



Algerian Vocational School Students in Jászberény, Hungary in the 1970s¹

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Abstract:

The everyday experiences of Algerian students studying in Hungary in the 1970s and 1980s are a scarcely studied field. The focus of the publication is the question of what microprocesses have emerged during the presence of Algerian students in Jászberény, a Hungarian rural town during the Kádár regime. As the topic is peripheral contemporary news articles in the daily press and oral history interviews with former teachers and students are the only sources, complemented by the TESCO documents in the Hungarian National Archives. It is a fortunate coincidence that a folder with the inscription 'TESCO Algerians' with valuable documents related to the education of Algerian students has survived in the Jászberény vocational technical school. Hungary started opening to the Third World countries in the 1960s, as part of the new Eastern Bloc foreign policy led by the Soviet Union, which tried to find alliances and markets in the decolonised new countries. The recent study focuses on two important questions: What microprocesses did the presence of foreign students trigger in Jászberény, embedded in the state socialist society? What kind of global challenges did the vocational education had to face during that time in Hungary? In this study, I try to figure out the main intercultural differences between the students and the locals, by drawing a lively picture of the Kádár era Jászberény from a special microhistorical perspective. I assume that the students living separately in different Hungarian towns may have faced similar everyday problems regardless of the place. In the near future I would like to compare the microhistories of the Algerian student groups studying in different Hungarian rural towns in the 1970s and 1980s, which could form a basis for a detailed comparative historical analysis to research the lesser-known intercultural dimension of the Socialist Hungary.

Keywords:

Algeria; Hungary;
Socialist Solidarity;
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Introduction

Hungary became a member of the United Nations on December 20, 1955, but until 1963 the so-called 'Hungarian question' hindered any contact with countries outside the Socialist Bloc (Békés, 2019, p. 193). On September 25, 1962, Ferhat Abbas proclaimed the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, thus a government led by Ben Bella was installed, but under the Evian Agreement, the former colonial power France also had serious influence in the country (Lengyel, 1982, p. 82; J. Nagy, 1987, p. 48). Algeria has an area of 2.381.000 km², with a population of 13 million in 5-2 million), Constantine (300.000) and Annaba (200.000) (Kádár, 1973, 28).

The contact of the Eastern Bloc with the African and Asian countries freed from colonial rule was also motivated by the Soviet geopolitical interest during the Cold War. Important elements of this process were the state loans, sending of experts, and offering vocational training for students coming from the developing world. The Soviet Union offered the greatest assistance, but other countries, including Hungary, also tried to get their share of it. In 1965, Hungary concluded a trade agreement with Algeria (Bódy 2021, p.14). On November 1, 1964, Gyula Kállai's delegation consisting of government, and KISZ members visited the celebration organized for the 10th anniversary of the Algerian liberation war (Solymári – Tarrósy, 2025, p. 150). On June 19, 1965, Ben Bella was overthrown in a bloodless coup, Houari Boumediene became the new leader, but this did not affect interstate relations (Lawless, 1980, p. 28). In 1968, the last French military units left Algeria, the country inaugurated the first national oil pipeline, and nationalized 11 foreign-owned iron, zinc, copper, and lead mines (Árkus, 1984, p.133-134). The scientific and cultural cooperation, as well as the relationship between the ministries, have also developed dynamically (Nagy 2017, p. 87). Hungary viewed the North African country as a potential market for Hungarian technology export, which Algeria was able to finance from its hydrocarbon revenues (Bódy, 2022, p. 334). TESCO International Technical and Scientific Cooperation and Trading Office³ was founded in 1962 with the aim of coordinating technological cooperation, scholarships and sending of experts (Tarrósy-Morenth, 2013, p. 80-81). Press and propaganda relations also expanded, in 1978 an agreement was signed between the two journalist associations and also the radio and television stations (MNL 1981).

