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Railway Traffic in Southwest Hungary After World War II

Pro&Contra

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Abstract

Immediately after World War II, the only transport available in Hungary was the railways and this was despite the heavy damage incurred by the rolling stock and tracks. By utilizing service reports, meeting minutes, and articles from local newspapers, this study attempts to present the Hungarian State Railways' (MÁV) regional directorate of Pécs's efforts to reconstruct their railway infrastructure and service. Not only is this research's focus on the railways' operation processes—e.g., the eradicating of inefficiency, the reconstruction of rolling stock, and the establishing coal reserves, but also the impact of the political, economic, and social arenas on railways and vice versa. As the most influential company in Hungary, the importance of MÁV's operation was not only a reflection of its role as an economic tool in the government's hands, but also that it proved to be the most powerful employer in the country with thousands of families directly depending on it.

Keywords: railway, economy, Hungary, efficiency, reconstruction

As in other countries in Europe, World War II wreaked large-scale destruction in Hungary.¹ The combat lasted more than half-a-year in the territory of present-day Hungary. The human and economic loss suffered during these six months and, indeed, over the course of the entire war has been the subject of many books, theses, and articles. Some have focussed on the damage caused to the transport system, and within them there is data detailing the serious losses of the Hungarian State Railways – which at that time was the backbone of the country's transport system due to a lack of roads, automobiles, and trucks – one of the most important pillars of the economy.²

Why, then, was the condition and capacity of the railways of such importance? Due to the absence of alternative transport, the railways were the primary conduit for the raw materials, goods, food, and stock required by Hungarian businesses. Another way the railway impacted on the economy was its operating of commuter-trains in the vicinity of the three largest conurbations. These trains allowed workers, students, and costermongers to access local centers. Hungarian State Railways (Magyar Államvasutak - MÁV) was not just a means of transporting freight and passengers, it was one of the biggest employers in

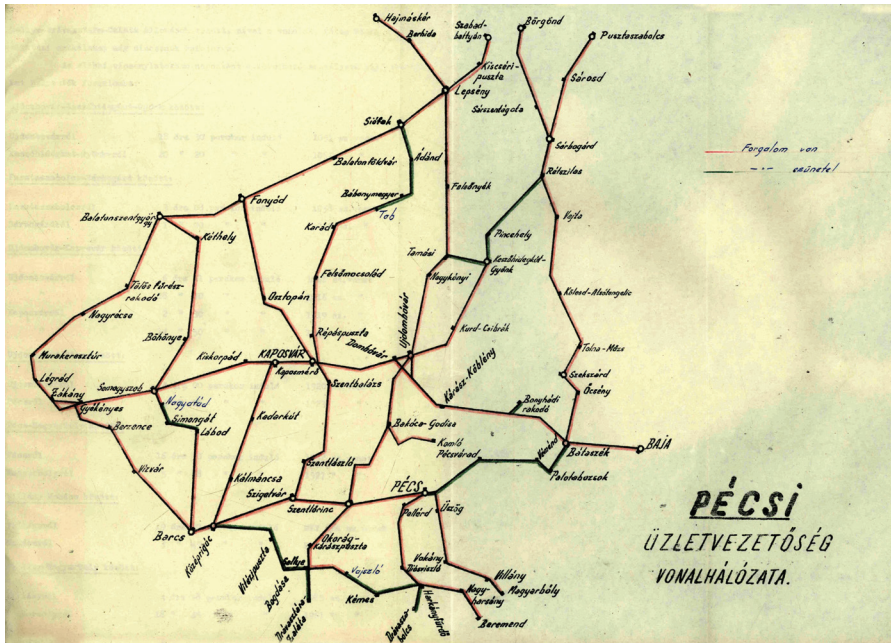
¹ The author's research was supported by the grant EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00001 ("Complex improvement of research capacities and services at Eszterházy Károly University").

² In 2013 a book was published on the occasion of the centenary of the Regional Directorate Pécs. Unfortunately, the essays focus on the services from the end of 1950s to present-days, the post-war years were not mentioned. *Mozaikek a pécsi vasútigazgatás 100 éves történetéből*. eds. Lászlóné Imre and János Majdán (Pécs: MÁV, 2013).

Hungary, and its operation helped provide for more than one hundred thousand families through employing one or more members. In addition, the government often ordered preferential tariffs conducive to reconstruction, for example, the waftage of coal, wood, cereal, or goods of restitution.

The main purpose of this study is to present the operation of the MÁV Regional Directorate Pécs – one of the six regional directorates – in the four years immediately following the war, from the end of 1944 to 1948.³ The sources are primarily the regional directorate's monthly presentations, and the central directorate's monthly operational reports. Unfortunately, the documentation of the regional directorate has proved to be incomplete for the first two years. Articles from local daily newspapers are often valuable resources for our type of research, providing information about the habits, rules, and circumstances of travelling, therefore, the local newspaper "Új Dunántúl," which was published in Pécs, where the head office of the regional directorate was located – was utilized in the research. At the end of 1944 three articles focusing solely on the railways were published, in the following year twenty-five, in 1946 fourteen, and in the last two years of our study period, nineteen and seven, respectively. In addition, many articles were published concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war or the deportations of local people of German extraction to Germany's American zone in 1946, and to the Soviet zone in 1947-1948.

³ The Hungarian State Railways' network extended more than 7900 km. From 1946, only the Győr-Sopron-Ebenfurth Railway Company had a 200 km network beside the MÁV in the country. Six regional directorates worked on with the headquarters in the following cities: Budapest, Miskolc, Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs and Szombathely. Pécs Directorate had a 1541 km long railway-network, so it took 19,44 per cent of the total. Pécs controlled the railways in Baranya, Somogy, and Tolna counties, and the southern parts of the counties Fejér, Veszprém, and Zala.



Picture 1. Traffic map of the directorate, April 1945. (MÁV Archive)

The Condition of Railway Lines

The Soviet troops' swift advance came to a halt at the beginning of December 1944 on the Székesfehérvár–Fonyód–Barcs line. The front remained here until the German counter-strike at the beginning of March 1945, which was repelled within ten days. After a few weeks, the Soviet army forced the Axis troops back into Austria. The combat movements impacted on the region's railway system, as bridges, cisterns, water towers, and railway yards were destroyed by the retreating German units, especially in the western part of the area.

