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STATE, NON-DENOMINATIONAL FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION, WITHOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION –
THE PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF THE HUNGARIAN MASONRY BETWEEN 1900 AND 1913

INTRODUCTION

The lodge system in the domestic Masonic world was not homogeneous. Lodges which initially had conservative values underwent a major transformation between their legitimation by the state in 1868 and the turn of the century. A significant change was, compared to their 18th-century predecessors, that the post-1869 lodges were recruited specifically from the middle and lower middle classes, and just very few members from the higher social classes could be found among them. It was a recurring theme in some Masonic memoirs and sources that the membership felt that their own lodge had no means to take action.¹

However, overt engagement in politics by lodges was forbidden by both the Masonic constitution and the regulations of the Ministry of Interior. The deal with the state was followed to the letter by some of the federation's membership, while the membership of other lodges, especially those formed after 1900, became increasingly vocal in their demands for lodges to play a role in the progressive transformation of society. It was along this debate that the conservative/liberal-radical opposition within Hungarian Freemasonry began to take its course. The former included lodges such as: Hungaria, Corvin Mátyás, Deák Ferencz, Nation; while the latter included: Comenius, Galilei, Demokratia, Martinovics, King Lazlo, Coloman the Learned² Between the two groups, radicalising lodges, or lodges showing traits of both trends can also be found. Both conservative and liberal lodges of the period considered the Hungarian school system a strategic area of paramount importance, in which they wanted to play a part.

¹ Frigyes Arató: *Az Árpád-páholy története* [The history of Arpad Lodge], Szeged, 1895. (Hungarian)

² Péter Csunderlik: *Radikálisok, szabadgondolkodók, ateisták. A Galilei Kör története* [Radicals, freethinkers, atheists. The history of Galilei Circle], Budapest, Napvilág Kiadó, 2017, 51. (Hungarian)

THE HUNGARIAN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE PERIOD

This section provides a summary overview of the Hungarian public education of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which the Masonic lodges defined their educational policy objectives. The work is primarily based on the relevant chapter of Ignác Romsics's book titled *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, and on the summary of the subchapter on education in Tamás Dobszay's university textbook.³

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE SECOND HALF OF DUALISM

Elementary education was regulated by the Act XXXVIII of 1868. The period saw an increase in the number of state and municipal schools: in the 1890s, only 10% of schools were run by the state or a municipality, while by 1913, the rate increased up to 30%. However, church and denominational schools remained dominant: at the end of the period, 70% of the educational institutions belonged to a denomination, most of them to the Roman Catholic Church. Children started school at the age of 6 and compulsory school age was 12 and 15. Attendance of elementary school was compulsory up to the age of 12, which in practice could only be achieved up to the age of 10. Pupils who did not study further were supposed to receive a reviewing course for 5 hours per week during the winter and 2 hours per week during the summer up to the age of 15. Between 1869 and 1914, the number of schools increased from 14,000 to 17,000; the number of teachers from 18,000 to 34,000; and the number of students from 729,000 to 2 million. In 1870, 60% of children aged 6–12 were attending school. This number grew to 81% by 1890, and to 85% by 1913, although, there were many dropouts, especially in some parts of the countryside. The schools had to overcome many shortcomings, the number of classrooms, for instance, was only a few thousand more than the number of schools at the turn of the century. Many village schools had 100 or more children in a single classroom. One teacher had a national average of 64 pupils in 1913–1914. In 1914, 58% of all elementary schools had one teacher, 21% had two, and 7% had three. The learning material was therefore very superficial. Both the curricula of 1869 and of 1905 set literacy as the main objective. In addition, numeracy, religious education and ethics, physical education, science, history – mainly Hungarian – and geography were given priority. The educational vision was to reduce illiteracy, a programme that proved

³ See Ignác Romsics: *Magyarország története a XX. században. Oktatás* [History of Hungary in Twentieth century. Education], Budapest, Osiris, 2010, 41–47.; and Tamás Dobszay: *Az oktatás*, [Education] in András Gergely (ed.): *Magyarország története a 19. században* [History of Hungary in Nineteenth century], Budapest, Osiris, 2005, 465–472. (Hungarian)

successful, however, incomplete: 68% of the population was literate in 1910. The process was accelerated after 1908 when public education, that formerly required a tuition fee, became completely free. The majority started working after the first four grades of elementary school, that is, at the age of 10.

For those who continued their studies, secondary schools preparing for tertiary education, vocational schools with a practical approach, and higher-elementary schools offered the opportunity. Secondary school had eight grades which was later parted and evolved into a secondary grammar school and a secondary school of science. Both the grammar school and the secondary school of science were for pupils between 10 and 18 years of age and ended with a final exam. The grammar school focused on humanities, teaching classical languages and classical education, while at the core of the secondary school of science's curriculum laid science and modern languages. While taking the final exam after a grammar school provided access to any university, a final examination certificate from the secondary school of science granted admission only to the University of Technology, to faculties of natural science and to tertiary colleges of economics and technology. The role of the Church remained predominant among secondary schools: there were only 38 state secondary schools for 118 denominational secondary schools. The other model was the higher-elementary school: after 4 years of elementary school, pupils studied here for 4 years, 24 hours a week, up to the age of 16. Learning material was reduced, and priority was given to practical skills, while the completion did not provide pupils with a final examination certificate, which meant that they could only become a civil servant and could not continue their studies at a university. Another type of school relevant to the present research was the higher commercial school, which provided pupils with the opportunity to work in commercial and industrial businesses and gave a commercial final examination certificate. The latter provided access to trade academies and colleges, but not to universities.⁴

Between 1870 and 1913, the number of secondary schools increased from 170 to 257, and the number of secondary school pupils from 35,000 to 81,000. This means that 2.5–3% of 10–18-year-olds attended secondary school before the First World War. By 1910, the number of secondary school graduates rose to 251,000, representing 1.4% of the population. It is important to note that these figures were not far behind the figures of Western Europe at the time.

⁴ Krisztina Stummer: A női felső kereskedelmi iskolák létrejötte és alakulása 1948-ig [The establishment and development of women's higher commercial schools until 1948], *Ujkor.hu*, 23.06.2020. <https://ujkor.hu/content/a-noi-felső-kereskedelmi-iskolák-letrejötte-es-alakulása-1948-ig> (Accessed: 9 February 2024.) (Hungarian)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN HUNGARY BETWEEN 1900 AND 1913

Since 1867, political and parliamentary life in Hungary has been defined by the struggle between the governing party and the opposition. The governing party's goal was to maintain the status quo and close ties with Vienna. The opposition called for social change, in the loosest possible cooperation with Vienna, the other centre of the state. More than half⁵ of Hungary's population was non-Hungarian-speaking at this time, so in the era of nationalism this was a source of tension. Another time bomb was the issue of land distribution, because millions of peasants did not have own land and the extension of the right to vote, as only 6% of Hungarian society had the right to vote and to stand as a candidate. The liberal-conservative elite was interested in maintaining these conditions because they feared that radical political reforms would strengthen ethnic minorities, a process that would lead to the disintegration of the country. At the same time, progressive political groups appeared in Hungary – mainly the Social-Democratic Movement and the bourgeois radicalism –, which hoped to solve national and social problems by extending land distribution and suffrage. The two approaches did not fit together. The open break among the Hungarian intellectual elite took place in August 1906. This is when the Social Sciences Society, which examined sociology, split into two. Those who left the association formed the Hungarian Social Science Association, a conservative, liberal faction that believed in slow social change. Those who remained in the Social Science Society called for radical, progressive social change.⁶ The split limited the Society's supply to young Jewish intellectuals.⁷ From that time onwards, the Jewish question became the theme of ideological and scientific debates and positions. There was one more development in the case, and that was the intellectual closure, the loss of clarifying debates and meaningful dialogue.⁸ The Social Science Society became the forum of the movement of bourgeois radicalism with Oszkár Jászi, Endre Ady, Pál Szende. Bourgeois radicalism is not a bourgeois or radical democrat, but a kind of socialist ideology, or more precisely a loose alliance of different liberal non-orthodox Marxist socialisms.⁹ Basically, Jászi dreamed the idea of “two Hungaries”: in this ideology's opinion two Hungarians are fighting each other: the old and the new, the reactionary

⁵ It was only in 1910 when Hungarian-speaking population exceeded 50% with a 54,5% result.