³ TESCO (International Technical and Scientific Cooperation and Trading Office) was a Hungarian-founded company belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Its main profile was the coordination of scientific and technological cooperation, especially building relationship with developing countries (sending experts, accepting scholarships). It survived the regime change and operated as TESCO Consulting Ltd. through privatization until 2017, when it was liquidated by the Commercial Court in bankruptcy proceedings. Its last CEO was László Pados. More about the company: <http://www.tescoconsulting.hu>

Receiving Algerian Scholarship Holders

In the 1970s, the majority of people travelling to Hungary from developing countries came for university, postgraduate or technical studies (Apor 2017, p. 26). The legal background was the Technical and Scientific Cooperation Agreement signed in 1966 (MNL TESCO Algeria, 1979-1990). Within its framework firstly 47 people arrived in Békéscsaba and Pécs for technical studies in September 1970. Based on the new agreement signed in 1973 altogether 97 scholarship holders arrived on March 15, 1974. Unfortunately, seven of them had to return for various reasons, like illness or different family problems (MNL TESCO Algeria, 1967-1975).

Miklós Toldi Food Industry Vocational High School (<i>Nagykőrös</i>)	28 students
High-voltage Vocational High School (<i>Jászberény</i>)	17 students
Tóth Kálmán Water Management Vocational High School (<i>Baja</i>)	19 students
Museum preparatory course (<i>Pécs</i>)	8 students
Chemical Industry Vocational High School (<i>Debrecen</i>)	9 students
Shoe Industry Vocational High School (<i>Martfű</i>)	9 students
Total	90 students

Figure 1: Distribution of Algerian students arriving in 1974. Source: MNL TESCO Algeria, 1967-1975.

In 1974, a total of 164 technicians were studying in Hungary; but unforeseen financial problems arose in their catering (MNL TESCO Algeria, 1967-1975). For the 1976–77 academic year the Hungarians provided 50 places, thus 30 new students arrived in December 1976. For the 1977–78 academic year, in addition to the existing 113 study places, the state offered scholarships to more 20 persons in the key areas of food and construction industry, and ten other scholarships in postgraduate training. The 1978–79 work program stipulated the admission of 184 students for 1979, but only 62 places remained for the 1980/81 academic year. In 1979, a total of 230 Algerians studied in Hungary as skilled workers, technicians and postgraduate training. A year later their number rose to 243, but new scholarship holders did not arrive from the mid-1980s (MNL TESCO Algeria, 1979-1990).

Vocational Education in Jászberény

In the following, the lives of Algerian students studying in Jászberény⁴ will be presented, highlighting how the years of János Kádár's soft dictatorship were realized in local context. István Rácz the principal of High-Power Vocational School⁵ has concluded a contract with the TESCO Office coordinating the education of Algerian students. At the 1972/73 academic year, 14 students could continue their studies in Jászberény joining the third school year, concerning they have studied two years in Budapest in another vocational school. István Rácz maintained good relationship with the Ministry of Metallurgy and Mechanical Engineering, which organized the training of foreign students. The Ministry was not satisfied with the level of knowledge and skills of this Algerian class, when studying in Budapest, as they have only attended classes from 5 pm to 8 pm, and their language skills were inadequate. Therefore, the Ministry asked principal István Rácz to take them over and improve the level of their education. After moving to Jászberény, their theoretical and practical knowledge has been brought to the required level (Interview with József Helmich, 2025).

The Jászberény school⁶ agreed to provide eight rooms for use: two classrooms (41.2 m² and 31 m²), a foyer (91.7 m²), three workshops and a restroom. Housing, teachers' fees, heating, lighting and other expenses all were financed by TESCO Company. Accommodation was initially in the school's dormitory, later in rented apartments in different parts of the city ('Algírok Mappa,' 23 October 1972). The scholarship's amount was quite enough for pocket money: 1,500 HUF/month in 1973, two years later it was increased to 1,800 HUF/month. In comparison it was the same amount as an engineer's salary at the very beginning of his career (Interview with Ferenc Bencsik, 2024). Some students were sent by their company to refresh their skills, meanwhile they continued to receive their home salary in a bank account in Algeria in addition to the Hungarian scholarship ('Algírok Mappa' 1970; Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

The three-story dormitory built at a cost of 14.5 million HUF for accommodating 204 people was opened on November 16, 1973, with a 156 m² clubroom, a doctor's office and three sick rooms on the ground floor. The Youth Club of the Budapest Committee of the Patriotic People's Front (Hazafias Népfrent) contributed 250 thousand HUF worth of work to the construction and also donated a 500-volume library (Szolnok Megyei Néplap, 1973). The Algerian students were housed on the dormitory's first floor, in a separate wing, in rooms numbered 107-113. They could spend their mornings inside the dormitory or in the city, as the house rules did not apply

⁴ Jászberény is town of 30.000 inhabitants in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County.

