

## A BRIEF REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS IN HUNGARY, 1990

The year 1989 had a special role in the 'history' of homelessness in Hungary. This was the time when this phenomenon took up its position within the scope of the interest of the mass media and when official decision-makers began to consider this problem. This was the time of the first demonstration of the homeless. This year saw the opening of the first welfare shelters and the first effort to handle and localise the problem. In this brief account we are seeking to answer the questions of who can be considered homeless, what groups and situations this category covers and what has happened in relation to this problem in the last year and a half. The emphasis laid on revealing elementary information, however fragmentary, in preference over a deeper analysis and evaluation of the social background.

## WHO IS HOMELESS?

At present there is no official recognition of the state of homelessness therefore there can be no talk of official definitions, registration, or procedures, either.\* Thus we are left with the possibility of the sociological definition of the problem on the basis of social practise.\*\*

It is worth distinguishing two groups immediately. One is the group of the *effectively homeless* and the other is of those living under the *threat of homelessness*\*\*\*

*The effectively homeless are those people who have no safe and certain, relatively reliable solution to the problem of where to live.* Those who spend their nights in public spaces (in the streets, stations, parks, on benches, or under trees, in caves or in deserted buildings, in basements or boilerhouses, empty railway wagons or other temporary shelters.) We also have to include those who do not spend their night in public territory or illegal hiding places but have to make an effort day by day (and from morning till night) to find somewhere where they would be tolerated overnight, in other words those, who do not know in the morning where they would sleep that night or in two or three days time. (To this group belong those who sell their body to gain somewhere to stay for a night or who are admitted into the homes of passing acquaintances or drinking companions for a night or two, or those who spend a night in an official shelter every now and then.)

It is important to point out that in accordance with the spirit of our definition *we do not consider as effectively homeless* those who are without a home of their own in general, such as young people living together with their families, or lodgers, or those living in very low quality, 'substandard' homes. Neither does our definition cover those who live for a long time in various institutions (state orphanages or reformatories, hospitals, old people's homes, prisons, hostels, workers' hostels, etc.). As we shall see the latter groups live *under the threat of homelessness*, constantly replacing the effectively homeless and therefore it is a vital task from the point of view of the problem of homelessness to keep them under observation.

In the course of the United Nations' programme which declared 1987 to be the 'Year of the Homeless' the definition of homelessness expanded to those living in cellars, streets, underpasses, deserted houses, those who had become homeless in consequence of a natural or human disaster. It also covered people who are not in the position to have access to drinking water and cleaning facilities, whose personal safety or tenancy is in danger and those whom poverty forces to live in slums or in cities. According to UN estimations, approximately one fifth of the people of the Earth are without minimally sufficient homes, and almost a hundred million people have no shelter whatsoever.\*\*\*\* This broad definition was primarily aiming to draw attention to the unsolved problems of the position of the poor of the 'third world'.

In the United States a regulation of precedent value prescribes that local authorities should look after the poor (naturally, only with relative success) the enforcement of which is granted by law.+ In the course of an empirical survey a group of American researchers considered as homeless those who (1) for a maximum of seven days before the survey and for a maximum of two weeks had stayed with a friend or a relative without payment or (2) in a place the fee of

\* Except for the regulation concerning police procedures which prescribe that for the sake of their own safety "helpless, homeless or in any way vulnerable persons, lost or straying children or adolescents..." have to be taken into police protection.

\*\* The forcing of exact definitions and quantitative exactitude often reveals that the author perceives his role as a kind of central decision-maker, whereas a problem-oriented approach lays the emphasis on the demand for qualitative analysis.

\*\*\* The excellent Canadian researchers of this matter also apply this distinction with a similar interpretation. See: H. Peter Oberlander and Arthur L. Fallick, *Chelter or Homes? A Contribution to the Search for Solutions to Homelessness in Canada. (A Progress Report)*, 1987.

\*\*\*\* Building for the Homeless. The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987). United Nations.

+ McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987.

which was being paid by some welfare office or (3) live in a temporary social shelter or (4) live in unusual places (e.g. in deserted buildings, in cars, huts etc.).\*

In England there is also a law prescribing the care of the poor in a narrow sense. Local authorities help those registered as homeless in the given district by rent-benefits, by mediating cheap rented flats or by securing a temporary (family) shelter. Most of these homeless are those who had had to move out of a tenancy and failed to find a new one, those who could not afford to pay rent at a market value, whose homes had become dangerous or impossible to live in or those whom family conflicts had put into a dangerous position.

