

# Chinese Migration to Eastern Europe

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## ABSTRACT

Most of the work on the early history of Chinese migration to eastern Europe, that is, the first half of the twentieth century, has been written by Russian scholars. Contemporary sources – accounts of Russian travellers and government documents – are overwhelmingly preoccupied with migration to the Russian Asian territories. But the interest in Chinese immigration since the 1990s has resulted in considerable attention being paid to the historical background as well, notably by Larin (1998, 2000) and Saveliev (2002). Chinese scholarship on Chinese labour in Europe during World War I (e.g. S. Chen, 1986) only devotes little space to eastern Europe.

Yet, Chinese migration to eastern Europe has a particular policy interest because in the past decade it has proven to be predictive of trends in Europe as a whole. A new flow of entrepreneurial migrants, who often had no connection to the historical, rural-based chains of migration that produced the earlier Chinese migrant populations of western Europe, found it possible and profitable to do business and settle on the European periphery during a brief period of liberal migration controls. Erratic crackdowns on illegal migration in the absence of thought-through migration regimes resulted in a volatile situation, periodically generating migration flows from one country in the region to another. These were facilitated by, and gave further rise to, networks of kinship and information spanning both eastern and western Europe.

While this paper focuses on Hungary, it also attempts to review information on other eastern European countries (particularly Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Czech Republic) where it is available. In doing so, it intends to fill a gap in information on Chinese in eastern Europe until more substantial research is produced, as well as to highlight the common features of, and links between, Chinese migration into individual eastern European countries as well as into western Europe.

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## INTRODUCTION: CURRENT RESEARCH ON CHINESE MIGRATION TO EASTERN EUROPE

Most of the work on the early history of Chinese migration to eastern Europe, that is, the first half of the twentieth century, has been written by Russian scholars. Contemporary sources – accounts of Russian travellers and government documents – are overwhelmingly preoccupied with migration to the Russian Asian territories. But the interest in Chinese immigration since the 1990s has resulted in considerable attention being paid to the historical background as well, notably by Larin (1998, 2000) and Saveliev (2002). Chinese scholarship on Chinese labour in Europe during World War I (e.g. S. Chen, 1986) only devotes little space to eastern Europe.

A much larger body of literature is devoted to post-1989 migration. Most of this literature is focused on two countries: Russia and Hungary. Part of the reason for this is objective – these two countries served as the major reception area for Chinese migration and trade to the rest of eastern Europe. Other reasons are the numerical importance of contemporary Chinese studies in Russia, the political concern about Chinese immigration in that country and, in the case of Hungary, long-term commitment to the topic by researchers from that area. The Russian press and politicians have come up with wildly varying estimates of Chinese immigration; these, as well as the motivations behind them, are cogently discussed by Vitkovskaia and Zaionchkovskaia (1999), who conclude that most estimates in circulation are highly exaggerated. Vitkovskaia and Zaionchkovskaia (1999) also give an overview of Russian (at central and regional level) immigration policy toward China and the recent history of immigration.<sup>1</sup> Because of the scarcity of reliable data, however, authors are limited to critically analysing the official figures available and comparing them with their own estimates. The only large-scale study of the Chinese in Russia based on independent data is by Gelbras (1999), a questionnaire study involving more than 700 respondents, of which a small excerpt is available in English (Gelbras, 2002). Apart from this, only small-scale studies about the attitude of the Russian population toward Chinese migrants are available (Dyatlov, 1999; Larina, 1999), and these originated in the Asian rather than the European part of Russia.

*New Chinese Migrants in Europe* (Nyíri, 1999) is a monograph on Chinese immigration to Hungary since 1989, but it approaches the features characteristic of that migration as typical of overseas migration from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the 1990s, rather than specific to Hungary. In other papers (2002a, 2002b, 2002c), I discuss the transnational social space of Chinese migrants to Hungary, the specifics of female migration, and religious conversion among migrants. Tóth (1997) has published research on the image of Chinese in the Hungarian press. Moore and Tubilewicz (2001) have written about Chinese in the

Czech Republic. Finally, in 1998 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has published a report on Chinese migration to Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania. In addition to these publications, literature on “illegal” Chinese migration (e.g. Smith, 1994; Myers, 1997; Zhang and Chin, 2001) and on shuttle trade in eastern Europe (e.g. Wallace, 1998; Humphrey, 1999) is relevant to the issue.

Several books have been published in Chinese on the subject of Chinese migrants to Hungary. Apart from Mao (c1992), which briefly also discusses Russia, however, they do not pretend to any formal scholarship and are rather lurid first-person accounts (Z. Li, 1993) or even novels (Chen and Chen, 1997). Soap operas about Chinese in Hungary have also been produced (*Zouru ouzhou* (Into Europe), directed by Chen Kemin, South-East Fujian Television, 1999). Most Chinese academic writing on “new migrants”, of which there is a rapidly growing body, mentions migration to eastern Europe (e.g. M. Li, 1995; Jiang, 1999; D. Li, no date; Xiao, 2001).

While this paper focuses on Hungary, it also attempts to review information on other eastern European countries (particularly Russia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Czech Republic) where it is available. In doing so, it intends to fill a gap in information on Chinese in eastern Europe until more substantial research is produced, as well as to highlight the common features of, and links between, Chinese migration into individual eastern European countries as well as into western Europe.

## HISTORY OF RECENT CHINESE MIGRATION TO EASTERN EUROPE: MAIN MIGRATION FLOWS

Russia and some eastern European countries experienced immigration from China until the 1920s, when the Soviet Union sealed its borders. Migration did not start to increase again until the “normalization” of Sino-Soviet relations under Gorbachev, which closely followed the liberalization of the PRC’s rules governing travel abroad, made it possible for Chinese citizens to engage in trade across the Soviet border. Starting in 1987, northern Chinese began to take advantage of the simplified procedure to obtain private passports to engage in “shuttle trade” between China and the Soviet Far East and Siberia. Many of the first shuttle traders were moonlighting Chinese contract labourers, increasing numbers of whom had been invited to Russia on contracts during the same period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially after the signing of a Sino-Russian treaty in 1992 waiving the visa requirement for overland group tourism in the bordering provinces, crossing the border became even easier (Khodakov, 1999). Russian news agencies reported 1 million border crossings by Chinese citizens into the Russian Far East in 1992, rising to 2.5 million in 1993 according to one source (de Tinguy, 1998: 302). Another source concurs that 1993 was the peak year for the Chinese inflow, but

cites a lower figure of 800,000 arrivals, noting that 900,000 Russians went to China in that year (Bagrov, 1999).