After the restitution of the pre-war borders and the reorganization of the railway network in the spring of 1945, the length of the regional directorate's network fell from 1,699 kms to 1,514 kms. According to the directorate's report, in July 1945 the Danube-bridge in Baja, seventy-nine small bridges and culverts with lengths between 1-14 meters, twelve bridges with lengths between 15-49 metres, and four more than 50-meter-long bridges were destroyed or too damaged to use.⁴ Due to destroyed bridges, the two

⁴ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. d. Summary report on the wartime operations of the regional directorate Pécs, July 1945

shire-town Kaposvár and Pécs were left without direct railway connection to Budapest. Until December 10, 1945, when the bridge over the River Sió was rebuilt in Simontornya, travelling to the capital and back was only possible by taking several detours.⁵ The most important lines were the north-southwest direction: Budapest–Székesfehérvár–Murakeresztúr, Budapest–Dombóvár–Kaposvár–Gyékényes rail lines with international traffic, (Budapest–)Dombóvár–Pécs–Mohács line with its significant inland traffic, primarily because of the coal mines within its proximity, which provided the highest quality coal in Hungary, as well as the Pécs–Barcs–Gyékényes and Dombóvár–Bátaszék–Baja transversal lines. To replace the destroyed Danube-bridge at Baja, the Soviet military engineers constructed a pontoon railway bridge, primarily for the demands of military transport, POW-transport, and war plunder. According to some railwaymen's reminiscences, only a few civilian trains ever used this bridge.⁶ Beyond the bridges, culverts, and yards, the tracks and sidings were also destroyed by the retreating Germans, as well as the communication infrastructure. Besides the mainlines, many branch lines also suffered severe damage.

The Soviet and Bulgarian troops pushing towards the west immediately started rebuilding the necessary railway lines. These reconstructions were provisional, some of them had to be rebuilt only a few months later. In order to ensure quick progress nearby inhabitants were ordered to work on the rebuilding of the railway lines.⁷ The reconstruction – naturally – began without any overall military command on other lines, depending on the availability of labour, building materials and tools. In the first couple of months, this reconstruction work was overseen at the local level, without any central planning. Only on June 6, 1945, was the state-wide reconstruction program initiated by the Trade and Transport Department, with respect to the demands of the occupying army.

Minister of Trade and Transport Ernő Gerő's speech at the Hungarian Communist Party's Pentecostal conference introduced significant dynamism to the reconstruction of the railways and communication systems with the slogan: "Head for the Railways!" The railwaymen's trade union announced a competitive project in June involving every service post. Due to this competition, 7 coal-feeders, 14 water towers, 66 kilometers of track, 391 sidings, and 106 bridges were restored in the directorate's network. One of the bridges was at the Hungarian-Yugoslavian border, Murakeresztúr, across the River Mura, so inter-

⁵ December 10-től Simontornyán át közlekednek a vonatok. Új Dunántúl, 1945. december 2. 1.

⁶ Gyula Lovas, Újra gurulnak a vonatok (Budapest: MÁV, 1996), 59–63, 73–75, 75–76. The pontoon bridge was installed in the spring of 1945, and it was operated until March 1946. From the autumn of 1945, some squadrons of the Hungarian 1st engineer division took part in the bridge's service. HL. MN. IX/61. 6. 1. Összefoglaló jelentés az 1. honvéd műszaki hadosztály, később Műszaki vezetési törzs 1945. október hó 15-től 1947. október hó 1-ig való működéséről. 23–36.

⁷ MÁV Arch. KS. 1. 24. Track reconstruction works carried out by the Red Army.

national aid shipments – landing in Trieste harbour – could arrive directly into Budapest, saving time and materials.⁸

Due to the destruction of the Danube-bridges, Hungary was split in two, and the sole, useable railway bridge was in Budapest. The detours necessary not only caused significant delays, but also increased the cartage, although MÁV covered half of the difference of the extra drayage.⁹ Furthermore, the only railway bridge over the Danube, which connected the two parts of the country, was also only a temporary construction with a very low speed limit of 10 kph. It was only 18 months after hostilities ceased that a semi-permanent bridge was built to accommodate the increased traffic, and on September 8, 1948, the second track of the railway bridge was reopened. The detour to the capital remained in use until 1950, as it took more than five years to rebuild the bridge in Baja connecting the southern parts of the country over the Danube.¹⁰



Picture 2. Rebuilding the Danube-bridge in Baja, 1950. (Fortepan, No. 91383)

⁸ István Szakács, “Murakeresztúri Mura határhíd,” in *Vasúti hidak a Pécsi Igazgatóság területén*, ed. József Hillier (Pécs: Vasúti Hidak Alapítvány, 2012), 74–81.

⁹ László Varga, president of MÁV mentioned an example at the first national railway congress on August 11, 1946. The distance between Dombóvár and Kiskunhalas is 155 kilometers through the Danube-bridge at Baja, but with the bypass to Budapest, the shipping increased up to 290 kilometers. Special issue of the Bulletin of Transport, August 11, 1946. 4–11.

¹⁰ Ernő Tóth, *Duna hídjaink* (Budapest: Közlekedésfejlesztési Koordinációs Központ, 2009), 29.

Due to the slow rail traffic, in the winter of 1945/46 enormous logjams formed, so the Pécs–Budapest direct freight trains often rested at suburban stations for more than ten hours, and in four cases, for more than twenty hours.¹¹ It caused a crucial problem; the all-important anthracite from Pécs could not reach the factories and railway stokeholes, coal consumption surged, and MÁV cancelled several trains from October because of the shortage of coal.

The rapid reconstruction did not mean that railway services returned to their pre-war status. Due to the lack of rails, nails, screws, and tools, the tracks were rebuilt with different rails, causing many difficulties later with maintenance. Most of the capacity of the ironworks was being utilized for the Soviet and Yugoslavian atonement, and some parts were provided for the reconstructions of the bridges and factories, so the railways' needs remained unfulfilled. The central distribution was not enough to allow for the rebuilding of the most important lines, moreover the allocated delivery of rail and steel equipment often delayed or fell off. Therefore, the maximum speed was limited to 70 kph on the main lines, and 30-40 kph on the branch lines.¹²

It is also noteworthy that the rail lines of the directorate were built on a hill-country, so their maintenance – especially the branch lines, which were built on shorter technical parameters – was more problematic. In addition, these tracks had deteriorated through excessive use by military transports of World War I and II and there had been no serious modernisation program. MÁV did not have the financial resources to repair all of the lines, some reconstruction was realized in the second half of the 1920s, and some only on the eve of World War II. Therefore, it is scarcely surprising that according to the reports on temporary speed limits, the Pécs Directorate was second in 1946, after the Szeged Directorate, but two years later had slipped to fourth.

The speed limits not only led to longer travelling times, but in this context, the limitations also decreased the line's capacity. Furthermore, the consumption of coal was increased through braking and acceleration, and more trackmen were required to observe for signs of wear.

¹¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Memorandum on the problems of traction service at the regional directorate Pécs. Monthly operational record, January 1946.

