

Forum

Social Sciences Review

Társadalomtudományi Szemle

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[Conservatism]

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ŠTEFAN GAUČÍK

Subject and context: A contribution to the interpretation of the history of the Pressburger Sparkassa

Abstract: The author chose a very demanding goal: besides the theoretical perspective on the historical importance of the banking sector and the financial elite in the 19th and 20th centuries, he also focuses on urban development processes and the modernization of the urban society in Bratislava. The paper analyses the existing, authorized interpretations of the history of the first commercial bank of the city of Bratislava, the First Savings Bank of Pressburg (Ger. Pressburger I. Sparkassa, Hun. Pozsonyi I. Takarékpénztár). Based on archival documents, it critically confronts the following issues: 1. the image of the bank (i.e., the issue of its capitalistic “character” and philanthropy); 2. the development of national orientation in Slovak banking history as to the establishment of the First Savings Bank of Pressburg (“the first Slovak financial institution”); and 3. the analysis of the type and development of savings banks in the context of the Hungarian banking sector. In addition, the paper also maps “products” of Slovak Marxist historiography, nationalistic concepts, and new, unfortunately inadequate, approaches after 1989.

Keywords: Bratislava; Pressburger Sparkassa; Bratislava Savings Bank; banking history; sources; historical clichés; ethnicity; identity.

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Introduction

The city of Bratislava not only has a remarkable past, with a rich social and cultural history, but also old traditions of economy, trade, finance, and credit services. These traditions can be inspiring and helpful—although perhaps with a bit of exaggeration—even today when various, positively perceived identities and virtues of civil society are being formed, such as thrift, patronage, solidarity, altruism, and the philanthropy of business entities, and an organic urban environment, poetically called the “smell” of the city, is being born.

* The present study was written as part of VEGA project 2/0069/21: The Role of the Bourgeoisie in Modernization Processes in Transition from Estates Society to Civil Society (Hungary Kingdom and Slovakia 1780–1918), implemented by the Institute of History Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Three decisive factors motivated me to write this study: 1. the long-ignored archival material of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, which has survived in the best condition from among the oldest collections of the monetary institutions of Bratislava; 2. persisting stereotypes and canonized themes in research on the history of banking in Slovakia; and 3. a monograph on the history of this bank, which I am planning to write in the near future and in which my many years of research will culminate. With respect to this intention, the postulates of this study form building blocks of the planned book.¹

Theses and Aspects: A Side Note on the Forgotten History of a Bank

During research on the history of so-called financial intermediaries (i.e., commercial banks, and even other alternative institutions such as private banking enterprises and credit cooperatives) in Bratislava, we encounter several problems, which are mainly related to methodology, concept, and sources. These difficulties are closely connected

1 The first official German and Hungarian company name of this institution (Pressburger Sparkassa/Pozsonyi Takarékpénztár) was valid from 1842 to 1870. Subsequently, its primacy in the city began to be emphasized due to the emergence of three new competing banks in 1867–1869, so its name was changed to Pressburger I. Sparkassa/Pozsonyi I. Takarékpénztár (The First Savings Bank of Pressburg). This name lasted until 1920. The bank was then given a trilingual company name (Prešporská I. sporivá banka/Pressburger I. Sparbanka/Pozsonyi I. Takarékbank). In 1923, the management of the institute refused to rename the company from “Pressburger” to “Bratislavaer,” and from “Pozsonyi” to “Bratislavai,” respectively. Nevertheless, in the end, it could not avoid doing so and had to use the Slovak equivalents from 1931 onwards. This usage was valid until June 13, 1945, when the bank, designated for liquidation, was renamed as Bratislavská I. sporivá banka, úč. spol. dočasná správa (First Savings Bank of Bratislava, joint stock company, temporary administration). See the Archive of the National Bank of Slovakia (ANBS), Bratislavská prvá sporivá banka (BPSB; First Savings Bank of Bratislava) fonds, inv. no. 12, Zápisnice riaditeľstva (1918–1926) [Minutes of the Board of Directors (1918–1926)], Zápisnica z 23. februára a zo 7. marca 1923 [Minutes of February 23 and March 7, 1923]; ANBS, BPSB, Box 11, No. 85, Dočasná správa [Temporary Management]; Národná banka Československa – Oblastný úrad pre Slovensko [National Bank of Czechoslovakia—Regional Office for Slovakia], Box 35, Likvidácia Bratislavskej I. sporivej banky, 11603/46–VI/18 [Liquidation of the First Savings Bank of Bratislava, 11603/46–VI/18]; A 100 éves Bratislavai I. Takarékbank R. T., azelőtt Pozsonyi I. Takarékpénztár 1842–1942 [The Hundred-Year-Old First Savings Bank of Bratislava, Joint-Stock Company, Previously the First Savings Bank of Pressburg 1842–1942]. Pozsony, Litera, 1942, 27–28.

On the circumstances of the establishment of this financial institute and its business activities, see the latest pieces of research by Gaučík 2020: 116–131; Gaučík 2021b: 439–464. I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Béla Tomka for his invaluable suggestions and to František Chudják, who has long been very helpful to me in providing access to the archival material of this savings bank and giving invaluable assistance regarding the nature and the possibilities of utilizing this archival fonds.

to the current dire state of economic history in Slovakia, including the history of entrepreneurship, the financial elite, and monetary institutions, and its lagging behind the latest trends abroad (Holec 2006: 41–42, 51–53; Michela 2011: 617–637; Pogány 1995: 146–149).² In our case, these difficulties persist partly because the history of credit services and their institutional background in Bratislava dates back to at least the latter half of the 18th century³ (not taking into account other forms of financial relations and lending in the Middle Ages and in the modern period) and has not been researched in detail yet (Gaučík 2014: 53–64). The long-accessible primary archival sources of the old monetary institutions of Bratislava have not been exploited, and the range of deficits is extensive also in other areas. There are no studies on the functioning of the credit market in the city, the social status of creditors and borrowers, or the social structure of the clientele. To put it simply, we have no knowledge of the mechanisms of credit distribution and of the “financial world” of the class system and the capitalist establishment of the city in the 19th century. On the other hand, there is still no high-quality, serious monograph on the history of financial institutions in Bratislava or their multinational elite, the image created of bankers, or the personal and power relations and self-image of this elite.⁴ Nor does research exist on the possible positions and

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- 2 The overall state of Slovak historiography was discussed extensively, although in a closed and quite restrained manner, on www.forumhistoriae.sk in 2007 and at the Fourteenth Congress of the Slovak Historical Society in 2011. Back in 2006–2007, Roman Holec was the first (and so far the last) person to dare to criticize Slovak economic history. On the other hand, he slightly overvalued the results of banking history in Slovakia in his texts (Ágnes Pogány, for example, analyzed Hungarian production much more critically and interpreted the results in the mirror of international research). In general, his criticism has remained in the void, and the situation has not changed significantly. There is no institute for the economic and social history of Slovakia and no “workshops” of banking history, and research continues to focus mainly on the so-called “national” Slovak banks—I consider this terminus technicus suitable only for the post-1918 period—and on the economic and financial context of Czech–Slovak relations in the 20th century. No intergenerational discussions have taken place, either. The personnel and institutional background of this scientific discipline is not developing; instead, stagnation can be seen, and short-term, sometimes even ad hoc, research projects dominate. Dialogue on the latest problems of banking history and on theoretical and methodological issues cannot receive a constructive forum.
 - 3 As part of her reform of the state credit system to consolidate the financial situation of the empire, Maria Theresa instructed the establishment of the Hungarian Royal Treasury (Hung. Magyar Királyi Hitelfőpénztár) in Bratislava, which began to operate in March 1774 and also assisted in lending to the private sector.
 - 4 Due to its tendentious concepts and dubious interpretations, Marian Tkáč’s book on Bratislava banks represents minimal scholarly contribution. It assiduously removes 19th-century Bratislava banks from the history of the city with the main argument that they belong to the category of “not our” institutions. He also relegates the most important representatives of the German, Hungarian, and foreign financial elite to the periphery. According to his notion, the history of banking in Bratislava does not belong to “national” concepts and is not

influence of Viennese private bankers, such as Arnsteiner & Eskeles or Salomon Rothschild, or the Sina Banking House (Sandgruber 1995: 219; Kövér 2012: 175–183).

Keeping in mind this tangled issue of research on savings banks, commercial banks, and business entities in Slovakia, why is the history of the Savings Bank of Pressburg an ignored topic, pushed to the periphery of research interest? For what reasons was one of the most important rural banks of Hungary and the dominant monetary institution of Bratislava, and thus even its “legacy,” negated in Slovak historiography?

Not only in the eyes of its contemporaries but also according to its rivals, the Savings Bank of Pressburg was the most powerful and most influential savings bank in the city, financially and morally supported by the local middle class, from its 1841 foundation until 1918.⁵ Moreover, we must not forget that it was also one of the prominent urban institutions that continuously supported the social situation, the school system, and religious communities with its philanthropic financial subventions, and thus was also instrumental in the creation of a bourgeois identity in the city (Gaučík 2004: 59–82; Gaučík 2012: 161–177; Gaučík 2019: 190–214). Why did it disappear from the history of Slovak banking despite the fact that it played an indispensable role in the credit market of the city and was intensively involved in the development of the urban environment and the economic and cultural growth of the city through the loans it provided up until its forced liquidation in 1945?

In the following lines, I will try to elucidate the “prehistory” of the interpretations, and their sometimes tendentious ideological overlays, and point out the deficits of Slovak historiography with respect to the history of this savings bank. My aim is not to seek the truth but, in the “mirror” of the books and archival materials I have studied, to draw a more plastic and possibly more objective picture of this bank. On the other

worthy of historical interest and research. It is thus confined to the dustbin of history. His overall production has been critically evaluated by Ľudovít Hallon. Tkáč’s “philosophy of history” has one more important ideological flaw: it creates an impression of a true and holy history, and what is more, mythologizes some “golden age.” Regarding such interpretations, John H. Arnold noted that the past must become an object of research and not a truth taken as something immanently obvious. See Tkáč 2006; Hallon 2007: 60–61; John 2005: 95.

5 Emil Felicides, a prominent figure of the financial elite of Bratislava before the coup and the chief financier of the General Savings Bank of Pressburg (Pozsonyi Általános Takarékpénztár)—an affiliate of the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest and a competitor of the Savings Bank of Pressburg—acknowledged the strong position of the Savings Bank of Pressburg in internal management materials. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár [National Archives of Hungary] (MNL OL), Pesti Magyar Kereskedelmi Bank [Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest], Z 40, Bundle 123, P 1272, File Number 2076, A Pozsonyi Általános Takarékpénztár üzleti jelentése 1911. december 31-ével lezárt mérlegéhez [Business Report of the General Savings Bank of Pressburg on Its Balance Sheet of December 31, 1911].

hand, I will keep in mind that the reasoning and disposition of historians who have occasionally mentioned the establishment of this oldest commercial bank of the city in their articles (forgetting or ignoring its context) are characterized by “qualities” such as self-interest, moral standpoint, and conviction and are moreover influenced by their world and the people around them.

In this study, I seek to answer the following question: How was this bank thematized and what ideological currents can we identify at least on three levels: in period texts, in narratives of the urban history of Bratislava, and in Slovak and Hungarian historiography?

I begin my analysis with the issue of the emergence of savings banks in Hungary in the first half of the 19th century and with questions around the birth of the Savings Bank of Pressburg and its possible influence on the genesis of other financial institutions. I present and discuss publications whose authors tried to elucidate the emergence and development of monetary institutions in Bratislava in connection with the history of banking in the territory of present-day Slovakia. Finally, after rejecting interpretations of the history of this institute with ethnic undertones, I try to arrive at a more objective view based on archival sources and utilize the latest results of specialized literature.

The Emergence of Savings Banks in Hungary and the Savings Bank of Pressburg

What influences and patterns can be identified with respect to the establishment of savings banks in the first half of the 19th century? What schemes of altruistic and commercial orientation were in existence? What role did, or could, the Savings Bank of Pressburg play in this process?

It cannot be definitively claimed that the first articles of association of the Savings Bank of Pressburg of 1842 became a generally accepted model for new institutions in Upper Hungary in an unchanged form, although the positive influence of the successful establishment of this bank and the philosophy of the joint-stock entrepreneurship presented in its articles, which spread rapidly even to other sectors of the economy (e.g., industry, railways), must not be underestimated. The funding of the construction of the Pest–Buda Chain Bridge (Lánchíd) over the Danube and the Bratislava–Trnava Horse-Drawn Railway, for example, was provided through joint-stock companies, in which the Viennese banker Georg Simon von Sina played a crucial role.

In general, the establishment of new financial institutions in Hungary was also influenced by the articles of association of the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest and, from 1841 onwards, also by those of the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest. A smaller group of savings banks purposely chose a joint-stock character as early as the 1840s or transformed themselves into joint-stock companies after their establishment,

while their birth was strongly influenced by regional and local socio-economic factors and by the strength of the local business elite.

The Savings Bank of Pressburg and the savings banks in Sopron and Miskolc were the first joint-stock companies (because they were established according to Article XVII of 1840). According to Adolf Fenyvessy, the chronicler of the history of the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest, the articles of association of the Savings Bank of Miskolc imitated those of the Bratislava model but also pursued philanthropic goals (Fenyvessy 1890: 29; Szemere 1847).

Previous, initially non-commercial institutions were also quickly transformed into commercial companies. The Savings Bank in Arad, established on January 14, 1840, on an entirely philanthropic basis, was transformed four years later into a joint-stock company (partly because of the growing influence of local traders, the foothold of the bill of exchange trade, and the problems with making the reserve fund earn interest). In this case, the reference to the Savings Bank of Pressburg and its profit-making philosophy is clearly demonstrable: on August 18, 1844, Ignác Markovits, the chief treasurer of the institute, recommended to its management to transform the association (initially the Savings Bank Association) into a joint-stock company, which the management approved unequivocally. Nevertheless, just like the elite of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, proudly and without scruple, the Araders also regarded themselves as the first rural monetary institution in Hungary (Ottenberg 1901: 22, 56, 62).

The First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest (Pesti Hazai Első Takarékpénztár Egyesület), operating from January 11, 1840, onwards, changed its form of organization four years later, in September 1845. Some stockholders of this association had initiated the change as early as 1841, but the majority of the general assembly did not support it then. Thus, until 1845, the institute had simultaneously pursued both philanthropic and a speculative missions (Fenyvessy 1890: 24, 29, 30).

The plan for a savings bank in the city of Košice first emerged in 1840 thanks to the efforts of the local trader Károly Fiedler, who vigorously campaigned for its establishment. After the founding general assembly, held on January 18, 1844, he contacted the management of the Savings Bank of Pressburg regarding organizational matters. The direct communication between these institutes in bookkeeping and financial matters is demonstrable. Three officials of the Savings Bank of Pressburg provided expert advice on bookkeeping and were adequately remunerated by their Košice counterparts. With quite a lot of euphemism, the chronicler of the history of the savings bank remarked that the “friendly relations” between the two institutes continued even afterwards (Klimkovics 1895: 6–9).

In the case of the Savings Bank of Prešov (Eperjesi Takarékpénztár), established on August 27, 1844, on a purely commercial basis and with its internal agenda kept in German until 1864 and then bilingually in German and Hungarian, the influence of the Savings Bank of Pressburg cannot be traced at all. Its active transactions were identical

to those of the institutes in Komárno and Nové Zámky, and it began to make philanthropic donations only in 1851 (Kónyai Kiss 1895: 21, 22, 28, 92).

The prehistory of the idea of a savings bank in Komárno dates back to 1841, when Komárno County received the balance sheet of the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest and the idea of establishing an independent institute for the town and its close vicinity emerged. Three years later, they secured the articles from the aforementioned savings bank of Pest-Buda, but for practical steps they nevertheless contacted the Savings Bank of Pressburg. They drew up their articles of association according to the model of the Savings Bank of Pressburg and had their shares and articles printed in Bratislava. In early 1846, an agreement was also made between these institutes on the dislocation of the new Komárno shares so that they “would not fall into untrustworthy hands.” The introduction to their first articles of association, from which philanthropic features are completely absent (their systematic provision of charitable endowments began only in 1863), did not specify the institutes that would have influenced the establishment of the Savings Bank of Komárno. It only mentions, laconically, the model of “already operating institutes.” Its main areas and conditions of lending activities, deposit-taking, provision of mortgages and loans for goods (specifically also for seeds and sheep’s wool), and bill of exchange business, as well as its organizational structure, were almost identical to those of the Nové Zámky institute. It is possible that the articles of association in Komárno became a prototype for the new articles of the Savings Bank of Nové Zámky (Csepi 1896: 13–15, 22, 32–35, 147).⁶ The director, József Scherz de Vaszója, who was apparently related to the Bratislava entrepreneur Philipp Scherz, a recognized authority among businesses and associations in Bratislava, probably played a major role in the orientation of the Savings Bank of Komárno to the Savings Bank of Pressburg (Tóth 2009: 125–126, 171).

In 1845, the founders of the Savings Bank of Banská Bystrica (Hun. Besztercebányai Takarékpénztár), which bore the name of the Savings Bank of Zvolen (Hun. Zólyomi Takarékpénztár) until 1881, approached three monetary institutions (the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest, the Savings Bank of Pressburg, and the Savings Bank of Košice) to support its establishment, and the latter two were also given the opportunity to subscribe for shares. Eventually, these banks adopted the articles of association of the Savings Bank of Pressburg with minimal changes and also set a dual financial philosophy: humanitarian and entrepreneurial goals side by side, although they began to pursue philanthropy only from 1858 onwards (Tilles 1895: 27, 29, 98, 174).

6 Komáromi Takarékpénztár szabályai [Articles of Association of the Savings Bank of Komárom]. Pozsony, Nyomatott Schmidt Antalnál, 1845, pp. 3, 7–10; 1847-dik évi augusztus 30-án szabados Érsekújvárott alakult Takarékpénztár alapszabályai [Articles of Association of the Savings Bank Established on August 30, 1847 in Érsekújvár]. Esztergom, Esztergami Beimel J. betűivel, 1847.

The circumstances of the establishment of the Savings Bank of Trnava (Tyrnauer Sparkasse/Nagyszombati Takarékpénztár) were specific in a different way. The idea to establish an institute apparently influenced by institutes in Pest-Buda, Győr, and Bratislava came up as early as 1844, but, for unknown reasons, the municipal council hindered the establishment of a savings bank for a long time. Nevertheless, the founding general assembly took place in early 1846 and approved a joint-stock character of the institute. On the other hand, from the very beginning, the management consciously emphasized the humanitarian, philanthropic mission of the savings bank. Nevertheless, it began to provide actual subsidies only in 1856 (Szibenliszt 1896: 2, 5, 57).⁷

The 1847 establishment of the Savings Bank of Banská Štiavnica (Sparkassa in Schemnitz/Selmezbányai Takarékpénztár) was positively influenced by the surrounding new institutes in Banská Bystrica (1845) and Kremnica (1847). In drawing up their articles of association, the officials in Banská Štiavnica drew from the examples of not only the Savings Bank of Pressburg, but later, in the neoabsolutist era, also of the Savings Bank of Buda (Budai Takarékpénztár; Pauer 1898: 5, 12, 13).

Historians Štefan Horváth and Ján Valach interpreted the character of such institution, a universal bank, seemingly unerringly despite the fact that, in the Hungarian context, savings banks (in fact, gradually emerging deposit credit institutes, or banks) constituted a special type of banking system (Horváth-Valach 1975: 41). Not least because of the 1840 package of commercial, financial, and credit laws⁸—and this is already a banality in specialized literature—their historical development did not move towards altruism but towards profit-making activities, and this made them diverge from the tendencies in Cisleithania. We should keep in mind that no specific government law or regulation regulated the activities of savings banks in Hungary at that time, so they created their own fields of operation and set for themselves a wide range of trades. Whether some of the weaker institutes in terms of capital had the capacity to do so is another story, though (Bácskai 1993: 118).

The divergence, deferment, or even resistance of the management of these institutes, including the Savings Bank of Pressburg, to repeated efforts of a directive nature and to the introduction of the Austrian savings banks model (the so-called *Regulativum*⁹) from 1844 onwards signaled that the development in Hungary was mov-

7 On the other hand, Gerő Wolff noted only the influence of the articles of association of the Savings Bank of Pressburg. Wolff 1907: 273.

8 These groundbreaking laws applied to bills of exchange (Article XV), the activities of traders (Article XVI), the status of industrial enterprises (Article XVII), public utility and joint-stock companies (Article XVII), and the introduction of the intabulation of receivables in the land registry (Article XXI). In a broader economic context, the laws on bankruptcy (Article XXII) and on the legal status of Jews (Article XXIX) also had positive effects. Vargha 1895: 18–20.

9 The full title of the regulation, issued by the emperor on September 2, 1844, and supple-

ing in a different direction: savings banks were not willing to transform themselves into new organizations of an altruistic character, submit to the centralist financial policy of Vienna, or give up their lucrative trades and the possibility to distribute their dividends. They wanted to retain their joint-stock form, which had already been tried and tested in practice and had been beneficial for them. On the other hand, from the 1850s onwards, the regulation in question had a positive effect on the implementation of charitable endowments but, in a significant number of cases, the articles of association of these institutes did not get approved, as the Governor's Council kept returning them for modification.¹⁰ Consequently, savings banks of a specifically altruistic character did not flourish in Hungary; in fact, they came into being only in isolated cases (Vargha 1895: 97).

From the 1850s onwards, so-called mobile banks (also called universal or mixed banks), which pursued not only traditional asset but also investment transactions and sold securities, were being established according to the French model of *Crédits Mobiliers* (Ger. *Mobiliarbanken*). This type quickly adapted to the conditions in European countries and began to appear in greater numbers in Hungary from 1867 onwards. These institutes (and also institutes of the *Baubanken* and *Maklerbanken* types) undoubtedly played an important role in the spread of new forms of speculative trading, large financial transactions, and the revival of stock exchange.¹¹ Therefore, the newer model of a universal bank did not exist in the first half of the 19th century, neither abroad nor in the Hungarian context. It should also be emphasized that savings banks naturally changed their businesses over time depending on the market opportunities, the changes in the legal environment, and the economic intentions of their managements (and this does not change the fact that a universal banking system in Hungary, similar to that in Austria and the German lands, was coming into being from the first half of the 19th century onwards).

mented by the Chancellor's Decree of September 26, was *Regulativ über die Bildung, Errichtung und Überwachen der Sparkassen*. It was also through this regulation, especially during the years of neo-absolutism and the provisorium, that the Austrian government tried to strictly control the establishment and operations of associations in the empire and thus eliminate any political activities unpleasant for the power. That is why the regulation had not only a financial character but also strong political overtones.

10 On the implementation of the *Regulativ* and the reactions of the savings banks, see the following interpretations from that period: Jónás 1892a: 24; Pauer 1898: 11–13; Gaszner 1904: 1. For a historical assessment, see Jirkovszky 1939. An extensive analysis of the formation of Hungarian banking, and thus a study of the genesis of monetary institutions in Slovakia in the first half of the 19th century, is completely absent from Slovak historical works.

11 *Meyers Konversations Lexikon*, Bd. 2, Leipzig – Wien, Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts, 1888, 331.

One unanswered question still remains: how did contemporaries or, more specifically, the official chronicler of the history of the savings bank, János Jónás,¹² interpret the character or profile of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, and what image did he create of this savings bank in the late 19th century?¹³

Jónás's booklet is an important historical source not only because it deals with the business activities of the bank and provides background information on the members of its board of directors and supervisory committee. It is an important work because it is the first, and probably the last, detailed attempt to interpret and convey the original, many times modified, concept of the savings bank and the background reasons and driving forces behind its establishment. This refers to the articles written by Paul Ballus,¹⁴ a renowned public figure and entrepreneur in Bratislava society at the time,

12 János Jónás (1848–1911) was born in the small town of Kiskunhalas and died in Prešov. At the University of Pest, he first studied at the departments of medicine and philosophy, concurrently. After interrupting his medical studies, he focused on the study of Asian languages, mathematics, and physics. He received a state scholarship in 1869–1871 and went on study stays in Berlin, Leipzig, and Munich. Subsequently, in addition to various teaching jobs, he worked at the Business Academy in Budapest from 1872 to 1879, where he became an assistant professor in 1879. He moved to Bratislava in 1885 and was appointed director of the newly founded Business Academy there. He also dealt with pedagogy and with medieval European and Eastern literature, and was active in the fields of associations, politics, and culture in Bratislava. In 1897, he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph for his pedagogical achievements. He is considered to be a pioneer of vocational business education in Hungary. For more details, see *Slovenský biografický slovník* [Slovak Biographical Dictionary]. Volume II. Martin, Matica Slovenská, 1987, 566.

13 This subsection analyzes the following, textually identical, bilingual *Festschriften*: Jónás 1892a; Jónás 1892b.

14 Paul/Pál Ballus (1783–1848) was born into an aristocratic Lutheran family in Modra. His family received a certificate of noble descent on July 12, 1805, from the Hungarian court chancellery in Vienna. In 1812, he did not yet figure in the taxpayers' list of Bratislava. In 1814, he married Karolina Albrecht, who came from a wealthy wine-growing family. His name was listed in the tax registers with the following attributes: in 1817 as a private entrepreneur (Ger. *Privatmann*), in 1819 as a wine merchant, and in 1823–1824 as a noble farmer. He owned houses, vineyards, and a wine pub. In 1823, he married for the second time. His wife Katarína Zuzana Sockl was the daughter of a soapmaker in Bratislava. Ballus quickly launched a political career, too: in 1824 he became an electable townsman, in 1827–1830 he held the post of prolocutor of the Lutheran religious community, from 1839 to 1848 he was a municipal councillor and, in the 1840s, he was also a treasurer of the Trans-Danubian Lutheran Congregation and chairman of the Burial Association. He was also active in politics. From 1832 to 1836, he represented the widow of N. Traun Abensperg, born Countess Révay, at the country diet. His work (*Pressburg und seine Umgebung. Beschreibung der königl. Freistadt Pressburg und ihrer Umgebung, 1823*) on the topography and the social conditions in the city is an indispensable source for learning about the history of Bratislava in the first half of the 19th century. A vivid picture of the character of Ballus, and of his business activities and literary works, is provided by Sas 1995: 38–40; Pálmány 2005: 353–354.

who published these plans in local periodicals (e.g., *Pressburger Zeitung*, *Hírnök*) in 1839 and 1841. Jónás undoubtedly emphasized the merits of Ballus but also stressed, without scruple, the importance of the initiators behind the scenes, albeit anonymously: renowned members of the entrepreneurial and commercial elite of the city (whose names were well-known to the public at the time, as they had been members of the managing structures and stockholders of the savings bank from the very beginning). Jónás characterized Ballus as a simple but “faithful and skillful interpreter” of the intentions of Bratislava traders, whose writings communicated the non-profit, altruism-based form of the savings bank (Jónás 1892a: 10).

However, Jónás’s claims and interpretations of Ballus’s theses confirm an important fact: the local plans to establish a municipal financial institute were motivated by the 1840 and 1841 reforms and rationalization of the imperial credit system, which affected the branches of the First Austrian Savings Bank in Hungary, including its Bratislava branch. This change indirectly generated the establishment of new, already independent, savings banks. In Bratislava, these plans were met with important support from representatives of the aristocracy, especially the influential Count Ferenc Zichy,¹⁵ as well as from the Pressburger Casino, in whose premises the organizational

15 Count Ferenc Zichy (1811–1900) was a representative of an old Hungarian aristocratic family. He was a member of the Voderady branch of the Ruthenian line of the Zichys. On his mother’s side, he was related to the Esterházy. He was born in Bratislava, where he also attended secondary school. He studied law at the Law Academy in Pest in 1830. After completing his studies, he became a sub-notary of Pest County in 1833. Later, he was a secretary of the Hungarian court chancellery in Vienna. In 1835, he became the administrator of Bihar County. In 1839, he was appointed vice governor of the city of Rijeka. In 1841, he became the chairman of the bills of exchange bureau in Bratislava, and his position and contacts came in very useful in the establishment of the Savings Bank of Pressburg. It was no coincidence that he became its first chairman and held that post until as late as 1876. He also initiated the establishment of the railway between Pest and Szolnok and the Bratislava–Trnava Horse-Drawn Railway. In Bratislava, he was instrumental in the establishment of an orphanage. In 1846, he was appointed temporary president of the Governor’s Council and was given the title of inner privy councillor. From May to August 1848, he was a ministerial secretary to Count István Széchenyi, who held the post of minister of transport in the first independent Hungarian government. In December 1848, he became imperial commissary of Bratislava and, commissioned by the government, he was assigned to the Russian army of Pashkevich in June 1849. In 1851, he received the title of imperial governor and was honoured with the Order of the Iron Crown three years later. From 1857 to 1859, he was chief courtier to Maximilian, the governor of the Austrian provinces of Lombardy–Venetia, with his seat in Venice. On November 26, 1860, he was appointed chief governor of Nógrád County. As chairman of the foreign committee, he participated in the negotiations with the Austrian party in 1867. In 1874–1879, he was an imperial envoy to Turkey. In 1879, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen. In 1887, he became the chairman of the Hungarian Gardeners’ Union. From 1888 onwards, he was a member of the Upper House and an imperial-royal tavnarcus. In 1892–1896, he was the president of the Financial

work around the establishment of the savings bank took place in March 1841 (Jónás 1892a: 13).

The founding general assembly of the Savings Bank of Pressburg was held on October 10, 1841. The institute started its business activities on January 2, 1842, in a rented building at 78 Dlhá Street, with a registered capital of 40,000 guilders, of which the subscribers paid only half according to the articles of association and the applicable laws (Jónás 1892a: 14).¹⁶

Jónás accurately distinguished between the main, “association-forming” tendencies of the time, forms of mobile capital activation, and concepts and their contents. In terms of the development of savings banks and the banking sector, he emphasized the poor baseline situation in the empire and in the Hungarian lands (i.e., the negative impact of the ongoing Napoleonic wars, the disruption of the economy, increasing national debt, the devaluation of the Austrian currency, and the decline of public trust) but also the shortcomings of the economic standard and the backwardness of Hungary. On the other hand, he underlined the stimulating impulses of the emerging, philanthropy-based savings banks in Germany and Switzerland, as well as the influence

Committee of the Upper House. After 1879, he lived on his estates and focused on their modernization. He dealt with orchardry, especially viticulture. Jónás 1892a: 13, 17, 18, 31, 66–67; Nagy 1865: 376; Révai Nagy Lexikona [Révai’s Great Encyclopaedia], Volume XIX, Budapest, Révai Testvérek Irodalmi Intézet Rt., 1926, 674; Slovenský biografický slovník [Slovak Biographical Dictionary], Volume VI, Martin, Matica slovenská, 1994, p. 444.

- 16 Pressburger Zeitung, October 5, 1841, Vol. 77, No. 80, 1; According to a report in the Pressburger Zeitung, the savings bank began to operate on January 3, 1842. Pressburger Zeitung, 7 January 1842, Vol. 78, No. 3, 12.

History is not anonymous. The members of the entrepreneurial elite active in the establishment of the savings bank have not been named yet. The shares were subscribed at the following firms: Theodor Edl, Joseph Jiringer, Paul Neubauer, Joseph Scherz, Christian von Schreiber, Georg Zechmeister. Most of the shareholders were local traders, followed by aristocrats. For the list of the names of the first 38 shareholders, see ANBS, BPSB, Kniha pokladničná 1842 [Treasury Book of 1842]. Count Ferenc Zichy became the chairman of the savings bank. The trader Georg Zechmeister was elected as its vice chairman. The 24-member board of directors consisted of the following persons: Michael Andrae (trader), Andreas Bednárics (attorney), Joseph von Botló (county attorney), Theodor Edl (banker), Johann von Fischer Sr. (trader), Alois Frank (attorney), Ernest Hauszer (attorney), Carl Hofer (trader), Joseph Jiringer (trader), Anton Jurenák (entrepreneur), Franz Kampf Müller (mayor), Dr. August von Kölbl (physician), Joseph Benedict Kőszeghy (confectioner), Daniel Medveczky (?), Joseph Neszter (chief county administrator), Paul Neubauer (trader), Georg Scharitzer (imperial-royal district judge), Philipp Scherz (trader), Michael Schönbauer (physician), Christian von Schreiber (trader), Michael Überpacher (carpenter, deputy mayor), Baron Georg Wilhelm. Freih. von Walterskirchen (landowner), Ladislaus Weisz (trader), and Carl Friedrich Wigand (trader). The trader Johann Kania withdrew in 1842. The physician Jakob Wellimirovics was still attending the directors’ meetings in early 1842 but might have withdrawn afterwards. Jónás 1892a: 60–67; ANBS, BPSB, Aufschn Sitzung Protokoll No 1.

of the first savings law in Great Britain in 1817. He did not see a uniformity in the bankers' endeavors but observed, regarding the Hungarian conditions, the genesis and formation of two, ultimately closely interconnected models: the altruistic and the rapidly rising commercial/entrepreneurial one. Thanks to the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest and the agile propaganda of its initiator, András Fáy, Pest-Buda became the first center of these endeavors. With its Savings Bank of Pressburg, Bratislava became the "heart" of the other path, that of a quest for a joint-stock form, while Jónás, as a decent chronicler, often emphasized the extensive influence of the "Bratislava model" (Jónás 1892a: 3–6).

Contrary to tendentious interpretations in the latter half of the 20th century, he had already pointed out the realities of the time based on original archival sources. Savings banks, emerging on charitable foundations, were quickly transformed into joint-stock companies because that was a more acceptable form for their founding members-shareholders, most of them traders, as it opened up new fields of operation. On the other hand, specialized institutions that could meet domestic credit demands were missing, or their number was minimal. His other argument, the continuity of philanthropic endeavors, is questionable (Jónás 1892a: 7). It is these examples that reveal that the Regulativum, criticized by the actors of financial life, might still have indirectly caused that the philanthropic endowments of savings banks only began to manifest themselves to a greater extent from the early 1850s onwards and even became permanent components of their balance sheets.¹⁷

With exaggeration, he saw the uniqueness of the Bratislava joint-stock company in its unparalleled organizational form, allegedly untried anywhere else in Europe. According to him, the savings bank successfully "embodied" the types of Einlagebank and Wohlfahrtsbank, (i.e., deposit activities and social charitable mission; Jónás 1892a: 7). However, although grandiose at first glance, Jónás's concept did not correspond to the realities in Germany. At that time, and even later, the Wohlfahrtsbank type was not widespread in German-speaking territories. The concept of this institute is difficult to define. It can refer not only to credit cooperatives but also to institutes that were established by the state and provided loans for social purposes. However, if we

17 According to János Jónás, the Savings Bank of Pressburg began to make charitable contributions in 1856. In its balance sheet of 1857, the amount of 420 guilders is listed for the support of a children's hospital ("Beitrag zum Stiftungsfinde des hiel. Franz Josef Kinder-Spital"). The decision about this contribution may have been made in 1856. Jónás 1892a: 35; ANBS, BPSB, Inv. No. 57, Výročné správy a záznamy z valných zhromaždení (1843–1891) [Annual Reports and Records of General Assemblies (1843–1891)], Geschäfts-Ausweis der Pressburger Sparkassa und der mit derselben verbunden Verfaß-Amtes für das Jahr 1857, 3. In the balance sheets, social and cultural subsidies are listed as Wohlthätigkeits-Spenden or Wohlthätigkeitszwecke.

theoretically accept Jónás's idea and think in alternatives to the Einlagebank, they could be institutes established on the principle of philanthropy; in Germany, precisely cooperatives of the Raiffeisen or Schulze-Delitzsch type.¹⁸ Incidentally, from 1864 onwards, the so-called *Genossenschaftsbänke*, which financed credit cooperatives, were also gaining a foothold in Germany besides unions as umbrella interest organizations, although their activities, as those of non-profit-oriented institutes, were institutionalized only by the Cooperative Act of 1889. (On the cooperative type of banks [Ger. *Genossenschaftsbank*] see Emmons–Mueller 1997.)

