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Debates in the Press Concerning Ruthenian National Ambitions and Assimilation to Hungarians at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries**

Резюме. Наприкінці XIX століття ідеал угорської національної держави та програма мадяризації вступили у більш поглиблений конфлікт з культурними, національними і політичними прагненнями етнічних груп, що проживали в Угорщині. Намагання створити та зміцнити русинську етнічну і культурну спільноту перепліталася зі створенням стандартизованої мовної норми, конфесійних шкіл, запровадженням викладання русинської мови, а також з автономією греко-католицької церкви, мовою літургії і захистом кириличного письма. У дослідженні представлено дебати стосовно цих питань у тогочасній пресі, яка публікувалася на рубежі століть і охоплювала інформацію про національну політику і реакцію на неї на місцевому рівні, про ідеологічні контексти формування груп та уявлення про русинське суспільство на Закарпатті. Лінгвістичний аналіз статей, опублікованих у газетах, також свідчить про ідентифікацію авторів, ставлення до русинської і угорської спільноти та держави. *Ключові слова:* русини, мадяризація, акультурація, греко-католицька церква, публіцистика

Rezümé. A 19. század végén a magyar nemzetállam eszménye és a magyarosítás programja egyre mélyülő konfliktusba került a Magyarországon élő etnikai csoportok kulturális, nemzeti vagy politikai törekvéseivel. A ruszin etnikai, illetve kulturális közösség megeremtésének és megerősítésének ambíciója a standardizált nyelvi norma megalkotásával, a felekezeti iskolákkal és a rutén nyelv oktatásával, a görögkatolikus egyház autonómiájával és a liturgia nyelvével, valamint a cirill betűs írás védelmével fonódott össze. A tanulmányban az ezekről a kérdésekről a századfordulón folytatott sajtóvitákat mutatom be, melyek a nemzetiségpolitikáról és a rá adott lokális válaszokról, a csoportképződés ideológiai kontextusairól, valamint a kárpátaljai ruszin társadalomról alkotott képzetekről tájékoztatnak. Az újságokban megjelenő cikkek nyelvi vizsgálata a szerzők identifikációjáról, a ruszin és a magyar közösséghez, illetve az államhoz kapcsolódó attitűdökről is tanúskodnak.

Kulcsszavak: ruszinok, magyarosítás, akkulturáció, görögkatolikus egyház, publicisztika

Abstract. At the end of the 19th century, the ideal of the Hungarian nation state and the programme of Magyarisation got into an ever deepening conflict with the cultural, national or political ambitions of the ethnic groups living in Hungary. The ambition of forming and strengthening the Ruthenian ethnic and cultural community was intertwined with creating the standardised language norm, with church schools and the teaching of the Ruthenian language, with the autonomy of the Greek Catholic church and the language of liturgy as well as with the protection of Cyrillic writing. In this paper, I am investigating debates in the press at the turn of the century concerning these questions, which provides information about ethnic minorities policy and the local responses to it, the ideological contexts of group formation and the ideas formed about the Ruthenian society in Subcarpathia. The linguistic analysis of the articles published in newspapers may also provide information about the authors' identification as well as attitudes to the Ruthenian and Hungarian communities and to the state. *Keywords:* Rusyns, Magyarisation, acculturation, Greek Catholic church, publicism

Public education and school policy

Journalism was most frequently concerned with the language issue in relation to the school policy of the government and the teaching of the mother tongue and

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** The study has been written as part of the academic program under the auspices of the Ethnography Research Team of ELKH–DE [Eötvös Loránd Research Network–University of Debrecen]. This time, I have investigated the periodicals in the Hungarian language, the study of the publications in the Ruthenian language will be implemented in a later phase of the research project.

the Hungarian language. In 1904, Ágoston Volosin¹ argued that in our elementary schools, 'the people's language' should be taught in the same way as the Hungarian language – the people had a natural and fundamental right to the former, and the state to the latter. At the same time, the author did not exclude the possibility of the Magyarisation of Greek Catholic public schools, adding that it should not lead to the loss of their religious character, which should not manifest itself in the preservation of the mother tongue but in the emphatic role of religious education.²

Act No. XXVII of 1907 (Lex Apponyi), aimed at Magyarisation and requiring irreproachable patriotic education for the state subsidy, triggered more critical reactions. According to Mihály Dutka, Greek Catholic clergyman in Újkemence, the act made it the responsibility of public schools to plant the idea of Hungarian nationhood and patriotism 'in the developing hearts of children', and although it reduced the financial burdens of the denominations maintaining schools, it strengthened state control, which forecast the danger of nationalisation. Therefore, educational institutions still in the ownership of denominations should be safeguarded as 'whoever controls the school controls the future, as well.'³

Pursuant to the enforcement order of Lex Apponyi, with the approval of the high church authority, the public administration committee of Ung county determined that the mandatory language of instruction in all schools should be Hungarian (religion and religious songs might be taught in the language of liturgy), to which Mihály Dutka also gave a critical response. According to the Greek Catholic clergyman, it was essential that in addition to acquiring the Hungarian language, children should learn to read and write in their mother tongue, as well (as the development of intellectual talent and thinking can be implemented in the mother tongue), and royal education inspectorates, which had decided about the language of instruction arbitrarily in more than one case, should respect the rights of the entities maintaining schools and school boards provided by law.⁴

Endre Tahy, vice-notary of the county responded to Dutka's article. The public administration committee declared all the schools to have Hungarian as the language of instruction because 'displaying genuine concern for the interests of the people left in their care', clergymen and teachers named Hungarian as the

¹ Ágoston Volosin (1874–1946) was a Greek Catholic priest, lecturer and then principal of the teacher training college in Ungvár. In 1938, Prime Minister of Carpatho-Ukraine. (In the spelling of personal names, I follow the forms used in the press.)