¹² Endre Bory, "A hazai vasutakon elért menetrend szerinti sebességek történeti áttekintése" in: *Vasúthistória Évkönyv 1992*. 403–413. Budapest: MÁV, 1992.

| | | 31 Dec 1946 | | 31 Dec 1947 | | 31 Dec 1948 | |
|---|---------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| | | Country-wide | Pécs | Country-wide | Pécs | Country-wide | Pécs |
| Speed limits | 5 kmph | 136 | 23 | 130 | 18 | 110 | 16 |
| | 10 kmph | 3 | | 1 | | 2 | |
| | 15 kmph | 157 | 17 | 126 | 11 | 128 | 21 |
| | 25 kmph | | | | | 152 | 41 |
| | Total | 296 | 40 | 257 | 29 | 392 | 78 |
| Railways network's length (km) | | 7992,9 | 1547,1 | 7997,4 | 1551,6 | 8006,0 | 1551,6 |
| Average distance between two speed limits in the network (km) | | 27,0 | 38,7 | 19,0 | 23,8 | no data | 19,9 |

Chart 1. Numbers of speed limits at the end of the year.

Vehicles

As well as the tracks, MÁV also suffered heavy losses regarding its rolling stock: locomotives, railcars, carriages, and wagons. According to the first report, which was written immediately after the war, 186 steam locomotives remained on the directorate's network – 22 per cent were Italian, Romanian, or German. From this, only 115 were in good working order. Before the Russian occupation, the regional directorate had had 199 locomotives, 14 railcars, and seven leased locomotives from Italy.¹³

As already mentioned, many necessary appliances for the procurement and storing of water and coal were destroyed; the damage to the water towers, pipes, and pumps was especially problematic and caused significant and long-term problems, resulting in the decrease of the railway line's capacity. All of the major railyards were damaged, the heaviest losses occurred at the train depot in Nagykanizsa.¹⁴

¹³ The Soviet troops took most of the vehicles as trophies, because of this, MÁV had to lease its own wagons and steam-locomotives. In 1948 Moscow gave back the vehicles with the treaties on February 2 and June 2. Zsuzsa Frisnyák, *A magyarországi közlekedés krónikája 1750–2000*. (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 2001), 197–198.

¹⁴ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. Summary report on the wartime... Chapter Traction. 74-95.



Picture 3. Dombóvár station after German air strike, 1944. (Fortepan, No. 15595)

| Depo | Number of locomotives | Wreckage or lay aside without repair | In repair | In service on the lines | In service at stations |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Pécs | 34 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 1 |
| Nagykanizsa | 39 | 6 | 2 | 29 | 2 |
| Dombóvár | 56 | 10 | 9 | 35 | 2 |
| Kaposvár | 36 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 1 |
| Bátaszék | 20 | | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| Barcs | 2 | 1 | | | 1 |
| Total | 187 | 37 | 35 | 107 | 8 |

Chart 2. Steam locomotives in June 1945.¹⁵

62 steam locomotives, 102 passenger carriages, 34 baggage-wagons, and 387 freight wagons vanished or were destroyed, most of which were driven to the west by the retreating German and Hungarian forces. Many vehicles were destroyed on the line between two stations, or on the sidelines of a station, in order to obstruct rail traffic and slow down the

¹⁵ See previous footnote. The additional locomotive in the chart may be either an error, or the result of instant modification that escaped the notice of the compiler. From the locomotive depot Pécs two steam locomotives were transited and five locos arrived.

Soviet advance. Immediately after combat ceased, railwaymen began to repair the damaged cars, wagons, and locomotives. During the first six weeks of the railway development competition referred to above, 139 steam locomotives, 239 passenger cars, 483 closed freight wagons, and 770 opened freight wagons were rebuilt in the Pécs directorate.¹⁶

At the end of the period under study, 246 steam locomotives and 12 railcars were in use in South Transdanubia, 19-19 per cent of the locomotives and railcars of MÁV were in use on the directorate's network.¹⁷ The increasing number of locomotives was a result of locomotive buying: Hungary bought 513 American war-locomotives – these were the USATC S 160 type locomotives – from the US Army's surplus and they arrived in Hungary from May 1947.¹⁸ Out of these engines, 63 were transferred to the directorate until the end of 1948.

In those years, railway traffic relied on steam energy, and therefore coal and water were essential for the network's operation. As already mentioned, the water supply system was eventually but sometimes only provisionally restored. On the other hand, the coal supply remained irregular until October 1947 due to insufficient coal-mining, transportation problems, the enormously increased coal demands of reconstruction work, compensation payments as well domestic heating needs. Furthermore, due to wartime exploitation, the quantity, as well as the quality of coal was reduced.¹⁹ Every year, the coal supply from August to December decreased, so in the last days of the year train depots had enough coal for only a day, or less. After the shortages of the winter months, April signalled an increase in the coal supply at least until the end of the summer.

Hungary's best coal mines were near Pécs, even so, as on all of the network, train services were intermittent from October 16, 1945, to January 17, 1946.²⁰ Traffic was chaotic even on the main lines; only the relief trains at Christmas and some governmental

¹⁶ Naturally, not all of the rebuilt vehicles returned to the directorate, many of them were transferred to other directorates.

¹⁷ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, December 1948.

¹⁸ István Mezei, ed., *A magyar vasút krónikája a XX. században*. (Budapest: MÁV ZRt, 2009), 169. Each locomotive cost between ten and twenty thousand US dollars, depending on technical conditions and the fuel system. Prof. Csiba József's presentation on 3rd National Railway-History Conference, 21th April 2017, Debrecen.

¹⁹ Gyula Erdmann and Iván Pető, *Dokumentumok a magyar szénbányászat történetéből, 1945–1949*. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1975), V–XIII.

²⁰ Coal mines were in Pécs, Nagymányok, Komló and Szászvár.

trains ran in these three months.²¹ At the same time, the anthracite from the Mecsek mountains was not suitable for locomotives' boilers, it had to be mixed with lignite. Before the war, MÁV's standard coal had 4,800 calories per kilogram, but after the war, the railways had to be satisfied with an average calorific value of 3,800 calories per kilogram – the calorific value was typically even lower. Because of these issues, the railwaymen in the Pécs directorate also complained just as in the other directorates; however, in Southern Transdanubia, the coal supply was better than in other regions, especially the Szeged and Debrecen directorates. The next chart illustrates how important the quality of the coal was and the location of the anthracite mines. Railways use many indicators to calculate the efficiency of their traffic. One of these is the burden-ton-kilometer indicator, which shows how much coal is needed to move a hundred tons' burden (vehicle and freight or passengers) for one kilometer. Due to the increased heating needs highlighted above, from October to March, coal consumption differences always ran higher than 10 per cent. In the hard winter of 1946/1947, the locomotives of the regional directorate used 20 per cent less coal than the average.