Informal “shuttle trade” had been a feature of the economies of scarcity in eastern Europe since at least the 1960s, but Chinese traders developed it to an unprecedented scale, stepping in to fill a market vacuum created by non-existent or broken-down retail networks of low-price clothing and shoes. Venturing farther and farther by train and spending more and more time at their destinations, they first reached European Russia and then Hungary, which in 1988 signed a treaty waiving the visa requirement for Chinese tourists. According to a Chinese source, nearly 10,000 Chinese traders were registered as Moscow residents in 1992 (Huaren jingji nianjian, 1994: 410). According to the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, the number of border crossings into Hungary by Chinese citizens jumped from nearly zero in the mid-1980s to 11,621 in 1990 and 27,330 in 1991. From Russia and Hungary, Chinese traders spread across eastern Europe, with perhaps the next most important destination being Romania, which recorded 14,200 entries by Chinese in 1991 (IOM, 1998: 326, Table 14.5).

Two main factors contributed to the surge of migration to eastern Europe in 1989. First, the crackdown on the student democracy movement in Tiananmen Square sent a wave of anxiety through the fledgling private sector. Entrepreneurs were eager to secure an escape path for their capital and families in case the Government reversed the economic reforms. Second, the recession of the Chinese economy between 1989 and 1991 affected private entrepreneurs, managers at state-owned companies (who could not sell their stock), and workers (whose wages were being held back) alike. In this situation, stories of the success of shuttle traders, able to sell anything in eastern Europe and getting rich, combined with news of the visa-free treaty with Hungary, sent tens of thousands of people packing. In the first book about Chinese migrants in eastern Europe, Mao Chun writes: “Even though these accounts were not thorough reports (...) people with a mind for it could get market information out of them” (Mao, 1992: 38-39).

Growth of Chinese businesses, changes in business climate, and immigration policies modified migration flows and generated new ones within the region. After 1993, the number of Chinese entering Russia fell, affected by the violent stand-off between President Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet in October 1993; the introduction of specialized immigration checks along the land borders, entrusted to a newly created Federal Migration Service in December 1993; and the re-introduction of the visa requirement for Chinese official passport holders (private passports had not been exempt) in early 1994 (Bagrov, 1999; Khodakov, 1999). The total number of Chinese entering Russia in 1997 was 449,000, with 464,200 in 1998. In the first six months of 2000, however, it jumped to 1.5 million, perhaps in response to the recovery of the Russian economy (*Migration News*, 2000). Many Chinese

moved on from Moscow to look for better business opportunities and increased safety. The main destination was Hungary. Then, the crackdown on Chinese immigration by Hungarian authorities in 1992<sup>2</sup> and, subsequently, increasing competition, lower profits, and increasing overheads in market trading led Chinese in Hungary to move to other eastern European countries. According to Hungarian Interior Ministry data, the number of Chinese entering Hungary dropped from 27,330 in 1991 to 7,885 in 1993, climbing back to 13,946 in 1996.

Most of those re-migrants who had spent years in Hungary retained their businesses there, usually in the care of a more recently arrived relative or friend, and continue to visit Hungary regularly, seeking to maintain a residence permit or to obtain a new one. Others initially obtained a residence permit in a neighbouring country as “insurance” and remained in Hungary as long as they could (Nyíri, 1999: 47).

Some migrants who had obtained Hungarian or Czech residence permits moved on legally (with tourist or visitor visas) to western Europe to work in workshops or restaurants. Some of those who failed to get a visa moved on clandestinely. Some were motivated by a preference for low-risk wage labour compared to doing business; others moved because they had lost the money they invested in starting their businesses.

## AN OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION ROUTES TO, FROM, AND WITHIN EASTERN EUROPE

The main flows in the 1990s seem to have been the following:

- From the Russian Far East to European Russia:  
Some migrants from north-east China moved on from the Far East of Russia to Moscow, both as traders and as students.<sup>3</sup> In the questionnaire study conducted by Vitkovskaya and Zayonchkovskaya (base size 244), one-fifth to one-fourth of respondents had visited other cities of the Russian Far East or eastern Siberia, apart from the location where they were interviewed. Almost one-tenth had been to a western Siberian city, 3 per cent had been to the Urals region; 15 per cent had been to Moscow and 6 per cent to St. Petersburg (1999: 100).
- From Moscow to Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic:  
Between 1991 and 1993, many Chinese moved on from Moscow to look for better business opportunities and safety. Many others decided to move because of their inability to repatriate profits. Many of the migrants from Fujian I interviewed in Hungary, Romania, and Italy had followed this trajectory.<sup>4</sup> Neither Romania nor the Czech Republic had imposed a visa

requirement on holders of official PRC passports, which were relatively easy to obtain; thus a large proportion of those who went to these countries travelled on service passports (Moore and Tubilewicz, 2001). For example, the executive vice president of the Fujian native-place association in Romania went to Russia in 1993, then to the Czech Republic where he stayed for one year commuting between the Czech Republic and Hungary. Finally, he moved to Romania in 1994.<sup>5</sup>

- From Hungary to the Czech Republic, Romania, Yugoslavia, Russia, and the rest of eastern Europe:  
Beginning in 1992, Romania and Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic) were the most popular destinations, but Chinese also went to Slovenia, Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, and later, after the end of the Bosnian war, to Yugoslavia and Bosnia. For example, Ms. Feng from Sanming, Fujian, had gone to Hungary in 1990 and moved from there to Russia.<sup>6</sup> A man from Peking and another migrant interviewed by IOM went to Budapest in 1991 and 1992, respectively, and moved to Romania in 1993. The motive of the first was that there were too many Chinese in Budapest and, because of the problems they were causing there, the Hungarian Government had become increasingly intolerant of them. The second mentioned that his business was in decline and he was no longer able to renew his residence permit in Hungary (IOM, 1998: 337-338).
- From Hungary and the Czech Republic to Germany, Austria, and Italy:  
Here are some examples of migration along this route. Mr. Yang went to Germany after spending a year in Hungary, where he had accumulated a debt of 700,000 yuan, mostly due to gambling. He now works in a restaurant. He had gone to Hungary via Russia, where he obtained a Hungarian visa, which he thinks had been issued in the Czech Republic.<sup>7</sup> When the clash between Yeltsin and the Duma broke out, Mr. You, from Fuqing, Fujian, moved from Moscow to Budapest and tried trading at the market for a week, but when business was bad he moved to Italy via the Czech Republic with the help of some people, presumably “snakeheads”, he had met in Budapest. Mr. Luo and a relative from Mingxi, Fujian, went to Moscow in 1992 and traded for half a year, but business was bad at the time so they went on to Italy on a tourist visa.<sup>8</sup>

