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Nodes, Ties, and Theories

Some Considerations on the Correlation between Historical Network Models and the Social Complexity of the Medieval Past

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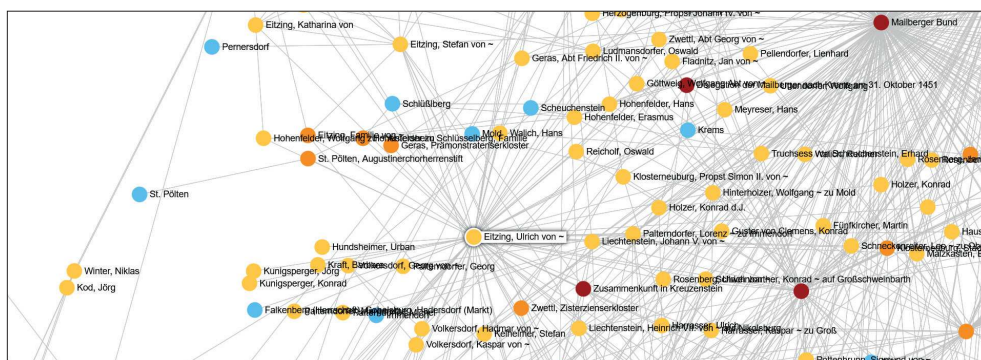
Abstract. In the last twenty years, the number of studies applying historical network analysis has grown significantly, in part due to the general "boom" in the digital humanities (although network analysis pre-dates the "digital turn"). Yet how can manifold social interactions be modelled as ties and individuals as nodes in a network for the purpose of quantitative analysis? Many historians approach network analysis in the face of significant amounts of digital data primarily from a quantitative perspective, trying to master the concepts, the mathematics, and the software. But one may ask, how can we perceive the actual correlations between network models and graphs and the social realities of the past? The paper presents some theoretical frameworks for this purpose. First, it examines three of the most elaborate concepts in "relational sociology" by Harrison C. White, Bruno Latour, and Niklas Luhmann. Second, it concentrates on attempts to combine Luhmann's systems theory with network theory, and some implications for historical medieval network analysis are suggested. Finally, the main points are summed up.

Keywords: historical network analysis, relational sociology, systems theory, late medieval history, social history

The relatively large amount of source evidence for well-documented individuals from the Late Middle Ages allows for the creation of quite impressive network models. Heinicker's article consistently uses the form Eitzing (ca. 1395–1460). He was a nobleman in the service of the Habsburg dukes of Austria and initiator of the so-called "Mailberger Bund," an alliance of aristocrats and representatives of the estates of Lower and Upper Austria established in October 1451 to enforce the release of Ladislaus Postumus, heir to the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary, from the tutelage of King Frederick III. The high density of information in these graphs may even make them hard to "decipher" (Figure 1).[1]

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1   For a state-of-the-art overview and introduction to historical network analysis in medieval studies, see now Hammond, *Social Network Analysis and Medieval History.* For an earlier

Figure 1 Extract from the network graph for Ulrich von Eyczing and
the Mailberger Bund of 1451 (data: Petra Heinicker; visualisation from
https://frontend-demo.openatlas.eu/en/visualization?mode=network)

Thus, it may be useful to resort to the network of a much less prominent indi-
vidual from a less well-documented corner of late medieval Europe. In a Byzantine
tax register of dues from the village of Radolibos in Macedonia for the Athos mon-
astery of Iviron from the year 1316, we find the following entry:

> "The priest Basileios Aroules has [a woman] Helene, a son, the priest
> Konstantinos, from him a daughter-in-law Anna, another son Chalkos, a
> daughter Maria, from her a son-in-law Ioannes, one house, one ox, a vineyard
> of nine modioi; the total tax amount is two hyperpyra. Ioannes, the shoe-
> maker, his son, has [a woman] Zoë, the sons Daniel and Basileios, a house, a
> vineyard of three modioi; the total tax amount is one hyperpyron. Michael, the
> shoemaker, his other son, has [a woman] Eirene, a daughter Anna, a house, a
> vineyard of three modioi; the total tax amount is one hyperpyron."[2]

In this and other document(s), we find further hints at ties which connected
the village priest Basileios Aroules with members of his family as well as with mem-
bers of his parish and the village. Equally, connections with the local bishop (his
superior), the representatives of the monastery of Iviron (as the lord of the manor)
and the local officials of the state (who composed the register of dues) can be iden-
tified. If we put his information into a network graph, with individuals as nodes
and their connections and interactions as links (Figure 2), one could imagine that
through the mediation of these more prominent actors, Basileios Aroules was
—hypothetically—even linked with the highest authorities of the Patriarch and the
Emperor in Constantinople.[3]

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overview, see Jullien, "Netzwerkanalyse in der Mediävistik." For an exhaustive bibliography,
see https://historicalnetworkresearch.org/bibliography/.

2   *Actes d'Iviron* III, ed. Lefort et al., 74, lns. 69–71 (original text in Greek).

3   On elite networks in the same period, see Gaul, "All the Emperor's Men."

But does this network graph correlate with the social reality of Basileios Aroules? While interaction with the fiscal officials was a relatively singular event in the course of the year, day-to-day interaction between neighbours and friends, and between priest and congregation within the village of Radolibos, was definitely a more prominent part of the social life of Basileios. Yet, this was of no interest to the officials preparing the list of dues, who reduced the social reality of the village to taxable family units. As with many aspects of past realities, much of the social life of Radolibos remains below the "threshold of literacy" and is therefore more or less inaccessible to us.[4]

But on an even more basic level: how can manifold social interactions be modelled as ties and individuals as nodes in a network for the purpose of quantitative analysis? The network graph for Basileios Aroules—in comparison with the one for Ulrich von Eyczing, for instance—appears relatively simple. However, does it not somehow disguise a social reality which was much more complex? Many historians approach the network analysis of significant quantities of prosopographical data from a quantitative perspective, trying to master the concepts, the mathematics, and the software.[5] But one may ask, how can we perceive the actual correlations between network models and graphs and social realities of the past?[6]

The present paper introduces some theoretical frameworks for this purpose; first, it takes a look at three of the most elaborate concepts of "relational sociology" by Harrison C. White, Bruno Latour and Niklas Luhmann. Second, it concentrates on attempts to combine Luhmann´s systems theory with network theory, and some implications for historical medieval network analysis are suggested.[7] Finally, the main points are summed up.
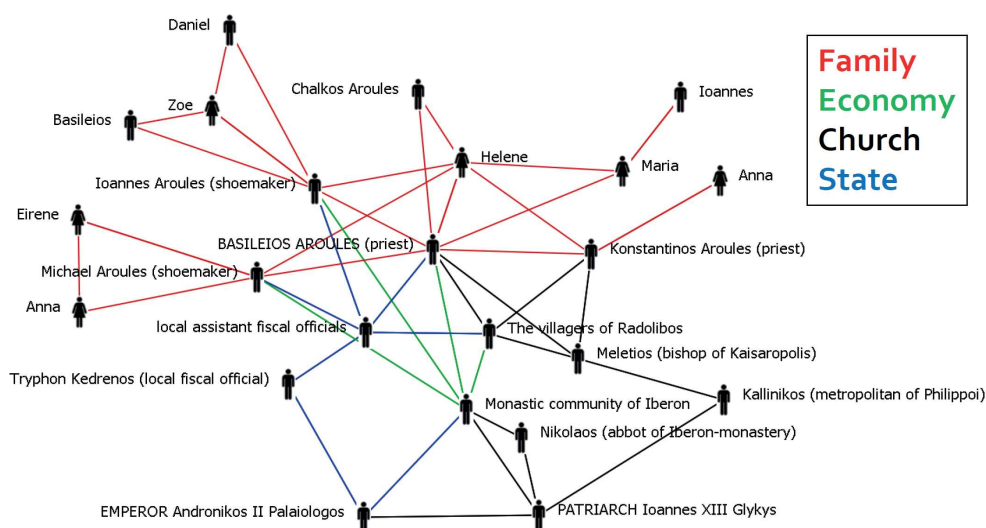
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4   Cp. also Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities*. For networks of women in the Middle Ages see Berat, Hardie, and Dumitrescu, *Relations of Power*; Rose, "Autour de la reine Emma," or Preiser-Kapeller, "Mapping Networks of Women."

5   Cp. for an overview of the theoretical foundations of historical network analysis Reinhard, *Freunde und Kreaturen*; Erickson, "Social Networks and History;" Gould, "Uses of Network Tools;" Lemercier, "Analyse de réseaux et histoire;" Düring, Eumann, Stark, and Von Keyserlingk, *Handbuch Historische Netzwerkforschung*. For the challenges of the historical interpretation of quantitative results in network analysis, see, for instance, Düring, "How Reliable are Centrality Measures," and Valeriola, "Can Historians Trust Centrality." On the challenge of 'big data' in history, see Graham, Milligan, and Weingart, *Exploring Big Historical Data*.

6   Cp. also Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," and Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White," 369, on deficits of theory in network research.

7   Cp. also Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 231; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept."

Figure 2 The (fragmentary) network of the village priest Basileios Aroules, 1316
(image created by J. Preiser-Kapeller)

Ties create nodes: Harrison C. White, Bruno Latour, Niklas Luhmann

Harrison C. White's "relational sociology" or "relational constructivism"[8]

Maybe the best-known theoretician among network analysts in the English-speaking world (and beyond) is Harrison C. White (1930–2024), with his concept of "relational sociology." White stated: "[N]etworks are phenomenological realities as well as measurement constructs."[9] He understood social networks as "socio-cultural formations." For White, actors do not appear simply as embedded in social networks. Their cognitions and behaviours, their identity as actors, and the attribution of actions are the results of trans-personal transaction processes within networks.

Important units of analysis in White's terminology are "identity," "control," and "network domains" ("netdoms"). Identities arise from efforts to support and position oneself ("control") alone and in interaction with other identities. By positioning an identity, other identities aspiring for footing can place themselves in relation to it. In this way, the control efforts of an identity then create a social reality for others, who ascribe meaning to these efforts and thus to their own identity. The control projects of

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8   White, *Identity and Control.* Cp. also Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 236; Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 290–93; Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White;" Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung;" Holzer, *Netzwerke,* 79–93.

9   White, *Identity and Control,* 36; cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 288; Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 12–13.

identities thereby result in discursive interactions that in turn generate meanings. In this way, identities are not only linked to each other, but are defined and constructed on the social level (only) through and within these links. Meanings are attributed to these links, and meanings coalesce into stories. These stories, in turn, construct the identities of actors participating in the respective context. The control efforts of identities take place between and within network domains ("netdoms"), which are simultaneously "interweavements" and condensations of topics and relationships. Identities "switch" between "netdoms," whereby different "registers of language" can also be used.[10] In this meshwork of structure and culture, identities meet other identities, and networks emerge: ties create nodes, and nodes create ties.[11]

As will become evident below, there are several connections between White's theories and those of Niklas Luhmann. White also drew on Luhmann in his work, especially in the second edition of his classic monograph *Identity and Control* (2008).[12] In 2005, White was the first Niklas Luhmann Visiting Professor at the University of Bielefeld.[13]

Bruno Latour and Actor-Network Theory[14]

Bruno Latour (1947–2022) and other proponents of Actor-Network Theory (such as Michel Callon [1945–2025] and John Law [1945–]) assumed that relations are simultaneously material and semiotic. Thus, their theory had particular appeal to archaeologists using network analysis.[15] In Actor-Network Theory, animated and inanimate entities and concepts can "act" and come together to form a consistent ensemble of persons, concepts,[16] and things. Again, these actors do not exist a priori, but are generated in the process of "networking." A presenter, the audience in a room, the room and its inanimate contents, such as the laptop, the beamer and the screen, together with the concept of "presentation" assemble for the purpose of a presentation and emerge in their respective identity (as "presenter," "moderator" or "audience") within this network. Such networks exist in a constant making and re-making. Relations are repeatedly "performed"—or the network will dissolve. This symmetric approach to human and non-human "actors" is

10   White and Godart, "Relational Language." Cp. also Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 14–15; Fuhse, "Zu einer relationalen Ungleichheitssoziologie," 198.

11   Cp. also Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 234; Fuchs, "The Behavior of Cultural Networks," 346.

12   White, *Identity and Control*; cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 294; Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White," 368–69; Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 15.

13   Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 20.

14   Latour, *Eine neue Soziologie*; Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White;" Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 22; Peuker, "Akteur-Netzwerk Theorie."

15   Knappett, *An Archaeology of Interaction*.

16   Cp. also Fuchs, "The Behavior of Cultural Networks."

otherwise not followed in relational sociology and systems theory, where only humans, as well as collective and corporate actors, can tell stories and attribute meaning to things and thereby "act." A very interesting attempt to combine Latour and White (and Luhmann), however, was undertaken by Henning Laux in 2009.[17]

Niklas Luhmann: "Society does not consist of human bodies and brains. It is simply a network of communications"

Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998) created an immense corpus of studies of thousands of pages, many published posthumously.[18] His "theory of social systems" has influenced a generation of sociologists (as well as historians[19]) in Germany as well as in other countries until today, although his reception has been less extensive outside the German-speaking scholarship.[20] This may be due to his language. Luhmann himself claimed he was deliberately keeping his prose enigmatic to prevent it from being understood "too quickly," which would only produce simplistic misunderstandings. Therefore, a mass of secondary literature has been written in order to make Luhmann's work more accessible. Some of his core theses can be summed up as follows:[21]

> "Society is a system. Also, the economy, politics, mass media, family, all social contacts, etc., are systems. Systems operate in difference from their (social, material, etc.) environment. This difference is, in turn, constructed within the system. Systems are »autopoietic« and reproduce themselves.[22] Social systems consist of »communications«. All social systems only constitute themselves through communications; there exists no other social mode of operation. It is not humans, but only social systems that can communicate. Human consciousness is a precondition for communication, but not part of social systems. Communications are only attributed to persons, who are colloquially identified as "participants of communication."[23]

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17 Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White."

18 Luhmann, *Wirtschaft*; Luhmann, "Interaktion in Oberschichten;" Luhmann, *Gesellschaft*; Luhmann, *Politik*; Luhmann, *Religion*.

19 Becker, *Geschichte und Systemtheorie*; Becker and Reinhardt-Becker, *Systemtheorie*. For most recent examples of applying systems theory on (ancient) history, see the contributions in Winterling, *Systemtheorie und antike Gesellschaft*.

20 Also in the overview by Mische, "Relational Sociology," Luhmann is not mentioned.

21 Cp. for the following Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*; Krieger, *Einführung*; Kneer and Nassehi, *Niklas Luhmanns Theorie*; Becker and Reinhardt-Becker, *Systemtheorie*; Berghaus, *Luhmann leicht gemacht*. Cp. also Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive."

22 Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 195–99.

23 Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 89–93.

Communication connects to earlier communication; thereby, a social system reproduces itself. Possible is only "the reproduction of communication from results of communication." Communication is a selection process within the space of possibilities limited by "sense," which is defined in communication. This selection has three aspects: selection of information, selection of message and selection of understanding. Each of these selections is completely contingent and also possible in other ways.[24]

Media (language; "media of proliferation," such as writing, printing, electronic media) limit the range of possible selections (for instance, through the vocabulary and grammar of a specific language). However, they also stimulate new possibilities of selection within these limits.[25] In modern society, several differentiated communication systems have emerged, such as politics, economy and religion. "Symbolically generalised media" of communication are created for specific fields and special problems such as property/money, power/law, or religious belief. They condition communication in a sense that they guarantee the acceptance of a selection proposal by establishing a binary code ("have/have not" resp. "payment/no payment," for instance).[26]

A system is defined by a boundary between itself and its environment, dividing it from an infinitely complex exterior. The interior of the system is thus a zone of reduced complexity: communication within a system operates by selecting only a limited amount of all information available from "outside."[27] The environment or another system does not directly affect a system, but only produces "resonances." These are again selectively transformed in their communications following their specific code, thereby reducing complexity as well as allowing an increase in complexity within the respective system.[28]

Systems theory and network theory[29]

The emergence of relationships and identities

In the last twenty years, several collections of papers have been published with the purpose of combining systems theory and network theory. Some of these

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24   Cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 295.

25   Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 199–202.

26   Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 189–95. Cp. also Tacke, "Differenzierung" 250; Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive," 319.

27   Cp. also Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 98.

28   Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 93–97.

29   Cp. for the following esp. Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere;" Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion;" Tacke, "Differenzierung;" Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 2010; Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive;" Holzer, *Netzwerke*, 93–104; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System;" Holzer, "Differenzierung."

studies have also attempted a synthesis of Harrison White's relational sociology with Luhmann's theories (as White himself has also done), and more rarely of Actor-Network Theory, White and Luhmann.

As for White, in Luhmann's systems theory, "persons" are constructs of communication for the purpose of communication. They only emerge in the process of communication. We find several termini in recent studies: "person," "actor," "identity," and "social address." Common is the supposition that they are

> "[…] an artefact of attribution, created in communication for communication, a more or less elaborate profile of characteristics and behaviours, with which the personalised other is identified and provided with in the communication and with which communication operates as supposition […] Addresses attain an individual profile of inclusion and exclusion. This refers back to stories and carriers of participation in differentiated systemic contexts and anticipates […] horizons of relevance for future communication."[30]

"Persons" or "identities" thus emerge in the process of communication and only gain a profile by their embedding in a web of communications. Thereby, they are also created as points of contact for further communication and sources of actions, motives and intentions. "Thus, a network consists of interconnected relationships, not of interconnected people."[31] "Relationships," in turn, emerge based on a "history" of episodes of interaction and communication, thereby also defining the horizon of expectation for further interaction and communication. Relationships provide the context and relevant social environment to classify a particular future interaction situation.[32] For specific relationships, specific cultural terms (such as "friendship" or "allegiance") emerge—which in turn influence the perception of and expectations for such a relationship.[33]

In order to make this framework useful for historical network theory, we propose a connection with a categorisation developed by Wolfgang Reinhard, a pioneer of historical network analysis in Germany. In his book *Lebensformen Europas*, Reinhard identified, on the one hand, "ascribed" forms of relationship, which are attributed to a dyad of two persons "congenitally": for instance, consanguinity or

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30   Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 31–32. Cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 297–98; Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive," 314–15.

31   Cp. also Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 238; Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 292, 295–97.

32   Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 289, 297; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 102–05.

33   Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 302; Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 41–43; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 101–02, 112–13.

origin from the same region. On the other hand, he observed relationships with a specific horizon of expectation acquired through acts of interaction or communication, such as spiritual kinship, godparenthood, relationship by marriage, membership in an organisation, patronage-clientele relationship, or friendship.[34]

In terms of systems theory, such relationships "pre-structure" communication and interaction and thus reduce the uncertainty and "contingency" of communication. Thus, relationships as well as identities—or in network analytical terms, ties and nodes—emerge from the network of communications. In this regard, a social network is always more than its single parts—it is always a "complex" network, "an emergent level of social reality."[35]

If one applies these concepts to the above-presented network of the Byzantine village priest Basileios Aroules, it is possible to identify further important aspects despite its fragmentary character and small scale: the identities of the husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather and head of the household emerge within a web of ascribed and attributed relationships of kinship and relationships acquired through intermarriage, which imply frequent, day-to-day interaction.[36] But a more peculiar aspect of Aroules' identity can be connected to one relationship of less frequent character, or even more to one single interaction episode: his ordination to the priesthood by and subordination to the local bishop, Meletios of Kaisaropolis. This relationship, in turn, established a predominant context for day-to-day interactions with the villagers and his kin, since it implied a set of rules and expectations associated with the priesthood, including his "private" life.[37]

While in network analytical terms, the tie between Aroules and Meletios opens only one path between the village priest and the wider social world, its relevance for the co-construction of the identity of Basileios Aroules is probably even greater than the constant interaction in the neighbourhood context (although the latter provides the framework for the day-to-day performance of "priesthood"). Even more, in terms of theology, this relationship between priest and bishop was imagined as part of a chain of interactions ("apostolic succession") leading back to Jesus Christ, the most important "point of reference" in medieval Christian communication systems in general.[38]

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34   Reinhard, *Lebensformen Europas*, 272–73; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 74–75.

35   Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 302–04. See also Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 104.

36   For such interaction among Byzantine villagers from a network analytical perspective cp. also Mitsiou, "Networks of Nicaea."

37   Kraus, *Kleriker im späten Byzanz*.

38   Kraus, *Kleriker im späten Byzanz*, esp. 59–60, 65 and 319–35 (on Aroules and his family). See also Everton, *Networks and Religion*.

This suggests that an exclusively quantitative or structural view of network graphs of past social formations is helpful for perceiving the scale, extent, and intensity of the webs of communication and interaction. It is not sufficient, however, to understand the relevance of nodes and links for actual identity-making and the emergence of (cultural or socio-economic) frameworks for interaction.