Finally, we cannot proceed without mentioning that until the 1952 wave of nationalisation which was followed by the first housing code of 1953, the Hungarian legal system also contained regulations concerning homelessness. At that time communal (state or local authority) ownership of homes played only a complementary role beside a private dominated housing sector. In these conditions those people were considered homeless who had failed to acquire a home in the regular market and it was up to the local authorities to find some sort of--usually substandard--housing for these people. 'Those people must be considered *homeless* who, in consequence of their conditions, are incapable of providing a home for themselves and their families.'

"An emergency home is one which is secured (build, rented, etc.) by the state, the legal authority or the local authority *exclusively for the homeless* and is registered as such. An emergency home is granted to those in need by the authority as a *public benefit*."\*\*

(In Budapest as early as the early 1930's the application of these regulations had to be restricted to *evicted families*.)

In current language the Hungarian regulations before 1953 declared the responsibility of local governments (in the case of larger towns that of the central government) in providing shelter for the homeless, but they did not prescribe the exact way and form in which this should be carried out locally. In larger towns there was a special category of homes and special institutions functioning for this purpose so that the local government had to solve the problem practically in regular market conditions (naturally, with some limitations and with the help of charity organisations), while homeless persons or families were granted a shelter in a non-market procedure, in the form of social support.

## GROUPS OF HOMELESS IN TODAY'S HUNGARY--WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

In the following part of the article we shall make an attempt to describe the ways and reasons of people becoming homeless in Hungary today.\*\*\* The various reasons or groups of reasons, naturally, do not separate sharply from each other in actual life. Our description is based primarily on the sociological review of the everyday practical experience of social workers involved in the handling of homeless people.

*Young people running away from home*, usually aged between 12 and 19. Their running away is usually connected with the psychological crises of early adolescence and the transition to late adolescence. A typical background is one of a problematic family, the alcoholism of a parent (or parents), the deviant or delinquent (criminal) way of life of the parents or the crisis caused by divorce or a search for a new partner. The young people either run away from such an environment or are actually thrown out and are left without a home. It is not accidental that such a background is frequently connected with drug-taking and unsettled sexual relations.

*Young people, on the verge of adulthood, running away from children's homes* (orphanages or reformatories); of a similar age as the previous group. Those young people also belong here who, at the age of 18, are automatically sent away from children's homes and are often left with no family background and nowhere to live. Young people brought up in such homes are not prepared for an independent existence, and their subsequent care is not ensured. They are socialised for a communal way of life and thus become 'institutionalised'. Often they learn from each other minor criminal activities, drug-taking and loose sexual modes of behaviour and find it practically impossible to break out of such a subcultural circle.

\* Piliavin--Westerfelt--Elliot, Estimating Mental Illness among the Homeless: The Effects of Choice--Based Sampling. In: Social Problems, Dec. 1989.)

\*\* 4780/1932. M. E. regulation concerning the legal status of emergency homes. For more details on this question see: Dezső Schuler, The Question of Homelessness in the Capital City. Statistical Review, 1934  
.Péter Győr, Social Housing Policies in Budapest from the Unification of the City until the 1930's (New York--Budapest conference, 1987)

Péter Győri--Léslő Gábor, Rummaging in the Housing Market (MS, 1990.)

\*\*\* See also: Péter Győri, Homelessness in Hungary. A Summary for 1990. UN -- HABITAT.

*Young and middle-aged drug-addicts*, usually originating in the previous groups. It is mainly the relatively easily available--but just as dangerous--practice of glue-sniffing and taking sedative cocktails that is becoming more and more widespread. Both the medical and the psychological treatment of this problem is completely unsolved in Hungary. It is partly this fact and partly the condemning, criminalising attitude of the general public which is responsible for the exclusion of such addicts from social integration, and for the threat of homelessness they live in. They are thrown out of their families, their relationships break up, they fail to find work and their employment relations are generally unsettled as well, and their way of life and company are entangled with the mildest or the middle layers of the criminal underworlds.