On the other hand, Jónás's desire, the combination of a credit cooperative and a deposit bank, could be achieved neither from a legal nor from a commercial political perspective. His concept essentially communicates the message of the management of the Savings Bank of Pressburg: philanthropic activities and endowments ensure service and dedication to the urban community and the city. After all, what the management of the bank repeatedly stressed, and apparently also believed, could have been the truth. The operations and the business intentions of the bank did dynamize the financial market and facilitate the economic growth and modernization of the city. Yet, the capitalist nature and the profit-making activities of the institute cast doubt on all this. That is why Jónás's statements should be regarded as simple components, or building blocks, of the positive image of the savings bank, not least with the aim to counter the anti-capitalist attacks that underlined the “profit-seeking” and “inhumane” aspect of such institutes.

Latter-Day Crooked and Blocked Roads

Interestingly, a short history of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, or even just a brief remark about its significance, is absent from the pre-1989 generalizing syntheses of the history of Slovakia (Holotík–Tibenský 1961: 438; Holotík–Mesároš 1968: 356–368; Hapák 1986: 45–47). In 1992, after decades of silence, Roman Holec at last mentioned this savings bank seriously and characterized it as one of the “important credit institutions of Hungary” (Podrimavský 1992: 462). Until now, this monetary institution “has appeared” only as a mere vocabulary entry with all its lapses and grave shortcomings.¹⁹

18 Wandel 1998: 13–14; Tilly 2003: 107–108. However, the German cooperative model did not gain a strong foothold in Hungary and only some of its elements were implemented there. From the late 19th century onwards, a centrally managed cooperative system came into being. On the other hand, the founders of Hungarian cooperative unions did draw inspiration from the German example.

19 Lexikón slovenských dejín. Bratislava, Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1997, 101; Kováč 1998: 430; Ďurica 2007: 193; Dejiny Slovenska. Dátumy, udalosti, osobnosti. Bratislava – Praha, Slovart – Libri, 2007, 257.

Pre-1989 syntheses of the history of Bratislava—characterized by fluctuating quality rather than uniformity and a one-sided positivist focus and explanation of historical processes on the basis of Marxist historical scholarship in the context of the working class, class struggles, and the socialist nation-building narrative—at least briefly highlight the importance of the establishment of this oldest institute, although they do not deal with it in depth and even gloss over its significance for the city. Schematic theses and clichés of the confluence of industrial and banking (thus naturally alien, sometimes even “hostile” and “usurious”) capital, as well as of the guided ethnicization of the banking sector, also appear. Consequently, the lines of force of the credit market, and other traditional Bratislava banks and affiliates of Budapest-based monetary institutions, have not received due attention.²⁰ This phenomenon clearly fits into the interpretive framework of the national collective memories of the Central European region: forgetting the diversity of the national past and the conscious selection and exclusion of certain elements of history, such as the coexistence of social strata and ethnicities. These “surgical interventions” then lead to “amnesia” and to the fabrication of a homogeneous national narrative.²¹

In the late 1990s, the Savings Bank of Pressburg still did not appear as the subject of any well-planned research, but only as a partial, sidelined topic. The historical aspect and the authorial narratives remained limited, and a descriptive interpretation of the history of this institution prevailed, not to mention the Sisyphean search for a “pure” national principle in Bratislava banking.²²

So far, the only sound Slovak study on the history of monetary institutions in Bratislava has been written by Ľudovít Hallon, and it has been published only recently (Hallon 2011: 179–202). However, it focuses on the period ranging from 1918 to 1948 and does not take into account the pre-1918 developmental trends and structuration of commercial banks in Bratislava. Conceptually, it fits into the traditional tracks of the historiography of banking entities in Slovakia (national institutes and institutes of other ethnicities, concentration process) and does not capitalize on recent economic theories of their multinationality, or “supranationality” (Curry–Fung–Harper 2003: 31–38). On the other hand, it positively mentions the establishment of the former Savings Bank

20 Lehotská–Pleva 1966: 191, 236–237; Horváth–Lehotská–Pleva 1978: 5, 174–175; Šášky 1992: 118–119. In his significant monograph about the development of commerce and the activities of the commercial/entrepreneurial strata in Bratislava, Eugen Forbat briefly mentioned the savings bank, too. Forbat 1959: 316.

21 Gábor Gyáni’s statement is cited by Mannová 2006: 50–51.

22 Fiala 1998: 71–73. Another interpretation, basically only a short sketch, by Tatiana Cvetková did not make a breakthrough in research on the history of this savings bank, either. She reproduced the previous, old theses but presented new data supported by archival research about the dissolution, or liquidation, of the institute after 1945. Cvetková 2003: 24–26.

of Pressburg, the importance of the branches of major Budapest banks, and the activities of the branch of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, and opens the door to research on the financial elite of the city.²³

The Savings Bank of Pressburg has been clearly pushed into the background even in recent Hungarian writings, much fewer in number, in Slovakia. Its genesis and purpose in the development of the city have been bypassed.²⁴ An analysis of this institute is also completely absent from Hungarian historical syntheses (a survey of the pre-

23 For the latest overview of commercial banks and the financial elite of Bratislava in the 1860s and the 1870s, see Gaučík 2021a: 181–202.

24 Andor Sas considered the municipal treasury to be a kind of an unspecified deposit bank and paid due attention to it. However, he did not deal with the Savings Bank of Pressburg at all. Mária Rózsa, on the other hand, took up Károly Samarjay's erroneous interpretation of 1887 and conceived a completely new, questionable and illogical statement, according to which the establishment of the savings bank after the English model was "closely related" to the establishment of the Pressburger Casino. It should be stressed that Samarjay's work deals with the history of the Casino because of its round anniversary. Regarding the activities of the members and the social weight of this association, he also created a positive image by appropriating one of the most successful projects of the bourgeoisie, the savings bank in Bratislava, and by glorifying certain personalities. He presented Ballus as an "intellectual" and "its founder," Jozef Scherz as the organizer of its commercial profile, and Jozef Jiringer as its "generous supporter," and he named only a narrow circle of those involved in the discussions, not to mention that he one-sidedly singled out Sebestyén Gervay, who had allegedly been instrumental in removing the bureaucratic obstacles to the establishment of the savings bank. He apparently emphasized his name because he was a close relative, an uncle, of Nándor Gervay, an influential member of the administration at that time. The leading figures of the social and financial elite naturally held several real and symbolic positions in the social life of the city and were also closely connected to the Casino. To put it simply: the founders and members of the first administration of the savings bank were also members of the Casino. The latter was a forum where they could also discuss matters concerning the establishment of the institute. From 1845 to 1859, and then from 1874 onwards, the savings bank provided a seat for the Casino in its premises, first on Laurinská Street and later in a building at the corner of Rybárska Street and Dlhá Street. In fact, the "English trace" consists only of some pieces of information about the activities of savings banks in England further unspecified in the sources. These were provided by Anton Jurenák, who was a trader in London at that time. One thing is certain, however: extra-continental models did not gain a foothold in the founding process and in the articles of association of the Savings Bank of Pressburg at all. The meticulous chronicler of the history of the savings bank, János Jónás, made no mention of the merits of Jurenák, who was undoubtedly an innovative and well-educated representative of this prominent family and a member of the board of directors of the savings bank in its 1842–1846 and 1849–1860 periods. In 1860–1870, he served as a cashier and was subsequently promoted to the position of second accountant. He retired on October 24, 1889. His name, however, appears only in Samarjay's writing and in the 1942 jubilee publication of the bank (excluding recent, uncritical references). Cf. Samarjay 1887: 11–13; Jónás 1892a: 62–63, 70–71; A 100 éves Bratislavai I. Takarékbank R. T., azelőtt Pozsonyi I. Takarékpénztár 1842–1942. Pozsony, Litera, 1942, 5; Sas 1995: 63; Rózsa 2005: 431; Francová 2010: 118–135.

1945 publications would be beyond the scope of this study). The name of the Savings Bank of Pressburg does appear in exceptional cases, but always only in the context of the formation of the banking system and the network of savings banks in the first half of the 19th century, with other institutions sometimes coming to the fore (e.g., the Oedenburger Sparkasse/Soproni Takarékpénztár).²⁵

The only detailed interpretation and evaluation of Paul Ballus's plans was written in 1975 (Horváth–Valach 1975: 33–36). However, this short passage in the still “unsurpassed” syntheses of the history of Slovak banking is characterized by terminological ambiguities regarding the genesis and the operational concept of the savings bank, among others. According to Horváth and Valach, the establishment of this institute was a “significant event” because it became “the first and an independent one” in Slovakia and was also the driving force behind the spread of this new organizational form in this territory, becoming a model for other monetary institutions of a “universal type.” Paradoxically, they first emphasize the long tradition of the institute (and such continuity logically implies successful activities), whereas they later mention, “from a retrospective perspective,” the ambivalence and fallacy (i.e., the historical fiasco) of Ballus's theses (i.e., the unsuccessful combination of a commercial profile and savings banking), not to mention that they limit the expansion of the joint stock type of companies only to the territory of present-day Slovakia.

The establishment of the Savings Bank of Pressburg was indisputably a significant event, and even its contemporaries and experts were aware of this at that time. What then gave rise to other, overly schematic ideas of primacy and of a special type of an institute, and why do they keep being uncritically repeated in modified forms to this day? What were the realities of the time (i.e., the birth of the first savings banks), and what potentially prefigured altruistic or commercial orientations in Hungarian banking?

To state that savings banks in Hungary in the first half of the 19th century can be considered universal banks is misleading, to say the least. It is true that their regulation by the authorities was benevolent and they could pursue a wide range of financial activities, but the field for pursuing already modern transactions characteristic of universal banks (a combination of deposit and investment deals, and especially industry financing) only came into being from the 1870s onwards. Although a legal background had already existed for savings banks to pursue universal banking operations, in practice only some of the largest institutions were able to do so. Most savings banks therefore

25 Berend–Szuhaý 1975: 45; Bácskai 1993: 116; Tomka 1996: 11. The Savings Bank of Sopron was established on August 31, 1842, but Count István Széchenyi had already raised the idea of its foundation in 1825. He became a shareholder of the bank, paying for 20 shares worth 2000 guilders, and was a member of its honorary committee. A Soproni Takarékpénztár ötven éves története 1842–1892. Sopron, Rónai Fr. Nyomása, a Takp. Kiadása, 1892; Östör 1942: 6–7.

dealt with deposit deals. This form of financial activity, however, involved not only the holding, management, and trading of deposits (securities) but also deposit-taking.²⁶

It is also important to take into account the fact that, at least in the first half of the 19th century, the Savings Bank of Pressburg could not yet cross the boundaries of the city and the region because the domestic capital market was characterized by fragmentation and disunity. To put it another way, this institute had just begun to operate, as an integrator, on the credit market (Tomka 1999: 59, 64–65).

Ethnicity as a Curse?

Two important dates in the history of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, the year of its foundation (1841) and the year of its definitive liquidation (1945), appear to also signal some interpretive “obstacles” in Slovak banking regarding the so-called non-Slovak monetary institutions and their elite. According to some authors, the establishment of this financial institution as the “first” Slovak one (i.e., on the territory of present-day Slovakia) belongs to the bright side of banking history in Slovakia—and this would be acceptable—but they do not pay adequate attention to the broader context of its time and they ignore facts, especially the circumstances of the establishment and development of the banking system in Hungary in the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, this savings bank was not the first one to be established in Hungary, as its elite emphasized and later, for completely different reasons, historical scholarship also presented.²⁷

Primacy definitely belongs to the Saxons of Transylvania and the savings bank operating locally in Braşov (Kronstädter Allgemeine Sparkasse, established in 1836), followed by the First Domestic Savings Bank of Pest (Pesti Hazai Első Takarékpénztár Egyesület, 1839), a savings bank in Arad initially operating on a philanthropic basis (Aradi Takarékpénztár, 1840), and one of the most influential institutions of 19th-century Hungarian banking, the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest (Pesti Magyar Kereskedelmi Bank, 1841; Gunszt 1908: 11–12)

26 For a plastic definition of deposit activities, see Révai Nagy Lexikona. XII. kötet, Budapest, Révai Testvérek Irodalmi Intézet Részvénytársaság, 1915, 683.

27 ANBS, BPSB, Inv. No. 57, Výročné správy a záznamy z valných zhromaždení (1843–1891) [Annual Reports and Records of General Assemblies (1843–1891)], A Pozsonyi I-ső Takarékpénztár igazgatósága és felügyelő bizottságának Lik jelentése és zárószámadás az 1891-ik üzletévről [Fiftieth Report and Financial Statement of the Board of Directors and the Supervisory Board of the First Savings Bank of Pressburg of the 1891 Financial Year], 3–4; Dokumenty z Archívu Národnej banky Slovenska [Documents from the Archive of the National Bank of Slovakia]. Bratislava, Národná banka Slovenska – Odbor verejných informácií, 2001, 6.

Unfortunately, this actually neglects a plastic presentation of the social and economic context of the period, not to mention the possibility of comparing the Hungarian conditions with the Austrian ones; the position of the Vienna-based imperial bank of issue (Erste Österreichische Sparkasse), established in 1819 and modelled after the first savings bank in Paris; the genesis of a capital and credit market; and an analysis of stimuli from other parts of Hungary and Austria.²⁸ From the perspective of the birth of the Savings Bank of Pressburg, we lack studies on impulses from the operations of the branch of the First Savings Bank of Austria and on the plans of a local foundation, although a concrete program for the establishment of a savings bank was drawn up by Paul Ballus as early as 1839.²⁹ There are thus several questions surrounding the establishment of this savings bank that have not been fully answered yet.

The other strong line of thought in Slovak historiography is linked to the year of 1945.³⁰ The birth of new Czechoslovakia, based on the national principle, also meant radical interventions in banking and finance, transformations of the banking system, and the nationalization of “foreign and hostile” capital and institutions. The German and the Hungarian financial elite, and their capital centers, were discarded definitively. In a figurative sense, this social and national break also caused a shift in Slovak historiography for many decades: research on so-called non-Slovak business entities and commercial banks was pushed into the background or ignored for ideological reasons.³¹

The fate of our subject of interest, from 1931 bearing the name of the First Savings Bank of Bratislava, was sealed after the liberation of Bratislava in April 1945. Slovak financial circles saw it as a “bastion” of hostile, “aggressive” Hungarian financial capital, while the institution had been an integral element of Slovak banking in 1918–1945. Moreover, it had intense business relations with monetary institutions in Slovakia, and its elite had numerous personal contacts with the Slovak financial elite, having even entered into various joint projects with them. Its alleged mission of eco-

28 Good 1986: 66; Bácskai 1993: 81–122. Pavol Martuliak’s claim that the savings bank took over the branch of the First Savings Bank of Austria in the city does not correspond to reality, and he does not cite any archival source. What the savings bank took over was the royal pawnshop in the city in 1851, which it ran until 1872. See Martuliak 2003: 215; ANBS, BPSB, Box 9, Statuten der Pressburger Sparcassa vom Jahre 1842. Preßburg, Druckt von Carl Friedrich Wigand [1842]; Jónás 1892a: 23–24, 50.

29 Projekt einer Sparcassa in Pressburg. In *Pannonia*, August 16, 1839, Vol. 3, No. 66, 1. Slovak specialist literature makes only a brief mention of the Viennese activities and impulses. See Horváth–Valach 1975: 32–33.

30 For conceptual reasons, it is not possible to bring a detailed analysis here, only a rough sketch and an indication of the direction of the transformations and breaks in Slovak banking.

31 On post-war banking in Slovakia, see Ryník 2002: 619–632. On the history of the First Savings Bank of Bratislava in 1945–1950, see Gaučík 2013: 250–260.

conomic support for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia was virtual and remained at the level of declarations. The reality was much more prosaic: on June 30, 1941, after the ratification of the Slovak-Hungarian Trade Treaty, which also included the reciprocity of so-called minority monetary institutions, it became an affiliate of one of the most influential institutions in Central Europe, the Hungarian General Credit Bank (Ránki 1983: 355–374). It entered its sphere of interest and secured clearing transactions between Slovakia and Hungary, while a confidant of the Slovak government became a member of its board of directors.³² On the other hand, it is impossible not to notice the power-related and ideological tendencies after the Second World War. At that time, the Czech and the Slovak financial elite strongly instrumentalized the ethnic aspect (i.e., the “Hungarian character”) of the bank for tactical reasons on the one hand, whereas, on the other hand, they did not emphasize it vehemently during their diplomatic negotiations with the Soviet party in the matter of so-called trophy banks (Chudják 1999: 25–26).

In April 1945, the Soviet military command confiscated the assets of German and Hungarian monetary institutions in Bratislava as booty, while the intergovernmental Czechoslovak–Soviet agreement of March 31, 1945, on the transfer and use of these assets applied only to the so-called German Reich companies and to other enterprises that had supported the German military economy (Klimeš-Lesjuk-Malá-Prečan 1965: 563). The agreement did not mention Hungarian monetary institutions (namely the First Savings Bank of Bratislava and the Signum Credit Cooperative of Craftsmen, Merchants, and Farmers), or Soviet claims against them, at all. The Czechoslovak party wanted to take advantage of this omission to assert its intentions to obtain the confiscated capital. Regarding these companies, the officials of the Central Bank emphasized that they were traditional Bratislava enterprises whose character had not changed during the German occupation, and that they had not collaborated with the Germans, had not served German military objectives, and had always been majority-owned by Czechoslovak nationals.³³

32 When the bank lost its independence in 1941, some members of its administration undoubtedly communicated nationalist theses outwards. János Esterházy, who was elected to replace Vilmos K. Ludwig as the new chairman of the institute in August 1941, played only a symbolic role in the management, as he could not actually influence the operations and objectives of the bank. Decisions were taken by the delegate of the Budapest headquarters in the position of administrateur délégué, László Farkas. According to the aforementioned treaty, the Slovak Economic Bank acted as the “bank” of the Slovak minority in Hungary. For more details, see Gaučík 2010: 140–150.

33 MNL OL, Magyar Nemzeti Bank [Hungarian National Bank], Z 12, Bundle 36, Item 327, Letter of the Hungarian Credit Bank to the Bank of Issue (April 9, 1946)

In Conclusion: Research Gates Open

In the past, the Savings Bank of Pressburg was given various ethnic attributes (Hungarian, German, Hungarian-German/German-Hungarian) that pointed to its ethnicity (and identity?) based on the nationality of its shareholders or senior managers. I would like to note that this was done without any specified criteria, without any explanation of terminology, and without using any research results.

I have tried to point out the risks of trivial grammatical association of ethnicity with the economic or business orientation of an organization (whether non-Slovak, Hungarianized, Hungarian-German, or Jewish), which can be found in historical texts and does not respect the social background of these institutions in the past.³⁴ It gives rise to unclear research interpretations, opens a gateway to “us and them” stereotypes, and makes its way into the texts of some historians. Such theses and constructs then result in an ethnic homogenization of history. Although so-called “ethnically different” banks is an artificial, unscientific category, it is still being pushed to the fore. That is why a group of foreign monetary institutions, or their branches, in the territory of Slovakia, which were instrumental in the modernization of the country, is pushed to the background (Hahn Henning–Mannová 2007: 18–19, 21–22).

It is justified to ask what the author of this study means by the term Savings Bank of Pressburg and whether he attributes any ethnicity to it. The schematic notions presented above are certainly imprecise and do not bring us any closer to the essence of the issue or to a better understanding of the historical phenomenon of finance in Central Europe and the emergence and development of commercial banks in the 19th century and—what is of interest to us—in the urban milieu of multiethnic Bratislava. An opportunity therefore arises to conceive new interpretations.

Two theses about the 19th-century banking system of Hungary may offer a way out of this maze: (1) Transnational, foreign consortia operated at the level of lending and investment in industry and trade on a larger scale. Credit packages created contacts between domestic entrepreneurs and foreign investors. In this context, nation or national context exist only as a framework or an intermediary element. The city actually acted as a specific entity, as an internally integral social organism. (2) I believe that this notion can be applied even to research on the domestic capital market and in the context of the unification of urban and regional markets, in which savings banks played a crucial role.

34 On the “most effective” combination (“Hungarian-German-Jewish”), see Faltus–Průcha 1969: 240, 241; Lacina 2000: 152. It can also be encountered in a different order (“Jewish-German-Hungarian”). See Ubiria–Kadlec–Matas 1958: 40.

I therefore view the Savings Bank of Pressburg as a classic urban, transnational financial institution that came to represent modern banking operations, investment, special financial services and transactions, and entrepreneurship; activated untapped finances; and thereby improved the local and the broader capital markets. I do not attribute an ethnic or national “character” to this financial organization, because this ambiguous and nebulous designation cannot be applied to serious research on rational forms of entrepreneurial activities.

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Andor Jaross as a created hero of the returned Felvidék

Abstract: Andor Jaross (1896–1946) is principally known as a Minister of Interior in Hungary after the Nazi's occupation. He is also one of the most emblematic personages responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews in 1944. After the First Vienna Award, when the southern parts of (Czecho)Slovakia were reannexed to Hungary, Jaross protected the dictatorial aspirations of Hungarian Prime Minister Béla Imrédý. In return, he was nominated for the Minister of the Felvidék. According to the press articles, right after the reannexation in 1938 (what was at that time commonly referred to as “the return to the Motherland Hungary”), Jaross became a “hero” in the returned regions, where he made all the decisions in practice, such as verification procedures, land distributions, and Jewish exemptions. Based on press materials of the examined period, this study poses the main question: What characteristics define the hero image of Jaross after 1938? It also highlights the negative consequences of the acceptance of this heroic role that was related to the “liberation” of Felvidék, his right-wing radicalization, and his views on the Jewish issue and the land distributions.

Keywords: Andor Jaross; returned Felvidék; created hero; de-Jewification; land issue.

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Introduction¹

Andor Jaross is known as the Minister of Interior of Hungary in 1944 after the German occupation. He is also among the most emblematic persons responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews in 1944. However, it is less known that Jaross defined himself as a “democratic” politician between the two World Wars. It is also less known that after the First Vienna Award he quickly changed his views in many ways and started to be a loyal follower of the Hungarian government. Jaross embraced Hungarian Prime Minister Imrédý's dictatorial aspirations, and in return he became Minister of the Felvidék after the reannexation of the territory in 1938. He instantly became a revered leader in the returned regions, where he made all the decisions in practice.

1 The Slovak version of this study, titled “Andor Jaross – stvorený hrdina ‘prinavrátenej’ Hornej zeme” was published in: Ristveyová, Katarína (ed.) 2023. Hrdinstvo a násilie počas 2. svetovej vojny. Banská Bystrica, Múzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, 157–175.

This study focuses on the political career of Andor Jaross after the First Vienna Award and examines the advantages and disadvantages of the “created hero” image. Based on press articles, I pose the following question: What characteristics defined the hero image of Jaross after 1938? I also highlight the negative consequences of the acceptance of this heroic role, his right-wing radicalization, and the changes of his views on the “Jewish question” and land issues. In any case, the main aim of the study is to draw an objective image of Andor Jaross after 1938.

From the childhood until the Vienna Award

Andor Jaross was born in Komáromcsehi on May 23, 1896. His birthplace, which was annexed to Czechoslovakia by the Trianon decision, was home not only to Slovaks and Hungarians but also to a small number of Jews. According to the 1910 census, 80.7% of the 596 inhabitants of Komáromcsehi were Slovaks, compared with a negligible 18% of Hungarians, 1.3% of Germans and 1.3% of Jews (i.e., Israelites; Kepecs 1996: 40).

Jaross was brought up in a religious environment in a close-knit family, and from 1906 he continued his secondary education at one of the most prestigious Catholic institutions, the Piarist Gymnasium (i.e., secondary school) in Tata. During his students years, he was the president of the literary circle named after Miklós Révai, and he also achieved great results in athletics. He graduated with distinction (Czáboczký 2019: 14–16).

His religious practice was primarily determined by the expectations of others, especially his wife. This is shown, for example, by the fact that he admitted that he went to confession mainly in response to his wife’s requests. He later stressed that there was never an anti-Semitic atmosphere in his family (Szirmai 1993: 133).

Andor Jaross became involved in Hungarian politics in Czechoslovakia almost immediately after the change of state in 1918–1920. In the 1920s, he first joined the National Christian Socialist Party led by János Lelley, but he left the party because of a speech by the party chairman in Nitra.² In 1921, he became member of the *Kisgazdapárt* (hereafter referred to as Small Farmers’ Party [SFP]) where he became co-chairman of the agricultural section. In 1925, he was elected as one of the national vice-presidents of the *Magyar Nemzeti Párt* (hereafter referred to as Hungarian National Party [HNP]), the successor of the SFP. In 1926, he became chairman of the agricultural section of the party’s district of Érsekújvár and in 1928 chairman of the HNP in the Komárom district. In 1929, he was also elected to the Provincial Assembly in Slovakia, and in 1931 he became vice-president of the Hungarian League of People’s Unions.³

2 Jaross mentioned this in an interview in 1937, although he did not speak about the content of the speech. *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, 1937. augusztus 5., 4.

In the 1920s, Jaross's political objectives focused mainly on promoting the economic organization of the Hungarian population in Czechoslovakia. At the same time he was also advocating the revision of the Czechoslovak land reform.⁴ The young politician was personally interested in the land redistribution, as the nationalist Czechoslovak land reform had reduced the Jaross estate to some 500 cadastral acres (Czáboczký 2023: 91). Jaross's domestic policy in the 1920s took a "middle-ground" position compared with the policies of the leaders of the *Nemzeti Keresztényszocialista Párt* (hereafter referred to as National Christian Socialist Party [NCS]) or the Hungarian National Party (Czáboczký 2019: 31).

Jaross's radicalization to the right became increasingly evident from the early 1930s. The young politician, who had an upwardly mobile career, and from 1935 also served as the executive chairman of the HNP, the most important opposition party of the Hungarian community in Czechoslovakia, was still a proponent of the so-called "modern nationalism," which emphasized the link between the social and national interests of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia. Jaross, who was described by Lujza Esterházy as a "liberal," felt it important to stress that the modern nationalism he advocated could not be identified with "minority-suppressing chauvinism" (Esterházy 1991: 68). In the spirit of "minority Hungarian nationalism," the politician organized, for example, a youth group and section within the HNP called *Fiatal Magyar Munkaközösség* (Young Hungarians Working Group; Czáboczký 2023: 104).

The first half of the 1930s, in the context of the Night of the Long Knives, he warned Hungarians against Fascist principles.⁵ In the second half of the 1930s, Jaross's "nationalism" took on a new color, and in many respects his policies became increasingly close to Hitler's ideas.⁶ This remark is no coincidence, since Jaross had already been sharply critical of the Paris Peace Treaty since the 1920s, and as it fell apart, he moved closer and closer to the "anti-Versailles" policies of Mussolini and Hitler. This may have been partly due to the fact that he served with his brothers in the First World War, and his two brothers, who fought on the Italian front, were killed in action (Czáboczký 2019: 17). In any case, the transformation of Jaross's political views

3 See more about his activities within the European Nationalities Congress in Eiler 2005: 123–140.

4 *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, 1926. május 23., 4. See more in Simon 2008: 159.

5 In an article, he noted that Hitlerism had been created as an "immunizing binder for the feverish German nation," which was a result of the Versailles Treaties. See more in *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*, 1934. július 8., 1.

6 In the 1990s, a press debate erupted about Andor Jaross between the historian and politician Gyula Popély and publicist Mihály Tóth. Tóth criticized Popély for wanting to give Jaross, a war criminal, a place alongside the emblematic figures of the nation. See the debate in *Új Szó*, 1992. január 21., 5.

is undoubtedly linked to Hungary's foreign policy orientation, which in the second half of the 1930s, in the context of the interests of revisionism, became increasingly close to Germany.⁷

Andor Jaross as an “all-powerful leader” after the reunification

As mentioned earlier, Andor Jaross played a major role in Hungarian politics in Czechoslovakia from the beginning of the 1920s. His role grew in the 1930s, and in 1936 he became the leader of the *Egyesült Magyar Párt* (hereafter referred to as the United Hungarian Party [UHP]), which was a merger of opposition Hungarian parties in Czechoslovakia. These minority processes were related to the changes in Hungarian foreign policy imbued with revisionist ideas. As far as we know, Jaross was not a very popular or well-known figure among Hungarians in Czechoslovakia: “Before the Reunification [...] Jaross was not particularly popular within the United Hungarian Party. After the Vienna Award, he was quickly elevated—undeservedly—by the press as a glorious leader, which he was able to use and quickly transform into influence. In December 1938, the slogan ‘Jaross is our leader!’ appeared at the events of the United Hungarian Party, and this was not just an empty phrase, but Jaross as a party chairman really directed his party like a leader,” writes Attila Simon about the leader of the UHP, who became “all-powerful leader” of the *Felvidék* after the First Vienna Award (Simon 2014: 63).

Andor Jaross's position was influenced after the reunification, primarily by Béla Imrédý. Not only was it in Imrédý's interest to build a close relationship with Jaross, but the politician from the *Felvidék* also benefited from being Imrédý's follower who appointed him Minister of the *Felvidék* and was given a free hand in the management of the affairs of the “returned” territories. The fact that János Esterházy⁸ remained in

7 Andor Jaross, who had been appointed national president after the United Hungarian Party (UHP) was founded in 1936, already stated in his program in April of 1938, which was published in the *Új Hírek*, that Germany's policies could not be overruled (Simon 2010: 96). Three months later, he made a speech on the “protection of the Hungarian *Lebensraum*” at an electoral plebiscite. In 1945, in a posthumous confession, he said the following about the policies of the Führer: “In Hitler's operation [...] I was fated to be influenced by the fact that it was because of his contribution that we annexed back part of the *Felvidék*” (Szirmai 1996: 137).

8 János Esterházy was a Hungarian Christian Socialist politician and party leader in Czechoslovakia. After the merger of the UHP in 1936, he became the party's executive chairman. After the First Vienna Award, he represented the Hungarian minority in Josef Tiso's Slovakia as the only Hungarian member of the Slovak parliament. On May 15, 1942, he was the only member of parliament who did not vote for the law on the transfer of Jews to Germany. He was persecuted by the Gestapo, after which was deported to the Soviet Union

his homeland and did not enter the stage of Hungarian domestic politics also contributed to Jaross's becoming an influential figure in Hungarian politics after the First Vienna Award. Géza Szűllő, another important protagonist of the Hungarian politics in Czechoslovakia, who later became a member of the Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament and gained some political influence during the premiership of Miklós Kállay, had by then fallen out of favor in Budapest (Simon 2014: 61).

The alliance of interests with Imrédy after brought the expected success for Andor Jaross. This also meant to him unconditional acceptance of the government's principles and loyalty to Imrédy. Jaross later said that he fully identified himself with the ideas of the Hungarian government, for example with the so-called "wonderful revolution," because for the returning Hungarians were also interested in the connection of the national and social aims (See more on this in Sipos 1970). Imrédy was also well aware that the slogan of "ethnic solidarity" was popular among the "returned" political elites. Jaross therefore immediately adopted the social and political program of the UHP to Imrédy's ideas. He ceaselessly emphasized that the "popular experience" of the society of the Felvidék was also an important benefit for the all-Hungarian society.⁹

It is no wonder that Jaross got a new position in Imrédy's government. From November 16, 1938, he became the Minister of the Felvidék and continued to serve the community of the Felvidék in the framework of the Ministry of Felvidék. The "Office of the Minister without portfolio for Affairs of the Felvidék" was established under the supervision of Andor Jaross, which operated between November 15, 1938, and April 1, 1940, with 19 civil servants and had an advisory and consultative function in relation to the affairs of the Felvidék. His full power is well illustrated by the report of the Council of Ministers: "The legislation concerning the Felvidék can only be enacted with prior consultation with the Minister of the Felvidék; personal and material measures can also be taken after prior consultation with Jaross."¹⁰ He was therefore ultimately responsible for all matters concerning the reannexed territories, but he usually discussed the issues with specialized ministers (Simon 2014: 54). Jaross's authority became inescapable in the affairs of the returned territories (See more in Sipos 1970). In other words, without Jaross, the ministers could not decide independently on any issue concerning the Felvidék. They had to consult Jaross on all matters concerning the returned Hungarian minority. In exchange for the absolute power, the 17 invited political

for 10 years of "hard labor". In the meantime, he was sentenced to death in Czechoslovakia in 1947, but he was eventually re-sentenced to life imprisonment and then 25 years in prison. He died in prison in Mírov, Czechia, in 1957 (Pásztor 2020: 140–141).

9 Uj Magyarország, 1938. november 20., 5.; Esti Kurir, 1938. november 22., 2.; Magyar Nemzet, 1938. november 22., 5.

10 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL), fond K 27, Minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyv. 1938. november 16.

representatives from the Felvidéki strengthened Imrédy's government, which was in deep crisis in this period.¹¹ The UHP (commonly known as the Hungarian Party of the Felvidék), led by the newly appointed Minister of the Felvidék, was the only party in the Felvidék to operate (alongside the dwindling Hlinka's Slovak People's Party in the Slovak villages), and Jaross also put his own people in county and district positions.¹² The minister's people decided on the national-based verification commissions or the annulment of former land acquisitions (See more in Tilkovszky 1967: 58–59, 88).

Jaross as a “hero created by the press”

The press of the Felvidék and the government press also played a major role in creating the heroic image of Jaross. In the most important media organ, the *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, the articles highlighted his role in the party unification process, and also the importance of his relations with Imrédy, and portrayed him as a leader or chief of the Felvidék. The head of the government also defined Jaross as the leader of the “returned” Felvidék and played a major role in creating the heroic image of the politician from Felvidék.¹³

On November 9, 1938, after the First Vienna Award, the *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap* drew attention to the fact that Jaross's personality was very popular not only in the Felvidék but also among the population of Budapest: “The most popular man in Budapest today is the chairman of the United Hungarian Party [...]: Andor Jaross. For those who don't know him by sight, he is the most popular leader of the Hungarian people in Hungary since his speech, which has created an unparalleled resonance in all strata of the Hungarian capital and among the Hungarian people as a whole.” When he traveled to Budapest, hundreds of acquaintances visited him, but this popularity was burdensome and uncomfortable for Jaross.¹⁴

It also emerges from the articles praising the Minister of the Felvidék that Jaross had risen to the position of “hero” primarily because of the reintegration. According to the published writings, the Hungarian society (including politicians) associated the

11 Law from 18 November 1938: Under this law, a total of 17 politicians who had previously served as representatives of the Czechoslovak Parliament were invited to sit in the Hungarian Chamber of Deputies, whose number was increased to 26 in the Chamber of Deputies after the 1939 elections. Of these, 18 were from Slovakian regions, while eight represented Carpathia (i.e., the territories that had been reannexed in 1939) (Simon 2014: 72).

12 Some attempts to break the hegemony of the UHP were made by some social democrats and the Arrow Cross, but they were unsuccessful (Simon 2014: 66).

13 *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1938. november 8., 2.