Relationships, interactions, and "stories"

As this example equally indicates, communication through the "media of proliferation" (i.e., the writing of documents providing information about Basileios Aroules) can take place among absentees. Especially in pre-modern societies, however, a "symbiotic connection" between relationships, communication, and actual interaction, often in a "face-to-face" context, can be observed.[39] This is even true for "media of proliferation" if we think of the constitution of a medieval charter in the presence of interested parties and witnesses or the act of the public reading of a letter in front of the addressee and their retinue.[40] The "power of rituals" has been particularly highlighted in medieval studies in the last decades—in the studies of Gerd Althoff, for instance, who writes: "Power in the Middle Ages had to be illustrative. This happened through acts of representation in which not only glory and wealth were shown publicly. By using ritual and ceremonial acts, commitments and relationships were depicted, rights recognised and much more. [The e]xercise of power took place very much in such acts. Its character was nowhere more directly expressed than in the often interactive action of the powerful in public. In that public power and ritual met, because through the ritual the possibilities of power were established, and its limits were set."[41]

These acts of historical communication are mostly accessible to us via artefacts of communication, such as texts of historiography, letters, and documents which describe or define a specific act of interaction or communication.[42] In terms of relational sociology, such sources convey elements of stories of relationships as defined by White.[43] Letters in Antiquity and the Middle Ages did not possess the "intimate"

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39   Cp. also Kieserling, "Kommunikation;" Holzer, "Differenzierung," 51–52; Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive," 315–16; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 106.

40   Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid*; Grünbart, "Tis love that has warm'd us."

41   Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale*, 11. Cp. also Schlögl, "Der frühneuzeitliche Hof," and esp. Arlinghaus, "Mittelalterliche Rituale" (for a systems-theoretical perspective).

42   Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 69. For challenges of turning medieval narratives into network models, see also Kenna, MacCarron, and MacCarron, *Maths Meets Myths*, or Preiser-Kapeller, "Letters and Network Analysis."

43   Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 292, 301, 307.

character of personal communication like today.[44] The rhetoric of classic epistolography, however, often provides a metaphorical yet no less impressive description of the "co-construction" of relationships and identities within networks (while, at the same time, documenting acts of communication among absentees). In a letter to Peter, archbishop of Alexandria, the fourth-century Cappadocian Church Father Basil the Great wrote, for instance:

> "Eyes are promoters of bodily friendship, and the intimacy engendered through long association strengthens such friendship. But true love is formed by the gift of the spirit, which brings together objects separated by a wide space and causes loved ones to know each other, not through the features of the body, but through the peculiarities of the soul. This indeed is the favour […] the Lord has wrought in our case also, making it possible for us to see you with the eyes of the soul, to embrace you with […] true love and to grow [as] one with you, as it were, and to enter into a single union with you through communion according to faith."[45]

One of the most elaborate analyses of rhetorical constructions of identities and relationships in pre-modern epistolography is Paul McLean's magisterial study, "The Art of the Network," about Renaissance Florence. There, he demonstrates on the basis of thousands of letters how "selves and relations are discursively constructed by patronage seekers". Such may we observe the transformation of "Rhetorics into Relations"—here modifying the title of Peter S. Bearman's equally illuminating book.[46]

Thus, there existed a large semantic pool for the interpretation and definition of network ties. However, not every term was appropriate or even permitted in every relationship in medieval societies. In April 1343, for instance, the Synod of bishops in Constantinople was concerned with a letter which one of their peers, Metropolitan Matthaios of Ephesos, had sent to Emir Umur I of Aydın (in Western Asia Minor). The Synod was especially concerned with the way Matthaios had addressed the Muslim potentate, because he had called Umur "his beloved son and himself the father" of the Emir. Furthermore, he referred to the clergy in Pyrgion, the capital of Aydın, "as the priests" of the Emir. The Synod declared:

> "This he [Matthaios] should not have done. For it befits high dignitaries of the Church to observe [the appropriate form of address] for such persons and not to use the same titles similarly for believers and for heathens

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44   Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid*; Preiser-Kapeller, "Letters and Network Analysis."

45   Basil, ep. 133, ed. Deferrari, Vol. II, 302. Translation from Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid*, 113.

46   McLean, *The Art of the Network*, esp. 1–34 and 224–29; cp. also Mische, "Relational Sociology," 88, and Bearman, *Relations into Rhetorics*.

and infidels. By all means, there must be a differentiation in the form of address as well as in everything else."[47]

The use of metaphors which indicated spiritual kinship was common in the ecclesiastical correspondence of (Late) Byzantium, but was limited to addressees of orthodox belief. If even Catholic rulers were excluded from the circle of spiritual children of the Byzantine Church, the consternation of the Synod about Matthaios' letter becomes comprehensible.[48] Thus, within communication systems of the past, specific terms and "stories" were confined to specific, communicatively determined contexts, and thereby specific relationships could be accepted or not.[49]

Multiplexity and the "crossing of social circles"[50]

Of interest is also the interplay between attributed and acquired relationships (see above) and between communications belonging to different communicative systems in the sense of Luhmann (such as political, economic or religious) within networks, or—in network analytical terms, the multiplexity of links.[51] For a "modern functionally differentiated" society, Luhmann assumed a "release" of individuals from the framework of attributed relationships. This implies that a person within a specific communicative context would be addressed only according to his or her corresponding function, not on the basis of his or her identity within another context. For traditional hierarchical societies, in contrast, he supposed a "total inclusion" of individuals, meaning that the identity or specific position of a person in the context of a predominant "guidance system" (religion, for instance) would also define to a high degree her or his position in all other contexts.[52]

So while today a medical doctor in the specific professional context may only be addressed as a physician, the identity of members of a religious or ethnic minority, for instance, would in pre-modern society very much define their addressability

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47   *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel* II, ed. Hunger, Kresten, Kislinger, and Cupane, no. 144, 322, 46–53 (April 1343); Kresten, "Pyrgion;" Preiser-Kapeller, "Conversion, Collaboration and Confrontation."

48   Cp. Preiser-Kapeller, "Familie der Könige;" Preiser-Kapeller, "Our in the Holy Spirit beloved Brothers."

49   Cp. also Becker, "Einleitung," 16. On ecclesiastical networks in the medieval West, see for instance Lorke, *Kommunikation über Kirchenreform.*

50   On this term established by Georg Simmel (1858–1918) cp. Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 232; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 68.

51   Cp. also Laux, "Bruno Latour Meets Harrison C. White," 382.

52   Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere;" Tacke, "Differenzierung," 244–45, 257; Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 304.

in all contexts of social life. This is why we read about "Jewish" or "Christian physicians" at the Abbasid court of Baghdad, for instance. In this context, the limited addressability of such persons within medieval Islamic society, due to their religious background and thus their greater dependence on ties to the ruler, even increased their chance of selection for positions of trust.[53]

In other cases, the correlation of networks with spatial (neighbourhood, regional origin) and/or social proximity (kinship) allows for their stabilisation through simplification. Franz-Josef Arlinghaus, for instance, wrote about an "amalgamation of family and company" by Italian merchants around 1400 CE, who thereby achieved an "increase of complexity without functional differentiation" (in the terms of Luhmann).[54] Relations of trust or reciprocity in business thereby received additional "external" footing and could also be connected to phenomena of "social homophily" in networks. "Homophily," in turn, could contribute to the emergence of clusters with a higher density of relationships among "homogeneous" identities from a quantitative point of view.[55] But this external embedding had to be augmented by a basis for reciprocity produced within the network. Merchants from the same city doing business abroad may have granted one another a degree of trust through leaps of faith, but for the establishment of a durable commercial relationship, actual benefits had to be produced within the new network.[56]

Trust could be established not only by direct interaction but also via relationships with a common third party. This could take place via the mobilisation of contacts of contacts in the form of recommendations, for instance, as Paul D. McLean analysed them for Renaissance Florence. It may also be the case that attenders have a relationship with an absentee, and on the basis of this "indirect" relation, develop communication with each other. The character of these already existing relationships can very much influence the terms of the new one.[57]

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53   Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*; Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*. Cp. also Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 33; Preiser-Kapeller and Mitsiou, "Mercantile and Religious Mobility."

54   Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 43; Arlinghaus, "Mittelalterliche Rituale," 122–28.

55   Fuhse, "Zu einer relationalen Ungleichheitssoziologie," 183, 190–93. On homophily, see McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, "Birds of a Feather."

56   Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 35–38, 43–44; Tacke, "Differenzierung," 252–53, 257, 260; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 73. For a historical example, see for instance Burkhardt, *Der hansische Bergenhandel*; Apellániz, "Venetian Trading Networks" or Preiser-Kapeller and Mitsiou, "Mercantile and Religious Mobility," and esp. also Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy*.

57   McLean, *The Art of the Network*; Tacke, "Differenzierung," 256; Holzer, "Differenzierung," 54; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 104–05.

These phenomena have been described in the field of social network analysis using concepts such as "transitivity" or "triadic closure" (A is connected to B, and A is connected to C; therefore, eventually B and C will also get directly connected via direct or indirect intermediation, e.g., through a letter of recommendation of A).[58] Within the framework of "systems network theory," the consideration of the systemic context and multiplexity of relationships and the potential influence of relationships established in one context (regional origin, for instance) for the "closure of triads" in other contexts (commercial partnership) adds depth to qualitative as well as quantitative analysis.[59] An example of such a historical network analysis is Padgett and Ansell's classic study "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici," where the combination of different social contexts and functional aspects in a social network is highlighted as the basis for the rise of the Medici in fifteenth-century Florence.[60]

Organisations and other "actors"[61]

Relational sociology, as well as systems theory, regard not only "persons" as possible points of reference for communication and relationships. Organisations and other larger social formations (such as the Mailberger Bund of 1451, see above), up to the level of polities,[62] can also be connected in networks and, respectively, are constituted and constructed in relational contexts.

> "Addresses emerge when communicative meaning is coherently attributed to a sender or receiver, to someone […] whom communication can perceive as [an] entity of communication. This can be the case not only for individuals as persons, but also for organisations."[63]

Thereby, we can observe, also in the semantics of everyday life, a double attribution of communicative acts. They are often attributed at the same time to a person and to an entire organisation. The integration of such double attributions of communicative acts into "stories" and the "horizon of expectations" connected with relationships can also mark the actual emergence of such a larger social formation as a more permanent point of reference within social systems.[64]

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58   Degenne and Forsé, *Les réseaux sociaux*, 139–42; Prell, *Social Network Analysis*, 141–48.

59   Tacke, "Differenzierung," 254–55; Holzer, "Differenzierung," 60–62; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 70; Martin and Lee, "Wie entstehen große soziale Strukturen," 119–20.

60   Padgett and Ansell, "Robust Action." Cp. also Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 73–74.

61   Cp. esp. Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 106–10.

62   Cp. for instance Maoz, *Networks of Nations*.

63   Bommes and Tacke, "Das Allgemeine und das Besondere," 32. Cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 298–99, 306–07; Laux, "Bruno Latour Meets Harrison C. White," 379; Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive," 316.

64   Holzer and Fuhse, "Netzwerke aus systemtheoretischer Perspektive," 316–17.

Network analysis accounts for such phenomena to a certain degree using methods of two-mode or multi-mode networks (with two or more categories of nodes). "Classic" examples are two-mode networks of companies and board members for the reconstruction of corporate elites and inter-corporate networks. But in most cases, such two-mode networks are ultimately decomposed into one-mode networks of interconnected individuals and of entangled companies, for instance. The actual communicative interplay within and the semantic construction of multi-modal networks may be taken into consideration to a greater degree.[65]

Within organisations, "social relations are selectively conditioned": membership in a formal organisation defines a pool of potential relationship partners. It also includes the fulfilment of a specific set of formalised "expectations of behaviour" (as in the above-mentioned case of "priesthood," for instance). Thus, within organisations, the "contingency" and "uncertainty" of communication can be reduced to an even higher degree than within the framework of attributed or acquired relationships. Thereby, potentials for a higher degree of social complexity for a specific purpose—the elaborate hierarchy of the medieval church, for instance—are created. At the same time, pre-modern sources make clear that this process of "formalisation" was less rigid and more constrained by the implications of other contexts of identity than in modern "functionally differentiated" society as defined by Luhmann.[66]

Furthermore, relationships within networks are often established, especially in contrast to formal membership rolls. Luhmann analysed the emergence of such informal relationships and networks within organisations as early as the 1960s. Informal communicative stories between persons, for instance, emerge in situations which are not totally covered by formalisations, such as everyday interactions—although in most cases, the total ignorance of formalised positions of persons can be observed very rarely, and even more in pre-modern status-conscious societies.[67] Again, the multiplexity of relationships and their interplay in the construction of communicative realities is highly relevant.

Network growth and the emergence of large-scale social systems[68]

As already indicated above, "emergence" and "complexity" are not found only in "large-scale networks," but are inherent properties of social systems independent of

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65   Cp. Carroll and Sapinski, "Corporate Elites;" Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 78.

66   Baraldi, Corsi, and Esposito, *GLU*, 129–31; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 107. For the limitations of organisational formalisations cp. esp. Schlögl, "Der frühneuzeitliche Hof," 199–204, and Sikora, "Formen des Politischen."

67   Cp. esp. Tacke, "Differenzierung;" Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 107–08.

68   Cp. Becker and Reinhardt-Becker, *Systemtheorie*, 80–90, Becker, "Einleitung," and Walz, "Theorien sozialer Evolution," 46–70, for the historical dimension of Luhmann's theory.

their size. Even the co-construction of a relationship within a dyad of two nodes can be described as an emergent and dynamic social system.[69]

But Luhmann and researchers who have built on his theories were, of course, also interested in the emergence of large-scale social formations. Within the framework of systems theory, these are understood as the result of the transition from earlier, small-scale and segmentary societies, where relationships were mostly confined to face-to-face contexts, to hierarchically differentiated societies with an increasing number of persons. During this growth process, inevitably, some people became "hubs" who attracted more relationships than others, but also had to find a way to balance this with their limited capacity for direct interaction. Thus, "media of proliferation" (i.e., writing) as well as social identities of authority ("kingship") and contexts of relationships (organisations) emerged, which did not necessitate constant face-to-face interaction and which could attract and formalise relationships and communication within larger social systems.[70]

At the same time, differences emerged not only in the number, but also in the range and quality of relationships. While a large number of persons were still embedded in spatially limited networks of kinship and neighbourhood (such as the village priest Basileios Aroules), "identities" such as that of the "aristocracy," for instance, led to the establishment of highly selective and transregional contacts for various political, familial or economic purposes (see the example of Ulrich von Eyczing above).[71] Such disentanglements from local interaction networks also characterised other members of society, such as higher clergymen or merchants.[72]

On the basis of the Paston Letters collection from fifteenth-century England, Alexander Bergs developed a scheme for the differentiation in the size, density, multiplexity and cohesion of social networks in a late medieval society with regard to variables such as gender, education, place of living (urban, rural) and status (Figure 3).[73]

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69   Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 306–07; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 98. Cp. also Stephan, "Emergenz in sozialen Systemen;" Mayntz, "Emergenz in Philosophie und Sozialtheorie."

70   Holzer and Schmidt, "Theorie der Netzwerke," 236; Holzer, "Differenzierung," 53–58; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 106; Martin and Lee, "Wie entstehen große soziale Strukturen." On such emergent phenomena cp. also Malkin, *A Small Greek World*, 31–33.

71   Luhmann, "Interaktion in Oberschichten." Cp. also Gramsch, "Politische als soziale Grenzen"; Gramsch, *Das Reich als Netzwerk der Fürsten*; Habermann, *Verbündete Vasallen*.

72   Luhmann, "Interaktion in Oberschichten;" Holzer, "Differenzierung," 54–56; Fuhse, "Zu einer relationalen Ungleichheitssoziologie," 201. Cp. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties."

73   Bergs, *Social Networks and Historical Sociolinguistics*, 59.

Variables	Checklist / Social network correlates							
	Number of ties		Density		Multiplexity		Overall network-structure	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	Close-knit	Loose-knit
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male
Education§	Higher	Lower	Lower	Higher	Higher	Lower	Lower	Higher
Literacy	High	Low/none	Low/none	High	Low/none	High	Low/none	High
Marital Status	Single	Married	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single
Place of living%	City	Village	Village	City	Village	City	Village	City
Reference group	Other	Family	Family	Other	Other	Family	Family	Other
Travel frequency	Frequent	Rare	Rare	Frequent	Rare	Frequent	Rare	Frequent
Travel destinations	(Inter-) national	Local/none	Local/none	(Inter-) national	Local/none	(Inter-) national	Local/none	(Inter-) national
Offices+	National	Local/none	Local/none	National	Local/none	National	Local/none	National
Contacts	High Prestige	Low Prestige	Low Prestige	High Prestige	Low Prestige	High Prestige	Low Prestige	High Prestige
Cluster*	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Figure 3 Correlations between social attributes and network characteristics
for pre-modern societies, scheme by Alexander Bergs
(from Bergs, *Social Networks and Historical Sociolinguistics*, 59).

From a systems theory point of view, however, one should not only ask how attributes of identities correlate with quantitative and qualitative characteristics of social networks, but also how these characteristics contribute to the emergence of specific identities. The partial disentanglement of "aristocrats" from close-knit local networks freed up the capacity for far-reaching relationships of different qualities and greater numbers, which in turn accounted for the formation of "aristocratic" identity. While one special relationship decisively distinguished the priest within the otherwise relatively homogeneous interaction context of the village of Radolibos, aristocrats such as Ulrich von Eyczing distinguished themselves through the number and variety of their relationships (of authority, allegiance, friendship, commercial partnership, cultural exchange, etc.).[74] In this regard, the quantitative and structural properties addressed by formal network analysis also become relevant and historically meaningful again, highlighting the necessity of combining methods and theoretical approaches.

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74   Cp. for instance Matschke and Tinnefeld, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz*. Cp. also Schlögl, "Der frühneuzeitliche Hof;" Gramsch, "Politische als soziale Grenzen?;" Gramsch, *Das Reich als Netzwerk der Fürsten*. See also Habermann, *Verbündete Vasallen*, and Habermann, *Spätmittelalterlicher Niederadel*, for an interesting attempt to combine multiplexity and quantitative measures.

Conclusion

What does a systems theory approach contribute to historical network analysis? The relational approach to past social realities inherent to historical network analysis from the perspective of systems theory is more appropriate than others. It becomes evident, however, that the emergence and reproduction of social networks involves many more prerequisites than "the flourishing semantics of network suggests."[75] A purely quantitative-structural approach to nodes and ties allows only limited access to the complex interplay between communications, interactions, relationships and identities (and in network analytical studies, historical interpretation cannot do without recourse to the "qualitative" characteristics of nodes and ties anyway).[76] At the same time, identities and communications have a quantitative aspect (such as the differentiation among "aristocrats" through the number of ties, for instance)—and through processes of stabilisation and formalisation patterns of relationships emerge which can also be perceived from a structural point of view (such as "betweenness" as an emergent structural property as well as an attribute of a "broker-identity," for instance).[77]

Therefore, a detailed discussion of the construction and emergence of "relational" phenomena in historical network analysis is useful. This is, of course, easier with networks of a smaller scale, which allow in-depth studies of semantics to be developed and used within and for a network.[78] Ultimately, the multiplex and multi-modal "arrangement of interdependencies" does not permit simple explanations. Elaborate mathematical tools must be combined with conceptual complexity to detect "meaningful patterns" in past social systems.[79] Thereby, network analysis can be understood not as a tool of reductionist structuralism, but as a window into the complexity and diversity of human societies of the medieval past.[80]

Acknowledgements

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75   Tacke, "Differenzierung," 267.

76   Cp. also Fuhse, "Zu einer relationalen Ungleichheitssoziologie," esp. 180–85.

77   Cp. also Fuhse, "Zu einer relationalen Ungleichheitssoziologie," 180, 199.

78   Cp. also Fuhse, "Die kommunikative Konstruktion," 313.

79   Laux, "Bruno Latour meets Harrison C. White," 392; Mützel and Fuhse, "Einleitung," 21; Hertner, "Netzwerkkonzept," 81–82; Holzer, "Von der Beziehung zum System," 98. Renate Mayntz observes an "irreducibility of emergent social phenomena," cp. Mayntz, "Emergenz in Philosophie und Sozialtheorie," 178–86.

80   Cp. also Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*; Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*.

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Leader without Followers?

A Network Analysis Study on the Formation of the Mailberger Bund

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Abstract. In 1451/52, an opposition of the estates formed in the Duchy of Austria under the leadership of Ulrich von Eitzing against the ruling prince, King Frederick III. The aim of this so-called "Mailberger Bund" was to end Frederick's guardianship over his cousin Ladislaus Postumus and transfer power to the latter. Although it was Ulrich von Eitzing who motivated a large part of the estates to participate in the Mailberger Bund, he was soon ousted from his leadership position by his allies. Using historical network analysis, this case study examines the extent to which Ulrich von Eitzing's "social capital" that he brought to the league contributed to this loss of power. The study also contributes to the discussion of network analysis as a method in historical studies.