⁶ Attila Pók (ed.): *A Huszadik Század körének történelemfelfogása* [The perception of history of the circle of Twentieth Century] Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1982, 5–6.

⁷ János Gyurgyák: *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok – A magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története* [Your Hungarian homeland it became – The history of Hungarian national ideology and nationalism] Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2007, 166.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

and the progressive, the old feudal and the new socialist.¹⁰ Their view of history and society was not a scientific work, but a set of subjective opinions that subordinated everything to the creation of a “new Hungary”. In addition to this there was growing anti-Semitism in the country, which used to be a religious question now became a political matter.

Meanwhile, political Catholicism, for example in the form of Christian Socialism, also appeared in Hungary by the figure of bishop Ottokár Prohászka.¹¹ Political Catholicism sought to defend the Church’s school system, its land property and its rights against the secular state. In the political life one of the major representatives of Catholicism was the Catholic Populist Party led by Károly Huszár. In response to the increasingly militant stance, Jesuit radical Béla Bangha and his journal, the *Magyar Kultúra* [Hungarian Culture],¹² political Protestantism and later political atheism also appeared in public and university life. If we would like to understand the fundamental difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant education, the perfect example is the discussion between the Roman Catholic priest, philosopher, politician, professor Gyula Kornis and the Protestant politician, education expert and professor Sándor Imre. According to Kornis the function of school is recreating the existing social hierarchy and keeping the order of society, the status quo mainly through the grammar schools. Opposite of this opinion Sándor Imre believed that the purpose of education is to create flexibility and interoperability between classes of society, mainly through the development of civil and technical schools.¹³

In summary, the school system became a “battlefield” of the different paradigms, denominations, faiths, classes of society and political courses, because every actor of the public life wanted to create their next generation through their own ideology in education. All of the sides’ catchword was: “Who has the youth, has the future.”

¹⁰ Ibid., 165.

¹¹ Jenő Gergely: *A politikai katolicizmus Magyarországon (1890 – 1950)* [The political Catholicism in Hungary (1890 – 1950)] Budapest, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1977, 9–30.

¹² Ibid., 44–50.

¹³ Péter Donáth: *Konszenzusereső reformer a válságok és szélsőségek korában – Imre Sándor a nemzeti együttműködés akadályairól, művelődéspolitikai szerepvállalásáról, a köznevelésről, s a magyar pedagógiáról.* [Consensus searcher reformer in the era of crises and extremes – Sándor Imre about the obstacles of national cooperation, about his engagement in cultural politics, about public education and the Hungarian pedagogics.] Budapest, Trezor Kiadó, 2022, 305.

THE 1900 PROGRAMME OF KING LAZLO LODGE

As the turn of the century approached, domestic lodges increasingly felt that they were operating in a vacuum and were unable to offer real action plans to their members calling for social change. The process was further fuelled by the growing number of teachers and instructors joining the lodges between 1899 and 1910, particularly, from elementary schools, higher commercial schools, higher-secondary schools of science and higher-elementary schools. The teachers of these types of schools could hope to improve their social and existential situation and gain more prestige through Freemasonry, which thus provided them with a channel for advocacy and representation in national political affairs.

This was the situation from which the Hungarian lodge world was moved by the King Lazlo lodge in Nagyvárad in 1899, with its newly elected Worshipful Master, dr. Zsigmond Várady. Following his election, at the meeting of the King Lazlo lodge on 20 April 1900, Worshipful Master Zsigmond Várady presented his proposal titled the *Social programme*.¹⁴ This 21-page handbook contained a comprehensive plan for the social, political, ecclesiastical, and educational transformation of the Hungarian society. Its importance cannot be overstated as in the following years, all the lodges in the country defined themselves in accordance with this document. This event was a breakthrough in terms of mobilising the membership. In the coming years, several lodges expressed their opinions and suggestions for further reflection on the *Social Programme* in the official Masonic gazette titled *Kelet* (East). This programme defined the thinking of the Masonic lodges for years, setting new ambitious goals and generating new conflicts in a society that had hitherto rigidly refused to take a public role. Among its diverse visions, the ideas on education will be examined hereinafter.

THE OBJECTIVES OF RADICAL EDUCATION POLICY

A radically new approach was brought about by the King Lazlo lodge's *Social Programme* which proposed the profound reform of the state education system. The handbook of proposals was divided into two large parts each consisting of smaller points that analysed the issues of education, church, property, and suffrage. As Zsigmond Várady set forth in the introductory part, the nation was underdeveloped, in a state of wealth decline, while Catholic trends were advancing, which he termed reactionary. The great transformations must be carried out by the

¹⁴ Ernő Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], Budapest, Kárpátia Stúdió, 2011, 101–102. (Hungarian)

nation, however, under the coordination of the Freemasonry. The fact that their treatises on education are included in Part I, point 1 of the handbook, that is, it opens with them, demonstrates their dedication to public education. According to these, only as much learning material should be included in the curriculum as is needed in daily practical life. Students must be taught selfless love and patriotism in schools. To do this, however, they saw it essential to remove religious education from schools, as it generates hatred and divides society: “To this end, it is also necessary to place religious education into the framework of church life separated from school, so that it does not instil an aversion or even hatred of other faiths in the heart of the child ...”¹⁵ The handbook continues with the nationalisation of schools and teacher training, which led to the removal of the school network from the hands of the Churches: “Public education and teacher training should be nationalised entirely; all curricula that contradict modern scientific achievements should be eliminated, including those that are practically futile.”¹⁶

They call for the education to be free of charge and for teaching materials to be provided by the state. They urged the introduction of “state compulsory education” and handicrafts until the school leaving examination, as well as the education of “appreciating the beauties of nature and art”. “A public school for nursery teachers shall be established in every village and universities shall be located in the countryside.”¹⁷ Other plans included the extension of educational freedom for women, itinerant education, free education, lyceums and readings, distributing the works of patriotic writers to the general public. The provision for free education for workers is also mentioned as part of point 4. In the following, the practical implementation of these latter initiatives will be examined.

Not all the points were radical however, for example, the Hungarian Freemasonries insisted on a monarchical form of government. Regarding the origins of inspiration for the programme, the turn-of-the-century articles of the journal *Kelet* may provide some information.¹⁸ These give an account of the education policy programmes of the French and Belgian Masonic lodges. In 1899, at the suggestion of the French Grand Lodge, the French lodges discussed the following topics:

¹⁵ Ernő Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], 2011, 104. (Hungarian)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See *Kelet* [East], Volume XII., 25 December 1900, 348.; *Kelet* [East], Volume XI, No.1, 20 January 1899, 15.

...how to organise public education if we want all schools to be the disseminators of modern ideas, what actions should be taken against those whose educational establishments instil reactionary principles into the minds of children, how to weed out religious hatred among denominations from public schools, how to prevent austerity at the expense of public education, how to remove nuns from all girls' schools ...¹⁹

While the Belgian Grand Orient had reportedly refused to get involved in Belgian denominational education issues, its members had individually spoken out against the presence of clergy in schools. The Belgian Grand Lodge had previously stated that, in its opinion, education should be secular, compulsory, and free. The Western European examples thus presumably served as guidelines for the King Lazlo lodge, providing a model for the group around Várady. Nevertheless, they were by no means instructions.

The *Social Programme's* otherwise harsh language did not appeal to the taste of many lodges. There was great indignation that its lines pointed out the perceived unviability of the mainly conservative, non-political line of thought that had been taken up to that time and called for almost open engagement in politics. The former was offensive, the latter unacceptable to the older generations of Freemasons, who voiced their opinions, so in the next one or two years, almost all the worshipful masters, except Grand Master George Joannovich, took a stand on the programme.