## THE LEGALITY OR ILLEGALITY OF MIGRATION

The enormous number of border crossings by Chinese into Russia is accounted for mainly by group tourism, which serves as a legal cover for shuttle trading. Of the 800,000 Chinese entrants in 1993 cited by Russian sources, 410,000 entered as tourists, 237,000 for official purposes, and 33,400 on official invitations (57,100

were transport workers) (Bagrov, 1999). Local authorities believe that 70 per cent of Chinese tourists engage in trade, which is illegal; others are actually agricultural and construction workers who simply want to avoid paying for the visa.<sup>9</sup> To prevent tourists from remaining in Russia illegally, regional authorities extensively apply expulsions and deportations; each year since 1994, between 2,000 and 7,000 Chinese have been expelled from the maritime region, of which more than 1,000 were deported each year (Gelbras, 2002). Recently, the authorities changed tactics. Instead of expensive and ineffective deportations, they hold travel agencies responsible for their clients. In the maritime region, 40 per cent of Chinese entrants overstayed their visa entitlement in 1994; in 1997, this dropped to 20 per cent and in 1998 to less than 1 per cent.<sup>10</sup> The number of Chinese who received administrative punishment in the region (for violating the visa regime, trading without a permit, and so on) has remained above 8,000 each year since 1994 (Gelbras, 2002).

A number of Chinese took advantage of the renewed possibility to study in Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus and, in the early 1990s, also in central and eastern Europe. Only a small number of these students were exclusively focused on their studies, while others concurrently engaged in trading, abandoned school after the completion of the preparatory language course, or did not show up at the school at all and merely used the student visa as a means of entering the country. The opportunity for this was created by easy admission to language schools and the possibility of altering their status from student to other types allowing business activities. In Belarus, China was the top country of origin of new foreign students in 1996 (Zagorets, 1997). Faculty members in Moscow, Khabarovsk, and Irkutsk believe that only about half of the Chinese students actually study, while the rest only trade. Of those who study, 20 per cent “are intent on getting an education”, while the rest only want to learn Russian. About 10 per cent actually get a degree.<sup>11</sup> In the Russian Far East and Siberia, Chinese students are often from the north-east and Inner Mongolia, with bilateral agreements between institutions of tertiary education in these regions aiding this. For example, the Irkutsk State Agricultural Academy has a student exchange programme with the Hohhot Agricultural Institute in Inner Mongolia (Kamezhuk, 1998). In eastern Europe, the origins of the students are more diverse. In the late 1990s, some Chinese students began applying to branches of American colleges set up in eastern Europe that offered students that chance to spend the last year or two of their studies in the United States, at colleges such as McDaniel College Budapest (formerly Western Maryland College Budapest). In 2000, a Chinese entrepreneur asked me to find a British university to set up a centre in Budapest that would provide thousands of Chinese students with British degrees.

However, most migration to eastern Europe has taken the form of entrepreneurial migration in which migrants either travelled on passports that needed no visas (i.e. service passports, so-called *xiao gongwu huzhao*, supposed to be issued to public employees abroad on official business, but unofficially quite easily available to

those on private trips), or applied for business, work or, later, family visit visas. This *legal* migration also partially relied on migration brokers who arrange for the documents needed to get a passport in China and come to Hungary (invitation letter from a Chinese company or in a relative's name, company registration in the migrant's name, enrolment in a school, and so on). Some of them can then also help migrants cross clandestinely to western Europe. This was a much higher-risk activity requiring greater familiarity with the terrain as it involved getting in touch with local human smugglers or even recruiting them from among local drivers (Nyíri, 1998: 355). This route of irregular migration to the West opened up in parallel with the rise of illegal migration by sea and air to the United States via South-East Asia and Latin America.<sup>12</sup>

Early migration brokers were recent migrants – students or traders – who spoke some Hungarian and, having started by issuing invitations to their relatives and friends, realized that this new line of business could supplement their income (M. Li, 2001). Many of them advised clients about what merchandise to bring with them, bought it, and then sold it at a profit, thus combining the “people business” (*rentou shengyi*, *zuo ren*) with trading (*zuo huo*). Most migration brokers subsequently expanded their services to helping new migrants apply for residence permits. Once they had accumulated sufficient capital, many of the early migration brokers opened restaurants and/or moved to North America as investor immigrants.

According to Chinese in Budapest, before the beginning of the armed conflicts over the Yugoslav succession, the Yugoslav-Austrian and Yugoslav-Italian borders were frequently used for clandestine crossings, as was the Czech-Slovak-German border. After the eruption of the Yugoslav conflicts, the southern route went mainly through the Hungarian-Austrian border.<sup>13</sup> After the crackdown on Chinese immigration in Hungary in 1991 and 1992, snakeheads appeared to redirect their business via Prague (Nyíri, 1999: 39-40). Statistics of apprehensions of border violators by Hungarian border guards (Table 1) appear to bear out British intelligence reports that, while Prague apparently remained an important way station,<sup>14</sup> the Budapest route became more popular again at the end of the 1990s. According to Interior Ministry data, the number of deportations of Chinese citizens without valid residence documents soared from 44 in 1995 to 843 (or 8% of all deportations) in 2000, then dropped to 261 in 2001.<sup>15</sup> Since 1998, when Hungary fully acceded to the Geneva Convention, some of the detained Chinese applied for asylum. In 2000, there were 200 such applications, accounting for about 3 per cent of all asylum claims.

This time, Yugoslavia served as the entry point from which migrants crossed the border to Hungary, as it was relatively easy to obtain a Yugoslav visa in Beijing.<sup>16</sup> Yugoslavia, as well as Bosnia, also became major transit stations for the sea routes



via Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia (Morrison, 2000). Since China was a political ally of the Milošević regime and Yugoslavia had few other places from which to expect investors, Belgrade had little incentive to tighten its visa regime. This resulted, particularly in the period after the NATO bombing of the PRC's embassy in Belgrade that symbolically sealed the friendship between the two states, in first one and then two Yugoslav flights a week arriving full of Chinese passengers.<sup>17</sup> According to the head of the Yugoslav statistics office, Srđan Bogusavljević, 50,000 Chinese arrived in Yugoslavia in 2000.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Yugoslavia attracted a number of Chinese entrepreneurs from other eastern European countries (principally Hungary) in 1998 and 1999 when, after the end of armed conflicts, they expected a post-war business boom.<sup>19</sup> The free movement between Yugoslavia and the Serb-controlled part of Bosnia, on the one hand, and loose controls on the Bosnian-Croatian border, plus the long and jagged Croatian and Montenegrin coastline, on the other, have resulted in a brisk Chinese border traffic, reflected in a growing number of apprehensions (Radulović, 2000; Gall, 2000; Kebo, 2001). In the summer of 2000, two Yugoslav soldiers were arrested in Montenegro trying to take 25 Chinese to the coast (Balmer, 2000a; 2000b).