Keywords: network analysis, conflict, Mailberger Bund, Ulrich von Eitzing, social capital, Frederick III, loss of power

In 1456, Emperor Frederick III had a list of charters compiled, which he carried with him in a double-locked chest.[1] In it, he deposited important charters of the Habsburg dynasty. However, he also kept in the chest *vil scheltprieff* (several scolding letters) of the man who, since his accession to power, had become one of the most unpredictable political figures in the Habsburg hereditary lands: Ulrich von Eitzing. The following investigation is devoted to him.[2]

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1   Lhotsky, "AEIOV," 205. I would like to thank Jörg Feuchter, Paul Heinicker, Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Christina Lutter, Sebastian Kolditz, and Alexander Watzinger for stimulating discussion and multifaceted support during the preparation of this essay.

2   For Ulrich von Eitzing, see Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 264–67; Gutkas, "Lebensjahre," 149–60; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 358–62; Lorenz, *Eyczing*, passim; Seidl, *Eizinger*, 9–64. Seidl's source-based study provides a large amount of valid data for our purposes and is therefore indispensable. However, it should be expressly noted here that Siegfried Seidl (1911–1947) received his doctorate from the University of Vienna in 1941 with this work, but had his

Ulrich's name is inextricably linked to the renowned aristocratic opposition in the Duchy of Austria, which formed the Mailberger Bund in 1451 and, within a few months, violently ended Frederick's guardianship over his cousin Ladislaus.[3] This conflict not only disrupted Frederick III's relationship with the Austrians for years. His attempt to reunite the Habsburg hereditary lands, which had been divided since 1379, also failed at the time. In 1452, the Mailberger Bund, together with the Bohemian and Hungarian estates, forced the enthronement of Albrecht II's son Ladislaus Postumus.[4] However, even before this political success, Ulrich von Eitzing had been ousted from his leadership position within the Mailberger Bund by his own allies. The question of why this happened is explored in the following case study, which was developed as part of the MEDCON – Mapping Medieval Conflicts project.[5] The project investigated the extent to which the concepts of social and geographical network analysis can be used to study political conflicts in the Middle Ages.

Ulrich von Eitzing was a social climber.[6] He came to Austria poor and insignificant, writes Eneas Silvius Piccolomini in his *Historia Australis*.[7] Born into a family of knights from Bavaria around 1398, Ulrich rose to become one of the most economically and politically influential men in the Duchy of Austria by the end of the 1430s. Having come into wealth through marriage, he acquired strategic real estate holdings in Lower and Upper Austria and Moravia, apparently with the aim of consolidating at least part of his possessions into a dominion.[8]

At the same time, Ulrich invested in his social and political advancement, provoking suspicion and criticism from his contemporaries.[9] His era was that of

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academic title revoked in 1947 after he was convicted of crimes committed during the Nazi era by the Vienna Regional Court and hanged. In 1941, Siegfried Seidl was commissioned by Adolf Eichmann to establish the Theresienstadt ghetto, which he headed as camp commander until 1943. Fedorovič, "Siegfried Seidl," 162–209.

3   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 51–94; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 347–92.

4   Alliance document of the Hungarian and Austrian estates and the Counts of Cilli for the liberation of Ladislaus, 5 March 1452, printed in: Chmel, *Materialien* 1, 374–76, no. 188; cp. Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 85f.

5   https://www.oeaw.ac.at/imafo/das-institut/detail/mapping-medieval-conflicts (Accessed: 7 August 2025).

6   Ulrich's career, outlined below, is typical of a social climber in the Late Middle Ages, as is the reaction of those around him; cp. Rabeler, *Lebensformen*, 279, cp. Rabeler the example of Wilwolts von Schaumburg, Rabeler, *Lebensformen*, 250–67, as well as Sigmund and Heinrich Prüschenk, Probszt, "Prueschenk," 115–27.

7   Piccolomini, *Historia Australis*, 448.

8   On Ulrich von Eitzing's acquisitions up to 1450, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 9–44. On the nature of his actions, see the examples of Retz and Gars, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 17, 35.

9   Piccolomini, *Historia Australis*, 448.

the reign of Albrecht II (V). The duke relied on the financially powerful knight, whom he promoted to the best of his ability in return. In 1437, he made him his *Hubmeister* (fiscal administrator) in Austria.[10] This marked the zenith of Ulrich's political career at court. Formal social advancement followed shortly thereafter when Albrecht elevated him to the Herrenstand (rank of lord) after his election as Roman-German king.

When Albrecht II was succeeded in Austria and the empire in 1439/40 by Frederick III, who came from the Styrian line of the Habsburgs, "war dies einem Wechsel der Dynastie und ihrer Herrschaftsgrundlagen näher als dynastischer Kontinuität" (this was closer to a change of dynasty and its foundations of power than to dynastic continuity).[11] Like most of the Austrian nobility, Ulrich von Eitzing did not consider the Styrian to be the legitimate successor to Albrecht II and mobilised the Austrian estates against the king. Karl Gutkas, who has produced the most authoritative study of the Mailberger Bund to date, emphasises that Ulrich von Eitzing, in addition to his powers of persuasion and talent for political theatre, clearly had numerous personal contacts whom he was able to activate for participation in the Mailberger Bund.[12] Although the formation of the alliance was not the sole work of Eitzinger, according to Gutkas, he can be regarded as the leader of the opposition of the estates in the early stages.[13] Nevertheless, Ulrich von Eitzing was soon ousted from the top by his most important ally, Ulrich von Cilli.[14] Gutkas sees the influential Count as the real winner of the guardianship conflict, who only allowed the *Provinzpolitiker* (provincial politician) Ulrich von Eitzing to take the lead as long as it was necessary to convince the Austrian estates.[15]

But why was Ulrich von Eitzing's position within the Mailberger Bund so fragile, even though he was supposedly able to mobilise so many of his personal contacts for it? Obviously, the nature of his social networks was not conducive to permanently stabilising his leadership position within the alliance and exposed him to particular risk in the event of a crisis—in this case, the threat posed by Count Ulrich von Cilli. This thesis, which will be examined below, is based on the concept of "social capital" established in the social sciences.[16] The concept emphasises that individuals can use personal resources to their advantage for specific goals because of their

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10   Lorenz, *Eyczing*, 5 and 15; Seidl, *Eizinger*, 13.

11   Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 32.

12   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 74f. and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 369.

13   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 68.

14   See Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 219f.

15   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 84, 92, 94; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 362.

16   Roth, "Soziales Kapital," 205–18; Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 105–10.

embeddedness in social networks.[17] At the same time, however, it has been observed that social networks have different effects depending on the goal pursued, i.e., they can also have negative effects.[18] Network analysis will be used to examine Ulrich von Eitzing's social connections within the Mailberger Bund, which comprised more than 250 people, in order to better understand the reasons for his loss of power.

The use of network analysis is so well established in (German-language) historical studies that the accumulated knowledge on the subject has already found its way into handbooks.[19] Broad-based and methodologically well-considered studies are also available.[20] At the same time, there is criticism questioning the validity of the method imported into historical studies, as well as wrangling over the definition of the term "network" and criticising its inflationary use.[21] Within the framework of this discussion, the present case study is intended as a further methodological attempt.

When historical science conducts network research, it often uses various approaches and selected methods of social science network analysis, employing certain lines of argumentation and basic assumptions of network theory, but does not always carry out network analysis in the strict social science sense.[22] The present study pursues a mixed methods approach: network analysis is used to structure the data and, as Robert Gramsch-Stehfest recently succinctly put it, as a *Hypothesengenerator* (hypothesis generator).[23] The visualised results are then interpreted using conventional historical methods.[24]

Network analysis is often used to examine social interdependencies and dynamics in order to draw conclusions about groups.[25] With this focus, the method has been used in historical research to study political structures and economic phenomena, as well as in conflict research.[26] In the following, Ulrich von Eitzing, an

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17   Roth, "Soziales Kapital," 208, 210f.

18   Roth, "Soziales Kapital," 210f.

19   See Düring et al., eds., *Netzwerkforschung*, as well as Reitmayer and Marx, "Netzwerkansätze."

20   Such as the works of Robert Gramsch-Stehfest, here, e.g., Gramsch-Stehfest, *Netzwerk der Fürsten*, or the works of Johannes Preiser-Kapeller.

21   Hitzbleck and Hübner, eds., *Grenzen des Netzwerks*, especially the introductory remarks, 7–40. Gramsch-Stehfest, "Metapher," 7–12, provides a concise overview of the common points of criticism.

22   Reitmayer and Marx, "Netzwerkansätze," 869.

23   Gramsch-Stehfest, "Metapher," 28.

24   Gramsch-Stehfest, "Metapher," 28.

25   See, for example, Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 71.

26   See, for example, Fouquet and Gilomen, eds, *Netzwerke*, for the economic sphere; Gramsch, *Netzwerk der Fürsten*, for the analysis of political structures in medieval Europe; Habermann, *Niederadel*, for the investigation of social structures and feuding practices of the late medieval lower nobility.

individual in the context of his social relationships, takes centre stage. The study of personal "networks" is not new in medieval studies, but network analysis has not necessarily been used for this purpose.[27] In the present study, the ego network model established in social science is adapted and tested for its suitability to investigate the social connections of Eitzinger within the Mailberger Bund.[28] Social science defines an ego-centred network as "die Beziehungen einer fokalen Person (Ego) zu anderen Personen (Alteri), mit denen sie im direkten Kontakt steht, sowie die Beziehungen zwischen den Alteri" (the relationships of a focal person (ego) to other persons (alters) with whom they are in direct contact, as well as the relationships between the alters).[29] The quality of a network is not a constitutive feature in the sense of the social science method.[30] The quality of a network is only described in a second step on the basis of various characteristics such as size, structure, composition, and reach.[31] The characteristic of size is the sum of all contacts, while the characteristic of structure is density. Density is "das Verhältnis der vorhandenen Beziehungen im Netzwerk zur Zahl der möglichen Beziehungen" (the quotient of the number of existing relationships and the number of possible relationships between the alters).[32] Size and density are usually considered the decisive characteristics.[33] However, as we will see, the composition of Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network is of crucial importance in explaining his loss of power. This raises the question of the degree of similarity between ego and alters, the so-called *Grad der Homophilie* (degree of homophily).[34]

It is well known that an ego network represents only "einen minimalen netzwerkanalytischen Zugang zur Realität" (a minimal network-analytical approach to reality)[35] since data is collected only about one actor and not about groups or entire networks, which is why it is not possible to analyse positions and role interdependencies. The insight gained from analysing the ego network can therefore only be realised through comparison. To enable this, Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network is generated from several subnetworks in accordance with the context in which his relationships developed, in order to define its composition more clearly and place it in the context of the Mailberg confederation as a higher-level social phenomenon, with a view to

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27   See, for example, Märtl, "Frühhumanisten," 122–28; Konzen, "Rechberg," 221–48; Schwarz, "Johann Waldner," 113–36.

28   On this point, see Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 507–18; Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse,* 65, 79–81, 105–110.

29   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 507; see also Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 65.

30   Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 108, cp. Gilomen, "Netzwerke," 349.

31   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 512.

32   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 513.

33   Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 108.

34   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 515.

35   Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 79.

identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Ulrich von Eitzing's social ties. As usual, the network data will be examined both at the network level and at selected points at the level of individual relationships between ego and alters, known as dyads.[36]

In a first step, the Mailberger Bund is reconstructed as a social structure. The pool of individuals identified forms the starting point as well as the reference point for all further steps of the investigation. All personal data collected was entered into the OpenAtlas database along with the corresponding source references and structured. OpenAtlas has been designed to meet the needs of historical research.[37] The database offers the possibility to record different entities (actors, places, and events) and to establish any number of user-defined relations (social, geographical, functional, etc.) between them. The data from this case study are publicly available.[38] The visualisations generated from them in this case study represent only a selection of the possible data modelling options.

The source material is favourable, as the Mailberger Bund drew up two alliance charters in October 1451, the lists of signatories of which have been edited.[39] A total of 257 different individuals or "legal entities" (monasteries, towns, etc.) affixed their seals to the first and/or second copy of the Mailberger Bund charter. In addition, several other individuals known from the research literature who sided with the allies during the guardianship conflict but are not named as signatories were also included.[40] This resulted in a group of 266 individuals. According to the alliance charters, "prelaten, graven, herrn, ritter unndt knecht und die vonn stetn, die in dem landt ze Osterreich gesessen und wannhaft sind" (clergy, counts, lords, knights, and squires who resided in the land of Austria) participated in the Mailberger Bund.[41] With Ulrich von Eitzing, about 15 percent of the participants in the Mailberger Bund can be classed as lords *(Herren)*, around 71 percent were knights *(Ritter)* or noble squires *(Edelknechte)*, another 9 percent were clergy, and 5 percent were cities.[42] Like Ulrich von Eitzing, most of the allies had their main possessions in Austria below the Enns River.[43]

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36   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 515.

37   See https://demo.openatlas.eu/ (Accessed: 7 August 2025).

38   https://arche.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/browser/oeaw_detail/66765 (Accessed: 5 August 2025).

39   Chmel, *Geschichte Kaiser Friedrichs*, 644–48.

40   See, for example, Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 71.

41   Printed text of the document according to the second version of 14 October 1451, in: Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 389–92, here 389.

42   Of the knights and noble squires, about 21 percent can be identified relatively clearly as knights and 22 percent as noble squires. For another 28 percent, this distinction cannot be made with certainty. The identification was made primarily according to Turba, *Ritterstand*; for the other participants, see also Zernatto, *Herrenstand* and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1" and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2."

43   Ulrich's main residence was Schrattenthal in the Weinviertel region. Lorenz, *Eyczing*, 11.

The central question underlying the modelling of Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network is which of these approximately 270 individuals the head of the Mailberger Bund had already been in contact with prior to the fall of 1451, and in what context these contacts can be documented. Social science usually generates the basic personnel structure of an ego network by surveying the individuals concerned. Medieval research must address these questions, known as *Namensgeneratoren* (name generators),[44] to relevant written sources or research literature.

First, it was investigated whether there were any individuals among the participants of the Mailberger Bund who had previously supported Ulrich von Eitzing in conflicts. The question behind this is whether Ulrich was possibly involved in feuding networks that enabled him to quickly recruit supporters for the opposition.[45] Due to their nearness in time to the Mailberger Bund, two feud letters by Ulrich von Eitzing from 1441 and 1450 were analysed. In 1441, Eitzinger quarrelled with Frederick III over debts dating back to his time as a *Hubmeister*.[46] Ulrich had guaranteed a large sum of money, and since Frederick III did not hold him harmless as promised for claims from his time under Albrecht II, Eitzinger declared a feud against him.[47]

Ulrich's feud letter to the city of Nuremberg in May 1450, which has been largely ignored by researchers to date, took place in the context of the disputes between Margrave Albrecht Achilles of Brandenburg and the city of Nuremberg in 1449/50.[48] Ulrich probably supported the margrave because he had been administrator of the Brandenburg fiefs in Austria since 1449.[49]

As usual for lists of feudal supporters, those from 1441 and 1450 mainly name members of the lower nobility.[50] The relevant comparison group among Mailberg's allies are therefore the approximately 190 knights and noble squires. For the conflict of 1441, the names of 156 feudal supporters who refused to support the king alongside Ulrich von Eitzing have been handed down.[51] In 1450, Ulrich von Eitzing

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44   Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 507f.

45   Such a network was maintained, for example, by the feudal entrepreneur Hans von Rechberg, see Konzen, "Rechberg," 221–48.

46   The conflict is mentioned by Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 265; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 58 and Brunner, *Land*, 49, among others.

47   On the original agreement of 1440, see Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 12 no. 32; for a conciliation between Frederick III and Ulrich von Eitzing in October 1441, see Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 12 no. 82.

48   Zeilinger, "Städtekrieg."

49   Lorenz, *Eyczing*, 56; Seidl, *Eizinger*, 41.

50   Schäfer, "Fehdeführer," 207.

51   Feud letters from Ulrich and Sigmund von Eitzing, Ulrich Laindecker, and Erhard Eibeck dated 24 May 1441, in: Kollár, *Analecta*, col. 878–887 no. XX; col. 890 no. XXII; col. 891 no. XXIII, and col. 892f. no. XX.

recruited a total of seventy-six *ritter und knecht* for his "Austrian party" to support Brandenburg against Nuremberg, fifty-nine of whom are known by name.[52] It is assumed that they came mainly from the Austrian–Moravian border region.[53] The most prominent supporters were the Boskovics, who were related to the Eitzingers and lived in Moravia. Lords with estates mainly in Austria, on the other hand, did not participate in Ulrich's feud against Frederick III in 1441 or in the conflict with the city of Nuremberg. Ulrich von Cilli, on the other hand, supported the margrave with his own feud letter to Nuremberg.[54]

Figures 1 and 2 both show a comparison of the supporters of the three feuds. Two visualisations of the same data are deliberately provided in order to raise awareness that data visualisation is a methodically controlled endeavour that can vary depending on the problem or phenomenon to be illustrated, as well as the aesthetic preferences of the data designer. [55] Both figures clearly show that the overlap between the people who were involved in several of Ulrich von Eitzing's feuds is remarkably small. Figure 2 additionally provides detailed information about the few individuals who participated in all three conflicts. These could be examined in more detail in further investigations. The result of comparing the three feuds suggests that there was no pool of feud supporters among Mailberg's allies who were ready to act on Ulrich von Eitzing's behalf in the background. It is clear that no feuding networks that could be activated when needed had formed among his former supporters, such as those established by professional feud entrepreneurs, such as Ulrich's contemporary, Hans von Rechberg (1410–1464), who deployed them in the service of third parties when necessary.[56]

This finding also calls into question Gutkas' previously not properly sourced assumption that a large number of the signatories of the Mailberg charters were dependent on Ulrich von Eitzing and that the large group of knights he had at his

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52 Two lists of feudal supporters have been preserved in the various editions of the report on the Margrave War attributed to Erhard Schürstab. The so-called "small" list shows the total number of Ulrich's supporters; the so-called "large" list names fifty-nine supporters, see *Chroniken Nürnberg*, 475–78. The manuscripts are described *Chroniken Nürnberg*, 118f. and 113f.

53 *Chroniken Nürnberg*, 475.

54 *Chroniken Nürnberg*, 476ff. The extent to which, as Lorenz, *Eyczing*, 59 believes, "the leaders of the 1452 uprising" had already united here remains unclear.

55 Special thanks are due to Johannes Preiser-Kapeller and Paul Heinicker, who created the visualisations. The former with the experienced eye of a historian, skilled in historical network analysis, the latter with the eye of a media designer and a focus on contemporary, differentiated data presentation. The accompanying interdisciplinary exchange was enriching, as it opened a media studies perspective on the challenges of data visualisation, based on Paul Heinicker's own intensive engagement with the topic, see Heinicker, *Anderes Visualisieren*.

56 Konzen, "Rechberg," 223 and 235.

disposal to administer his many castles was his recruitment pool.[57] If this had been the case, one would have expected a much larger number of names to appear in the earlier conflicts, especially due to the proximity in time, in the feud against the city of Nuremberg.

Figure 1 Supporters of the feuds of 1441 and 1450 compared with the participants in the Mailberger Bund (visualisation: Johannes Preiser-Kapeller)

Current research assumes that servants and subjects were obliged to participate in their lord's feud[58] and so far sees the feudal bond between helper and feud leader as the most important recruitment base for feuds.[59] Nevertheless, despite exemplary investigations, it is still difficult to unequivocally categorise participants in feuds.[60]

In the case of the Mailberger Bund, there are doubts that dependence on the leader was a decisive factor for many supporters to join. So far, this can only

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57   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 361.

58   Brunner, *Land*, 76.

59   Schäfer, "Fehdeführer," 207.

60   Schäfer, "Fehdeführer," 203 and her conclusion on 219f. Schäfer emphasises that the term "helper" should be understood as a functional designation and does not say anything about the hierarchical stratification or legal classification of the feud participants into patrons, helpers, and servants.

Figure 2 Supporters of the feuds of 1441 and 1450 compared with the participants in the Mailberger Bund (visualisation: Paul Heinicker)

be reasonably assumed in a few individual cases, such as those identified by Karl Gutkas: the noble squires Wolfgang Trebinger, Christoph Stoitzendorfer, and Hans Meyreser.[61] Stoitzendorfer had presumably placed himself under Eitzinger's authority by selling him his seat in 1446.[62] He had already been involved in Ulrich's feud against Nuremberg, took part in the preparatory meeting for the Mailberger Bund in Wullersdorf a year and a half later, and sealed both Mailberg charters. A similar pattern can be seen with Trebinger.[63] The noble squires Benedikt Grassegker and Stefan Kelheimer, as well as Hans Stockheimer, had already supported Eitzinger in earlier conflicts.[64] The Herzogenburg monastery, which had placed itself under the protection of Ulrich von Eitzing and his brothers for fifteen years in 1444, was certainly unable to avoid participating in the alliance.[65]

Due to their diverse nature, the three conflicts probably required different groups of supporters from Eitzinger's perspective, who were likely to have had their own interests. The feud in 1441 was a legal remedy imposed by Eitzinger out of economic necessity and was not particularly a political measure.[66] Ulrich's supporters probably also had financial claims of their own.[67] In the case of the Margrave war, Ulrich himself was a feudal supporter and, as Brandenburg's administrator, was certainly obliged to participate in the feud. Geographical considerations were obviously decisive for him in recruiting his supporters.