² X: Egy-két szó a magyar nyelv tanításához ('A few words about the teaching of the Hungarian language'). *Görög Katolikus Szemle*, 1904. június 12. 1.

³ –a –ly: Egyházmegyénk és az 1907. évi XXVII. tc. ('Our eparchy and Act No. XXVII of 1907'). *Görög Katolikus Szemle*, 1908. november 1. 263.

⁴ Mihály Dutka spoke about the practice that in villages inhabited by Ruthenians and Slovaks, teachers determined the language of instruction 'as they pleased' (while in the annual reports, they indicated Hungarian as the language of instruction from an excess of zeal or in the hope of earning merits although occasionally, they themselves did not speak Hungarian, either) –a –ly: Egyházmegyénk és az 1907. évi XXVII. tc. ('Our eparchy and Act No. XXVII of 1907'). *Görög Katolikus Szemle*, 1908. november 8. 269; 1908. november 15. 274–275; november 22. 281–282.

language of instruction used. ‘This is open, straightforward and honest conduct. This is worthy of them and suits the historical past and patriotism of the Ruthenian people!’ In contrast to this, Dutka – in the vice notary’s opinion – attacked the Hungarian language and wished to stir up distrust against the church authority and the secular authority responsible for education.⁵

The clergyman continued the debate in the press. First, he asserted that he was Hungarian (he was born Hungarian, had Hungarian as his mother tongue and only learned Ruthenian as a seminarist to be able to communicate with the people). Then he added that the exclusive and forced introduction of Hungarian as the language of instruction did not promote Magyarisation but was rather to the detriment of it. It deeply hurt his sense of justice if ‘the rights of the weaker party were grossly violated’ and non-Hungarian citizens would deserve ‘being treated with humanity’.⁶

In his newspaper articles, Ignác Kardos, headmaster of the state elementary school in Ungvár⁷ urged teachers and nursery school teachers to educate their pupils having foreign mother tongues to become Hungarians (their most important duty was Magyarisation), to which R. S. responded in the newspaper entitled *Ung*. He distinguished voluntary Magyarisation, due to the power of Hungarian culture and society, and arbitrary Magyarisation, that is, the aggressive spread of the Hungarian language. He thought that the latter could not have any results, and the objective of school education was that the ethnic groups should acquire the Hungarian language but by no means that they should be turned into Hungarians. (‘As a good Hungarian, I do not want to force what only has real value if it comes voluntarily.’)⁸

Ignác Kardos defended his position in a long polemical. He doubted that R. S. was Hungarian. In his opinion, in the last decades of the dual monarchy, only the citizens of Ungvár assimilated to Hungarians while this did not happen in the Ruthenian villages of the county.⁹ Therefore, Magyarisation and the intensive teaching of Hungarian were needed as without them, no Slovak or Ruthenian would ever become Hungarian.¹⁰

At the turn of the century, the government intended to use religious education, too, to promote Magyarisation. Government decree No. 12196 of 1906 made it possible to use the mother tongue in addition to Hungarian as the mandatory language of religious education at most in the first three grades of public schools.¹¹

⁵ te: Magyar tanítási nyelv (‘Hungarian as the language of instruction’). *Ung*, 1909. január 31. 1–2.

⁶ DUTKA MIHÁLY: Magyar tanítási nyelv. Válasz (‘Hungarian as the language of instruction. Response’). *Ung*, 1909. február 7. 2.

⁷ Kardos was born in Szomolnok in 1854. After graduating from the teacher training college in Igló, he started work in the state elementary school in Ungvár, where he was headmaster between 1891 and 1894. (In 1891, he changed his name from Krompaszky to Kardos to make it sound more Hungarian.)

⁸ R. S.: Ami legalábbis fölösleges (‘What is unnecessary at any rate’). *Ung*, 1892. február 14. 1–2.

⁹ Kardos mentioned as an example Lyuta in the Nagyberezna district.

¹⁰ KARDOS IGNÁCZ: Válasz annak, akit illet (‘Answer to whom it may concern’). *Ung*, 1892. február 21. 1–2.

¹¹ BECKER VENDEL: A vallásitanítás nyelve (‘The language of religious education’). *Katholikus Nevelés*, 1910. február 20. 65–74.

To the plans under preparation, the editorial board of *Görög Katolikus Szemle* ('Greek Catholic Review'), published in Ungvár, reacted. Religious education was not an administrative but a church issue as religious education in a foreign language, not relying on the knowledge and experience acquired in the family, had no practical result and led to becoming faithless. Therefore, religious education could not be subordinated to the idea of Magyarisation and its language should be the children's mother tongue.¹²

Jenő Szabó commented on the position statement of *Szemle*.¹³ He also considered it important that religious education should be conducted in the mother tongue of the people (the teacher of religion should address both heart and intellect), and the use of the Hungarian language might only be considered in those social classes (in the middle classes and the intelligentsia), where children could understand and speak this language well.¹⁴

The language of liturgy, the unification of calendars and Cyrillic characters

Liturgy in Hungarian divided Ruthenians living in Hungary very much. In 1896, the Pope forbade Greek Catholics to use the Hungarian language, and the pilgrimage organised to Rome yielded no result, either. The pastoral letter of Gyula Firczák, bishop of Munkács issued in November 1900, confirmed that the languages of liturgy of Greek Catholicism were Old Slavonic and Romanian. However, the National Committee of Greek Catholic Hungarians, supported by the government and established by Hungarian and assimilated Ruthenian intellectuals in 1898, promoted the church approval and spread of Hungarian as the language of liturgy.¹⁵

Those who were against Hungarian as the language of liturgy had different arguments. The author using the name Munkás ('Workman') criticised 'fashionable believers' who thought that with the development of science and education, that is, with the intellectual progress of mankind, Catholic faith should also be modernised and claimed the right to make changes. In contrast, faith is a divine revelation and it never changes as it is perfect, and only the church has the right

¹² To strengthen its position, *Szemle* published the writing of chaplain Vendel Becker. Vendel Becker: A vallásnevelés nyelvéről ('On the language of religious education'). *Görög Katolikus Szemle*, 1904. január 31. 1–2.