| Kg coal for 100 burdenton-kilometer | 1938 | | 1946 | | 1947 | | 1948 | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Month | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs |
| January | 14,57 | 13,84 | 23,64 | 21,20 | 20,19 | 15,97 | 14,86 | 13,05 |
| February | 12,55 | 12,42 | 23,75 | 19,06 | 22,11 | 17,57 | 13,50 | 12,53 |
| March | 12,06 | 12,22 | 21,11 | 16,36 | 16,47 | 12,02 | 14,03 | 12,14 |
| April | 11,82 | 12,26 | 17,77 | 13,70 | 12,91 | 10,48 | 12,25 | 10,82 |
| May | 11,07 | 10,93 | 16,84 | 13,12 | 11,77 | 10,16 | 11,28 | 10,01 |
| June | 10,52 | 10,62 | 15,39 | 12,53 | 11,69 | 10,40 | 10,82 | 9,38 |
| July | 10,29 | 10,15 | 15,30 | 12,67 | 11,56 | 10,22 | 11,02 | 9,87 |
| August | 9,92 | 9,48 | 15,08 | 12,94 | 11,80 | 10,42 | 10,38 | 8,99 |
| September | 10,17 | 9,83 | 14,83 | 11,91 | 11,89 | 11,18 | 10,59 | 9,12 |
| October | 10,55 | 10,24 | 15,24 | 12,70 | 12,43 | 11,56 | 11,05 | 9,64 |
| November | 11,64 | 11,36 | 17,23 | 13,98 | 13,09 | 11,93 | 12,01 | 10,61 |
| December | 11,93* | 11,97 | 16,84 | 13,58 | 13,75 | 12,21 | 13,85 | 12,12 |

Chart 3. Coal-using efficiency: coal consumption for moving 100 tons one kilometer.

* December 1937.

²¹ "Szénhiány miatt országosan vonatforgalmi korlátozások lesznek" Új Dunántúl, October 14, 1945, 2. For the causes of the lack of coal, see: Gergely Péterffy, "A vasúti közlekedés újraindításának nehézségei a II. világháború után. Pályaállapot – járműpark – szénhelyzet." in *Trauma és válság a századfordulón*, ed. Béla Bartók (Eger: Líceum, 2015) 13–17.

As the chart illustrates, coal consumption in the depots of the Pécs directorate was slightly better than the national average before the war, but after the war, the difference grew significantly, primarily in the first two years.

Despite the improved coal consumption, other factors broke down the expected capacity. General technical failure or, in rare situations, a lack of water or coal stopped some trains. In 1938, there were altogether 20 occasions of failure in the Pécs directorate's – ten per cent of the total network – with 230,000 train kilometers per case. Eight years later, every fourth train broke down on the Pécs network, with a much shorter distance than the total. In the following years, the figures improved, while in the last year of the time period under study the number of breakdowns fell to 18 per cent.

The above-mentioned duality clearly represents the complexity of railway services, which are influenced by many factors. The close proximity of a quality coal source did not guarantee a better service; besides, the technical dependability of the rolling stock remained less than the network's average – presumably, the demanding geographical environment could have been responsible for this.

| | 1938 | | 1946 | | 1947 | | 1948 | |
|---|------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|--------|--------------|
| | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side | Pécs | Country-side |
| Case | 20 | 202 | 75 | 292 | 72 | 349 | 56 | 305 |
| Distance between two case (1000 trainkm / case) | 230 | 177 | 41,54 | 58,92 | 95,94 | 128,96 | 134,32 | 187,22 |

Chart 4. Breakdowns of locomotives.

The passenger and freight wagons were also a vital issue. Due to the lack of passenger carriages, the daily one train pair put into service often occurred impossible, so, closed freight wagons doubled up as passenger cars. As the ministry and the head directorate foresaw that the commandeered vehicles would not be returned in the short term, orders were given to make the freight vehicles more comfortable with small modifications, such as benches, doors, smaller windows, heating stoves in wintertime, and oil or electric lamps.²²

Until the end of the war in Hungary, railway traffic depended on how many vehicles the Russian military administration could spare. On many lines, just the one train ran, on other lines a service was available only every other day. In the middle of April 1945, the

²² Béla Pálmány, ed., *Dokumentumok a magyar közlekedés történetéből (1945–1949)*. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1981), 279–280.

Russian administration relinquished command back to the regional directorate; however, the carriages had to be claimed from the Russian military administration.²³ The patchy wagon park was further reduced by Russian military commanders, therefore no trains ran along the Dombóvár–Veszprém branch line in the summer of 1945, due Russian troops' unprompted actions in the vicinity of Veszprém.

The Pécs directorate required 150 closed and 200 open-freight wagons for domestic traffic in the first summer – in order to satisfy the demands of the coal mines. Due to these vehicle shortages, it was often the case that the railway directorate had to work with whatever was at hand. Besides from May 22, the Pécs Directorate had supply their wagons to the Budapest–Pécs line. Despite their largesse only eight cars in total could be gathered for the purpose of forming this important passenger train.

| Types of carriages | Total | From these were | | |
|--------------------|-------|-----------------|------------|----------|
| | | Available | Repairable | Wreckage |
| Passenger cars | 124 | 107 | 12 | 5 |
| Baggage cars | 34 | 33 | 1 | |
| Closed freight | 969 | 889 | 22 | 58 |
| Opened freight | 1551 | 1483 | 42 | 26 |
| Flat-wagon | 461 | 449 | 10 | 2 |
| Tank-wagon | 142 | 135 | 7 | |
| Total | 3281 | 3096 | 94 | 91 |

Chart 5. Carriages of the Pécs directorate, June 1945.

The lack of passenger cars and closed freight wagons was an ongoing challenge, yet as the country's economic development continued, the difficulties eased, although the lack of rolling stock continued to have an impact over the following decades. MÁV had lost 79 per cent of its carriage park due to war, or the Soviet's and other allied troops' arbitrary actions. Years before the conflict reached Hungary, Berlin had begun the removal of vehicles from the Hungarian railways in exchange for German wagons or rolling stock from the occupied territories, to take effect on Hungarian economy and policy. As a result, MÁV lost control of its wagons, while having to lease cars from the German railways. When the allied troops occupied Hungary, the German army and the far-right Hungarian administration gave the order for the plundering of Hungary; the loot included industrial

²³ MÁV Arch. BG. 1. Summary report on the wartime... 51–73. General Kossov, in the name of Allied Control Committee gave back the command on the railway network to the Hungarian government on 22nd October. „Az orosz hatóságok magyar kezelésbe adták át az Államvasutakat” *Népszava*, October 24, 1945, 3.

assets, raw materials, food, works of art, and others – all to be primarily transported on the railways.²⁴ Some of the remaining vehicles were requisitioned by the Russians, first for transporting troops and supplies, then to bring POWs and “trophies” back to the Soviet-Union – a significant number of these trains remained outside Hungary. One of the aims of the “Head for the Railways!” project was to repair 500 locomotives and 10,000 freight wagons by the end of 1945, but only 6,477 freight cars and 571 passenger cars had been restored within seven months.²⁵