TABLE 1  
CHINESE CITIZENS APPREHENDED BY HUNGARIAN BORDER GUARDS  
FOR ATTEMPTED BORDER VIOLATIONS (INBOUND AND OUTBOUND)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Austria	21	99	18	14	1	2	5	40	173
Slovenia	0	188	39	36	0	0	11	81	43
Yugoslavia	0	6	11	7	30	21	39	6	150
Romania	0	51	95	56	3	34	1	20	14
Ukraine	0	2	1	2	1	19	11	95	27
Slovakia	1	60	28	3	0	8	6	60	68
Total	40	431	202	150	41	107	90	312	493

Source: Data provided by the Hungarian Border Guard.

In addition, the route via Hungary remained important. According to Hungarian border guards, most illegal Chinese migrants apprehended since 1998 had come from Yugoslavia, and many had residence permits there.<sup>20</sup> Both British investigators and Chinese in Hungary and Yugoslavia believe that most of the 58 Chinese found dead in a container at Dover in 2000 had come via these two countries (Balmer, 2000b). After the Dover tragedy, the European Union (EU) put pressure on Yugoslavia and sent a team of ten police officers to Bosnia to help control illegal migration.

## NUMBERS

There are no reliable data on the number of Chinese in any eastern European country. In most countries, there are one or several relatively low official figures and a second set of much higher “estimates” that officials frequently operate with, while the Chinese themselves and researchers prefer in-between figures. The discrepancy between the various figures is frequently used to prove the proliferation of illegal immigration but, in reality, the main reason is often the poor quality of data supplied by police, border guards, and other agencies, and the lack of central data collecting for certain types of migrants altogether. An additional reason is the high mobility of Chinese migrants and, in Russia, the seasonal nature of migration, which causes the population to fluctuate significantly and calls for the distinction between the settled Chinese population and shuttle traders who may spend only a few days in Russia.

The greatest discrepancies in the numbers concern the Chinese population in the Russian Far East. Since 1992, very high numbers of current Chinese migrants have been published in the media, including a claim of 2 million (de Tinguy, 1998: 302) and that, in the border zone, Chinese outnumber Russians by a factor of 1.5 to 2 (Vitkovskaia and Zaionchkovskaia, 1999: 96). But according to Russian data, the total number of Chinese citizens who entered the Russian Far East between 1992 and 1998 was somewhat more than 2 million (Chinese data tend to be somewhat higher but comparable) and, given that most of them were shuttle traders, the average number of crossings per person must be much higher than one. Therefore, estimates in the millions are highly unlikely, even if many crossings were illegal (Vitkovskaia 2000: 207-208). Most researchers believe that the proportion of the Chinese population in both rural and urban areas of the Russian Far East is still far below that of the early twentieth century. Their estimates for 1993 to 1995 were between 50,000 and 100,000 (Vitkovskaia and Zaionchovskaia, 1999: 96-97).

In Moscow, there were 11,335 registered residents from the PRC in 1997 (Maslov, 1998). Based on a combination of various official data sets with field observations and indirect evidence, such as the circulation of Chinese-language papers and the capacity of buildings where Chinese live (in Moscow, their residences are highly concentrated in relatively few housing estates), Gelbras estimates the number of Chinese in Moscow to be between 20,000 and 25,000 (Gelbras, 2002). However, the value of any estimate is limited, as the presence of Chinese in Moscow is highly seasonal, following the yearly cycle of retail business. At times when business is sluggish, many Chinese return to China, to come back again when business picks up.<sup>21</sup>

Gelbras (2002) estimates the total number of Chinese in Russia at between 200,000 and 400,000. In 2000, summing up studies to that date and two roundtables on

the subject organized by the Moscow Carnegie Center (in 1998 and 1999), Vitkovskaia arrived at a number of between 200,000 and 500,000 Chinese in Russia at any given time, but stressed that most of these were “commuters” rather than residents in the traditional sense (2000: 208-209). In August 2000, 237,000 Chinese were legally registered in Russia (*Migration News*, 2000).

In 1992, according to a Chinese source, between 6,000 and 7,000 Chinese were registered as living in the Ukraine (Huaren jingji nianjian, 1994: 411; de Tinguy, 1998: 309). Around 3,000 Chinese were counted in Belarus in the early 1990s (Huaren jingji nianjian, 1994: 411). Several hundred Chinese traders turned up in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the early 1990s, where they lived principally in the respective capitals (Huaren jingji nianjian, 1994: 411).

Although the number of Chinese holding residence permits in Hungary has never exceeded 10,000, estimates given by some police and border guard officials were as high as 30,000 or 100,000 in 2001; an official of the Chinese embassy estimated the irregular presence of 20,000 Chinese (Sárkány 2001). Judging from my fieldwork, such figures appear unrealistic. Using estimates provided by Chinese association leaders, and based on the number of functioning Chinese businesses, I arrived at an estimated 15,000 Chinese actually living in the country (Nyíri, 1999).

The Department of Integration of Foreigners of the Czech Republic estimated that around 9,000 Chinese lived in the country in 1998, including irregular migrants. By contrast, only 3,600 Chinese were listed in Ministry of the Interior statistics in 2000 as having residence permits valid for more than 90 days ([www.mvcr.cz/dokumenty/migrace/2000/prilohy2.html](http://www.mvcr.cz/dokumenty/migrace/2000/prilohy2.html)). According to statistics released by the Republic of China, some 420 Chinese were in Poland in late 1994 (Huaqiao jingji nianjian, 1996: 765-766). In 1995 and 1996, however, some 1,100 work permits were granted to Chinese business owners (Igllicka, 2001).<sup>22</sup> In Romania, there were around 14,200 Chinese citizens registered as residents in April 1999.<sup>23</sup> According to a Chinese source, 5,000 Chinese had settled in Bulgaria by the mid-nineties (D. Li, no date).