14 *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1938. november 9., 5.

events of the “return” with illusory ideas, and they were positively biased towards Jaross’s personality: “I have spoken to people of all political persuasions, and all of them look forward with hope to the involvement of the Hungarians of the Felvidék in Hungarian public life. They expect a lot from us. Only positive things, the simplification of Hungarian political life, a healthy levelling out, Hungarian unity, a new Hungarian impetus. And they see all this embodied in the strong, muscular, imposing young figure of Andor Jaross.”¹⁵ However, the internal policy conflicts of the following months showed that opposition politicians often criticized Jaross’s unconditional loyalty to the government.¹⁶ Jaross was also subject to severe critiques from the opposition side. He was criticized for his unconditional loyalty to the government and his policy turn regarding the Jewish question. However, Jaross was presented as a victim by the official press of the Felvidék. The Hungarian official press published articles trying to convince the public that Jaross was the best person to guarantee the great task of unification and reintegration after the return. The daily *Magyar Nemzet* on November 6, 1938, referred to the special tasks that only Jaross can guarantee: “We had to appoint a man to this serious task who could reconcile the forced provincialism of the Hungarians of the Felvidék with the traditions of universal Hungarian national politics and the great interests that lie along the line of our historical goals.”¹⁷

The “returning” society showed unconditional commitment to the minister, whom it regarded as an all-powerful “leader.” Many articles portrayed Jaross as the person who united the previously marginalized Hungarian minority community. At the same time, as a strong-handed leader, he gave hope and was a pledge of the unity to the “returned” inhabitants: “The Hungarians, who in 20 years of unanimous will had so often cried out with sincere admiration of the moment—‘Long live Jaross!’—were waiting for their leader. The faces in the cold of the snowy December morning were flushed as if with the warm fire of joy and mutual rejoicing, and the hard peasant eyes were fixed on the minister’s pert, joyful face as a father looks at his now grown-up sons. Then the narrative began, and its unbroken continuity was seldom interrupted by the rapturous applause of the people.” Articles voicing biased opinions also overestimated Jaross’s previous political activities, and thus they tried to give Jaross’s earlier work a high profile.¹⁸ These articles, moreover, often identified Andor Jaross with the “returned” society

15 Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap, 1938. november 9., 5.

16 See more on this in Képviselőházi napló, 1938. XX. (345. ülés, 1938. november 23.) Az 1935. évi április hó 27-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója. XX. kötet. Budapest, Athenaeum, 251–254.

17 Magyar Nemzet, 1938. november 6., 1.

18 Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap, 1938. december 11., 7.; Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap, 1939. február 19., 8.

and the Felvidék. One such example was the article about Jaross's internal political conflicts published on January 14, 1939, in the *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*.¹⁹

Jaross's importance is shown in the fact that in the following months eight municipalities elected him honorary citizen, including as Komárom, Békés, Kiskunhalas, Léva, Munkács, Ipolyság, Udvard, and Bori, among which there were settlements outside the Felvidék as well (János 1940: 214).²⁰ In addition, one village was named after Jaross: the village Brusek and an adjacent foreign settlement, created by the dispossessed farmers of the Czech land reform in Udvard, were named Jarossfalva.²¹ Jaross, who was blessed with excellent oratorical skills, used this "hero" image in his speeches. The local elites also tried to present him as the most important person in the Felvidék. For example, when Jaross arrived to the Felvidék, official events were preceded by long preparations. Such was the case when Jaross visited Komárom in order to attend the national congress of the United Hungarian Party. On January 18, 1939, Zsigmond Fülöp, the mayor of Komárom, hung up banners in the town that drew attention to the fact that "The Hungarians of Komárom are participating in this historic congress with true enthusiasm and greet the guests and Hungarian brothers and sisters with festive feelings. In order to express this feeling in a fitting way throughout the town, I invite the people of Komárom, especially the homeowners, to decorate their houses with flags on the day of the Congress."²² In his welcome speech the mayor assured the party leader of his support against the internal political debates.²³ According to press reports, members at the party congress in Komárom praised the Minister of the Felvidék in a poem set to the tune of the song of "Lajos Kossuth Said." Jaross thus soon became a "hero" of the reunification, associated with the ideal of so-called "Hungarian freedom."²⁴ At the same time, Jaross's wife was also the subject of articles voicing

19 "And a million returned Hungarians are insulted by anyone who insults the elected leader of the Felvidék with his wit or lack of wit[...] Because Jaross means Felvidék and Felvidék means Jaross." *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. január 14., 1. See more in *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. március 12., 7. and *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. március 17., 9.

20 In his summary, József Botlik mentions seven settlements, omitting Léva. Botlik 2020: 326. These honorary citizenship titles were lost after the war. See more on this in Végső-Simko 2007: 39., 258; Végső 2019: 134.

21 *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. január 21., 3.

22 Štátny Archív (ŠA) Nitra, pob. Komárno, fond Municipálne mesto Komárno (MMK-II.) 1403/1939. "The houses were decorated with flags, like in those memorable days. In shop windows, white paper ribbons with the words 'Long live Jaross!' in bold letters." *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. január 21., 3.

23 *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. január 20., 1.

24 The lyrics were as follows: "Andor Jaross, we ask you to continue to be our leader! You led us to freedom. Lead me to Great Hungary. Long live Hungarian freedom! Long live the Homeland!" *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. január 21., 3.

biased opinion in the contemporary press. One such example was an article in the *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap* of May 5, 1939, about a fund-raising campaign organized by the National League for the Protection of Children and the Children's Sanatorium Association, where Jaross's wife was leading a collection for children in the Felvidék.²⁵

In January 1939, the merging with the Hungarian Life Movement and the leadership role alongside Imrédy also confirmed the importance of his role. His rapid political rise and his decisive role in late 1938 and early 1939 were largely linked to his relationship with Béla Imrédy. It seems from his "bombastic speeches" and "passionate editorials," which, however, merely echoed Imrédy's views in more simple terms, he sought to make up for the lack of independence with a show of strength and barrel-chested rants, his overwhelming "desire to appear" (Sipos 1970: 205).

Jaross's role in the de-Jewification of the Felvidék

From the beginning, Jaross's public speeches were focused on two crucial issues: the land distributions and the solution of the "Jewish question" in the Felvidék. He was influenced by Imrédy's policy, who offered the Hungarian society a quick solution to these two issues (Bajcsi 2023b: 15). By promising a swift and complete resolution of critical issues, Jaross also wished to strengthen his own popularity among the "returned" society. As with other Hungarian politicians in Czechoslovakia, Jaross could have been expected to show loyalty to the Jews and to continue to cooperate with them: "Ask anyone in the Felvidék about this, but especially the illustrious witnesses of the good behavior of the Jews, such as the three leaders of the Hungarian minority in the Felvidék, Count János Esterházy, Géza Szüllő, and Andor Jaross, who had achieved historical merit."²⁶ Unlike his two colleagues', however, Jaross's position took a major turn, and after the reunification he sought to portray the Jews of the Felvidék as a separate community from the Hungarians. Jaross embraced and continued to support Imrédy's program of social reforms and identified himself with the prime minister's anti-Semitic stance. Incidentally, Imrédy's anti-Jewish sentiments must have been influenced at this time by the growing dissatisfaction with the first Jewish law among the "Christian middle class," which was interested in acquiring Jewish wealth (Sipos 1966: 65).

The reassessment of the Jewish question may also have become timely, as the proportion of Jews in the country had increased dramatically with the reoccupation of

25 *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. május 5. , 7.

26 An article in the *Pesti Napló* on November 17, 1938, not only emphasized the loyalty of Hungarian Jews in the Felvidék to the nation, but it also expressed his confidence in Hungarian politicians in the Felvidék who were impartial on the Jewish question in the period between the two wars. *Pesti Napló*, 1938. november 27., 1.

the Felvidék.²⁷ As has been shown above, Andor Jaross played a major role in promoting anti-Jewish slogans and in spreading rumors about opportunistic (i.e., nationally disloyal) Jewry.²⁸ This stereotype, moreover, provided a good basis for his group, which was promoted to and organized around key positions at the county and district levels, to socially and economically marginalize Jews.

Jaross and his staff very quickly achieved the de-Jewification in the Felvidék (see more in Bajcsi 2023b). Jews were excluded from official positions, and their acquisition of property was in many cases nullified. In the months following the First Vienna Award, the main instrument for elite exchanges in the Felvidék was provided by the justification procedures.²⁹ In the Czechoslovak era, the honorable attitude towards Hungarians was reviewed not only in the case of the Jews but also among the reintegrated “Christian” Hungarians.³⁰

27 With the reintegration of Felvidék, the proportion of Jews in Hungary increased by 6.3%. Moreover, the fact that the proportion of Jews among the 700,000 inhabitants of the Transcarpathian territories, recaptured in March 1939, was higher than that of Hungarians may have given further fuel to anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic propaganda: while 11% of the population were Jews, the proportion of Hungarians was no more than 10.1% in 1941. Ungváry 2016: 419.

28 See more in *8 Órai Újság*, 1938. december 20. and *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. december 24., 2.

29 See more in *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, 1939. június 6., 2.

30 According to M.E. Decree No. 2300/1939 on the filling of civil service posts in there occupied Felvidék, adopted in January 1939, priority for filling civil service posts in the Felvidék was given to Hungarian civil servants who had lost their jobs before Trianon as a result of Czechoslovak measures, and secondly to those who had been in the Czechoslovak civil service at the time of the First Vienna Award or who had lived in the “returned” territory. In addition, at the suggestion of Jaross, the decree also included the provision that persons from the Felvidék could only be made permanent if their conduct had been proven in a verification procedure. To the verification committees set up for this purpose, the person to be verified had to give an answer as to his nationality, the language of instruction in his schools, the place of his military service, the circumstances of his civil service, and any party activities. However, there was no “standard practice,” and the final result was largely influenced by the composition of the verification committees. (Simon 2018 249–250; see more in *Magyarországi Rendeleték Tára 1867–1945. 1939. Magyarországi Rendeleték Tára*, 58–69.) According to the Hungarian nation-building strategy of the time, only those inhabitants of the Felvidék whose trustworthiness was considered by the government to be unquestionable from a national point of view were allowed to share in the “public bread.” This was central not only for appointments to public office, but also, for example, for social benefits. As Edit Csilléry pointed out in her study, “they were the basis for deciding who got a decent pension, an industrial license, a social grant, or land. It was not only a fight for jobs of trust or higher social prestige but also a fight for who could be a midwife, a forestry day laborer, a servant, a train brakeman, or a road sweeper, for example.” Bajcsi 2021: 47–48.; Csilléry 2014: 8.

The Hungarian National Councils operated during the period of the military administration and were built up within the structures of the UHP. Later, the verification committees under the control of the Minister of the Felvidék, on the one hand, tried to “keep the right people from the Felvidék in their positions and get them there,” taking into account the interests of the UHP from a national and moral point of view. On the other hand, they were effective instruments for the expulsion of Jewish officials (Bajcsi 2020: 22). In fact, Jaross managed to ensure that the UHP had considerable influence in the composition of the certification committees. Moreover he and his circle often prevailed in the decisions. It is also noticeable that Jaross and the UHP leaders were behind some of the negative decisions as wells. As Attila Simon notes in his work, “Jaross specifically drew the attention of the committee members to the fact that they could take as many negative decisions as they liked, as the pensions to be paid out would not be a burden on the state coffers” (Simon 2014: 94).³¹ In the course of the screenings launched on the basis of verification procedures, the vast majority of the 11,000 Hungarians in the Felvidék passed without difficulty, while the Jews were almost entirely excluded from the state sector (Simon 2014: 90–91).³² In the course of the justifications, the Jews were accused mainly of collaborating with the Czechs, one form of which was through donations for the protection of the state: “The Jews in Czechoslovakia are engaged in strong anti-Hungarian propaganda. They claim that Hungary is on the verge of revolution and is suffering great hardship. The Jewish reserve soldiers who enlisted on May 21 are said to have donated their entire pay to arm the army. The soldiers of Hungarian and German nationality refused to donate for the purpose of arming, despite the call to do so.”³³

In the process of redistribution of industrial licenses, 60% of Jews were excluded from the economy of the Felvidék.³⁴ At the same time, it is well known that industrial licenses could be bought for 500–1000 pence (Simon 2014: 203). It is worth noting that while Jaross championed the so-called second Jewish law, he also wished to exempt “loyal Jews” who belonged to his circles.³⁵ These exceptions primarily affected

31 Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap, 1939. június 6., 2.

32 The swift “elimination” of the Jews is also evidenced by the fact that “the military administration, on the orders of the Chief of General Staff, did not allow officials of Jewish origin to take an oath of allegiance.” ŠA Nitra, pob. Komárno, fond Hlavnoslužovský úrad (HSÚ) Komárno, 24 biz./1938. Megbízhatatlan egyének ügye. A magyar királyi II. hadtestparancsnokság (nyomozó csoport parancsnokától) magyar királyi járási katonai parancsnokságnak. 1938. december 19.

33 MNL OL, fond K 149. 11753/1938. res. A magyar királyi csendőrség nyomozó osztályparancsnoka a belügyminiszternek. 1938. augusztus 4.

34 As statistics on the revision of industrial licences have not yet been produced, these data are only available from the press. Simon 2014: 203.

those Jews with whom the minister had worked in the frame of the Hungarian National Party during the Czechoslovak period. Jaross's influence on the Felvidék affairs is shown by the fact that he succeeded in including in the second Jewish law a section exempting nationally loyal Jews from the provisions of the discriminatory law.³⁶

Andor Jaross and the land issue

Jaross's statements of November 1938 already have shown that he attached great importance to the land settlement: "The problem of land reform is a national, popular, racial, military, and state-building interest. Whoever touches this question for a moment from the standpoint of individual or family politics is unworthy to speak for the nation. All such tendencies find themselves in opposition to us, our million-strong, self-conscious masses of the people. But the other reforms, including the reform of the Jewish law, are exclusively oriented towards the strengthening of the Hungarian race, of the popular forces."³⁷ Jaross stressed that the lands thus taken would be returned to the Hungarian peasantry. He also pointed out at the UHP's meeting in Ipolyság that it would be a good idea to extend this method to the whole country: "The land was taken away from the Hungarian landowners, but it was not given to the Hungarian peasantry. We will change this and, as we have promised the Hungarians in the Felvidék for 20 years, we will divide up the remaining estates and settlements. But we will also go further. Following our example, we want to fight for and promote a healthy land reform in the territory of the former Trianon Hungary."³⁸

For the Hungarian population in the Felvidék, land redistribution was a particularly sensitive issue because of the nationalistic nature of the first Czechoslovak land reforms between 1920 and 1935, during which Hungarians had received very little of

35 Magyar Nemzet, 1939. február 11., 5.

36 In August 1939, Pesti Magyar Hírlap published details of the provisions of the second Jewish law concerning the returned territories: "The implementing instruction states that the exemption provided for in the second section of the law (who is not considered a Jew) also extends to persons who, during the period of the secession, risked their freedom or physical integrity or suffered a longer term imprisonment or physical abuse because of their loyal conduct towards the Hungarian people in the occupied territories, as well as to their wives and children, and to their widows and children who lost their lives as a result of such conduct. The wife, widow, and children, however, only if their conduct during the period of separation, was irreproachable from the point of view of loyalty to the Hungarian nation." Pesti Magyar Hírlap, 1939. augusztus 22., 2.; Pesti Magyar Hírlap, 1939. augusztus 27., 5; Magyarországi Rendeleték Tára 1867–1945. 1939. Rendeleték Tára, Rendeleték/337, 1173.

37 Uj Magyarság, 1938. november 20., 5.

38 Pesti Hírlap, 1938. december 6., 2.

the redistributed land. In southern Slovakia, where the Hungarian population constituted 70–90% of the inhabitants, Hungarians received merely 19% of the allotted land. Of the 140,000 hectares of land in southern Slovakia, only 27,540 hectares were in the hands of the Hungarian population. Of this land, 17,662 hectares were distributed as small allotments and 9,918 hectares as residual land.³⁹

As a result, Jaross, together with several other politicians of the UHP, placed great emphasis on the revision of the Czechoslovak land reform. The fact that other UHP members besides Jaross were personally involved in the earlier land reform certainly played a role: “His father, István Jaross had some 352 acres confiscated him by the Czechs. Most of these lands could have been returned to him by the Czech settlers. Despite his family belonging to the old land-owning nobility, he was one of the first among the nobles of the Felvidék to proclaim that the land belongs to those farmers of the Felvidék who had fought heroically alongside them in their political struggles for 20 years.... But there are other similar examples connected to the Jaross family. Vilmos Jaross also lost some 320 acres of land confiscated this way. Béla Szilassy, the state secretary, Nándor Nagy, and István Bartal renounced 320–420 acres of land.”⁴⁰ In charge of the revision of the Czechoslovak land distributions was an expert appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture as Jaross’s state secretary, Béla Szilassy, a landowner from Losonc, who had also previously been a member of the Hungarian party elite in Czechoslovakia. Under his leadership, the Government Commissariat for Land Settlement in the Felvidék was set up in March 1939. Szilassy had the power to decide whether beneficiaries could keep their former benefits. The revision of the Czechoslovak land reform started with the use of the lands of Czech colonists and residual landowners (Simon 2014: 122–123).⁴¹ The plan drawn up by Szilassy and Jaross was clearly intended to compensate for the disadvantages suffered by the Hungarian population,⁴² but Jaross also used it against the Jews, and the revision of the Czechoslovak land reform led to the unlawful cancellation of many Jewish land acquisitions (Simon 2014: 130).

In any case, Jaross promised a solution to the economic and social problems of the Felvidék through the “changing of the guard.” Soon afterwards, it became clear that the

39 This meant that 20% of Slovakia’s Hungarian population received less than 6% of the land allocated. Simon 2014: 113; see also Simon 2008.

40 Képviselőházi napló, 1939, II. (44. ülés, 1939. október 26.) Az 1939. évi június hó 10-ére hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója. II. kötet. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1939, 415.

41 According to the data of Lóránt Tilkovszky, 41,000 acres were transferred to new tenants. Tilkovszky 1967: 71.

42 The estates “returned” by the abolition were given to the local Hungarian population or distributed in the form of military plots and to large families. Simon 2008: 213.

“de-Jewification” of the economy had caused serious problems for the economy of the Felvidék. At the same time, the press in the Felvidék continued to support Jaross on the Jewish law and land reform. In a May 1939 article, for example, it defended the minister against “Christians” who criticized his “permissive” attitude towards Jews. The article portrayed Jaross as a “victim” of the slanderers, while noting that “an atmosphere of mistrust will not succeed in strangling Jaross” voice. They will not be able to drive a wedge between Jaross and his supporters and will not be able to separate him from Teleki. Neither the young people of the Felvidék, nor the old people, nor the clergy could be turned against Jaross by the trumped-up false accusation of apostasy. Because no exaggeration was true, neither he nor the party could be accused of exaggeration or deviation from the program.⁴³

However, as Jaross’s ministerial post did not fit in with the unificationist ideas of Pál Teleki, who succeeded Imrédy as prime minister, the post of minister without portfolio was abolished (Simon 2014: 130). This was due to the demise of the UHP by his deepening conflict with Teleki beginning in the summer of 1939. For the prime minister, the dangers of the extreme right-wing grouping around Imrédy and Jaross within the governing party became increasingly apparent (Simon 2014: 74). In addition, Teleki had been an advocate of unification against the *corpus separatum* from the outset, and Jaross’s corruption scandals had led him to seek to dismantle the ministry as soon as possible (See more in Tilkovszky 1967: 58–59, 88). However, as Jaross and his circle had control over the political and administrative affairs in Felvidék, the protégé of the minister could only be removed gradually, also leading to the abolishment of the ministry (Sipos 1970: 204). After the disbanding of the Ministry of the Felvidék in the summer of 1940, Szilassy’s position was also abolished and his duties were taken over by the Minister of Agriculture. By this time, the Hungarian government was already in favor of unification (i.e., the application of the mother country’s practice in the Jewish question as well). However, the war did not allow a complete revision of the Czechoslovak land reform.

Conclusions

Andor Jaross's career and political views were greatly influenced by the events of the First Vienna Award. The alliance of interests he formed with Béla Imrédy played a major role in the development of the previously unpopular Hungarian politician's career in Czechoslovakia. The politician from the Felvidék became a loyal follower of Imrédy's policies, including those of the so-called “miraculous revolution,” land distribution, and the Jewish problem, in return for which he was able to exercise full control over the

43 Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap, 1939. május 14., 1.

“returned” territories. From November 1938, Jaross, as Minister of the Felvidék, was the almost absolute leader of the re-claimed territories, and the United Hungarian Party, which he also led, was virtually the only party in the Felvidék. According to the press of the Felvidék and in the articles of the governmental press, he became a hero among the society of the Felvidék and all Hungarians. However, Jaross, who in the meantime had also become a member of parliament, was increasingly criticized by the opposition of the government.

In any case, Jaross’s heroic rise could only have happened during a period when the revision was realized in the Felvidék. His position was also guaranteed by the previous relations with Budapest and the alliance of the interests with Imrédy. These circumstances created the opportunity for Jaross to rise to the heroic status almost instantly. This role required unconditional cooperation from the increasingly radical policies of the head of the government. Thus, Jaross, similar to Imrédy, promised a rapid and wide-ranging revision of the Jewish question and the land reform. In any case, radical responses to social and economic problems were closely related with the creating of “heroic” statesmen, who are able to show the picture of the perfect leader, such as Miklós Horthy in Hungary or Andor Jaross in the Felvidék. Despite this, Jaross relatively quickly lost his sway when Pál Teleki became the prime minister. The new government did not trust Jaross, who continued to be a follower of the ex-prime minister Imrédy. Teleki also criticized Jaross’s dubious affairs and his corrupt behavior and wanted to finalize the unification as soon as possible. Thereafter, Jaross continued to build his friendship with Imrédy, and in October 1941 they together founded the radical-right wing Hungarian Renewal Party.

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ADRIENN TENGELY

The views of the clergy in the dioceses of Rožňava and Eger on Catholic book publishing in 1848

Abstract: In the spring of 1848, the revolutionary events did not leave the Catholic Church untouched, and the need for change was felt throughout Hungary. Consequently, a national synod was planned for September 24, 1848, the task of which was to adapt the Church to the changed situation. In connection with this, the bishops drew up and sent to the dioceses a list of topics to be discussed at the national synod, point 10 of which was the promotion and distribution of a publishing house of good cheap books. On the basis of this list of topics, in the summer of 1848 most dioceses held deanery district meetings and later diocesan consultations to discuss and comment on the various issues, including the question of the Catholic publishing company. This gives us an idea of how the clergy of the country viewed the matter in the months when the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association (later the St. Stephen Association) was founded. In our study, we examine in detail the opinions of the clergy of the dioceses of Rožňava and Eger on the issue.

Keywords: Catholic Church; 1848; book publishing; Good and Cheap Publishing House Association; St. Stephen Association.

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The question of Catholic literature and publishing was a very topical issue in the public life of the Church in Hungary in the first half of the 19th century. The problem of “good” and “bad” literature (i.e., the contrast between press products that exhibit proper morality and those entertaining works and press products that are anti-religious, anti-clerical, or even considered immoral and their harmful effects) was already a major concern for the preparers and participants of the 1822 Hungarian national synod. They strongly requested the strict state censorship and, if necessary, a ban on the latter, while in case of the former, although the idea of an independent Catholic publishing house in Hungary had not yet been raised, they proposed that the archclergy should ensure the writing and publication of religious ethical books with Bible stories and

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examples of saints for the young and adults as Sunday readings (Fejérdy 2018: 496–499, 511, 532).

The idea of establishing a Catholic publishing house appeared in the Hungarian Catholic press at the end of the 1830s, although it was still only in the form of a descriptions of similar organizations abroad.¹ Antal Notter also lists some similar foreign organizations founded in the era that had had an impact on Hungarian organizations (see Notter 1904: Chapter “*A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig*”). These examples also led to the publication of an article by Canon Mihály Fogarasy in the Catholic journal *Religio és Nevelés* (Religion and Education) of December 1, 1844, in which he discussed the proposal and possibilities of founding such a publishing house in Hungary.² His proposal was immediately received positively, and many people agreed with it.³ Some people even added different ideas to his proposal. For example there was a very inventive—but difficult to implement—idea to combine the issue of a publishing house with temperance associations fighting against alcoholism, which were widespread at the time especially in the northern dioceses of the era (Sedlák 1998; Zakar 2015: 1211–1246; Zakar 2016b: 215–227) in a way that the members of the association would use the money that they had previously spent on alcohol to buy religious books.⁴ Finally, the association was officially established on February 15, 1847, under the name Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, but this was then only known in a small circle, since its statutes could not be printed and thus widely distributed until its official authorization (See Notter 1904: Chapter “*A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig*”). The initiative became publicly known in front of the whole clergy of the country a year later, in May 1848 when the statutes were published in the pages of *Religio és Nevelés*.⁵

During these months, the revolutionary events did not leave the building of the Catholic Church untouched either, and the need for change burst forth with great force in the whole country. Consequently, a national synod was planned for September 24,

1 Franciaország. In *Szión*, August 9, 1838, Vol. 1, Iss. 11, p. 42.; Austria. In *Szión*, July 10, 1839, Vol. 2, Iss. 2, p. 6.

2 Fogarassy, Mihály: Esmék egy nevelési, épületes és fölvilágosító könyvek terjesztésére alakítandó társulat szerkezetéhez. In *Religio és Nevelés*, December 1, 1844, Vol. 4, Iss. 44, pp. 345–348.

3 Gózony, György: Nyílt levél főtiszt. Fogarasy Mihály apát és nagyváradai d. sz. kanonok úrhoz. In *Religio és Nevelés*, December 29, 1844, Vol. 4, Iss. 51, pp. 405–409.; Sörös, I.: Vallási egyletek. In *Religio és Nevelés*, January 1, 1845, Vol. 5, Iss. 1, pp. 1–4.

4 S. I.: Józansági egyletek. In *Religio és Nevelés*, March 9, 1845, Vol. 5, Iss. 20, pp. 166–167.

5 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and May 11, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312. The assembly of deanery district of Miskolc on July 18, 1848, also mentioned that the association is known from this article in *Religio és Nevelés*: Eger Archidieceze Archives, Archivum Novum, Synodus 3129 (hereinafter: EAA AN 3129) minutes of the Miskolc district assembly on July 18, 1848.

1848, with the task of adapting the Church to the changed political, social, and economic situation. In connection with this, the episcopate compiled a list of 23 points of planned topics for the national synod. (The synod theme is also known in 21-point and 25-point versions in contemporary sources.) The list was sent to every part of the country, and based on this, in the summer of 1848, at the invitation of the archclergy, the dioceses held district meetings and diocesan meetings to discuss the issues (Tamási 2014: 22–25; Tamási 2015: 35–88). A more restricted diocesan meeting was held in the Rožňava diocese on May 11, 1848, with the participation of bishop Béla Bartakovics, the members of the chaplaincy, and the deans, where they compiled their own suggestions for topics⁶ to be discussed by the individual district deans during May.⁷ However, once the 23 points had been reviewed, they were sent out again to the clergy of the diocese, who also commented on them during further meetings of the diocesan districts in August.⁸ On the basis of these, a diocese meeting was held on September 5, 1848, the decisions of which were published in extracts in *Religio és Nevelés*.⁹ In Eger, at the invitation of grand provost, Sándor Lévy, who led the diocese due to the vacancy of the archbishop's chair, the diocesan districts drew up their proposals for the synod in May and June, and then during July they commented on the 23-point syllabus, which was later discussed at the diocesan level on August 2, 1848 (Tengely 2017: 76–86; Tamási 2018: 127–138).

Point 10 of the 23-point synod syllabus discussed the question of the Catholic publishing house, together with the issue of another planned organization, the so-called Catholicum Institutum: “The establishment of the Catholicum Institutum, and the promotion and dissemination of an association for the publishing of good cheap books.”¹⁰ As seen above, the clergy already knew the statute, the organization, and the aims of the publishing house from the press, so being well-informed, they could give their opinion on the matter.

There was basically unanimous support from the clergy in the whole country for the need for a publishing house, because everybody thought that “people need good books.”¹¹ Therefore the organization should be supported as it was expected to serve the

6 Megyei közlés. Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41, pp. 358–359.

7 Rožňava Diocese Archives, Episcopal Office, Filed documents (hereinafter: RDA EO) 376/1848, 463/1848, 464/1848, 465/1848, 466/1848, 467/1848, 468/1848, 469/1848, 470/1848, 471/1848, 472/1848, 473/1848.

8 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848.

9 Megyei tanácskozmány. Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, pp. 286–287, and September 21, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 293–295.

10 EAA AN 3129 Sorozata azon tárgyaknak...; Published in print: Lakatos–Sarnyai 2001: 51.; Zakar 2016a: 164–166.

11 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11. Note that page 13 is wrongly stated on the document.

cause of Catholicism as well.¹² It was considered important for three reasons. First, it was thought that the publishing house will be suitable to promote and spread religious zeal by proper publications; secondly, to raise and improve the religious literacy of the believers acquired through school and Sunday afternoon church catechism; and thirdly, to eliminate the harmful effects of the newly-established free press and of entertainment literature, often considered anti-religious and immoral. This latter was thought to be most feasible by “employing” similar means (Lakatos–Sarnyai 2001: 76, 80) as the clergy of the deanery district of Nyíregyháza graphically had put it: “Through these channels, many bad and unreligious ideas and things are infiltrated among the people: the same means must be used by the Church as well to revive religious life, to disprove errant doctrines, and to strengthen the true faith.”¹³ However, as for the details and emphases, there were often

12 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11. Megyei közlés. Péccsett, május 23-kán. In *Religió és Nevelés*, June 1, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43, p. 379; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, am. Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359; Jegyzőkönyve a győri püspök-megyebeli clerus 1848-dik évi augusztus hó 22-, 23- és 24-dik napjain tartott tanácskozmányának. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41–42, pp. 333–334; Az esztergomi főegyházmegye hasonnevű helynökkerületének nemzeti zsinatot előkészítő tanácskozmánya... In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 33, p. 270; Megyei tanácskozmány. Rosnyó. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, p. 287; Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316; A nagyvárad i. sz. egyházmegyei, 1848-dik évi augusztus 30- és 31-kén a püspöki lakban tartott zsinat jegyzőkönyve. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religió*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, p. 132; A kalocsai érsekmegei folyóévi aug. 30-, 31- és sept. 1-sején tartott köztanácskozmány eredményének fővonásai. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 10, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43-44, p. 343. See also Gárdonyi 2016: 59 and Zakar 2003: 38-39. In addition to the Rožňava and Eger sources to be presented in detail, we also examined the following records from the deanery districts: Jureczky, János: Kerületi gyűlés Jabloncza. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 18, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 34, pp. 279–280; Mező-Eörs julius 10-én. In *Religió és Nevelés*, July 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 11, p. 87; Megyei közlés. Az erdödi kerületi tudósítás vége. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 3, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 28, p. 229; Kassai megyéből. Péchujfalván, September utólján. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 22, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 49, p. 380; Kerületi gyűlés. Málcza, september hó 19-dikén. In *Religió és Nevelés* 26. 10. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398.; Kerületi gyűlés. Sziget, sept. hó 14-én. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 399.; A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320.; Nyílt levelezés XIV. Faigel Pál boconádi plébános véleménye. In *Religió és Nevelés*, August 22, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 23, p. 189. Also Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 76, 80; Zakar 2016a: 171, 178, 181; Kelemen 2015: 41–42; Tamási 2013: 81–83.

13 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848; EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the Archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11.; Megyei közlés. Mező-Eörs julius 10-én. In *Religió és Nevelés*, July 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 11, p. 87.

differences of opinion, with each deanery district and diocese considering different aspects to be important and worth highlighting, so we can see a wide range of ideas.

The clergy of the deanery districts of Nyíregyháza and Mohács, for example, considered the promotion of the Christian Calendar, a folk Catholic calendar that had been published a few weeks earlier by the association, as the most urgent and at that moment the most important task of the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, since “it is the only one reading material of the lower class people had so far.”¹⁴ They suggested that it should be distributed as quickly and widely as possible—“we are in the middle of the year!”—preventing people from buying another calendar, since if they had already bought one that year, they would not spend money on another one, but instead they would like this one and buy it year after year. Thus the financial support of the publishing house would be partly solved.¹⁵ In the diocese of Rožňava, the Upper Gemer deanery district opinion, as well as the decisions of the Transylvanian diocese, considered the cheap, native-language edition of the Bible, especially the New Testament with explanatory notes, as the priority task of the publisher, which had been a hectic point of Hungarian Catholic literature for decades.¹⁶ The Novohrad Mountain district of the Rožňava diocese highlighted the publication of multilingual Catholic elementary school textbooks and prayer books.¹⁷ The Nyíregyháza district in the Eger archdiocese also stressed the importance of supporting local priests who write as an important task of the publishing house,¹⁸ while the clergy of the Central Heves district, on the contrary, emphasized the advantages of translating “good and useful works” from abroad rather than original, domestic works, adding that the translators should charge a moderate price for their work so that as many people as possible buy the publications.¹⁹

The question of the publishing house was also linked to the issue of the Catholic press—although this was asked about in the next point of the synod syllabus²⁰—and some of the association’s activities were also intended to include publishing. For exam-

14 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

15 A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, vol. 42, iss. 81, p. 320.; EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848; The clergy of the Vác Diocese strongly advocated the distribution of the Christian Calendar: Lénár 2017: 176.

16 RDA EO 470/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Upper-Gemer deanery district; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, am. Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359.

17 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Novohrad Mountain deanery district.

18 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

19 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Central-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

20 Point 11 of the 23-point synod theme: “Provision of a church newspaper.” EAA AN 3129 Sorozata azon tárgyaknak...; In our study, we do not want to deal with the question of the church press, only if it affects the book publisher.

ple, the decisions of the Spiš diocese stated that the publishing house should “turn its attention” to political newsletters as well.²¹ A meeting of the clergy of the Szécsény deanery district,²² the Novohrad Mountain district of the Rožňava diocese,²³ and the Nyíregyháza deanery district on June 6, 1848, proposed that the publishing house publish a Catholic public newspaper suitable for the general literacy of the people,²⁴ but in fact the doors were already wide open, as the desired newspaper was launched by the association exactly a month later under the title *Katholikus Néplap* (Catholic Public Paper; see Notter 1904: Chapter “A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig”).

It is interesting to note the demands that the lower clergy made on the works to be published. As for the nature of the publications, the Nyíregyháza district was the most accurate in formulating the clergy’s vision, which was that the publishing house should meet the literary needs of all layers of the Catholic society: “It should work in three directions: towards the educated (scientifically); towards those who like novels (as literary fiction); towards the people (popularly).”²⁵ The stylistic requirements also reflected this idea. It was emphasized in many places that both more simple publications for the taste and literacy levels of the less educated and more “sophisticated” works for the more educated classes should be produced (Kelemen 2015: 41–42). In accordance with the name of the association, the need to make publications available at low cost was also emphasized in some places.²⁶

From a linguistic point of view, for the part of the priests of mixed nationality areas the need arose for the books to be published not only in Hungarian but also in the languages of the Catholic nationalities (i.e., Slovakian, Croatian, and German) too. This was requested in the Upper Gemer and Novohrad Mountain districts of the Rožňava diocese as well as²⁷ in several districts of the Győr diocese having a significant number of native German- and Croatian-speaking believers, and in the decisions of the Győr diocese.²⁸ Indeed, at the first meeting of the election board of the association it had been already decided to publish the relevant publications in the Slovak and Romanian

21 Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316.