In the warm season, the trains without windows, doors, and heating systems were not an issue, but in autumn and winter they became one. It proved not just an inconvenience, it was life-threatening. Freezing to death on a journey of a few hours was a distinct possibility, especially if someone travelled alone and fell asleep.²⁶ The management ordered for the openings to be covered so as to protect the passengers from the cold. Even so, in some cases, MÁV had to deploy open freight wagons due to the lack of passenger trains, and in these, the nearly 250 km Kaposvár to Budapest journey took four days in November 1945.²⁷ One year later, the heated and windowed carriages were removed from the branch line trains to replace them – foreign passenger cars were put in use to provide at least a certain amount of comfort on the more important mainline passenger trains.²⁸

Although MÁV tried to repair the passenger cars as well, the exiguous number of them, the infrequent traffic, and the large number of passengers resulted in the cars’ being overcrowded, which led to them being damaged. In January 1946, László Varga, the president of MÁV, saw the condition of the passenger cars: “If the public protect the cars from dilapidation, there will be no obstacle to putting in service windowed and heated, albeit for the time being wood-seated, cars.”²⁹ But the expected improvement did not come to fruition. As the vice chairman Károly Kopasz stated in August:

²⁴ MNL OL. M-KS. 283/32. 69. German organization of the Hungarian economy. Backward Summary. Chapter Transport. 61–72.

²⁵ György Gál, ed., *A vasút újjáépítése. Tanulmányok a Magyar Államvasút másfél éves helyreállítási munkáiról* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946), 120, 122, and 124. From Dombóvár railway junction Bulgarian troops engaged 26 restored wagons, so the railwaymen were uncertain about the restoration. PIL-SZKL. 1/6. 135. Secretary of the Council of Trade-Union, Isván Kossa’s letter to the Minister of Trade and Transport, Ernő Gerő, 21st June 1945.

²⁶ Károly Martinkó, “Gyalog a sínek mentén,” *Vasút* 37, no. 6 (1988): 2., Lajos Szabó, “Egy mozdonyvezető visszaemlékezései,” in: *Vasúthistória Évkönyv 1994* (Budapest: MÁV, 1994), 408. Articles from the newspaper Új-Dunántúl, October 7, 1945, 4, and October 11, 1946, 2.

²⁷ Jenő Madaras, *Hamvaszószerda* (Budapest: Mikes, 1993), 171–173.

²⁸ MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, October 1946. Advice of the Department of Traction.

²⁹ László Varga, „Helyzetkép az Államvasutakról”, *Közlekedési Közöny* 2, no. 2 (1946): 9–10.

The State Railways has spent a lot of money on repairing and maintaining its passenger cars. Unfortunately, the people did not take care of the vehicles, moreover, ruined them on purpose. The windows are broken, sometimes disassembled, even the seats are carried off. Our duty is to protect the benefits of the railways, and therefore the crew have to prevent any kind of vandalism in any possible way – even calling the police forces.³⁰

In spite of all this, the condition of the passenger carriages had improved by 1947 but was still far from pre-war standards. In these times, the modified closed freight wagons used for passenger transport became nicknamed “calf-chair cars.”³¹

The freight wagons were in a better state of repair due to the governmental instancy for repairing them. Another significant factor in this process was that after the summer of 1946 Russian military transports were reduced, meaning non-military traffic could increase, even though it was only the Kaposvár–Siófok branch line had some occasional freight traffic beside the main lines. As the consolidation improved, a salvage program started. Many carriages were lying near the tracks and were cannibalized by residents, or by railwaymen trying to keep other vehicles in service. This project started at the end of the summer of 1946, but there is only data from the regional directorate from April to October 1948, when three moving repair teams delivered 407 closed and 204 opened freight wagons to the repair garages and 239 wagons were dismantled.³²

As discussed above, the chaos and general disorder at the war’s end had resulted in Hungary’s rolling stock being dispersed far and wide, and it soon became an imperative for railway companies to recover their locomotives, railcars, and wagons as soon. To start this process – which was a primary requisite for every railway company in Europe – Hungary had to first regain its sovereignty from the Allied Control Commission in September 1947, when the peace treaty took effect. Two months later in Belgrade, the Central European states’ railway companies held a conference centered on the challenges faced by the railways, at which they assigned a contract for the method of use and returned foreign railway vehicles. The first known transport of foreign carriages from the Pécs directorate departed in January 1948 – 297 wrecked cars were exchanged for 55 MÁV wagons. In

³⁰ Károly Kopasz’s presentation on the First National Railway Congress. Special issue of Bulletin of Transport, August 11, 1946. 12. The minister had to mention – on the debate of the budget of the Ministry of Transport in February 27, 1947 – the critical conditions of the trains. “We have to carry an enormous mass of passengers with very few vehicles, thus the public have to miss the minimal criterion of the civilized travel. On the other hand, this kind of surfeit of cars is also not good for the carriages.” *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*. Volume VI. 1952, 72.

³¹ These calf-chair cars remained in service until the beginning of the 1960s.

³² MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, from April to October 1948.

total that year 457 Italian, 300 German, 25 Belgian, 19 Austrian, 17 Czechoslovakian, 5 Romanian, 2 Polish, and 2 Bulgarian wagons were returned by the regional directorate, while 231 cars arrived from Italy, most of which were freight wagons.

These positive steps still did not satisfy the rising demand for freight wagons, thus the directorate had to reduce turnaround time (time of loading, delivering, and unloading a wagon, measured in days). As the president of MÁV explained at the first National Railway Congress in August 1946, the railway and the customers together had to halve turnaround times from 14.5 to 7 days: the only way to double the number of railcars available, or the fragile economic situation which had begun to stabilize would collapse. Two years later, even this seven-day period looked insufficient, and it had to be reduced to four and a half days to satisfy demand.³³

Traffic

As the front moved toward, the first “scout-trains” ran along the lines, to check the tracks, sidings, bridges, and water-supply systems. The first passenger trains were given permission by the Soviet Military Command on December 19, 1944, to run on some important and useable lines, one pair of trains on each line. Trains operated with only one class, so fares were the same throughout. People were informed about the train schedules in local newspapers, of course these “timetables” served only as indicators; in reality, civilian traffic depended on military needs and possibilities. As the local reconstruction began making progress, further trains came into service until March 1945. However, for a few weeks, due to the German counter attack and then the Soviet attack, no passenger trains could operate. Non-military traffic recommenced at the beginning of April, when a three-way system came into effect. On the more important lines, one train-pair ran a day, on others – generally branch lines – every second day had a train-pair and finally on many lines traffic was still suspended.³⁴ At the end of April, the lines in the proximity of Kaposvár

³³ Imre Oláh, “A forgalmi szolgálat erőpróbája: az őszi forgalom,” *Közlekedési Közöny* 4, no. 50 (1948): 614–615.