¹³ Szabó Jenő (1843–1921) was a lawyer and state official, from 1868 employee of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, from 1887 minister counsellor and head of the railway and factory department. From 1896, he was member of the upper house of the Hungarian Parliament. In 1902, he was elected president of the Association of Hungarian Greek Catholics. *Országgyűlési Almanach 1901–1906*. Szerk. Sturm Albert. Budapest, 1901. 173–174.

¹⁴ Sz. J.: A vallásnevelés nyelvéről ('On the language of religious education'). *Görög Katolikus Szemle*, 1904. február 7. 28–29.

¹⁵ Practice was not uniform as in several churches, services were held partly or entirely in Hungarian. BOTLIK JÓZSEF (1997): *Hármas kereszt alatt. Görög katolikusok Kárpátalján az ungvári uniótól napjainkig (1646–1997)*. Budapest, 162–167.; MAYER MÁRIA (1977): *Kárpátukrán (ruszin) politikai és társadalmi törekvések 1860–1910*. Budapest. 146–148.

to regulate religious life.¹⁶ The teaching staff of the College of Theology in Ungvár confirmed in a declaration that the language of liturgy of the Munkács eparchy, sanctified by one thousand years' use, was Old Slavonic therefore every clergyman had to use it and no unlawful customs might prevail.¹⁷

The leader of *Görög Katholikus Szemle* attacked the National Committee of Greek Catholic Hungarians. It called the name of the association separatistic as it suggested that the followers of the Slavic liturgy, of equal rank with Latin, were not Hungarians, what is more, they were unpatriotic and were supporters of Pan-Slavism although Ruthenians 'are as good Hungarians as the members of the national committee'. In addition, going from settlement to settlement, the association canvassed for liturgy in Hungarian, issued circulars, formed congregations, and with this, it was destroying the prestige of the church and the clergy and brought policy and the nationality problem into religious life.¹⁸

Although bishop Firczák banned the press debate about Hungarian liturgy, this hardly restrained the opponents. A 'Greek Catholic believer from Hajdú county' who took part in the Rome pilgrimage wrote in *Budapesti Napló* ('Budapest Diary') that after the Pope's 1896 encyclical, the Hungarian language mass, long in use, was discontinued in more than 30 parishes (those defending this practice were explicitly persecuted in the Munkács eparchy), which 'is directed against our Hungarian identity' and violated the spiritual needs of believers. In the author's opinion, Greek Catholics had the right to liturgy in Hungarian, which he derived from the 1646 Union of Ungvár, from the treaty concluded with Rome.¹⁹

Jenő Szabó, chairman of the national committee expressed his opinion, too. He did not deny that the issue of Hungarian liturgy had ethnic implications but made a distinction between Greek Catholic intelligentsia (the 'intellectual class') and common people. The former chose their political views and along with them, their nationality freely while in the case of the latter, 'racial awareness' was not formed by the school or the family but by the church (religious rites). He argued that the lack of Hungarian liturgy led to the emergence of an independent (Ruthenian) intelligentsia (as it had happened with the Romanians) yet it was the legitimate need of the modern Hungarian nation that after the end of the estate system, its intelligentsia should be exclusively Hungarian. Therefore, Hungarian service in the church primarily ensured that the intellectuals of Ruthenian origin should not be forced to change their religion if they wished to be Hungarians.²⁰

¹⁶ Munkás: Divatos hívők ('Fashionable believers'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1900. november 18. 1–2; Munkás: Pax Dei – Treuga Dei. *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1900. december 2. 1–2.

¹⁷ Nyilatkozat ('Declaration'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1900. november 11. 3.

¹⁸ Görög katolikus magyarok országos bizottsága ('National committee of Greek Catholic Hungarians'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1900. október 28. 1–2.

¹⁹ Magyar liturgia ('Hungarian liturgy'). *Budapesti Napló*, 1903. január 26. 1.

²⁰ SZABÓ JENŐ: A görög katolikus magyarság és a nemzetiségi kérdés ('Greek Catholic Hungarians and the nationality problem'). *Budapesti Szemle*, 1909. 391. sz. 44–67.

Gyula Firczák did not allow any public discourse about the language of liturgy but in 1899, he made it possible for the clergymen of the eparchy to discuss the unification of calendars, long on the agenda, in district meetings.²¹ The majority of clergymen decided on the introduction of the Gregorian calendar but in the press, a long lasting debate started at this time, as well. In the Ruthenian periodical entitled *Nauka*, Kasszandra stood up for the Julian calendar referring to the spirit of ancestors, to which József Fesztóry, clergyman in Vécse responded. The issue of the calendar was not a dogma therefore neither version was sacred and unchangeable, and in contrast to retrograde Greek Catholics, the civilised world used the Gregorian calendar. Fesztóry also rejected Kasszandra's proposal to ask common people about the reform of the calendar as peasants could hardly make decisions responsibly or in their own interests about problems beyond 'their limited mental capacity'.²²

Miklós Rusznák argued for the unification of calendars 'with strict objectivity', relying on scientific, religious and political aspects.²³ He argued that the Julian calendar was astronomically inaccurate, it did not affect the truths of faith but it was the remnant of Eastern Orthodoxy and linked Greek Catholics to Russia in public opinion.²⁴ To the article, Iván Porfyr reacted.²⁵ He also referred to the 1646 Union, the treaty concluded with the Holy See, guaranteeing the integrity of the Greek church ritual (the ancient calendar was an integral part of it), in which only the bishops of Munkács and Eperjes and the joint synod of the eparchies could have competence. Rome was striving to curb the rights of the Greek church and what is more, to merge Greek Catholics into the Latin ritual, and calendar unification was an aggressive device for this.²⁶

At the beginning of the 1910s, József Kaminszky was of the opinion that the reform of the calendar was in a deadlock.²⁷ As common people – those whose mother tongue was Hungarian and those whose mother tongue was Russian alike

²¹ BOTLIK 1997. 180.