22 Az esztergomi főmegyének szécsényi alesperesi kerületéből. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 25, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41, p. 360.

23 RDA EO 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Novohrad Mountain deanery district.

24 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

25 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848.

26 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Nyíregyháza district assembly on June 6, 1848, Minutes of the Central-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

27 RDA EO 470/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinions of the Novohrad Mountain and Upper-Gemer deanery districts.

28 Jegyzőkönyve a győri püspök-megyebeli clerus 1848-dik évi augusztus hó 22-, 23- és 24-dik napjain tartott tanácskozmányának. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 5, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 41–42, pp. 333–334.; Kelemen 2015: 41–42.

languages, especially the Christian Calendar (see Notter 1904: Chapter “A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig”). As for the also multinational clergy, the Moson deanery district in the Győr diocese suggested that to counterbalance this, works should also be published in Latin—obviously mainly theological and various religious studies (Kelemen 2015: 41–42).

As mentioned above, the organizational framework of the association was already known to the clergy, as the *Religio és Nevelés* had already published the statutes of the publishing house a few weeks earlier, in May 1848.²⁹ The syllabus of the synod, however, took the opinion of the association and another association, the so-called Catholicum Institutum under one point. Following the termination of the Catholic Church’s status as a state church—as proclaimed by the XX provision of 1848—this was intended to be a national Catholic organization on an English model, with ecclesiastical and lay members, a broad task list, central management, and a budget.³⁰ The fact that the two organizations appeared in one point gives the impression that in the long run the high clergy imagined the functioning of the publishing house under the aegis of the latter. In spite of this, both in the deanery district and in the diocese decisions the two organizations were considered separately and opinions were given independently of each other, from which we can conclude that the clergy did not want to incorporate the publishing house into this institution with uncertain framework and future, and they considered the already existing organizational framework more suitable, though the Lower Heves deanery district in the Eger archdiocese proposed a review at the planned national synod.³¹ Only in a few places, for example in the decisions of the Mezőkövesd deanery district, do we hear that the publishing house was to be incorporated “without any suspicion” into the Catholicum Institutum to be established.³²

The most divergent opinions emerged on the issue of the financial sustainability of the publishing house and, in this context, the question of membership. The two issues were related, as according to the statutes the association financed its operational costs and the publications from the annual 18 pengő forint payment of the so-called founding members and the annual 3 pengő forint payment of participating mem-

29 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and 11. 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312.

30 „D”: Egy magyar kath. institutum mintája s föllállítás módjáról. In *Religio és Nevelés*, April 20, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 32, pp. 253–255.

31 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Lower-Heves (Hun. Alsó-Heves esperesi kerület) district assembly on July 20, 1848.

32 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Mezőkövesd district assembly on July 20, 1848; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, pp. 132; A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320.

bers.³³ It was proudly announced in many places that even in a few weeks many members had already joined the association.³⁴ The Rožňava diocese boasted 76 members,³⁵ mainly from the Plešivec,³⁶ Lučenec,³⁷ and Rimavská Seč³⁸ districts. Many people from the Polgár district of the Eger archdiocese also joined the association,³⁹ and in the Apátfalva deanery district all priests committed themselves to paying the membership fee, thus setting an example for the other districts to follow.⁴⁰

One might conclude that the clergy were enthusiastic about joining the association, but the picture was in fact not so positive. Namely, many people were deterred by the financial sacrifice: “In the following days the county government circulated the signature sheet of the Good and Cheap Catholic books. How many of us signed our names, as it is easy to count, and who were those who did not? Perhaps the wealthiest?”—Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós complained.⁴¹ Indeed, for example in many districts of the Eger archdiocese, the clergy only provided its support in principle to the publishing house and covertly avoided financial support on the grounds of their poverty, or instead of the present they promised to pay in the properly distant and uncertain future.⁴² There were even those who wished to shift the financial maintenance of the publishing house from the lower clergy to the richly remunerated archclergy and canons having a rich income.⁴³

33 A jó és olcsó könyvkiadó társulat programja s alapszabályai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, May 7, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 36, pp. 298–301; and 11. 5. 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 37, pp. 311–312.

34 In addition to the dioceses we examined, similar statements were made in the dioceses of Spiš, Szatmár, Transylvania, Pécs and Kalocsa, as well as in the deanery district of Sopron: Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316; Szathmár-egyházmegyei tanácskozmány jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio*, February 25, 1849, Vol. 1, Iss. 17, p. 132; A Kolosvártt 1848-dik évi Szent-Mihály hava első napján, ami Kovács Miklós erdélyi püspök ur elnöklete alatt kezdődött, és ugyanazon hó 4-dik napján végződött erdélymegyei zsinat jegyzőkönyvének kivonata. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 15, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 46, p. 359; A kalocsai érsekmegyei folyóévi aug. 30-, 31- és sept. 1-sején tartott köztanácskozmány eredményének fővonásai. In *Religio és Nevelés*, October 10, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 43-44, p. 343; also Kelemen 2015: 41–42.

35 Megyei tanácskozmány Rosnyó. In *Religio és Nevelés*, September 19, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 35, p. 287.

36 RDA EO 376/1848, 473/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Plešivec deanery district.

37 RDA EO 472/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Lučenec deanery district.

38 RDA EO 471/1848, 505/1848, 531/1848 Opinion of the Rimavská Seč deanery district.

39 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Polgár district assembly on July 18, 1848.

40 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Apátfalva district assembly on July 18, 1848.

41 The opinion of Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós. Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 80.

42 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Eger district assembly on July 11, 1848, minutes of Jászberény district assembly on 15th July 1848. The clergy made a similar statement too in the Central-Torontál deanery district in the diocese of Csanád, see Zakar 2016a: 178.

43 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Upper-Pata district assembly on July 17, 1848, minutes of Szolnok-Heves district assembly on July 18, 1848.

Therefore, it was obvious to many that providing the financial basis of the publishing house could be considered questionable only from membership fees. Therefore many deanery districts and dioceses made various proposals to increase the income of the association. Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós, for example, proposed that the membership fee should be levied on all priests as an annual tax, pointing out that at times even wealthy priests were reluctant to join.⁴⁴ In the decisions of the Eger archdiocese, it was suggested that the publishing house should be maintained from central church support,⁴⁵ but it is not clear exactly how it was envisaged: whether they had in mind a diocesan fund to be set up from the contributions of the diocesan clergy, similar to the priests' pension funds, or whether they had expected the central subsidiary promised by the state to all established denominations in Article 3 of Act XX of 1848.⁴⁶ The Malčice district in the Košice diocese thought somewhat similarly, too: it was proposed that all church incomes be placed under the administration of a committee of clergy and laity to finance the printing presses that would produce the publishing house's books.⁴⁷

Another suggested solution to increase the income of the publishing house was to involve more lay believers into the association in addition to the clergy. This was in accordance with the ideas of Canon Fogarasy, who was thinking only in terms of a clergy association in the first half of the 1840s, but by 1848 he also wanted to build on lay members (see Notter 1904: Chapter "A Társulat alapításától a szabadságharczig"). For example, in the Spiš diocese it was thought that better-off parishes should be obliged to pay the membership fee from their coffers,⁴⁸ while others found a voluntary way of doing so feasible and recommended that local priests should try to involve laymen in promoting the publishing house by training the most enthusiastic ones who could recruit additional members in their own parishes. The Upper Tisza district suggested that poorer laymen who can only pay a lower membership fee should also be allowed to join the association.⁴⁹

44 The opinion of Lajos Márkus, parish priest of Hajós. Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 80.

45 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the archdiocese of Eger on August 2, 1848, p. 11.

46 Article 3 of Act XX of 1848. In *Laws of 1000 years*. <<https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=84800020.TV&searchUrl=/ezer-ev-torvenyei%3Fpagenum%3D27>>. [September 18, 2023].

47 Kerületi gyűlés. Málcza, september hó 19-dikén. In *Religió és Nevelés*, October 26, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 51, p. 398.

48 Szepesmegyei zsinat. In *Religió és Nevelés*, September 28, 1848, Vol. 8, Iss. 39, p. 316. This was also suggested by Tivadar Zerich, theology teacher in Gyulafehérvár in Transylvania. Tamási 2013: 83.

49 A mohácsi al-esperesi kerületnek... In *Nemzeti*, August 13, 1848, Vol. 42, Iss. 81, p. 320. Kelemen 2015: 41–42; Lakatos-Sarnyai 2001: 76.

In the Transylvanian diocese, however, there were opposing views on the payment of such financial support from the church or the believers: some deanery districts suggested that the publishing house should be transformed into a real joint stock company, probably with the aim of becoming a profit-oriented company that could sustain itself from its incomes and did not need additional financial support (Tamási 2013: 83).

At the Eger archdiocese meeting on August 2, 1848, another specific viewpoint came up in connection with the publishing house, which reflected the strong presence of the diocese particularism in the local clergy. Namely, the Eger decisions stated that the diocese wished to reserve the right to be able to publish books outside the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, if it is justified by local needs, and to warn the people in the diocese of harmful books and press products and give a recommendation for suitable ones.⁵⁰ It is questionable what was the reason of this unique insertion. Presumably, in spite of all the principled advocacy, the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association was seen as a competitor to the diocesan-owned Printing House of the Lyceum of Eger (founded in 1766), which had been the dominant institution of Catholic book publishing in the whole of northeastern Hungary for almost a century (Mizera – Nagy – Verók 2017: 9–54). It may well be that the synod fathers wanted to ensure the continued operation and turnover of the local church press and publishing house in the coming decades, even after the expected expansion of the large national Catholic publishing house association.⁵¹

In connection with the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association and the promotion of Catholic literature, the idea to establish local Catholic libraries came up in the Szendrő district of the Eger archdiocese, where those who could not afford books could also benefit from the blessings of national Catholic publications.⁵² This was a very forward-looking initiative since the widespread establishment of Catholic reading circles and public libraries did not occur until the first half of the 20th century (Tengely 2022: 101–102).

Overall, it can be said that the clergy of the Rožňava and Eger dioceses were in principle unanimous in their support for the establishment and operation of the Good and Cheap Publishing House Association, similarly to other dioceses. However, the situation was not nearly so clear as regards the financial backing of the publishing house and the contribution to it: many people were already strongly reluctant to make any a

50 EAA AN Publico-ecclesiastica 1848/1032. Minutes of the meeting of the archdiocese of Eger on 2nd August 1848, p. 11.

51 There was a time when the situation had a favorable effect on the cooperation between the two organizations: between 1859 and 1865 the St. Stephan Association rented the Liceum Printing House and produced its publications there until its own printing house was established (Notter 1904: Chapter “*Az abszolútizmus évtizedében*”).

52 EAA AN 3129 Minutes of the Szendrő district assembly on July 13, 1848; the same was recommended at the diocesan meeting of Vác on August 24: Lénár 2017: 176.

financial sacrifice for the sake of Catholic book publishing and preferred to propose various “alternative” solutions: for example that the operation of the publishing house should be funded by the church magnates or the believers or that the association should be transformed into a profit-making company. However, beside this, in connection with the publishing house, many well-intentioned and forward-looking proposals were born in the deanery district and diocese meetings, such as the inclusion of secular elements in the association, which had hitherto been primarily a clerical organization, or the idea of setting up local Catholic libraries, which could make it possible for every layer of the society, even for the poorest ones, to gain access to the products of Catholic literature and the publications of the association.

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ADAM SOMORJAI OSB¹

Hungarians in Slovakia in the letters and telegrams of Prince Primate Joseph Mindszenty, directed to the Western Heads of States 1945–1948

Abstract: Between 1945 and 1948, Prince Primate of Hungary and Archbishop of Esztergom Joseph Mindszenty regularly wrote letters to Pope Pius XII, British diplomats, and cardinals in the United States, Britain, and Australia. His letters and telegrams, protesting against the plight of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and their forced Slovakisation and deportation to the Czech Republic, are prominent among these letters. This was given by his duties as the ecclesiastical superior of the Esztergom archdiocese in the territories on the north of the Danube River and by his status as archbishop and Prince Primate. In our paper we attempt to summarize the relevant archivistic material in the years between 1945 and 1948: of the 118 Mindszenty letters found by our research so far, 33 deal with his efforts on behalf of the Hungarian community in Czechoslovakia.

Keywords: Joseph Mindszenty; 1945–1948; letters and telegrams; Hungarians in Czechoslovakia; violation of rights; protest.

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Introduction

As an employee of the Vatican Secretariat of State, and especially as employee of the Historical Archives of the Section for Relations with States, I noticed that Cardinal Mindszenty wrote an extraordinary number of letters to Pope Pius XII and his immediate colleagues, the heads of the Vatican Secretariat of State. So far, I have counted 78 letters and telegrams on subjects of public historical interest. Moreover, while working on the beatification of the archbishop, I noticed that he wrote an extraordinary number of letters and telegrams to American political leaders, and I found original copies of them in the archives of some of them (Somorjai–Zinner 2013).

¹ The Author is a Member of the Ordo Sancti Benedicti.

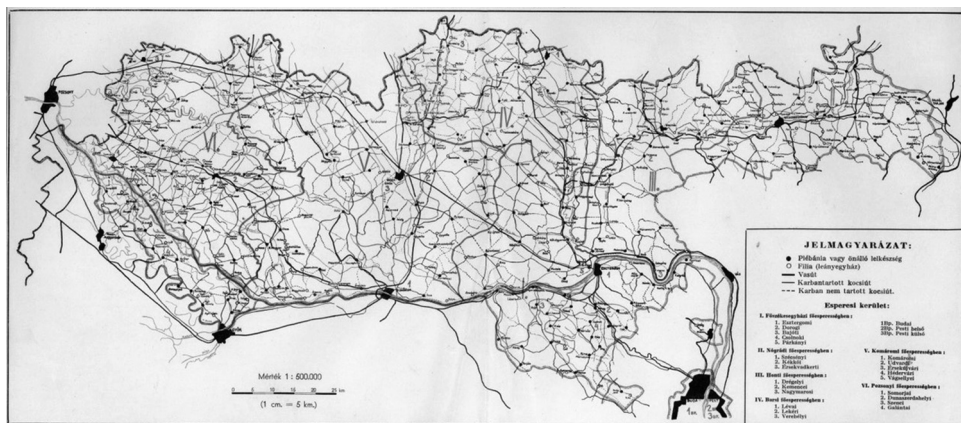
The following is a report of the results of this research, indicating that the scope of the material would exceed the possibilities of a short report, so I will limit myself to the most relevant moments, referring to the already published contributions. This is an attempt to broaden the horizon and to complete the picture created by his copious number of correspondences with Hungarian governmental figures.²

1. Mindszenty and the Hungarians of Slovakia in his letters written to Pope Pius XII

The first question for us is: how exactly did Mindszenty get to Slovakia? He was the Prince Primate of Hungary, in his own interpretation of Great Hungary, for which there is a Slovak word: “Uhorsko” (in Czech “Uhersko”). However, he probably did not know the word. Here there is a reason for tension: the Holy See, the Vatican, understood the jurisdiction of the Prince Primate to be the territory of the respective countries and therefore did not share the position of the Archbishop of Esztergom (Ostrihom in Slovak). We could say that Mindszenty did not come to Slovakia but that southern Slovakia was under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Esztergom. The Archdiocese of Esztergom predated the formation of Slovakia as a state. Esztergom, as is well known, became an archbishopric in 1001 by a papal bull issued at the Synod of Ravenna, which was attended by the Christian authorities of the time, including Pope Sylvester II and Emperor Otto III. The Hungarian king was represented by Archbishop Astrik of Coloca (Hungary).

The greater part of the territory of the Archdiocese of Esztergom was located north of the River Danube (and River Ipel), which in 1922 became an apostolic administration with the see in Trnava (Nagyszombat in Hungarian). Most of these, with Hungarian populations, returned to Esztergom in Hungary, according to the first Vienna Award in 1938. Trnava remained the apostolic administration, so the territories under Esztergom had another vicar general for six years, under Hungarian government, with the see Trnovec nad Váhom (Vágtarnóc in Hungarian).

2 The first revelatory compilation by József Vecsey was published in Hungarian and German, see Vecsey-Schwendemann 1956, 1957, 1959. Fundamental to our theme is the richly documented monumental monograph, which draws on the latest archival research, see Balogh 2015, especially the chapter on the activity of the Prince Primate on behalf of the Hungarians in Slovakia (606 ss.); note that in the English edition of the one volume in 2021, this topic was not discussed.



1. Map. Map of the Esztergom Archdiocese, 1939–October 1945.

The ecclesiastical annexation of southern Slovakia and Mindszenty's struggle for its return

When the Soviet troops marched into the Czechoslovak Republic, these areas became again Czechoslovak territory. No peace treaty had yet been signed, but the Czechoslovak authorities had already taken over the administration and taken action, just as in 1919–1920, and many Hungarians, including priests, who were a threat to the old-new state were expelled from their territory.

At that time there was no Archbishop in Esztergom, because Justinian Serédi, who was born in the ancient Benedictine village of Diakovce (Deáki in Hungarian) and had family ties to our territory in discussion, died on March 29, 1945. In the period of vacancy, Msgr. János Drahos was the chapter administrator,³ but the Czechoslovak authorities did not tolerate his ecclesiastical activity on their own territories. Therefore, at their request, the apostolic see took the administration of these territories away from the see of Esztergom, namely from his vicar general, Rev. Ján Hanzlík of Trnovec nad Váhom, who was a Slovak and spoke Hungarian very well. Hanzlík informed about this in a letter three days after, directed to the new archbishop, Joseph Mindszenty, on October 22, 1945. What happened was that, in the absence of an apostolic nuncio, the Vatican Secretariat of State, on the authority of the chargé d'affaires of the Prague nuncia-

3 János Drahos (1884–1950), born in Brezová pod Bradlom, finished his secondary education in Trnava and Bratislava, first as a chaplain in Banská Štiavnica, and from 1912 he was in office in Esztergom. Between 1937 and 1950, he was Deputy Vicar General of Esztergom and at that time deputy of the chapter. After the arrest of Cardinal Mindszenty, he administered the archdiocese as vicar general from 1948.

ture's, informed Bishop Pavol Jantusch, Apostolic Administrator of Trnava, that he would regain jurisdiction over these territories on October 19, 1945.

Mindszenty, whose official inauguration took place on October 7, 1945. in Esztergom, inherited this issue as one of his first tasks. In a letter dated October 23, he asked His Holiness Pope Pius XII to make no changes, at least until the peace treaty had been signed. He did no more than reverse the Vatican's argument rejecting his request of a few years earlier about Prekmurje (Slovenia) to be reattached to the diocese of Szombathely.⁴ In our case, this had to be done by February 10, 1947, when the Treaty of Paris, which also established the *de jure* borders, came into force. Until then, however, the Czechoslovak authorities were *de facto* in possession.

The official reply was only received after he had personally visited the Vatican Secretariat of State on December 10 and explained his position in detail. At the time, the Secretary to the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Msgr. Domenico Tardini,⁵ blamed his subordinate for not having duly informed the competent ecclesiastical authority of this important change, but in his defence he said that there was no nuncio in Budapest and that communication between Rome and Esztergom was very difficult. Finally, on January 27, 1946, in a written reply Tardini justified the measure on the grounds of "the urgency of the time," while reassuring the Archbishop of Esztergom that "the diocesan boundaries would not change in any way." Therefore, there has been neither a dismemberment nor an aggregation that would reduce or increase the former diocesan boundaries.

Mindszenty then made several more appeals to Pope Pius XII. In a letter of April 11, 1946 (see Somorjai 2019), he argued that the dioceses should not be split up and that the Hungarian faithful in neighboring countries should be cared for in their own language. In a letter of April 24, 1947, he asked that the southern Slovakian part of the Esztergom Archdiocese should not become a separate diocese. Subsequently, in a letter of June 12, 1947, he asked for a share of the income from the estates in Czechoslovakia.

He also wrote other letters concerning his diocese, the most important of which is perhaps the one on August 27, 1947. He resigned his title of archbishop because he

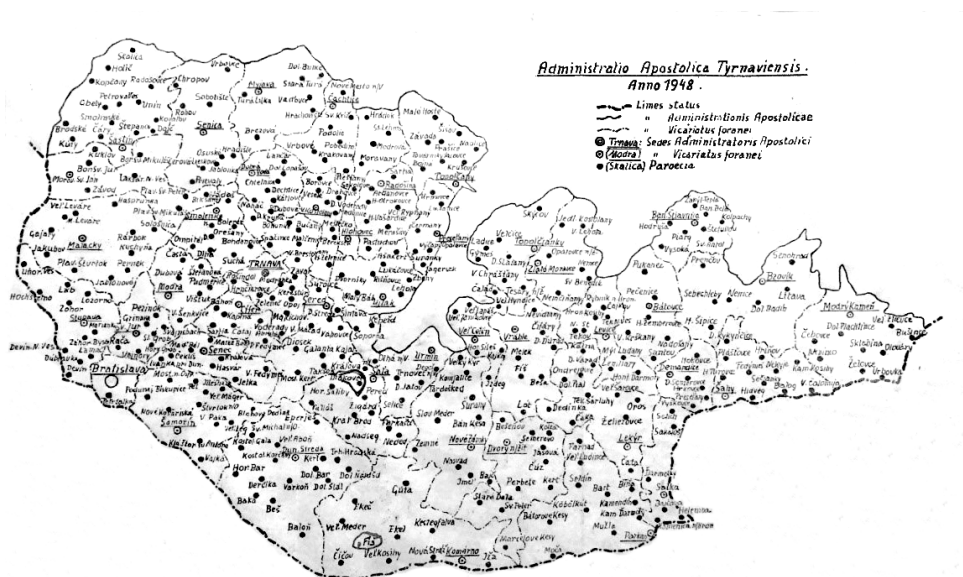
4 See the chapter: "Prelate Pehm and Territorial Revision in the Mura Region" in Balogh 2021: 93.

5 Domenico Tardini (1888–1961) was a longtime aide to Pope Pius XII in the Secretariat in State. He was Msgr. Secretary to the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs 1937–1952, and after 1958 (during the reign of Pope John XXIII) he was Prefect of the Congregation, Secretary of State and Cardinal. (One notes that the expression "Msgr. Secretary" belongs to the Vatican terminology and means an important leader role as staff member.)

had been unable to achieve results. The resignation was conditional, so the official reply of November 5, 1947, encouraged him to continue his efforts.⁶

It goes beyond the time frame indicated in the address, but we note that he sent further correspondences on this subject both from the American Embassy and during his stay in Vienna.

For the historical context of the letters below, it is important to make a note on the relationship of Trnava as archdiocese and Mindszenty. On December 30, 1977, Pope Paul VI erected the Apostolic See of Trnava to the rank of archdiocese by his bull *Qui divino consilio*.⁷ The question is why the Vatican waited so long. The answer is presumably (also) because it was mindful of the sensitivities of the former Archbishop Mindszenty and his six further letters on the subject from the US Embassy in Budapest, and two further letters from Vienna, all requesting that no changes be made. After Mindszenty's death in 1975, his person could no longer be an obstacle to the erection of the seat of Nagyszombat. It should be noted that, following this decision, the other dioceses in Slovakia were subordinated by the Holy See to this metropolis as "suffraganeous."



2. Map. The Apostolic Administration of Trnava in the year 1948.

6 The matter was discussed abundantly in Balogh 2015. 614ss.

7 Acta Apostolicae Sedis 70 (1978), p. 275.

The persecution of the Hungarians in Slovakia in the letters of Cardinal Mindszenty

The Czechoslovak Republic wanted to expel the Hungarians from his territories. On this behalf there were two directions. One was the southern one, called population exchange, and the native Hungarians were settled in the areas south of the Danube. Mindszenty, as the competent Bishop and Prince Primate of Hungary, repeatedly spoke out against this. The Hungarian literature on this subject is abundant, so we will focus on his letters to Pope Pius XII on behalf of the Hungarians deported to the Czech Republic. He had already informed the Vatican Secretariat of State and the leaders of the Allied Powers about the situation of the Hungarians on November 8, 1945, and then in a printed circular letter in Latin on November 15. In a letter of protest to Mindszenty on December 15, Tardini wrote that it was only from this letter of the Cardinal Archbishop that he had learned of the inhuman treatment of the Hungarians in southern Slovakia by the Czechoslovak authorities.

Between 1946 and 1948, he continued to besiege the Pope with letters and dispatches, of which we can only give a taste here: nine in 1946, five in 1947, and one in 1948. On January 9, 1947, he compared the forcible removal of Hungarians from their “ancient land of a thousand years to the so-called Sudetenland” to the deportation of the Jews, and in 1948 he again defended the Hungarian people of Slovakia in his letters. A total of 21 letters on this subject, addressed to Pope Pius XII, have been uncovered so far (See Somorjai 2021).

2. Mindszenty and the Hungarians in Slovakia in the letters directed to British authorities

Mindszenty’s letters to the British government officials have been dealt with in several of our publications. Our attention was drawn to the reports of British diplomacy, in so far as we found Mindszenty’s name there. In our communications we have gone as far as June 1946.⁸ In our summary and evaluation of these communications, we have highlighted the idea that the British had early on expressed the view that Mindszenty’s political manifesta-

8 Somorjai, Adam: “Mindszenty József és a brit diplomácia. 1945. szeptember 13. és 18.” (Joseph Mindszenty and the British diplomacy, in *VERITAS Évkönyv 2015*, 209–226 (with English summary); Somorjai, Adam: “Mindszenty József és a brit diplomácia jelentései, II. rész. Újabb iratok 1945 október-decemberéből” (Joseph Mindszenty and the reports of British diplomacy, Part II. Newer sources October–December 1945), in *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok - Essays in Church History in Hungary*, 26 (2014) No. 1–4, 297–317; Somorjai, Adam: “Mindszenty József és a brit diplomácia jelentései, III. rész. Újabb iratok 1946 január-júniusából.” (Joseph Mindszenty and the reports of British diplomacy, Part III. Newer sources January–June 1946), in *Magyar Egyháztörténeti Vázlatok - Essays in Church History in Hungary*, 30 (2018) No. 1–2, 84–112.

tions would not be successful.⁹ We can conclude that Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom, Prince Primate of Hungary, regularly wrote to British diplomats between 1945 and 1948, and also to American, British, and Australian cardinals who were created by Pope Pius XII together with him in 1946. His letters and telegrams protesting against the plight of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia and their deportation occupied an important place among these letters. He was motivated to do so by his duties as bishop, as the ecclesiastical superior of the Esztergom archdiocesan territories north of the Danube, and by his status as archbishop-metropolitan and Prince Primate. More recently, we have summarized the relevant material from the period 1945–1948.¹⁰ Of the 40 letters we found, 14 deal with his efforts on behalf of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia.

In the following are a list and quotation from his letters written on behalf of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia. In addition, there are several letters from Mindszenty concerning Hungarians in Transcarpathia, Transylvania, and Yugoslavia, as well as several other items describing the political situation in Hungary.

1945

The first letter examined in this context is dated on October 7, 1945, directed to Gascoigne,¹¹ a British representative in Budapest. In this the Prince Primate asked to take steps, that the measures that injured people's rights and were unlawful be urgently remedied, and that suitable reparations be made. The text of the letter is the following:

Copy

No. 3564/1945

Esztergom, October 7, 1945.

Your Excellency,

A considerable part of the Archdiocese of Esztergom is situated on the other side of the Danube—across the borderline of Trianon which is again effective for the duration of the armistice. From there I am hearing now unceasing cry for help.

9 See Somorjai, Adam: "British diplomats about József Mindszenty September 1945–June 1946", in András Fejérdy–Bernadett Wirthné Diera (eds.): *The Trial of Cardinal József Mindszenty from the Perspective of Seventy years. The Fate of Church Leaders in Central and Eastern Europe*. Pontificio Comitato di Scienze Storiche. (Atti e Documenti, 59.) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 2021, 53–65.

10 Somorjai, Adam: *Mindszenty hercegprímás a csehszlovákiai magyarság védelmében, II. rész. A brit külügyminisztérium levéltári anyaga alapján. 1945-1948*. (Prince Primate Mindszenty on the defence of the Hungarians in Cecoslovakia, Part II. Based on the sources preserved in the British Foreign Office, 1945–1948). In press.

11 Alvary Douglas Frederick Trench-Gascoigne (1893–1970) was a British diplomat 1936–1938 in Budapest and in 1945–1946 he served as the British representative of the Allied Control Commission in Hungary.

The more than one million Hungarians who live on the one hand in a great group immediately on the banks of the Danube on the other hand scattered in whole Slovakia—contrary to the solemn declaration of the Great Powers—are not entitled to those citizenship rights which are due the other citizens of the Czechoslovakian State on the land where they have been living for one thousand years and where even the Slovaks never suffered such a persecution. In accordance with this I have had lately the honour to reach Your Excellency some serious particulars.

Now the Czechoslovakian authorities take away from the towns and the little villages the Hungarians often with his families and in the night to unknown places. For example from Érsekújvár [Nové Zámky]¹² in the end of October with the assistance of officers of the National Security (Národná Bezpečnosť) coming from Pozsony [Bratislava] and Nyitra [Nitra], recently from Léva [Levice] carried many hundred men away to concentration or working camps of anywhere in Bohemia [*i.e.*, *Czechia*] in goods wagons locked in a similar manner they carried off the Jews as well. In the present the well situated and smallholders are taken away from their houses in order to lay hands on these and confiscate all personal estates too of the Hungarians in the moment when they must leave their home.

From Mr. Beneš—some people say, that he is democratic—write *The Times* in his issue of October 22. p. 15, that he “and his Government are adamantly determined to rid the state of almost all of its ... 800,000 Hungarians.” The number of the Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia is much more than 800,000 but what they must go away for from the land where they have been living for one thousand years?

Mr. Beneš can only in this way ensure Central Europe’s security? Only this way can he build—what he may call a “temple of peace” (p. 14), but in this temple the dead Hungarians are laying in crypt. One may silence in this manner also Central Europe, but this is a silence of the cemetery.

May I, Your Excellency, repeatedly request that You use all your influence in diplomatic ways that every measure taken against the Hungarians and their persecutions be ceased. It is now evident that this can be satisfactorily settled only by adjusting the border to Hungary in accordance with the desire of the Hungarians living there in a solid group for centuries. The Czechoslovak Government will the result of the plebiscite make smaller, therefore, certainly, persecute and expel now the Hungarians from this territory.

I feel sure, that Your Excellency’s Government already up to the present made much in the cause of truth and particularly in the interests of the Hungarian People, but I beg Your Excellency again, that You take steps, that the measures which injure people’s rights and are unlawful be urgently remedied and that suitable reparations be made.

I have the honour to be respectfully, Your Excellency,

(Signed) Mindzenty [sic!] Jozsef. [*not signed because a copy*]

Prince Primate of Hungary,
Archbishop of Esztergom¹³

12 The letter uses the Hungarian version of the towns; we give their Slovak version in parentheses.

13 TNA FO 371/48489 Southern 1945 Hungary File No 459, Pp. 15802 to End. Received under No. 421 (133/81/45).

1946

On April 23, 1946, the Prince Primate wrote to the King of the United Kingdom, George VI, and to the President of the United States of America, Harry S. Truman, in the interest of the Hungarians in the nearby states. Here we offer the text of the project in original English to the king (which differs in some details from the letter to the president):

Esztergom, Hungary, Easter Sunday, Sire; May it please Your Majesty; By the Grace—and just now especially onerous mission—of Divine Providence being the chief spiritual lord of Hungary, burdened by the office of my Predecessors who, for 946 or 947 years having been the first barons of the land, very often had to speak for the Hungarian nation, now, on the eve of the Peace negotiations, on behalf and in the name of my people that in the present circumstances are forced to silence, I most respectfully beg to approach immediately Your Majesty, asking Your Majesty, graciously to do everything in order that the mistakes of the Peace Treaty of Trianon after the First World War be not repeated; crushing once more our people, and causing perhaps new storms.

On behalf of the some 3,500,000 Hungarians living outside of the borders of “Trianon Hungary,” a mutilated fraction of the Hungary of King Saint Stephen (who had been the host of King Edmund Ironside’s two sons, and the father-in-law of Edward, and the grandfather of your own great Saint Margaret the Queen of Malcolm of Scotland) and also on behalf the millions of Hungarians residing in “Trianon Hungary” for these one thousand years.

In my conviction, this is the request and deeply felt desire of the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian Nation now unable freely to express themselves. Nor can I doubt the fairness and justice of this request.

I have the honour to remain, Sire, with the profoundest respect, Your Majesty’s servant in Christ.¹⁴

On April 29, 1946, the Prince Primate wrote a letter to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Ernest Bevin.¹⁵ He asked him to annul the agreement between Hungary and Czechoslovakia of February 27, 1946, on the mutual population change, since its decisions are contrary to human rights. He complained that the agreement does not guarantee minority rights for Hungarians. He condemned Beneš’s policies. Mindszenty saw the solution to the fate of the Hungarians in border adjustment: the question will only be settled, he wrote, if the territories in south Slovakia, inhabited by Hungarians, were annexed to Hungary. If the Great Powers do not allow this, then the Hungarians in Slovakia will face certain destruction. The same thing will happen to the Hungarians as

14 Project in English see: ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/19. fol. 68. The research in the ÁBTL here and below was done by Margit Balogh, to whom I express my thanks.

15 Ernest Bevin (1881–1951) was a British statesman, trade union leader, and Labour Party politician. He was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1945–1951.

had happened to the Jews by the hands of the Slovaks in 1944. He did not even recognize the population exchange agreement itself as valid: in his view, its provisions were contrary to moral and natural law and also to fundamental human rights.¹⁶

On June 25, 1946, he wrote to the new British representative, Knox Helm.¹⁷ In this letter, he detailed the measures taken by the Slovak authorities five days earlier: they had posted a village-by-village notice that those who had not acquired Czechoslovak citizenship by 1938 had until June 25 to do so. In that case, they would have all rights that go with Czechoslovak citizenship. The next day, on June 21, it was announced that all peasants had to present their land titles at the mayor's office. One by one they were asked if they wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia. After they had answered in the affirmative, as their parents and grandparents had all lived here, they were asked to sign a piece of paper. When they saw that it was related to Czechoslovak citizenship, they left without signing, except for a few who were in a difficult situation. The majority said they would not deny their Hungarian citizenship. In response, the authorities threatened to confiscate their property, deprive them of their rations of flour and sugar, and fine them 50 Czechoslovak crowns. He then wrote of the cancellation of the new mass in Nagyölvéd (*Velké Ludince*), the ban on the use of the Hungarian language in churches, and the internment of Hungarian citizens from the surrounding areas of Szőgyén (*Svodín*; June 22), Muzsla (*Mužla*; June 24), and Kéménd (*Kamenín*; June 24). Finally, he described the atrocities that had taken place at the "Hidegvölgyi" camps (Nagyölvéd [*Velké Ludince*]), the estate of the Archbishop of Esztergom.¹⁸

On July 22, 1946, he again appealed to Helm on behalf of the Bishop's Conference, saying that of the 750,000 Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, 200,000 were being forced to become Slovaks under threat of exile, confiscation of property, and internment, and another 400,000 were to be expelled. The Hungarian bishops were also, he wrote, standing up for the human rights of the inhabitants of the former Hungary.¹⁹

On August 4, 1946, Mindszenty wrote to both the American and the British ministers regarding the situation of the Hungarians in Romania and in Czechoslovakia. He wrote "soon after the armistice, Czechoslovakia declared that it did not want to live with the Hungarians (750,000) living on its territory. Because of the inhumane expulsion

16 This letter we did not find in The National Archives in Kew, London. For the citation in Hungarian see: Janek 2008; cf. Balogh 2015: 608.