⁵ The school has been operating as a Catholic vocational technical high-school since 2012. Today its name is Szent József Katolikus Elektronikai Technikum, Gimnázium és Kollégium. Its previous and widely-known name was Liska József Erősáramú Szakközépiskola, Gimnázium és Kollégium. Since 1969 the main profile is the education of high voltage technicians. Interview with Mrs. Árpádné Bakki retired vice-principal, 2025

⁶ Hereby I express my gratitude to Ferenc Bencsik former principal of the school for providing me very useful unknown sources for the publication.



to them (Interview with Ferenc Bencsik, 2024). The students' first impressions were like these:

“When we arrived, we didn’t know what to expect. The Hungarian lifestyle, culture and food were also unusual. The strangest thing was the cold weather, we didn’t know the winter was so cold (minus 5-6 degrees), we only had jackets. There was snow, we played with it like children, because we have never seen it before. In the dormitory, they cooked with fat, often offered meals made of pork, what we don’t eat. They even boiled chicken heads and feet in the soup, which was extremely unusual for us. It was also hard to get used to the fact that boys and girls are everywhere together, not separated like in Algeria. You can just go to a coffee shop where you can drink alcohol and meet local girls, not like in our homeland.” (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

A group of Algerian students dressed in traditional costumes, have stood in the school corridor in ankle-length felt dresses and peaked caps seemed a bit exotic at first, but after three weeks, they have completely changed their clothes to European ones. It was a great pleasure for them to see snowfall for the first time in their lives; they thought it was “manna” falling from the sky. It was not possible for the teachers to do their job that day, because the Algerians were playing with the snow all the time. The first difficulty for them was learning the Hungarian language. The six-month training was conducted in French for 45 hours a week. On March 15, 1974, the school signed a contract with András Simon, a retired teacher to give eight lectures a week, his main task was to teach Hungarian literature to the students. If they did not understand something, he switched to French, but he was speaking in a quite boring way. Gyula Boros, around 30 years old and coming from Szolnok, gave 15 theoretical and 10 practical lectures a week. According to Remili Ali, a former student, the Hungarian language is extremely difficult, thus they had to study all day and night:

“We only studied the language for half a year, but in the meantime, we went everywhere and met girls in town. There are a high school and a Teacher Training College. The Algerian kids are not shy; they dared to talk to them anywhere. We started by saying hi, then we tried to communicate with our ‘hands and feet.’ Back then, there was still life in Jászberény, there were many people, many cafes. The locals knew that such young foreigners were studying here, and it helped a lot in learning the Hungarian language talked to people. Later on, the difference in language skills was also visible; those Algerians who didn't date didn't learn the language as much.” In Jászberény, no one spoke French or English, therefore they had to learn Hungarian as fast as they could (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

TESCO's letter of August 11, 1975, was entitled 'Mandatory medical examination of Algerian scholarship holders,' because the Ministry of Health has made obligatory the laboratory tests for the student after returning from Algeria, which had to be

supplemented with a cholera stool examination. The results of the students' blood count, Wassermann, urine, bacteriological and parasitological findings were also sent to laboratories ('Algírok Mappa' 1975).

High-Voltage Professional Training

The profession was taught in three academic years (Szolnok Megyei Néplap, 1976). Classes started at 2 p.m. and lasted until 7 p.m. During the interviews, it became clear that the technical subjects of electronics were much easier for the students, they specially liked technical drawing. Learning mathematics, electrical engineering, physics and chemistry was also considered a positive experience for the Algerians. On the other hand, it was quite difficult for them to reconcile the theoretical texts and sketches they learned from technology (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024). Their former technology teacher remembers them this way:

"I taught the first Algerian group in the 1972-73 school year. They were healthy, adult men aged 25-35 years, and they made a splash in the city with their rugged appearance. The training was only on basic level, as they probably had a primary school or maybe vocational education. They had difficulties understanding the Hungarian explanations. Furthermore, the teachers did not get any guidance on what subject to teach them, thus we have mainly taught only basic electronics" (Interview with István Gergen, 2025).