An article by Mór Gelléri, the editor-in-chief of *Kelet* and member of the Coloman the Learned lodge, was particularly resounding.²⁰ He scrutinised the draft made by the lodge in Nagyvárad, which, in his opinion, seemed new only in its rhetoric. He particularly criticised the programme's suggestion that his generation had done nothing for decades. Whereas, according to Gelléri, there were indeed lodges specialising in the education of the people and the uplifting of the intellectual proletariat. According to Gelléri, these lodges, which are not named in the source, had already been involved in the reform of secondary school curricula, tried to influence the spirit of the textbooks, and sought links with teachers to educate children in the Masonic spirit. It is noteworthy however, that Gelléri also saw the radicals' overall view of Hungary as

¹⁹ *Kelet* [East], Volume XII, 25 December 1900, 348.

²⁰ Gelléri, Mór: Társadalmi program. Egy pár reflexió a „László király” páholy által Magyarország Symbolikus Nagypáholyához intézett legújabb „feliratra” [Social programme. A few reflections on the most recent “inscription” addressed by the “King Lazlo” lodge to the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary.] *Kelet*, [East] Volume XII, No. 5, 20 May 1900, 1–8, Special supplement to the May 1900 issue of the *Kelet*. Written and read by Mór Gelléri at the meeting of the Demokratia lodge on 12 May 1900.

highly exaggerated. In his opinion, there are indeed serious problems in the country, but they were no weightier than in other European countries.²¹

László Perjessy's reflection from the Árpád Lodge was less critical.²² He was admitted to the Árpád lodge in Szeged in 1900²³ and was headmaster of a higher commercial school of the town.²⁴ He was able to identify with the programme in principle and saw it as highlighting relevant issues. However, he condemned its tone as unfair to other lodges that led to unnecessary internal strife. Nevertheless, he also acknowledged that the style stemmed from a legitimate impatience.

B. Bárczi²⁵ presented the programme in the circle of Philantropia,²⁶ in the town of Zombor.²⁷ Bárczi said that he had heard many condemnations of the *Social Programme*, but he believed that political discussion should not be completely excluded from lodge life. "This idea of the King Lazlo lodge is both good and clever." Among the many points, Bárczi highlighted the issue of public education, too. In his view, the way the whole Hungarian system of public education was set up at the time was contradictory to the feasibility of the Nagyvárad programme as it lacked the right people and the necessary financing. The latter highlighted an important point. Hence, the issue could be debated, but there was not much room for progress.

Despite criticisms, the King Lazlo lodge must have felt a sense of momentum, since shortly after the declaration of the *Social Programme*, it further detailed its education plans in two pamphlets.²⁸ According to these, public education must be based on pure human ethics; religious education should be left up to the family and should be replaced with ethics lessons; while the education should be scientific, overloading the curriculum is to be avoided; a network of field trips should be established; at least one modern foreign language should be made compulsory (preferably English or French); nurseries and schools should be established in

²¹ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség*, [Fighting Freemasonry] 130. (Hungarian)

²² *Kelet*, [East] vol. XIII, No. 1, 20 January 1901, 15–19.

²³ József Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei: a magyarországi szabadkőművesek mozgalma és külföldi kapcsolatai 1920-tól 1937-ig* [Sins of Freemasonry: the movement of Masonic in Hungary and its foreign relations from 1920 to 1937], Volume 1, Budapest, 1938 Budai-Bernwaller Ny. (Hungarian); József Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei: A magyarországi szabadkőműves páholyok tagjainak névsora 1868-tól 1920-ig* [Sins of Freemasonry: the movement of Masonic in Hungary and its foreign relations from 1868 to 1920], Volume 2, Budapest, Budai-Bernwallner József Kvnny, 1939, 255. (Hungarian).

²⁴ See *A szegedi M. Kir. Állami Felső Kereskedelmi Iskola Értesítője* [Term of Hungarian Royal State Higher Commercial School in Szeged], 17th school year, 1901, 25. (Hungarian)

²⁵ It is not clear who the name may refer to, as it does not appear in this form in the József Palatinus compilation or in the 1920 list of the Ministry of the Interior. I assume, however, that the lecture was given by Iván Bárczi, an assistant financial secretary by profession, who was originally from Zombor.

²⁶ Circle: a Masonic unit smaller than a lodge, established in smaller communities with few members.

²⁷ *Kelet* [East] vol. XIII, 5. No. 20 May 1901, 177–182.

²⁸ *Kelet*, [East] vol. XII, 8. No. 20 October 1900, 259–262.

every municipality; the salary of teachers should be raised; unlimited right of public inquiry should be provided; teacher training should be improved; state control should be exercised over all schools; commemorations with ethical purposes should be organised in the schools; tuition fees should be cheap and fully waived for the poor; practical development of girls' education and freedom of education for women should also be realized. The detailed line of thought was later supplemented by the nationalisation of public education and teacher training; and the requirement to remove from the curriculum anything that is not in line with the latest scientific research; and that teaching materials along with equipment should be provided by the state and compulsory state education should be introduced. The ambitious plans were intended to fill gaps in the Eötvös education system in many areas. There are therefore several points among those listed above which served progress with modernisation upon further reflection: such as free education, teaching of a modern foreign language, complete abolition of truancy. At the same time, the issue of state, non-denominational education, which did not want to include religious education as a subject, was a source of serious tension.

The lodge of Nagyvárad was condemned by the Grand Lodge and the Council of the Federation for their ambitious plans and described their programme as unconstitutional "...because it seeks to play a political role, to control the political governance of the country and to challenge the authorities that run it."²⁹ However, the King Lazlo must have felt that it drew level with the Grand Lodge and, as the leader of radicalism, could begin to build a new direction. The next stage in the process of becoming independent was the roving conference announced by the King Lazlo Lodge on 2 December 1902, which from then on was planned to be held in a different town every year. The roving conference wanted to work alongside the national congresses, whose work, according to Zsigmond Várady, did not exceed administrative tasks.³⁰ The venue, agenda, and the time of the first roving conference were announced by the lodge members of Nagyvárad without consulting the Grand Lodge, leaving the Grand Lodge in an impasse: if they join the conference, they would give legitimacy to it; if not, the points would be discussed without them. Out of the 56 lodges operating in Hungary at the time, 24 were invited to the conference, where in the end the representatives of 18 lodges were present.³¹ Education was a key topic at the meeting. In his opening speech, Várady pointed out that he saw the excessive power of the Catholic Church in Hungary as the main obstacle to the

²⁹ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], 139. (Hungarian)

³⁰ This statement is a gross exaggeration but reviewing the minutes of the Council of the Federation (Szövetségtanács), it is true that a lot of attention and time was taken up by the mere administration of the participants and the topics presented. See MNL-OL-P 1083-3. number

³¹ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], 159. (Hungarian)

development of Hungarian society, and by taking away denominational schools, universities and academies from the Church, this position could be eliminated. In the end, the roving conference agreed on the following four points: 1) they expressed the need to nationalise schools; 2) the introduction of ethics as a subject in schools; 3) the withdrawal of religious education from schools; and 4) they entrusted the Union Lodge to prepare and map out these issues.³²

MASONIC EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN EDUCATION (1900–1908)

From the previous chapter, the main demands of the new direction dictated by King Lazlo lodge are clearly visible: state, non-denominational, free, and compulsory school system for all. In addition to the widespread extension of suffrage, as a logical complement to it, the radical transformation of the education system became the main objective of progressive Freemasonry. Those lodges and members who were prepared to identify with radicalism felt particularly important to remove religious education from the curriculum and made efforts to limit it to private life. Their main argument was that since the content of religious education varied from denomination to denomination and its interpretation depended largely on the presentation and personality of the teacher, who was in most cases a member of the clergy, therefore, in the education of future generations, it would easily lead to hatred among children, thus building barriers between them. This insight also became more pronounced in Masonic circles from the late 1890s. Dr. Menyhért Edelman,³³ a doctor and a member of the King Lazlo lodge, argued that religious education should be replaced by general moral education:

Against the present system of religious education, which instils denominational hatred into the soul of the young child and erects a barrier between man and man at an early age, we took a stand, we published and distributed perhaps the first manual of moral education in Hungarian to sow the seeds of pure human morality.³⁴

³² The subsequent involvement of the Union lodge may be the subject of further research, because, among the domestic lodges, the Kolozsvár-based Union had the largest number of teachers and instructors among its members. Most of them worked in Protestant denominational educational institutions, therefore, it is questionable what their attitude was to the withdrawal of religious education from schools.