*Alcoholics, psychologically or somatically ill and handicapped people* form a much wider and much more heterogeneous group than the previous one. Most of these people are middle-aged or old. Some of them are more or less capable of working and manage to earn enough for daily food by some occasional work or in some other way. Others are incapable of working, some of them officially registered as disabled as well, living in poverty. Their relations with their microenvironment are often broken. They were usually expelled from their home, if they ever had one, or they left it behind voluntarily and are now drifting aimlessly.

*Old, decrepit tramps* who usually come from the previous groups. Most of them have lived this specialised way of life, different from that of other homeless people, permanently and for a long time. Old people's homes are reluctant to admit these people but if such a possibility occurs it is often rejected as these people usually do not want to give up their usual way of life. They only compromise with the institutionalised possibility and way of life in the final case. As other groups of homeless people despise them these wandering homeless old people usually keep away from others' company.

People who voluntarily take to living rough, voicing unconventional norms and values are those who "choose" the exclusion from society as an alternative to badly paid, hard physical labour which offers them no future prospects. They are capable of conscious movement and organisation but behind their "choices" we can always retrace the above mentioned reasons of raw reality.

*Members of the underworld or those who have just come out of prison* are usually middle-aged or young adults who had also lost their home--if they had ever had one. Their care and rehabilitation is not catered for, either. Some of them have no other choice but homelessness, others, however, use this subculture for a hiding place.

*Occasional workers, ex-commuters, those living in workers' hostels, unemployed people* are usually middle-aged people capable of working. Many of them are skilled workers even if they do not work in their own field. Their earnings do not cover the increasing costs of lodgings or their income is uneven. They are often left without work or money. They are suffering simultaneously from the increase of regional unemployment and the growing expenses of everyday existence. Wherever they look for work they fail to find a home. If they had once had one they later lost it and became homeless. Within these conditions they still try to live as settled a life as possible.

*Divorced people* after the breaking down of their marriage or relationship are often left without a place to live. They sometimes also fail to recover financially, mentally and psychically. Contrary to several thousand other divorced people, they are the ones who become completely displaced, getting entangled in alcoholism, deviance and finally a state of homelessness.

*Evicted people* who had not paid rent or the fees of public utilities or were using a flat or house illegally (because they had taken it over illegally, or because they were only tenants, or because their care and inheritance contract with an old person failed) become homeless through an official procedure and their future is of no further interest to anybody. This often happens to young single mothers with young children or to young couples. Their situation is also completely uncatered for.

Because of the wide variety of the possible causes of homelessness and thus of the problems which arise from it, only well-considered, differentiated strategies for its handling can lead to efficient results. In certain cases we need the radical transformation of already existing ('homelessness-producing') institutions and procedures. In other cases problems are due to the lack of a network of operative medical and welfare institutions. Some reasons are rooted in the functioning of local governments and of housing policies in general. In many cases a temporary shelter has to be accepted as an involuntary solution.

We do not know the quantitative data of these necessarily overlapping groups. We only have occasional fragments of quantitative information which can only be interpreted in themselves with great moderation and can in no way serve as basis for generalisation.

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PEOPLE AT THE WELFARE SHELTER AT NO 3. VAJDAHUNYAD U., IN THE 8th DISTRICT OF BUDAPEST, ON JAN. 8th, 1990\*

The number of people living in the shelter: 51

Men: 40                      Born in Budapest: 16

Women: 11                  Born elsewhere: 35

completed less than

8 classes of primary  
education: 7

completed 8 classes: 27

completed more than

8 classes (not more than a vocational school): 17

aged under 19: 8

20 to 29: 21

30 to 49: 11

50 to 59: 4

over 60: 7

Has not got an identity card: 46

Has not got an employment register card: 43

Has no address (even fictitious): 7

Their address is an Institute  
of Child and Youth Protection where they had spent time: 8

Spent some time in a state children's home: 24

Spent some time in prison: 22

Handicapped or seriously ill: 25

Regularly drinks alcohol: 38

Occasionally or regularly takes drugs: 13

\*This shelter functions as part of the Center for the Treatment of the Homeless of the Shelter Foundation, which we shall talk about later. The data reflects the situation at the time of the official opening of the shelter early in January, following the demonstrations of the homeless in December.