The appearance of 18-20 North Africans was a novelty in Jászberény. The first class seemed to be a solid group, they did not reach the usual level of knowledge, but they were mostly involved in sports. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of this group and the language barriers have also hindered the process of education, and some students did not interest in studying at all, they have regularly hung out at school, and István Rácz tried to punish them by withdrawing the scholarship for the days they missed. When the TESCO Office found it out, Sándor Derzsi commercial director and József Mózer department leader have written him a letter dated September 22, 1975, drawing the principal's attention to the international agreements. According to these, all scholarship holders are entitled to get financial support for every day spent in Hungary, and therefore he should not punish the absences with a deduction of scholarship rates, but he should resort to other disciplinary measures ('Algírok Mappa' 1975).

The next table shows the subjects the Algerian students had to learn:

Technical drawing	2 lessons
Technology (electrical industry)	3 lessons
Mathematics	5 lessons
Electrical machines	2 lessons
Electrical appliances	3 lessons

Electrical works	2 lessons
Automation	3 lessons
Business economics	1 lesson
Electrical measurements (machine)	3 lessons
Professional practice	12 lessons
Total	36 lessons

Figure 2: Number of weekly lessons for each subject in the 1973/74 academic year.

Source: 'Algírok Mappa' 1973.

The students' professional knowledge has developed as a result of all teachers' enormous efforts and sacrifice. There were ten-minute breaks between the 45-minute lessons, and a 20-minute break after the third lecture. The list of teachers: *Árpád Bakki* (physics, electrical measurement), *Sándor Pecsényánszky* (electrical engineering, electrical machines), *Mária Lóczy* (technical drawing), *István Gergen* (technology), *József Helmich* (technology, electrical measurement), *László Barta* (machine elements), *István Rác* (mathematics), *Károly Harangozó* (electrical measurement).

The practical education took place on Thursdays in the school workshop. The list of teachers leading the training was: *István Krizsán* (winding), *Lehel Rigó* (machine cutting), *Károly Palotai* (winding), *László Sándor* (school workshop manager, electrical measurement), *József Kohári* (manual cutting, welding, soldering), *László Szabó* (electrical measurement). In addition to professional subjects, students practiced the correct Hungarian speech in a class called 'Language Training' led by *Piroska Nagy* for two hours a week. Vice-principal Mrs. *Árpádné Bakki* in her lecture called 'Hungarian Cultural History' has comprehensively presented the main historical figures of Hungarian intellectual life. She was very surprised to realise that there were some Algerian students who have already heard about the fact, that the famous composer, Béla Bartók has collected Arabic folk songs too, in addition to Hungarian ones. The vice-principal has mastered the students' pronunciation in a special voice training, as it was quite difficult for many of them to pronounce the strange Hungarian vowels (Interview with Mrs. *Árpádné Bakki*, 2025).

The second group arrived in March 1974 with a stopover in Zürich and Geneva on a Swiss Air flight. A French-speaking TESCO representative was waiting for them at Ferihegy Airport, after that the group was taken to Jászberény by bus. The group mostly consisted of adult workers of three state-owned Algerian companies (SONELGAZ, SONELEC, and SONIPEC). Learning the language lasted till the end of the school year, as they arrived later, only in the second semester. Their Hungarian language exam had to be taken in front of a committee of totally unknown teachers. It had a written and oral part, but overall, it was not difficult for most of the students. The two best ones, Abderrahmane Abellache and Ali Remili, received a free plane ticket to Algiers. Everyone has travelled home for the summertime; they returned only in September. Ali Mahmoud Cherifati, the head of the class, was also responsible for organizing cultural programs. Several students already had previous knowledge in the technical field, but

some of them had only attended high school without gaining any skills. In his group there was only one student who regularly hung out due to the many entertainment options in the city, thus he failed and graduated only a year later. According to the 1974 curriculum, the students had to learn Arabic and Hungarian folk songs, the use of Arabic folk instruments, Arabic and Hungarian beat music, therefore a special two-stringed folk instrument (gombri) was also requested from Algiers ('Algírok Mappa', 1974).

During the vacation everybody visited their sending companies, where they picked up their plane tickets for the next school year. Friends often asked the students how life was in Hungary, and what about local food. They did not have any complaints as they replied: 'We live well in Jászberény, the language is quite difficult, but the Hungarian girls are really beautiful.' At home they could also access their bank account. Meanwhile studying in Hungary their home salaries from their companies were also collected at their account, thus they could withdraw any money to Jászberény in foreign currency, which was mainly used for partying, travelling or buying used Western cars (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).



Figure 3. Algerian students on a school trip to Budapest, Source: Nagy Piroska's photograph collection.