In 2000, Serbian opposition media claimed that there were “more than 100,000” Chinese in the country. The alliance between Belgrade and Beijing, the image of Yugoslavia as villain, and the Dover incident attracted Western media attention to these allegations. *The Times*, for example, wrote that, “Milošević has capitalized on NATO’s mistaken bombing of the Chinese Embassy (...) by importing tens of thousands of Chinese into the heart of Europe” (Todorovic, 2000). Chinese in Yugoslavia themselves estimated their numbers in 2000 at between a few thousand and 20,000 to 30,000, adding that they were not as numerous as in Hungary. The number of Chinese market traders was visibly lower in Belgrade than in

Budapest. In March 2001, the Serbian Government said that 2,034 Chinese held residence permits in Serbia (Xie, 2000). It is thus likely that, while Yugoslavia is the scene of considerable Chinese transit traffic, only few actually settle there. It is possible that “snakeheads” procure Yugoslav passports for their clients, but hardly on a large scale.<sup>24</sup>

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Chinese migrants to eastern Europe tend to differ in their motivation and background than migrants from traditional rural *qiaoxiang* (migrant homelands) that had dominated the west European scene until the 1970s. While chain migration generated by these earlier migrants continues, migration to eastern Europe originates largely in the urban-coastal zones of the PRC, most of which have no tradition of chain migration. There is no dominant place of origin. But, by the mid-1990s, Zhejiang and Fujian, two provinces that did have strong emigration traditions, developed new migration homelands (*qiaoxiang*) that catered specifically to eastern Europe. Jiangyin and Jiangjing townships in Fuqing County, Fujian, are now specializing in migration to Hungary, Germany, and Russia; Mingxi township near Sanming city, Fujian, in migration to Hungary and Italy; and Wenxi village near Wenzhou city, Zhejiang, in migration to Hungary.<sup>25</sup> In the database of the Hungarian Interior Ministry, the largest group of Chinese (18%) comes from coastal Fujian, followed by Zhejiang (the major sending province for most of western Europe). Other major groups come from Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and the provinces of Hebei (near Peking) and Manchuria (the three north-eastern provinces). According to Chinese in Yugoslavia, migrants from Zhejiang made up the largest group in 2000.<sup>26</sup> In Romania, in addition to those from Zhejiang and Fujian, there is a third large group of migrants from Henan Province, who apparently began arriving in large numbers later than the other two groups.<sup>27</sup>

Among Chinese in Russia, there is a larger share of migrants from north-east China. But in Moscow, as in the rest of eastern Europe, no group forms a majority. In a random sample of 428 Chinese polled in Moscow in late 1998 by the team of Gelbras, the three north-eastern provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning) combined accounted for 22 per cent of respondents. By contrast, north-easterners accounted for an overwhelming majority of 329 Chinese polled in Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and Ussuriysk in the framework of the same study in early 1999 (Gelbras, 1999: 5, 10).

The proportion of women in current migration appears to be much larger than in previous migration waves from China, where women typically followed men after the men had established themselves. In Hungary (May 2000), 35 per cent of Chinese citizens in the Interior Ministry database were women. In Russia (Gelbras,

1999, N=757) 34 per cent were women. Many women now migrate independently. By contrast, the number of children remains low as they are often left behind or sent back.

Migration to eastern Europe involves upwardly mobile individuals, educated above average and individually motivated. In the Interior Ministry's database referred to above, 342 persons gave their professional qualification as engineers, 275 as teachers, 223 as cadres, 183 as doctors, 171 as economists, 235 as "intellectuals", and 125 as university or college students. By far the largest group (27%) gave no other profession or qualification than businessman or businesswoman.<sup>28</sup> Another indication of the relatively high level of education among Chinese in Hungary is that in a sample of 135 market traders, 45 per cent claimed to have upper secondary education and 39 per cent higher education (City of Budapest, 1997). Gelbras (1999) found similar percentages.

### **Geographical distribution and residence patterns**

The overwhelming majority of Chinese in Hungary (82% of long-term permit and immigrant residence permit applicants in the Interior Ministry database) reside in Budapest. Other larger groups are found in centres of cross-border trade (Nyíregyháza near the Ukrainian and Romanian, and Szeged near the Yugoslav and Romanian borders). Smaller towns and villages, particularly those close to main thoroughfares, also have a few Chinese residents. Informants in Russia and Romania have suggested similar patterns – concentrations in large cities with some presence in smaller towns – but there are no data available. The situation in Poland and the Czech Republic appears to be different, with an even higher concentration in the respective capitals since Chinese there do not engage in trade, the activity that attracts them to smaller towns.

### **Economic activities**

Most Chinese in eastern Europe deal with the import, wholesale, or retail of low-price clothes and shoes from China. The Chinese took advantage of economies that were, to varying degrees, undersupplied, and filled a supply gap by offering cheap but popular clothes of the kind made in China for low-price Western retail chains. Contrary to traditional Chinese migrants to western Europe, these migrants, thanks to their background, had the cultural capital, the mobility, and the means of communication necessary to develop close ties with state enterprises in China, which supplied them with merchandise at low subsidized prices and on favourable credit terms. (For the enterprises, this was a means of expanding into new markets and to pull down stocks.) In addition, for managers of state-owned companies, poorly controlled capital transfers abroad through (former) employees offered opportunities to find ways to repatriate profits as private gains, but to

write off losses at the company's expense (Nyíri, 1999: 53). Overseas companies informally affiliated with businesses in China could serve as channels for reinvesting money transferred to them in China in the guise of joint ventures, securing not only more favourable tax treatment but also the possibility to "repatriate" profits, taking them out of China.

In the early 1990s, Hungary became the distribution centre of Chinese imports to eastern Europe, with traders from Poland, the Ukraine, and Yugoslavia flocking to the large market in Budapest where most Chinese wholesalers were based. While relying on close contacts with China, these businesses cannot exist without a certain degree of contact with the local economy and employ a range of local workers, secretaries, translators, lawyers, and accountants.

Wholesale business is concentrated at open-air markets where most merchants are foreigners. The Józsefváros (Four Tigers) market in Budapest, Blok 40 in Belgrade, Europa Market in Bucharest, and the Izmailovo Market in Moscow became well-known centres of the business. According to a 1997 survey by Sik, 47 per cent of the traders at consumer goods markets in Hungarian cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants were Chinese. According to Nagy, in the same year, 15 to 20 per cent of Budapest families made some purchase at a "Chinese market" (see Nyíri, 1999: 50). At least as many consumers shop at "Chinese shops", which have by now reached even remote villages. "Chinese shops" are also numerous in Yugoslavia and Romania, but have not yet appeared in Russia. In the Czech Republic and Poland, the shops selling Chinese goods are owned not by Chinese but by Vietnamese, a larger immigrant group, but they obtain the merchandise from Chinese importers and wholesalers.

In early 1992, 1,400 Chinese-owned businesses were registered in Hungary, with total invested capital of US\$ 20 million (Nyíri, 1999: 50). Ten years later, according to the Hungarian Economics Ministry, the number of Chinese-owned businesses had risen to around 10,000. That would imply that nearly every Chinese in Hungary had his or her own company. According to the ministry, the total investment of these businesses was US\$ 120 million, yielding a very small average sum of US\$ 1,200 for each. Interestingly, only 503 Chinese-operated companies were registered in Moscow in 1997, suggesting that having a company was not a necessary condition for Chinese traders to remain in the city, while perhaps also indicating some barriers to the registration of businesses there.

As most of the Chinese are self-employed, only a minority is employed by other, almost exclusively Chinese, enterprises. In Hungary, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), 1,700 Chinese had work permits in 1999. According to the Russian Federal Migration Service, 24,256 Chinese held work permits in Russia in 1999, but most of these were employed in agriculture and construction in the Far Eastern and Siberian regions of the country.