Next, three subnetworks will be used to investigate who from Ulrich von Eitzing's immediate social circle was involved in the Mailberger Bund. To this end, the *Diplomatarium* of the Eitzinger family, published by Joseph Chmel[68]—with a focus on the period from the 1430s onwards—and relevant research literature is evaluated with regard to Ulrich von Eitzing's known relationships with participants in the Mailberger Bund prior to 1451. This includes biographical and genealogical literature as well as the aforementioned study by Karl Gutkas.[69] This source and lit-

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61   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 369 with note 61; see also Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 71.

62   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 42 no. 77; see also the earlier sales to the Eitzinger, Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 38 no. 69.

63   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 35 no. 64 and 41 no. 76; see also Seidl, *Eizinger*, 32 and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 369.

64   See Figure 2 and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 70f.

65   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 38 no. 68, see also Seidl, *Eizinger*, 33.

66   See also Georg von Puchheim's financially motivated feud against Frederick III: Brunner, "Fehdewesen," 435–59.

67   In his feud letter, Eitzinger states that Albrecht had appointed him *mitsambt andern … unverschaidenlich* as guarantors. Kollár, *Analecta*, col. 879, no. XX.

68   Chmel, "Adels-Geschichte"; Chmel, "Eizinger 1"; Chmel, "Eizinger 2."

69   These are essentially Zernatto, *Herrenstand*; Turba, *Ritterstand*; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund,

erature base only provides initial access to Ulrich von Eitzing's network of relationships. It would need to be supplemented by more comprehensive research through systematic archive and literature searches.

Qualified relationships are established between the data sets of the individual actors and the data set of Ulrich von Eitzing in the OpenAtlas database using the categories of "kinship," "economic," and "social," resulting in three subnetworks. Figure 3 shows a visualisation of the relevant relational data structured in the database. The three subnetworks, which are interpreted in more detail below, are coloured differently for better differentiation. Together with a fourth "political" subnetwork generated from other sources, these form the core of Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network (Figure 4). Like Figure 3, Figure 4 does not show the final research result. Visualisation of the relational data is rather an intermediate methodological step. The modelled subnetworks are now being examined in greater detail using conventional methods.

The first subnetwork comprises Eitzinger's family ties to members of the Mailberger Bund. Family is the most clearly identifiable group in Ulrich's ego network. Family was not only a constitutive element of his economic and social rise, but also an essential stabilising factor in his conflicts. Ulrich had three brothers and six sisters. The systematic social advancement of his generation demanded viable strategies for risk reduction. The Eitzinger brothers realised this by acting as a family association in economic and legal matters.[70] This strategy was also observed among other members of the rising knightly class in the fifteenth century,[71] making it easier to compensate for possible personnel losses. Together with his brothers, Ulrich had acquired most of the central Eitzinger possessions, initially with Martin and, after his death, with his younger brothers Oswald and Stephan.[72] Ulrich had been elevated to the rank of lord with the latter. Oswald became Ulrich's most important partner within the family.

While Oswald and Stephan strengthened the family's ties to Moravia through their marriages, the sisters were socially anchored above and below the Enns River in Austria through marriage into knightly families.[73] Ulrich's sister Elisabeth, in turn, had been abbess of the Benedictine convent of Erla since 1437, which she led to

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Part 1"; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," and Seidl, *Eizinger*. There is some overlap between the sources cited and the literature, as some of the works are based on the same source material.

70   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 358f., Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 267, note 526.

71   See the brothers Prüschenk; Probszt, "Prueschenk," 115–27.

72   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 359, on Martin see also Seidl, *Eizinger*, 10f.

73   Oswald was first married to Katharina von Gaiditz and then to Johanna von Boskovic, while Stephan was married to Katharina von Boskovic Černohorský; see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 65, 74, and 78. For Ulrich's sisters, see the family tree at the end of the same work.

Figure 3 "Kinship," "economic," and "social" subnetwork (visualisation: Paul Heinicker)

economic prosperity during her thirty-year tenure.[74] By marrying Barbara Kraft, Ulrich acquired the foundation of his fortune and, at the same time, established family ties to Berthold von Mangen, the long-serving *Hubmeister* under Albrecht II.[75] Without this contact, Ulrich's rise at court would have been almost inconceivable.

About a quarter of Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network was family (see the connections marked in red in Figures 3 and 4 originating from Ulrich von Eitzing). Most of his siblings and their families were involved in the Mailberger Bund. In the early stages, it was primarily Stephan who took part in the preparatory meetings in Mailberg and Wullersdorf and sealed the first charter.[76] The second charter bears the seal of Elisabeth Eitzinger. Their sister Anna is represented by her husband Hans Strasser, and Margareta Eitzinger by her son Oswald Ludmansdorfer.[77] Katharina
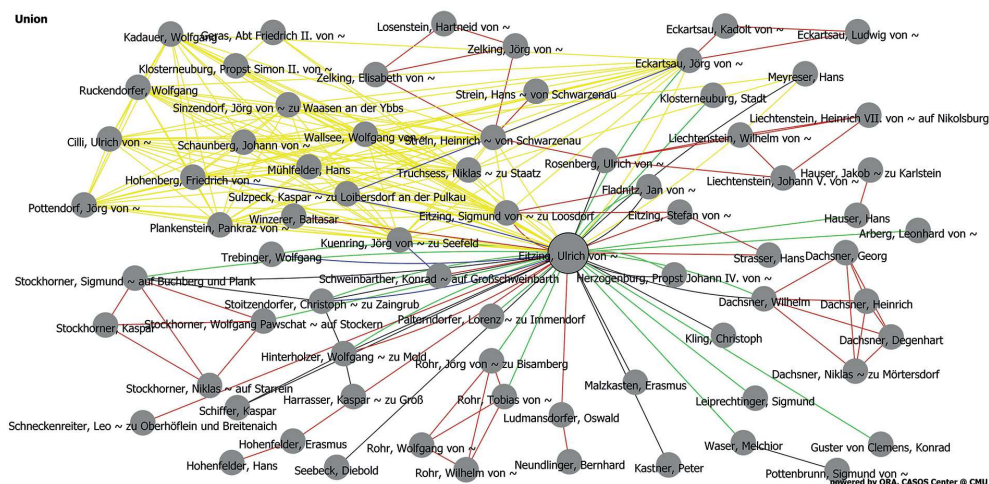
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74   *Dehio Niederösterreich*, 1950.

75   Lorenz, *Eyczing*, 4f.

76   However, he did not participate in Ulrich's feud against the city of Nuremberg.

77   He sealed the second Mailberg charter and participated in the alliance for the liberation of Ladislaus on 5 March 1452.

Eitzinger's family by marriage is represented by Erasmus Hohenfelder.[78] However, the families of Dorothea and Afra Eitzinger, the Stadlers and the Apfentalers did not participate in the alliance. Afra's lack of support is likely due to the fact that she had lost a dispute over inheritance with her brothers a few years earlier.[79]

Figure 4 Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network including "political" subnetwork
(visualisation: Johannes Preiser-Kapeller)

Instead, some of Ulrich's more distant relatives joined the Mailberger Bund, such as the Schneckenreiter, the Stockhorner, the Winczer, and the Wildungsmauer families.[80] However, the most committed member of the family was the knight Sigmund Eitzinger zu Loosdorf, a cousin of Ulrich's from a collateral line. He had already taken part in Ulrich's feud with Frederick III in 1441.[81] From the first meeting in Mailberg in 1451 until the Göllersdorfer Bund against Frederick III in 1460, with whom Ulrich attempted to reactivate the opposition of the estates against the emperor, he stood at his cousin's side.[82]

Various family members had already been involved in Ulrich's feuds, examined above. In 1441, these included Ulrich's brothers Stephan and Oswald, as well as a relative from a collateral line.[83] In 1450, they were a member of the Kornberger

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78   For information on Katharina's relationship with Erasmus Hohenfelder, see Turba, *Ritterstand*, 63f.

79   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 28–32, nos 57–59.

80   For details of the individual family relationships, see Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 69; Chmel, "Adels-Geschichte," 239; Seidl, *Eizinger*, 12f.; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 358.

81   Kollár, *Analecta*, col. 890, no. XXII.

82   Chmel, *Materialien* 2, 211–14, no. 166; on the Göllersdorfer Bund, see Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 267.

83   Ulrich von Eitzing zu Starein, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 28.

Eitzinger family[84] and a member of the Boskovic Černohorský family. The respective motives are likely to be found between family loyalty and self-interest. Ulrich's declaration of feud in 1441 is to be understood as having been made on behalf of all three Eitzinger brothers,[85] as the economic existence of the entire family was at stake. The repeated joint appearances of the Eitzinger brothers make it all the more clear that Oswald Eitzinger's name does not appear at any point during the Mailberger Bund.[86] Oswald, who financed Frederick III for a long time, did not always agree with his brother's attitude towards the sovereign,[87] and may have distanced himself from Ulrich during this time.

In summary, it can be said that Ulrich von Eitzing relied heavily on family support in times of conflict. This is generally considered a characteristic feature of feuds among knights[88] and is an initial indication that Ulrich von Eitzing, although now a lord, remained socially attached to his class of origin.

Compared to the family subnetwork, the two subnetworks "economic" and "social" have much less distinct contours. The relationships are more difficult to qualify. The relationships recorded in both subnetworks of Ulrich von Eitzing have in common that their origins largely overlap, but the individuals had different functions. The connections marked in green in Figures 3 and 4, originating from Ulrich von Eitzing, can be traced back to economic transactions. These relate almost exclusively to Ulrich's numerous property purchases in Austria. The contacts are Ulrich's respective transaction partners. This "economic" subnetwork is therefore not a trade network that would have emerged through recurring interaction with the same individuals. The contacts were established on a case-by-case basis. The next subnetwork (Figures 3 and 4—grey lines) comprises contacts with individuals who, according to the sources, were known to Ulrich in some form, but without it being possible to define the nature of the relationship in each individual case. For this reason, the neutral term "social" was chosen to describe this subnetwork. These are predominantly individuals who had acted as witnesses in the business dealings of the Eitzinger.[89] However, it is not always clear from the sources for which of the business parties they had acted as witnesses.

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84   Altmann von Eitzing zu Kornberg. Simon von Eitzing also took part.

85   To settle the conflict, Frederick III negotiated with all three, see Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 12 no. 58.

86   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 363, on Oswald, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 65–76.

87   Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 267, note 526.

88   Schäfer, "Fehdeführer," 220 with note 119.

89   These were, for example, Jan von Fladnitz, Wolfgang Hinterholzer zu Mold, Peter Kastner, Jörg Kunigsperger, Konrad Kunigsperger, Erasmus Malzkasten, Hans Meyreser, Kaspar Schiffer, Diebold Seebeck, Hans Walich, see Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 25f. no. 50; 26f. no. 52; 59 no. 111; 38f. no. 70; 6 no. 5; 15 no. 21; 46 no. 87; 60f. no. 115; 45 no. 87; 33 no. 60; 48 no. 90 and 33 no. 60.

The "economic" and "social" subnetworks together comprise around twenty-f
ive people, which corresponds to just under one-tenth of the Mailberg's allies. These
include connections to some important parties, such as the Commander of the epon-
ymous Mailberg commandery, Wilhelm Dachsner, from whom Ulrich von Eitzing
purchased some estates in 1445 during times of economic hardship.[90] Dachsner not
only opened the doors of the commandery to the allies but also brought a prominent
part of his family into the alliance (Figure 4, right).[91] A second look at the sources
reveals that a significant number of those who had done business with Eitzinger or
attested to his business dealings in the previous two decades were members of the
Mailberg alliance.[92] Ulrich von Eitzing seems to have exerted a certain influence
on these circles. Some of the men in Ulrich's ego network, such as the Dachsners,
Stockhorners, Hohenfelders, and von Rohrs, also mobilised other family members
(Figure 4).

However, one-off business contacts do not necessarily indicate a close per-
sonal relationship with Ulrich von Eitzing. The same applies to the witnesses to
the charters, although a certain degree of group affiliation is certainly possible in
this case.[93] In the case of a group of individuals, however, the increased network
density as seen in the visualisation suggests a stronger social bond between them.
This is the Eitzinger–Stockhorner–Stoitzendorfer–Hinterholzer–Trebinger group
(Figure 4, left). The Eitzingers and Stockhorners form the centre of this circle. They
were distantly related,[94] and there were repeated economic contacts, most recently
in 1450.[95] With Hans Stockhorner, who did not participate in the alliance him-
self,[96] Ulrich had belonged to the administrators of Albrecht II and Friedrich III.[97]
His brothers Kaspar and Wolfgang,[98] as well as Niklas Stockhorner of Starrein and
Sigmund Stockhorner of Buchberg and Plank, who came from other lines, were

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90   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 39f. no. 73, see also Seidl, *Eizinger*, 34 and 43. Further transactions fol-
      lowed in 1448 and 1450, Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 58 no. 109 and Chmel, "Eizinger 2," 21 no. 137.
      Wilhelm Dachsner also attested to several transactions by Ulrich von Eitzing, Chmel, "Eizinger
      1," 42 no. 78 and 57 no. 108.

91   For more on the Dachsners, see Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 367.

92   The Pielacher family, for example, did not participate in the alliance. Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 21 no.
      42, and 28 no. 55.

93   See Habermann, *Niederadel*, 93, who critically examines the concept of "Vergesellung."

94   Anna Eitzinger zu Kornberg was married to Christian Stockhorner, Turba, *Ritterstand*, 126.

95   On the connections between the Eitzingers and the Stockhorners, see Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 4f.
      no. 2; 39 no. 72; 43 no. 79; 68f. nos. 133–135, as well as Seidl, *Eizinger*, 15, 34, 52, and Gutkas,
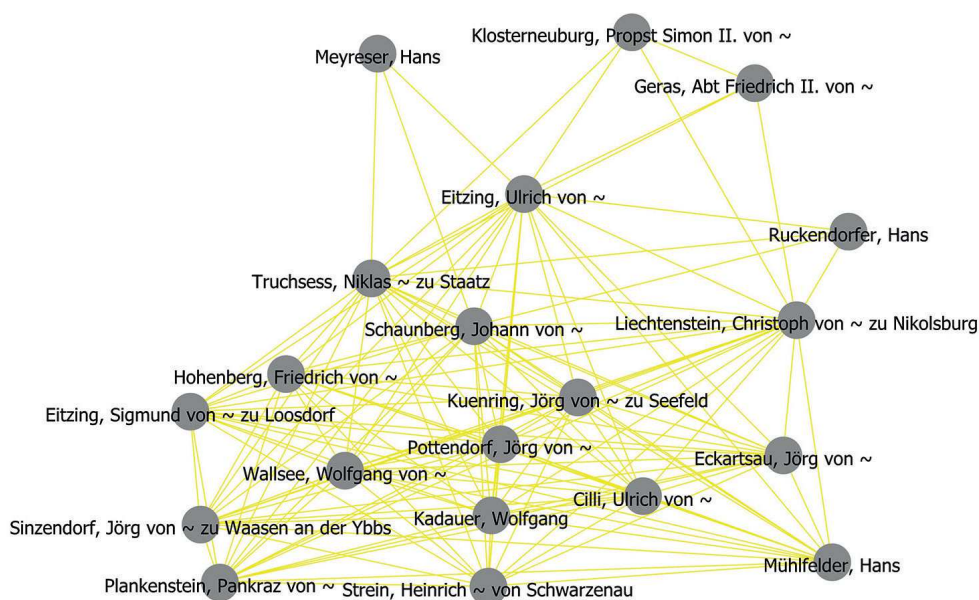   "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 69, as well as Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 369.

96   He may already have been deceased.

97   Zernatto, *Herrenstand*, 241.

98   Turba, *Ritterstand*, 126.

active supporters of the alliance. In the second half of the 1440s, Eitzinger's servant Stoitzendorfer became involved in the business activities of the circle around Ulrich von Eitzing, the Stockhorners, and Wolfgang Hinterholzer[99] and was also counted among the *frunden* (friends) of Christian Stockhorner.[100] The group was also united by the fact that they mostly came from the same area around Horn and Mold.[101] In addition to his family, this circle of people is likely to have been among Ulrich von Eitzing's closest social connections.

Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network within the Mailberger Bund is finally rounded off by a final subnetwork, for which sources have been evaluated that prove or suggest contacts between Ulrich and members of the confederation that had been established in a political context prior to the formation of the Mailberger Bund (Figure 5 and Figure 4 left—yellow lines). The focus is on the decade beginning with the reign of Albrecht II, as the years 1438 to 1448 saw both the height of Ulrich's political career and the decline of his political influence at the court of Frederick III.

Figure 5 "Political" subnetwork (visualisation: Johannes Preiser-Kapeller)

When modelling this "political" subnetwork, it becomes particularly clear that network analysis is only as good as the quantity and quality of the sources on which it is based, and that a lack of source criticism can easily lead to misinterpretations.

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99   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 59 no. 111; 63 no. 119.

100   Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 38 no. 69; 43 no. 79; 51 no. 95; 61f. no. 117; 63 no. 119.

101   Gutkas already refers to this group from the Horner area in "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 69.

Here, too, the network can only provide an initial indication of Ulrich von Eitzing's connections with the Austrian political elites involved in the Mailberger Bund.[102] For a more differentiated presentation, further sources would have to be evaluated, which is not possible within the scope of this short study. For the methodological attempt pursued here, sources were selected that cover as many of the men who served under Albrecht II and Frederick III in Austria as possible. The men appointed as *Landesverweser* (administrators) in Austria by Albrecht II in 1438 and then by Friedrich III in 1442, who included Ulrich von Eitzing, were taken into account.[103] In addition, a group of men are examined who, like him, performed council services or diplomatic functions for Friedrich III in the 1440s.[104]

First, a methodological problem must be addressed: it is not certain that the administrators appointed by Frederick III in 1442 actually took office, i.e., the relationships with Ulrich von Eitzing and among themselves are likely but not certain.[105] The tools used here to structure the data and the visualisation based on it only allow yes/no statements. Contingencies that can be described narratively in a few strokes cannot be depicted, or only with considerable effort. It should also be remembered that the ego network model alone cannot be used to make any definitive statements about the political relationships between ego and alters, or between alter and alter. It only shows the context in which the contacts were established. Thus, Ulrich von Cilli, Ulrich von Eitzing's greatest opponent in the Mailberger Bund, also appears in this subnetwork.

Despite these weaknesses, the "political" subnetwork can be used for our purposes in terms of hypothesis formation. First, it is striking that it does not really matter whether the administrators appointed in 1442 actually took office. Of these twenty-four, only three participated in the Mailberger Bund alongside Ulrich von Eitzing, namely Johann von Schaunberg, Niklas Truchsess zu Staatz, and Wolfgang Ruckendorfer. By transferring political responsibility at the beginning of his reign in Austria, Frederick III thus achieved a remarkable feat of integration.

The "political" subnetwork gains further depth when compared to the inner core, i.e., the leadership of the Mailberger Bund. According to Karl Gutkas, this consisted of Ulrich von Eitzing, Wilhelm von Liechtenstein, Georg von Kuenring, Kadolt von Wehingen, Wilhelm Dachsner, Niklas Truchsess zu Staatz, Sigmund Fritzelsdorfer,

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102   See also the presentation of the participants in Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 357–82.

103   The list of administrators in 1438 is provided by Zernatto, *Herrenstand*, 241, on those *reten in Österreich* appointed by Frederick III, see Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 12 no. 99.

104   For Frederick III's delegations to Moravia in 1445 and 1448, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 33 and Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 13 no. 66.

105   This is pointed out by Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 59.

Wolfgang Ruckendorfer, and Wolfgang Stockhorner.[106] Gutkas' findings are largely confirmed by examining the data structured in the OpenAtlas database to determine which individuals participated in which actions of the Mailberg allies (Figure 6).[107] A comparison between this leadership group of the Mailberger Bund and Eitzinger's ego network shows that Eitzinger had been in close contact with about half of the men or their families before the Mailberger Bund was formed. These were Wilhelm Dachsner, Wolfgang Ruckendorfer, Wolfgang Stockhorner, and Niklas Truchsess zu Staatz. A comparison of this excerpt from Ulrich's ego network with the leadership of the Mailberger Bund suggests that there were two parties within this core group, one around Ulrich von Eitzing and another around the influential Georg von Kuenring.[108] This hypothesis could be a starting point for further investigation.