The foreigners studying in Hungary seemed to be an interesting topic for the local press too, thus in 1972, a reporter interviewed some of the students. Slimane Bendjaballah, a 22-year-old young man, the leader of the Algerians spoke surprisingly good Hungarian:

"As a student, my job is to study with honour, as a student leader, to interpret the requests, comments, and complaints of my peers. I don't have a difficult job because everyone helps me, we hardly have anything to ask for, we get everything we need. The teachers and the principal take our opinions into account, and they would certainly listen to our complaints."



Abdelkrim Guezlane started his studies in Algiers, then he continued studying in Budapest after a year and a half. The curly-haired young man speaks seriously:

'It was easier to study in Budapest than in Algiers, in Jászberény it is easier than in Budapest. I highly appreciate the good teaching methods here, mostly the 12-hour practical sessions per week in a modernly equipped school, as this Jászberény institute. Every day I feel that I know more than yesterday, and I understand what they are teaching me better and better.'

Abdelmalik Rezig (Kamel) is already a family man. He got married in Budapest to a Hungarian girl; they have a 15-month-old baby boy. He is thinking of which subject is the most difficult for him. He answers to the reporter's question: "*Our curriculum was designed in such a way that we understood from the beginning what we were learning would be useful to us. When I finish these two years, I want to continue my studies at ELTE University*" (Szolnok Megyei Néplap, 1972).

Two very serious members of the second group also gave interview, motivating the entire class. Both were married; they have first lived in a shared apartment. After their wives arrived from Algeria, they moved separately. They did not go to parties with the others and always cooked for themselves individually (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024). Abdellah Sakhraoui told the reporter with strong accent that he was born in Algiers, and before coming here he had worked as a guest worker in France. He highlighted the modern education in Jászberény. Learning the language was a big challenge for him, because he considered the six-month intensive training to be insufficient, and he wanted to learn the literary language as well. Said Kebache was married too. His wife Zhor, and their two curly-haired daughters, Linda and Kerima, also lived in Jászberény at this time. The children attended the kindergarten of Pelyhespart. It was more difficult for Said to learn Hungarian as an adult, but he got lots of help at the school. He also had a dream of continuing his studies and to teach in Algeria in a similar modern vocational school (Szolnok Megyei Néplap, 1976).⁷

There were some Algerian students who were very interested in the local society, especially how different people lived in Hungary. Once three of them spontaneously visited the vice-principal, Mrs. Árpádné Bakki, and her husband as they were just interested in their private life (Interview with Mrs. Árpádné Bakki, 2025). In 1975 the Jászberény branch of the Algerian Students' Union was re-established, two students became members. TESCO also provided support for organizing cultural events for the Algerians.⁸ Every year, teachers wrote descriptions of the students, which are considered rare written sources:

⁷ His wife and two little daughters have arrived to Jászberény after the first schoolyear. Zhor has been as a housewife in the beginning, but later when she started boring, she got a job in the local Lehel Refrigerator Factory, where she could also pick up some language skills. (Interview with Edit Senhaji, 2025).

⁸ Cherifati Ali-Mahmoud became the local leader of the Algerian Student Union, and Derrar Ahmed his right hand (Interview with Ali Remili 2024.)

'He is capable, he is painfully precise in his preparation, but he is too meticulous. He is active in class, he doesn't care if he doesn't understand something, he strives very hard to achieve a good grade. He openly expresses his opinion and reacts sensitively to comments or actions that affect him. He gets angry easily and he is prone to making rash decisions. However, he calmly corrects his actions if he thinks they are wrong. His academic performance has decreased by a few tenths, and his diligence has slowed down compared to the previous year. He is very interested in the Hungarian environment around him, the lives of people, and their relationship with each other. He has gained a lot of experience during his stay in different countries; this has played a major role in the development of his critical attitude. He is able to influence the members of the group.'

'He has good language skills, and he studies extremely diligently, conscientiously and persistently. Due to his quick thinking and slow language expression skills, he speaks with a slight stutter. In the first year, he was among the best students in group B, this drove him to study. In the second year, the two groups merged, thus he became to the middle, but he is trying very hard to be among the better ones, which is also evident in his second semester results. His human qualities can only be praised. He is respectful towards his teachers, very modest, perhaps a little withdrawn. He is a good social person, helpful, and his peers like him. He attended classes diligently, and he is interested in technical things as well as theory.'