17 Sir Alexander Knox Helm (1893–1964) was a British diplomat, a representative in the Allied Control Commission in Hungary in 1946, and Minister to Hungary in 1947–1949.

18 Mindszenty to Helm, June 25, 1946: The National Archives (Kew, London) (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) 371/58998 Southern 1946 Hungary File No 249, pp. 6148–11667, typed copy.

19 Mindszenty to Helm, July 22, 1946: TNA FO 371/58998 Southern 1946 Hungary File No 249, Pp. 6148–11667, typed copy.

that had been started, the Hungarian government made an agreement with the Czechoslovak government in February of that year that as many Hungarians as Slovaks would be resettled from truncated Hungary; in addition, they would take 1,000 so-called war criminals from them, and then—without specifying the number—larger war criminals. The Czechoslovak government did not honour the agreement, did not pay the Hungarian officials, and continued the persecution in churches, schools, and economic life. It forced Hungarians to become Slovak citizens. Now all those who did not take Slovak citizenship are being scared hour after hour that they will be expelled.”²⁰

On September 2, 1946, he again wrote to the same American and the British ministers, protesting against the resettlement of the Hungarians in Slovakia. The project preserved in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security is as follows. “When the list of expellees was drawn up, it was considered a war crime to display a Hungarian flag when Hungarian troops arrived in 1938. It is not the fascists who are expelled, but only the wealthy small farmers. Its elites have lived there for over a thousand years and have committed no crime. The Nuremberg trials in Germany did not find so many war criminals. What the Czechoslovak government is planning to do here in the near future is a violation of human rights. For this, the educated nations cannot take responsibility, because the human rights proclaimed at that time could prove to be empty propaganda tools. Starving and economically depressed for decades, Hungary is unable to feed another 300,000 people. Romania and Yugoslavia are preparing to take similar action against the same number of Hungarians separately. I ask for your kind intervention to stop this inhumane and criminal deportation.”²¹

On September 17, 1946, again, he protested to the both, British and American state secretaries. (Balogh 2015: 611) The Hungarian bishops, he wrote, “will ask Foreign Minister Bevin at their autumn conference to annul the Prague agreement because it is contrary to human rights and the Paris decisions, to prohibit forced population exchanges, and finally to stipulate and guarantee the rights of minorities in churches, schools, offices, etc.”²²

On *October 26, 1946*, he wrote a short letter of recommendation to Secretary of State Bevin regarding the letter of the Hungarian women in Slovakia, written in French, and sent by him in the annex. In this unsigned letter, the Hungarian women in Slovakia described their sufferings. The letters of October 23 and 26 were sent by the Foreign

20 The text translated by us from Hungarian, which is under ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/19. fol. 107–108 (project).

21 The citation was translated by us from Hungarian: ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/19. fol. 139 (project).

22 Mindszenty to Bevin, October 23, 1946. See: TNA FO 371/67192 Southern 1947 Hungary File No. 83 to pp. 1299. Received under R653, with date January 16, 1947. Original, signed. As to as the expression “Paris decisions” he referred to the Paris conference of the Allied Powers on October 2, 1946.

Office to the British Mission in Budapest on January 22, 1947. According to the official note, no further action was intended in the matter.²³

The deportation of Hungarians from Slovakia to the Czech Republic began on November 15, 1946. The Prince Primate was informed of this two days later, and a week later, on November 22, 1946, he appealed to British Prime Minister Attlee.²⁴ Referring also to the UN General Assembly resolutions of November 19, he asked that justice be done as a matter of urgency to the hundreds of thousands of Hungarians who have been miserably deprived of their homes and property, and that those who have already been deported be returned to their homes and property as soon as possible through their government. He gave specific news about the villages of Muzsla (*Mužla*) and Ebed (*Obid*): “120 families have been deported from Muzsla, but the ‘deportation’ is still going on. There are medical examinations everywhere. The healthy ones are being taken. Muzsla is so surrounded by the military that no one can escape. On November 21, some 27 families escaped from Ebed. They crossed the border at Tát [*on the other side of the River Danube, suburb of Esztergom*]. On November 21 there is a horse-passage in Ebed; the horse-passages are taken away. Those who are taken away are also taken away, but in a different direction. It was thrown out that the corn-crib must be cleared so that they have no hiding place. We are desperate.”²⁵

The text is as follows:

Excellency,

The territory of Csallóköz [*Žitný ostrov*] and the whole northern coast-line of the Danube inhabited purely by Hungarians and at present by the verdict of the Armistice-agreement adjudged to Czechoslovakia became again the place of the most cruel and inhuman persecution.

The Czechs who couldn't obtain the consent of the United Nations at the conference of Paris to the transfer of one part of the Hungarian population counting more than 600,000 persons, now try to tear off the Hungarian inhabitants from their native land, where they lived since thousand years.

23 Mindszenty to Bevin, October 26, 1946. Signed copy: TNA FO 371/67192 Southern 1947 Hungary File No. 83 to p. 1299.

24 Clement Richard Attlee (1883–1956) was a British statesman, 1935–1955 Leader of the Labour Party, and 1945–1951 Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

25 Mindszenty to Attlee, November 22, 1946. Published by Margit Balogh. Project in ÁBTL V-700/19 fol. 168–171. TNA FO 371/58999 Southern 1946 Hungary File No. 249 pp. 12103 to end. The text was forwarded the same day to the Foreign Office under No. 436, No 194/34/46 and received November 25, 1946 under R17234.

Since the 16th November desperate refugees come to me from the northern side of the Danube and report that a most cruel deportation of the Hungarian is started towards the northern empty places of Czechoslovakia.

They conscript the poor people to work—men, women, youth separately. In the necks of the children boards are hung with dates of their birth. So are family-ties cut cruelly.

The transports are directed towards Kolin, Pilsen, Prague, Binin. Who refuses to go is put in chains and thrown into the cars. Someone saw how a young mother still lying in bed for three days was thrown into the transportation-car.

They permit to take with only 5 kg meal and just knife and fork. On the last day it was allowed already to carry pieces of furniture but the miserable can't be delighted by this, because they are afraid that even this would be taken of them.

To allege some facts more, the military and the gendarmery arrived on Saturday the 16th November. Only to the village Muzsla 120 gendarmes and soldiers twice more with civil-clothed partisans, who are the worst of all, are arrived. Most of them are Slovakian soldiers but it is told, that there are Czechs among them too. Till now 120 families were expelled from Muzsla, but the conscription goes further on. Medical examination is held everywhere and only the healthy persons are transferred. Muzsla is surrounded so much by military that nobody could escape from there.

On the 21st November about 27 families fled from Ebed and they crossed the frontier by Tát. On this very day in Ebed the horses were conscripted too, the licenses were taken away. The cattle of the inhabitants is equally transferred but in another direction as the men are. It was decreed that even the corn-stalks must to be gathered that no hide-spot will remain to anyone. Everybody is utterly desperated.

The steps of my late predecessor taken by the Hungarian Government till March, 1944 have assured to the Jews in Hungary the best treatment what they could have anywhere in Europe. After the decisive German occupation of our country my predecessor has obtained that the deportation of the Jews in Budapest has begun only about the month of October, when most of them could attain the protection of the liberating armies. Now the Hungarians of Czechoslovakia are in the same or even worse condition. I request, Your Excellency, to carry out the necessary measures to put and end to such misdeeds for those extirpation this war was waged. The Hungarians of Czechoslovakia shall have a share of the fundamental human rights and come back to Hungary, because the experiences of the last two years have sufficiently shown that the use of human rights cannot be hoped in Czechoslovakia.

In the General Assembly of the United Nations, in the meeting held on the 19th November the representatives esteemed necessary to take immediate measures to stop at once the persecution of minorities in certain countries. I am sorry to see, that in the meantime there measures are absolutely needed in Czechoslovakia boasting with his democracy.

I demand, Your Excellency, that by the action of your Government assure justice to hundred thousands of Hungarians reduces to such a deplorable condition, guarantee to the deported people the return to their home and restitution of their property.

I remain, Excellency, with the expression of my high esteem.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Joseph Card. Mindszenty,
Prince Primate of Hungary,
Archbishop of Esztergom.

Budapest, the November 22nd, 1946.

On the next day, November 23, he protested by telegram to the Cardinals who had been created at the same time as he had been: Spellman and Griffin.²⁶

The text is as follows:

Alinea according to decision of Paris Peace Conference question of Hungarian in Slovakia should be settled by agreement between Hungarian and Czechoslovak Government or in absence of agreement being reached with assistance council Foreign Ministers STOP Hungarian Government has already expressed willingness open negotiations but these have not started yet STOP without awaiting negotiations Czechoslovak authorities have unilaterally begun solution of question of Hungarians in Slovakia and are using brutal methods with object produce accomplished facts STOP first objective of Czechoslovak move seems removal of Hungarians from Hungarian inhabited areas along south Slovak frontier STOP November seventeenth systematic deportation population Hungarian vil-lages began with methods similar Nazi deportations STOP Hungarians forcibly transported to districts evacuate by Germans in Czechoslovakia STOP villages concerned surrounded by armed guards forbidding Hungarians leave their homes even for attending mass Sunday STOP Alinea deportations carried out under pretext compulsory labour decree but in practice legal provisions disregarded STOP while decree only provides for tempory compulsory labour service of men from sixteen to fifty five and women eighteen to fourthy and exempts mothers young children expectant mothers STOP in violation of decree Czechoslovak authorities deport women with babies or in their seventh or eight month which even results in miscarriage and women being transported separated from their husbands STOP men women and children from tender years and men aged eighty being taken and families being turned from thousand years homes and aged unsupported people incapable of work also deported STOP properties of deported families given to new Slovak settlers and goods and chattles confiscated without compensation STOP Slovak authorities make deportees sign forms in Slovak language which they do not understand STOP population resisting bitterly resulting casualties including wounded and dead STOP

26 Francis Joseph Spellman (1889–1967) was Archbishop of New York in 1939 and made a cardinal in 1946. Bernard William Griffin (1899–1956) was Archbishop of Westminster in 1943 and made cardinal in 1946. The text of the telegram was sent December 11, 1946, of the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, Msgr. Amleto Giovanni Cicognani to the Secreterat of State of His Holiness in the Vatican, see: ASRS (Archivio Segreteria [di Stato] Rapporti con gli Stati), AA.EE.SS. Cecoslovacchia, pos. 200, fol. 1052 (Report of Cicognani), fol. 1033. (the text of the telegram, cited above).

intervention my predecessor and all Hungarian bishops stopped deportation of Jews by Nazis thus saving some thousand Hungarian Jews STOP now Hungarian Catholics are being deported from their thousand year homes in brutal fashion eighteen months after War horrors ended and forced to leave soil of their ancestors STOP feel it my duty appeal for support World public opinion in order to discontinue deportations STOP beg Your Excellency to use your authority with State Department and United Nations for prevention measures contrary all human rights and international law and with a view for arranging for return to their homes of deported Hungarians and restoration of their confiscated properties STOP documentary evidence for cabled facts available

CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

The same text was sent by him by means of the Minister in Rome to the Vatican.²⁷ The copy sent to Cardinal Griffin is preserved in the files of the Foreign Office, London, which was sent by the Office of Griffin November 25, 1946, to Mr. Christopher Paget Mayhew,²⁸ Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office.²⁹ *The Catholic Herald*, in its November 29, 1949, issue published several citations.³⁰

1947

In the course of the year, the Prince Primate spoke five times with British politicians in defence of the Hungarian people in Czechoslovakia.

The first in chronological order is his telegram dated February 5, 1947, addressed to King George VI,³¹ US President Harry S. Truman,³² and Msgr. Montini,³³ head of the General Affairs Section of the Vatican Secretariat of State. He addressed the barbaric

27 For the text translated in Italian see: ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Cecosl. Pos. 200, ff. 771rv. (N. Prot. 9076/46).

28 Major Christopher Paget Mayhew (1915–1997) was a British politician and Labour Member of the Parliament. In 1974 he left to join the Liberals. In 1945 he became an Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. In 1981 he was named a life peer with the title Baron Mayhew.

29 See: TNA FO 371/58999 Southern 1946 Hungary File No 249 pp. 12103 to end.

30 *The Catholic Herald*, November 29, 1946. See: ASRS, AA.EE.SS. Cecosl. Pos. 200, fol. 768 (AES ikt. sz. 9182/46).

31 Albert Frederick Arthur George of Windsor, George VI (1895–1952) was King of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth from 1935 until his death. He was the last Emperor of India and the first head of the Commonwealth. For the copy sent to him see: TNA FO 371/67193 Southern 1947 Hungary File No. 83 pp. 1463–2411, January 31, 1947, received February 6. (registration number: R1636/83/21).

32 Harry S. Truman (1884–1972) was the 33rd President of the US (1945–1953).

33 Giovanni Battista Montini (1897–1978) served in the Holy See's Secretariat of State from 1922 to 1954 and in 1954 as Archbishop of Milan. In 1958 he was made cardinal, and 1963 he became Pope Pole VI.

deportations taking place in Czechoslovakia, because thousands of Hungarians were being resettled in the Sudetenland. He asked for help.

Mindszenty-His Britannic Majesty, London

With deepest respect and hopeful supplication I beg to submit to Your Majesty the case of the horrible persecution of 652 thousand Hungarians since two years under Czechoslovak rule. Summarily without trial Hungarians are deprived of their human rights all their property religious and cultural freedom and the use of their mother tongue. These rights were declared as inviolable and sacred by charter of United Nations and Great Powers and guaranteed by their authority. Since November 16 under pretext of compulsory labour children aged persons invalids bedridden persons women in pregnancy or after childbirth business men smallholders owning land property of 20-100 acres University graduated ordained priests are deported from thousand years home in cattle-boxes to work as farm labourers. Among the sick and children many die during the transport owing to intense cold. In name of humanity I beseech your Majesty that similar to the support given to the Churches intervention in case of deportation Jews to years ago deign to raise his voice of protest against these deportations infringing the laws of God as well as humanitarian principles in order to put end to horrible suffering of hundred thousands.

Mindszenty Cardinal Primate of Hungary.³⁴

On February 15, 1947, he wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Bevin:³⁵

DISPATCH

The Right Honourable
Ernest Bevin
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
LONDON

As the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, who am observing this debasement and extermination of human beings from the nearest proximity with the deepest affliction and who did everything possible on the most concrete serious bases in order to stop and repair these inhuman actions, I cannot omit to make certain observations regarding this declaration, commending them to the close attention of the high personage, issuer of the declaration.

34 See TNA FO 371/67193 Southern 1947 Hungary File No. 83 pp. 1463-2411, January 31, 1947. Received February 6. (registration: R1636/83/21). The British Mission in Budapest, signed by Helm, informed about receipt. We did not search the itinerary of the telegram to determine whether it was received by the Office of the King.

35 See TNA FO 371/67194 Southern 1947 Hungary File No 83 pp. 2468 to end. Reg. No. R2690/83/21.

The deportations of masses cannot be declared permitted! Anyone, who declares them permitted, has to reckon with the constant agitation of the states and with the incalculable persecution of the inhabitants. What is thus to become of the free and frightless life?

The Czechoslovakian State first deprived the persecuted and deported Hungarians of their citizenship, of all human rights and thrust those who were during ten centuries free-men and farmers into a state of slavery. These are in the true sense of the word offered for sale.

If these unparalleled proceedings of the Czechoslovakian State against the Hungarians, if the deportations beyond the frontiers of the Czechoslovakian republic and into an Oriental State, if the murders, the suicides of those driven to despair, the cases of madness, of freezings on account of the tremendous cold can be contained in the paragraphs of the Peace Treaties, these latter cannot claim the character of ethical norms. Besides, where is the force and value of Chartas then destined to assure human rights and dignity?

These persecutions and spoliations of right are going on since the spring of 1945, the deportations since November 16, 1946. The Czechoslovakian State was not troubled by the peace-negotiations, it did not await their decisions, but desecrated the period, probably even the day of the signing of the Peace with similar inhuman actions. I need not mention, that in the convention previously concluded with the Hungarian Government regarding the exchange of population it bound itself to refrain from such compulsory measures.

If on the bases and in the interest of the peace and the already signed documents thereof this atrocious injustice will not be stopped and remedied, it cannot be hoped that God's blessing be on this work of peace.

If I am therefore invoking and imploring justice for the Hungarians in Slovakia also in this form, I am serving this work of peace as well, a work of peace so hard and trying for Hungary. This work of peace has to be furthered in the first place by those mighty nations and their leaders, who own the possibility and the power thereto. In the interest of this great aim did I write my imploring lines.

May I beg Your Excellency to accept the expression of my special esteem.

Esztergom, February 1947.

Joseph Mindszenty, m.p. [not signed]
Cardinal, Prince Primate,
Archbishop of Esztergom.³⁶

On October 20, 1947, he wrote two letters to some British politicians. It was probably intended that one of them should be forwarded to the British Foreign Minister himself. The texts of the two letters differ.³⁷

36 TNA FO 371/67194 Southern 1947 Hungary File No 83 pp. 2468 to end. Reg. nr. R2690/83/21 Távirat száma: Budapest, No. 47. (65/9/47) Project in: ÁBTL 3.1.9. V-700/19. fol. 127-128. 268 (project in Hungarian).

37 Typed copy, Primatial Archives, Pro. No. 7079/1947, see: TNA FO 371/67194 SOUTHERN 1947 Hungary File No. 83 pp. 2468 to end. Reg. No. R16649/83/21 (received November 4, 1947).

On October 28, 1947, he wrote a letter to Helm on behalf of the three villages in the nearby of Bratislava, the Slovak Capital, annexed to Czechoslovakia.³⁸ The text is as follows:

Your Excellency,

The Peace Treaty of Paris obliged Hungary to cede to Czechoslovakia, besides the immense territories amounting to the 1/6 part of the former territory of the country, three other communities from the body of mutilated Hungary (Oroszvár, Horvátjárfalu, Dunacsún [*Rusovce, Jarovce, and Čunovo*]) which never belonged to Czechoslovakia, being situated on this side of the Danube. All legal basis in respect of either language, history, economics or geography, was entirely lacking. Yet it is not this, but the new development of the fate of these three communities we want to speak of. The human and civil rights of these above named communities were guaranteed by Czechoslovakia. The Peace Treaty only mentions persons departing voluntarily.

On the 15th of the current month Czechoslovakia took possession of the three communities. On the same day delegates of the Czechoslovak school-inspector's office in Bratislava gave orders on the spot to the four teachers (two nuns and two lay teachers) of the catholic schools at Oroszvár, to continue the teaching as before. On the next day, October 16th, however, the chief school-inspector himself personally informed them by word of mouth that the teaching in Hungarian language will cease and the teachers will be dismissed. The commissary of the community then informed the Hungarian teachers that in case they are willing to teach in Slovak schools and in Slovak language, they should go to Bratislava to the school-inspector's office. The two nuns—relying on the Peace Treaty—refused to follow this offer. The two lay catholic teachers, however, under the pressure of the danger of losing the means of livelihood for their family—went to Bratislava and signed a declaration at the school-inspector office, according to which they undertake to learn Slovak within six months and go to teach in Slovak schools.

On October 23–24th the registrations of the schoolchildren took place at Oroszvár and the new Slovak teachers announced the beginning of the teaching—presumably Slovak teaching—for October 27th.

The inhabitants of Oroszvár are Hungarians.

In the "integrity of human and civil rights" the right of the mother-tongue, of the national culture, of the former livelihood of those living there (i.e. of the teachers) is included; the right of every citizen to the use of his mother-tongue, to education, to abode in freedom on his former dwelling place, to the inviolability of property, etc.

So the Czechoslovak authorities stood for one single day on the basis of the Peace Treaty, on the very next day, however, they committed a flagrant and brutal offense against it.

Czechoslovakia came into possession of these three communities on the intervention of the Great Powers. As we cannot know whether the Hungarian Government will

38 See: TNA FO 371/67188 Hungary 1947. R 15338/11/21 No. 11/59/47. Received November 10, 1947; typed copy.

occupy themselves with this severe offense I confide the matter to the hands of Your Excellency in the name of the protection of the human and civil rights, by virtues of my office of constitutional dignitary who is competent in like matters since 950 years.

I request the urgent reestablishment of the Hungarian schools and the Hungarian teachers, the legal defense of the inhabitants of these communities.

May I ask for kind informations regarding the steps to be taken.

Asking Your Excellency to accept the expression of my sincere esteem, I am
Esztergom, October 28th, 1947.

Sgd: Joseph Cardinal Mindzenty,
Cardinal Prince Primate,
Archbishop of Esztergom.

At the end of November 1947, he wrote to Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney:³⁹

MEMORANDUM (typewritten, without name, without date)

By the terms of the Armistice of 1945 Upper Hungary [*i.e.*, *Slovakia today*] with a population of 652,000 Hungarians was assigned to Czechoslovakia. Ninety per cent of this territory is purely Hungarian belonging to dismembered Hungary.

In a way reminiscent of the Hitler regime, these Hungarians were deprived of all human and civic rights. They lost their property and estates, were thrown out of their trades and professions and left without the means of obtaining their daily bread—and all this without any legal process whatever. Attention is drawn to the following statistics:

1. 100,000 Hungarians were inhumanly deported to the Sudeten region and forced to become servants.

2. Another 350,000 were inhumanly forced by the police, under terroristic pressure, by forcible deportation and expulsion, by continual threats, to renounce their country and their mother tongue and to declare themselves of Slav nationality.

3. 3,000 families were sent into over-populated parts of mutilated Hungary, where misery reigns. The extermination of non-Slav elements is going on under an odious system nothing different from slave-hunting.

After the expulsion of 100 members of the Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist clergy of Hungary, the expulsion of another 123 has begun. Through these measures 500,000 Hungarians remaining in Slovakia—a country in which there is a great scarcity of clergy—are deprived of all spiritual care, for they are ignorant of the Slav language. They did not become Slav-speaking automatically when they were registered as Slavs. The priests who

39 Commonwealth of Australia, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, Memorandum sent by Secretary R. Hay, to "The External Affairs Officer," in the Foreign Office, London. Typed copy dated on December 3, 1947: FO 371/67194. Department of External Affairs, Canberra No. 939 (R43/83/21), E 47/17/3/1.

were forced out were Slovak speaking. Jews were persecuted in the same way, merely because they were Jews.

This persecution of Hungarians is absolutely opposed to the decision of the Conference of Paris, to the human rights Proclaimed by the Allied Powers, to the elementary idea of freedom. They are deprived of rights, of property, of bread, and of the consolations of religion as well. The savage in central Africa is better treated than they are in the centre of Europe.

The pretext of the persecution is the reception given to Hungarian groups who marched into ancient Hungarian territory with the consent—remember—of the Slovaks. There is surely no proportion between the “crime” and the punishment.

This scandalous treatment of an ancient people is the cause of many deaths, suicides and nervous maladies approaching madness.

The Hungarian Bench of Bishops demands the immediate cessation of this persecution and the immediate establishment of an International Committee in order to prevent the continuation of such atrocities, which the Czechoslovak Government hypocritically denies.”

[not signed]

1948

In this year he again wrote to Helm and the American minister Chapin⁴⁰ on behalf of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, with the date August 10, 1948.⁴¹

Your Excellency,

I have been informed that Czechoslovakia has again extended for a further period of six months the “labour service” in Sudetenland of the Hungarians carried off by force to that province from the Hungarian territories allotted to it at the end of 1946 and early in 1947.

The outrage on human rights involved both in the original action and its continuation is far too grave to allow me to pass over the matter in silence.

This abduction was made for two reasons:

1. The dispersal by force of the 650,000 Hungarians living in a compact block. Such a solution of the nationality question is at variance with the war-aims proclaimed by the Western Powers and with the Charters (Human rights, peace without fear and want, etc.)

40 Selden Chapin (1899–1963) was an American diplomat, and in 1947–1949 he was Minister in Budapest.

41 Letter of Joseph Mindszenty to the British Minister Knox Helm, dated Esztergom, August 10, 1948. EPL Prot. No. 3559/1948. Typed copy, project in: ÁBTL V-700/19. fols 358-360; received in London, see: FO 371/72387 (91/12/48), (91/13/48); To the American Minister Selden Chapin. Original, signed. The project in Hungarian in: EPL Processus, 6. doboz, V-700/19. 358–360. fol. Some citation at Balogh 2015: 535.

and runs counter equally to the fundamental conditions underlying the existence of Czechoslovakia laid down in 1919 by the Western Powers. Under Article 1 of Chapter I. of the Treaty of St. Germain Czechoslovakia was established as a *nationality* State subject to the preliminary condition that Czechoslovakia should guarantee the nationalities allotted to her their nationality and linguistic rights and should never at any time pass laws or issue decrees prejudicing those rights. The fact that between 1919 and 1939 Czechoslovakia failed to make that country popular with her nationalities does not entitle her to flout human rights, to resort to deportation, to the long-established Hungarian block, etc. All she was entitled to was at most to call to account individually persons guilty of offences against the unity of the State and to punish them according to their deserts; but she was not under any circumstances entitled to institute collective punishment, to deprive everyone of his human rights or to take away everyone's mother tongue and ancestral property without judgment of a court of law,—particularly in view of the fact that the State itself must be held partly responsible for alienating the sympathies of its nationals and that the responsibility must be laid partly also on the judgment of the peace—dictators in forcing into an unnatural union peoples not destined by God or Nature to belong to one and the same State.

2. The Czechs had driven the Germans out of Sudetenland. That province had become uninhabited and its fields left without cultivators. Again, Bohemia itself is so entirely a “one-child” country that its agriculture is badly in want of labour; for it is a general world-phenomenon that among peoples addicted to birth-control the people are found leaving the villages and country districts and moving into the towns. These two crimes of the Czech people running counter to human rights (viz. the driving away of the population on the basis of the Hitlerian principle of collective responsibility and the practice of abortion) offer no justification for the committal of this further crime against human rights—the deportation of Hungarians.

The Hungarians have been autoththonous inhabitants of their present places of residence since the ninth century. They have had churches, schools, cemeteries, houses and lands of their own and respectable means of earning sufficient to enable them to provide for their families. This has all been taken from them by the Czechs, who have carried them off in a temperature of 20 to 30° below zero on journeys to foreign parts taking 5–6 days. On the way invalids and infants were frozen to death. Others became victims of armed brutality.

At the Sudeten stations the Czech landowners and officials set up veritable slave-markets in order to dispose of the deportees. In the places of work the deportees were overworked. Women with child had to tend 30-40 head of horned cattle. There was no Sunday rest, no opportunity of going to church; and the children had no Hungarian schools. In more than one place the diet was meagre, there was no fuel, and the deserted dwellings were infested with swarms of rats and mice, which devoured the food and clothes and even the footwear the deportees had brought with them from their homes. The treatment of the deportees was brutal. For that reason many of the deportees escaped. On arriving home, these persons found that their goods and chattels had already been stolen by partisans.

The deportation of the Hungarians was effected on the basis of the so-called “Public Labour” Decree No. 82 ex 1946. This was merely a “blind” to disguise the two objects referred to above. In the meantime, the statesmen who had at the outset attempted denial, admitted this fact. Fierlinger acknowledged that the Government Decree had a nationality objective. This is what appears on the whole to be revealed also by the fact that in 1946 it was officially announced that the public labour obligation applied to Czechs and Slovaks too and that in consequence Hungarians could not be exempted either. And now the Hungarians have been serving for two years already whereas the Czechs and Slovaks—if they were engaged in any public labour at all between the expulsion of the Germans and the end of 1946—were detained for short periods only, and that in the interests of their countries in which they enjoy special rights.

Seeing that the deportation is a breach of the Charters and of the Treaties of Peace (both I. and II.), and that it seriously affects the prestige of the Powers, I beg respectfully to request Your Excellency to take steps through your Government to provide that Czechoslovakia shall observe the Nationality Provision forming a fundamental condition of the First Treaty of Peace, shall see that human rights are enforced, shall convey the Hungarians back to their places of residence and reinstate them in their possessions and in their human rights.

With the expression of my profound respects,

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

Esztergom, August 10, 1948.

(Sgd.) József Mindszenty,
Cardinal, Prince Primate,
Archbishop of Esztergom.

[To: His Excellency
Alexander Know Helm,
Minister of the British Empire,
Budapest, XIV. Stefánia út 22.]

3. Some remarks on recent interpretations

Recent views suggest that Mindszenty would not have recognized the borders of Slovakia (Ungváry 2023). He, however, fought for diocesan boundaries and understood his own title, “Primate of Hungary,” to refer to the territory of Great Hungary, as a spiritual authority. According to the same author, Mindszenty wanted to restore the Polish-Hungarian border (see Somorjai–Zinner 2013: 149 and our commentary), thus abolishing the statehood of Slovakia. The propagator of these views is not correct: in 1939, when Carpathia was reconquered, the people celebrated this fact as the restoration of the 1000-year-old Polish-Hungarian border. Mindszenty may have been referring to this, but there is no sign that he ever referred to the whole line of the Polish-Hungarian border. A detailed refutation of this opinion goes beyond the scope of the subject of our title.

In any case, the Cardinal Archbishop Mindszenty's argumentation was logical, clear, and unassailable. He asked for respect for international treaties, and he was not thinking in terms of state borders but of diocesan ones. When he sent a draft of diocesan boundaries to the Vatican based on the changed pastoral needs, he proposed changes only for the post-February 10, 1947, (i.e., the then present-day territory of the country), but he did not propose changes for the territories of dioceses in Slovakia and other neighboring countries that extend beyond the current territory at that time (see Balogh 2024). This was only done, as we know, in the case of our country in 1993. His position was that as long as communism lasts *nihil innovetur* (i.e., no innovations should be made in the ecclesiastical field). No new things should happen; diocesan boundaries should not be changed.

4. Final remarks

It is now necessary to include other British archive sources in the research in order to get a clearer picture of how the British authorities related to the letters. Likewise, the archives of the Foreign Office in Prague and the Czechoslovak embassies and embassies also contain archival material relevant to our topic.

Mindszenty also frequently appealed to the American governmental authorities, often sending the same letter, with the same or similar date, to American diplomatic actors. Our impression is that Mindszenty must have had more confidence in the British on the Hungarian issue in Czechoslovakia, being a legitimist and trusting more in the kingdoms than in the republics. In any case, a detailed list of his letters to US diplomats is still to be compiled (see Balogh 2021). At the same time, the Prince Primate wrote a couple of letters to the French authorities as well.

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ÁGNES TÓTH

East German–Hungarian Cultural Relations 1949-1973¹

Abstract: After World War II, European countries' freedom to maneuver and make decisions was largely shaped by the tension between the two major military-political blocs and the obligations arising from the bipolar world order. Although this international status quo, rooted in the intense rivalry between the two sides, remained in place until the early 1990s, by the late 1950s, the arms race stalemate had made it clear to both the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as to the blocs they controlled, that they were mutually dependent and needed to cooperate. The response of Western powers to events like the 1956 uprising in Poznań and the Hungarian Revolution also showed that the United States had abandoned direct support for the East-Central European countries. "Essentially, it was from this point that the so-called softening-up, applied until the late 1980s, began. Its goal was to 'soften' the East European regimes by using Western economic aid, concessions, loans, and cultural, and diplomatic relations to pressure these governments into adopting more liberal domestic policies and pursuing a foreign policy less dependent on the Soviet Union. All this, however, occurred not only based on the de facto but also, from the mid-1970s, the de jure recognition of the European status quo" (Békés 2019: 147).

Keywords: bipolar world order; international status quo; softening-up policy; East-Germany; Hungary.

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The Impact of the European Detente on Cultural Relations among Socialist Countries

In 1965, as European political dynamics shifted, the Soviet Union directed socialist countries to revitalize and reassess their cultural and scientific relationships.² In response, some countries began adjusting their cultural and scientific policies to align

* The present study was prepared with the support of the Klebelsberg Scholarship program.

- 1 Both Hungarian and German historiography have yet to fully explore the relationship between Hungary and the German Democratic Republic. When it comes to the history of cultural and scientific exchanges between the two countries, only a handful of articles covering specific topics and one comprehensive study have been published. See Schmidt-Schweizer 2022; Somogyi 2018; Somogyi 2020; Somogyi 2023.
- 2 National Archives of the Hungarian National Archives (hereinafter: MNL OL) Institute of Cultural Relations. General documents 1958–1980 (hereinafter: XIX-A-33-a)-Elnöki-1971. Annual meeting 1971 (27. d.) Endre Rosta lecture, 15 February 15, 1971.

with new Soviet directives. In the spring of that year, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP PB) developed a new cultural and scientific policy concept, and at its meeting on September 14, 1965, it adopted guidelines for cultural relations with other socialist countries.³ These guidelines emphasized the importance of moving away from simply measuring quantity and instead they focused on deeper, higher-quality exchanges that recognized the cultural differences among nations.

However, renewing cultural and scientific cooperation among socialist countries was not smooth at all. Since the early 1960s, state and party delegations had to find common ground that would allow for the expansion of bilateral relations, despite existing ideological and cultural policy disagreements within the socialist bloc. Additionally, they needed to unite against the perceived threat of “capitalist softening-up.” Ideological unity became more limited, focusing mainly on the basic goals of socialism and the principle of unified action in the international class struggle.⁴

Accordingly, differentiated objectives were set during bilateral negotiations. Rather than trying to persuade each other or enforce the exclusive acceptance of certain viewpoints, the focus shifted to clarify the needs of each party and determining what the other side could (and was willing to) fulfill. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, this approach led to more diverse, varied, and decentralized forms of cooperation in cultural relations between socialist countries. These new forms of cooperation were often outlined in five-year work plans. Notable progress was especially evident in scientific collaborations, as reflected in agreements between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the scientific academies of other socialist countries, as well as the increasing number of inter-institutional partnerships.

The Beginnings: Cautious, Distrustful, Apparent Cooperation (1949–1959)

On October 19, 1949, just days after the German Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as GDR) was founded, Hungary officially recognized its sovereignty, and both countries established diplomatic missions in their capitals.⁵ A few months later, on June 24, 1950, during a visit by a GDR government delegation to Hungary, a declaration of

3 The agenda item was presented by Béla Köpeczi. During the discussion, Antal Apró, Pál Ilku, József Szirmai, and János Kádár contributed, suggesting only minor content and stylistic changes (<https://adatbazisokonline.mnl.gov.hu/adatbazis/mszmp-jegykozonyvek/adatlap/2189>; accessed: July 13, 2023).

4 MNL OL XIX-A-33-a-Elnöki-1971. Annual meeting 1971 (27. d.) Endre Rosta lecture, February 15, 1971 (27. d.)

5 The diplomatic mission was elevated to the rank of an embassy on December 5, 1953. See: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015: 115.

friendly cooperation was signed. Over the following days, economic, cultural, and technical-scientific framework agreements were concluded in this spirit.⁶ The cultural cooperation agreement, which only contained 11 articles, outlined only broad intentions. These included mutual support for exchanging experiences among those working in science, education, and culture, granting recommended scholars to conduct research in each other's public collections; sharing educational plans and methods; promoting the translation and publication of valuable progressive works; exchanging cultural articles; and organizing performances of plays, musical works, films, and visual art exhibitions. The agreement also encouraged cooperation between mass organizations, cultural associations, and writers' unions. Additionally, both countries pledged to promote the exchange of experiences in mass cultural work, particularly in factories and rural areas, and to cooperate in the fight against fascist and imperialist ideologies (Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 145–147).