³⁴ “Itt az új vasúti menetrend,” *Új Dunántúl*, April 19, 1945, 1.

re-opened and once again the two chief towns of the county were connected with a direct train.³⁵

Due to the infrequent rail services traffic, freight trains were also used for passenger travel which is why conductors were ordered to collect fares. However, these fares could not keep pace with the world's highest inflation, neither with the weekly stated tariff-coefficients; for example, in May 1946 a ticket cost 5,220 times more than a fare had in August 1936.³⁶ Often on a longer trip, people were unable to buy a return ticket because of the hyperinflation, which caused prices to rise on an hourly basis. As a result, from June, the state railways introduced the round-trip fare to earn some money – in these months, the train-jumper was a general phenomenon. As the economy stabilized, and the new currency, the Forint, was introduced, a new fare was announced on August 1. In the prevailing economic environment it was too expensive due to the low level of wages, and therefore, because of the new fares, passenger turnover decreased. To halt this, the ministry cut the fares by twenty per cent and - in contrast to the previously planned strict monetary program – new reductions were introduced on a social basis.

Due to the infrequency of rail traffic, many did not have any other opportunity to travel other than on a freight train. The government announced a number of limitations from May 1945 so as to reduce the number of travellers – especially on main lines – because of the railway's insufficient capacity. The constraints were in force until the end of 1946. These restrictions depended on the cooperation of the police, as three or four conductors could not enforce them against hundreds of embittered, desperate men travelling to look for food in order to feed their families. The police were also required to stop passengers travelling on the roofs of the wagons, or holding onto doors, acts which caused numerous accidents. Transport police were stationed in December 1945 at Pécs's railway station. In the first months they served only at the station and the neighboring area and did not venture onto the trains to protect the passengers and cargoes from robbery and pillage, a common occurrence during the first two years.³⁷ These violent incidents were

³⁵ „Közvetlen vonatjáratot létesítettek Pécs-Kaposvár között Szigetváron át,” Új Dunántúl, June 9, 1945, 3.

³⁶ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational record, May 1946. It is important to note that hyperinflation caused a profoundly serious deficit to MÁV. The value of the Hungarian money, the Pengő was so low that it could not be used, thus dollar or jewels replaced money, and in many cases barter remained the only means of exchange. As people departed from Budapest or bigger towns to find food, the non value-follower railway fare was not meant a real expense.

³⁷ „Pécsett megalakult a vasúti rendőrség,” Új Dunántúl, November 18, 1945, 1. For travelling on roof see: „A részleges vasúti személyforgalom sikeres visszaállítását követően sor kerül a teherdarabáru-forgalom felvételére is,” Új Dunántúl, January 12, 1946, 2.

often instigated by Soviet soldiers, but sometimes the perpetrators were Hungarians in Soviet uniforms. In addition to the police force, a guardian battalion of the 1st Engineer Division barracked next to the main railway stations of Dombóvár, Nagykanizsa, and Pécs, in order to protect important coal stocks and certain freight trains carrying coal and foodstuffs.³⁸

Railway traffic was greatly curtailed in the autumn of 1945 due to a lack of coal, even the workmen's trains were suspended for some days, the long-distance trains provided an intermittent service for months, although a new schedule took effect on November 1, when the use of the Moscow time zone was ended – it had been in force from the middle of August, so railwaymen, passengers, and customers had had to add two hours to the local time.³⁹ During these months, governmental messenger trains ran between Budapest and the county towns. These trains comprised only one or two carriages and were tasked with delivering important governmental documents, mail, official delegates, and if there was available space, civilians could buy tickets at half-price.

As the coal supply increased, more and more trains were added to the schedules, which were published on posters, noticeboards, and in journals; the first railway guide, a short, simplified brochure, was published for the new winter schedule on November 1, 1946.

Railway traffic restarted on the branch lines as well, although only with one daily train pair except for Pécs, where two train pairs ran on the neighboring lines. Despite the schedules including considerable reserve times, delays often occurred because the branch line trains carried freight not just passenger cars. For that very reason, the mainline trains observed connections from branch lines and thus were also delayed. When fast trains appeared, initially between Pécs and Nagykanizsa connecting the region's two important railway junctions, the 148 km trip took six and a half hours. Between the capital and Pécs, express railcar was placed in service which provided rapid and comfortable travel for the time. In contrast to the passenger trains' nine- or ten- hour-long journeys, the express completed the 245-km-long distance in five hours.

³⁸ 1st Engineer Division, 1st railway regiment, 3rd battalion's 1st and 3rd squadron served on the railway's network of southwest Hungary.

³⁹ "November 1-től ismét közép-európai időszámítás lesz a magyar vasutakon," Új Dunántúl, October 31, 1945, 4.

After the stabilization of the monetary system and the resultant overturning of the twenty per cent fare reduction, revenues began to increase due also to some political meetings, not only in Budapest, but in the larger towns as well.⁴⁰

By the end of 1946, coal supplies were at a critical level again but this time trains were not cancelled, even though the winter of 1946–1947 was extremely cold. Snowstorms were followed by a late snowfall in March, leading to the suspension of traffic on many lines for five to eight days; with the ensuing thaw, floods damaged many bridges and railroad embankments, and once again the long-distance trains between Budapest and Pécs had to be diverted. On top of this, the tight passenger carriage park and locomotive park reached its end of capacity, it was not able to run more passenger trains. Public security also improved as the reconstruction continued.

On May 4, 1947, the first schedule which was not dissimilar to the pre-war peacetime timetables came into effect. Twice a week the Budapest–Trieste–Venice international express ran on the southern railway line of Lake Balaton. One was able to travel in sleeping cars on night trains, and some Balaton-bound trains were equipped with restaurant wagons too. In addition, direct cars ran to Keszthely and Harkányfürdő, two popular spa towns. Most of the domestic trains ran exclusively with third-class carriages, but fast trains had second class as well, only the Budapest–Trieste express had first class. With the new timetable, not only were the comfort and the quality of services improved, but the number of trains also increased.

One year later, on May 9, 1948, the first peacetime timetable took effect, although the priorities had changed slightly. The primary goal was to serve the transport needs of workers and students. The quality of travel was also greater, more restaurant or buffet cars could be found in long-distance trains. In the summer, many special “bath trains” arrived at the stations around Lake Balaton, and some direct trains to Harkányfürdő, too. Besides these special domestic trains, twenty-two Czechoslovakian – Čedok-trains – seasonal train pairs ran through Hungary headed to the shores of the Adriatic Sea and back.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For example, the 3rd Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party or the biggest party, the Independent Smallholder Parties organized Peasant-days in September 1946. Both were held in Budapest, where the parties fought it out over significant fare discounts and charter trains. MÁV Arch. PG. 1. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, September 1946.