'He has good abilities; his diligence has deteriorated compared to the previous year. As a result, his academic performance is weaker. He is sensitive, easily angered, and cannot always control himself. He works a lot for the community as a good organizer. He has excesses in judging events. He has a stomach ulcer, so he cooks for himself. His appearance is attractive; his appearance is well-groomed. He expresses his opinion in all circumstances, without considering the consequences. He monitors the problems of the community closely and he sees the internal and external forces that cause them. He affects a large part of the group; thus, he is suitable for organizing work that unites the community. He loves this job and does it with honour, although it has caused some setbacks in his academic performance' ('Algírok' Mappa, 1978).

The third Algerian class of 27 student arrived in 1975. Due to their large number and different prior knowledge, they were separated to two groups, A and B. After finishing the first year, in September 1976 the groups were merged once they had reached a similar level of knowledge. Their attitude was extremely contradictory; they did not take studying so seriously either, because there were many young people among them who only came to have some fun or saw Hungary as a stopover on their journey to Western Europe (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024). Mokdad Laoues, who currently lives in Spain, recalls his studies in Jászberény this way:

“At that time, we arrived in Hungary in January 1975, and that’s when we started learning Hungarian. We studied the language for half a year, then we had a summer break. In September, we started studying electromechanics properly, all the studies were four years long. We graduated in 1979” (Interview with Mokdad Laoues, 2024).

Leisure and Entertainment

The students moved around the city a lot, got to know the society of Jászberény, they were regular guests of the local restaurants and bars. Remili Ali, a former student, remembers the local entertainment opportunities:

“After 7 pm, when we finished school, life has just begun, the four or five bars were open until midnight on weekdays too. After school we went to party. We went to Lehel Restaurant a lot, where there was live music every night. There was a disco once a week at Pannónia Bar. There was also a weekly disco at the Teacher Training College in its main hall, where the Algerian boys were popular. Our regular venue was the Kőhídi Bar, where a pianist played music. Life in the city was colourful, there were many cultural groups, we had fottball team too, that played the small-field city football championship, and we played a lot of music and performed folk dances too. On weekends, when the weather was nice, we went to the beach, or to a match, or we just organised a program with our girlfriends” (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

The Jászberény caterers knew well who was allowed to lend money and who was not. In such cases, the manager would write down that the student would pay the bill when he received his scholarship. They always paid on time; they did not abuse the situation. The Algerians went to Pannónia Bar a lot, where they mainly drank cocktails, they also liked beer and the local brandy called ‘pálinka’ (Interview with József Helmich and Edit Senhaji, 2025). The students have also formed a small music group with the singers Abderrahmane Abellache and Ramdane Saada together with Ahmed Khedar, who played the guitar professionally. They mostly played Arabic music and performed at different school events. The students have also organized a folk-dance group and a small-field local football team, called ‘Algerian Students,’ which played matches in the Jászberény city championship on Saturdays (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

It was a sensitive topic in Jászberény that the Algerians were better at getting girls than the locals. This was also accompanied by the fact that some of them were also financially free. For example, at that time it was really hard to get normal jeans in Hungary, but they could buy it in France or Italy for themselves. So, Hungary was a complete ‘free world’ for most of the Algerian students at that time, if a young man had some money, in addition he was exotic too, the girls would go for him in many cases (Interview with Ali Remili).



Az 1978-ban végzett második csoport

Figure 4: The second Algerian group (1974-1978). Source: Nagy Piroska's photographic collection.

There were several clashes over girls who preferred Algerian boys, and even a middle-aged lady welcomed them warmly (Tokai, 2024, p. 99). The police often visited their headquarters, the Kőhídi Presszó, and usually intervened to protect them from the angry locals. Because of the conflicts with the locals there were different court trails, but in the worst case, these only ended in expulsion from the country (Interview with István Holló, Mrs. Károlyné Nagy and István Nemes, 2024). István Rácz was an influential man with a significant network of party contacts, and he was also meticulous in ensuring that interstate relations were not damaged, thus he maintained good relationship with the local police and always took care of any behaviour problems (Interview with Ali Remili, 2024).