²² FESZTÓRY JÓZSEF: Nyílt levél Kasszandrához ('An open letter to Kasszandra'). *Kárpáti Lapok*, 1899. november 5. 1. Still, Gyula Firczák ordered to hold a plebiscite in which the great majority of the Ruthenian believers voted for the Julian calendar. (The reform of the calendar was only implemented in the Budapest Greek Catholic congregation in 1909.) BOTLIK 180–181.

²³ Miklós Rusznák (1878–1954) was a Greek Catholic clergyman, lecturer of theology, vice rector of the Eperjes lyceum, director of Szent János Institute.

²⁴ RUSZNÁK MIKLÓS: Harc a régi és az új naptár körül ('Fight about the old and the new calendar'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1910. február 20. 61–62.

²⁵ Probably, it is a pseudonym.

²⁶ PORFYR IVÁN: Végre ('At last'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1910. március 6. 77–79.

²⁷ József Kaminszky (1878–1944) was an attorney, in 1918, secretary of the Ministry of Ruszka-Krajna. He was founding member of the Gyöngyösi Literary Society and the Hungarian-Russian Cultural Association in Ungvár. (His father, Géza Kaminszky was a Greek Catholic clergyman, principal of the teacher training college in Ungvár and from 1899 editor of *Görög Katholikus Szemle*.) *Országgyűlési Almanach 1939–1944*. Szerk. Haeffler István. Budapest, 1940. 568.

– unrelentingly insisted on the ancient church calendar, considering it to have the force of a dogma and rejected the very idea to celebrate together with those following Latin liturgy. Therefore the Julian calendar had to be retained until common people realized that the reform of the calendar and the 'appropriate adaptation' of the dates of holidays 'to civil life' did not threaten either their religion or the tradition of the Greek church. (According to Kaminszky, a precipitous reform might lead to schism on a mass scale.)²⁸

The definition of Ruthenian national ambitions and Ruthenian cultural community could not lack debates about the literary language and everyday language use and Cyrillic script, either. One of the participants, Hiador Sztripszky summarised the objectives and the antecedents of the language reform in his piece entitled *Moscophilizmus, ukrainizmus és a hazai rusznákok* ('Moscophilism, Ukrainism and Ruthenians in Hungary').²⁹ The Russophile movement orientating towards the Russian language and culture was suppressed in the 1860s and 1870s, and the Ruthenian intelligentsia in Hungary, which could not read, write or speak Russian, and considered their own language 'to have the smell of peasants' capes' (to be rough) and despised it, started to assimilate to Hungarians. In spite of this, the ideal of the Russian literary language remained, and the Ruthenian periodicals published at the turn of the century followed the grammar of Great Russian, which they mixed with Hungarian word order and Slovakian, Russian, Ruthenian and Old Slavonic words (most of the newspapers „is a nonsense mishmash language-wise, using a variety which is nobody's language").³⁰

In Sztripszky's opinion, the assimilated intelligentsia did not care about the intellectual backwardness and social subordination of the peasantry (there was the largest number of illiterate people among the Ruthenians, which pushed them towards the 'Russkie faith', and the language of common people was turning into a specific 'Hungaro-Ruthenian' variant. (This language was mixed with Hungarian words and formulas, and the effect of Hungarian also prevailed in its phonetics so much that Ruthenians beyond the border could understand it only with the help of a dictionary.) At the same time, common people spoke several dialects, from among which the uniform Ruthenian folk language, which could protect against Russophile and Ukranophile ambitions and would be suitable for educating the

²⁸ K. J.: Holtponon ('In a deadlock'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1910. március 6. 77.

²⁹ Hiador Sztripszky (1875–1946) was a bibliographer, linguist and ethnographer. From 1903, he worked for the Museum of Transylvania and then from 1910 for the Hungarian National Museum. UDVARI ISTVÁN: Adalékok Sztripszky Hiador pályakezdéséhez. *Szabolcs-Szatmár-Beregi Levéltári Évkönyv*, 2001. 303–318.

³⁰ The newspaper for common people entitled *Nyegyilja*, initiated by the government, was edited by a teacher living in Budapest who was born in a Slovak region, studied in Ungvár 'with Russkie grammar' and practised Russian among the Serbs in Bácska. If he can read at all, the Ruthenian peasant is baffled at most: 'It must have been written in a very clever, gentlemanlike way because I do not understand a word of it.' SZTRIPSKY HIADOR: *Moscophilizmus, ukrainizmus és a hazai rusznákok* ('Moscophilism, Ukrainism and Ruthenians in Hungary'). *Budapesti Szemle*, 1913. 453. sz. 287.

peasants through, for example, the publication of public school textbooks and newspapers, should rely on the Bereg dialect as its base, (The author undertook to create this language, in which, following the example of Ukrainian, etymological spelling would be replaced by phonetic spelling.)³¹ Thus, in Sztripszky's plan, in contrast to the Ruthenian intelligentsia, having assimilated to Hungarians, common people would preserve their own language, and the literary language would be a device in improving their social and intellectual conditions.