INFORMATIONS CONCERNING THE 'ROUGH' YOUNG PERSONS IN THE CARE OF GYULA MIKUS\*

Age

|                 | 13-15 | 16-18 | 19-21 | 22-24 | 25-27 | 28-30 | 31- | Altogether |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|------------|
| Men             | 3     | 41    | 76    | 42    | 23    | 12    | 27  | 224        |
| Within that:    |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| lived in        |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| children's home | 2     | 22    | 53    | 28    | 18    | 10    | 11  | 144        |
| has been in     |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| prison          | -     | 6     | 26    | 17    | 13    | 7     | 17  | 86         |
| Women:          | 13    | 22    | 29    | 6     | 1     | 3     | 2   | 76         |
| Within that:    |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| lived in        |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| children's home | 8     | 7     | 19    | 4     | 1     | 2     | -   | 41         |
| been in prison  | 1     | 3     | 1     | -     | 1     | 1     | 8   |            |
| Total           | 16    | 63    | 105   | 48    | 24    | 15    | 29  | 300        |
| Within that:    |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| lived in        |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| children's      |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| home            | 10    | 29    | 72    | 32    | 19    | 12    | 11  | 185        |
| has been is     |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |            |
| prison          | 1     | 7     | 29    | 18    | 13    | 8     | 18  | 94         |

(Continued)

| Duration           |    |            |             |           |           |         |            |
|--------------------|----|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------|------------|
| less than 3 months |    | 3-6 months | 6-12 months | 1-3 years | 3 years + | no data | Altogether |
| Lives rough        |    |            |             |           |           |         |            |
| Men                | 51 | 68         | 50          | 31        | 20        | 6       | 224        |
| Women              | 30 | 21         | 12          | 9         | 1         | 3       | 76         |
| Total              | 81 | 89         | 62          | 40        | 21        | 9       | 300        |
| Unemployed         |    |            |             |           |           |         |            |
| Men                | 47 | 71         | 59          | 30        | 13        | 4       | 224        |
| Women              | 25 | 22         | 10          | 9         | -         | 10      | 76         |
| Total              | 72 | 93         | 69          | 39        | 13        | 14      | 300        |

\*Gyula Mikus: Investigations into the Homeless ('rough') Microspheres in Budapest (MS). The author is a recognised expert of the treatment of young 'rough' homeless people, in the last 15 years he has worked as an advisor in the Institute of Child and Youth Protection at Kállai Éva St., Budapest, where he obtained his experience.

#### INFORMATION CONCERNING THOSE LIVING IN TEMPORARY WORKER'S HOSTELS IN BUDAPEST\*

##### Semi-skilled and unskilled workers 366

##### Within this

Unskilled worker involved in unidentified activity 111

Semi-skilled worker involved in unidentified activity 58

##### Cleaner 73

Kitchen worker, chambermaid, waiter 32

Boilerman, porter, driver's mate 28

Night watchman, caretaker, concierge 15

##### Other 49

Medical worker 187

Within this: orderlies 111

Theatre staff, assistants 50

##### Carriers, others 26

Unskilled non-physical (typist, clerk) 130

Skilled worker (locksmith, driver, electrician) 77

Intellectual with tertiary education (teacher, engineer) 20

Pensioner 176

Unidentified 53

Total 1,009

\*The data is based on the 1988 register of five temporary homes of mixed purpose, only partly for the homeless, in the care of the Executive Committee of the Capital City Council. See: REPORT 1., 1989 (Social Committee for the Homeless).