It is also clear that some of Ulrich's most important relationships from his "political" subnetwork can be traced back to his time at the court of Albrecht II. These include men such as the noble squire Hans Meyreser, Johann von Schaunberg, and Reinprecht V von Wallsee,[109] although they were not part of the leadership circle.[110] Ulrich von Eitzing's closest ally from the core group was probably Niklas Truchsess von Staatz.[111] The political careers of the two men had run parallel for years: when Ulrich was Albrecht II's *Hubmeister*, Niklas held the office of court marshal. Both were among Albrecht II's administrators. Later, both were sent on diplomatic missions on behalf of Frederick III.[112] At the time of the Mailberg uprising, Niklas took over the office of *Hubmeister*.[113] Unlike most of the other Mailberg allies, he still stood alongside Ulrich von Eitzing against Frederick III in the Göllerdorfer Bund in 1460. However, it cannot be clarified at this point whether Ulrich von Eitzing was integrated into the court networks under Albrecht II beyond these individual contacts or whether he remained isolated, as was often the case with social climbers

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106   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 72. Fritzelsdorfer was Albrecht V's Truchsess, see Turba, *Ritterstand*, 48. On the noble squire Wolfgang Ruckendorfer see Heinig, *Friedrich III*, 290 and Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 366.

107   Meeting in Mailberg on 14 October 1451, assembly in Wullersdorf on 31/31 October 1451, sealing of the first alliance charters, sealing of the second alliance charter, delegation of the Mailberg allies to Frederick III on 31 October 1451, (written) message to Frederick III on 18 November 1451, alliance for the liberation of Ladislaus on 5 March 1452, see Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 66, 69–72, Chmel, *Geschichte Kaiser Friedrichs*, 644–48.

108   For Kuenring, see Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 364.

109   Zernatto, *Herrenstand*, 241.

110   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 80f.

111   For him, see Turba, *Ritterstand*, 38f.; Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 368.

112   On Frederick III's delegations to Moravia in 1445 and 1448, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 33 and Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 13 no. 66.

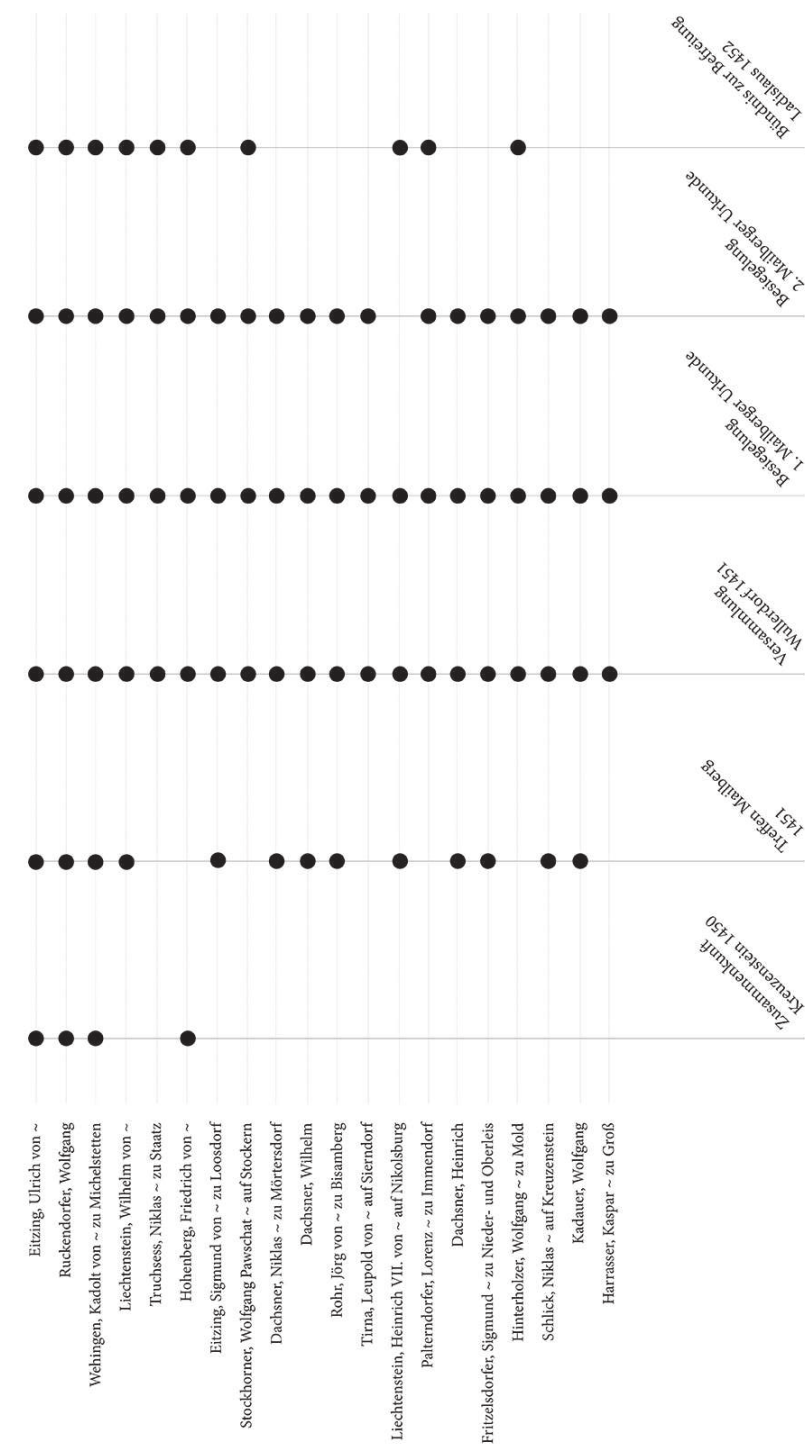113   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 78.

Figure 6 Participation intensity of the Mailberg allies (visualisation: Paul Heinicker)

whose careers depended heavily on the patronage of a prince.[114] Accordingly, the visibly higher density of the "political" subnetwork should also be interpreted with caution.[115] Unlike in the "economic" and "social" subnetworks, the "political" contacts do not predominantly radiate outwards towards the ego. Intuitively, one would associate this high density with qualities such as loyalty, intensity, and stability with regard to the ego. In the conflict case examined here, however, it is likely to have represented an increased social risk for Ulrich von Eitzing. This is because the high density would also have made it easier for people to switch sides. Such a conceivable social dynamic could have contributed to Ulrich von Eitzing, who was already closely connected to only part of the inner leadership circle, being isolated more quickly when Ulrich von Cilli joined the alliance.

Let us summarise. The present case study on the Mailberger Bund has shown that the ego network model can be used for historical conflict research. At the same time, the study makes it clear that network analysis generally requires methodological supplementation if it is to deliver reliable results. With the help of the ego network model, the case study was able to identify striking characteristics of Ulrich von Eitzing's social capital, which provide indicative clues as to his loss of power within the Mailberger Bund. One of the great strengths of network analysis is the ability to visualise structured data. Some phenomena, especially when examining large groups of people, become much clearer through visualisation than they would in a purely narrative presentation. An example is Figures 1 and 2, which show at a glance that there was hardly any overlap between Ulrich von Eitzing's groups of supporters in the three conflict scenarios examined. As a rule, visualisations must be interpreted with caution. First of all, the purpose of a visualisation should be clear, which in most cases is to form hypotheses (Gramsch-Stehfest). Then, it should be borne in mind that the interpretation of the visualisation may vary depending on the question being asked. This became clear in the interpretation of the density of Ulrich von Eitzing's "political" network.

Nevertheless, the ego network remains limited. It alone cannot be used to illustrate the relative size, density, and reach of Ulrich von Eitzing's social network in comparison to the networks of other alliance members. Nevertheless, the methodological approach could be expanded. As part of a more comprehensive study, it would be useful to compare Ulrich's ego network with the ego networks of other protagonists of the Mailberger Bund, especially with that of his opponent, Ulrich von Cilli. A potential future study could examine the extent to which the quality of the social

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114   Rabeler, *Lebensformen*, 279, 281.

115   This is not determined mathematically, as is usual in network analysis, but merely established as a finding generated by visualisation; for the calculation of density, see Wolf and Repke, "Egozentrierte Netzwerke," 513.

capital of an established prince, such as Ulrich von Cilli, differed from that of a social climber, such as Ulrich von Eitzing, within the opposition of the estates. However, the relatively high time and technical effort required for network analysis must be taken into account before the first results can be seen after manual data extraction, structuring, and visualisation. However, given the current state of AI development, automated data extraction is expected to make this process much easier.[116]

The network analysis carried out here shows that Ulrich von Eitzing had contacts with around one-fifth of the Mailberg alliance partners prior to 1451. Ulrich's ego network, and thus his social capital within the Mailberger Bund, proves to be heterogeneous in many respects, both in terms of its composition and its structure. It is composed of individuals from various, largely independent spheres of Ulrich von Eitzing's life. While the subnetworks "kinship", "economic," and "social" overlap in some areas, the "political" subnetwork remains largely isolated. The most stable elements of the network are Ulrich von Eitzing's family and the group of men who lived close to the Eitzing family seat in Lower Austria. Neither did a significant number of Ulrich's servants participate in the Mailberg league, nor had Ulrich established any feuding networks in earlier conflicts that he could have brought into the Mailberger Bund. The Eitzingers' "political" contacts can be divided into a close circle of men who can be identified as his party within the alliance's leadership, and relationships that can be described as rather distant to unstable. The high density of the "political" subnetwork is interpreted as a predisposition for Eitzinger's social isolation towards the end of the guardianship conflict.

In general, an ego network is considered to be more effective the more alters it contains who do not know each other and the more diverse they are in terms of their other characteristics.[117] However, the performance of the network depends on the respective target. A heterogeneous network may be effective in terms of career advancement, but ineffective in terms of social security in the event of conflict. Ulrich von Eitzing's ego network, modelled in this case study, reflects the social capital of a social climber. If a network analysis were to be carried out specifically focusing on Ulrich's career and evaluating relevant sources, this heterogeneity would likely become even more apparent. Ulrich's relationships could be described as those of a typical *Cutpoint-Akteur* (cutpoint actor): he is connected to groups from different social circles, but does not really belong to any of them and is "der typische Abweichler, Modernisierer und Innovateur" (the typical deviant, moderniser, and innovator).[118] However, given his fragile position within the Mailberger Bund, this heterogeneous structure of his social capital seems to have been disadvantageous for Ulrich von Eitzing.

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116   Gramsch-Stehfest, "Metaphor," 10.

117   Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 107.

118   Jansen, *Netzwerkanalyse*, 106.

It is clear that he attempted to win over people loyal to him for the major political upheaval in Austria. However, this circle remained small in comparison to the almost 270 supporters of the alliance. It consisted of his family and the small group around him and the Stockhorners.[119] As Gutkas already points out, the property of Ulrich von Eitzing's relatives and acquaintances who participated in the alliance was rather insignificant, and their influence was limited.[120] They did not offer sufficient potential to serve as social backup for Eitzinger.

Furthermore, it is striking that Ulrich von Eitzing, who had formally belonged to the estate of lords *(Herrenstand)* since 1439, still had close contacts mainly with knights and noble squires. This was probably another weak point in his social capital. The fifteenth century was a time of great social mobility in Austria.[121] The formal rise from knighthood to estate of lords was increasingly possible,[122] and the Eitzingers were among the first families in Austria to take this social step.[123] The late medieval lords formed a legal but not a social unit; there were social differences within the class, and it was difficult to reach the top positions.[124] There was a great need for social distinction.[125] The formal legal admission of the Eitzingers to the estate of lords was consolidated in stages under Albrecht II and Friedrich III.[126] Social acceptance towards the newcomers probably took correspondingly longer.[127] According to the results of network analysis, Ulrich von Eitzing was in close contact with only a few of the approximately forty members of the Mailberger Bund who can be classified as lords *(Herren)* and were distributed among about twenty families residing in Austria.[128] These included the von Rohr family,[129] who were themselves

119   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 69.

120   Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 369.

121   Feldbauer, "Rangprobleme," 582.

122   See Feldbauer, "Rangprobleme," 582, and Schneider, *Niederadel*, 270. Spieß, on the other hand, describes social advancement in the Duchy of Austria around 1500 as an exception, Spieß, "Abgrenzung," 194.

123   Schneider, *Niederadel*, 264 with reference to Zernatto, *Herrenstand*, 232–35; see also Seidl, *Eizinger*, 23 with note 1.

124   See Feldbauer, "Rangprobleme," 578, and Spieß, "Abgrenzung," 204f.

125   Spieß, "Abgrenzung," 204.

126   See Koller, *Reichsregister*, 146–49 nos. 206f., Chmel, *Regesta* ,no. 178, Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 39 no. 71.

127   Cp. the contemptuous description of Ulrich by the anonymous accuser, behind whom Gutkas suspects Georg von Kuenring, see Böhm, "Beschuldigungen" and Gutkas, "Lebensjahre", 154f.

128   These were the Arberg, Eckartsau, Hohenberg, Kuenring, Liechtenstein, Losenstein, Mainburg, Plankenstein, Polheim, Pottendorf, Rohr, Rosenberg, Schaunberg, Schlick, Strein, Toppel, Wald, Wallsee, Wehingen, Winden, and Zelking families.

129   For the Rohr family, see Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 2," 365f. For Ulrich's contacts with the Rohr family, see Seidl, *Eizinger*, 31; Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 22 no. 60, Regesten Kaiser Friedrichs III. H. 12 no. 58.

social climbers, and the Arberger family,[130] who were related to them, as well as Ulrich von Rosenberg, who resided in Moravia.[131] In order to establish a leading position among the lords, it would have been necessary for the Eitzingers to enter into appropriate marriages, which they had not done.[132]

This social divide also ran through the leadership of the Mailberger Bund. The party around Eitzinger consisted mainly of knights and noble squires, while the presumed second party around Georg von Kuenring with Wilhelm von Liechtenstein and Kadolt von Wehingen was made up of members of the Austrian Herrenstand. Ulrich lacked a significant family that could have earned him recognition among the influential Austrian lords beyond their shared political goal. The upstart Ulrich von Eitzing remained an outsider.

Ulrich von Eitzing's fragile social capital probably made it easier for the influential Count Ulrich von Cilli, who was also closely related to the pretender to the throne Ladislaus Postumus, to claim the leading role within the Mailberger Bund for himself. Karl Gutkas' assessment that Ulrich von Eitzing was a *Provinzpolitiker* is thus confirmed by the present network analysis and can be supplemented by the fact that Ulrich was not only limited in terms of his political motives, but also remained restricted in his social circle. In a sense, Ulrich von Eitzing, one of the most important social climbers of the fifteenth century in Austria, continued to act like a knight.

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130   Seidl, *Eizinger*, 23; Chmel, "Eizinger 1," 9–11 no. 10.

131   Eitzinger and Ulrich von Rosenberg had been engaged in lively correspondence since 1450, Gutkas, "Mailberger Bund, Part 1," 63.

132   Feldbauer, "Rangprobleme," 578.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

When Nations Are Ready for Their Own Architecture

Introduction to a Journal Bloc on National Styles

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The positive, almost poetic metaphor of "nation-building" has held among the stiff, rational keywords of nationalism studies since the 1950s. This concept was introduced into the field's discourse by the social scientists who first argued that nations were not created by God but by people themselves. These scholars named the process "nation-building." According to them, nations had to be built through language standardisation, social mobility, mass education, and mass media. Thus, the concept was initially used in the sense of a general, socio-cultural, top-down process led by the elite, with the aim of unifying states.[1]

Over the past decades, the thesis about the constructed nature of nations has become a premise of the field of nationalism studies, whilst—in parallel—the metaphor's frame of reference has been narrowed down to the domain of culture. Today, when coming across the concept of "nation-building" in an academic publication, the reader would most probably be thinking about a national culture, rather than state formation, politics, or social mobility. Currently, "nation-building" means, above all, the program of the completion and normativisation of national culture, with the aim of fostering national identity through culture.[2]

Karl W. Deutsch (1912–1992)—a pioneer among social scientists who began to investigate nation formation as a socio-historical and communicational phenomenon—wrote an overview in 1963 on the state of the art of the emerging field of nationalism studies. He believed that three concepts were competing for the central position in this emerging discourse: "national growth," "national development," and "nation-building." Deutsch positioned the three concepts in a triad in which the extreme opposite points were "national growth" and "nation-building," while "national development" was between the other two. In this discursive context,

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1   Smith, "State-Making and Nation-Building," 231–32.

2   Kaufmann, "Nation-Building," 208.

"national growth" implied imagining the establishment of nations as an organic process; by contrast, those who preferred the concept of "nation-building" intended to stress the planned and top-down nature of nations; whilst the verbiage focusing on "national development" mirrored an understanding that social principles partly determine nation-formation processes, but at the same time, they can also be designed or manipulated by the elite. If we look at the titles and table of contents of the works written and edited by Deutsch, it is striking that he did not commit himself to any of the concepts in question and used them alternately. We know that the Czech social scientist used "nation-building" when he found it important to emphasise the planned character of nation-formation processes, as well as the multifarious possibilities that are potentially encoded in them. That is to say, the plans and constructions of a nation are similar to those of an actual building: they can be done by using various materials, forms, and different timings.[3]

Thus, from the establishment of this discourse, the notion of "nation-building" had competitors within the terminology of nationalism studies. In fact, it is indeed reasonable to ask: Why do we use an architectural metaphor for the identification of the process of nation formation? Why has "nation-building" gained more popularity than "national growth" or other synonyms? Scholars of nationalism usually study literacy and education rather more than architecture. Correspondingly, we could have coined similarly expressive metaphors with the vocabulary of book culture, family, or school, and it is not impossible to imagine the terms "nation-edition" or "nation-education" instead of the tried and trusted "nation-building."

Honestly, we do not see a clear-cut reason for the long-lasting success of this concept. But it definitely has something to do with the semantic advantages highlighted by Deutsch and with the fact that architecture is intrinsic to mankind. This intrinsicality means that architecture is an indispensable but special part of the life of human communities. Due to this intrinsicality, the nineteenth-century formation of national identities and cultures—processes that are coincidentally named "nation-building" by twentieth-century historians—expanded to the practice of planning, constructing and living in houses. The patriots, who were occupied with the building of their nation (in a metaphorical sense), had to concern themselves with buildings (in a tangible sense) because architecture provides characteristic ways of expressing power and worldview. Public buildings, like monuments, bear witness to the strength, ideas, and peculiarity of those who erected them, and assure that the building community is not mistaken for another community. Elites have been aware of this representational power of architecture since the age of the pyramids.

In Central Europe and the Balkans, intellectual and political leaders of national movements as well as patriotic architects discovered the same kind of power in the

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3   Deutsch, "Nation-Building and National Development," 3.

nineteenth century—thousands of years after the pharaohs, but for pretty similar reasons—, and started their attempts at nationalising architecture for themselves. Accordingly, the national idea had a decisive role in the architecture of the long nineteenth century. Architects planned edifices to commemorate their nation's heroes and outstanding personalities. Later, in the second half of the century, nationalism left its stamp on increasing numbers of public and residential buildings, that is, on spaces used by the communities and families that made up the nation. This phenomenon prevailed all over the continent, but only in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe did large numbers of patriotic architects try to establish distinct styles and regear architecture on a national basis.

In these regions, architects made efforts to elaborate about two dozen national architectural styles—from scratch or by reviving historic styles. In the latter cases, the architects who reapplied historic styles—for example, the Romanesque of medieval Bohemian churches or the Renaissance of seventeenth-century Upper Hungarian mansions—claimed that they were not nationalising but rather re-nationalising bygone ways of building, since they had served as the nation's style several centuries before. The patriotic architects, architectural historians, and critics who pledged such aims wanted to offer a formal architectural language to their greater community. Accordingly, their efforts were comparable to the attempts of those intellectuals who had established a standard language and national literature a few decades earlier. They intended their national style to spread all over the country's townscapes, mark facades as well as interiors, and continuously announce that the nation owns a peculiar and precious culture. National styles were supposed to express the national character through architectural means, enrich the symbolic paraphernalia, help compatriots and foreigners to distinguish the nation, and attract the communities also living in the country but not assimilated into the core nation.

Thus, by investigating national architectural styles, we can better understand how Czechs, Poles, Croats, Romanians, Hungarians, and other neighbouring nations fancied themselves in the age of nationalism. The authors of the following thematic bloc of *HSCE*, published in two parts in this and the next issue of the journal, would like to contribute to the understanding of such wishful self-representations. Among our articles, the reader will find comparative and discursive analyses as well as case studies of outstanding monuments and simpler buildings executed according to standard designs. Following the significant literature on the national scale and the trailblazing macro-scale overviews,[4] these writings provide more detailed insights into the history of national architecture and mirror many colours of our region's multifarious culture.

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4   Chevallier, "Les architectures nationales;" Hajdu, "The Search for National Architectural Styles;" Moravánszky, *Competing Visions*, 217–83; Popescu, "Un patrimoine de l'identité."