Several people reacted critically to the paper. In *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, Revizor ('inspector') did not only criticise the less widespread and mocking name 'rusznák', used for the Ruthenians, but also refuted that Ruthenian penmen could not speak Ruthenian, that the Russophile trend in the 1850s and 1860s had a considerable influence on Ruthenian literature and Ruthenian intelligentsia or that the language of Nyegyilja would be incomprehensible for the peasants.³² Agenor also rejected the charge of 'Moscophilism' and the charge that the Ruthenian intelligentsia (clergy) had separated from common people and were not working to make them more cultured.³³ Alvégi argued that there already existed the Ruthenian literary language, which had been created by Sándor Duchnovics and his Eperjes circle decades before.³⁴ It was based on common people's language but its grammar did not rely on phonetics but on the etymology of the church language as that was most suitable to create a link between Ruthenian dialects in Hungary. The education of the Ruthenian people could be implemented in this language (it was what the press also used), while the 'literary language' invented by Sztripszky and the proposed phonetic spelling was a 'plot' striving to change the already living folk literary language, supported by Ukrainists living in Galicia. (Hiador Sztripszky was their friend, he had been a grantee at Lemberg University, his plan had stemmed from selfish financial interests, and he, in fact, wanted to introduce the Ukrainian literary language.)³⁵

Ágoston Volosin also elaborated on the social and political factors of language use and connected them to assimilation. According to the statistics cited, the number of Ruthenians decreased in Szepes and Sáros counties in the second half of the 19th century, which was the consequence of 'assimilation to the Slovaks' to a greater and greater extent. (What is more, the change of language

³¹ SZTRIPSZKY HIADOR: Moszkophilizmus, ukrainizmus és a hazai rusznákok ('Moscophilism, Ukrainism and Ruthenians in Hungary'). *Budapesti Szemle*, 1913. 453. sz. 278–296.; SZTRIPSZKY HIADOR: A rutének feltámasztása ('The resurrection of Ruthenians'). *Pesti Hírlap*, 1909. október 24. 33–34.

³² Revizor: Moszkophilizmus, ukrainizmus és a hazai rusznákok ('Moscophilism, Ukrainism and Ruthenians in Hungary'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1913. március 9. 4–5.

³³ Agenor: A mi jóakaróink ('Our patrons'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1913. március 16. 4–5.

³⁴ Sándor Duchnovich (1803–1865) was a Greek Catholic canon, writer, poet and notary of the holy see in Ungvár.

³⁵ Alvégi: Támadás több oldalról ('Attack from several sides'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. június 7. 3–4.; Alvégi: Megjegyzéseim a 24. számban közölt Válaszra ('My comments on the Answer published in issue No. 24'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. június 28. 4–6.; Alvégi: „Levél a magyarországi ruténektől” ('A letter from Ruthenians in Hungary'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. július 26. 3–4.

extended as far as Ungvár with the region of Szobránc speaking Slovakian, for example.)³⁶ Volosin named the causes, as well. The majority of the Ruthenians leaving school did not learn to read and write in their mother tongue but they understood the papers published for common people and other popular scientific publications in Slovakian. Emigrants returning from overseas also used Slovakian as they had read newspapers published in Slovakian abroad. Lads leaving the army did not speak pure Ruthenian but a 'Slovakised' variant as 'that was how the lieutenant talked to them'. ('Slovakian seems much more gentlemanlike to them than Ruthenian.') In addition, simultaneously with assimilation to the Slovaks, there started in Hungary and Galicia the pressing of Great Russian grammatical forms alien to common people³⁷ and the dissemination of Great Russian literature. Finally, Volosin listed the means of stopping Slovakisation, which was a Hungarian national and Ruthenian cultural and church interest: it was necessary to break with Great Russian grammatical and Slovakian language formulas, and support the pure, popular Ruthenian language and the publication of papers for common people printed with 'Hungarian characters'.³⁸

The use of the Cyrillic or Latin characters also caused division among the intelligentsia. In 1897, a 'Greek Catholic Ruthenian clergyman' spoke about his everyday experience. He said that in the previous decades, there had been fewer and fewer children who could read and write, the cause of which was that in Ruthenian public schools, two kinds of alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) were used parallel with each other. (Only those learned to read Hungarian properly who attended either a state school or such a denomination school where the teacher gave up Cyrillic characters thus committing a breach of duty.) There had already been written Ruthenian books with Latin characters but it would be essential to teach only one kind of (Latin) characters, and popular scientific readings and the popular papers should also use them, which would not hurt the national or religious feelings of any Ruthenians.³⁹ In 1911, the newspaper entitled *Bereg* complained about the 'alien character' of the publications printed in the Cyrillic alphabet, hindering Magyarisation, to which *Görög Katholikus Szemle* reacted. The Hungarian language was rapidly spreading among the younger generations but there were many who only knew the Cyrillic alphabet. However, this did not affect their patriotism.⁴⁰

³⁶ The author referred to Pál Balogh's work entitled *A népfajok Magyarországon* ('Ethnic groups in Hungary'), published in 1912: in the past 50 years, in the Hungarian Highlands, 176 settlements with a majority of Ruthenian inhabitants assimilated to Slovaks while the number of villages having assimilated to Hungarians was only 37.

³⁷ Such was, for example, Pál Gönczy's Ruthenian alphabet, adapted to the popular Ruthenian language by the author of the article.

³⁸ Volosin Ágoston: A ruthének tótosítása ('The Slovakisation of Ruthenians'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1916. január 16. 1.

³⁹ Julián-naptár, Cyrill-betűk ('Julian calendar, Cyrillic characters'). *Ung*, 1897. október 24. 1–2.

⁴⁰ Széljegyzetek ('Marginal notes'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1911. augusztus 6. 1.