It was a nice custom of the students to send postcards to their teachers from home during the summer break even after they had finished school. Ahmed Khedar wrote to József Helmich on March 23, 1977, that he had met Mohamed Mokhtari, who had given him the teacher's home address. He was sad that a teacher would no longer be teaching them in the next school year. As he puts it: *"I am very sorry. Everyone is sorry. It will be a bad school year for us, it started badly. We don't know what surprises the maths teacher will have in store for us."* Then, he quickly turns to his summer experiences: *"Time is running here, and soon we have to go back to Jászberény. There are three girls here from the Jászberény Teacher Training College, they are having a good time. There will surely be more girls next summer."*



Maiza El-Mamoun has sent postcards after graduating: “*The best time is over! We have to be realistic. I don’t work, I’m still studying, I think I’m used to the life of a student.*” In another postcard, he writes about starting to teach:

“I’m fine, I teach biology in high school. Yes, it’s very tiring, especially with 18-year-olds. It’s hot here, there are a lot of people on the beach, you can’t even move, there’s such a big crowd. I met Jamel and his wife; they already have a daughter” (József Helmich’s postcard collection).

On December 8, 1974, Ahmed Derrar had a drunken argument with two locals of Jászberény, in Pannónia Bár as he went to a nearby table, picked up a glass and threw it at the victim. The police patrol acted, but the student repeatedly attacked the victim, although he was no longer able to hit him again. Derrar was sentenced to a fine of 1,000 HUF for disorderly conduct, which he had to pay within 15 days. Police Major László Banka when mitigating circumstances considered that he had shown remorse. However, he warned the student if he commits a similar crime of vandalism in the future, he will be sentenced to imprisonment according to the law (‘Algírok Mappa’1975).

The Exams

The first group took the exams on June 14, 1973, in the subjects of mechanical elements, mathematics, and technology, and the next day in electrical machines and general engineering. Eight of the 14 students have failed, thus a retake exam needed to be held for them on September 5 and 17. The reason why they could not pass the exam was the fact that they came totally unprepared for the first time, and the school didn't want all of them to be failed. During the second retake exam, two of the eight students, Douad Akli and Tessa Noureddin have failed again in maths. According to the school regulations, a newer retake exam cannot be held in such cases, therefore principal István Rácz wrote a letter to the TESCO Office asking if they would be granted another opportunity based on special consideration (‘Algírok Mappa’1973).

The second group had to take a class exam on technology, electrical machines and electrical equipment subjects to a five-member committee on June 27, 1977. The chairman was Gyula Szücs, principal of the János Pálffy Industrial Vocational School in Szolnok, the co-chairman was István Kovács from the Ministry (‘Algírok Mappa’1977). The committee members were István Rácz principal, Sándor Pecsényánszky teacher of electrical machines, and Mrs. Andrásné Hlavacska teacher of technology and electrical equipment. István Rácz, after welcoming the members, highlighted that these students would take the written graduation exam in September. They can go home after the class exam, they have to come back only at the beginning of August, this one month will be the preparation time for the upcoming written exam. The oral part of the graduation exam will take place in October. He feels that the class has worked properly from the beginning, thus their schoolwork is much better than the previous and the following groups. These students have always prepared, and they could compete with any

Hungarian class. The order of the subjects was: 1. Technology, 2. Electrical machines, 3. Electrical equipment. A total of 17 students took part of the exam, 16 passed it, only one of them was allowed to take a retake exam and there were no repeaters.

The chairman emphasized that the students' behaviour was disciplined, they presented their knowledge courageously and their language skills were also appropriate, their drawing skills and the precise use of technical terms were also noticeable. Mustapha Kamel Cheriti's exam was outstanding, who completed his answers with excellent blackboard diagrams and sketches. Only Omar Bentalla did not reach the minimum level, therefore he failed. Sándor Pecsényánszky added that all the students know the learning material relatively well, but their knowledge is too lexical without real practice, on the other hand István Rácz emphasized that they were very excited and wanted to pass the exam as soon as possible. The chairman announced the results and congratulated the examinees ('Algírok Mappa' 1977). The second class took the written school leaving exam in September 1977, while the oral and the practical exams in mathematics, technology, electrical machines and equipment in October. The technician exam was taken in 1978, thus earning them the qualification of 'Electrical machine and equipment manufacturing technician' (Ali Remili's school leaving and technician certificate).