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The National Style and Crime

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Abstract. This study explores the impact of visual culture and architectural theory on the formation of national identity in early Czechoslovakia, with a particular focus on the interwar period and the debates surrounding the so-called "national style." It examines how key figures such as Pavel Janák and Karel Teige articulated aesthetic frameworks that either reinforced or challenged nationalist discourse. Janák's attempts to define a distinctively Czech architectural style reflected a synthesis of vernacular inspiration and modern formal language, demonstrating the tension between cosmopolitanism and local tradition. By contrast, Teige's classification of architectural trends, particularly his advocacy of Jaromír Krejcar, reveals an ideologically charged attempt to canonise modernist principles. The article also considers the broader cultural and political context, particularly the use of architecture to legitimise the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic. Ultimately, the study emphasises the intricate relationship between politics, identity, and aesthetics in the cultural development of a post-imperial nation-state.

Keywords: Czechoslovakia, national style, modernism, Pavel Janák, Karel Teige, nation-building

Introduction

The establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 created a new political reality and a pressing cultural problem: how should the newly formed state present itself visually, materially, and symbolically? Architecture and the built environment played a central role in this process. Public buildings and spaces, urban expansions, and the aesthetic vocabulary of modern design became tools for consolidating democratic legitimacy, distinguishing the republic from its Habsburg past and communicating cultural confidence both domestically and internationally. However, architecture was not merely a neutral reflection of politics; it was also shaped by competing visions of modernity, identity, and belonging.

    This article examines the role of architectural discourse and practice in the formation of interwar Czechoslovak identity, with a focus on two emblematic figures:

Pavel Janák (1882–1956)[1] and Karel Teige (1900–1951).[2] Janák, who was educated before World War I, became a leading proponent of a distinctively Czech national style that drew on vernacular traditions, historic models, and modern formalism. Nearly a generation younger than Janák, Teige emerged as the polemical voice of the avant-garde, dismissing both nationalist sentiments and ornament in favour of an uncompromising constructivism or functionalism that aligned with international networks. Their often contrasting views not only illustrate aesthetic debates and the development of architectural discourse, but also the broader tensions in the cultural politics of the First Republic.

The article builds on recent scholarship that complicates the narrative of interwar Czechoslovakia as a significant democratic experiment.[3] The concept of "national indifference," pioneered by Jeremy King, Pieter Judson, Tara Zahra, and James Bjork, has revealed that nationalism did not automatically command the loyalty of ordinary people in East Central Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.[4] Similarly, Vratislav Doubek's work on "latent Czechoslovakism" has highlighted the constructed and fragile nature of the republic's founding myth of Czech–Slovak unity. Against this backdrop, architecture can be understood as a medium through which cultural elites attempted to determine identity and project national cohesion, often in the face of indifference, ambivalence, or resistance.

At the same time, it is necessary to address the gendered structures of cultural production. As Melissa Feinberg has argued through her notion of "elusive equality,"[5] the 1920 Czechoslovak constitution proclaimed gender equality but did little to change entrenched inequalities in education, employment, and political participation.[6] Women's access to professional careers in fields such as architecture was severely limited, ensuring that male voices dominated the design and interpretation of the built environment. Examining Janák and Teige, therefore, also means recognising how their prominence was conditioned by structural exclusions that silenced or marginalised women's contributions.

By situating Janák and Teige within these intertwined contexts—nationalism, democracy, and male dominance—, the article seeks to provide a critical reassessment of the architectural history of interwar Czechoslovakia. It argues that architecture was simultaneously a site of creative experimentation and an arena of power, where cultural authority was asserted, contested, and often denied to those outside the dominant male elite.

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1   Kiesling, *Janák*.

2   Michalová, *Teige*.

3   Rákosník, Spurný, and Štaif, *Milníky*, 71–166.

4   Bjork, *Neither German*; Judson, *Guardians*; King, *Budweisers*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

5   Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*.

6   Doubek, "Latent Czechoslovakism," 37–67.

The Czechoslovak nation: politics and identity

The idea of Czechoslovak unity emerged in the nineteenth century primarily within liberal intellectual circles. As Michal Doubek and others have shown, what existed before 1918 was not a fully formed political programme but a "latent Czechoslovakism"—a sense of cultural and linguistic proximity between Czechs and Slovaks, nurtured by educated elites but not yet widely embraced by broader society.

For Czech liberals, Czechoslovakism provided a way to expand their demographic base and strengthen claims to autonomy within the Habsburg monarchy. Slovak elites, however, were more hesitant.[7] While they shared cultural affinities with the Czechs, they also feared being subsumed into a larger Czech nation, and often turned to Vienna or Budapest for protection. Latent Czechoslovakism, therefore, was a double-edged idea: it offered the potential for cooperation but lacked the institutional grounding or popular legitimacy to function as a genuine political project until after World War I.

The collapse of Austria–Hungary in 1918 provided the opening for transforming latent Czechoslovakism into state policy. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the philosopher-politician who became Czechoslovakia's first president, was instrumental in this process. From exile during the war, Masaryk worked tirelessly to gain international recognition for an independent Czechoslovak state.[8] His arguments strategically combined appeals to democratic principles with demographic calculations.

On its own, the Czech ethnic group was not a convincing majority in Central Europe. By fusing the Czechs and Slovaks into a single political nation, Masaryk could present the allies with a more coherent case for self-determination. The resulting Czechoslovak nation was, in effect, a deliberate political construct—one designed to bolster Czech claims while simultaneously reducing the influence of large German and Hungarian minorities.

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918 was celebrated as a triumph of national self-determination, yet the state was multi-ethnic from the outset.[9] Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews, and Poles all lived within its borders. While the constitution proclaimed equality for all citizens, political reality was different: Czechs, and to a lesser extent Slovaks, dominated public life. The republic thus rested on a paradox. It claimed legitimacy through democratic and humanist ideals, but it relied on a myth of a unified Czechoslovak nation to justify Czech hegemony. This myth was reinforced through education, public ceremonies, mass Sokol sports events, and the arts, all of which sought to present Czechoslovakia as a coherent national project. Yet for minorities—and indeed for many Slovaks—this was experienced less as inclusion than as cultural domination.

7   Lipták, *Slovensko*, 62–70.

8   Masaryk, *Světová revoluce*.

9   Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 20–86.

One of the most visible arenas where this politics of identity played out was the transformation of urban space, especially in Prague.[10] The city was cast as the capital of the Czechoslovak nation, and its architecture became a symbolic battleground. Street names were changed, monuments both torn down and erected, and buildings repurposed to project the dominance of Czech identity. The demolition of the Marian Column in Old Town Square, or the transfer of the Estates Theatre from German to Czech hands, exemplify how cultural memory was recast through physical interventions.

This environment directly shaped the work of Czech architects such as Janák, Jaromír Krejcar, Teige's favourite architect, and their contemporaries. The question was not simply how to design buildings, but how to encode national and political meanings within them. Whether through Janák's ornamental "national style" or Krejcar's functionalist internationalism, architecture was inseparable from the larger project of legitimising Czechoslovakia as a modern, sovereign nation-state.

The creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 did not only require new political institutions; it also demanded new symbols that could embody and legitimise the young state. Tomáš G. Masaryk, in his essay *The World Revolution (Světová revoluce)*, emphasised the significance of ceremony and visual culture as instruments of education and political pedagogy.[11] For Masaryk, rituals, symbols, and material expressions were indispensable for communicating abstract democratic ideals to citizens. In a society with multiple languages, religions, and historical loyalties, architecture and public art offered a powerful means of projecting unity.

This urgency was particularly acute because Czechoslovakia, unlike nations with centuries of continuous sovereignty, could not rely on a deep reservoir of shared historical state traditions. Its very territorial borders were contested; its ethnic composition fragile; and its religious landscape divided. Thus, the invention of state symbols in stone, colours, and ornaments was not an accessory but a constitutive act of nation-building. The new transformation resulted in German architects being marginalised, as they received hardly any state commissions.[12]

Generations and ideologies: Janák and Teige

The careers of Pavel Janák and Karel Teige illustrate the ways in which architecture became an arena for negotiating identity, ideology, and generational authority in interwar Czechoslovakia. While both men were central to defining the republic's

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10   Hnídková, *Spirit at Work*.

11   Masaryk, "Světová revoluce," 378.

12   Kerdová, *Klein-Berlin*, 71, 90.

architectural discourse, their approaches diverged sharply in the 1920s. Their opposition highlights the tension between national and international, between an older generation shaped under the multi-ethnic Habsburg monarchy and a younger one intent on severing ties with the past in the name of modernity. Despite their initial differences, they both held Adolf Loos and his architectural legacy in high regard.[13] However, it took them almost the entire decade of the 1920s to recognise the mutual qualities in their approach.

Janák was part of a generation educated during the final decades of the Habsburg monarchy. Having studied at both the Czech Technical University in Prague and the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, he was influenced first by Otto Wagner and the Viennese Secession movement. Since his Viennese years, he had also been familiar with Adolf Loos and his notorious polemics that largely contributed to shaping modernism. Like many of his contemporaries, Janák grappled with how to reconcile universal modernist forms with local identity. His early experiments with Cubist architecture—seen in the robust pedestals to Štursa's sculptures by Hlávka Bridge in Prague (1911–1912) (Figure 1), and the Fára House in Pelhřimov (1913–1914)—represented a radical attempt to apply thoroughly transformed aesthetics to the built environment. Yet in the course of World War I, Janák shifted his architectural agenda toward what is called the "national style."[14]

Among the members of the pre-war leading art and architectural associations, such as Artěl, Skupina výtvarných umělců (Group of Visual Artists), and Svaz českého díla (Czech Werkbund), Pavel Janák stood out as the most theoretically ambitious. Janák developed pre-war writings that reflected on the modern architecture coined by Otto Wagner and the polarity of European culture, borrowing from Wilhelm Worringer's ideas of northern and southern artistic sensibilities and determinations.[15]

Figure 1 Pavel Janák, pedestals to Jan Štursa´s sculpture by Hlávka Bridge, Prague, 1911–1912

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13   Teige, *Moderní architektura*, 63–90.

14   Hnídková, *The National Style*, 54–55.

15   Worringer, *Abstraktion*.

Even before independence, Janák was sensitive to the way local factors shaped artistic production.

By the end of World War I, Janák had translated these insights into a concrete programme: the creation of a "Czech type" of architecture.[16] This type was not to be a slavish reproduction of folk motifs, but a synthesis of modern form and vernacular resonance. Houses, settlement layouts, and interiors were to speak in a language recognisably Czech yet attuned to international developments. In Janák's writings, ornament and rhythm were not decorative afterthoughts but the very expression of the Czech spirit—a poetic counterweight to the cold utilitarianism he associated with Germany.

His conception was ideological as much as aesthetic. By insisting on the inevitability of Czech tendencies toward ornament, melody, and rhythm, Janák framed the national style as the outward manifestation of inner spiritual life, placing it in opposition to purely constructive modernisms. This insistence aligned his architectural vision with broader cultural efforts to assert Czech identity in a fragile republic.

In his manifesto *Ve třetině cesty* (A Third of the Way),[17] Janák set out his vision for locally determined architectural production. Here, he pointed out that

> "[…] matter is identical with soil—the homeland on which the tribe grows—national life and spirit, which emanates from this series of identities, returns to it and creates organized architectural entities from its individual areas. Such architecture, which already creatively embraces life, is national architecture. Therefore, above the same soil and for the same tribe and national life, architecture has internal permanence, immutability, and character. Here, architecture is parallel to, or even equivalent to, the construction of animal dwellings: it must organize dwellings for the body, life, and spirit of man, both individual and collective national dwellings, so that they are in harmony with the body of the national and individual types. Each national tribe has its own specific and unique types of architecture—dwellings, just as each animal species has its typical den. Within the limits of the national type, an individual's dwelling is shaped according to his personal scope, characteristics, and needs. Thus, many purposes are not included at the beginning, but in a series of organisational activities of architecture, which begins with the organisation of matter and ends with it. And architecture, encompassing this stage, this social sphere, becomes a national art from a pure art."[18]

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16   Janák, Výstava, 323; AAS NTM, Collection 85 – Janák, box 44, Janák, Československý interiér, 8.

17   Janák, "Ve třetině cesty," 218–26.

18   Janák, "Ve třetině cesty," 220.

Calling for a national type did not oppose Janák's rejection of crude folklorism. However, it did not mean folk culture was absent from the national style. On the contrary, the years immediately after independence saw an ethnographic turn.[19] Folk embroidery, woodcarving, and vernacular building were mined for motifs that could be translated into urban architecture. Alois Riegl's earlier rehabilitation of folk art as a subject worthy of scholarly attention now found political resonance: in a state dominated by Slavic populations, drawing on Slavic cultural traditions offered both legitimacy and popular appeal.[20]

Artists and architects therefore found themselves balancing between two poles: the desire to appear modern and cosmopolitan, and the imperative to root their designs in recognisable national forms. The result was an architectural vocabulary that, while often rhetorically distancing itself from vernacular sources, nonetheless carried their imprint.

The national style was not a simple revival of folk architecture. Rather, Janák sought to extract formal principles from vernacular sources and historical legacy and translate them into a modern idiom. Ornament, colour, and rich decoration became central to his theory of Czech architecture. In his writings, he repeatedly contrasted the "poetic" and "expressive" character of Czech art with the "rationalist" tendencies of German or Viennese traditions.[21] This framing was not purely aesthetic; it resonated with the broader nationalist discourse that sought to define Czechoslovakia's distinctiveness in the wake of independence.

The roots of this project can be traced to the pre-war activities of the Czech Werkbund (Svaz českého díla). Before 1918, Czech artists and architects sought to distinguish their cultural production from Austrian hegemony. Their separate exhibition at the 1914 Werkbund show in Cologne was a bold act of symbolic secession: it declared that Czech modernism had its own trajectory and should not be subsumed under the imperial umbrella.[22]

The catalogue of that exhibition, titled *Čechische Bestrebungen um ein modernes Interieur*, made clear that even styles seemingly cosmopolitan, such as Cubism, could be reframed as national. By placing Cubism within a Czech narrative of innovation and cultural distinctiveness, the Werkbund circle laid the groundwork for what after 1918 would be theorised as a national style—an architecture and crafts production that bore the mark of Czech identity.[23]

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19   Czumalo, "Architektura," 264–86.

20   Berounský, *Ohlasy*, 84–85.

21   Janák, "Hranol," 162–70.

22   Štech, *Čechische Bestrebungen*.

23   Hnídková, "Rondocubism."

Urban landmarks of the national style

The dominance of the Czech community in Prague had been growing since 1861, when the number of Czech political representatives surpassed that of the German community, radically reshaping the city's political landscape. This trend was further boosted by post-war development. The new spirit of Czechoslovakia was evident in the renaming of the main boulevard that formed an inner ring between the Old Town and the New Town. After 1918, this ring was given names such as "Národní třída," which celebrates the Czech nation, and "28. října Street," commemorating the date on which Czechoslovakia was founded. On the other side of the ring, nationalist achievements found their climax in "Náměstí Republiky" (Republic Square) and "Revoluční třída" (Revolution Prospect). "Revolution" was the term used to mark the founding of Czechoslovakia. All of these names were powerful symbols of Czech dominance over the capital.

Following these national sentiments, Janák's vision of a Czech national style gained recognition in line with the ambition to establish Prague as the capital of Czechoslovakia. This is evident in the architectural competitions held to design a parliament building that would dominate the city from the Letná plateau,[24] and in the proposals to build a second National Theatre near the Municipal Building in a neighbourhood predominantly inhabited by Germans. Although none of these monuments were ever constructed, Prague's transformation into the capital of Czechoslovakia was achieved through both public and private investment.

This radical urban transformation is best exemplified by two buildings in Prague's New Town district. Designed by Josef Gočár and Pavel Janák, they originally served as the headquarters of major financial institutions. Although they have become spectacular landmarks of the Czech national style, the processes that led to their final designs were different, if not contradictory.

The first building is the headquarters of the Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions *(Banka československých legií)*, popularly called Legiobanka (1922–1923)[25] (Figure 2). Conceived in the euphoric aftermath of World War I, the project embodied the new Czechoslovak Republic's ideals and the self-image of its war heroes—the legionaries. The bank's founding documents reflected a dual mission: to harness the intellectual and material potential of returning soldiers and to express, through architecture, their role in building the new state. Legiobanka's origins lay in financial institutions formed by the legions in Siberia during the Russian Civil War, which later merged to create a symbolically charged, nationally significant bank.

24   Hnídková, "Letná," 78–122.

25   Hnídková, *National Style*, 112–22.

Figure 2 Josef Gočár, Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions, Prague, 1922–1923

Gočár's headquarters represented both economic power and national pride, translating the ideological aspirations of the First Republic into a physical form. The commission was the result of an architectural competition held in 1922, in which Gočár successfully defended his vision against other leading Czech architects. His winning proposal reflected a careful balance between national symbolism and modern expression. Gočár also invited his friends, sculptors Otto Gutfreund and Jan Štursa, to decorate the main facade.

The building's facade and interior were designed as a cohesive narrative: the triumphal-arch composition, monumental sculptures, and rich colour contrasts (notably red and white, symbolising revolution and patriotism) conveyed themes of victory and return. The sculptural programme—including reliefs depicting battles such as Zborov and Piava—celebrated military heroism and national unity, while the building's stylistic vocabulary blended modern dynamism with classical symbolism. The integration of sculpture, fresco, and architecture reflected contemporary

calls for *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art that harmonised all media to express collective identity.

Ultimately, the Legiobanka building stands as both a culmination and a turning point in Czech architectural modernism. It embodied the optimism and mythmaking of the early republic but quickly became a target of the avant-garde generation's rejection of nationalist aesthetics coined in the term "Legiobanka style."

By a striking historical irony, the other of the most significant monuments of the national style was not commissioned by a domestic authority but by the Italian insurance company Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà.[26] Its construction in the symbolic heart of Prague—on the corner of Jungmannovo náměstí and the newly renamed Národní třída—became a matter of national debate. The company's initial choice of Josef Zasche, a respected local architect of German nationality, provoked a wave of public opposition led by the Klub Za starou Prahu (Club for Old Prague), the Státní regulační komise (State Regulatory Commission), and various artistic circles. Critics argued that Zasche's design was too "exotic" and was incompatible with the national symbolism of the site.[27] Under pressure from this nationalistically charged criticism, Riunione Adriatica withdrew Zasche's commission and announced a limited architectural competition for a new design.

The competition invited several prominent Czech architects, among them Bohumil Hübschmann, Bohumír Kozák, Miloš Vaněček, and Pavel Janák, who ultimately emerged as the clear winner.[28] The jury, composed of leading figures like Josef Gočár and Jaroslav Guth, favoured Janák's proposal for its rhythmic massing and dynamic facade composition. However, practical constraints meant that Janák had to retain Zasche's original structural scheme, as the building permit had already been granted. His intervention therefore focused primarily on the facade—concealing the earlier German contribution while asserting a new national visual identity. The building's exterior, with its rich ornamentation, turreted skyline, and profusion of decorative motifs, was celebrated by contemporary critics like František Žákavec for evoking both Slavic and Oriental inspirations, and praised by the Club for Old Prague as more in harmony with Prague's Czech character.[29]

Janák's design thus embodied the ideals of the national style: the use of ornament, colour, and craft detail to express a distinctively Czech sensibility. Sculptors of national renown—including Jan Štursa, Bohumil Kafka, Otto Gutfreund, and Karel

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26   Hnídková, *National Style*, 129–33.

27   vd [Vilém Dvorák], "Palác pojišťovny," 97.

28   AAS NTM, Collection 85 – Janák, box 81, folder 101 Riunione. Letter from Riunione to Pavel Janák, Prague, 21 February 1922.

29   "Činnost Klubu za starou Prahu v roce 1922," 39.

Dvořák—were enlisted to enrich the facade with allegories, decorative reliefs, and scenes reflecting both everyday life and the mythic spirit of the Adriatic. The project's conception rested not only on formal considerations but also on Janák's theoretical position that architecture should express the spirit of place, a notion shared by critics such as Zdeněk Wirth and Václav Vilém Štech. The palace became a manifestation of how ornament and craftsmanship could serve as a visual metaphor for the national character—a view deeply rooted in Czech folk traditions and in the post-1918 cultural optimism of the new republic.

Yet this idealised vision was soon challenged. The completed Riunione Adriatica palace drew fierce criticism from the avant-garde, who viewed its ornate facades as reactionary and provincial. Figures such as Karel Teige dismissed it as a "box of chocolates," a hollow pastiche devoid of true modernity,[30] while Le Corbusier and Henry van de Velde publicly condemned it as retrograde and theatrical.[31] By the mid-1920s, the notion of a Czech national style was increasingly regarded as a hollow ideological construct, overtaken by the rise of purism, constructivism, and functionalism. These international movements redefined architectural progress and consigned Janák's ornate facade to the margins of history, transforming the Riunione Adriatica building into both a symbol of early republican idealism and a cautionary emblem of the fleeting triumph of national decorativeness in modern architecture.