After World War I broke out, the Hungarian government promoted the replacement of the Cyrillic characters, which according to Béla Jankovics, Minister of Religion and Education was not justified 'by the consideration of Magyarisation or similar chauvinistic ideas but by the defense against the Greek Orthodox propaganda intertwined with Russophile aspirations'.⁴¹ Hiador Sztripszky also referred to the danger of Pan-Slavism, which he completed with historical arguments. This 'very strange' alphabet was once developed by the spiritual leaders of Slavic people to isolate themselves from 'the Latin church said to be malignant and European culture.' However, Hungarian Ruthenians had never belonged to any Slavic state, and not only their history but also their language connected them to the Hungarian nation as it had been becoming more and more similar to Hungarian for centuries. Therefore it was not justified either culturally or on the basis of language development to preserve Cyrillic characters, which isolated Ruthenians in Hungary from 'West European thought'.⁴²

The vice-notary, Endre Tahy, unlikely to have thorough groundings in Slavic philology, also expressed his opinion. After the world war broke out, the Ruthenians, 'this underage and helpless folk' could experience the 'loving care' of Hungarian society, for which they owed gratitude to their protectors. This and their patriotism might be expressed if they at last gave up the Cyrillic alphabet, 'giving the unpleasant impression of their belonging to the world of the east', which hindered cultural and social assimilation. Tahy rejected the fears that Latin characters would result in the 'Slovakisation' instead of the Magyarisation of the Ruthenians. In contrast to the Slovaks living in West Hungary, 'having got infected' in the neighbourhood of the Czechs, the culture of the Slovaks living in Zemplén, Ung and Bereg counties was Hungarian, and their character, customs and way of thinking were the same as those of 100% Hungarians. However, it was necessary to distribute publications with Hungarian characters more intensively among the Ruthenians, and state institutions should take forceful measures against those trying to stand in the way of 'the Hungarian genius'.⁴³

Debate about 'alien culture'

The best example of the political instrumentalisation of culture, i.e. the confrontational role it played in national homogenisation and, in contrast, in the strengthening of the identity of minorities, is demonstrated in the debate of 1913–14. Péter

⁴¹ KEMÉNY G. GÁBOR (1999): *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában VII. (1914–1916)*. Budapest. 248–250.

⁴² SZTRIPSZKY HIADOR: Cirill betű – latin betű ('Cyrillic alphabet – Latin alphabet'). *Budapesti Hírlap*, 1915. október 6. 2–3.

⁴³ TAHY ENDRE: A cirill betűk kérdése ('The issue of Cyrillic characters'). *Határszéli Újság*, 1916. február 7. 1–2.

Dolinay Jr. Greek Catholic priest repeated the frequently voiced criticism: his fellow priests had become distanced from the masses and were ashamed of their roots. They forgot *prosphoron*,⁴⁴ on which they grew up, they changed their ancient Greek surnames and first names, they married into families of alien liturgy and religion and their children would be Lutherans or Roman Catholics. They would become estranged from the language of their own people (the Ruthenians) and would be under the influence of ‘alien culture’.⁴⁵

Dolinay referred to Hungarian culture, to which sheriff József Nagy reacted in an outrage. He labelled the clergyman and *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, which had published the article, unpatriotic, but the Ruthenian race, which proved their loyalty and valour during Rákóczi’s war of independence, had become symbiotic with the Hungarians. The Ruthenians had been provided acknowledgement and history by the Hungarian nation, and had been able to achieve social status and valued existence through ‘the culture of this nation’. According to the sheriff, there was no Ruthenian culture, since culture is equivalent to social classes, public institutions, intellectual and economic outputs, and serves the needs of ‘pulsating state existence’. The Ruthenian intelligentsia, consisting of clergymen and teachers, however, were ‘patriotic Hungarians’, and if there were any ‘Ruthenian reformers’ among them, they would be facing the statepower.⁴⁶

The editors of *Görög Katholikus Szemle* refuted the claim of unpatriotism in an unusual tone (‘What rubbish is this?’), and Péter Dolinay also responded. In his opinion, the concept of culture was not identical with statehood, and the Ruthenians, as an independent race living in Hungary, had an original and unique culture and education, which ‘sets them apart from any other race’. Language, or education in the mother tongue was the most important tool of preserving this culture, and the forced transplantation of another culture was no less of an absurdity than “someone trying to graft a hard shell fruit onto a fleshy fruit tree.”⁴⁷

The polemic, harsh and at times personal tone, also inspired ‘Veteran’ to voice his opinion. He criticised the false propaganda about the harmonious co-existence of Ruthenians and Hungarians and presented ‘Squalor county’ and its Ruthenian inhabitants.⁴⁸ He described tumble-down cottages, starving people in rags, emigrants, notaries meting out hefty taxes, auctioning bailiffs, and last but not least abusive sheriffs. ‘We made a visit to the school, too. When the teacher

⁴⁴ The sourdough bread of the Eastern church.

⁴⁵ DOLINAY PÉTER: „Restaurare omnia...” *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1913. december 21. 1–2.

⁴⁶ NAGY JÓZSEF: Idegen kultúra (‘Alien culture’). *Ung.* 1914. január 11. 1–2.; NAGY JÓZSEF: Idegen kultúra (‘Alien culture’). *Ung.* 1914. január 25. 2–3.

⁴⁷ Idegen kultúra (‘Alien culture’). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. január 18. 3–4.; DOLINAY PÉTER: Idegen kultúra (‘Alien culture’). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. január 25. 1–2.

⁴⁸ The author clearly referred to Ung county.

asks a question, the children remain silent because they do not speak Hungarian and they are not allowed to speak Ruthenian. The short-coated (or short-sighted) sheriff confiscated the Ruthenian catechisms as evidence and submitted them to the gendarmerie.⁴⁹ It is obvious that the author held responsible the administration (and in particular József Nagy) for the destitution of the Ruthenian people and their estrangement from the Hungarian population.