## **Integration and transnationalism**

Individual stories of Chinese in eastern Europe reveal an extraordinary degree of mobility. In the process of my fieldwork in Hungary since 1992, I have interviewed people who started trading in Hungary, were unsuccessful or lost their money at the casino, and went to Italy or Germany to work in leather workshops or restaurants for three or five years. Now they consider investing the money earned in Hungary or Romania once again as they want to develop their own businesses. Others, whose applications for political asylum in Germany had been turned down, chose to re-enter Hungary illegally because they thought it was easier to re-legalize their status there. Several more who started trading in Russia in the early 1990s went on to Hungary, but as residence permit policies were tightened in 1992, returned to Russia. In other words, migration, even illegal migration, is happening not just from East to West, but also in the opposite direction. Many Chinese, especially those from Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces, have family members working in garment or leather workshops in Italy or in restaurants in Spain, Germany, or England, most of whom made their way there from Hungary. A number of entrepreneurs have expanded their import or restaurant businesses to neighbouring eastern European countries and now circulate between them. Others have legally immigrated to Canada or the United States, but they, too, maintain businesses in eastern Europe. Most Chinese parents wish to send their children to college in the United States or the United Kingdom, and a number have already done so. A few of these children have already graduated and joined American companies, some of which sent them back to Europe. For example, a couple from Shanghai who moved to Hungary (via Sri Lanka) in 1990 and runs both a restaurant and an import business, brought their son over after he finished middle school in China. After several years at an American missionary high school in Budapest and at the local campus of an American college, he moved on to the main campus of the school in Maryland and is now an accountant in Baltimore. The son of a couple from Fujian, who own a warehouse in Budapest, spent only a year in Hungary before the couple immigrated to the United States; he now attends college in Los Angeles, while the couple share their time between Hungary, China, and the United States. For such migrant families, Hungary, as the cash-generating destination in which Chinese can be bosses, albeit harassed by the authorities and the local people, is one of the nodes in a transnational migratory portfolio. Another node is the destination that offers them existential security, international mobility, and a good living environment for their later years, and their children access to education and to professional jobs.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Immigration policies of eastern European countries show considerable variations. Russia created a Federal Migration Service soon after the collapse of the Soviet

Union to cope primarily with ethnic Russian refugees and forced migrants from the other successor states, but also with huge numbers of other, particularly Afghan, refugees. A Federal Migration Programme was enacted in 1992 and has been periodically reviewed (the latest version is for the period from 2002 to 2004). Demographers have participated in the work of these programmes, which, beyond dealing with refugees, have addressed migration processes holistically, accepting it is a necessary phenomenon. The successive programmes note both opportunities and difficulties brought about by migration; and review emigration, immigration, internal migration, the demographic and labour situation, and issues of intolerance and welfare. The Government adopted a new white paper (*kontseptsia*) on migration policy in 2001. The document issued by the Minister of Federation Affairs, Nationalities and Migration Policy (Blokhin, 2001: 8-9) notes the need to develop a selective, quota-based immigration policy.

Yet, the reality of Chinese migration to Russia has been much more affected by federal and regional policies on entry, entrepreneurship, and labour than by federal migration policy. On the one hand, this is because Chinese in Russia are more interested in the security and returns of their economic activities, the ability to repatriate profits and to be free of official harassment, than in long-term efforts at integration. (This is not to deny, however, that they are also interested in the availability of long-term legal residence.) In Gelbras' (1999) study, about one-third of respondents in Moscow intend to return home, while another third say their decision will depend on how their business goes; only one-third would like to stay in Russia. While 35 per cent would like to expand their business in Russia, almost as many would like to open a business in China (Gelbras, 1999: 31). Only 10 per cent would like their children to live in Russia, while 40 per cent do not, and 40 per cent "have not considered the question" (Gelbras, 1999: 39).

As already stated above, most Chinese entering Russia took advantage of the visa waiver for border tourism to engage in trade. The number of overstayers has been affected by the tightening of regional sanctions on overstaying and trading without a licence in the maritime province. As for Moscow, it appears that most Chinese obtain business, employee, or student visas to go there, and support networks that provide the necessary documents and assist in the administration of visas and residence permits have become well-entrenched.

On the other hand, the discrepancies between migration policy goals and the realities of Chinese migration is that Russia's Far Eastern region has become economically dependent on consumer goods and, to some extent, foodstuffs imported from China, which could only be substituted by imports from European Russia at a higher cost. Furthermore, economic planners in the region pin their hopes of recovery on cooperation with neighbouring China, Korea, and Japan. But, at the same time, some regional political leaders have emphasized the "demographic,



economic, and ecological danger” posed by Chinese migrants who supposedly plunder Russia’s natural resources, take profits out of the country, and gradually displace the local population (Larin, 1999). As a result, the access of Chinese traders and their consumer goods to Russia is assured, their incriminated economic activities (including the export of timber, other forest resources, and metal) continue, but their lives as individuals are made as difficult as possible through such measures as the imposition of a maximum stay of three days without a visa (in the Maritime Province), the obligation to report to the police even for the shortest stays, and harassment of traders by police and tax officials, that have included raids on Chinese hostels in Moscow by tax police in combat fatigues and masks. Seventy per cent name extortion by police as a business problem, while only 20 per cent complain of the impossibility of obtaining a permanent residence permit (Gelbras, 1999: 33). Some of Gelbras’ respondents claimed having been “fined” by the police ten times in a month (1999: 33). At various times, foreigners were not allowed to repatriate profits and, as a result, Chinese resorted to taking them out in their luggage in cash, a practice that often ended in loss.

In contrast to Russia, the smaller countries on the western rim of eastern Europe have not developed concepts of migration policy but, following the western European example, have treated immigration on an ad hoc basis, determined by short-term public opinion pressures, “national” or ethnic solidarity, the economy, and, lately, accession to the EU. Yet the emphasis in immigration practices still varied considerably across the countries. Hungary, the country with the smallest relative and absolute numbers of immigrants among the three front-runners for accession, has gradually emerged as the country with the smallest immigrant population (144,000, or 1.5% of the population, in 1997 (OECD, 2001:50)) – of which most are ethnic Hungarians – and the most restrictive immigration practices. Thus, contrary to Poland and the Czech Republic where asylum seekers enjoy a certain degree of freedom of movement and, under certain conditions, the right to work, in Hungary they are detained in prison-like centres if they have no legal title to be present. Foreigners, including legal permanent residents in their homes, are subject to checks by police; border guards; customs, tax, and employment office agents; and public land superintendents. Non-white foreigners are particularly often subjected to police brutality, a point noted in the report by the European Commission to Prevent Torture in 2000, as well as to extortion by police.