The third group took the exam in technology, electrical machines and electrical equipment subjects, on January 11, 1978. The principal said these students had arrived in January 1975, and after an intensive language preparation they received a shortened high-voltage training. They were an 'eager' group, they prepared for the exam with great diligence, 20 students came for the exam, all of them passed it successfully, there were no repeaters. According to co-chairman István Kovács, the electrical industry and technology subjects were a bit difficult for them, as they had to connect many new concepts and their sketches were poorly done. In the case of 'electrical machines and equipment,' they successfully coped with the preparation of winding drawings. The Hungarian technical language did not cause any problem; thus, most candidates could explain the vector diagrams too. With the use of the very special technical terms of electrical equipment subject they had some difficulties, but their blackboard sketches were acceptable. Sándor Pecsényánszky highlighted that the weakest of the Algerians were the two repeaters, who skipped several parts of the learning material. In general, the students' expressive ability was much weaker than the previous group, as their language skills were poorer, their teachers were happy if they could understand their explanation during the lessons. The technical subjects have certainly less textual content, therefore the instructors could pay more attention to the technical drawing, thus it was easier for the Algerian students to understand ('Algírok Mappa' 1978).

Conclusion

This study presents the everyday life of three Algerian classes studying in Jászberény in the 1970s. According to the experiences summarized during the research, despite the Socialist 'ideological community of destiny,' local traditions were also alive, and, in

several cases, these led to different intercultural conflicts. The presence of the Algerian students gave Jászberény a kind of 'intercultural dimension,' but the meeting of two distant cultures has caused socio-cultural conflicts and numerous local prejudices. In the context of communism 'western way of life' was only available to a few, which aroused envy in the eyes of the locals, and in some cases discriminatory stereotypes are still present among the population. It was also a significant challenge for the vocational education in Jászberény to teach a technical profession for foreigners in Hungarian, but the exam results show that drawing and practical tasks independent of language were easier for the Algerians. In principle after graduation, they had to work seven years in Algeria, some of them later moved to another countries like France, Spain and Canada, only few remained in Hungary. Currently, two former students live in Jászberény, and a third one in Szolnok the county seat. Their children have already assimilated into the Hungarian society, the daughter of Mouloud Argaz has graduated from the same school, and Ali Remili's granddaughter is currently studying their computer science. For those living in Algeria, some level of Hungarian and a nostalgia for their student life in Jászberény have survived to this day. Therefore, it would be necessary to conduct much more oral history interviews with former students from the developing countries and to digitize their existing photographic material too.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

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Algerian Sassy Students, who have Passed the Exams Successfully

Group 1 (1972-74): The first two years were completed in Budapest (1970-72), *Electrical and Equipment Technician Exam (1974)*: Abdelmalik Rezig, Abderrahmane Hammadi, Abderrazah Titah, Akli Duad, Omar Azzouz, Farid Debih, Goulam Reduane, Guezlane Ahdelkrim, Mustapha Arab, Oumoussa Cherif, Slimane Bendjaballah

Group 2 (1974-78): *Form teacher: István Rácz, Matriculation exam (1977), Electrical and equipment technician exam (1978)*: Abbas Mouloud, Abellache Abderrahmane, Akrouf Ali, Argaz Mouloud, Boudjelaba Makhlof, Bouzouina Belhadj, Brahmi Djamel-Eddine, Cherifati Ali-Mahmoud, Cheriti Mustapha Kamel, Derrar Ahmed, Kebache Said, Remili Ali, Saada Ramdane, Sakhraoui Abdellah, Taibi Zoubir

Group 3 (1975-79): *Form teacher: Sándorné Csiszár, Matriculation exam (1978), Electrical and equipment technician exam (1979):* Ait-Ouhamou Ameziane, Azouaou Abdelmadjid, Beddar Mohamed, Bentalla Omar, Berrekia Miloud, Boudra Hassene, Brahim Mokhtar, Chaouadi Omar, Drici Said, Khedar Ahmed, Khenenou Abdelkrime, Khiter Aissa, Lakehal Embarek, Laoues Mokdad, Maiza El-Mamoun, Matmati Abdelkader, Mokhtari Mohamed, Rebbach Lamouri, Talaoubrid Mohamed, Zerrar Said



Figure 5: Tableau of the third Jászberény group (1975-79). Source: A Liska József Erősáramú Szakközépiskola, Gimnázium és Kollégium Jubileumi Évkönyve 50 (1959-2009). Liska József Erősáramú Szakközépiskola, Gimnázium és Kollégium, Jászberény. 208.

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