³³ Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei* [Sins of Freemasonry], 1938, 64. (Hungarian)

³⁴ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], 48. (Hungarian)

Later sources also failed to precisely define the nature of the moral education as a substitute for religious education. The emphasis was mainly placed on the fact that the content of this subject had fewer risks of arousing emotions, and entrusted its transmission to qualified teachers, not to priests. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the removal of religious education from compulsory school curriculum occupied a prominent place in the *Social Programme* and its addenda and among the points of the subsequent roving conference, which was able to win the agreement of many members. It is not a coincidence that a third of the federation also considered the ideas of the French work programme mentioned above worthy of being applied to the Hungarian situation. A discussion on the question of religious education could thus begin, in which there was a basic consensus among the members.

The headmaster, László Perjessy, quoted earlier, agreed with the abolition of religious education from schools. He saw the difficulty in that leaving religious matters to families provides no guarantee for the child not receiving even more hate speech about people of other religions.³⁵ Perjessy did not elaborate further on his suggestion, nor did he offer any solutions, but this research presumes that it is possible that similar questions led the designers of later Masonic dormitories.³⁶ László Árpád Taxner,³⁷ a member of the Comenius lodge believed that society was experiencing a moral deficit because religious education was failing its role in moral development.³⁸ “Religious education,” he writes, “is lost in its rituals”. Morality can be “more” because the moral is unified while religion depends on the “denomination”, it is divisive, and open to many interpretations. He saw great danger in the complete withdrawal of moral education from teachers, which had been transferred to teachers of religious education. He asked his lodge to take up the following directive:

³⁵ *Kelet* [East], vol. XIII, No. 1, 20 January 1901, 15–19.

³⁶ See MNL-OL-P number 1083-3. – 1911. *Ülésjegyzőkönyvek* [Reports]

³⁷ Principal and instructor of boy and girl school of Alsó főutca, later the principal of elementary school of Szent István square in District V in Budapest. *Hungaricana, Budapesti Cím- Lakásjegyzék*, [Budapest apartment and address lists] 1913. (vol. 25), part 3, 526. More József Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei*, [Sins of Freemasonry] 345. (Hungarian)

³⁸ *Kelet* [East], vol. XV, No. 3, 25 March 1903., 81–84.

the training and consolidation of the moral sense and character of the pupils is primarily the task of the teacher, moral education, initially in the lower grades is suitable in the form of stories, benevolent advice and parables, then gradually developed from grade to grade into the form of narratives, life and character sketches, included among the ordinary subjects, scheduled an hour a week or divided into half-hours, to be presented and explained by each teacher in his or her own class.³⁹

The development of educational agendas similar to those of the aforementioned roving conferences was also pursued independently by the various radicalising lodges. For example, in 1907, Dr. Mihály Szalay⁴⁰, the Worshipful Master of the Reform lodge, met every two weeks to discuss the issue of non-denominational public schools.⁴¹ Regarding religious education, it is highly interesting that among their many plans for the future, they considered the following actions as realistically achievable in the near future: the abolition of religious education in the first and second grades of elementary school; while secular teachers should teach religion in the upper grades and priests of all denominations should be excluded from schools.

STATE, NON-DENOMINATIONAL AND FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION (1900–1908)

The radical Masonic education policy considered a system of free and compulsory public schools, supervised by the state and completely independent of the Churches its ideal. In view of the fact that 70% of domestic schools of the period were owned by a denomination, this seemed a bold plan. Compared to the question of religious education, this draft seemed to have even more sources of conflict with the Catholic Church, since it called for the complete dismantling of one of its main domestic structural arrangements. According to the recollections, the Masonic position seems to be even more united on the issue of non-denominational public education than on the more delicate issue of religious education. It was a common Protestant opinion,⁴² even beyond the lodges, that the quality of denominational schools and the

³⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁰ Journalist, editor in the world outside the lodge. Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei* [Sins of Freemasonry], 328. (Hungarian)

⁴¹ *Kelet* [East], vol. XIX, No. 3, 20 March 1907, 77–82.

⁴² “From the end of the 19th century, the Transylvanian diocese handed over more and more of its schools to the state. Part of the reason for this was the poverty of schools and teachers, who were living in great poverty and craved a more secure state salary.” Pál Hatos: *Szabadkőművesből református püspök: Ravasz László élete* [From

qualifications of their teachers were inferior to those of the state schools, and that their centralisation therefore served the cause of modernisation. As 15% of children of compulsory school age were not attending school, it seemed timely to tighten up and, for social reasons, to exempt education from tuition fees, regardless of worldview.

Making the theoretical foundations of the *Social Programme* his own, József Mikussai, a teacher from Nagyvárad, gave a lecture at the 1903 Congress in Nagyvárad⁴³ on the urgency of nationalising schools.⁴⁴ According to him, the state shows unity, while denominations only create division. It is therefore clear, in his view, that state schools are ahead of church schools in the intellectual field, which is why they should be put in competition because teachers and students are better qualified in state schools.

In addition to practical considerations, Lipót Sidwers from the Progress Lodge put forward patriotism and national unity without hatred as the main objectives of the nationalisation in 1901 at the official meeting of his Lodge.⁴⁵ The views of Sidwers and Mikussai were in fact shared by the other lodges, with no significant differences of opinion among members who did not shy away from political issues.

The debate that took place in 1907 in the Fraternity lodge⁴⁶ shows most strikingly that there was agreement on the basic principles between moderates and radicals, but that there were substantial differences regarding the details. The lodge favoured the idea of compulsory and somewhat uniform popular education, but they did not want to remove denominationalism completely. Thus, it was hardly acceptable for teachers who were members of the lodge to go against their oaths taken in their denominational schools and be advocates of non-denominational schools. A further problem was that some denominations and some denominational schools had more modern and competitive curricula than state schools. Therefore, intervention was only possible where there was backwardness. According to one of the members⁴⁷, denominational education used to have a purpose and a place, but time had

Freemason to a Calvinist bishop. Life of László Ravasz], Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó, 2016. 33.; “Let us not be sad but pray every hour: complete state free public education, thy kingdom come!” See: *Néptanítók Lapja*, vol. XXXI., No. 33, 18 August 1898, 6.

⁴³ Bíró Márk: *A magyarországi szabadkőműves páholyoknak Nagyvárad kel[etén] megtartott első vándorgyűlésének naplója* [Diary of the first itinerant meeting of the Hungarian Masonic lodges in the city of Nagyvárad (Oradea)], Nagyvárad, Sonnenfeld Adolf Műnyomda, 1904, 73–86.

⁴⁴ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség*, 175. (Hungarian)

⁴⁵ *Kelet* [East], vol. XIII, No. 2, 20 February 1901, 53–55.

⁴⁶ *Kelet* [East], vol. XIX, No. 3, 20 March 1907, 89–90.

⁴⁷ Source indicates the member with “Lö.”. It is possible that “Lö.” is Dr. Vilmos Löwinger advocate. Palatinus: *A szabadkőművesség bűnei* [Sins of Freemasonry], 209. (Hungarian)

passed by it. An unnamed⁴⁸ Protestant headmaster stated in his speech that Protestants have always opposed the absolutist aspirations of the state and would therefore not let the denomination out of their hands. Some said it was a noble idea, but simply not timely. Those day's "clericalism" was so strong that the project was not feasible. Moreover, a violent, premature attempt would only backfire and lead to an anti-Semitic movement. Their conclusion was that they should first be content with compulsory⁴⁹ and then free public education, and then possibly nationalisation. In addition to the above, there was another major argument in favour of nationalisation: the schools of Serbian and Romanian national minorities were run by the denomination of the national minority concerned in many cases. These schools operated almost independently of the Hungarian state, their language of instruction was not Hungarian, and the education they provided was not for the sake of Hungarian society. As Mikussai, quoted earlier, highlighted: "National minority schools are hotbeds of Hungarian hatred ... National minorities and denominations alike are enemies of nationalisation, the former sees its agitating capacity, the latter its dominant position threatened..."⁵⁰ Dr. Mihály Szalay also stated that "Denominational education is the strongest fortress of denominationalism and national minority."⁵¹ (It was not by chance that some lodges considered themselves as one of the bastions of Hungarian "supremacism/hegemony".)⁵² The contradiction in this respect is fascinating, as the nationalism of the lodges was thus juxtaposed with the tolerance of their Masonic ideals. Szalay solved this strange situation in his own way: "If we can explain to the

⁴⁸ Source indicates the member with "H.". It is presumably Nándor Hirschmann, the headmaster of the Lutheran Lyceum of the Apostolic Faith in Pressburg (currently: Bratislava, Slovakia) (Pozsonyi Ágostai Hitvallású Evangélikus Líceum). He was the president of the Lyceum Self-Help Institute and a member of the board of the National Association of Lutheran Teachers and Instructors (Ágh. Hitv. Ev. Tanárok és Tanítók országos egyesülete). Palatinus: *The sins of Freemasonry*, 137.; *A pozsonyi Ágostai Hitvallású Evangélikus Líceum Értesítője*, [Bulletin of Lutheran Lyceum of the Apostolic Faith in Pressburg] 1908/1909 school term, 1908, 52.