There are no specific provisions regarding Chinese immigration and, unlike in Russia, there are no suggestions that Chinese account for a major percentage of immigrants. Yet, in effect, Chinese have been treated with pointed discourtesy. Most Chinese in Hungary, as detailed above, enter with visitor, employee, or entrepreneurial visas, with which they can apply for temporary residence permits valid for one or two years. Getting a visa to Hungary is much more difficult than to Russia and, beginning in 1992, it has progressively moved toward even tighter

restrictions. Foreign residents do not have the automatic right to bring dependants, even minor children, to Hungary. My Chinese informants maintain that, since 2000, persons with private passports have been unable to obtain Hungarian visas of any title without paying a middleman claiming to have access to the Interior Ministry. Middle-ranking Interior Ministry officials in charge of approving visas and permanent residence permits have been arrested on corruption charges. It is hard to determine whether the practice of denying visas resulted in more corruption than before, but it probably did make corruption more common as the number of successful visa applicants shrank. Each tightening of extensions of residence permits in 1992, again in the mid-1990s and in 2002, resulted in more illegality among Chinese migrants already in the country. While Hungary has not prevented Chinese from repatriating profits, the uncertainty of being able to extend their residence permits regardless of business results has created a widespread sense of insecurity among Chinese business owners.

Neither central nor local governments in eastern Europe have formulated a reception policy or undertaken any efforts to integrate Chinese migrants, seeing them purely in terms of a case of policing. Both in Budapest (1995) and Moscow (1999), city governments supported surveys of the Chinese populations, but then did nothing with the resulting findings.

There are surveys regarding the intentions of Chinese in Hungary to stay or leave, but qualitative evidence from my research points much in the same direction as Gelbras' poll in Russia. Most Chinese in Hungary do not intend to spend their lives there, a fact underscored by the trend to send Chinese children either back to China or to study in the United Kingdom or the United States. This is not to say, however, that Chinese migrants regard eastern Europe merely as a springboard to the West, as is often suggested in the literature on "illegal" migration. Rather, most of them continuously and opportunistically balance a number of factors, which include potential income and mobility, rights to legal residence, quality of life, and their children's access to education offering upward mobility. As a result of this deliberation process, some migrants end up returning to China or moving, legally or illegally, to a third country. Others end up staying, such as, for example, those in Hungary who count on access to western Europe after the country's accession to the EU.

Changing business opportunities and immigration practices – which in eastern Europe occurred erratically and without any policy guidance – and lack of business and legal security have triggered flows of migrants between eastern European countries at various times as described above. One unintended consequence of this course of action in Hungary has been a shift in the Chinese population traceable both in the Interior Ministry database and in the streets. As more successful individual entrepreneurs have returned to China or legally migrated to the

West – often maintaining businesses in Hungary, but moving their families to what they perceived as more secure places – their place has been taken by new chain migrants from Fujian and Zhejiang without either capital or alternative options of mobility, who were ready to pay middlemen to be able to migrate. The average level of education and capital of migrants has, therefore, declined. The current lack of policy combined with the restrictive implementation of regulations is, thus, unable to prevent immigration – although it can reduce it – but it is conducive to the maintenance of a highly fluid and transnational community, with little reinvestment of profits and little interest in, or prospects of, integration. A similar volatility may be observed in the case of two very different migrant groups, those of Afghan and Bosnian refugees, who, in the absence of integration programmes or legal security, have preferred to move to western Europe.

## CONCLUSION

Chinese migration to eastern Europe has a particular policy interest in that it has in the past decade proven to be predictive of trends in Europe as a whole. A new flow of entrepreneurial migrants, who often had no connection to the historical, rural-based chains of migration that produced the earlier Chinese migrant populations of western Europe, has found it possible and profitable to do business and settle on the European periphery during a brief period of liberal migration controls. Erratic crackdowns on illegal migration in the absence of thought-through migration regimes resulted in a volatile situation, periodically generating migration flows from one country in the region to another. These were facilitated by, and gave further rise to, networks of kinship and information spanning both eastern and western Europe.

Gradually, models of entrepreneurial activity initiated in Russia and eastern Europe, namely the importing and distribution of Chinese-made clothing and other consumer goods, has been picked up by Chinese migrants to southern Europe and then in western Europe, countries with more mature and regulated trade regimes and higher business costs. Legal entrepreneurial migrants, reaching western Europe more slowly, mainly as students, are beginning to change the old Chinese ethnic economies there. These changes are likely to accelerate with China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), which will improve opportunities for bilateral business activities. At the same time, new chains of migration from Fujian, first established – legally – in Russia and Hungary, have reached Italy and the United Kingdom in the form of illegal entrants.

## NOTES

1. More recently, Vitkovskaia, while reiterating her earlier conclusions, has nonetheless shifted her emphasis to the need of controlling Chinese immigration to avoid potential security risks (Vitkovskaia, 2000).
2. Hungary re-imposed the visa requirement on holders of Chinese private passports in early 1992, repeatedly froze the granting and extension of temporary residence permits to Chinese, and rounded up undocumented Chinese migrants.
3. This information was obtained from interviews with students at Moscow State University in March 1998 and with a trader from Harbin in Budapest in June 1999.
4. This information was obtained from interviews with migrants in Moscow, Budapest, and Fujian from February to September 1999. It was carried out within the framework of the Economic and Social Research Council-supported research project, "At the margins of the Chinese world system: the Fuzhou diaspora in Europe" (grant no. L214252012). Altogether, I interviewed more than 80 migrants from Fujian.
5. This information was obtained from an interview in Bucharest in May 1999.
6. This information was obtained from interviews in Prato in April 1999.
7. This information was obtained from an interview in Freiburg im Breisgau in March 1999.
8. This information was obtained from interviews in Prato in April 1999.
9. Data provided by Aleksandr A. Berestovoy, Head, Committee on Tourism and Resorts, Maritime Region Administration, at the Perspectives of the Far Eastern Region (of Russia): The Chinese Factor Roundtable, Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, Far Eastern Division, Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok: 28-29 June 1999.
10. Data provided by Aleksandr A. Berestovoy in Vladivostok: 28-29 June 1999.
11. Data provided by Yekaterina Motrich, Institute of Economic Research, Russian Academy of Sciences (Khabarovsk), and Vilya Gelbras at the Perspectives of the Far Eastern Region (of Russia): The Chinese Factor Roundtable, Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, Far Eastern Division, Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok: 28-29 June 1999; also Dyatlov 1999: 86-87.
12. On the rise of irregular migration to America, see Smith, 1997.
13. This information was obtained from an interview in London on 22 September 1999.
14. This information was obtained from interviews with irregular migrants in Amsterdam and the Tilburg immigration detention centre in March 1999.
15. Deportees, however, may be not only illegal entrants but also overstayers, so that the increase in deportations may be linked to a tightening of the practice of extending residence permits.
16. This information was obtained from interviews with apprehended border violators at the Nyírbátor and Szombathely communal residences of the Hungarian Border Guard on 12 and 20 July 1999, with migrants' family members in Fuqing, Fujian, on 21 August 1999, and with Paul Kwok in London on 22 September 1999.
17. This information was obtained from interviews in Subotica, Vojvodina, Yugoslavia, July 2000, and in Fujian, August 1999.
18. This information was obtained from oral communication with Ivan Krastev, Bulgarian member of the international observers team at the Yugoslav elections in 2000.