Karel Teige: the avant-garde polemicist

Karel Teige represented a younger generation unburdened by direct ties to the Habsburg monarchy. A member of the Devětsil artistic collective,[32] Teige emerged as a central figure of the interwar avant-garde in Czechoslovakia and beyond. As an avid art critic, he exercised influence through polemical writings, campaigning, editorial work, and tireless participation in international networks. He did not gain his authority through commissions, but through his ability to theorise, classify and canonise artistic and architectural movements.

Teige's advocacy of constructivism and functionalism placed him in stark opposition to Janák's ornamental nationalism. In his seminal text *The Minimum Dwelling*,[33] Teige argued for rational, economical housing as the core task of modern architecture. By framing functionalism as both scientifically rational and socially progressive, Teige aligned architecture with the broader leftist project of radical social transformation.

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30   Teige, *Moderní architektura*, 105.

31   Sokol, *Moje plány*, 110.

32   Pomajzlová, ed., *Devětsil*.

33   Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling*.

For Teige, the national style was little more than a nostalgic illusion. He rejected the very premise that architecture should embody national identity, insisting instead that it responds to universal needs of housing, hygiene, and efficiency. He claimed that

"[…] official and fashionable architecture at that time [in the early 1920s] sought to revive some kind of (fictitious) national style; elements of national ornamentation were revived and stylised in the spirit of a kind of pseudo-Cubist decorativism. This decorative fashion, led at the time by Pavel Janák, Josef Gočár, and decorative graphic artist František Kysela, represented in the field of furniture making and the arts and crafts industry in general by the Czechoslovak Werkbund, transformed architecture into ornamental facade design, enamored with garish colours. It became the official and recognized Czechoslovak architectural style in 1922–1925 and set the development of Czech architecture back by at least half a century. […] National decorativism, essentially reactionary, evoked long-banished specters of historicism and stylistic falsification. The pompous splendor of materials, plethoric ornamentation, and waste of marble, reminiscent of the horrors of a perverted Renaissance: the facade of a single building is constructed for money that would be enough to build three or five normal residential buildings."[34]

Yet Teige's radicalism was not purely imported. His polemics were deeply embedded in the political and cultural context of interwar Czechoslovakia. His attacks on nationalist ornament were also attacks on the cultural establishment that sought to stabilise the republic through symbolic forms. Teige thus stood at the intersection of aesthetics and politics: by redefining architecture as a tool of social revolution, he challenged both the professional establishment and the nationalist consensus of the First Republic.

To underline his perception of Czech architecture in the 1920s and make his personal position evident, Teige meticulously designed a chart bearing a long name, *Srovnávací tabulka, zachycující zhruba vývojové etapy modern architetkury v létech 1919–1930* (A comparative table showing the approximate stages of development of modern architecture between 1919 and 1930)[35] (Figure 4).

This chart is divided into three lines in chronological order (1919–1922, 1922–1926 and 1926–1930) and five columns labelled "West; USSR; Krejcar; Czechoslovak Official Modernism; Outside development. The official architecture unaffected by the development *(Mimo vývoj. Officielní architektura vývojem nedotčená)*." The message of the chart is straightforward. It positions the architect Jaromír Krejcar

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34   Teige, *Práce Jaromíra Krejcara*, 14.

35   Teige, *Práce Jaromíra Krejcara*, 29.

Figure 3 Karel Teige, Examples of Czechoslovak Official Modernism 1920–1924:
Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions by Gočár and Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà by Janák

(1895–1950) within the progressive international avant-garde movement, while mocking the official stance of Czechoslovak architecture. Nevertheless, Teige identifies Gočár and Janák as modernist architects (Figure 3). In his view, however, the premises of the ministries and Charles University show no evidence of an understanding of modern architecture.

In contrast to the early dominance of the national style, Teige presented Jaromír Krejcar, a fellow architect, as an early pioneer of the avant-garde movement in Czechoslovakia. He championed figures such as Jaromír Krejcar, whose work embodied the clarity and social purpose Teige associated with the leftist principles of modern architecture.

Although Karel Teige's condemnation of ornamentation in architecture appears, at first glance, to echo Adolf Loos's celebrated modernist essay,[36] the two positions emerged from distinct ideological premises. For Loos, the rejection of ornament was primarily a moral and cultural argument: he viewed decoration as a vestige of primitive expression, incompatible with the ethical progress and rational sobriety of

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36   Loos, *Ornament and Crime.*

Figure 4 Karel Teige, A comparative table showing the approximate stages of development of modern architecture between 1919 and 1930

modern civilisation. His stance stemmed from an individualist bourgeois ethos that equated aesthetic purity with cultural refinement and temporal advancement. Teige, by contrast, approached ornament's obsolescence not as a moral lapse but as a social and economic symptom of outdated production systems. Rooted in Marxist materialism, he perceived ornament as a wasteful by-product of capitalist commodification and bourgeois taste—a superficial embellishment that masked social inequality and inhibited collective progress. Whereas Loos sought cultural elevation through restraint and timeless form, Teige envisioned a revolutionary utilitarianism in which architecture, liberated from decorative excess, could serve the egalitarian needs of a new socialist society.

This ideological divergence was vividly reflected in Teige's evaluation of contemporary Czech architecture, particularly his critique of Pavel Janák and, to a lesser extent, Josef Gočár. Whereas Loos's anti-ornamentalism was directed toward cultivating a universal aesthetic discipline, Teige's criticism was politically charged—an attack on what he perceived as the national bourgeoisie's attempt to aestheticise the new republic through decorative façadism. For Teige, Janák's Riunione Adriatica palace epitomised the failure of the national style: an anachronistic and wasteful

display of ornament that betrayed the modern mission of architecture to serve collective, functional needs. Gočár's Legiobanka, although equally rooted in symbolic expression, fared slightly better in Teige's eyes due to its structural coherence and urban sensibility, yet it too remained burdened by decorative historicism. In this sense, Teige's position marked a radical break with the romantic nationalism of his predecessors: where Loos had sought to civilise taste, Teige sought to revolutionise it. His critique reframed the rejection of ornament not as a matter of moral purity or stylistic progress, but as a demand for architecture's full integration into the social and economic realities of modern life.

Teige's uncompromising position became a decisive intellectual force in the Czech avant-garde's transition toward functionalism in the latter half of the 1920s. Through his writings in the journals *Stavba* and *ReD*, he articulated a vision of architecture grounded in scientific rationalism, collective utility, and technological modernity—values that rejected both the ornamental symbolism of the national style and the metaphysical formalism of earlier Cubist experiments. Under his influence, a younger generation of architects, including Jaromír Krejcar, came to regard the facade not as a canvas for cultural expression but as a rational interface mediating structure, function, and human use. Ornament was thus displaced by proportion, light, and material economy as the true markers of modern architectural integrity. In this shift, Teige not only reinterpreted Loos's call for restraint through a socialist lens, but also transformed it into a collective aesthetic programme—one that aligned architecture with the social mission of the modern state. The resulting Czech functionalism, characterised by its lucid geometry and moral clarity, stood as both an aesthetic and political repudiation of the ornamental nationalism that had briefly flourished after 1918.

The clash between Teige's purist functionalism and Janák's decorative nationalism encapsulates the broader ideological polarisation that defined Czechoslovak architectural discourse in the interwar period. While Janák, shaped by the optimism of statehood, sought to root modern architecture in a distinctly Czech cultural identity, Teige rejected such nationalism as an artistic regression incompatible with the universal rationalism of the machine age. Their divergent positions—one idealistic and symbolic, the other utilitarian and socially programmatic—illuminate the evolving tensions between art and ideology, between form and function, that shaped the aesthetic and intellectual trajectory of Czechoslovak modernism.

Conclusion

The architectural and artistic ferment of interwar Czechoslovakia reveals a culture grappling with the dual imperatives of national self-definition and modern progress. The early 1920s, embodied in the monumental gestures of Gočár's Legiobanka and

Janák's Riunione Adriatica palace, were marked by an exuberant effort to materialise the ideals of independence through a newly minted national style. These buildings were not mere exercises in ornamentation, but acts of political and cultural expression—visual manifestos of a young state eager to proclaim its identity in stone, glass, and colour. Their symbolic facades, rich in sculptural and decorative programmes, sought to translate the euphoria of liberation into a tangible civic language.

Yet, as the decade progressed, the initial euphoria gave way to a sober re-evaluation of these ideals. Karel Teige and the avant-garde dismissed the national style as anachronistic, its ornamentation symptomatic of bourgeois nostalgia incompatible with the social and technological realities of the new age. The debate between Teige's ascetic modernism and Janák's national style thus became a microcosm of the broader European struggle between cultural particularism and international functionalism. What had begun as a search for a uniquely Czech visual identity gradually dissolved into the universal grammar of purism, constructivism, and functionalist design that came to dominate the late 1920s and 1930s.

In retrospect, however, the monuments of the national style stand as vital historical documents—expressions of a brief but fervent moment when architecture was charged with the task of narrating a nation's birth. Their synthesis of sculpture, ornament, and architecture reveals a belief in the unity of the arts and in the moral mission of aesthetics within the public realm. Even if later generations dismissed these buildings as decorative relics, they remain eloquent witnesses to the aspirations and anxieties of a society negotiating its place between history and modernity, between the local and the universal.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

The Church of the Former Monastery at Curtea de Argeș

A Place of Art, Legend, and National Memory*

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Abstract. This article analyses the church of Curtea de Argeș, a unique architectural monument in former Wallachia, which is a symbol of historical heritage in the entire state of Romania. It is partly an art historical analysis, and partly an intellectual history of the studies, preservation and promotion of the monument in the period of nation-state formation in the late nineteenth century. The monument was at the centre of significant historical events, legends, beliefs; together with its unique architecture, they were recounted and used for the promotion of national art and culture. Indeed, modern state-builders have paid careful attention to the historical complexity of the monument, including its legends, in defining the idea of Romanian art. Therefore, the article argues more broadly that national symbols are successful if they are based on both historical facts and legends from the past. Furthermore, the modern transformation of the monument into a national symbol was not solely a Romanian affair. Its discovery and promotion happened through a complex transnational exchange between various architects and scholars based in Romania, France and the Habsburg Empire. Therefore, the article provides further proofs for the transnational nature of the national heritage formation in Eastern Europe and beyond.

Keywords: Romanian art, national style, architectural monuments, national heritage, national symbols, Wallachia, Curtea de Argeș

Introduction

On a cold cloudy December morning in 2017, the Romanian Honour Guard were waiting in front of the military plane that had just landed at Otopeni International Airport in Bucharest. Accompanied by the sombre music of the ceremonial

orchestra, they were preparing to receive the body of King Michael of Romania, the country's last reigning monarch and the final surviving head of state in Europe from World War II era. As the orchestra continued its funeral march, the soldiers lifted the coffin and slowly advanced across the cold grey tarmac. The whole nation was watching the lonely wooden casket making its way on home soil. It felt surreal. The long-exiled king was home again, but this time alone, as a mere mortal, succumbing to his inevitable destiny.

The funeral of King Michael lasted four days, accompanied by the usual pomp and symbolism befitting such an exceptional occasion. The burial service did not take place in Bucharest, but naturally at the sixteenth-century church of Curtea de Argeş (Argyasudvarhely), where all Romanian kings are interred and where a new Episcopal Cathedral had just been completed. The church was turned into the Royal Mausoleum by Romania's first king, Carol I (r. 1867–1914), founder of the dynasty that ended with King Michael's death. The historical monument was once again at the centre of a royal funeral in 2017, as it had been in 1914, for King Carol, in 1927 for King Ferdinand and in 1938 for Queen Marie.

The church of Curtea de Argeş has been promoted over the last two centuries as the most significant historical monument of the country. Renowned for its distinctive architecture, it is also a site of legends, popular beliefs, and special liturgical ceremonies—a place that has long provoked debates among architects, historians, and art historians concerning the nature and sources of its decoration and architecture, as well as the origins of its designer or designers (Figure 1).

This article argues that the architecture of Curtea de Argeş, the historical sources, and the legends surrounding it are all connected to its modern history as a national symbol. It connects historical facts, liturgical practices and its legend with its modern role as a centrepiece of national heritage formation. In doing so, it complements and extends studies that have either focused on the monument's nineteenth-century reception[1] or on its early modern history.[2] The research uses sources that have never been analysed together to offer a more comprehensive account of the building's possible architectural sources and the multiple meanings it has held until today.

The construction was one of the major undertakings during the reign of Voivode Neagoe Basarab (around 1482–1521), who envisaged the monument as a princely necropolis for his family and successors. Started in 1512, the very year Neagoe in

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1   Minea, "The Monastery of Curtea de Argeş," 181; Zach, "Der Fürstenhof in Argeş," 105; Popescu, "André Lecomte Du Nouÿ," 302; Noica, *Istoria restaurarii*, 45.

2   Payne, "Renaissance in the Balkans?," 5; Negrău, "The Structure of the Monastery Church," 62; Cernea, "André Lecomte du Noüy and the frescoes," 70.

Figure 1 The Church of Curtea de Argeş. a) around 1880 (after restoration); b) contemporary image
Source: *Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine*, Paris, Viollet-le-Duc Fonds, Box Roumanie, no. 36, 2320-2330

front of Basarab ascended the throne of Wallachia, the church was completed relatively quickly, in 1517. During the reign of Radu of Afumați (1522–1529), it was decorated and painted on the interior. Initially a monastery, it became an Episcopal Church in 1793 when the Episcopy was founded. It has double walls: an inner layer of brick, and a thicker outer layer of carved stone brought from a nearby quarry at Albești. The monument was raised on an earthen platform about two meters high. It has a trefoil plan, with an enlarged narthex—much larger than the naos—an unusual feature for an Orthodox church, but one that can be explained by its function as a princely necropolis. This narthex is surmounted by three of the church's four domes.

These dry facts conceal a spectacular architecture—unique in the world—that has fascinated chroniclers, travellers, artists, historians, and military leaders alike. It arose in a politically unstable environment that had not produced a monument of such renown before, nor would it ever produce one. This earlier history proved highly relevant for modern architects, historians, and politicians, who connected the church to the very foundations of the Romanian state—chiefly its newly established monarchy.

This article therefore proposes a *longue-durée* analysis of the church of Curtea de Argeş, linking its historical development, associated legends, and devotional practices with its modern role as a centrepiece of national heritage formation. It complements studies of nation-building through architecture in Romania,[3] as well as research on the monument's early modern history.[4]

Although the Curtea de Argeş Monastery enjoyed undeniable fame from the moment of its consecration, serving as a source of pride for local rulers and inspiring glowing descriptions from foreign visitors, it is the monument's modern history that has largely defined its present image and that of its founder. With the establishment of the Romanian nation-state in 1859, through the union of the former Ottoman provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, what had by then become the Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeş was the first monument studied by contemporary intellectuals, the first to be restored, the country's principal exhibit (as scale models or fragments of architecture) at universal expositions, and the site chosen by King Carol as the royal necropolis. It was without doubt the most important historical monument for Romania's artistic heritage in the nineteenth century.

The architecture of the monument, the theories about its origins and, above all, the way it came to embody the ideal of a national cultural heritage from the

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3   Minea, "The Monastery of Curtea de Argeş," 181; Zach, "Der Fürstenhof in Argeş," 105; Popescu, "André Lecomte Du Nouÿ," 302; Noica, *Istoria restaurarii*, 45.

4   Payne, "Renaissance in the Balkans?," 5; Negrău, "The Structure of the Monastery Church," 62; Cernea, "André Lecomte du Noüy and the frescoes," 70.

mid-nineteenth century onward are nevertheless only a part of the story. This article will further also reveal the intricate transnational dialogues and relations that made the monument a national one, as well as the various forms of continuity between its premodern and modern fame.

Creating the legend. The story of Meșterul Manole, the mason who built the Curtea de Argeș Monastery

A group of masons was once commissioned to build a monumental structure, only to discover—through repeated failures and prophetic visions—that a dramatic human sacrifice was required for the building to endure: the immurement of one of the masons' wives. The bravest among them accepts this immense sacrifice, and the monument is ultimately completed, enclosing within its walls the dark tale of a human life taken. The folktale of the "Walled-up Wife" was the narrative that first endowed the Curtea de Argeș Monastery with a prominent role in shaping Romanian cultural identity.

The tale is specific to a wide geographical area, especially to Southeastern Europe (From Transylvania to Greece), although it has variants in other places, the Caucasus or India.[5] It was first published in Serbian by the famous linguist and folklorist Vuk Karadžić in 1815, and subsequently Jacob Grimm translated it into German in 1824. The Romanian version was first published in 1842, followed by another version in 1847, and popularised by the major Romanian folklorist and poet Vasile Alecsandri (1821–1890) in 1853 under the title *The Monastery of Argeș (Monastirea Argeșului)*, the first version that places the legend at Curtea de Argeș.[6] Alecsandri later used his personal and political connections to publish his version of the legend internationally: in 1855, he translated it into French as part of a volume of folk tales, and he also gave it to the Lutheran priest from Hermannstadt (Sibiu [Nagyszeben]), Johann Karl Schuller (1794–1865), who translated it into German in 1857.[7]

Despite its wide geographical spread, in Serbia and Romania, the legend quickly developed into an element of national self-identification. Using several folk stories, Alecsandri composed the ballad in a creative and free manner that included several of his additions, especially the idea that the monument to be constructed was the Curtea de Argeș Monastery. As a counter example, in the Kogălniceanu version of the story, the monument was another church in the former Moldavian capital

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5   Campbell and Bompas, "Three Santal Tales."

6   Alecsandri, *Poezii populare*, 1–16; Kogălniceanu, "Cercări făcute de om;" Bolliac, "Meșterul Manole."

7   Alexandri (sic!), *Ballades et Chants populaires;* Schuller, *Kloster Argisch.*

Iași, the Trei Ierarhi (Three Hierarchs) Church. Documenting various versions of the story in Romania, subsequent researchers also noted how the Curtea de Argeș Monastery was almost never the monument to be constructed, and even churches and monasteries in general are rare as a subject.[8]

Alecsandri goes even further, connecting with and connects through the legend the Curtea de Argeș Monastery with the moment of Wallachia's foundation. In his ballad, the patron of the masons and the one who orders the building of the monastery is no other than Negru-Vodă, a voivode that for many historians is the founder of Wallachia, even though he is essentially no more than a legend, since no concrete proof of his existence has ever been discovered.[9] Moreover, it seems likely that Alecsandri made a double confusion: he first transcribed the name Neagu-Vodă (that might refer to Neagoe Basarab) as Negru-Vodă, and he confused the Princely Church of Curtea de Argeș, a much older church, from the mid-fourteenth century, with the former monastery and current episcopal church.[10]

Yet scholarly rigour mattered far less than the historical symbolism and dramatic force of the story that had made the monastery at Curtea de Argeș a site of national identity for the intellectual elite, already before the formation of modern Romania. A legend with multiple variants, it quickly achieved national prominence and, by the late nineteenth century, had become a familiar and emotional tale even among children.[11]

Major studies and monographs on the monument often include the legend alongside architectural and historical analysis.[12] Some even suggest that it may contain some truth, noting a votive inscription that refers to a ruined church once standing on the site of the later monastery.[13] Accordingly, the earlier church was the structure attributed to Negru-Vodă, the founder of Wallachia, and the ballad alludes to that building. Through this narrative, Curtea de Argeș was once again tied to the nation's history, celebrated as "the tragic and legendary construction of Curtea de Argeș, the best-known, beloved, and often-recounted historical episode of our country."[14]

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8   Taloș, "Balada meşterului Manole," 42.

9   Chihaia, *De la "Negru Vodă;"* Djuvara, *Thocomerius – Negru Vodă*.

10   Papadima, "Neagoe Basarab," 74.

11   Papadima, "Neagoe Basarab," 73.

12   Tocilescu and Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii*; Jaffé, *Die Bischofliche Klosterkirche*.

13   Moldovan, "Arhitectura Bisercii Lui Neagoe Basarab," 20; Payne, "Renaissance in the Balkans?," 28, note 5.

14   Delavrancea, *Despre literatură şi artă*.

Building the legend. A church "in beauty surpassing all the others"

Gavriil Protu (Gabriel Protos), head of the monastic community at Mount Athos in the early sixteenth century, witnessed and recorded the consecration of the church at Curtea de Argeș in 1517. He described the event as an exceptionally lavish celebration, attended by leading Orthodox dignitaries, including the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Theoleptus I (patriarchate 1513–1522).[15] Yet the highest praise was reserved for the church itself, which he regarded as "not as large and illustrious as the Temple on Mount Zion built by Solomon nor as Saint Sophia, raised by the great Emperor Justinian, but in beauty surpassing all the others."[16]

Naturally, the chronicle was far from objective. It was commissioned by Neagoe Basarab, the church's founder, and written as a *Vita* of Saint Niphon, the former Patriarch of Constantinople and head of the Wallachian Orthodox Church, whose relics had been taken by the voivode to Curtea de Argeș Monastery. Nevertheless, this extraordinary praise sheds light on the monument's significance at the time, its reception, and the founder's ambition to assert himself as one of the foremost rulers of the Orthodox world. In fact, the monument was long known—and is still often referred to today—as "Neagoe's Church,"[17] a clear indication that the voivode successfully inscribed his reign and legacy onto the monument.