# INFORMATION CONCERNING THE HOMELESS OF THE LARGE CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA\*

|                                                                   | Single women<br>242 people = 100 % | Women with children<br>268 people = 100 % | Single men<br>1042 people = 100 % |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Age 18-30                                                         | 39                                 | 61                                        | 25                                |
| 31-50                                                             | 41                                 | 37                                        | 54                                |
| 51-64                                                             | 19                                 | 2                                         | 18                                |
| 65                                                                | 1                                  | 0                                         | 3                                 |
| Duration of homelessness                                          |                                    |                                           |                                   |
| up to 3 months                                                    | 36                                 | 41                                        | 16                                |
| 3 to 13 months                                                    | 28                                 | 29                                        | 33                                |
| 12 to 24 months                                                   | 10                                 | 15                                        | 17                                |
| over 24 months                                                    | 26                                 | 15                                        | 34                                |
| Duration of unemployment                                          |                                    |                                           |                                   |
| up to 3 months                                                    | 12                                 | 11                                        | 9                                 |
| 3 to 13 months                                                    | 34                                 | 24                                        | 30                                |
| 12 to 24 months                                                   | 11                                 | 14                                        | 14                                |
| over 24 months                                                    | 43                                 | 51                                        | 47                                |
| Has been treated<br>as a nervous patient                          | 27                                 | 8                                         | 19                                |
| Has attempted<br>suicide                                          | 26                                 | 14                                        | 21                                |
| Has been under<br>drug-treatment                                  | 19                                 | 7                                         | 37                                |
| Has been in prison                                                | 20                                 | 13                                        | 40                                |
| How many days did you<br>go without eating<br>anything last week? |                                    |                                           |                                   |
| There was no such day                                             | 80                                 | 83                                        | 60                                |
| One day                                                           | 9                                  | 10                                        | 22                                |
| Two days                                                          | 6                                  | 6                                         | 9                                 |
| Three days or more                                                | 5                                  | 2                                         | 8                                 |

Even in awareness of these orientative pieces of information it is only on the basis of direct fieldwork that we can say that in Hungary certain forms of *social isolation* play an especially high role in the generation of homelessness. These are, among others, the background of years spent in children's homes (orphanages or reformatories), or of dropping out of a closer and a wider network of family relations, having a family with only one active wage-earner in it, being disabled, a mental or a physical handicap, or any other form of the loss of the working ability. At the same time phenomena like the effective homelessness of families or single parents with children, eviction, long-term unemployment or the loss of home because of arrears of utility fees are much less dominant in Hungary. The threat of these, however, is becoming more and more palpable.\*\*

In consequence of the rather more 'spectacular' homelessness of some cities homelessness is usually thought of as a metropolitan phenomenon. Although we do not know exact figures, we have seen written reports from the workers of several local social institutions about the existence of homelessness in typical out-of-town centers, urban slums in regions of economic depression.\*\*\* Several 'provincial' colonies, sites, hiding places, stations etc. could be listed, side-

\* M. R. Burt--B. E. Cohen, Differences among Homeless Single Women with Children and Single Men. Social Problems, 1989 December. Researchers intended to make a representative empirical sociological survey about the homeless of American cities with more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. They gave questionnaire to people living in temporary shelters, and those having meals at welfare kitchens who claimed to be homeless.

\*\* There are no temporary or workers' hostels for families or parents with children at all in Hungary. The few attempts at sheltered housing have already proved insufficient. Some homeless families, for want of a better choice, have 'arbitra' occupied the worst quality, empty emergency council homes. In consequence of the increasing number of local authority evictions they often lose even this possibility. For more detail see the permanent column 'Under the poverty line' in the weekly magazine 'Beszélő'.

\*\*\* See the answers given to the circular letter of March 1990 of the Social Committee of the Homeless. REPORT 3-4. (In preparation.)

buildings, sheds and derelict farms where today's seasonal farm-hands, servants, abandoned "village idiots" try to find shelter from time to time.)

Effective homelessness is usually a *temporary state*. Even those for whom it is a lasting way of life there are phases when they have somewhere to live--only to return to the streets after some time. But the more typical scenario is that those who are out of the 'sphere of danger' become settled again after a while and their place among the effectively homeless is taken by somebody else.

Homelessness is usually one of the manifestations of a complex social state of deprivation. In the course of the handling of this problem it must be born in mind that *the lack of a home or of the possibility of a lasting and stable solution is only one (but one very significant dimension of this complex state of deprivation.)*

#### THE NUMBER OF THOSE LIVING IN THE SPHERE OF THE DANGER OF EFFECTIVE HOMELESSNESS

The 'counting' of the homeless could only be very limited even in the case of their registration. IT is typical that even the United Nations statistics of 1985 which claimed an intention toward comprehensiveness could only account for official registration of the homeless from six countries and even those showed rather tenuous results.\* It is obviously the high number of various methods of definitions and enumeration which is responsible for the discrepancies between the various estimations of American researchers with regard to the number of the homeless in America. (The results of these estimations vary between 2,50,00 and 3 million or 11 to 120 people for every ten thousand citizens.)\*\*

In the following part of the article we are going to look at such peripher situations, reflected marginally in the 1980 census, which represent spheres of danger still accessible by statistical methods. Some of these cases cover actual homelessness while another portion of them (the size of which can only be estimated empirically) imply in their present state a menace of imminent homelessness.\*\*\* (Naturally, it was a lack of a better and more up-to-date stock of data that made us turn to the census of 1980.)