19. This information was obtained from interviews in Subotica, Vojvodina, Yugoslavia, July 2000.
20. This information was obtained from interviews with commanding officers at the Kiskunhalas and Nyírbátor border guard divisions, 2000-2001.
21. This information was obtained from an interview with Weng Ruilong in Moscow on 23 June 1999.
22. If these figures reflect an actual influx, then it is probably connected to an outflow of Chinese from Hungary, where the ethnic imports market was becoming increasingly saturated.
23. Data obtained from the Immigration Department of the Romanian Border Guard furnished to the Hungarian Ambassador. I thank Ambassador Ferenc Szöcs for sharing them.
24. Interview with a self-styled snakehead in Prato, Italy, on 26 June 2000.
25. On migration from Fujian, see the forthcoming book by Pieke, et al.
26. This information obtained from interviews in Belgrade in December 2000.
27. This information obtained from interviews with leaders of the Fujian and Henan tongxianghui in Bucharest, May 1999.
28. The Ministry of the Interior database contains two variables that provide an indication of occupation. One is a term that can mean both "education" and "profession", and the other is "occupation". From the responses, it is clear that some respondents give their original profession as the response to one question and their current occupation as the response to the other, or their profession and job title, or their occupation in China and occupation in Hungary. There are therefore many overlaps and difficulties in evaluating these variables, and one can only use them as a rough indicator.

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## L'IMMIGRATION CHINOISE EN EUROPE CENTRALE ET ORIENTALE

La majeure partie des travaux consacrés aux premières vagues de migration chinoise en Europe orientale, qui remontent à la première moitié du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, ont été rédigés par des universitaires russes. Les sources contemporaines – des comptes rendus de voyageurs russes ou des documents gouvernementaux – rendent compte dans leur immense majorité de la seule migration dans les territoires russes d'Asie. Cependant, l'intérêt pour l'immigration chinoise qui se manifeste depuis les années 90 a fait qu'une attention considérable a été accordée au con-texte historique également, notamment par Larin (1998, 2000) et Saveliev (2002). Les universitaires chinois qui se sont intéressés à la migration de main-d'œuvre chinoise en Europe au cours de la première guerre mondiale (par exemple Chen, 1986) n'ont consacré que peu de place à l'Europe orientale.

Cependant, l'immigration chinoise en Europe orientale revêt un intérêt politique particulier dans la mesure où, au cours de la dernière décennie, elle a eu valeur d'indicateur des tendances migratoires dans l'ensemble de l'Europe. Une nouvelle vague de migrants entrepreneurs, souvent sans aucun lien avec la migration chinoise historique à caractère rural ayant produit les premières vagues d'immigration chinoise en Europe occidentale, a estimé possible et rentable de faire des affaires et de s'installer à la périphérie de l'Europe pendant une brève période de contrôle libéralisé des migrations. Les mesures de répression chaotiques prises à l'encontre de l'immigration illégale en l'absence de régimes migratoires bien pensés ont débouché sur une situation explosive, générant périodiquement des flux migratoires d'un pays de la région vers un autre. Ces mouvements ont été facilités par les réseaux d'information reliant l'Europe de l'Est à l'Europe de l'Ouest et par ceux constitués sur la base de liens de parenté, qu'ils ont d'ailleurs contribué à faire prospérer.

Si cet article met surtout l'accent sur la Hongrie, il tente également de passer en revue les informations relatives à d'autres pays d'Europe de l'Est (particulièrement la Russie, la Roumanie, la Yougoslavie et la République tchèque), lorsque de telles informations ont pu être obtenues. Ce faisant, l'auteur s'efforce de combler le manque d'informations concernant l'immigration chinoise en Europe orientale jusqu'à ce que des recherches plus substantielles aient pu être effectuées, tout en mettant en lumière les caractéristiques communes de l'immigration chinoise dans les différents pays d'Europe de l'Est et les liens qui les unissent, de même qu'en Europe occidentale.

## MIGRACIÓN CHINA HACIA EUROPA CENTRAL Y ORIENTAL

La mayor parte de la labor de investigación sobre la historia antigua de la migración China hacia Europa Oriental, es decir, durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, ha estado a cargo de estudiosos rusos. Las fuentes contemporáneas – narraciones de viajeros rusos y documentos gubernamentales – se centran en la migración a los territorios ruso asiáticos. Pero el interés en la inmigración china desde los años noventa, ha dado lugar a que se conceda considerable atención a los antecedentes históricos, principalmente por Larin (1998, 2000) y Saveliev (2002). Los becarios chinos o la migración china en Europa durante la Primera Guerra Mundial (por ejemplo Chen, 1986) apenas abordan la región de Europa Oriental.

Sin embargo, la migración china hacia Europa Oriental reviste un interés político particular puesto que en la última década se ha demostrado que es representativa de las tendencias en Europa en su totalidad. Una nueva corriente de migrantes empresarios, que a menudo no tenían ninguna conexión con las cadenas históricas rurales de la inmigración que produjeron las poblaciones de migrantes chinos de antaño en Europa Occidental, encontraron que era posible y provechoso hacer negocios y asentarse en la periferia europea durante el breve período de controles migratorios liberales. Los golpes erráticos asestados a la migración irregular por la inexistencia de regímenes migratorios exhaustivos dieron lugar a una situación muy voluble, que periódicamente genera corrientes de migrantes de un país en una región hacia otra. Ello se vio facilitado por las redes de ayuda e información que provenían tanto de Europa Oriental como Occidental, y que además han permitido que surjan otras tantas redes.

Este documento se centra en Hungría, e intenta examinar la información sobre otros países de Europa Oriental (particularmente Rusia, Rumania, Yugoslavia y la República Checa) donde hay información disponible. En ese quehacer, intenta colmar la brecha de información sobre los chinos en Europa Oriental hasta que se cuente con una investigación más substancial, y ello con objeto de destacar las características comunes de la migración China y sus vínculos con países de Europa Oriental, a título individual, y con aquellos de Europa Occidental.