In his first article, Péter Dolinay criticised the clerical and secular intelligentsia assimilating to Hungarians (those often changing their names), from among whom Miklós Kutkafalvy joined the debate.⁵⁰ He primarily objected to the fact that the *Szemle* ‘attributed much more significance to the contribution of József Nagy than what it deserved’ and went on emphasizing the patriotism and “good Hungarian character” of the Greek Catholic clergy in Upper Hungary. The solicitor thus took the side of the clergy that he thought were done wrong to by this attack and called for the alliance of the Greek Catholic clerical and secular intelligentsia and their political activism. He suggested that a petition be submitted to the count for the discharge of József Nagy and his transfer to another district where the Greek Catholic population was not in majority.⁵¹

The sheriff, however, was supported by a respectable patron. István Csuha, the parliamentary representative of the Independence Party, made a motion that the administrative committee of Ung county condemn the attack against Hungarian national culture and stand up for its official. In his opinion, there was only one culture in Hungary, the Hungarian one, and Péter Dolinay’s article, along with the ‘wit-starved’ Veteran’s piece, only incited animosity among the Greek Catholic parishioners wishing to establish an ‘alien Ruthenian culture wanting to live’, which was unknown to him. The committee adopted the representative’s motion⁵², to which *Görög Katholikus Szemle* reacted by two official public decla-

⁴⁹ Veterán: Helyzetünk mozi képekben (‘Our situation in cinema pictures’). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. február 1. 1–3.

⁵⁰ Miklós Kutkafalvy (1882–?) was a solicitor, prosecutor of the Catholic National Alliance (Katholikus Népszövetség), editor of the *Görög Katolikus Hírlap* (Greek Catholic Chronicle) (his father was a Greek Catholic clergyman). He was the chairman of the Vasvári Pál Circle, founded in 1904, the objective of which was to disseminate the notion of Hungarian statehood. (He changed his name from Nyikolaj Kutka to a Hungarian version.). *Nemzetgyűlési Almanach 1920–1922*. Szerk. Vidor Gyula.:Budapest, 1921. 83–84.; MAYER 166.

⁵¹ KUTKAFALVY MIKLÓS: Levél a Szerkesztőhöz (‘Letter to the editor’). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. február 8. 1–3. József Nagy was the head of Perecsény township, where the proportion of Greek Catholics (and Ruthenian speakers) in 1910 was 86%. *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények*, vol. 42. 262–263.

⁵² Gyula Bradács notary held the view that minority and religious matters were delicate topics and thus they should not react to minor newspaper articles. Tivadar Matyaczkó, Greek Catholic clergyman and superintendent of education of the diocese also suggested that the motion be ignored but the bishop of Munkacs should be approached with a request for his intervention with the editor so that no ‘such misguided thoughts’ be published in the future. A közigazgatási bizottság ülése (‘Meeting of the administrative committee’). *Ung*, 1914. február 15. 3–5.

rations. The Vasvári Pál Circle in Budapest protested vehemently against anyone attacking the clergy of the dioceses of Munkács and Eperjes, which had a thousand-year history similarly to Hungary, and accusing them of spreading alien culture or unpatriotism. In the name of the ‘spiritual leaders’ of the Sub-Carpathian people, eighteen Greek Catholic clergymen and teachers also rejected the label of unpatriotism and emphasized that the foundations of the religious faith of the Ruthenian population were not József Nagy’s culture but St Stephen’s belief and ‘religious culture’. They had achieved more merit by spreading the Hungarian word, psalm and prayer than the sheriff did with his ‘patriotic defence work’, and stressed that all those cultures which were not intertwined with religion were alien to them.⁵³

The conflict that lasted several months and spilled over and beyond the press came to an end with this, however, readers could become familiar with other interpretations of national and minority culture. József Kaminszky, starting from the sociological (positivist) interpretation of culture (culture ensures the biological survival of nations and the prevalence of the national idea) was of the opinion that nations which were of a lower level of education were following the more educated nations, and the higher level national education ‘assimilates the minorities different from the race of the nation state in their origin, language, traditions and culture’. The author also defined the historical and social conditions of the power of national culture (for centuries, it was the education of the nobility which preserved the Hungarian national character, followed by the middle classes which replaced noblemen), and then described the Ruthenian people. Their farming was backward, they were lazy and ‘degenerated physically’, ‘lacking in morality’ and their intellectual education was scanty as they had not recognised the significance of schooling. The clergy and the teachers had turned into Hungarians in language, spirit and public life, and their patriotism originated from the recognition that “the people forming the nation state are Hungarians, who on the strength of their higher intellectual power and historical rights deserve to be the only people to provide the country with a national character [...] The Ruthenian people can only acquire intellectual education and material well-being if they merge into the Hungarian race.’

The portrait of the middle classes as the sole agent of maintaining the culture, however, was tainted with negative shades, too. One often finds it sickening, says Kaminszky, that the Hungarian intelligentsia keeps trumpeting in public life and in the press about the building of the nation state, but this enthusiasm is only the surface, which has hardly any creative power. This is why we need a

⁵³ Idegen kultúra (‘Alien culture’). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1914. február 22. 3.

more organised, more active, more unified and more socially sympathetic middle class, which in addition to spreading the national culture can also ease the misery of the people in Upper Hungary.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The authors of the pieces cited above were the most significant mediators of national and minority culture (teachers, clergymen, writers, lawyers) and the representatives of political power (notaries, sheriffs), who shaped the public opinion by voicing their own views and objectives. The Ruthenian intelligentsia accepted and found necessary the teaching of the national language of the state (Hungarian), the acquisition of which was not only the condition for integrating into the political community but also that of social mobility and individual career building. At the turn of the century, the Hungarian government and local administration saw the teaching of the Hungarian language as the political means of Magyarisation (linguistic homogenisation) (the number of schools where the language of education was Ruthenian was reduced from 393 to 47 between 1880 and 1939),⁵⁵ and the educational indoctrination was also supported by the assimilated Ruthenian intelligentsia as it was a way of expressing their loyalty to the nation. However, Ruthenian national intellectuals were of the view that the teaching of the Hungarian language must not restrict the teaching of the mother tongue (nor the religious schools), which was a civic right and a pre-condition for the cultural rise of the Ruthenian people. In their opinion, the acquisition of the Hungarian language was not identical with assimilation and it did not create spiritual community, but its enforcement created an obstacle to the spreading of the idea of the Hungarian nation state, and it could not be effective either in the linguistically homogeneous Ruthenian villages, where the majority of children did not attend school.