⁴¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Summary report on the output of the regional directorate in 1948. Between Budapest and Lake Balaton, 93 train-pairs ran in 1948, without the relief trains at the significant feasts. On other relations 36 train-pairs ran in the summer. A special train of workers of the Weiss Manfréd Industry arrived to Siófok in August 1948: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6846>

Until the summer of 1946, basic foodstuffs, coal, and some international aid deliveries constituted freight traffic, and general trade only restarted after the economic stabilization. As mentioned earlier, the autumnal harvest caused serious transport problems, especially sugar-beet delivery. Besides, from October 1946 significant quantities of iron ore arrived from Yugoslavia, which demonstrated that international transport had reopened in the region. Freight traffic only ran on the main lines between the county towns, or between the capital and the larger towns. Transport required an excessive amount of time, the average speed of freight trains was terribly slow, and due to the lack of locomotives the mainline fast freight trains had multiple duties, coupling and decoupling wagons at the stations. From autumn 1946, to achieve faster freight deliveries light collector freight trains came into use gradually on the mainlines. These swifter train collected the wagons from smaller sections at railway junctions so the fast freight trains had only to stop at the junctions.

The rebuilding of former economic routes accelerated in 1947. For example, from May the Yugoslavian-Czechoslovakian iron ore trade continued through Hungary, just as it had done before the war.

As freight traffic improved month after month, some railwaymen could not resist the temptation to steal from the delivered goods to gain some extra income and feed their families. MÁV issued severe directives to protect the goods, and its own fair name, but even so, until December, the compensation that the railway had to pay for the stolen items continued to increase.⁴²

Besides, it was not only the quantity of delivered goods that was growing, but its structure also changed. For example, new fruits and vegetables appeared within consignments in the region. It is a matter for further research to determine whether this change was due to the economic and agrarian reforms, or was caused by changes in the region's population, or maybe both.⁴³ Nevertheless, the volume of transported products in autumn 1947 was greater than the autumn prior to the war's outbreak, and this growth continued the following year. This positive tendency emerged not only as a result of

⁴² MÁV Arch. PG. 2. Minutes of the meetings of regional directorate's leadership, October and December 1947. To achieve some extra incomings legally, most of the railwaymen took on some additional work. Especially in summer, e.g., taking part in the harvest or other agricultural-work, others undertook manual work; employment depended on personal qualifications and possibilities within the neighborhood. That is why most tried to take holidays in the harvest-period. If they could not, they often reported sick. To prevent this, the regional directorate employed a patient visitor status with tighter affirmation for four months in summer of 1948 the check and filter out fakers.

⁴³ MÁV Arch. PG. 2. Monthly operational record on the regional directorate, September 1947.

the war compensation and reconstruction program, but also the state’s “three-year plan” program.

| Year | Transported paying passengers | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| | MÁV Total | Directorate Pécs | |
| | passenger | passenger | % |
| June-Dec 1945 | 38 707 128 | 3 995 324 | 10,32 |
| 1946 | 80 811 421 | 4 759 566 | 5,89 |
| 1947 | 91 515 843 | 12 192 660 | 13,32 |
| 1948 | 113 701 501 | 9 815 366 | 8,63 |
| Total | 324 735 893 | 30 762 916 | 9,47 |

Chart 6. Number and rate of transported paying passengers.

| Period | Train-kilometers | | | Compound-ton-kilometers | | | Freight-ton-kilometers | | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------|-------|-------------------------|-----------|-------|------------------------|---------|-------|
| | Total | Pécs | % | Total | Pécs | % | Total | Pécs | % |
| June-Dec 1945 | 6 931 237 | 1 247 010 | 17,99 | 3 077 549 | 434 584 | 14,12 | 916 901 | 124 397 | 13,56 |
| 1946 | 17 604 354 | 2 572 311 | 14,61 | 6 752 013 | 805 182 | 11,92 | 2 074 764 | 251 067 | 12,1 |
| 1947 | 22 457 629 | 4 482 342 | 19,95 | 10 720 043 | 1 506 692 | 14,05 | 3 237 282 | 484 888 | 14,97 |
| 1948 | 40 739 410 | 6 278 446 | 15,41 | 14 022 093 | 1 917 346 | 13,67 | 4 053 331 | 580 558 | 14,32 |

Chart 7. Traffic-output of the Pécs directorate.⁴⁴

The charts above display an antinomic status of the regional directorate’s traffic performance. The two high-points of recorded paying passengers are 1946 and 1947. The negative downturn in 1946 was probably caused by those seeking food and taking trips from the capital city and larger industrial towns – the problem of passengers’ registration and the round-trip tickets causing a modifier effect on statistics. The following year’s outstanding data was a result of summer vacation travelling, especially the cheap, low-cost trips organized by trade unions. It is also probable that migration both outward, i.e., Hungarian Germans’ deportation from the country, and inward, i.e., the Czechoslovakian Hungarians’ banishment into Hungary had an increasing effect on the number of passengers. Poor peasant families from the east in 1945–1946, and expelled Hungarians from Czechoslovakia in 1947–1948 arrived in the region’s wealthy Swabian villages. The fall in

⁴⁴ Train-kilometers: travelled distance of all trains. Compound-ton-kilometers: product arithmetical of train-kilometers and total weight of trains. Freight-ton-kilometers: product arithmetical of transported freight and the distance of delivery.

passengers in the last year is puzzling, perhaps the nascent conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet camp and the interior political changes this caused were to blame.

The high rate of kilometers in 1945 was a result of Russian military shipments, the establishment of a filter camp in Kaposvár for those returning from the west, and the trains from and to Budapest which were diverted. Two years later, the deportations and immigration had an upward effect which can be explained by the fact that the region traded mainly agricultural products that generated freight traffic during the July–November period, while industrial activity trailed behind the national average, despite the importance of the coal in Mecsek. Although important international railway lines ran through the directorate, international traffic could be considered low on the whole.

Moreover, we have to mention the surprising changes in the population that significantly transformed the demographics of South Transdanubia. Only the railroad could be used to cope with the population change, which caused a serious social shock after the war. The regional directorate was affected by all three organized settlements. Before that, however, a considerable number of the Seklers expelled from Moldavia (Romania) to Bácska in 1941–1942, and fleeing from the Yugoslavian partisans in autumn 1944, found shelter in the counties of Baranya and Tolna.⁴⁵

In the summer of 1945, the government organized a settlement campaign for the overpopulated eastern regions, and consequently poor peasant families were moved to Hungarian Germans' houses, in most cases – as a collective punishment – the new householders were set upon by the indigenous families.⁴⁶ These domestic settlement processes in Southeast Transdanubia continued until the autumn of 1946, when the settlement campaign was stopped in order to reserve places for the persecuted Czechoslovakian Hungarians. Until December 4, 1946, 16,297 families were given new land in the three counties, which translates into nearly 62,000 people moving into the region within one and a half years, assuming that an average family constituted 3,8 members.⁴⁷

The deportation of Hungarian Germans started on January 19, 1946, when the first train with 40 wagons departed from Budaörs, a village near the capital. Approximately a thousand people were transported by train and, according to the Hungarian Telegraph Bureau's report, 30 people were accommodated in bunk beds in cattle cars. The depor-

⁴⁵ Bácska: a fertile agricultural area in northern Serbia, between the rivers of Danube and Tisza.