⁴⁹ Education was made compulsory for children as early as 1868, when the Public Education Act was passed. However: "...less than two-fifths of schools (6 356 schools to be precise) were open for a full school year in today's terms, namely 9-10 months, with all others open for less than that. Almost half of the schools (7 449) worked for 8-9 months, but 17% (2 723) did not even comply with the legal minimum of 8 months of compulsory schooling..." See: Nagy: *Magyar tanító 1911-ben*, 34. In addition: "...on average 85% of schoolable in the country attended primary school..." Gabriella Baska – Mária Nagy – Éva Szabolcs: *Magyar tanító, 1901* [Hungarian teacher, 1901], (Iskolakultúra-könyvek 9.), Pécs, Molnár Nyomda és Kiadó Kft., 2001, 13. However, only 15.2% of pupils eventually completed sixth grade. Ibid, 26.

⁵⁰ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség* [Fighting Freemasonry], 176. (Hungarian)

⁵¹ *Kelet* [East], vol. XIX, No. 3, 20 March 1907, 79.

⁵² For example, the Unio Lodge in Cluj-Napoca. Pál Hatós: *Szabadkőművesből református püspök: Ravasz László élete* [From Freemason to a Calvinist bishop. Life of László Ravasz], Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó, 2016. 102.; László Ravasz: *Emlékezéseim* [My memories], Budapest, Kiadja a Református Egyházi Zsinat Irodájának Sajtóosztálya, 1992., 120. We can read about more nationalist, Hungarian supremacist Lodges and dominant figures: Balázs Ablonczy: *Száz év múlva lejár? – Újabb Trianon-legendák* [Expires in a hundred years? – New legends of Trianon], Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó és Kereskedelmi Kft., 2022., 33–50.

denominations that this is the national interest, then they will bow to the argument and, as a denomination, they will allow state, national schools in Hungary.”⁵³

MASONIC EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN EDUCATION
(1908–1913)

The year 1907 marked a milestone in the attitude of Hungarian Freemasonry towards education. On 25 April 1907, the Hungarian Parliament adopted the bill proposed by Count Albert Apponyi *On the legal status of non-state elementary public schools and the salaries of municipal and denominational teachers* (Act XXVII of 1907). This reform was carried out, however, by leaving the educational institutions supervised by the church schools under the ownership and administration of the denominations. Freemasonry saw this law as a disastrous defeat because it achieved the modernisation demanded by the lodges (for example, tuition-free education) by completely brushing aside the idea of nationalisation and the withdrawal of religious education from schools.

Why was this event a decisive event in the working of the Hungarian lodges? In 1906, the federation agreed that they were ready to continue to act as a united movement on the question of education, to support state, non-denominational, free public education, without religious education. But no one of the 30–40 Freemasonry members of Parliament fought against the Act XXVII of Apponyi in the house of Parliament. Some of them even supported the law with their votes. These representatives were loyal to their political parties – for example the governing party – not to their Masonic federation. This created a huge breach of trust between the Hungarian lodges. The King Lazlo lodge demanded the expulsion of these members from the federation. On the other hand, the National lodge protected them on the basis of liberty of conscience. In the discussion many lodges expressed their opinion.⁵⁴ The conflict rose again between the conservative and the radical lodges. While the conservatives considered the decision of the federation a recommendation, radicals considered the decision a binding programme, which must be carried out in unison nationwide. Due to the evolved situation many radical members of the federation and the conservative lodges grew apart, and progressives

⁵³ Raffay: *Harcoló szabadkőművesség*, [Fighting Freemasonry] 80. (Hungarian)

⁵⁴ The summary of discussion is highlighted in *A Nagyvárad keletén dolgozó László király páholy s a Budapest keletén dolgozó Nemzeti páholy közt nyílt harc tört ki / A Prometheus páholy* [Open fight broke out between the King Lazlo lodge, working in the east of Nagyvárad and the National lodge, working in the east of Budapest / Prometheus lodge] Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library], Kny. D 6.370 Kisnyomtatványtár 1–3.

became more radical. They looked for a way of their own expression by establishing new lodges (called Martinovics [Budapest], Archimedes [Budapest], Anonymus [Budapest], March [Budapest], Bihar [Nagyvárad⁵⁵]), new political formations (called bourgeois radicalism, later the Radical Party), newspapers (called *Dél* [South], *Huszadik Század* [Twentieth Century], *Világ* [Light]).

The frustration that arose from the failure led to the continued radicalisation of several lodges, out of which the Demokratia lodge of Budapest stood out. Later, some members of this lodge left and formed the Martinovics lodge, which was approved by the Grand Lodge on 27 March 1909. The leaders of the eight young founders of the lodge were Oszkár Jászi and Zoltán Zigány.

The role of religious education continued to concern Freemasons after 1907 and they continued to call for its removal from the curriculum. What was new in the articles published between 1908 and 1913 was that they saw religious education as a threat to natural sciences favoured by the radicals and therefore, the emphasis was placed on their defence. The Demokratia, then the Martinovics lodge, believed that religious education, since it does not allow for the teaching of modern sciences, keeps a large part of the Hungarian society in “backwardness.” And it is precisely through this subject that clericalism was able to “detain” the spirit of the age, making any development impossible.

According to Zsigmond Várady’s writing in the journal *Dél* (South): “There are three places where the nation’s progress is decided today: in schools, in the press and in the House of Representatives.”⁵⁶ He painfully details that in this struggle, clericalism was winning, and with the 1907 Act, the Church had finally taken control of the Parliament. According to Várady, it was becoming more and more common in schools to falsify and suppress scientific evidence when it contradicted faith. He gave an account of several cases when anti-Semitic teachers of religious education verbally insulted Jewish students and punished their Christian friends, and Protestant students were forced to study the Catholic religious education, and then they were graded despite the law. Students were afraid to resist because they overtly threatened the Protestants with damnation. He believed that since the introduction of the law, the spirit of “clericalism” strengthened greatly in the schools. He was concerned about the rise of congregations of Mary: students were singing religious hymns, worshiped the pope, recited

⁵⁵ Oradea, Romania

⁵⁶ *Dél* [South], vol. II, No. 1, January 1909, 5–8.

poems to him, played religious anti-Semitic dramas in the schools, and they were separated with congregation badges from other students. The supervisors and headmasters were appointed from the priests, who eliminated modern sciences from schools. He provides an example of an unnamed secondary grammar school, where the cardinal bishop had asked the headmaster 10-12 years before to give preference to the Catholic students because the non-Catholic students were better learners. According to the headmaster's answer: "Your Eminence! when a child steps across the doorstep of the secondary school, he or she ceases to be Catholic and I know students only!"⁵⁷ In those days, crucifixes were placed in all classrooms of the abovementioned secondary grammar school. As Várady said, this is how the institutes of rationalism fall. The journal of the radicals stated in detail why a country where religious education dominates over natural sciences, lags behind internationally.⁵⁸

According to Zsigmond Várady's words, education must be the task of the state, not that of the denominations. Denomination educates people for the afterlife, while the state needs them to work for the present world. Schools cannot be therefore taken over by clericalism. The school pertains to science, not to faith. Confident and smart people should be trained for the country instead of "submissive lazy" people. *Dél* highlights the unacceptable inconsistency that the content of religious education does not match the content of other subjects. This raises the question: should religious education remain the only subject, or is it the only one to be eliminated from the curriculum? Natural sciences focus on development while religious education conveys that everything "just happened" as it is. Religious education creates helpless people because it teaches that we should accept what a higher authority states instead of thinking over processes. Religious education forbids complex thinking and thus creates dogmas. According to the article, it was not a coincidence that those countries were the most competitive where clericalism was pushed into the background. Compared to these countries, Russia, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Hungary were significantly underdeveloped.⁵⁹ The Church, through religious citizens educated in these schools, keeps the state in captivity. It is important to note however, that this Masonic opinion is exaggerated, considering that the level of the Hungarian educational system of the period was much closer to that of the Western countries,

⁵⁷ *Dél* [South], vol. II, No. 1, January 1909, 6.