In the following years, reciprocal visits by party, government, and parliamentary delegations became routine, and although progress was slow, efforts were made to fill the framework agreements with content. However, concrete agreements in the economic, political, and cultural areas were often preceded by lengthy and bureaucratic negotiations. The execution of these agreements was frequently hindered by new conditions imposed by the German side. As a result, even those modest goals set in the annual work plans were often not met. In any given year, only a few events were organized in areas such as the screening of new films, performances by orchestras, art exhibitions, and the exchange of scientific achievements. Noteworthy in the early years of East German–Hungarian cultural relations was the year 1952: in the spring, German Film Weeks were held in several Hungarian cities, and in the fall, German and Hungarian cultural weeks were organized in Budapest and Berlin, respectively. (Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 105).

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution caused a decline in Hungarian–East German relations across all areas. The GDR leadership, to prevent similar sympathetic actions among German youth and intellectuals, labeled the events in Hungary as a “coup by counter-revolutionary elements” as early as October 25, 1956. By early November, the GDR was among the first to congratulate János Kádár and sent significant aid to Hungary through the Hilfskomitee. At the same time, the travel facilitations introduced in 1956 were revoked, and visa requirements were reintroduced by the end of the year (Horváth–Németh 1999: 115–119). The participation of the Hungarian intelligentsia in

6 The cultural agreement was signed by József Révai on the Hungarian side and Anton Ackermann on the German side. The scientific and technical agreement was signed by Zoltán Vas, the financial agreement by Károly Olt, and the trade agreement by András Szobek. MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 54. cs. 105. ó. e., and XIX-J-1-j-NDK 4. b tétel sz. n./1959.

the revolution made the GDR's official bodies particularly distrustful and cautious, especially in the cultural sphere. Cultural exchange relations were effectively suspended, and travel was restricted.⁷

The normalization of East German–Hungarian relations began in the spring of 1958, signaled by a visit to East Berlin by a Hungarian party and government delegation led by Ferenc Münnich, as well as the appointment of a new Hungarian ambassador, István Rostás.⁸ However, relations remained characterized by a cool distance for years, dictated by the two countries' shared membership in the same political bloc and the obligations that entailed. East German diplomacy did not consider the ideological commitment of Hungarian communist leaders to be solid enough, and it criticized every corrective step taken to ensure the system's functioning, while jealously monitoring and opposing the development of trade relations between Hungary and the Federal Republic of Germany (hereinafter referred to as FRG).

At the same time, the GDR began to pay more attention to the German minority in Hungary. To strengthen its vision of a socialist German nation, the GDR sought to position itself as the primary homeland for German minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, it closely monitored the situation of the German minority in Hungary, though its actions were guided more by political interests than genuine concern for the community. For example, during negotiations regarding family reunification or the release of prisoners held in Tiszalök, the GDR advocated for those affected but did not promote contacts between family members who had been expatriated to the FRG and those who remained in Hungary, nor did it push for easing the rules for visiting relatives.⁹ The GDR viewed such demands as part of West Germany's softening-up strategy and expected both the Hungarian government and German minority leaders to adopt a clear political stance aligned with its interests.

Frigyes Wild, leader of the German Association, maintained regular contact with the GDR embassy in Budapest starting in the latter half of 1956. In a meeting on October 2, 1956, he briefed Rudolf Helmer,¹⁰ the newly appointed GDR ambassador, on

7 For information on relations between the GDR and Hungary from 1950 to 1960, see MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK *Külügyminisztérium TÜK iratok, NDK 1945–1995* (hereinafter: XIX-J-1-j-NDK) 4. b tétele sz. n./1959 and *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes* (hereinafter: PA AA) *Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten* (hereinafter: MfAA) A 9246. From mid-1957, the critical reassessment of the work of György Lukács and Gyula Háty also began.

8 István Rostás (1906–1989) was qualified to be a tailor's assistant. He knew the following languages: German, French, Russian, Romanian. He was the head of the Embassy in Berlin from 1957 to 1962. See: Baráth–Geccsényi 2015: 249–250.

9 For more on this, see Tóth 2020: 85–130.

10 Rudolf Helmer (1904–2007) was a trained technical draftsman. From 1956 to 1959, he served as the ambassador of the German Democratic Republic in Budapest (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Helmer; accessed: July 13, 2023).

the situation of Germans in Hungary. Wild spoke openly about the community's distrust toward the association, the lingering effects of post-war state repression, and the challenges they faced: the public use of the German language was avoided out of fear, family reunifications were delayed for years, and confiscated homes and lands were not returned despite government promises. He emphasized that the Hungarian government was committed to addressing these issues and would soon establish the legal framework to do so. Wild also gave a detailed overview of the association's operations, including its organizational structure, staff, budget, and activities. The German side expressed particular interest in the restitution of houses. Wild requested a significant amount of German-language literature and materials highlighting the GDR's development to support the association's political lectures.¹¹

Wild hoped that by informing the GDR embassy—especially after it became clear that the Hungarian government would not fulfill its promises regarding the integration of Germans—he could make the community's problems part of the bilateral negotiations. However, he was disappointed in this hope. East German diplomacy was partly open to fulfilling specific cultural requests—such as teacher training, exchange visits, and providing instruments to orchestras—but did not go beyond that.¹²

Some criticism was expressed regarding education. During a visit to Hungary in February 1958, a German parliamentary delegation visited the German-language primary school in Gara and the Teachers' Training College in Pécs. According to the principal's notes, members of the German delegation made the following remarks: "In terms of settling the political and economic rights of the German minority, Hungary ranks among the last of the people's democracies. Comrade Dickmann told me about their experiences in Hungary and said that there is still much work to be done at the teachers' training college in Pécs, particularly in developing the language skills of the students."¹³

Coordinating the Framework and Content of Cooperation (1960–1970)

In order to deepen cultural relations, the governments of the GDR and the Hungarian People's Republic signed a new agreement on December 19, 1959, focusing on cultural and scientific cooperation (Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 148–152). Signed by Minister of Culture Alexander Abusch and Minister of Education Valéria Benke, the agreement avoided antifascist and anti-imperialist rhetoric, emphasizing practical goals.

11 PA AA MfAA A 9083. 64–66, and PA AA A 9086.142.

12 MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, *Magyari Béla levele Wild Frigyesnek*, July 11, 1958 (34. d.)

13 MNL OL XXVIII-I-1, *Lovrity Sándor levele Wild Frigyesnek*, February 5, 1958 (34. d.)

Accordingly, the aim was to strengthen institutional ties, facilitate exchanges of ideas at scientific conferences, and to promote the translation, publication, and exchange of scientific and literary works and journals.

The agreement also included provisions for language departments, lecturer exchanges, and student exchanges at universities, vocational schools, and specialized institutions. Cooperation would extend across various fields, including literature, publishing, film, theater, music, the fine arts, folk art, mass culture, and libraries. The agreement also encouraged collaboration between cultural organizations, artistic associations, sports clubs, and radio and television stations. Additionally, it facilitated the activities of press agency representatives and press organizations in each other's countries and supported the exchange of journalists while mutually protecting copyright.

Article 11 of the agreement was especially notable, stating: "(1) The contracting parties will promote and support the widespread popularization of the achievements of the other country in all areas. (2) Both parties will support the establishment and activities of cultural and information offices or centers in the country of the other party" (Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 151). The agreement also called for annual or multi-annual work plans to implement these initiatives. Just a month and a half later, on February 5, 1960, the GDR opened its Cultural and Information Office in Budapest, which quickly became active across a wide range of cultural initiatives.¹⁴

Although the distrust in cultural matters following the 1956 revolution had eased by the early 1960s, relations between Hungary and the GDR remained cautious. This was evident in the "Guidelines for Foreign Policy with the German Democratic Republic," drafted in the spring of 1961. The document noted that agreements had covered all major areas of state relations except for citizenship issues. However, to improve political relations, Hungary believed it was essential to coordinate its policies towards the Federal Republic of Germany closely with the GDR. Hungary also pledged active support to the GDR in securing a peace treaty, addressing the Berlin question and overcoming diplomatic isolation.¹⁵

14 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK *Külügyminisztérium. Általános iratok, NDK 1945–1995* (hereinafter: XIX-J-1-k-NDK) 108-574-6296-2-1968. For the role of East German cultural offices and centers, see Josephine Events: *Die Imagepflege der Kultur- und Informationszentren der DDR im Ausland bis zur internationalen Anerkennung 1972/73* (www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/203946/die-imagepflege-der-kultur-und-informationszentren-der-ddr-im-ausland-bis-zur-internationalen-erkennung-1972-73; accessed: July 13, 2023); Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 110-111.

15 OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-4. b. tétel 003455/1961 and XIX-J-34-b 16. d tétel 3/48/1960.

In the early 1960s, there was a noticeable increase in scientific cooperation and student exchanges programs in Hungarian–East German cultural relations.¹⁶ During this period, the GDR leadership placed significant emphasis on promoting the German language in Hungary, seeing it as a crucial vehicle for cultural and ideological transmission. The main goal, besides promoting the GDR, was to counterbalance the FRG’s language expansion ambitions.¹⁷

The German minority became the primary beneficiaries of the GDR’s efforts in Hungary. After World War II, as part of the collective punishment against Germans, community members were not allowed to study in their native language, and even public use of the German language was banned. The restart of German language education in schools in the late 1950s could only partially counteract these negative effects. As a result, the community had a strong interest in deepening exchange programs and developing language skills in a native German environment.

Cooperation in literature and the fine arts was hampered by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (German: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [SED]), which, during this period, sought to enforce the dominance of socialist ideology in the arts under the guise of combating “modern dogmatism.” The SED encouraged workers to organize the arts. At national cultural forums held in 1957 and 1960, and at the Bitterfeld Conferences in 1959 and 1964, workers’ creative efforts were glorified. The slogan of the first Bitterfeld Conference was “Grab your pen, buddy! The socialist national culture needs you!” (*Greif zur Feder Kumpel, die sozialistische deutsche Nationalliteratur braucht dich!*). The second conference’s motto, “Work, learn, live in a socialist way” (*Sozialistisch arbeiten, sozialistisch lernen, sozialistisch leben*), underscored the SED’s goal of imposing its cultural ideals across all aspects of society.¹⁸

At the meeting in Budapest in late January 1970, held for cultural officers working in socialist countries, a Hungarian Foreign Ministry official summarized the situation: “The Bitterfeld principles, by lowering cultural and artistic activities to a level of amateurism and promoting this as a model for all socialist countries, made it nearly impossible to sustain cultural relations for a time. In order to preserve the excellent organizational frameworks and forms of cooperation that have been established, we should

16 In 1963–1964, there were already 134 Hungarian scholarship holders in the GDR and 111 East Germans in Hungary. Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 110.

17 For more details on this, see Praxenthaler 2002: 2–10, and Schmidt-Schweizer 2022: 110–111.

18 For more details on this, see *Bitterfelder Konferenz vom 24. April 1959* (<https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutsche-einheit/lange-wege-der-deutschen-einheit/501147/bitterfelder-konferenz-vom-24-april-1959/>; accessed: July 13, 2023); Németh 2002: 513–519.

temporarily focus on educational and scientific content, as well as cultural themes that present fewer challenges for our German comrades.”¹⁹

In these discussions, the Hungarian side consistently pushed to increase the previously agreed upon quotas and aimed to expand and deepen direct institutional contacts, which the German side did not oppose. For the 1968–1969 academic year, Hungary was permitted to send 15 university students and 32 vocational school students for full programs, 20 third- and fourth-year university students majoring in German for one-year partial programs, and five doctoral candidates. In return, 27 university students and two doctoral candidates from the GDR could study in Hungary.²⁰ Several higher education institutions established direct connections during these years, allowing students and instructors to participate in multi-week student and professional exchange programs.²¹ The National Széchenyi Library, the Berlin State Library, and the Deutsche Bücherei organized mutual consultations and lectures on library science. Hundreds of vocational students in both countries had the opportunity to spend two weeks in the other country, gaining professional experience and learning about new technologies.²² There was also progress in the arts: in the fall of 1968, the Hungarian State Opera performed in Berlin, and the German State Opera performed in Budapest to great success. The Hungarian State Puppet Theater also performed at the Berlin Festival Days and the Friedrichstadt-Palast ensemble was invited to Budapest. In music, the focus was not only on the mutual performances of ensembles but also on

19 MNL OL XIX-A-33-a-Elnöki-Nagy-Miklós-megb-1970 (42.d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 28, 1970.

20 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK 108-712-1968, and 108-712-1425-2-1968 (28. d.). In the years that followed, the two countries' leading education politicians held more regular and intensive exchanges of views, which were welcomed by both sides. In early February 1972, Sigfried Beier, Deputy Minister of Education, held talks in Budapest and assessed the signed work plan as “reflecting the high quality and prospects of the rapidly developing relations between the two countries in the field of public education.” MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-72 (1161)-1972 (86. d.), *Feljegyzés*, February 21, 1972.

21 Thus, direct relationships were established between the University of Agricultural Sciences in Debrecen and the University of Rostock; the College of Agricultural Sciences in Keszthely, the University of Agricultural Sciences in Gödöllő, and the Faculty of Agriculture at Humboldt University in Berlin; the University of Forestry and Wood Sciences in Sopron and the Faculty of Forestry at the Technical University of Dresden; and the College of Agricultural Sciences in Mosonmagyaróvár and the Faculty of Agriculture at Friedrich Schiller University. MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK 108-712-1968 *Tervezet*, February 7, 1968, and 108-712-1425-2-1968 (28. d.). *Magyar-NDK kulturális munkaterv kiegészítő jegyzőkönyve*, April 16, 1973.

22 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK 108-712-1968 *Tervezet*, February 7, 1968, and 108-712-1425-2-1968 (28. d.). *Magyar-NDK kulturális munkaterv kiegészítő jegyzőkönyve*, April 16, 1973.

the further education of young musicians and ensuring their participation in music competitions held in both countries.²³

The Hungarian delegation was pleasantly surprised that negotiations in Berlin in early 1969 for the next two-year scientific and cultural work plan proceeded in a warmer atmosphere than expected, marked by “mutual understanding and a willingness to compromise.”²⁴ The Germans appreciated the involvement of József Bognár,²⁵ president of the Institute for Cultural Relations (Hungarian: Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete, *hereinafter referred to as KKI*), who also observed that “tensions in cultural circles have eased, and isolation has lessened.”²⁶ The 1969–1970 work plan placed significant focus on celebrating key anniversaries for both countries: the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (Hungarian: Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság), the 20th anniversary of the GDR’s founding, and the 25th anniversary of both countries’ liberation. The plan reflected growing scientific and cultural ties, with special attention given to expanding academic and educational cooperation. The German delegation highlighted the success of talks with the Hungarian educational delegation in East Berlin in December 1968 and encouraged a visit to Berlin by Pál Ilku as soon as possible to further expand cooperation. The most problematic area of cooperation remained the visual arts. After the Germans firmly rejected the proposed exhibition by the Kilencek Art Group,²⁷ the work plan only vaguely mentioned the possibility of a Hungarian fine arts exhibition.²⁸

The Impact of the East German Policy Adjustments (1970–1973)

Negotiations in the following years continued in a constructive and open atmosphere. Discussions on new five-year strategic plans took place in Budapest from January 18

23 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK 108-712-1968 *Tervezet*, February 7, 1968, and 108-712-1425-2-1968 (28. d.). *Magyar-NDK kulturális munkaterv kiegészítő jegyzőkönyve*, April 16, 1973.

24 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-0037911-1969. *Nagy Lajos kultúrattasé jelentése*, January 15, 1969.

25 József Bognár (Szombathely, 1917–Budapest, 1996) earned a teaching diploma in Hungarian-German studies in Budapest in 1940. Between 1946 and 1956, he was a member of the government multiple times. From 1961 to 1969, he was the president of the Institute for Cultural Relations. In 1968, he was one of the developers of the economic reform known as the “new economic mechanism.” From 1973 to 1987, he served as the director of the World Economy Research Institute at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

26 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-0037911-1969 (69. d.) *Nagy Lajos jelentése*, January 15, 1969.

27 archivum.mtva.hu/photobank/item/MTI-FOTO-QXBTN5EYUNwaTk2KzhpR1NyQjVvUT09; accessed: September 20, 2023.

28 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-0037911-1969 (69. d.) *Nagy Lajos jelentése*, January 15, 1969.

to 22, 1971.²⁹ The German side emphasized that they were “deeply interested in and committed to further developing the achievements of the past year.”³⁰ Both parties agreed that the dynamically developing political and economic relations between the two countries, highlighted by mutual visits of their leaders in the previous year, should be matched by developments in the fields of culture and science. They aimed to promote this through increased direct communication between the institutions and organizations involved in cooperation.³¹

No problems of principle arose during the negotiations. However, the German side announced that due to the development of their diplomatic relations, they were required to accommodate many students and Germanists, while their own needs were growing faster than expected. As a result, they could not fully meet the expectations of either the socialist countries or Hungary in terms of providing full or partial training for Germanists. The Hungarian side, referring to their ability to “counteract the FRG’s softening-up activities among this [the German] population,”³² requested a greater role from the GDR in supporting the cultural needs of Germans in Hungary. The GDR delegation asked the Hungarian side to specify their request and proposed a ministerial-level agreement. Since the KKI had already submitted detailed requests related to this issue, the response could be interpreted as a polite rejection. This interpretation was reinforced when, a few months later, the German side did not support the conclusion of a separate agreement, arguing that “this entire issue is a sensitive matter for the GDR” and that they did not want to create the impression of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. The German side was clearly hinting at the fact that Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, with significant numbers of ethnic Germans, had not made similar requests. In fact, these countries had rejected external cultural support for their German communities. Therefore, a separate agreement with Hungary could have negative repercussions and set a precedent.³³

Regarding the long-term cultural and scientific plans for the following five years, the parties agreed that they should emphasize cooperation and improve quality “based on political consensus.”³⁴ During the discussions, Sándor Demeter, vice president of

29 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 25, 1971.

30 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés Gyenes András és Everhartz megbeszéléséről*, January 22, 1971.

31 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 25, 1971.

32 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 25, 1971.

33 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Berlini nagykövetség jelentése*, March 23, 1971.

34 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 25, 1971.

the KKI, strongly requested the assistance of the GDR Foreign Ministry in resolving the issue of opening the Hungarian House of Culture, which had been pending for years. Ambassador Herbert Plaschke³⁵ and Everhartz, head of the foreign ministry's department, acknowledged the legitimacy of the Hungarian request and expressed regret over the significant delays in the construction.³⁶ During these days, German diplomats also held talks with Deputy Foreign Minister András Gyenes. They emphasized that “the GDR party and state leadership highly values the current state of our relations. They particularly emphasized the significant progress made in the past year and stated that [...] this may be more important and useful to them than to us for obvious reasons.”³⁷

In order to make cultural relations more intense and transparent, the Council of Ministers decided in September 1970 to authorize the Ministry of Culture to establish cultural cooperation committees with socialist countries. These committees handled operational tasks primarily. The Hungarian–East German Cultural Cooperation Committee was established in the spring of 1973.³⁸

The change in the East German side's attitude was closely related to the internal process that were unfolding in the GDR in these months. The political, economic, and cultural programs announced by Walter Ulbricht in the previous years had proven unsuccessful, and the need to address this reality could no longer be postponed. It was clear that corrections were necessary. Ulbricht, having lost the support of the Soviet Union, found himself in a vacuum. On May 3, 1971, at the 16th meeting of the SED Central Committee, he was forced to resign, and his successor was Erich Honecker, the former leader of the youth organization (German: Die Freie Deutsche Jugend, hereinafter referred to as FDJ). The Eighth Congress of the SED, held in June 1971, essen-

35 Herbert Plaschke (1929–2010), an economist by training, was a diplomat and served as the ambassador of the German Democratic Republic in Budapest from 1967 to 1973. (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Plaschke; accessed: July 7, 2023).

36 During the talks, Márton Kalász was introduced to the German delegation. He had recently been sent by the KKI to Berlin as a staff member of the Hungarian Cultural Institute, which had been operating for a year without its own building or headquarters. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés*, January 25, 1971.

37 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-71/00662/-1971 (77. d.) *Feljegyzés Gyenes András és Everhartz megbeszéléséről*, January 22, 1971.

38 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK-1452-2-1973 (38. d.) *Feljegyzés a Magyar-NDK Kormányközi Kulturális Együttműködési Bizottság létrehozásáról*, February 3, 1973 and MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK-1452-2-1973 (38. d.), *Kádár József levele*, February 8, 1973.

tially endorsed the principles formulated as “steps towards a new orientation”³⁹ in the debates of the previous months.

A significant shift occurred in the cultural sphere with the revision of the Bitterfeld principles. While amateur movements continued to play an important role in literature, visual arts, and theater, ensuring broad social participation in controlled cultural activities, the rigid expectations placed on professional artists were eased. No longer were they required to focus solely on meeting daily political needs or depicting socialism exclusively through the lens of productive work. “Socialism must be depicted in its beauty, but also with its problems and complexities.”⁴⁰ Erich Honecker echoed this statement, declaring that there were no taboos in the arts and that experimentation was encouraged.

Thus, the multidimensional approach to socialist society gained legitimacy, also expressed in the slogan “*Neues Leben—Neues in der Kunst*” (New life—new in art). The more flexible cultural policy and greater creative freedom initiated an intense renewal process within all artistic associations, where internal operations were also re-regulated amid heated debates. Additionally, artists who had been sidelined and had shown passive resistance during the Bitterfeld cultural policy, such as Fritz Cremer, Stephan Heim, Günter Kunert, and Stephan Hermlin, were once again welcomed back into the cultural sphere.

At a meeting of the Visual Artists’ Association, which received extensive press coverage, Fritz Cremer stressed that “the time has come to address real problems and the actual state of visual arts within the Association.”⁴¹ In the Writers’ Association,

39 Ambassador Imre Kovács reported on the preparations for the 8th Party Congress of the SED in several analytical reports. For more details, see MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-50 (001156) – 1971 (76. d.). His superiors, recognizing the embassy’s informational work, judged that there was a “lag in understanding the background and effects there, and in revealing the details of the context. This is largely attributed to deficiencies in the embassy’s network of contacts.” MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-2772-1971 (71. d.).

40 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-NDK-108-50 (001156) – 1971 (76. d.) *Kovács Imre nagykövet jelentése az Államtanácsnak az irodalom kérdéseiről tartott tanácskozásáról*, March 5, 1971. In his work *Berlin – Zárt Övezet* [Berlin—Closed Zone], Márton Kalász shares his memories of his time in Berlin during the 1960s as a scholarship holder and in the early 1970s as a staff member at the House of Hungarian Culture. Through his personal experiences and friendships, the author provides a sensitive and vivid portrayal of the cultural life in the German capital and the political processes that took place.

41 The press covered Cremer’s speech even though the renowned sculptor had declined to participate in the Berlin exhibition organized as a preparatory event for the national fine arts exhibition claiming that the exhibition represented a lower artistic standard than his artistic perception. MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-108-70 (00689) -1972. 76. d.) *Kovács Imre nagykövet jelentése az NDK kulturális életének néhány kérdéséről*, April 21, 1972.

Hermann Kant, the vice president, gained prominence, and his previously banned novel *Das Impressum* quickly sold out in bookstores. Intense debates unfolded at the Congress of the Film and TV Creators' Association, held from April 7 to 9, 1972, where the flaws of the previous cultural policy were openly discussed. While speakers acknowledged that the 75% drop in cinema attendance was partly due to the rise of television, they largely blamed the decline on the dull and uninspired films being produced. Discussions focused on increasing the critical role of films, shaping audience tastes, building greater trust between state authorities and filmmakers, and fostering cooperation among film artists in socialist Europe. During the congress, two previously banned DEFA films, *Der Dritte* (Her Third) and *Sonnensucher* (Sun Seekers), which offered realistic depictions of life, were reinstated. Unfortunately, they could no longer be screened as the original copies had been destroyed.

As part of the “policy of re-evaluation,” the concept of “two German states, two German nations” was emphasized more than ever, while some adjustments occurred. Accordingly, a unified German nation no longer existed due to the different social developments in East and West Germany. In the GDR, the building of socialism and the establishment of “worker-peasant power” created a new, socialist type of nation. Embracing the traditions of classical progressive German culture was central to this identity, with the GDR positioning itself as its sole representative. This led to a policy of distancing from the FRG, accelerating the dismantling of intra-German cultural ties. However, this approach also caused tension within the socialist bloc, as many European socialist countries, including Hungary, were already strengthening the cultural and scientific cooperations with the FRG.

After the 8th Party Congress of the SED, the East German leadership continued to promote the idea of “two German states, two German nations” while also working to normalize relations between the two states. It supported the European *détente* process and aimed to facilitate the ratification of the Soviet–FRG and Polish–FRG treaties. At the same time, it cautiously began cultural cooperation with several developed capitalist countries.

In order to reduce the GDR's international isolation, efforts were made to strengthen its international cultural relations, with increased attention given to ties with socialist countries. Individuals in key positions within international scientific, educational, and cultural organizations were invited for exchange of experiences. Moreover, when negotiating cultural work plans, the GDR adopted a more flexible approach to accommodate the other party's requests.⁴² Hungarian diplomacy viewed this opening process positively, as Ambassador Imre Kovács⁴³ highlighted in his report:

42 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-108-70 (00689) -1972. 76. d.) Kovács Imre nagykövetség jelentése az NDK kulturális életének néhány kérdéséről, April 21. 1972.

Currently, the party “firmly controls the transformation process, but in some cases, middle- and lower-level officials need encouragement from above to consistently implement the SED’s 8th Party Congress guidelines. As a result, the SED is engaged in a two-front struggle: not only fighting against bourgeois ideological infiltration but also pushing back against conservative forces, which has sometimes led to dismissals. In this phase, the GDR is adopting and placing great value on the experiences of other socialist countries, particularly in the cultural field, where there is strong interest in Soviet, Hungarian, and Polish approaches.”⁴⁴

The growing dynamism of East German–Hungarian cultural relations from the mid-1960s onward is evident in the expanding cooperation across various areas of “socialist culture” and the increasing institutionalization of cultural exchange. On June 10, 1966, Hungary and the GDR signed an agreement in Budapest outlining the conditions for the mutual operation of cultural and information centers. This agreement elaborated on Article 11 of the cultural and scientific cooperation agreement signed over half a decade earlier.⁴⁵ As a result, in the spring of 1968, the GDR upgraded its existing cultural and information office, which had been operating for nearly a decade, into its Cultural and Information Center in downtown Budapest at Deák Ferenc Square. The new center featured a library, a cinema, and a shop selling cultural items, all under much-improved conditions.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Hungary began negotiations to establish a similar institute in East Berlin.⁴⁷

Based on the above, it can be concluded that several factors influenced East German–Hungarian cultural relations during this period, though their significance shifted over time. The most important factor was their shared membership in the same political bloc and the need to align with Soviet expectations. Consequently, the topics and approaches in their bilateral relations were shaped less by the countries’ actual

43 Imre Kovács (1914–1986), a trained baker who served as the ambassador of Hungary to Berlin from 1970 to 1974. See: Baráth–Gecsényi 2015: 207.

44 MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-108-70 (00689) -1972. 76. d.) Kovács Imre nagykövet jelentése az NDK kulturális életének néhány kérdéséről, April 21. 1972. For more information on this, see: MNL-A-33-b-009/18-1972 (120. d.) Jelentés, October 9, 1972.

45 MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK-108-574-6296-2-1968 (76. d.), Megállapodás, October 22, 1968.

46 The institute located at 3 Deák Ferenc Square was officially inaugurated on May 8, 1968. The renovation and reconstruction of the building, based on Hungarian and German plans, cost a total of 13 million HUF. – MNL OL XIX-J-1-k-NDK 108-574-6296-2 (76.d.) The parties began negotiations regarding the new location and operation of the GDR Cultural and Information Center in early 1964. For more details, see PA AA MfAA C 525 71.

47 The documents do not reveal why Hungary delayed opening its own center in Berlin for nearly a decade. The GDR opened its information center in Budapest in 1960, the same year the agreement was signed.

needs and more by the demands of the broader Cold War conflict between the two political blocs.

This is reflected in the opening-up process seen in cultural relations among socialist countries from the mid-1960s, driven largely by strategic changes in the ongoing struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Throughout this time, East Germany's leadership, with its more rigid foreign and domestic policies, remained wary of the Hungarian leadership, which occasionally tested the limits of its restricted freedom of action. Additionally, East Germany faced a unique situation due to the existence of the two German states and its quest to be the sole representative of the German nation. This led to even stronger Soviet influence over East Germany compared to other socialist countries.

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The Russian–Ukrainian war in Ukrainian legislation from 2014 to early 2024

Abstract: Russia’s deliberate armed aggression against Ukraine began in February 2014 with the seizure of part of Ukraine’s territory, the Crimean Peninsula, and then the provocation of war in Donbas. On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. The Ukrainian Armed Forces, territorial defense forces, and Ukrainian civilians thwarted the Kremlin’s plans for a “blitzkrieg.” The study presents some aspects of Ukrainian legislation related to Russia’s war against Ukraine since 2014.

Keywords: Cold War; frozen conflicts; hybrid war; temporarily occupied territories; full-scale war; martial law; Russian Federation; Ukraine.

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1. From the Paris Charter to the new Cold War

In the post-World War II bipolar world order, security was provided by two major military blocs: the NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The 40-year Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain, the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Socialist Camp, democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the creation of independent countries. Formally, the Cold War had no winner. The Polish-born US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski has said that the Cold War ended with a “lukewarm peace,” as opposed to the “cold peace” that usually follows a “hot war.” There was no act of surrender like those of Compiègne in 1918¹ or Reims in 1945.² Nevertheless, “the Paris conference of November 1990,

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- 1 The Compiègne Armistice of November 11, 1918, put an end to the fighting between the Entente and its last remaining opponent, Germany.
- 2 The German Third Reich unconditionally surrendered in the west to the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) at Reims on May 7, 1945, and in the east to the Soviet Red Army in Berlin on May 9, 1945.

the scene of East-West reconciliation, was in effect the ratification of the geopolitical and ideological victory of the West” (Brzezinski 1991: 3).

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe (Paris Charter), adopted at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Paris November 19–21, 1990, declared the end of the division of Europe that had existed since the World War II and defined new principles of cooperation. However, it was a political document, not a treaty. According to Richard Sakwa, the collapse of the post-Cold War European security order was both a cause and a consequence of the Ukraine crisis, the failure to realize the aspirations of the Paris Charter for a “Europe whole and free,” the failure of the pan-continental unity project, and Russia’s reaction to its exclusion from the new European order and its turn to neo-revisionism (Sakwa 2005: 557).

The Warsaw Pact, one of the two military blocs of the Cold War, was dissolved, but NATO, which had 16 members at the height of the Cold War, expanded to 30 by 2020. Post-Cold War aspirants to NATO membership saw joining the alliance as crucial to achieving their goals of integration with the West and protection from the Russian Federation, with which many had a troubled history. Proponents of NATO’s enlargement also saw it as essential to promoting and consolidating democracy in post-Cold War Europe. Opponents of enlargement, on the other hand, warned that it could restore a Cold War atmosphere to East–West relations (Menon–Ruger 2020: 371).

The Russian Federation was perpetuating the “frozen conflicts” of the 1990s at the cost of wars (Grant 2017: 376; Cuppuleri 2020: 1–9). The term is rarely used in international documents, but it is widely used by politicians and experts to refer to Transnistria (Trans-Dniester) in Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) in Azerbaijan,³ and South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. The common feature of these separatist territories is that they belong de jure to these countries, but de facto they are not governed by a subordinate local administration but rather are supported by a foreign state. In addition, since the 1990s, the views of Alexander Dugin, the unofficial ideologist of Putin’s Russia, the founder of neo-Eurasianism, have been gaining ground. He argues that patriotism is the need to build a new empire, a Eurasian superpower, in opposition to the Atlanticist world led by the United States, integrating the former Soviet republics into the new alliance under the aegis of Russia. This Eurasian empire must have access to the warm seas in order to face the global challenge of Atlanticism. The obstacle is Ukraine, which will either become an extension of Moscow’s hand or, if it refuses to do so, will challenge Russia’s security and become a factor of war (“The sovereignty of

3 It ceased to exist de facto from September 2023 and de jure from January 1, 2024; the leadership of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic surrendered and accepted reintegration into Azerbaijan.

Ukraine represents such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that it can, in principle, easily provoke a military conflict” [Shekhovtsov 2014]).

In 2007, at the 43rd Munich Security Conference, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin, who was attending for the first time, delivered an unexpectedly bellicose speech. He lashed out at the United States and NATO and announced a new foreign policy strategy, an open confrontation with the United States as opposed to the partnership that had existed until then. This could be interpreted as the beginning of a second Cold War (Dalby 2016). From 2012, Russia officially made the expansion of the reach and influence of the “Russian world” (Russkiy Mir) and the Eurasian Union its main foreign policy objective, referring to the “Eurasian” ideals that bind a large part of the post-Soviet space to the “Russian world” along the lines of Russian language and culture, common history and heritage (starting with the medieval Kyivan Rus), Orthodoxy, conservative values, and the need for economic integration (Zhurzhenko 2014). Andrei Kolesnikov, director of the Carnegie Center in Moscow, on the 10th anniversary of the speech, called it Putin’s Fulton speech: “Such an offensive and aggressive speech was a ‘foul of the last hope’: the Russian president wanted to scare the West with his frankness, believing that perhaps ‘Western partners’ would take his concerns into account and take some steps towards him. [...] The effect was the opposite, but this option B was also calculated [*by Putin*]: if you don’t want it, Russia will turn from a fragment of the West into a super-sovereign island. That day Putin lost Europe and, perhaps, the entire West” (Kolesnikov 2017).

2. The concept of “peacekeeping”

According to the UN Charter (1945): “The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice” (Chapter VI Article 33[1]). If conciliatory proposals made for the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security fail, the Security Council “may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations” (Chapter VII Article 42).

In the Cold War era, peacekeeping was mainly about maintaining demilitarized zones and ceasefires, but since then it has become increasingly about intervening in an ongoing conflict.

At the international level, peacekeeping is the responsibility of the United Nations, but the concept is understood and interpreted differently in different countries. In Russia, according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993), the president

decides on the possibility of deploying the army abroad on the basis of the authority of the upper house of parliament (Article 102[1.d]). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia succeeded it as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Russia's relationship with UN peacekeeping changed when Vladimir Putin came to power, and since then Russia has emphasized that these peacekeeping missions are in the interests of the West. The Russian Federation has reduced its participation in UN peacekeeping operations, sending only special units and sometimes only military experts (Romańczuk 2018: 43–44).

In the 1990s, the UN intervened in Abkhazia, part of Georgia, and the OSCE in South Ossetia. This status quo was changed by the 2008 Russian–Georgian War, which could no longer be interpreted as peacekeeping and was widely condemned by the international community, while Georgia lost the opportunity to have a say in the life of the two regions for an indefinite period. The situation was different in Transnistria, where Russia not only deployed a peacekeeping contingent but also provided a wide range of support, including military assistance, to the local separatists. The conflict in Moldova has become a kind of “testing ground” for the new Russian concept of maintaining its influence in the post-Soviet space. The Russian Federation's tactic is “controlled chaos,” based on unresolved and “frozen” armed conflicts (Romańczuk 2018: 47–49). In Moscow's view, the interventions in Tajikistan (1992) and Kazakhstan (2022) were also “peacekeeping.” What Moscow has called as international operations in conflict zones has been aptly described by Alexander Nikitin as “simulative peacekeeping” (“*military*” operations with various legal underpinnings but not United Nations mandates”; Nikitin 2013: 158–180; cf. Williams 2022).