It is inherent in the practical order of the execution of the census that people living in places which are not registered by the local administration as places of residence do not get included in the census. This means that census officers do not even meet most of the effectively homeless, rough-living people. The classification of those places that they do come across is essentially in accordance with the internationally accepted order of the classification of types of human habitation.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL CATEGORISATION OF THE TYPES OF HUMAN DOMICILES\*\*\*\*

Usual residential units

Residential units

Caravan units

Other units

Temporary residential units

Units in non-residential buildings

Other, originally non-residential spaces

Hotels, hostels

Camps

Other places

of habitation

Institutions

Further other places of habitation

#### PEOPLE WITHOUT THEIR OWN HOME:

In 1980 the part of the population not living in a home was:

360,615 persons

People registered in institutions (who at the time of the census had their official permanent address or officially registered temporary address at the institution):

children's homes, orphanages,

reformatories, students' hostels:

191,00 persons

\* Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics. United Nations, New York, 1985. (E.g. Finland: 488 people, Norway; 4,037 people, Pakistan: 106,154 people, India: 2,327,015 people).

\*\* See Burt and Cohen's essay mentioned earlier.

\*\*\* For more detail see: Péter Györi: On the Margin of the Statistics. IN: REPORT 2. Social Committee for the Homeless, 1989.

\*\*\*\* Gyula Sebestyén--Ágnes Sebestyén, Housing is a World-wide Problem, ÉTK, 1987.

|                                                                                                                                           |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| workers' hostels, building site                                                                                                           |                |
| barracks, tied accommodation, monasteries etc.                                                                                            | 92,000 persons |
| old people's homes, charity homes etc.                                                                                                    | 33,000 persons |
| hospitals, children's sanatoriums,<br>occupational therapy institutes,<br>alcohol withdrawal clinics etc.                                 | 60,000 persons |
| Another source tells us that in 1980<br>approximately 28,000 people were<br>to be found in prisons whose number<br>at the present time is | 12,000 persons |

The present day Hungarian census (which is also supposed to fulfil the role of registering all places of habitation) only handles the part of the population that lives in ordinary homes. Thus it is only the category of 'others' which allows us to believe that there are people at all in Hungary who do not live in ordinary homes. In fact, as we shall see, hundreds of thousands of people live in 'institutional households' and many others in '*other residential units*'.

In the course of the survey of buildings in search of 'places of human habitation' 1,189 "*inhabited economic buildings*" were found (smaller economic buildings which were not built for residential purposes, such as workshops, warehouses, garages, wash-houses etc.). 2,787 other places were registered as '*inhabited temporary, mobile or other facilities*' (such as huts, hovels, caravans, disused buses, circus-lorries, barges, caves etc.).

Beside the registration of buildings a registration of people's whereabouts was also carried out, in the course of which 11,086 '*other inhabited residential units*' were found (in Budapest 3,780). According to the definition these are *non-residential buildings* (shops, offices, workshops, warehouses, wash-houses, garages, press-houses etc.) used for a place of habitation without a technical transformation by at least one person. This category also includes *temporary, mobile and other places of habitation* (caravans, barges, railway wagons, caves, huts, hovels etc.). The number of people living in such places was 28,378 (7,622 of them is Budapest).

#### PEOPLE LIVING IN THE STATE OF PHYSICAL OR SOCIAL INSTABILITY OR JEOPARDY

The number of people registered by the census as *having no registered permanent address*, only a temporary registration, was

8,400

The number of tenants in a total of 100,000 *tenancy* flats was (in Budapest 49,000)  
(Tenants in one-roomed flats were 22,000 people.)

175,000

The number of *night-lodgers* in a total of 10,000 rooms was:  
(in Budapest 7.3 thousand people)

19,000

(15,000 people were night-lodgers in one-roomed flats.)

