. A number of individual informants--including top-level writers and journalists, and former Party and Government officials--could not have been located except in Europe. Several informants who were in key positions and are now writing memoirs or memoranda for the Project could not have been contacted--nor their confidence secured--except through personal conversations. And several categories of respondents--notably, Communist Party members--would have been missing from the sample, had it not been for the work in Europe. This is likewise true, with but slight exceptions, for those who left Hungary in the spring and summer of 1957. Finally, the experience of interviewing in various European locations provided our staff with a good,

if crude, yardstick to the differences in political and non-political attitudes among refugee clusters in various places of residence.

It soon became apparent that the conduct of the operation would be complicated—and the number or length of interviews probably reduced—because of several considerations: (a) the greater scatter of key refugees and of representatives of various socio-economic groups we were interested in having as respondents; (b) the failure to find a Hungarian-speaking contact man who was not politically identified with any one faction and who was available full-time for the Project; (c) the greater length of recording-time required—due perhaps to an overly optimistic advance plan and perhaps to the fact that most interviewers did not handle English as a native language and therefore, in effect, had to translate (often with the aid of a dictionary) as they transcribed their handwritten Hungarian notes on tape; (d) failure to find an additional interviewer who could have been added to our staff in Europe, as had been hoped.

The conduct of the European phase was furthermore rendered quite taxing because of several unforeseen and largely unforeseeable circumstances, such as (a) difficulties with the landlord in whose house the Project headquarters and living quarters for five Project members (including three families with small children) were located—altercations which on several occasions seriously impeded the day-to-day work of the office and led to legal action; (b) some tension among the interviewing staff, which proved to include individuals of considerable temperament, pecuniary interest, and addiction to autonomous behavior. In addition, the director was away for several weeks on trips setting up interviewing schedules and contacts in other centers, and for more than two additional

weeks on a trip to the Soviet Union (albeit with the blessings of his superiors at Columbia University); the executive secretary was, as agreed in advance with the School of International Affairs, away on vacation for several weeks; so that the executive officer and the director's assistant (hired for part-time work though in fact working overtime) were the only ones permanently available for the infinite number of chores, big and small, which the operation required.

The major price of the personnel shortage resulting from this overburdening of the available few was the fact that nearly nobody was able to give systematic substantive attention to the interviews in a fashion that might have improved their value in the course of the interviewing process. Finally, it had been hoped that the speedy dispatch of transcripts to the Chairman of the Executive Committee, in New York, would permit the incorporation of suggestions for changes in the interviewing pattern even while it was taking shape in Europe. In fact, some such changes were made and were incorporated in the latter phase of the European interviewing; but their relative worth proved less striking than had been expected.

Many of these shortcomings can be traced not only to the problems inherent in the type of project here discussed but also to the time element: had the project been prepared more slowly and thoroughly, and had it been "in the field" for a longer period of time, some of the shortcomings would have been avoided or eliminated. Under the circumstances, little or nothing could be done about them.

In view of the above, it became necessary to make a decision, more or less *ad hoc*, on what to concentrate in the European operation—since not all of the optimistic expectations cherished prior to our departure could

be met. It was decided to tap, first of all, all "unique" individuals and groups; and secondly, to interview as many of the others, aiming at diversification not only by social and age categories, but also by country of residence and procuring intermediaries (since our lists and contacts came through a variety of refugee, governmental, and international welfare, social, and political agencies). In brief, it may be said that the first goal was met substantially to our satisfaction, given the time and personnel limits under which we operated. The cross-section obtained, on the other hand, cannot be deemed to be entirely adequate, but presumably it can be rectified by means of additional interviews in the United States and Canada--which for various reasons it seems imperative to pursue, at least on a limited scale.

So far as the sample of "A" respondents is concerned, the composition is fair by age groups (except for the oldest categories); but there seem to be shortages for the following categories: respondent from Southern and Eastern Hungary; rural residents; urban industrial labor and miners; teachers; apolitical professionals, such as dentists; scientists; in several groups, women. Some of the above categories should be easy to fill; others (notably, peasants) may be far more difficult to obtain.

Within the European refugee population, the following distinctions could be made.

Germany: Southern Germany (Munich area) thoroughly covered; Western and Northern Germany inadequately touched, but only few interesting individuals for "B" interviews are believed to have been missed.

Austria: A team of from 3 to 7 interviewers spent several weeks in the Vienna area, and several return visits ensued, in the course of which most key individuals located--particularly intellectuals, ex-party personnel, politicians, journalists, and writers--were interviewed. Some recent defectors were also reached, though more might have been located. Another trip to the Innsbruck area netted interesting "A" and "B" interviews but convinced the staff that there was a diminishing return to be expected from more haphazard, rank-and-file interviews.

away from "home base." Under the circumstances, the attention given to the refugees in Austria seemed quite adequate.

France: Three interviewers conducted several interviews each in Paris and, after clearance with the government authorities, went on a brief trip to a recently established camp housing Hungarian refugees transferred from Yugoslavia. Except for the latter (which were "A" interviews), the talks were with fairly prominent or interesting economists, writers, military men. It is not likely that anyone important—at least among those who have "surfaced"—has been missed.

England: Several interviewers worked in England, interviewing especially (1) the four top writers who left Hungary last November; (2) a group of articulate "leftist" university students now at Oxford; (3) others in the London area, especially some members of workers' councils, student leaders, and radio men. The shortcoming of this expedition was the failure to tap worker and peasant respondents there—a failure due to lack of time and a sense of "uniqueness" about the London and Oxford respondents. The most interesting of the Oxford group also spent several days at Feldafing with the staff.