⁵⁸ *Dél* [South], vol. II, No. 15, October 1909, 4–8.

⁵⁹ It is possible that Max Weber's book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* influenced the author of the idea. In any case, there are much more complex reasons why the development of Russia or the Turkish Empire, for example, lagged behind the secular West. See Oded Galor: *The journey of Humanity – The origins of wealth and inequality*. Budapest, Libri, 2022., more Jared Diamond: *Guns, germs and steel – The fates of human societies*. Budapest, Akkord Kiadó, 2019.

than to that of the negative examples listed in the article.⁶⁰ Consistent with the above views, an article from 1910 without an author sees religious education as the continuation of Middle Ages in schools:

The complete elimination of religious education, the extermination of excessive nationalism, the abolition of worshipping the Middle Ages and the old-fashioned historical spirit must be pursued, and it must be completed by placing the entire education on the basis of natural sciences.⁶¹

The writer considered it a sign of backwardness that school textbooks still gave an account of medieval legends, religious zeal, religious tales, and a positive image of Jesuits. The faith that contemporaries put in natural sciences, in which they saw the future, can therefore be clearly discerned. It is important to note that, as in previous years, the new generation of Freemasons also saw moral education as a means of replacing religious education. In addition to Freemasonry, moral education was well-received by other freethinkers and other radical groups in the era.

According to an unknown lodge member, the lack of teaching morality in schools had never been felt as much as it did at the time.⁶² Previously, religion provided a moral limit, but among the new intellectual trends of the modern times, religion lost its power and had no influence. Therefore, there is a need for ethics which could improve the souls of the youth, while it is not limited to religious education, but it is able to offer more. Religious education can be interpreted in many ways, while ethics is unified. The author mentioned Japan as an example, where the tradition of ethics and moral education was thousands of years old, yet it excluded the idea of God and the European type of religious education. As he wrote, Japan influenced Felix Adler, professor at Columbia University, who launched his movement for a unified moral education of the youth in 1875. He established the *Ethical Culture Ligue* which already had a wide network in Western European countries, with the mission of spreading moral education and separating it from religious education.

⁶⁰ See Ignác Romsics: *Magyarország története a huszadik században* [History of Hungary in the Twentieth century.] 41–47.

⁶¹ *Dél* [South], vol. III, No. 14, September 1910, 6–7.

⁶² *Dél* [South], vol. III, No. 16, November 1910, 6–7.

The instructor gets the children as they come to him, with their ideas and language, also with their family's faith. His only job should be to show them the rules of a higher morality. The instructor does not take the place of the priest or that of the head of the family. He connects his forces with them to educate all men to be good men.⁶³

STATE, NON-DENOMINATIONAL, FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION
(1908–1913)

The systemic reform of the school system remained the main objective of the radical lodges. The bill named after Albert Apponyi fell short of the hopes of the Freemasons and continued to leave more than two-thirds of Hungarian schools in the hands of the Church. However, the centralisation of the education system, that is, its ownership by the state, remained one of the main demands of the lodges engaging in politics.

Zoltán Zigány, one of the charismatic figures of the Martinovics lodge founded by Oszkár Jászi⁶⁴ pointed out the unsustainable conditions of the Hungarian clerical school system in a lengthy analysis, which was also published in detail by *Dél* following its publication by *Huszdik Század*.⁶⁵ According to Zigány, public education was going full steam ahead towards denominationalism.⁶⁶ By that time, the summer holiday in the lodges had already lasted for seven months, so according to Zigány's report, the shock of the laws adopted in 1907 forced the Freemasons to seven months of inactivity. Zigány used a wealth of data to demonstrate the extent to which the undivided, single-teacher, and overcrowded school structure was underdeveloped. According to Zigány, in 1905–1906, there were 1447⁶⁷ schools in Hungary where the Hungarian language was taught with unsatisfactory success. These were all schools of national minorities or of denominations. There were 3248 schools with a mixed language of

⁶³ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁴ Zoltán Zigány principal of the Civil School, teacher of law and economics, city inspector. As teacher and principal he worked in girl Civil School of Kis-szuzgló in VII. district, and also in higher trade school of Aranyosi in Budapest. *A budapesti székesfővárosi községi polgári fiú- és leány-iskolák értesítője* [Term of boy and girl civil school of Budapest], 1911–1912, 95.; *A budapesti Aranyosi-féle Felső Kereskedelmi Iskola Értesítője* [Bulletin of higher trade school of Aranyosi in Budapest], school term 1903–1904, 34. He used the pseudonym "Pál Tóásó" as his pen name in some newspapers, such as *Socialism*.

⁶⁵ *Dél* [South], vol. I, No. 10, 1908. 6–8.

⁶⁶ According to the data available to us, the process was the other way round: the number of state elementary schools increased steadily during the period. Baska–Nagy–Szabolcs: *Magyar tanító, 1901, 22–29*.

⁶⁷ Zoltán Zigány is probably making reference here to the legal justification for 19th paragraph of the 1907 Act. <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=90700027.TVI&searchUrl=/ezer-ev-torvenyei%3Fpagenum%3D45> (Accessed: 1 November 2024)

instruction, and all but 65 of these were denominational. More than 2000 teachers were working without a diploma in the country at the time.⁶⁸ It must be a false information, because 99 per cent of teachers in 1913 had diploma.⁶⁹ 888 teachers knew little, and 300 teachers knew nothing in Hungarian.⁷⁰ However according to the modern historical literature in the analysed era the number of non-Hungarian language schools decreased with 60 per cent.⁷¹ They all worked in the “shadow” of the denominational schools. However, state schools were all better than the average, only 44% of them was a one-teacher school,⁷² which seemed almost ideal at the time. In addition, according to Zigány, the curriculum of denominational schools was completely underdeveloped with science being almost completely neglected. Anyway, it was not true in this form, the pupils had to learn real subjects in the schools of Churches also, basically in accordance with the Western-European standards, but we have to notice that, most of the grammar schools were in the hands of denominations, and in these schools the religious education and the subjects of human sciences and ancient languages were more focused,⁷³ than the natural sciences, modern languages or sociology and economics. At the time, under Apponyi’s school policy, there were 13 different, independent school operators in the country;⁷⁴ this resembled medieval fragmentation, as Zigány drew it. The phrasing in this context is quite propagandistic again, but a contemporary professor and expert of education, Sándor Imre also saw that the network of schools in Hungary really was divided in these years because of the large number of school keeper, like the different denominations.⁷⁵ According to the article of

⁶⁸ It is not clear on what basis Zigány calculated. The official report of the Ministry mentions only 342 people in 1911. Mária Nagy: Magyar tanító 1911-ben. [Hungarian teacher in 1911] in *Iskolakultúra*, 2006/2., 36.

⁶⁹ Mariann Nagy: Magyarország oktatásügye. [Education of Hungary] in *Magyarország történeti földrajza II.* [Historical geography of Hungary]. Pál Beluszky (ed.). Pécs, 2008, 126.

⁷⁰ Among 32000 teachers, this is a significant minority. In addition, in 1900 73.6% of the teachers were Hungarian native languages, but this percentage was 83.2% in 1911, and 78,9% of elementary schools were Hungarian mother tongues in 1911. Mária Nagy: Magyar tanító 1911-ben. [Hungarian teacher in 1911], 2006, 37.

⁷¹ Nagy: *Magyarország oktatásügye. [Education of Hungary]*, 127.