In terms of the classification according to *the right of using a place of residence* the 'others' category includes those who live in a whole flat or house *on a right of favour* or *without a right*. Altogether 8,300 such residences were found, 61 per cent of them were one roomed flats or houses (in Budapest 2,270 65 per cent one-roomed). The number of people living in such residences was (in Budapest; 5,420) altogether:

20,533

In terms of the classification according to *the position of a place of habitation* the 'others' category includes cellars, caves, 'foxholes'. Of these 266 were registered (91 in Budapest) and the number of people found in such places was (in Budapest: 217) altogether:

776

Residences *the walls of which belong to 'others'* category are temporary buildings with tin, wooden, paper, hardboard walls.

The number of these registered was (in Budapest 2130) altogether:  
(We do not know the number of people living in such domiciles.)

4,486

The number of people living in a habitation without a 'proper room' was (in Budapest: 20,371):

50,532

The number of people living with five or more others in a habitation with only one room was

26,000

The number of people who lived in a one-roomed habitation with no utilities was (in Budapest: 225,000):

1,548,000

The number of people living in flats or houses built before 1900 was (in Budapest: 306,000)

1,203,000

|                                                                                                                                                              |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The number of habitations registered in which there is less than 4 m <sup>2</sup> of roomspace per inhabitant was (in Budapest: 34,000) altogether:          | 135,000 |
| The number of those living in a "flat" or house or not larger than 19 m <sup>2</sup> in Budapest was:                                                        | 37,000  |
| within that the number of one-roomed habitations without utilities was:                                                                                      | 32,000  |
| The number of people living in a habitation smaller than 30 m <sup>2</sup> which was shared by two families or one family and at least one other person was: | 166,000 |

According to the 1984 microcensus there are 137,000 people who regularly sleep not in a room but in kitchens or other spaces in a building. At the same time they found 72,000 *emergency homes and other homes* (with a room less than 12 m<sup>2</sup> large and with no modern conveniences or with a room less than 6 m<sup>2</sup> large in non-residential spaces) were found. 12,000 'homes' were found consisting of only one space and having no proper room.

Information from the margin of the statistics shows that, if we only calculate those categories that do not overlap, there were at least 200,000 people living on the verge *or in danger of effective homelessness* in Hungary in 1980. This is only the figure revealed by people's statistically registered living conditions. In fact, to this category must be added the group of tens of thousands of divorced people, a certain portion of the 300,000 registered alcoholics, of handicapped people, whose number is not known, and a part of drug-takers.

The experience of those involved in the treatment of homeless people shows that the majority of effectively homeless people come from the above listed, and quantitatively characterised, groups at risk. The number of these homeless people, if we calculate the probable frequency of homelessness, may even increase to 30,000 (30 in every 10,000 people).

#### TENDENCIES AND EVENTS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS

A general impression is that the number of homeless people has increased sharply in the recent short period in Hungary and especially in Budapest. At the present moment a lack of reliable, or even comparable, data prevents us from reinforcing or doubting this opinion.

One thing that is certain is that increased publicity, demonstration and the decrease of police repression has made this earlier hidden problem more visible to the average citizen. It has also been observed that following the establishment of institutions for the aid of the homeless other deprived groups also seek help as 'homeless.'

In all probability the number of the effectively homeless has been *directly* increased by the following factors:

- the failure of the lowest spheres of housing, the utilisation of emergency homes for other purposes (through waiting lists), the increasing fees of lodgings and tenancies;
- the increasing number of cases of eviction by authority; of cases of people giving up their housing because of increased financial burdens, and of cases when young people and dependant old people are forced out of their homes;
- the closing down or transformation of several workers hostels,
- the abolishment of the legal persecution of work avoidance and the abolition of reformatories in 1989, the act of partial amnesty, the increase of the number of undetected criminals, and the so reading of drug-addiction in certain groups;
- the several effects of the increase of regional unemployment which caused a great number of people to flee into another without any opportunity for a "home".

The limits of this article make it unsuitable to discuss in detail the processes in the background of these phenomena, the major sources of homelessness (children's homes, prisons, mental asylums), and the persistent insufficient network of institutional welfare network (rehabilitation homes, welfare homes, various forms of financial support). We simply recall the history of the last one and a half to two years.