Other countries: In Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy several refugees were interviewed. In some instances these proved to be very well-informed men. All of these were "B" interviews aimed at tapping unique knowledge or experiences. By correspondence, a few others (in Sweden, Holland) were reached. No interviewing took place in Yugoslavia.

The total number of interviews thus far obtained is approximately as follows. (Exact figures are still unavailable because some interviews conducted after the departure of the staff from Feldafing have not yet arrived, and some tapes have not yet been transcribed.)

	<u>US Pre-Test</u>	<u>US Summer</u>	<u>Europe Summer</u>	<u>Total</u>
"A" Interviews	38 (incl. some incomplete)	11	76 plus	125 (incl. some incomplete)
"B" Interviews	0	1	142 plus	About 150 (but of varying length and substance).

The number of pages of interview transcripts will come to at least 10,000. It should be added that, while the value of the "A" interviews is fairly constant, the worth of "B" interviews fluctuates substantially; in some cases, "B's" are actually incomplete or informal "A's," with some questions deleted or added.

For qualitative work, one device may prove to be more useful than had been expected: brief manuscripts and memoirs produced by a few selected, articulate, and well-informed refugees about specific aspects of their experiences or summarizing their judgment of certain problems and trends, as discussed with the interviewer or staff. Some of these manuscripts are still being written; of course, nearly all are in Hungarian. The device of giving cooperative and thoughtful people a chance to express themselves at leisure and at greater length seems to make both for a better product and for more detail (and sometimes frankness) than fairly concise oral contacts could produce.

On the whole, the Project met with the cooperation of virtually all groups and agencies which it was necessary or useful to contact. Occasionally a German government office or a particularly obscurantist old-emigré Hungarian faction would make difficulties, as did (on at least one occasion) an American intelligence unit—with profuse subsequent apologies but also irremediable loss of face and faith in us by the refugee group involved. Of the European governments involved, the foreign offices invariably proved more helpful than the ministries of the interior or home offices (Britain, Austria, Switzerland, France). The major welfare agencies—International Rescue Committee, Caritas and its branches, World Council of Churches and affiliated groups, and the various Hungarian groups—were quite helpful, as were the Munich office of Radio Free Europe, the Paris offices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Rockefeller Foundation, a number of individuals in British universities and at the BBC. In Germany itself, all the requisite facilities and help were secured, but no genuine interest in the substantive aspects of our Project was encountered there. In

various instances, among intermediaries and respondents themselves, there was the clear suspicion that the Project was a "front" for a United States intelligence operation—a natural thought, under the circumstances, which we (needless to say) went to some pains to dispel. While inevitably there was bias and distortion on the part of the refugee population, an impressionistic verdict would be that rapport and cooperation as well as willingness to talk frankly were greater on this Project than, say, on the Harvard University Soviet Refugee Interview Project.

With the completion of the European phase of the Project, the director, the executive officer, the executive secretary, and the assistant to the director in the European operation have ended their assignments. The current work of the Project office in New York continues to be in the hands of the assistant director, André Varchaver, who was in charge of the American operation and the office work during the summer months. The processing, transcribing, and reproducing of the interview protocols should be completed before the end of the year, with the assistance of temporary help. It now seems to be in order to plan the research and analysis of the materials, as well as such additional interviewing as the analysis may require. As of this time, there is no reason to alter the original plans regarding the final products and time-table to aim at, though quite possibly the analysis may prove more difficult, more lengthy, more costly—but also more challenging and more fruitful—than some of us had anticipated.

In conclusion, I should like to express my genuine gratitude for the confidence in having me direct the Project in its two initial phases, and for the assistance from so many quarters, without which the rather hectic schedules and improvised demands could not have been met.

Appendix

(I) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Prof. Henry L. Roberts, Chairman	(History)	(Columbia University)
Prof. Conrad Arensberg	(Anthropology)	(Columbia University)
Prof. Alexander Erlich	(Economics)	(Columbia University)
Prof. William T.H. Fox	(International Relations)	(Columbia University)
Dr. David L. Sills	(Social Research)	(Columbia University)
Prof. John Lots	(Hungarian Culture)	(Columbia University)
Prof. Paul E. Zinner	(Government)	(Columbia University)

(II) PROJECT STAFF FOR EUROPE

Alexander Dallin, Project Director	(Columbia University)
Robert L. Fischelis, Executive Officer	(Harvard University)
Elisava Kovacich (Miss), Executive Secretary	
Florence C. Dallin (Mrs.), Assistant to the Director	

Interviewers

(1) Stephen Borsody	(Chatham College)
(2) Stephen Gorove	(New York Law School)
(3) Anthony Jassy	(Buffield College, Oxford)
(4) John Kosa	(Le Moyne College)
(5) Leslie Lasslo	(Columbia University)
(6) Judith Le Bovit (Mrs.)	(American University)
(7) Marian Lov (Miss)	(Harvard University)
(8) August J. Molnar, Jr.	(Elmhurst College)
(9) Nicholas Nyary	(Columbia University)
(10) Paul E. Zinner	(Columbia University)

(III) PROJECT STAFF FOR THE UNITED STATES

André Varchaver, Assistant Project Director	
Elisabeth Fontana (Mrs.), Executive Secretary	
Judith Saly (Mrs.), Secretary-Translator	

Interviewers

(1) Joseph Altman	(New York University)
(2) Joseph Brunner	
(3) Desider Holisher	(City College, New York)
(4) Peter Horvath	(Marymount College)
(5) Gosa Kunn	
(6) Iuro Benethy	
(7) Anna Owen (Mrs.)	(New School for Social Research)
(8) Lasslo Pastor	(Columbia University)
(9) Marta Rezier (Miss)	(Columbia University)
(10) Edvia Turgeon (Mrs.)	(Columbia University)