⁷² It is not clear again, on what basis Zigány calculated, but in 1901 70.65% of all elementary schools were one-teacher school, and it was a steadily improving trend. Baska–Nagy–Szabolcs: *Magyar tanító, 1901*, 27. In addition, public schools embodied an “ideal” model, so the Zigány figure may have been close to the truth. *Ibid*, 24.

⁷³ István Mészáros – András Németh – Béla Pukánszky: *Bevezetés a pedagógia és az iskoláztatás történetébe.* [Introduction into the history of pedagogy and education in school.] Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 1999, 360.

⁷⁴ This information is quite accurate in 1913: State, Royal Catholic, County, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Jewish, Foundation, Private, Transylvanian Status, Protestant, Unitarian, Orthodox. Nagy: *Magyarország oktatásügye. [Education of Hungary]*, 136. We can find the same school keepers in Gábor I. Kovács: *Eliték és iskolák, felekezetek és etnikumok.* [Elites and schools, denominations and ethnics.] Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2011, 90–93.

⁷⁵ Péter Donáth: Konszenzusereső reformer a válságok és szélsőségek korában – Imre Sándor a nemzeti együttműködés akadályairól, művelődéspolitikai szerepvállalásáról, a köznevelésről, s a magyar pedagógiáról. [Consensus searcher reformer in the era of crises and extremes – Sándor Imre about the obstacles of national cooperation, about his engagement in cultural politics, about public education and the Hungarian pedagogics.] Budapest, Trezor Kiadó, 2022, 12–22.

Zigány, the biggest beneficiaries of the 1907 Act were the owners of denominational school. This recent conclusion was a way of expression of the radical Freemasonries' frustration.

The problem was that – according to Zigány again – the 1907 Act did not substantially reduce the number of truants, since 650,000 children did not go to school⁷⁶ because there was no school in their vicinity. In Zigány's view, clerical organisations were multiplying and growing stronger across the country. Public education was declining while denominational education was growing stronger. However, in the light of the data available from the research it is clear that overall, the study published by Zigány can be considered more of a political essay and indictment than a professional work. For example, this 650,000 number is a gross exaggeration. However, according to the report of the Ministry of Religious and Public Education, it was a fact, that in 1906–1907 there were 331,994 children who did not go to school, although they were schoolable, include 139,957 Hungarian children.⁷⁷ We have to notice that fact too, it was a constantly improving process, namely in 1896 79 per cent of schoolable children learned in schools, while in 1913 this proportion was 93 per cent.⁷⁸

Count Alfonso Castelnau, a member of the Demokratia lodge reported that the clergy should be expelled from the schools by the most forceful means possible and scientific rationality should be given priority.⁷⁹ He believed it was no coincidence that while the entire school system in Portugal was in the hands of the Church, illiteracy rate was higher in the country than in Russia. He said Albert Apponyi deserved “credit” for enacting a “patriotic” school law with a new foundation. Apponyi's law took denominational schools out of the hands of the state. A clerical leadership was formed in the educational administration. In his view, a process was taking place at the time in which existing public schools were also being converted into denominational schools and teachers along with students were forced into Catholic congregations. The Count, however, misunderstood this trend. During this period, the number and proportion of state schools in the total school system was growing slowly but steadily.⁸⁰

It is worth noting that in the sources the individual members of the lodge spoke about class struggle within society, one of the main forums of which was the school.⁸¹ They were careful

⁷⁶ *Dél* [South] vol. I, No. 14, 1908, 8.

⁷⁷ *Kormányjelentés és Statisztikai évkönyv – 1908.*, [Report of Government and Annals of Year – 1908] Budapest, Atheneum Irodalmi és Nyomdai R.T. Könyvnyomdája, 1909, 178.

⁷⁸ Nagy: *Magyarország oktatásügye.* [Education of Hungary], 126.

⁷⁹ *Kélet* [East], vol. XXII, No. 14, 1 Nov 1910, 362–364.

⁸⁰ Tamás Dobszay: Az oktatás [Education], in András Gergely (ed.): *Magyarország története a 19. században* [History of Hungary in Nineteenth century] Budapest, Osiris, 2005. 465–472.

⁸¹ *Dél* [South], vol. I, No. 7, May 1908, 7.

to distinguish in their communications between institutionalised clericalism and private religion: “The fight against clericalism is not the fight against religion.”⁸² Finally, it is particularly noteworthy that Zsigmond Várady, Zoltán Zigány and Count Castelnau spoke independently of each other about the rise of Portuguese and French monks and nuns in Hungary. Zigány pointed out that “new and new schools, convents and monasteries of foreign monks and nuns, who immigrate en masse, are built all over the country.”⁸³ While Castelnau referred to a “reliable” source upon claiming that the immigration of thousands of Portuguese monks, priests and nuns to Hungary was “imminent” and to which the Hungarian government was open to.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any further detailed material on the background to these rather bold claims presented above. However, the many thousands of people and the image of a new “clerical conquest” in domestic education seem greatly exaggerated.

SUMMARY

We have seen that at the turn of the 19th century, some lodges of the Hungarian Freemasonry made proposals for the development of the national educational policy and prepared a political programme for this. We must understand, however, that the lodges themselves had very limited room for action. A striking example of this was the so-called “Lex Apponyi”, adopted in 1907, which proved that the lodges were unable to enforce their demands⁸⁵ in national politics.

The attitude of the individual lodges and their members to the demands made was also quite different. It is worth pointing out that there were also serious fault lines within Hungarian

⁸² *Dél* [South], vol. I, No. 17, December 1908, 5–6.

⁸³ *Dél* [South], vol. I, No. 10, 1908, 8.

⁸⁴ *Kelet* [East], vol. XXII, No. 14, 1 November 1910, 363.

⁸⁵ “Many reasons existed why the number and role of Freemasons holding high positions in the Hungarian government was not very significant...In the 1892 elections, of the total number of 453 members (413 elected members and 40 delegated from the Croatian Parliament), 40 Freemasons were elected, and in the 1896 elections, 42. Subsequently, the number of Masonic deputies fell to 40 in the 1901 elections and to 34 in 1905. Thus, they represented between 7.5 and 9.3% of the House, and between 8.2 and 10.2% of its elected members. Most Masonic deputies belonged to one of the two dominant parties in the House of Representatives, namely the Liberal Party and the Independence Party (Year 1848). In the 1892- 1896 Parliament, there were 26 Freemasons in the total of 243 Liberal Party deputies, or 10.7%, and 9 in the total of 86 deputies of the Year 1848 Party or 10.5%. In the next Parliament, there were 30 Masonic deputies in the total of 290 Liberal Party deputies, or 10.3%, and 17 in the total of 159 of the Year 1848 Party deputies, or 10.7% in the 1905- 1906 Parliament.” Ludwik, Hass: The socio-professional composition of Hungarian freemasonry (1868–1920), in *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 1974/30, 91–92. On the other hand, according to the sources of Masonic in the analysed era, half of these representatives were inactive in their Lodges’ life, so in many cases they did not stand for the interests of Freemasonry Federation. We have to underline the fact also, these representatives were separated in different political parties, fighting each other in Parliament.

Freemasonry. The truly committed advocates of free, non-denominational, state education without religious education were mainly active among the lodge members in Budapest. These Masonic teachers in the capital were, without exception, teaching in state-run schools,⁸⁶ as opposed to the mainly Roman Catholic grammar schools. Accordingly, they wanted to increase the importance of their own curriculum in Hungarian education, which was based mainly on sciences, modern languages, and natural sciences. Secondary grammar schools of higher status, however, which provided access to universities, emphasized mainly the subjects of classical education – Latin, ancient Greek, religious education – that is, the scholarly education. Taking this into account, the struggle of Freemasonry over educational policy can also be understood as an internal struggle of the Hungarian teaching community, which was divided during the period. In conclusion, according to my own research, there was a considerable fraction between the society of teachers of the Roman Catholic grammar schools and the group of the Masonic teachers. The Masonic teachers were the symbols of the new, modern, bourgeois Hungary and education system, who taught the candidates of the new professions of twentieth century. For example commercial experts, bureaucrats, officers etc.⁸⁷ It is no wonder, that we can find lot of Masonic teachers especially in civil schools: this type of the education was a typical product of the era of dualism, most civil schools were in Hungarian, their personnel taught pupils on “rational” basis to professions of the middle-class.⁸⁸ As a contrast the teachers of schools of Churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, taught pupils to carry on classic, “Latin–Greek” culture. This confrontation is noticeable also in the world of the Hungarian Lodges between Masonic teachers of Protestant Churches, basically in the middle-sized towns of the countryside, and the Masonic teachers of elementary, civil, higher commercial schools, essentially in the capital, Budapest.