Following Russia's intervention in Ukraine in 2014 (the occupation of Crimea and covert support for the armed conflict in Donbas), there was a relatively brief debate on the feasibility of sending UN peacekeepers to eastern Ukraine. The issue failed to advance in the Security Council, leaving OSCE monitors⁴ as the only legitimate peacekeepers in Ukraine. A few days before Vladimir Putin announced the recognition of the Luhansk and Donetsk quasi-states on February 21, 2022, Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Stanislav Zas gave an exclusive interview to Reuters in Moscow, in which he said that the CSTO could send peacekeepers to the Donbas if there was an international consensus for such a deployment. “I don't believe that the situation now will return to how it used to be when tanks were housed at their bases and soldiers in their barracks. It won't happen. There needs to be an understanding about the necessity to sit down at the table and agree something. It's a new reality,” he said. Zas rejected the idea that the CSTO was an instrument of Russian influence,

4 OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (<https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine-closed>).

but left no doubt that “we have colossal potential in our hands [...] believe me, we can send as many as needed” (Osborn 2022; cf. Williams 2022).

The CSTO was not deployed, but Russian regular forces nevertheless launched a full-scale war (invasion) of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, from the territories of the two CSTO member states: the Russian Federation and Belarus.

3. The status of the war in internal law

Following the second wave of the Majdan protests in early 2014, which saw Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich flee his country, the Winter Olympics in Sochi in the Russian Federation, and an emergency military exercise near the Ukrainian border, armed men without insignia appeared in Crimea on February 27. Kyiv identified them as Russian troops, while Moscow claimed that they were not soldiers but members of the local “people’s self-defense.” Both the Ukrainian and Russian press immediately dubbed the gunmen “little green men” (or “desert tourists”), who had seized government buildings on the peninsula and blockaded military installations and the navy. The new pro-Russian prime minister (illegitimate under international and Ukrainian law), Sergei Aksyonov, appealed to Vladimir Putin to ensure “peace and tranquility” on the peninsula. On March 1, the Russian president initiated the deployment of the Russian army “in connection with the extraordinary situation in Ukraine and the threat to the lives of Russian citizens,” which was approved the same day by the upper house of parliament, the Federation Council. On March 18, following the controversial referendum of March 16, Putin and representatives of the Russian occupation administration in Crimea signed the so-called Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation (in reality the annexation of Crimea; Gardner 2016: 490–505; Vidmar 2015: 365–383).

Following the annexation of Crimea, protests under the Russian flag began in major cities in the eastern and southern provinces of the Ukraine, with demonstrators occupying administrative buildings, looting police armories, beating people and even causing violent deaths, and calling for another “Crimea.” Unidentified Russian armed groups infiltrated Crimea, led by a former FSB officer, Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov, “Shooter”), who himself made the following statement back in November 2014:

This is my fifth war. There were two wars in Chechnya, Transnistria and Bosnia. [...] When the events in Crimea took place, it was clear that it would not end with Crimea alone. Crimea as part of Novorossiya is a colossal acquisition, a diamond in the crown of the Russian Empire. And Crimea alone, separated [with Russia] by the land bridge of an enemy state, was not the real thing. [In the Donbas] at first, no one wanted to fight. The first two weeks passed under the banner that both

sides wanted to convince each other. During the first days in Slovyansk, both we and they were extremely careful about using weapons. [...] If in April and May everything was on the upswing, i.e. the territory of the uprising was expanding, we were gradually taking control of the settlements of the Donetsk Republic, spreading the movement, then in June we began to retreat. [...] And the enemy began to be motivated to fight. [...] At that moment, I understood perfectly well that Donetsk and Luhansk alone would not be able to fight against the Ukrainians.

(Prochanov 2014)

The mercenary leader of the private military company, Yevgeny Prigozhin, also publicly admitted that the Wagner Group was involved in the fighting in Donbas (Chajkovskaja 2023). Moreover, Sergei Mironov of the Just Russia party admitted that not only medicine and food have been delivered to Donbas since 2014. “Let me be clear: we are supplying [the Donbas] with dual-use products. Today we can talk about it openly.”⁵ The facts go on and on, while the official narrative in Russia was that there was a civil war in Ukraine. In fact, it was a Russian pseudo-civil war against the Ukrainian state.

The separatists set up a camp in the territory under their control where not only prisoners but also members of the local population deemed unreliable were held captive and tortured (Aseyev 2020). Eight years of brainwashing and indoctrination did not, however, result in the local population becoming full supporters of the “Russian world” and of “Novorossiia.” There have also been cases of administrative and police buildings being occupied in the western part of Ukraine, but the difference is that they have not obstructed the functioning of the offices, called on foreign forces such as NATO to intervene, or called on Poland to occupy the part of the country. People were also beaten up during the riots in the western part of the country, but there was only one fatality. The incident in Odesa of May 2, 2014 (Goncharenko 2015) then became Russia’s main point of reference against Ukraine. We were in the aftermath of the Kyiv massacre, where the armed forces fired on the revolutionaries, killing over a hundred people, Crimea was lost, and the state lost control over a parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. This does not explain the brutality of the incident in Odesa, but it is an important element of the fear that fueled it.

Donbas is a contraction of the Slavic name for the Donetsk Basin, named after the river Donetsk, originally a geographical area and industrial region that crosses state borders, with most of the area belonging to Ukraine and the rest to Russia. In Ukrainian, the acronym LDNR is widely used, which is the result of the merging of the initials of the

5 Сергей Миронов, December 5, 2022, (https://twitter.com/mironov_ru/status/1599715504880771072).

quasi-state formations Luhansk People's Republic (Ukrainian and Russian: LNR) and Donetsk People's Republic (Ukrainian and Russian: DNR). The industrial rise of the Donetsk Basin began at a dizzying pace in the second half of the 19th century. By the end of the century, almost half of the Russian Empire's coal production came from here. The rapid industrial development continued into the Soviet period, and it was one of the strongholds of Soviet heavy industry, including the military industry, and eventually it was one of the most important economic regions of independent Ukraine, which was then cut off from the country's bloodstream by the war and largely destroyed by the war.

On the basis of the decision of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC, Ukrainian: RNBO) of April 13, 2014, Ukraine launched an "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (in both Ukrainian and English: ATO) against the separatist regions on the following day, April 14, 2014. The NSDC decision was a secret clause of Presidential Decree 405 of 2014 "On the Decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of April 13, 2014, 'On Urgent Measures to Overcome the Threat of Terrorism and Preserve the Territorial Integrity of Ukraine,'"⁶ the text of which is not public. The ATO was a special legal regime, without the imposition of martial law, under the control of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU, Ukrainian: SBU).

On the third day of the operation, April 15, 2014, the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, voted in favor of the Law of Ukraine 1207-VII of 2014 "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine."⁷ The law was adopted in the second reading, after almost 200 amendments, including the deletion of the concept of "collaboration." The law defines the status of the "temporarily occupied territory" as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation:

The territory of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation are an integral part of the territory of Ukraine, which is subject to the Constitution and laws of Ukraine and international treaties ratified by the Parliament of Ukraine.

Article 1[1] considers February 19, 2014, as the date of the beginning of the temporary occupation (Article 2[1]). It introduces a "special legal regime" in this territory (Article 4), and it specifies the details of the activities of state bodies, local self-governments, enterprises, institutions, and organizations under this legal regime, and the observance and protection of human and civil rights and freedoms, as well as the

6 Decree of President of Ukraine 405 of 2014 On the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine of April 13, 2014, "On Urgent Measures to Overcome the Terrorist Threat and Preserve the Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/405/2014#Text>) (last accessed 2023.11.21.)

7 Law of Ukraine 1207-VII of 2014 "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine," (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1207-18>).

rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of legal persons. The law states that citizens of Ukraine have the right to enter and leave the temporarily occupied territories freely and without hindrance upon presentation of a document proving their Ukrainian citizenship. The entry and exit of foreigners and stateless persons into the temporarily occupied territories is subject to special authorization through the entry and exit points established for such persons. The law also stipulates that Ukraine does not recognize the “compulsory automatic” acquisition by its citizens of the citizenship of another state (Article 5[6]).

On March 16, 2018, President Petro Poroshenko announced on the battlefield in Donbas that the era of the ATO was over.⁸ On April 30, 2018, the President of Ukraine signed the Law of Ukraine 2268-VIII of 2018 “On the Specifics of the State Policy on Ensuring State Sovereignty of Ukraine in the Temporarily Occupied Territories Donetsk and Luhansk Regions,”⁹ which replaced the ATO with the Joint Forces Operation (JFO, Ukrainian: OOS), now under the command of the Joint Operational Headquarters (JOH) of the Armed Forces under the strategic direction of the General Staff (until February 24, 2022).¹⁰ The basis for the ATO was the Ukrainian parliament’s designation of the breakaway republics as terrorist organizations and the designation of these terrorist organizations as the enemy. The new legal status, JFO, classified Russia as the aggressor. Ukraine is not fighting terrorists; it is fighting the Russian aggressor, which is not a matter for the services but a military task. The JOH controls of all the organizations of violence in the Donbas not just the military. The main objective is to “contain” the enemy. The temporarily occupied territories have been excluded from the parliamentary, local, and presidential elections that have taken place since.

Pursuant to Decree of the President of Ukraine 303 of March 17, 2014, “On partial mobilization” for military service has begun.¹¹ The last conscription was due to take place in autumn 2013, but it was reinstated on May 1, 2014, due to the deterioration of the situation in eastern Ukraine.

8 Порошенко оголосив про завершення АТО. *РБК-Україна*, May 16, 2018. (<https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/poroshenko-obyavil-zavershenii-ato-1521212346.html>).

9 Law of Ukraine 2268-VIII of 2018 “On the Specifics of the State Policy on Ensuring State Sovereignty of Ukraine in the Temporarily Occupied Territories Donetsk and Luhansk Regions,” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2268-19#Text>). (last accessed 2023.11.21.)

10 Law of Ukraine 2217-IX of 2022 “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Regulation of the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine,” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2217-20#Text>). (last accessed 2023.11.21.)

11 Decree of the President of Ukraine 303 of 2014 “On partial mobilization,” (<https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3032014-16358>) (last accessed 2023.11.21.)

Until 2022, the events were described in both the literature and the wider public in terms of the “Ukrainian crisis” or “hybrid warfare.” The Budapest Memorandum (1994), which was supposed to ensure Ukraine’s sovereignty and integrity, including through Russia, did not serve to prevent aggression. On the contrary, it served as an example of how international treaties can be ignored. The Cold War as a form of global conflict is being replaced by a hybrid war. There are several definitions of the term, but the essence is that the state waging such a war makes deals with non-state actors (armed groups, local populations, and organizations with which formal contact is completely impossible) who can do things that the state itself cannot. The term was first applied to Ukraine by the Dutch politician and retired general Frank van Kappen in April 2014. Previously used in relation to Chechnya, Iraq, and Lebanon, the term has taken on a broader meaning for Ukraine than before. Russia’s hybrid warfare in Ukraine, which was not openly declared until 2022, was not limited to the battlefield or the theater of operations but also included influencing the highest levels of political decision-making (Rácz 2015: 41–43).

The extension of the conflict in early 2022 is usually described as a “full-scale war” (invasion). In January 2023, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in its decision to the case of Ukraine and the Netherlands versus Russia declared the applications partly admissible.¹² Ukraine has asked the international court to declare that Russian military personnel have been present in Donbas since April 2014, that Russian soldiers have been fighting as members of pro-Russian separatist armed groups and have been present in command positions. At the latest from August 2014, in connection with the battle of Ilovaik, Russian troops were deployed on a large scale, so it was not a “civil war” as propagated by Russia, but the Russian-Ukrainian war has been going on since 2014.

4. Donbas Reintegration Law

On June 6, 2014, in Bénouville, Normandy, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings, French President François Hollande invited the German chancellor, the Russian president, and the Ukrainian president, among others, to discuss the possibility of a peaceful settlement. Negotiations on a settlement began in June in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group of the OSCE, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation, set up at the suggestion of the Normandy Four. Following the negotiations,

¹² European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber: Case of Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia (Applications nos. 8019/16, 43800/14, and 28525/20). Decision. Strasbourg, January 25, 2023. (<https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Ukraine-and-the-Netherlands-V.-Russia.pdf>).

the Normandy Four signed a document in Minsk on September 5, 2014, under the auspices of the OSCE, aimed at preventing the escalation of the war in eastern Ukraine. This was the Minsk-1 agreement, which summarized the settlement plan in 12 points, the most important of which were an immediate OSCE-monitored ceasefire, exchange of prisoners, amnesty, and legislation (including constitutional amendments) on the special status of the eastern regions.

As a follow-up to Minsk-1, the Trilateral Contact Group and the representatives of the eastern regions signed a protocol on the conditions of the ceasefire on September 19, 2014, also in Minsk. However, a full ceasefire did not materialize. On February 11–12, 2015, another attempt was made in Minsk to agree on “Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements,” the Minsk-2 agreement. This time, the joint press conference of the leaders of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Germany, and France was cancelled and only a short statement was published on the Kremlin’s website expressing their joint support for the agreement. The document was not signed by the negotiators but only by the mediators. On February 17, on Russia’s initiative, the UN Security Council unanimously welcomed both the package and the statement.

Minsk-2 further elaborated on 13 points from Minsk-1. Minsk-2 included 13 of Minsk-1’s proposals: ceasefire; holding of local elections; pardon and amnesty for persons involved in the event; exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons “all for all”; ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid; restoration of socio-economic ties with the rest of Ukraine; restoration of state border control to Ukraine after the elections; withdrawal of all foreign armed formations and military equipment, including mercenaries, from the territory of Ukraine; constitutional reform on the specific status of particular regions; and intensification of the work of the Trilateral Contact Group, including through the establishment of working groups on the implementation of relevant aspects of the agreements (Lieven 2022; Allan 2020).

The signing took place in the days of the bloody clashes over the Battle of Debaltseve. Together with the battles for Ilovaisk and Donetsk Airport, these were the most serious clashes of the war. By the end of the month, the intensity of the fighting had decreased significantly and the line of demarcation between government forces and separatist-controlled areas, covering about a third of the territory of the two districts, had stabilized. The Trilateral Contact Group continued to meet and, since May 2015, separate working groups, led by OSCE coordinators, have been established to address military, political, economic, and humanitarian issues. Over time, however, its activities were exhausted by periodic prisoner exchanges, which were discontinued. A single general prisoner exchange took place in 2019, after the inauguration of Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and then the process was interrupted again.

The OSCE launched its Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) at Ukraine’s request back in March 2014, sending envoys to Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Odesa, Kherson, Dnipro, Donetsk, and Luhansk. Following the Minsk agreements, the monitoring compliance with the ceasefire agreements has become a priority, and a checkpoint

has been established on the territory of the Russian Federation. According to regular and detailed reports, in the almost eight years since April 2014, the intensity of the fighting has only temporarily decreased in some periods.¹³

In the Minsk process, the agreed principles of the settlement were interpreted differently by the parties, leaving no chance for agreement. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (head of state since 2017) then developed a concept for implementing the political clauses of the Minsk agreements. On October 2, 2015, at the Paris summit of the leaders of the Normandy Four in Paris, he presented the first version of what he later called the formula (which was continuously supplemented in the following years in order to reach an agreement). It provided for the following steps: 1) a constitutional provision on the special status of the Luhansk-Donetsk region; 2) an amnesty law on the impunity of those responsible official in the region; and 3) a special law on the holding of elections in the region. The idea was that the Ukrainian parliament would provisionally adopt the law on special status on the evening of the election day, which would become final after the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights certified the elections as valid.

Steinmeier said that elections should be held regardless of who controls the territory and that the region could be integrated with an elected leadership and special status under the Minsk agreements. However, this has not led to results. Kyiv could only recognize the elections as legitimate if they were not held under the shadow of Russian military control and the local administration it had created, and Russia's position was that the withdrawal of military forces and the restoration of Ukrainian control would be possible after these elections were held locally and internationally recognized. Germany and France have called for the elections to go ahead, while the United States has taken the position that a secure environment must be created before the political and technical procedures for the elections can be carried out, with the withdrawal of the combatants from the area as a minimum precondition (Miller 2014).

In Ukraine, the only legislation on the special status of the Donbas region did not affect the status itself. This was the aforementioned Law of Ukraine 2268-VIII of 2018 (popularly known as the Donbas Reintegration Law), which introduces the concept of “temporarily occupied territories” (Article 1[1]) and refers to Russia as an “aggressor” (Preamble) and an “occupier” (Article 7[2]). It also states that *the armed aggression of the Russian Federation began with the undeclared and covert invasions of the territory of Ukraine by divisions of armed forces and other security agencies of the Russian Federation, as well as with the organization and support of terrorist activities [...] the Russian Federation commits a crime of aggression against Ukraine and performs temporary occupation of part of its territory by means of the paramilitary groups of the*

13 OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (<https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine-closed>).

Russian Federation consisting of regular connections and divisions, subordinated to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the divisions and special forming subordinated to other security agencies of the Russian Federation [...] the actions of the Russian Federation on the territory of certain districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol grossly violate the principles, and norms of international law. (Preamble)

In addition to the Trilateral Contact Group, meetings with the Normandy Four continued. It is therefore no coincidence that French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Kyiv shortly before the invasion and then Moscow in February 2022. On February 14, the day of Scholz's visit, Vadim Pristaiko, Ukraine's ambassador to London and former foreign minister, was asked by journalists if Ukraine could consider renouncing its NATO membership, even though it was against the country's constitution, to which the ambassador replied in the affirmative.¹⁴ However, in a joint press conference with Scholz, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, when asked about Pristaiko's statement, had already replied that Ukraine's attitude towards NATO membership had not changed, but that it was not up to him but to the Western partners.¹⁵

On February 21, 2022, Russia's President Vladimir Putin announced the recognition of the breakaway republics of Donbas, and the next day he told journalists that "of course, the Minsk agreements no longer exist."¹⁶ On February 23, the Russian Federation celebrated the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland. The next day, February 24, 2022, the full-scale war of Ukraine began. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on that day in a dramatic televised address to the citizens of Germany:

*Fellow citizens, today is a terrible day for Ukraine. And a dark day for Europe. We are all concerned about peace. I can well imagine the questions you will be asking yourselves this evening. I am no different. The situation is very serious. We are currently witnessing the start of a war, a war the likes of which we have not seen in Europe more than 75 years. Russia's President Putin has decided to launch a military attack against Ukraine. This is an attack on an independent sovereign country. Nothing and nobody can justify it.*¹⁷

14 Україна може відмовитись від вступу в НАТО – посол Пристайко. *BBC News Ukraine*, February 14, 2022 (<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-60373189>).

15 Зеленський: НАТО є гарантією безпеки України, іншого шляху немає. *BBC News Ukraine*, February 17, 2022 (<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-60417961>).

16 Путин заявил, что минских соглашений больше не существует. *TACC*, 22 февраля 2022 (<https://tass.ru/politika/13811259>).

17 Televised address by Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz on the Russian attack against Ukraine, Berlin, February 24, 2022 (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/televised-address-by-federal-chancellor-olaf-scholz-on-the-russian-attack-against-ukraine-2007846>).

5. Martial law

In accordance with Section I, Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine, the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, ensuring its economic and information security are the most important tasks of the state and the concern of the entire Ukrainian people (first indent), the defense of Ukraine and the protection of its sovereignty are entrusted to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (second indent), the defense of Ukraine and the protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability are entrusted to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (second indent), the provision of state security and the protection of the state borders of Ukraine are entrusted to the appropriate military formations and law enforcement bodies of the State (third indent), and the establishment of foreign military bases on the territory of Ukraine is not permitted (seventh indent).

The legal basis for the imposition of martial law is the Constitution, Law of Ukraine 389-VIII of 2015 “On the Legal Regime of the Martial Law”¹⁸ and the presidential decree imposing martial law. Several articles of the constitution deal with martial law and states of emergency: expropriation of private property (Article 41); work under martial law or state of emergency (Article 43); special restrictions of rights and freedoms (Article 64); if a decree of the President of Ukraine declares the introduction of martial law or a state of emergency in Ukraine or in certain regions of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine shall hold a session without prior convocation within two days; if the term of the powers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine expires while martial law or a state of emergency is in force, its powers shall be extended until the date of the first meeting of the first session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine elected after the lifting of martial law or a state of emergency (Article 83); the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine shall, within two days from the date of the address by the President of Ukraine, adopt decrees on the introduction of martial law or a state of emergency in Ukraine or in its particular regions, on full or partial mobilization (Article 85[31]); and on the legal regime of martial law and a state of emergency, on zones of ecological emergency (Article 92[19]).

Article 1 of the abovementioned Law of Ukraine 389-VIII of 2015 “On the Legal Regime of the Martial Law” contains the following definition: “Martial law is the particular legal regime introduced in Ukraine or in its certain areas in case of the armed aggression or threat of attack, danger of the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity and restriction of constitutional rights and freedoms of man and citizen, rights and legitimate interests of legal entities with indication of an effective period of these restrictions provides to relevant organs of the government, military command, military

18 Law of Ukraine 389-VIII of 2015 “On the Legal Regime of the Martial Law” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/389-19#Text>).

authorities, and local government bodies of the powers necessary for prevention of threat, repulse of the armed aggression and ensuring national security, elimination of threat of danger of the state independence of Ukraine, its territorial integrity, and also temporary, caused by threat.” In other words, the law allows for the introduction of an extraordinary legal order as soon as the threat arises and makes its effect time limited.

In Ukraine, self-governance has been defined by Chapter XI of the Constitution (1996), two laws on self-government (1990, 1997), and the administrative reform called decentralization, which was implemented between 2015 and 2020. Since 2015, there have been two temporary state bodies in the public administration: the civil-military administration under the Law of Ukraine 141-VIII of 2015 “On the Civil-Military Administration”¹⁹ and the military administration under the above-mentioned Law of Ukraine 389-VIII of 2015 “On the Legal Regime of the Martial Law.”

In 2015, 19 civil-military administrative units were established in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. Of these, two were at the oblast level and 17 at the municipal level, operating as part of the Counter-Terrorism Center of the Security Service of Ukraine or the Joint Operational Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Their main task was to exercise the powers of local executive authorities and local self-government bodies. During the existence of the civilian-military administration, the civil administration ceased its activities.

According to Article 10(2) of Law 389-VIII of 2015, municipalities and municipal-owned companies are subordinate to the military administration established at local level, while Article 10(1) states that: the activities of the president, the parliament (Verkhovna Rada), the government (Cabinet of Ministers), the National Bank, the Ombudsman for Human Rights, the courts, the law enforcement bodies, the investigative bodies, and the secret services may not be suspended. Military administrations are temporary state bodies that, during martial law, are responsible for ensuring the functioning of the constitution and laws of Ukraine; for implementing, together with the military command, the measures of the martial law legal regime; for national defense, civil defense, public security, and public order; and for the protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens. The establishment of a military administration is decided by the President of Ukraine on the proposal of the regional state administration or the military headquarters. The Head of the Military Administration is appointed and dismissed by the President of Ukraine on the recommendation of the General Staff of the Armed Forces or the competent regional state administration.

19 Law of Ukraine 141-VIII of 2015 “On the Civil-Military Administration” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/141-19#Text>).

On February 24, 2022, the Decree of the President of Ukraine 68 of 2022 “On the Establishment of Military Administrations”²⁰ established 25 regional military administrations throughout Ukraine. The heads of the regional (the 24 regions) and state administrations of the capital Kyiv (the governors and the mayor) were appointed heads of the military administrations. At the same time, the corresponding district military administrations were created on the basis of the existing district state administrations, and their heads became the heads of the former civil administrations. In peacetime, heads of municipalities and district administrations are elected officials, while governors are administrative leaders appointed from above by the head of state, in addition to the elected deputies. Military administrations continue to function during martial law and for 30 days after its termination or suspension. The jurisdiction of the military administrations shall be maintained in the temporarily occupied territories. If the threat to security and public order in the region ceases to exist, the Ukrainian parliament may, on a proposal from the president, decide before the expiry of the 30-day period, but not before the date of the termination or cessation of martial law, to return the region concerned to civil administration.

The constitution extends the five-year term of office of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; if it expires while martial law or a state of emergency is in force, its authority is extended until the date of the first sitting of the first session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine elected after the lifting of martial law or a state of emergency (Chapter IV, Article 83[4]). Unlike parliamentary elections, the constitution does not explicitly prohibit the holding of presidential elections under martial law. Article 108 states that the president exercises his powers until the newly elected President of Ukraine takes office, but Article 103 sets a five-year presidential term. At the same time, Ukrainian electoral law prohibits the holding of elections under martial law (Skorkin 2024).

Thus, in the event of a threat to national security, the procedure for introducing martial law is as follows: the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, taking into account the situation, makes a proposal to the head of state, who submits it to the parliament in the form of a presidential decree, which the parliament enacts into law. Martial law has been introduced twice in independent Ukraine, in 2018 and 2022.

5.1. Martial law in particular areas in the years 2018

On November 25, 2018, the so-called Kerch incident took place, when the Russian Navy attacked the Ukrainian naval vessels *Berdyansk*, *Nikopol*, and *Yani Kapu*, which were on their way from Odessa to Berdyansk, seizing the ships and taking 24 sailors

20 Decree of President of Ukraine 68 of 2022 “On the Establishment of Military Administrations” (<https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/682022-41405>).

captive. Ukraine immediately convened a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council, which proposed to President Petro Poroshenko that martial law be imposed for a period of 60 days. The next day, November 26, Poroshenko signed the decree during the day.²¹ In the late afternoon, however, he announced that he would ask parliament to impose martial law for 30 days, to avoid it spilling over into the upcoming presidential election campaign.²² Poroshenko stressed that the introduction of martial law at this time was necessary because, for the first time since the beginning of Russian aggression, Russian forces were acting officially and under their own flag.²³

According to Article 85(31) of the constitution, within two days of the President of Ukraine's address, parliament must approve the decree on the introduction of martial law or a state of emergency in Ukraine or in its particular regions. In this case, on the same day, the parliament voted on the law on the implementation of the presidential decree,²⁴ which introduced a state of martial law for 30 days in 10 regions (near the Moldovan and Russian borders; the Black Sea coast; and the regions bordering the eastern front: Vinnytsia, Donetsk, Mikolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhya) and the Ukrainian internal waters of the Azov-Kerch Aquatory. In Ukraine, the army was put on alert, only Ukrainian citizens were allowed to cross the administrative border separating Ukraine from Crimea (Milanova 2018), the entire Ukrainian–Russian border was closed to Russian citizens of military age, except for humanitarian purposes (e.g., funerals), and diplomats and cargo vehicles were allowed to travel freely (Leonova 2018). The movement of Ukrainian citizens was not restricted here either. There was no mobilization due to martial law in particular areas.²⁵

Critics have linked the timing to the political ambitions of Poroshenko, who had been in office since May 2014 (he wanted to run again in the upcoming presidential elections while his popularity was on the decline) and in this regard have pointed to several military incidents after the Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 that were far more serious than the Kerch crises (Mirovalev 2018). At a meeting of the

21 Указ Порошенка щодо підготовки до воєнного стану – повний текст. *Радіо Свобода*, November 26, 2018 (<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-rnbo-vojennyi-stan/29621708.html>).

22 Порошенко запропонує Раді ввести воєнний стан на 30 днів. *Радіо Свобода*, November 26, 2018 (<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-poroshenko-viyskovyi-stan/29621996.html>).

23 Чому воєнний стан в Україні ввели лише зараз: пояснення Порошенка. 24 *Канал*, November 28, 2018 (https://24tv.ua/chomu_voyenniy_stan_v_ukrayini_vveli_lishe_zaraz_royasnennya_poroshenka_n1071105).

24 Law of Ukraine 2630-VIII of 2018 “On Approval of the Decree of the President of Ukraine on Imposition of Martial Law in Ukraine” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2630-VIII#Text>).

25 У Генштабі заявили, що мобілізації через воєнний стан не буде. *РБК-Україна*, November 28, 2018 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20181130071804/https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/genshtabe-zayavili-mobilizatsii-voennogo-1543421526.html>).

National Security and Defense Council on December 26, President Petro Poroshenko announced the end of martial law in 10 regions of Ukraine as of 14:00 on December 26. The president stressed that this was “a decision of principle. It is based on the analysis of all components of the current security situation in the country.”²⁶

5.2. Martial law throughout the country in 2022

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, a state of war and general mobilization was declared in Ukraine from 5:30 a.m. Kyiv time on February 24, 2022. The proposal to impose martial law in Ukraine or in certain regions of Ukraine is submitted by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine to the President of Ukraine. In order to take a decision on the martial law, the President of Ukraine issues a decree on the introduction of martial law and immediately submits it to the parliament for approval, at the same time submitting the relevant draft law. Within two days of the president’s decree, the parliament will meet without convening and will consider whether to approve the decree. Martial law is declared for a period of 90 days, and the procedure is that before the end of the 90 days, parliament may extend the period for a further 90 days. This continues until martial law is lifted. Martial law is lifted by decree of the President of Ukraine when the threat that justified its imposition has passed. The main restrictions of martial law are that the constitution cannot be amended, referendums cannot be held, strikes cannot be called, mass rallies cannot be organized, etc. However, the parliament continues to function; there is no government by decree.

On February 24, 2022, in connection with the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and in order to ensure the defense of the state, the Law of Ukraine 2105-IX of 2022 approved Decree of the President of Ukraine 69 of 2022 “On General Mobilization,”²⁷ by which general mobilization was ordered. This lasted for 90 days and was extended in the same way as martial law. All citizens (so far only men) between the ages of 18 and 60 who are able to perform military service can be mobilized. Dynamic changes have been made to the main categories of persons eligible for conscription and exemption.

On July 26, 2021, the Ukrainian parliament adopted Law of Ukraine 1702-IX of 2021 “On the Fundamentals of National Resistance,” which entered into force on January 1, 2022.²⁸ According to this law the national resistance is a set of actions

26 Порошенко оголосив про завершення воєнного стану. *Українська правда*, December 26, 2018 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200810061854/https://www.pravda.com.ua/ews/2018/12/26/7202331/>).

27 Law of Ukraine 2105-IX of 2022 “On Approval of the Decree of the President of Ukraine On General Mobilization” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2105-20#Text>).

28 Law of Ukraine 1702-IX of 2021 “About Bases of National Resistance” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1702-20#Text>).

organized and carried out for the purpose of assisting the defense of Ukraine by the broadest participation of citizens of Ukraine in actions aimed at providing military safety, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the state and controlling and repulsing aggression (Article 1[1][8]). Volunteers of territorial defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine can be Ukrainian citizens, foreigners, or stateless persons (Article 1[1][1]). The most important amendment to the law was made by the Law of Ukraine 2237-IX of 2022 “On amendments to the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Fundamentals of National Resistance,’”²⁹ which allowed the deployment of territorial defense units in the areas of conduct (active military operations).

Defending the independence and territorial integrity of the country is the constitutional duty of every Ukrainian citizen, male or female. The Law of Ukraine 2232-XII of 1992 “On Military Service and Conscription” has been amended several times.³⁰ Among other things, the 2010 amendment allows women who are on the military register to be called up for military service or recruited to perform work to ensure the defense of the state in times of war. In times of peace, women may be called up for military service and service in the military reserve only on a voluntary (contractual) basis (Article 1[12][1]). According to the 2018 amendment, women shall perform military service on an equal footing with men (except in cases stipulated by legislation on the protection of motherhood and childhood and on the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex), which includes voluntary enlistment (under contract) and conscription for military service, military service, service in the military reserve, performance of military service in the reserve, and compliance with the rules of military registration (Article 1[12][2]). Moreover, in 2021 it was added to the law that women who have a specialty and/or profession related to the relevant military accounting specialty, defined in the list approved by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and are suitable for military service for health and age, will be included in the military registration of military personnel (Article 1[11][1]–[2]).

On April 11, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law of Ukraine 3633-IX of 2024 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Certain Issues of Military Service, Mobilization, and Military Registration.”³¹ President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed the law on mobilization on April 16. The document was published on April 17 and came into force on May 18. The law introduced the fol-

29 Law of Ukraine 2237-IX of 2022 “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine On the Fundamentals of National Resistance” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2237-IX#Text>).

30 Law of Ukraine 2232-XII of 1992 “On Military Service and Conscription” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text>).

31 Law of Ukraine 3633-IX of 2024 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Certain Issues of Military Service, Mobilization, and Military Registration” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3633-20#Text>).

lowing main changes within 60 days from the date of entry into force of this law: persons subject to military service must update their personal military registration data; male citizens aged 25–50 must undergo a repeated medical examination if they are assigned to disability group II or III for the first time after February 24, 2022; an exhaustive list of valid reasons for not appearing at the military registration office; basic military service (instead of compulsory military service); women on the military register may be called up for military service or engage in wartime defense work on a voluntary basis; and the list of criteria for deferring mobilization is specified (McKenzie 2024). According to Government Decision 443 of April 23, 2024, men between the ages of 18 and 60 are no longer allowed to obtain identity cards and passports (lost, expired) at diplomatic missions abroad but only on the territory of Ukraine.³²

Shortly beforehand, on April 2, 2024, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed an amendment to the law, passed by the Ukrainian parliament in May 2023, lowering the country's minimum conscription age from 27 to 25.³³ This means that from April 4, 2024, according to the Ministry of Defense, it will allow more men fit for military service to be mobilized.³⁴ The President explained:

We need to form brigades to replace those that have been at the front for two years. For this to happen, and for them to be an adequate replacement, people must be trained and be in good physical condition. With all due respect to our soldiers, we are saying that there is a difference between a 25-year-old soldier and a 50-year-old soldier. And that is a fact. Different fronts present different challenges, different warfare and different technologies. (cited by Protz 2024)

6. Summary

According to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX) of December 14, 1974, the use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity, or political independence of another state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, constitutes aggression (Article 1). The first use of armed force by a state in contravention of the charter shall constitute prima facie evidence of an act of aggression (Article 2). The study examines some aspects of Ukrainian legisla-

32 Decision of Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 443 of 2024 (<https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-vnesennia-zmin-do-punktu-11-poriadku-realizatsii-eksperymentalnoho-proektu-shcho-do-oformlennia-pasporta-hromadianyna-ukrainy-ta-pasporta-hromadianyna-ukrainy-i230424-443>).

33 Law of Ukraine 3127-IX of 2023 “On Amendments to the Law of Ukraine On Military Service and Conscription” (<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text>).