⁴⁶ Besides other neighboring countries, 172,000 people fled to Hungary from Rumania, USSR, and Yugoslavia. We still do not know the influence of these movements upon the regional directorate's territory. Tamás Stark, "Háborús népességmozgás a Kárpát-medencében (1938–1948)," in *KSH Történelmi Demográfiai Évkönyve 2001* (Budapest: KSH Népegyetudományi Kutatóintézet, 2001), 389–410.

⁴⁷ Miklós Füzes, *Forgószeél*, (Pécs: Baranya Megyei Levéltár, 1990) 40–43.

tation of the South Transdanubian Germans began in April in Tolna county, while in Baranya county in late May. The Swabian transports were halted by the Americans in mid-June, but in November six more trains left for Germany: in total 23,058 people were transported to West Germany from the region. The last stage was commenced by the Hungarian-Soviet convention of July 17, 1947, when Moscow accepted 50,000 Germans in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. The first train left on August 19, via Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸ Until June 1948, 63,794 people were relocated from the territory of the directorate to the Anglo-Saxon and the Soviet zones of Germany.⁴⁹

According to the few MÁV records, there were eight relocation trains from Baranya county and one from Szekszárd in September 1947. According to the schedules, the trains arrived via Budapest at the Hungarian-Czechoslovakian border station in Szob. From Szekszárd the journey lasted 17 hours, but from Mohács or the southernmost point of the country, Magyarbóly, the trip took 24 hours.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, only in March-May 1948 was data on the deportations issued for the directorate meetings, on the basis of which can be concluded that a total of 12 trains were sent into Germany, two of them from Somogy county and the rest from Tolna.⁵¹

In addition, the railwaymen were also hit hard by the Danubian Swabians' deportations. The chief of Bátaszék station wrote a letter in August 1947 asking the director for help, reporting a severe problem triggered by the restarted deportations. Approximately two hundred railwaymen in the vicinity were threatened with deportation due to their ancestry. As a result of the ongoing tension, the outcome of the completed settlement processes and their insecurity, a proper service could not be provided by them.⁵²

Besides Hungary, Yugoslavia was also trying to get rid of its German nationals. Those who could not flee in the winter of 1944, were later put onto trains which set off via Hungary to Germany, without food, water, and medical supplies. The number of trains is unknown, as well as how many were received by the US authorities in Germany

⁴⁸ MNL OL. M-KS. 274. 10. 35. Report by István Friss on the negotiations in Prague, August 14, 1947. István Friss, member of the Hungarian Communist Party leadership negotiated between 7–12 August, 1947, with the members of Czechoslovakian government about the crossing conditions of the deported Swabians' trains.

⁴⁹ Füzes, *Forgószél*, 48–50.

Baranya: in 1946: 70,66 people, in 1947: 4,189 people and in 1948: 9,264 people.

Tolna: in 1946: 15,992 people, in 1947: 8,853 people and in 1948: 13,431 people.

Somogy: in 1948: 4,999 people.

⁵⁰ MÁV Arch. DNR. Document No. 113241/1947.

⁵¹ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, from March to May 1948.

⁵² MNL OL. Z 1523. 69. Minutes of the conference of regional directors, August 11, 1947.

and how many of them were turned back. During the long weeks of travelling, epidemics decimated the “passengers” due to the harsh conditions. It happened in the case of the refusal of the Yugoslavian train from Germany, which was waiting from January 25 to February 10, 1946, at the Murakeresztúr border station, with 1,378 people on board waiting to be handed over to the Yugoslavian railways. During this time, 78 died of enteritis.⁵³

The reasons for the disintegration in post-war Czechoslovakia was caused by nationality, so the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was also declared to be collectively guilty just as the Sudeten Germans. The Anglo-Saxon powers did not support Prague’s unilateral deportation plan for the expulsion of the Hungarian minority, calling on the two governments to negotiate. Budapest was forced to conclude the Hungarian-Slovakian Population Exchange Convention on February 27, 1946, according to which, based on Katalin Vadkerty’s account, a total of 89,660 people was moved to Hungary between April 1947 and December 1948, while 37,885 Slovaks arrived in Slovakia from Hungary.⁵⁴

Until the end of 1948, 2,583 families in 118 villages of Baranya county, 366 families in 24 settlements in Somogy county, and 1,624 families in 53 villages of Tolna county were resettled.⁵⁵ Trains carrying Hungarians from Czechoslovakian territory were recorded for the first time only in the October and November monthly reports in 1947, but only in passing, as a reason for the increase in traffic. On March 21, 1948, however, there were special trains from Baranya and Tolna commandeered to carry the deported Hungarians to their conference in Pécs.⁵⁶ In the final year, the arrival of a total of 147 settler trains was recorded in the annual summary of the regional directorate.⁵⁷

⁵³ MÁV Arch. DNR. Document No. 2546/1946.

⁵⁴ Katalin Vadkerty, *A kitelepítéstől a reszlovakizációig* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2007), 304–305. The first train of deported Hungarians arrived to Szob, border of Hungary, see: <http://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6388>

⁵⁵ Füzes, *Forgószél*, 40–43.

⁵⁶ MÁV Arch. PG. 3. Monthly operational records on the regional directorate, March 1948.

⁵⁷ See footnote no. 41. Only the report of November 1948 contains specific data, according to which the 17 settler-trains received 715 wagons, which brought 365 members of 87 families with their belongings (furniture, agricultural machines, and motorcycles) and with 829 cattle, domesticated animals. The following month, a train with 35 wagons left from Pécs towards Czechoslovakia with Hungarian Slovaks on board.



**Picture 4. Deported Hungarians cooking in front of their wagons, 1947
(Fortepan, No. 32734)**

Summary

This paper has attempted to present the MÁV Regional Directorate Pécs's solutions to different problems and their effectiveness in the years after World War II. The data itself, of course, is unable to reflect the complexity of the processes, and can only be understood if it is viewed against the political, economic, and social circumstances. A national railroad is a huge cobweb, if there is a problem at one end it has implications for the railroad and the railwaymen at the other end. It is not disputed that the reconstruction was conducted in an atmosphere of desperation on the part of the railroads, while railwaymen were affected by redundancies – just as other public servants –, in which 193 officers, 574 auxiliary officers, and 606 ushers were removed from the regional directorate. There were great deprivations that impacted the railwaymen's ability to do their work: not only were food supplies insufficient for their families but the serious shortage of clothing and footwear throughout these years also impacted morale.

In presenting the above processes, this paper illustrated the difficulties faced by the railwaymen and how these issues were gradually overcome allowing for the continuous improvement in rail transport in South Transdanubia, which ultimately helped reintegrate the region into the country's economic circulation.

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