Moving away from Budapest, the teachers of some rural lodges were mainly from Protestant secondary schools, academies, and lyceums. In criticising the “clericalism” of the Roman Catholic Church and its predominance in education, they were in line with their counterparts in

⁸⁶ Basically, in elementary, civil, higher commercial, and general secondary schools.

⁸⁷ Here we should note that the most dynamically developing vocational training sectors of the dualism era were trade and industry education. For the liberal Hungarian ruling class, Hungarian industry represented the strengthening of Hungary's position, its independence from Austria within the empire, and a means of Hungarian supremacy. Katalin Vörös: A modernizáció és a nacionalizmus keresztmetszetében: Nemzetépítési törekvések a dualizmus kori középfokú iparoktatás vonatkozásában. [In the cross-section of modernization and nationalism: Nation-building efforts in relation to secondary industrial education in the era of dualism], in *Modernizáció és nemzetállam-építés: Haza és/vagy haladás dilemmája a dualizmus kori Magyarországon* [Modernization and building of nation-state: dilemma of homeland and/or progression in Hungary of the era of dualism], (ed.) Csibi, Norbert; Schwarczwölder, Ádám, Pécs, 2018., 248.

⁸⁸ Nagy: *Magyarország oktatásügye*. [Education of Hungary], 132.

Budapest. In my view, this struggle could be interpreted as a rather late stage of the Protestant and Roman Catholic cultural struggle between baroque and anti-baroque.⁸⁹ At the same time, Masonic Protestant educators had a higher social embeddedness and prestige in their local communities than their counterparts in the Hungarian capital. They spent longer periods of time in their institutions than most of the lodge members in Budapest, therefore, they were less likely to feel rootless. The Calvinist and Lutheran Churches were able to provide them with financial and social support.⁹⁰ For example the Churches provided in many cases for their teachers: apartment in villages, firewood, land, (which was tilled by the parents of children very often), products, “couple-salary”, “stole-money” and “soul-money”.⁹¹ On the other hand, the Masonic educators in the capital could rely almost exclusively on the state and therefore had more interest in increasing the influence of the civil state.⁹² Moreover, among the Protestant Masonic teachers, we find a significant number of teachers of Latin and Greek languages, law, and religious education.⁹³ It was therefore not in their interest to remove these classical subjects from schools. At the same time, they largely supported the expansion of the state’s maintaining role and free public education.

It was precisely at this time that the free-thinking, bourgeois radical and social-democratic ideas of the period were of great significance in urban intellectual, bourgeois, and bureaucratic circles. These ideologies often shared a common set with Freemasonry in terms of individuals.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ See more on this topic: Elemér Mályusz: *Magyarország története a felvilágosodás korában* [History of Hungary in the age of Enlightenment], Budapest, Osiris, 2002. (Hungarian). The analysed era was also characterised by the Catholic-Protestant conflict: “The liberal-emancipatory movement, which flourished at the end of the 19th century, culminated in the ecclesiastical laws of 1894... This moment in turn galvanised the Catholic public, which until then had been rather passive politically. The Catholic Populist Party was born, and within a short time political Catholicism became an inescapable political factor...” Pál Hatos: *Szabadkőművesből református püspök* [From Freemasonic to a Calvinist bishop], 2016., 34–35. More details about Roman Catholic political activism between 1894 and 1914 in Hungary: Jenő Gergely: *A politikai katolicizmus Magyarországon, 1891–1950* [The political Catholicism in Hungary, 1891–1950], Budapest 1977., 7–102.

⁹⁰ Baska–Nagy–Szabolcs: *Magyar tanító, 1901*, 47–51.

⁹¹ Only widows and married couples were obliged to pay these wages. Most of the time the value is given in money, but sometimes crop income. The “stole-money” was paid after certain church rituals had been performed.

⁹² Elemér Kelemen: *A tanító a történelem sodrában – Tanulmányok a magyar tanítóság 19–20. századi történetéből* [The teacher in the current of history – Studies from the history of Hungarian teachers in Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries], Pécs, Iskolakultúra, 2007, 10–19, 116–126.

⁹³ According to my own research, 10% of the Masonic teachers belonged to this category between 1890 and 1920. Exactly 112 persons. The information is based on the register of Masonries in National Archives, the list of József Palatinus, relevant school terms and the gazette of *Kelet*.

⁹⁴ For example, Oszkár Jászi, Zoltán Zsigány, Zsigmond Kunfi, Béla Somogyi, József Pogány, Péter Ágoston. There were a lot of common points between the projects of radical Freemasonries and the Programme of Bourgeois Radical Party in the question of public education. See: *Magyarország története a 19. században. Szöveggyűjtemény.* [History of Hungary in Nineteenth century. A collection of texts.] (ed.) Gábor Pajkossy, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2006, 888. In addition, Pál Hatos treat as fact, the Radical Party was organized in the Martinovics Lodge. See Pál Hatos: *Az elátkozott köztársaság. Az 1918-as összeomlás és forradalom története* [The

Let's see some details of the Programme of Bourgeois Radical Party in the question of public education:

III. Development of the power of spirit and moral.

1. We demand the secularisation of public education and its professional management.

We demand universal and fast implementation of compulsative education [...] We demand the increase of technical schools. The emphasis of education as a whole should be on the natural, technical and social sciences, with the teaching of the classical languages and literatures being kept as narrow as possible. *The teaching of religious education is to be left to the autonomous activity of the family and the churches...*⁹⁵

After this let see the relevant quote of the Programme of Party of Social-Democratics in Hungary in the question of public education:

(Party of Social-Democratics in Hungary demands the follows:) [...] 8. State, county or municipal organisation of public education [...] The abolition of denominational schools. The abolition of religious education in public schools. Universal, compulsory, free education and care in public schools...⁹⁶

cursed Republic. The story of breakdown and revolution in 1918], Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó, 2018, 72. As regards the *Party of Social-Democratics in Hungary* also in question of public education see: *Magyarország története a 19. században. Szöveggyűjtemény* [History of Hungary in Nineteenth century. A collection of texts], 756.

“Only 31 Masons were elected in the Parliamentary election held in June 1910. This was the smallest number in the last 20 years. A novel feature was that after 1905 several outstanding Social-Democratic leaders joined the Masonic movement, people like Zsigmond Kunfi, Peter Agoston, Ernő Czobel, Jozsef Diener-Dénes, Jozsef Pogány, Imre Pogány, and Zoltan Ronai. At the same time, extreme radicals from the bourgeoisie also joined the movement, including Oskar Jaszi, the leading bourgeois sociologist, from 1911 head of the Martinovics Lodge in Budapest, known as the Sociologists' Lodge.” Ludwik Hass: *The socio-professional composition of Hungarian freemasonry (1868–1920)*, 1974, 95.

⁹⁵ *Magyarország története a 19. században. Szöveggyűjtemény*. [History of Hungary in Nineteenth century. A collection of texts.] (ed.) Gábor Pajkossy, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2006, 888.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 756.

As we can see the programmes of the two mentioned political party match the project of the Freemasonry Lodges in the scope of the public education.

The three world views mentioned above also saw the secularization of schools and the abolition of religious education as their goal. However, they were not allowed to have seats in Parliament, while some members of Freemasonry were present as Members of Parliament. Therefore, for example, an urban state teacher sympathetic to social democracy or bourgeois radicalism could easily see a way to advocacy in the Hungarian lodges. Thus, as in the previous centuries, Freemasonry did not shape but only followed the spirit of the age.

An examination of the Masonic drafts of state, non-denominational education without religious education gives a good overview of the scope of the lodges of the time, their internal debates and their thoughts about the state of the country. However, it was only during 1918 and 1919 that the government of Count Mihály Károlyi, and later the Soviet Republic had the opportunity to put the programmes into practice, independently of lodges.

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