It is important to give a brief idea of the background, of the political transformation of the various segments of Hungarian society in this period, the organisation of new special interest groups, the emergence of doubts concerning the legitimacy of the existing institutional system. This might serve as an explanation for the appearance of a small, professional lobby advocating the interests of the homeless, following the rise of fees at the earlier mentioned, so called temporary workers' hostels in Budapest, at the beginning of 1989. It was through the activity of this group that the question of homelessness gained legitimacy, but while those who were affected by the problem began to recognize and define themselves as a separate social group, the solution of the problem has still not reached the level of even the most basic decisions.

Unable to answer new challenges, welfare and local administration authorities only started taking hurried emergency measures when they were frightened by the mass of homeless people starting a sit-in demonstration in reaction to the drastic measure which, in protection of the civil population, ordered the closing of railway stations. For want of better solutions these authorities were forced to accept the help of such new civilian and charity organisations with which they had earlier refused to cooperate. These ecclesiastic and secular 'laymen', together with newly trained social workers, were the first ones to work in the first homes and shelters for the homeless. (The course of events was identical outside the capital, in the towns of Pécs, Debrecen, Tatabánya, Miskolc etc. in the winter of 1989.)

A more prepared and sensitive response arrived from the central government departments which had a wider range of devices at their command and were more vulnerable politically at the time. Apart from establishing an 'operative crisis committee', they gave financial support to local civilian aiding organisations through a competition system, avoiding the channels of financial distribution controlled by the local governments. (Consequently, they received applications from traditional local welfare institutions, which suffer from a chronic shortage of funds, attempting to ensure the survival of their original, insufficient activity.)

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPETITION CONDUCTED BY THE MINISTRY OF WELFARE AND HEALTHS IN 1990 ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF "TEMPORARY SHELTERS"

Number of applicants Sum of money in question

(in million forints)

##### Applying organisation

|                           |     |     |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| county council            | 47  | 164 |
| local council             | 37  | 81  |
| associations, foundations | 29  | 160 |
| churches                  | 12  | 29  |
| others                    | 9   | 25  |
| Budapest                  | 40  | 216 |
| county towns              | 40  | 130 |
| other towns               | 28  | 61  |
| villages                  | 26  | 52  |
| Total                     | 134 | 459 |

(The amount of money in question at the competition was altogether 25 million forints.)

As far as the situation at the present moment, in the middle of 1990, is concerned, we can say that social phenomena which are responsible for the regeneration and increase of homelessness (alcoholism, drug-addiction, unemployment, impoverishment, housing shortage) are increasingly effective and often occur in combination with each other. At the same time the network of 'secondary' institutions necessary for the compensation of these factors has still not emerged or these institutions are still working in traditional fields with persisting inefficiency. As a first reaction to the massive and more and more visible increase of homelessness a few shelters for the homeless have been set up but their volume and facilities are usually unable to cope with the crisis.\*

#### CENTRES FOR THE HOMELESS FUNCTIONING IN HUNGARY AT PRESENT

| Location       | Number of places (persons) | Organisation in charge          |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ajka           | 10                         | Family Welfare Center           |
| Balassagyarmat | 10                         | Family Welfare Center           |
| Debrecen       | 50                         | Center for Welfare Institutions |
| Érd            | 15                         | Family Welfare Center           |
| Kaposvár       | 31                         | V.W.C., "Home Foundation"       |
| Makó           | 17                         | Family Welfare Center           |
| Miskolc        | 36                         | Center for Welfare Center       |
| Nagykálló      | 4                          | Charity Center                  |
| Pécs           | 20                         | City Council                    |

\* Historical and international comparisons prove that the establishment of par excellence shelters is the most elementary reaction to this problem. One important tendency lays the emphasis on the possible solutions of 'cheap housing', while another trend stresses the role of widening a network for the treatment of the (deviant) mental illness. A mixture of the two is represented in the wide-spread system of non-profit homes and networks of communally supported religious and secular organisations.

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Sopron         | 40  |
| Szeged         | 20  |
| Székesfehérvár | 20  |
| Szolnok        | 10  |
| Budapest       | 20  |
| Budapest       | 6   |
| Budapest       | 55  |
| Budapest       | 80  |
| Budapest       | 300 |
| Budapest       | 16  |

Family Welfare Center  
 Shelter Foundation  
 City Council  
 City Council  
 Shelter Foundation  
 Újpest Family Welfare Center  
 Shelter Foundation  
 Municipal Council  
 Rehabilitation Home for the Homeless  
 Municipal Child and Youth Protection Institu

Péter Győri