34 Міністерство оборони України: Удосконалення військового обліку призовників триває навіть в умовах воєнного стану (<https://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2023/05/04/udoskonallyennya-vijskovogo-obliku-prizovnikiv-trivay-navit-v-umovah-voennogo-stanu/>).

tion on Russia's war against Ukraine from 2014 to early 2024. Russia's deliberate armed aggression against Ukraine began in February 2014 with a military operation by the Russian armed forces to seize a part of Ukrainian territory, the Crimean Peninsula, and then to start the war in Donbass. Moreover, on February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine after the Russian President announced the launch of a so-called "special military operation" under the pretext of the "demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine." The Ukrainian armed forces, territorial defense forces, and population thwarted the Kremlin's "blitzkrieg" plans to seize territory in Ukraine and change the government in Ukraine. The pre-invasion phase can be described in the terminology of hybrid warfare, followed by a full-scale war, the worst European conflict since the Second World War, and an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

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ZSOLT MIKULA

The situation of social work in the semi-peripheral Hungarian reality

Abstract: This research investigates the contemporary state of social work in Hungary by examining the evolution of interest relationships within the socio-economic-political value system, shaped by both national and global economic policies. Utilizing Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, which categorizes nations into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral groups based on their economic and political influence, this study analyzes the effects of Hungary's historical and economic development on its social work sector. As a semi-peripheral country, Hungary has encountered substantial social and economic challenges following its transition from socialism. The study underscores the implications of global economic trends and the dependency of semi-peripheral and peripheral countries on core nations. Although the unrestricted flow of capital and technology benefits core countries and multinational corporations, it exacerbates inequalities in less developed nations. Hungary's post-socialist transformation has led to the erosion of the middle class and heightened social inequalities, further aggravated by a shift towards a workfare society that prioritizes economic growth over social welfare.

Keywords: social work; world system theory; welfare; economic policy; workfare; social values.

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Introduction

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of social work in Hungary through exploratory research, it is essential to consider the evolution of interest relationships based on the interdependence of national and global economic policies. Analyzing causal relationships within the socio-economic-political value system, which encompasses multiple dimensions, can enhance the reliability of conclusions about the current state of social work in Hungary.

Definition of theoretical framework

The diverse structural composition and operational modes of nation-states (e.g., social structure, degree of inequality) are primarily determined by the extent to which a country has gained economic advantages and influence throughout its history. Immanuel Wallerstein (1983), an American sociologist and polymath, conceptualized

dynamically changing processes based on the logic of capital accumulation, division of labor, and international exchange relationships as the world-systems approach theoretical model. This model categorizes the world's independent nation-states into peripheral, semi-peripheral, and core groups based on their historical political and economic influence.¹

Drawing on Wallerstein's theoretical approach, capitalist nations where private ownership of the means of production has been historically beneficial increasingly oriented themselves towards industrial development. Due to this economic structural transformation, the social class structure of core countries gradually underwent changes. In economic terms, this transformation meant that in nation-states prioritizing a capitalist perspective, the gradual increase in the number of middle-class individuals contributed to the expansion of the middle class, thereby reducing inequality within the societal structure (Tóth 2016). According to the world-systems theory, at the top of the hierarchy are complexly developed capitalist nation-states that maintain exploitative relationships, primarily representing the interests of core nations, resulting from the unequal distribution of labor and benefits.

1 In his 1988 study, Ferenc Kozma complements Wallerstein's economic-political interest-based theory by emphasizing the importance of considering multidimensional variables (e.g., technological, economic, political-military, cultural, and ethical coexistence conditions) when examining group formations and power dynamics.

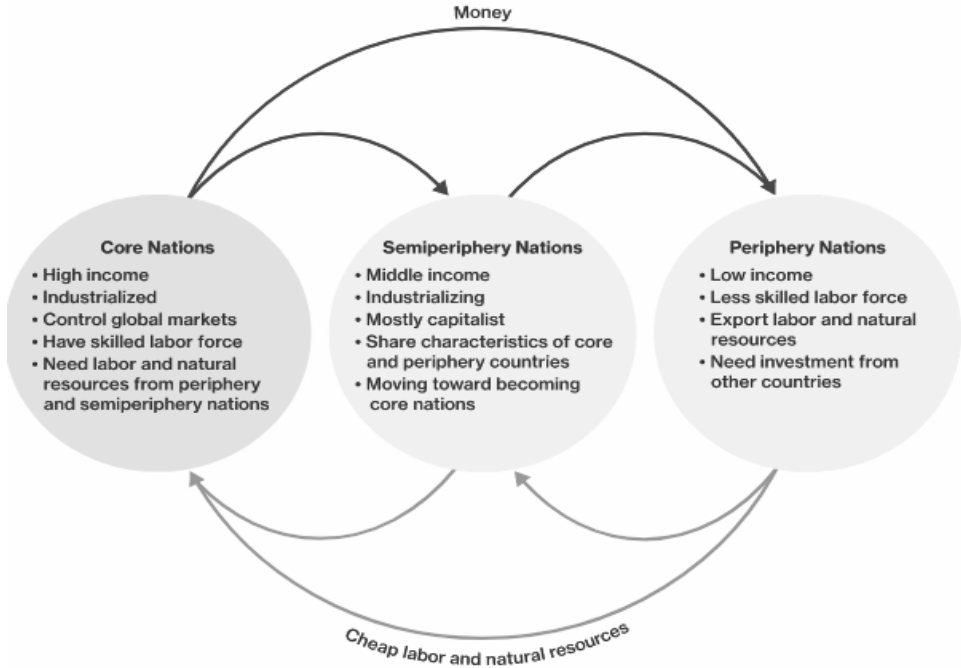


Figure 1. The structure of the theoretical model of the world system. (Source: www.coursehero.com)

At one pole of the linearly represented model, the core states with significant economic and political influence (e.g., USA, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany) can be found, while on the opposite pole, in the periphery, there are industrially underdeveloped countries with low economic and political influence (e.g., Afghanistan, Bolivia, Egypt, Uganda), whose societies are characterized by great polarization and inequality (Figure 1). Between the two endpoints of the model, in the semi-periphery, are nation-states that, based on their indicators derived from the division of labor and their level of complex development, cannot be classified into the groups of core or peripheral countries (e.g., Russia, Panama, Hungary, India, Poland).² The biggest losers in capitalist market economic processes are primarily and the nation-states in the periphery and

² Nation-states located in the semi-periphery possess lower technological capabilities and capital compared to the core states, while having higher capabilities compared to countries in the periphery.

semi-periphery as the global economic production chain, due to the unequal distribution of benefits, sustains and increases the evolution of inequality between nations and within societies (e.g., division of labor, technology, economy, production, standard of living). The cooperation between core states and states located in the periphery or semi-periphery is characterized by a vulnerable and subordinate system of interdependence, resulting in further global inequality through asymmetric exchange value and benefit distribution (Éber 2018).

World systems, globality, inequality

The primary goal of global economic processes serving the interests of capitalism for centuries, as well as artificially created globalization processes during the 20th century, is to facilitate the free flow of intellectual capital, labor, means of production, and technology. The global expansion of capitalist economic actors and the regulation of the international market economy have ensured that the core countries and their closely linked investor groups, as well as the trusts of international mega-corporations, benefit most from the per capita gains generated in the periphery and semi-periphery (Szabó 2022). In other words, nation-states or core countries with significant economic policy advantages and structured according to democratic principles exploit, in the spirit of “mutual dependence,” the states located in the semi-periphery and periphery with lesser global economic and political influence.

Multinational corporate groups of capitalist nation-states with strong economic and foreign policy influence typically withdraw the investment profits sooner or later from the territory of the producing country, and the surplus tax generated from the withdrawal of capital is utilized in their core countries.³ Thus, depending on the extent of benefit redistribution and state commitment, additional socio-political developments can take place in core countries that, in a comprehensive sense, can increase, protect, or serve the interests of their society (e.g., reducing social inequality, social welfare, education, or healthcare).⁴ Global economic policy is a dynamically changing and artificially sustained dependency relationship that ultimately contributes to regulating and reducing the economic, internal, and foreign policy maneuverability of states located in the periphery and semi-periphery. Wallerstein’s world-systems theory supports the noti-

3 Decision-making principles based on a double standard strongly question the legitimacy of global economic policies built on exploitation.

4 “The concept of the welfare state primarily refers to a complex of state social policy institutions and government measures aimed at correcting the negative effects of capitalist market economies. These were developed based on various motives and at different rates in developed capitalist countries.” Pongrác 2019: 56.

on that states located in the periphery and semi-periphery are excessively exposed to the dependency influence of capitalist, international transnational mega-corporations from an economic policy perspective, making them much more vulnerable and reactive to external and internal variables affecting the market economy. As it was expressed by Pongrác: "The strategies of companies associated with the consumer societies' core states ultimately enforce the aspects of global economic exploitation and significantly undermine the socio-cultural and natural environment, which can be demonstrated in the difference between the amount of money paid for labor and cheap raw material prices, as well as the continuous production of environmentally harmful substances." (Pongrác 2019: 130-131)

Individual choices for the common good

During participation in the value-creating global competitive market, the fundamental institution of the capitalist states' market economy is served by the protection of private property rights. The operational characteristics of core states are primarily determined by the degree of connection between capital and power, as well as the coherence and direction of the economic, political, and social value system. Capitalist countries with similar market economic interests but varying levels of development are characterized by significant operational differences (e.g., political, economic, degree of state involvement), which directly impact the dynamically evolving socio-political direction of the respective country.⁵ The balance in the distribution of economic, political, and social responsibility, as well as the socially established value system throughout history, greatly contributes to determining the principles by which state budget revenue from the market economy will be utilized during redistribution.

Divergent historical influences

Due to industrial development, the gradually expanding and strengthening social middle class has shaped the structure of capitalist societies and contributed to the establishment and strengthening of the foundations of the welfare state in the victorious Western countries following World War II. Depending on the degree of state involvement, political and economic forces in these Western countries gradually created and reinforced the welfare state, ensuring social rights. In contrast to capitalist countries, the transformation of the post-socialist society structure in Hungary only began in the

5 Depending on the current value system of the economy and politics and the extent of state involvement, capitalist models (liberal, conservative, social, DKA) significantly differ from each other. Major, no date.

1980s. The economic paradigm shift introduced in just under a decade, expanding the influence of private capital, significantly reshaped the relationship of micro- and macroeconomic actors in the market. The radical reduction of state responsibility, customary in socialism, following the regime change, rapidly transformed the structure of Hungarian society. The self-perpetuating effects of market economic competition contributed to the emergence and intensification of various inequalities (economic, wealth, social, intellectual, cultural, territorial, etc.), leading to the increasing polarization of Hungarian society through the narrowing of the middle class formed in the socialist system (Éber 2020). The decline of the middle class⁶ and the polarizing impact of post-communist capitalism have contributed to the current trend of growing social inequality and the impoverishment of the structure of Hungarian society (Bartha 2013).

The institutionalization of social work's advancement

The cradle of modern professional social work is primarily considered to be England and the United States. Similar to those of the English model, the roots of the American model can be traced back to the voluntary, civil-based Charity Organization Society, and later, to the Chicago Settlement movements organized from sociological workshops. Political welfare initiatives aimed at meeting social needs, coupled with the development of social work in the United States, later collectively contributed to the establishment of professional social work. The gradual acceptance of the profession and its value in state and societal contexts laid the foundation for the international legitimacy of the profession. This, in turn, facilitated the direct contribution of the social sphere to the post-war reconstruction of Western European social institution systems (Kozma 2007).

A short summary of the development of social work in Hungary

The development of social work education in Hungary and the establishment of social work as an independent profession faced obstacles due to the closure of the civil era at the end of the 20th century and the emergence of the socialist state apparatus.⁷ During this period, political decision-makers did not agree with the professional legiti-

6 During the Kádár era's social compromise, reforms were introduced that made life in Hungary more tolerable compared to life in other countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), a period often referred to as "goulash communism."

7 The first social policy courses organized by the Folk Educators' Society in 1912, as well as the settlement movement led by Rezső Hilscher at the University Social Institute, laid the foundation for Hungarian university students to participate in practical social courses from 1920 onwards.

macy of the settlement movement. Consequently, they questioned the necessity of social work education and the importance of a professionally functioning service system.⁸ The decision-making processes that excluded the professional field gradually led to the dismantling of religious and civil initiatives involved in social care and services, and certain parts of the social care system were integrated under the supervision of the newly emerging state institutions and sectors (Budai et al. 2006). Due to the state policy prioritizing ideology, there was no opportunity for professional social work to emerge as an independent occupation in the Hungarian labor market until 1989. After the regime change, driven by heightened societal demands and the need for professional management of emerging social issues, independent undergraduate social work education was reintroduced in Hungary after nearly 50 years of omission.⁹ The primary goal of modern social work, integrated from the practical methodology of capitalist welfare states, focused primarily on addressing and managing suddenly occurring social problems.¹⁰

Current state of professional social work in Hungary

One factor hindering the credibility of measuring occupational prestige is that only those professions about which respondents have definite knowledge and ideas can provide an authentic picture (Goldthorpe & Hope 1973). The low societal acceptance of the social sphere/work in Hungary and the lack of social knowledge sharply contrast with generally accepted trends in developed Western countries (Erdős 2019). In contrast to the general, comprehensive knowledge of the populations in the United States and the United Kingdom, the majority of the Hungarian public generally defines social workers as individuals with low educational qualifications, working for minimum wage, engaged in physical or unnecessary work (Szoboszlai 2017).

8 Prior to the regime change, approximately 40,000 people worked in various areas of the social sphere in Hungary due to the lack of adequate qualifications. Budai et al. 2006.

9 In contrast to international trends, the first independent higher education-level social work training in Hungary started much later, in 1989, in Szekszárd at the Illés Gyula Pedagogical College. The introduction of higher education social work training was primarily justified by changing social and professional needs during the period of regime change (e.g., ensuring a welfare model, decreasing state involvement, increasing societal demands). Mrázik 2019.

10 The economic impact of ill-considered decision-making (e.g., the privatization law adopted in 1993, significant increases in public utility fees, waste of human resources, lack of active and passive labor market tools, high substitution rate of benefits) significantly affected and transformed the structure of Hungarian society.

Changes in student numbers

The current perception of the social prestige of occupations is just one of the factors that young people consider when planning their career choices. People's childhood desires, education, culture, changing internal values, different life stages, the varying socialization environments shaping their personalities, the cumulative effects of physiological changes occurring at different micro, meso, and macro levels, and the socially accepted value system all influence the choice of the educational path. The first two decades following the introduction of social work in 1989 were characterized by a slow but steady increase in the number of students and those employed in social sectors (Balog et al. 2015).

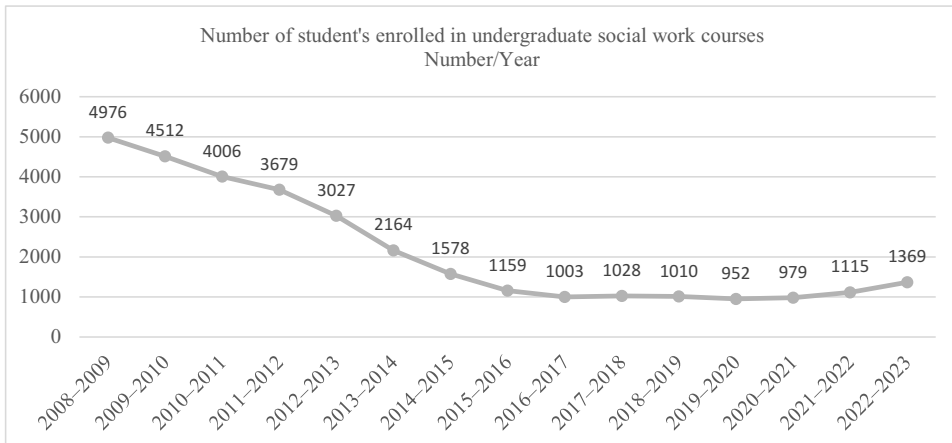


Figure 2. The development of the number of students in Hungary between 2008–2020. (Source: own edition, based upon the ISCDE statistics by The Hungarian Educational Authority, 2023. International Standard Classification of Education [ISCDE])

According to the statistical data from the Hungarian Education Office, the number of students applying for the social work specialization and those obtaining a degree have been continuously decreasing in Hungary since the global economic crisis in 2008 (see Figures 2 and 3).¹¹ The currently applied political model tends to support the continuo-

11 According to the Education Office (May 21, 2024) the increase in the number of students and the number of degrees awarded in 2020 is closely linked to the decreasing requirements for higher education. For example, according to Article 6 of Government Decree 101/2020 and Article 79(10) of Act LVIII of 2020, students who have passed the final exa-

us decrease in social tolerance and stigmatizes marginalized groups, as well as the volunteers and professional helpers who interact with them (Berger 2019). This aligns with the early observations of Keller (2009) and Ball (2001), stating that, alongside the suppression of communal values, postmodern society is characterized by a focus on personal, self-centric individual interests (Temesváry 2018), the pursuit of subjective dreams, existence, identity, and the desire for a quality lifestyle (Bugovics 2012). Taking into account the study by Ágnes Utasi (2018), it is increasingly common nowadays that the majority of the population in developed countries is characterized by a primarily materialistic-individualistic orientation.

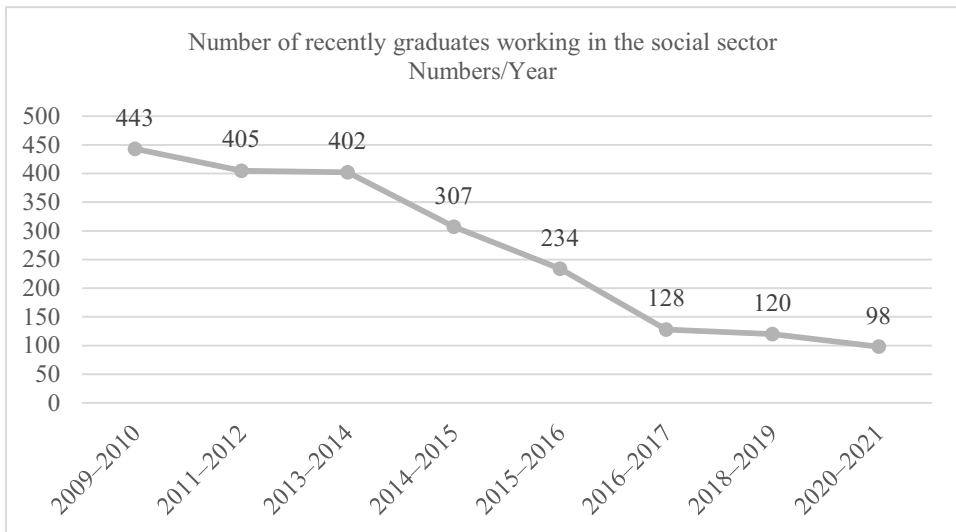


Figure 3. Number of students graduating from a higher education institution in Hungary and employed as social workers.¹² (Source: own edition, based upon by the Hungarian Education Office)

mination by August 31, 2020, are exempted from taking the language examination as a prerequisite for obtaining a diploma. On the basis of the information currently available, it is not yet possible to assess the motivation for students to choose the degree course and the consequences of the state regulation for the future (e.g., quality of training, quality of services).

12 Pre-degree certificate means a certificate that states that the student has passed the curriculum examinations.

The responsibility of politics

According to demographic indicators, it is evident that alongside the declining population in Hungary, the dependency ratio and aging index continue to rise (Central Statistical Office [CSO/KSH] 2023).¹³ The decrease in the level of state involvement contradicts the continuously growing clientele and the expectations of the majority society towards quality services,¹⁴ as well as the trends in international social work.¹⁵ The societal perception of social workers largely depends on the extent to which the public is informed about the social sphere, how it is portrayed, and with what meaning and characteristics it attributes to social work (Ferge 2017). The shift away from the welfare model, which prioritizes reducing social inequality, and the content features and symbols of the current unidirectional government communication model do not effectively reflect the utilization and value of social work to society.¹⁶ The distribution and utilization of available resources are primarily determined by the values represented by the political elite in power. The close intertwining of the interests of the current government and economic groups contributes to influencing the dynamic changes in societal values through symbols representing common state power and global economic interests.¹⁷ Symbols promoting profit orientation shape the change in societal values through the formation of interpersonal moral values (e.g., social solidarity, responsibility), thereby influencing the societal esteem and prestige of social work.¹⁸ Regarding the acknowledgment of the social sphere by the state, Géza Gosztonyi (2021), the president of the Hungarian Association of Social Workers, stated that, due to

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- 13 According to Eurostat's forecast, the social aging occurring in developed countries, along with global societal burdens due to health and economic changes, poses challenges to the state social welfare system.
 - 14 The U.S. Bureau of Statistics' 2021 forecast suggests that the societal demand for military social workers will increase three times faster (13% by 2029) than for all other occupations combined. Virginia University Press, 2021.
 - 15 Based on the 2019 recommendation of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), the number of registered social workers, which was 32,344 in 2011, needs to be increased to 68,498 by 2030 to ensure smooth operation in the social sector. Pontsho 2022.
 - 16 Despite the emphasis on values such as national consciousness revival, Christian ethics, and the protection of Hungarian citizens and the Hungarian market, there seems to be an increasingly paradoxical, dual interpretation of economic and political directions. This trend appears to downplay social solidarity and responsibility (e.g., poverty eradication, social inclusion, reducing inequality, assisting the disadvantaged) over time.
 - 17 Political power can influence (strengthen or weaken) the structure of society through its micro, macro, and meso environments, affecting the formation of people's opinions, value systems, and the direction of their personal motivations to a limited extent.
 - 18 In a study determining the prestige value of occupations, social work ranked 96th out of 173 measured occupations. CSO/KSH 2016.

external impacts on society (e.g., COVID-19, migration, the Ukrainian war), the social role of the social sphere has increasingly strengthened in recent years, and the client base in need of assistance has significantly widened. However, social policy often forgets about the social sphere, such as during the pandemic and the prioritization of vaccination schedules (Botás 2021).

The relationship between economic policy, social policy, and social work

Based on the economic policy outlined by the Hungarian government in 2010, the goal is to achieve a workfare society that ensures long-term growth for the Hungarian economy. The key element for the stability of labor-based (workfare) economic policy is to increase the number of available jobs. Due to the absence of geopolitical and economic factors (e.g., capital, military influence, technology, minerals), the government primarily seeks to realize economic development through the attraction of foreign capital and technology.¹⁹ During the investment-supporting measures, the state apparatus proposes numerous regulations based on the coordination of market and government interest mechanisms. These regulations primarily serve the interests of investor conglomerates/multinational corporations closely connected to power and central states, contrary to the interests of the Hungarian majority society. The extent of the shift away from the social welfare model aimed at reducing vertical inequality, as formulated by Nicolas Barr (2009), indicates that the moral values of the current government increasingly align with the profit logic of capitalist ideology.²⁰ The negative consequence of the shift in economic policy perspective is that government-supported social policy measures directly impact the dominant direction of social policy. By reducing the effective toolbox of social regulations and services supported during redistribution, which would primarily benefit the lower-income and poorer societal strata, the government restricts the means of achieving social justice and equality.

19 State interventions supporting capitalist economic principles influence the shaping of society's structure and value system, impacting the future of social work.

20 Evaluating indicators in Tamás Keller's (2009) study reveals that the majority of the 21st-century population possesses individualistic personality traits, mainly moving towards a postmodern, materialistic, and material value-oriented direction. Valuch 2015.

Conclusions

The primary goal of capital investment groups representing the interests of core countries is to maximize profit with minimal risk factors. When approving international investments that appear attractive, it should be borne in mind that the regulations and measures underpinning economic investments can have a negative long-term impact on the structure and values of Hungarian society. Direct state measures that support investment (e.g., environmental regulation, changes in labor laws, tax breaks) and underlying, hidden regulations (e.g., control of NGOs,²¹ influence on national media, regulation of interest groups, low-skilled labor/jobs) all facilitate capital inflows but also largely determine the direction of development of the social system.²²

While the structure of work-based (workfare) is perceived by investors as having decreasing risk factors, parallel to government efforts towards workfare reforms, state support for the social sphere,²³ the structure of social services,²⁴ and social policies prioritizing welfare foundations are gradually transforming.²⁵ As in the development of capitalist countries, it was the widespread social prosperity experienced in Hungary as a result of economic development that primarily contributed to the initial change in social values (Molnár 2022). Over the past 30 years, changes in social ideology and values have led to a significant part of society becoming increasingly indifferent to problems that do not directly affect them (Fülöp 2013). The growing indifference and lack of interest towards helping professions (e.g., decreasing social sensitivity, declining solidarity, lack of tolerance) all contribute to the continuous decline in the number of indi-

21 Regarding the role of civil/nonprofit organizations, it is essential to highlight that the sector can be interpreted as one of the indispensable control elements and foundational pillars of modern democracies. "The lack of developed civil social complexity leads to issues that are sufficient for conflict but not suitable for compromise." Reisinger 2012.

22 The government envisions the growth of economic indicators primarily through investment in low-skilled human capital (Totyk 2018; Csontos 2023). However, this process leads to the long-term transformation of the impoverished structure of Hungarian society.

23 Andrea Gyarmati (2021a) highlights in her study that the salary scale for those working in the social sphere has not changed since 2011, in contrast to other helping professions. Consequently, the average salary supplemented with allowances for those in the social sector reached only 71% of the national average in 2020.

24 The reorganization of the welfare mixed society through state initiatives is a good idea in principle (SzocOkos 2021). However, the unequal extent of state support and financing generates significant tension among civil, state, and church social service providers (SzocOkos 2022).

25 Parallel to industrialization in the 1800s, the societal value and legal concept of poverty underwent reevaluation in history. Similar to the workfare model, the assessment of social benefits/assistance primarily considered whether one was a "deserving poor" or a lazy "undeserving poor." Gregg & Lars 2018.

viduals choosing professions such as social work.²⁶ One of the most significant risks inherent in the economic policy model grounded in capitalist values and dependency relations is that corporations from core countries, positioned at the top of the global hierarchy, possess such considerable economic and political influence that they can exert substantial pressure on the domestic–foreign and development policies of nations located on the periphery. This dynamic severely undermines the economic sovereignty and erodes the competitiveness of these nations. The study concludes that Hungary’s evolving socio-economic landscape and policy decisions significantly influence the development and perception of social work. This highlights the critical need for policies that strike a balance between economic growth and social welfare to effectively address escalating inequalities and support vulnerable populations.

26 While Hays and Varley’s 1965 study indicates that the personal value orientation of social workers differs from the societal average, emphasizing social relational values over material values (Pilinszki et al. 2014), Andrea Gyarmati (2021b) draws attention to the significant perceived labor shortage in the sector today: “More than half of the workplaces have a labor shortage of over 10%, and there is also a high turnover rate, with a third of employees leaving within a year.”

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BOOK REVIEWS

Roger Scruton: A konzervativizmus [Conservatism]. Mathias Corvinus Collegium Press, Budapest, 2023, 185 p.

I initially picked up Roger Scruton's (1944–2020) social philosophy book titled *Conservatism* to better understand terms such as conservatism, liberalism, neoconservatism, socialism, and cancel culture and others often inconsistently used in the media. I was not disappointed. After I believe two afternoons of reading Scruton, I have a clearer grasp of the historical roots and modern meanings of these ideas.

What I did not expect was that Roger Scruton's book could also be read from the perspective of education as an institution. Specifically, "Conservatism" helped me think through many of the uncertainties facing today's public education system—why these uncertainties exist—and, perhaps, point to potential solutions. More concretely, while Scruton in this book (originally published in 2017 under the title *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile*) traces the historical development of conservatism as a unified intellectual, political, and cultural movement, much of his analysis can also be seen as addressing the ultimate purpose and goal of education. According to Scruton's interpretation, conservatism offers a framework for raising well-mannered, tradition-respecting, yet free-thinking young adults.

Of course, this is not something Roger Scruton explicitly states; rather, this is what I, as a reader of his book, think, having felt for years that the school system is in crisis. Today, schools are equipped with everything that seems to represent modernity—computers, smartphones, and so on—but one key element has disappeared: ethos, the spirit of meaningful learning. Among all subjects, history education, in my view, is in the deepest crisis. It has lost the guiding principle of why we teach and learn history in the first place.

For me, Roger Scruton provides answers to these major uncertainties through his reflections on conservative thought. Those who study history are young adults who want to feel secure, to feel at home in the world. They have personal desires but also want to belong to communities. They are ready to overcome obstacles, ready to compete, while also following the rules—qualities that fit Roger Scruton's interpretation of conservatism.

Roger Scruton touches on education in several places. For example, he discusses the British school system, which he believes faces the thankless task of trying to integrate children from various sociocultural backgrounds according to an imagined order, an order that many of the students' parents deeply resent (p. 157). However, education is not the central theme of Scruton's book; instead, he returns to topics such as the "illusion of choice" in an increasingly shallow mass democracy (following Hegel, p. 69), the nature of socialist-communist political regimes (p. 70), and the culture of liberal guilt—precisely the topics that initially drew me to this book. Beyond these, Scruton also delves into contemporary phenomena, including the rampant culture of equality and the implications of big data for conservative economics (p. 117).

As the reviewer explores Roger Scruton's views on conservatism and finds valuable insights into what makes a good school, they cannot help but wonder: are there any functioning customs and traditions in Hungarian schools in Slovakia that could guide school communities toward a Scruton-style conservatism?

Scruton's three most prominent ideas (i.e., his critique of the Enlightenment, his doubts about the omnipotent state, and his conservative interpretation of freedom) shape the framework for this question. His book provides historical context for how these three pillars form the foundation of contemporary con-

servatism. In his critique of the Enlightenment, Scruton draws on David Hume's moral philosophy, which suggests that the associations of free individuals are not based on reason but on feelings of sympathy and belonging (p. 42). However, why is a centralized state problematic? Alexis de Tocqueville, for instance, argued that centralization erases class distinctions, dismantles social hierarchies, and weakens regional and local attachments (p. 80). In today's highly centralized state-run schools, the issue with the central state—an impersonal and unaccountable machinery (p. 70)—is that overregulation stifles the creativity and initiative of both teachers and students. Unlike liberalism, conservatism imposes necessary limits on freedom to allow a community, such as a school, to function in an organized and purposeful way (p. 43). However, these limits should be set by the community itself, not by distant bureaucrats. This aligns with the conservative belief that individual freedom arises from political order (p. 33).

Scruton delves deeply into cultural conservatism (pp. 85–110), which could be seen as the ideal measure for a traditional, value-preserving school. He examines the conser-

vativism of thinkers like Michael Oakeshott, an intellectual pioneer of modern history education, and explores how conservatism leans toward transcendence (e.g., William F. Buckley) as opposed to Marxist secularization. Scruton also openly addresses conservatism's antidemocratic tendencies, referencing the works of Kenneth Minogue. In fact, conservative political philosophy rejects the notion of absolute equality, emphasizing the natural differences between individuals and states.

Through Roger Scruton's work, I understood how closely aligned Catholic universalism, classical liberalism, and the conservatism that emerged from it once were, especially when the focus was on human freedom: the noble ideal. As Wilhelm E. von Ketteler wrote in 1875: "The true enemy of personal freedom is *absolutism*—the belief in a state with absolute and unlimited power. Since only God is absolute, absolutism also leads to the deification of the state. Wherever this idea takes root, there is no room for individual rights and freedoms; the very concept of personal freedom disappears."

Barnabás Vajda

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle – Forum Social Sciences Review

GENERAL RULES

The Forum Social Sciences Review is the fifth annual Issue of the Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle (<https://forumszemle.eu/>) in English language. It publishes texts (studies, debates, conference reports, reviews, etc.) mainly on topics regarding Hungarians living in Slovakia.

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Regarding studies, a proper level of written English language is obligatory for the Author. Forum Social Sciences Review does not provide English translation, nevertheless it takes care of English proofreading. The Editor and the English language proofreader make corrections in the manuscript only in the most necessary extent. A manuscript that does not meet sufficient linguistic criterias, can be rejected by the Editor, regardless to its content.

The content of studies will undergo external peer review. The Author will be notified about the result of the review process: publish - publish after revision by the Author - reject.

Format and technical requirements

Manuscripts should be sent to the Editor's e-mail address in editable electronic format. Texts should be in Word format, charts in Excel, pictures and photos as .jpg. The Author should hand in a plain text (in technical terms) as simple as possible, with a minimum of formatting. It means that the Author should avoid complicated formatting solutions, or full-capital-letter names, or special types of letters, etc.

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The structure of the text is marked with chapter titles, such as Introduction, Conclusions, etc. Chapter titles can be marked with numbers too (e.g. 1., 1.1., 1.1.1.).

As a general rule while quoting, use this orthography: ...as Kant says “.....”

Reference to Literature

Bibliographical references (both direct citations as well as paraphrases) are written as intertextual references, i.e. a short-version bibliographical reference is inserted right into the main text in a bracket. The full-version of the bibliographical reference is listed at the end of the study in the Literature.

Example: (Huizinga 1976) or (Huizinga 1976: 115) or (Huizinga 1976: 14 -25). 1) or (see more in Simon 2014).

Listing a literature, both explicitly cited and/or implicitly applied, is optional for the Author, in the Literature (no:) chapter at the end of the study, in alphabetical order.

Reference to books, monographs:

1. Authors's full name (family name [*comma*], first name)
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3. Full title of the book or monograph (*in Italic*).
4. Place of publication,
5. and name of the publishing house.

Example: Huizinga, Johan 1976. *A középkor alkonya*. Budapest, Európa.

If the Hungarian title is translated, then: Huizinga, Johan 1976. Egy korszak vége (*The End of an Epoch*). Budapest, Európa.

Reference to studies or other texts published in collective works:

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8. Place of publication,
9. name of publishing house,
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Example: Hajnal, István 1986. Mikor érünk Európába? In: Ring, Éva (szerk.): *Helyünk Európában. Nézetek és koncepciók a 20. századi Magyarországon*. Budapest, Magvető, 624–645.

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3. Title of the text.
4. Title of the journal or magazine (*in Italic*),
5. Volume,
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Example: Pašiaková, Jaroslava 1992. Kassák és a Bauhaus. *Irodalmi Szemle*, 35. évf. 7. sz. 692.

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Archival and press sources are referred to in a form of footnotes. It means that in the text a numbered upper index ('Insert footnotes') refers to the detailed footnote text elaborated at the bottom of the same page.

Example: Slovenský národný archív v Bratislave (SNA v BA), fond Ministerstvo školstva a národnej osvety (MŠaNO), 1939-1945, kartón (k.) 52., dokumentu Nariadenie ministerstva školstva zo dňa 12.4.1941.

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Each **Table, Chart, Photo** should be given a title. The place of tables, charts and photos should be clearly marked in the text, but they must NOT be inserted into the text. It means that charts and photos should be attached to the Manuscript in separate files.

Example: (in the text) Table 1: National minorities in Hungary between 1880 and 1910.

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Barnabás Vajda via e-mail: vajdabb@gmail.com.

AUTHORS OF THE ISSUE

Bajcsi, Ildikó: PhD. Historian, research fellow. Institute for Violence, Budapest, Hungary (ildikobajcsiov@gmail.com)

Fedinec, Csilla: Historian, Editor, Senior Research Fellow. HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary (fedinec.csilla@tk.hun-ren.hu) (ORCID: 0000-0002-9156-9002)

Gaučík, Štefan: Historian. Institute of History Slovak Academy of Sciences, Department of the History of the 19th Century, Bratislava, Slovakia (stefan.gaucik@savba.sk)

Mikula, Zsolt: PhD. candidate. Eötvös Lóránd University, Doctoral School of Sociology, Budapest, Hungary (mikula@student.elte.hu)

Somorjai, Adam: Catholic Priest, theologian, emeritus Vatican archivist, Benedictine monk of the Pannonhalma Archabbey, Hungary (p.adam@osb.hu)

Tengely, Adrienn: Historian. Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary (tengely.adrienn@uni-eszterhazy.hu)

Tóth, Ágnes: Research Professor, HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Minority Studies, Budapest, Hungary (toth.agnes@tk.hu)

Vajda, Barnabás: Historian. Department of History, Faculty of Education, J. Selye University, Komárno, Slovakia (vajdabb@gmail.com)