An even sharper debate took place around the language of liturgy and the unification of the calendar, which saw the clash of arguments about the continuity of religious traditions and about religious reform and modernisation. Religion and religious denomination, however, implied forms of social behaviour and political orientation. Slavic liturgy, the Julian calendar and the Cyrillic alphabet turned into tools of creating and strengthening Ruthenian identity but in the view of the assimilated intelligentsia who preserved their religious denomination (Greek Catholic), these were identified with the criticised national ambitions or the preservation of Russophil traditions.

⁵⁴ K. J.: A magyar középosztály nemzeti művelődési feladatai a határszélen ('The tasks of Hungarian middle classes in national education in the border region'). *Görög Katholikus Szemle*, 1910. december 18. 381–383. (The text was read out at the session of the Gyöngyösi Literary Society.)

⁵⁵ FEDINEC CSILLA – GÖNCZI ANDREA (2010): *Nyelvpolitika a mai Kárpátalja területén 1918-ig*. In: *Kárpátalja 1919–2009. Történelem, politika, kultúra*. Szerk. Fedinec Csilla – Vehes Mikola. Budapest. 565.

These debates did not lack in cultural-morphological typologisation, popular at the turn of the century, the interpretation of the Ruthenians' historical role, or in the symbolic forms of identification in the use of ethnonyms. The members of the Magyarised intelligentsia accepted the homogenising model of the national culture, by which the Ruthenians could attach to western culture. In 1902, Jenő Szabó turned to the press: he requested not to be called Ruthenians and supported his claim with historical arguments. The term 'Ruthenus', found in old Latin documents, only signified religious denomination (the people did not have a nationality), the union of 1646 involved not only Ruthenians but also Hungarians, and the monastery of Máriapócs was founded by a Hungarian nobleman (called Demeter Rácz). Szabó suggested the term 'magyar' (Hungarian) or 'magyar-orosz' (Hungaro-Russian) (foreigners also used this term), and ended his article by claiming 'we do not want our children to be Ruthenians'.⁵⁶ The Ruthenian clerical intellectuals contrasted Hungarian national culture with the ancient denominational culture, which strengthened ethnic group identity with the continuity of the thousand-year-old autochthonous Ruthenian history. According to the manifesto of the journal *Kelet* ('East'), 'in our ancestors, we share the treaty of blood, our ancestors, who came with Árpád, took part in the taking of the homeland, many members of the first Hungarian royal dynasty converted to the liturgy of our forefathers, and this land and also the ancient Hungarian constitution are ours, too'.⁵⁷

The discourse around nation, ethnicity and denomination did not lack in the aims of social development, either. The creation of the Ruthenian literary language built on the language of the people, as planned, would not only provide protection against Russophil and Ukranophil ambitions, but would increase the prestige of the language and the possibility of linguistic interaction, and thus support the integration of the Ruthenian society.⁵⁸ The organiser of national and ethnic minority communities is the middle class, thus they were in the centre of public discourse. The assimilated intelligentsia and those employed by the state administration viewed themselves as part of the unified (historical) middle classes, and according to Jenő Szabó, the secular and clerical intelligentsia were Hungarians in language, culture, and social and family life, and thus 'the Ruthenian intelligentsia would mean regression from a national point of view'.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ SZABÓ JENŐ: Kérelem a magyar sajtóhoz ('Plea to the Hungarian press'). *Ugocsa*, 1902. november 30. 1–2.

⁵⁷ Tisztelt Olvasóinkhoz! ('To the Reader!'). *Kelet*, 1889. december 29. 1.

⁵⁸ The letters written during the schismatic movement testify that the use of the Ruthenian language and that of the Cyrillic alphabet varied from village to village. GÖNCZI ANDREA (2007): *Ruszin skizmatikus mozgalom a XX. század elején*. Ungvár–Beregszász. 8.

⁵⁹ SZABÓ JENŐ: Rutén intelligencia ('Ruthenian intelligentsia'). *Magyar Kultúra*, 1915. április 20. 357–358.

Gyula Hadzsega, however, thought⁶⁰ that there was a need for a faithful Ruthenian intelligentsia, moreover, administrative clerks should be Greek Catholics who spoke the language of the peasants, which was the most important condition for the intellectual education of the people.⁶¹ The debates, however, took place among individuals who articulated their own experiences of socialisation, career, and family and professional relationships.⁶² This can hardly be ignored when examining the processes of public discourse of national or ethnic group formation going on in the press.

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⁶⁰ Gyula Hadzsega (1879–1949) was a Greek Catholic clergyman, teacher of the seminary in Ungvár from 1907.

⁶¹ HADZSEGA GYULA: A rutén kérdés ('The Ruthenian issue'). *Magyar Kultúra*, 1915. február 20. 170–171.

⁶² The article written by János Prodan, the journalist of *Görög Katolikus Hírlap* (Greek Catholic News) testifies the pluralism of identity: "I have never thought of myself as Ruthenian, but I do not deny the fact that my origins are in the Russian people of Sub-Carpathia. I am proud to speak the language of this people and will serve its interest all times but not as a Ruthenian rather as a Hungarian person whose political and social views do not differ from those of his fellow citizens. I am Hungarian in the country of the body and Greek Catholic in the realm of the spirit." Cited MAYER 1977. 155.