But what makes the church appearance so remarkable? Its most striking architectural features are found on the exterior. The entire facade is divided into two registers—lower and upper—by a richly sculpted twisted cord, a decorative element unique at the time to Wallachian monuments (it first appeared at the nearby Dealu Monastery, built between 1499 and 1501, and later spread also in Moldavia, first at Dragomirna Monastery) (Figure 2).

The lower register is punctuated by narrow windows framed in elaborately carved surrounds, alternating with plain or sculpted rectangular stone panels. The abundance of sculpted detail continues in the upper register, where blind arcades enclose luxuriously decorated stone discs. At the intersections of the arcades, there are smaller discs to which bronze sculptures in the form of birds are affixed (Figure 3). These were not mere ornaments. According to the seventeenth-century chronicler Paul of Aleppo, who described the monument more than a century after its consecration, the birds emitted a distinctive whistling sound when the wind blew, while

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15   The chronicle, written by the monk Gavriil Protu, survives in Greek, Slavonic, and Romanian manuscripts. The first edition was published as Simedrea, *Viața și traiul sfântului Nifon*. For a recent study on the life and culture during the reign of Neagoe Basarab, see Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab-Princeps Christianus*.

16   Gavriil Protu, *Viața și traiul Sfinției Sale*, 19.

17   See for example Moldovan, "Arhitectura Bisercii lui Neagoe Basarab;" Andronescu, *Biserica lui Neagoe*.

Figure 2 Dealu Monastery (late fifteenth century)

small bells hanging beneath their necks chimed as well, creating a unique atmosphere.[18] An equally remarkable scenography, as will be shown, characterised the church's interior.

Beneath the cornice runs another band of rich decoration in the form of *muqarnas*, marking only the beginning of an even more elaborate decorative program that extends across the upper portions of the church, including the roof and all four towers. They feature the same narrow windows framed by sculpted rectangular borders as those on the facade, and the viewer's gaze is inevitably drawn to the two small front cupolas, twisted in a spiral of about thirty degrees—an ornamental feature unique in the entire world (Figure 4).

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18   A medieval chronicle written by Paul of Aleppo in the mid-seventeenth century to describe the journeys of his father, Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, through Constantinople, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Russia between 1652 and 1659, and again from 1666 to 1669. For the descriptions of the church and the birds, see *Călători străini*, vol. 6, 166.

Figure 3 The Church of Curtea de Argeş, detail with bronze birds

Figure 4 The Church of Curtea de Argeş, detail of the south facade

The interior of the church, though less lavishly decorated, was likewise the setting for a scenography unparalleled in ecclesiastical architecture. The enlarged narthex hosts twelve columns forming a central square. Around this square were arranged the tombs of Neagoe Basarab, his family, and his successors. Between the columns, there were tall choir stalls surmounted by double-faced icons—four of which still survive—while curtains were hung between the western pair of columns marking the entrance to the narthex square and the eastern pair leading into the naos (Figure 5).[19] The ensemble must have provided the stage for unique rituals, perhaps related to the church's function as a princely necropolis. Though the details of these ceremonies are lost to us, their existence once again underscores the exceptional religious significance of the monument and the importance Neagoe Basarab accorded to it.

Explaining the legend. Sources and theories about the monument's architecture

What then were the sources of this unique architecture, and who were the architects or builders of the monument? The two medieval chronicles that describe the church—one written in the sixteenth century, and the other in the seventeenth

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19   The arrangement of the icons and choir stalls is mentioned by both of the aforementioned chroniclers. See Lăzărescu, "O icoană puțin cunoscută;" Lăzărescu, *Biserica Mânăstirii Argeşului*. For more on the religious symbolism of the church's architecture, see Negrău, "The Structure of the Monastery Church."

Figure 5 Hypothetical reconstruction of the narthex of the Church at Curtea de Argeş
with choir stalls, icons, and curtains between the columns
Source: Alexandrov Yuriy Source: Emil Lăzărescu, *Biserica Mănăstirii Argeşului,* (Bucharest, 1967)

century—do not answer these questions. I have already mentioned both, the *Life of Saint Niphon* (c. 1440–1508) by Gavriil Protu and the travel journal of the seventeenth-century Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, written by his son Paul of Aleppo. The latter offers a detailed description of the church and is still the principal source for reconstructing its architectural and liturgical aspects.[20]

Paul of Aleppo was the first to advance a hypothesis regarding the origins of the builders of Curtea de Argeş. He reports that Neagoe Basarab had been in contact with architects and masons from Istanbul and brought them to Wallachia under the pretext of constructing a mosque—thus managing to secure the services of some of the most highly skilled craftsmen of the time.[21] Accordingly, the builders of Curtea de Argeş may in fact have been mosque architects or masons, a theory supported by the discovery of a brick in one of the towers inscribed with the Arabic word "Allah."[22]

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20   See the citations in Odobescu and Aurelian, *Notice sur la Roumanie*, 408–12; Tocilescu and Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii.*

21   *Călători străini*, 165.

22   Tocilescu and Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii*, 37.

This "mosque-architect" theory, however, was largely ignored in the nineteenth century, as any direct association with the Ottoman cultural sphere was politically undesirable in modern Romania—a state intent on defining a national identity distinct from that of its former suzerain and resistant to notions of transconfessional artistic practices, such as artists working across Orthodox and Muslim contexts. Only recently has Horia Moldovan highlighted the striking parallels between Curtea de Argeş and contemporary mosques in Istanbul: the pyramidal arrangement of the towers, the fountain in front of the church reminiscent of Ottoman ablution fountains, and decorative elements such as the muqarnas beneath the cornice.[23] The historical overlooking of the Ottoman context as a potential source for the church's builders and architectural style illustrates the strength of a nationalist ideology premised on an impenetrable boundary between the Romanian principalities and Ottoman cultural influences.

The hypothesis of an Ottoman origin for the architecture of Curtea de Argeş gains further credibility when we consider the social and political context of Wallachia at the time—a region under Istanbul's military, political, and economic control, but also within its cultural and social orbit. Voivode Neagoe Basarab himself was raised and educated in Istanbul, as was customary for future rulers of the Romanian principalities. Thus, Paul of Aleppo's account that Neagoe brought his craftsmen from Istanbul, after all the most accessible source of highly skilled artisans, appears entirely plausible.

In the most recent large study on Curtea de Argeş church, Alina Payne advances new arguments for the hypothesis of the Ottoman influence by noting that Neagoe was probably inspired by the white-stone mosques of Istanbul, Bursa or Edirne (such as Bayezid II's mosque in Istanbul), and concluding that the architects probably originated from these regions.[24] Of these cities, Edirne, today located on the Turkish–Bulgarian border, was also geographically the closest to Wallachia, lying less than four hundred kilometres to the south. Neagoe's commission of a richly decorated monument may also have had a pragmatic dimension: according to Payne ornamentation was less likely to arouse Ottoman suspicion, as it carried no overt ethnic or political symbolism.[25]

Naturally, this hypothesis does not directly explain the similarities between Curtea de Argeş and other Wallachian churches—most notably the Dealu Monastery—or the parallels with the decoration of tenth-century Armenian and Georgian churches, as will be discussed below. It is nevertheless plausible that the team of builders and architects included both Istanbul-based craftsmen and local or

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23   Moldovan, "Arhitectura Bisercii Lui Neagoe Basarab," 27–29.

24   Payne, "Renaissance in the Balkans?," 17.

25   Payne, "Renaissance in the Balkans?," 21.

regional artists—some experienced in constructing Orthodox churches, others in building Ottoman mosques.

By ignoring the Ottoman connection, nineteenth- and twentieth-century art historians and architects sought instead to emphasise links between Curtea de Argeş and the broader Orthodox world. One early hypothesis, more legend than scholarship, was first mentioned in 1859 in the travel notes of the Habsburg military doctor Wilhelm Derblich and repeated often thereafter: that the architect of Curtea de Argeş was none other than Prince Neagoe Basarab himself.[26] This notion conveniently accounted for the mosque-like influences, as Neagoe was said to have learned the art of architecture in his youth, in the company of mosque builders in Istanbul.

The most frequently cited theory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, was that the church's builders were of Armenian or Georgian origin. The first to propose this was the architect-restorer André Lecomte du Noüy (whose work will be discussed in the final section), who in 1879 argued that, both in its proportions and in its decoration, the monument was "of Armenian-Georgian origin and not at all Arabic."[27] Indeed, Lecomte du Noüy had good reason to think so. Comparing Curtea de Argeş with monuments such as the Akhtala Monastery in Armenia, the Sapara Monastery and the Manglisi Cathedral in Georgia, we find the same narrow windows, intricately carved stone frames with similar motifs, and even sculpted discs reminiscent of those at Curtea de Argeş (Figure 6).

Figure 6a Akhtala Monastery, Armenia, west facade
Figure 6b Sapara Monastery, Georgia, detail

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26   Derblich, *Land und Leute*, 13 cited in Moldovan, "Note Despre Arhitectura Bisericii," 3.

27   "Report," 10 December 1879, in *Restaurarea Monumentelor Istorice 1865–1890*, 91.

It is also likely that Lecomte du Noüy drew inspiration from his mentor Viollet-le-Duc's 1877 *L'Art russe*, published shortly before in which Viollet-le-Duc argued that the rich stone decoration of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Russian churches derived from earlier Armenian and Georgian models.[28] One of his examples was the Cathedral of Saint Demetrius in Vladimir, whose late twelfth-century decorative motifs he considered akin to those of eleventh-century Armenian monuments (Figure 7).[29] Indeed, the elaborate stone carving on the facade of the Vladimir Cathedral together with its general appearance closely resemble both Armenian monuments and Neagoe's church at Curtea de Argeş.

Figure 7 Cathedral of St. Demetrius, Vladimir, Russia (late twelfth century)
Source: https://pixabay.com

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28   O'Connell, "A Rational, National Architecture," 443.

29   Viollet-le-Duc, *L'art russe*, 63–69.

The temporal and geographic distance between the tenth-century monuments east of the Black Sea and the sixteenth-century Wallachian church is considerable, and there is little evidence—aside from Vladimir Cathedral—of any continuous decorative tradition or of Caucasian artisans working in Wallachia. Yet, such considerations did little to deter the enthusiasm of nineteenth-century scholars for the Armenian-Georgian hypothesis, particularly since it anchored Neagoe's church firmly within the Christian-Orthodox world. Grigore Tocilescu (1850–1909), the leading archaeologists in nineteenth-century Romania, was a firm supporter of the theory, noting that in certain Caucasian monuments "one finds the same system of arcades often employed on the facades of the churches mentioned above, the same sculpted cornices or cords, the same interlacing ornaments and rosettes, and, what is most significant, the same vertical proportions, the same spirit, the same style."[30]

Others, such as the historian and novelist Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu (1838–1907), came up with highly speculative models to bridge the chronological gap between medieval Caucasus and early modern Wallachia. He proposed that the town of Curtea de Argeș had originally been an Armenian colony, based on a supposed phonetic resemblance to an Armenian city named Argis.[31] His far-fetched theory of distant origins, for both the monument and the town, prompted a sharp rebuttal from the fellow historian Alexandru D. Xenopol (1847–1920), who observed ironically that "the name Baku of a city in Georgia has nothing to do with Bacău in Romania, just as Alexandria in Egypt bears no relation to the small town of Alexandria in the county of Teleorman."[32]

The hypothesis of Armenian builders was nonetheless regarded as the most credible also later, in the major interwar histories of art and architecture by Nicolae Ghika-Budești and Gheorghe Balș, as well as in numerous later studies.[33] To explain the significant chronological gap, scholars increasingly pointed to the enduring tradition of Armenian architects who preserved and transmitted their artistic knowledge within the Ottoman Empire, where many court architects were of Armenian descent. Indeed, the most famous Ottoman architect, Mimar Sinan (who served Sultans Suleiman the Magnificent, Selim II, and Murad III in the sixteenth century) was of Armenian origin, as was the Balian family, which produced some of the Empire's most prominent modern architects. The hypothesis of Armenian architects active in Istanbul would also conveniently account for the church's evident Ottoman stylistic features.

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30   Tocilescu, in Hașdeu, *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae*, 335.

31   Hașdeu, *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae*, 335–36.

32   Xenopol, "Originea Argeșului," 64–71.

33   Ghika-Budești, "Înrâurirea armenească," 140–43; Balș, *Influences arméniennes*; Ionescu, "Empreintes armeniennes."

As for the interior frescoes (today exhibited at the National Art Museum in Bucharest), their sources appear somewhat clearer, as the entire pictorial program is firmly anchored in the Byzantine tradition. Even so, the painters' identity is largely unknown, apart from one name—Dobromir. Emanuela Cernea, however, has noted similarities between these frescoes and those from the artistic milieu of Mount Athos, as well as with the Cretan school of painting, as she draws comparisons with the works of Theophanes the Cretan and his son Simeon.[34]

Using the legend. Curtea de Argeş and the Romanian nation state

In 1860, it was published the first historical and architectural study of the former monastery at Curtea de Argeş. The analysis was published by the Habsburg meteorologist and teacher from Hermannstadt Ludwig Reissenberger (1819–1895) in the annuary of the Imperial Commission for the Research and Preservation of Monuments and as a stand-alone publication.[35] For the 1860s, the study was of exceptional quality. Its fifty pages included detailed descriptions of the architecture and decorations, the plan and history of the monument and of the Orthodox faith, along with twenty-five wood engravings and four metal plates.

But why would a writer from the Habsburg Empire venture into a largely unknown territory south of the Carpathians to study an Orthodox church? And, more importantly, why would the Austrian Commission for Historic Monuments be interested in a monastery in Romania? The answer lies in the unique nature of the architecture at Curtea de Argeş and in the particular interest of the Habsburg Empire in the Romanian Principalities in the mid-nineteenth century. Toward the end of the Crimean War, following Russia's defeat in the Balkans, the Principalities came under Habsburg occupation for a year and a half, from June 1854 to December 1856. The Habsburgs recognised both the scientific and symbolic value of the monument and the potential importance of a study devoted to it, and they promptly commissioned one.

Reissenberger's study can be considered the true beginning of the historical and architectural interest in the monument. It is generally descriptive, showing meticulously architectural details as well as the ground floor plan of the church, but it also places the monument in the post-Byzantine artistic tradition. Reissenberger claimed that the church testifies to the stagnation and "oppressive" nature of Byzantine culture, but at the same time gives "a new direction" to Byzantine art through its innovative architecture.[36]

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34   Cernea, "André Lecomte du Noüy and the frescoes," 73–74.

35   Reissenberger, *Die Bischöfliche Klosterkirche*; Reissenberger, "Die Bischöfliche Klosterkirche."

36   Minea, "The Monastery of Curtea de Argeş," 187–88.

In 1862, it was partially translated into Romanian by Dimitrie Berindei, accompanied by an introduction that represents the first attempt to write a history of architecture in Romania.[37] In 1867, it was also translated into French for the Paris Universal Exhibition; on this occasion, the former monastery served as a model for the national pavilion[38] (Figure 8).

The Universal Exhibition offered Romania a unique opportunity to present itself as a modern national state, despite its complex political situation: officially, still under Ottoman suzerainty, yet with self-governance and, from 1866, a foreign ruler, the German Prince Carol I. It was at this time that the name "Romania" was first used in an international context replacing the earlier "United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia." It was also then that Neagoe's church was definitively consecrated as the most important historical monument in the country. It was presented as Romania's chief artistic achieve-

Figure 8 Ambroise Baudry, Romania's Pavilion at the Paris Universal Exhibition, 1867
Source: Musée d'Orsay, *Documentation* section, Paris, Box 48: Ambroise Baudry'

ment in three ways: as the inspiration for the Romanian pavilion (designed by the French architect Ambroise Baudry) and for the Romanian section of the main gallery; as a two-and-a-half-meter-high replica of the church sculpted by Karl Stork; and as the subject of three separate publications.[39]

The organiser of the Romanian exhibition in Paris, historian and archaeologist Alexandru Odobescu, presented the Argeş monument as proof of the undeniable artistic value of Romanian culture at the European level:

"At a time when all nations showcase the wealth and products of their imagination and taste, one might fear the poverty of our own artistic achievements. Yet Romania possesses its own treasures: our people wear some of the most graceful traditional costumes, the art of painting is

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37   Berindeiu, "Răpide ochire asupra Architecturei Bizantine." See also Minea, "From Byzantine to Brâncovenesc."

38   Reissenberger, *L'église Du Monastère Épiscopal.*

39   Details in Reissenberger, *L'église Du Monastère Épiscopal*; Odobescu and Aurelian, *Notice sur la Roumanie*; Odobescu, *Notice sur les antiquites*, 55–68.

starting to flourish, and, most notably, the country boasts an architec-
tural monument worthy of the world's admiration. The faithful repro-
duction of the episcopal church at Curtea de Argeş is certain to make a
sensation in the artistic world, especially now, as civilised Europe, tired of
overused styles, turns once more to Byzantine architecture as a source of
inspiration."[40]

Reissenberger's study and the ensuing promotion of the church played a deci-
sive role in its designation as the first monument to undergo restoration in modern
Romania. As early as 1863, the Romanian government commissioned the architect
Gaetano Burelly (1820–1896) to undertake a "complete restoration" of the church.[41]
Due to a lack of funds, work advanced slowly, and only in 1874 did the Ministry of
Religion convene a special committee to draft the restoration project, composed of
the country's leading architects and archaeologists—among them Alexandru Orăscu,
Dimitrie Berindei, Alexandru Odobescu, Alfred Berthon, and Paul Gottereau.[42] To
coordinate the work, they turned to none other than Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-
le-Duc (1814–1879), probably the most famous restorer in the world at the time.
Viollet-le-Duc accepted the proposal and subsequently entrusted the restoration to
one of his students, the young architect André Lecomte du Noüy (1844–1914).[43]

Lecomte du Noüy arrived in Romania in the spring of 1875 on an initial two-
year contract but ended up working at Curtea de Argeş for eleven years. He restored
four other monuments and stayed in the country until his death; he was buried
at Curtea de Argeş, near the church he had restored. The exterior restoration did
not bring any major changes beyond the addition of a new crown to the domes,
rainwater pipes, gargoyles, and a decorative fence around the monument. The archi-
tect, however, demolished the monastic buildings and rebuilt the Ottoman-inspired
fountain in front of the church (Figure 9).

On the interior, Lecomte du Noüy radically transformed the monument accord-
ing to the decision of the Ministry of Religion, which also stipulated in the 1881
contract that the restorer must undertake study trips to Romania, Constantinople,
Venice, and Mount Athos to research comparable frescoes and church furnish-
ings.[44]All the frescoes were removed, and the most important compositions and
figures were transferred to the Museum of Antiquities in Bucharest, the only public

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40   Odobescu, *Scrieri Literare și Istorice*, 86.

41   *Restaurarea Monumentelor Istorice 1865–1890*, 2.

42   "Decizia Ministrului Cultelor B. Boerescu," 30 January 1874, in *Restaurarea Monumentelor
      Istorice 1865–1890*, 14.

43   "Scrisoare către Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice," 20 August 1874. Fond Ministerul
      Religiei și Instrucțiunii Publice, ANR, dossier no. 127, leaf 173.

44   "Contract," 7 February 1881. *Restaurarea Monumentelor Istorice,* 114–16.

Figure 9 Baptismal font, Church of Curtea de Argeş. Before and after restoration
Source: Carol Popp de Szathmáry. *Episcopie de Curtea de Argis*. Bucharest, 1866; *Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine*, Paris, Viollet-le-Duc Fonds, Box Roumanie, no. 36, 2320–30

museum in the country, which exhibited at the time artefacts taken from the monasteries and churches across Romania.[45] The new frescoes, executed by a team of French artists, freely replicated the principal figures of the original paintings but with markedly different colouring (brighter hues, stronger contrasts) and with a much larger portion of the surface devoted to a luminous gold background.

The frescoes at Curtea de Argeş were the result of a French–Romanian collaboration, testifying to the close artistic relations between the two countries. The Parisian painter Luc-Olivier Merson (1846–1920), who painted the main figures, first studied the costumes of former Wallachian rulers to depict the church founder Neagoe Basarab and his family.[46] Once the preparatory drawing was completed, it was transferred to the walls by Romanian artists, including Eduard Grant and N. Constantinescu (full name unknown).

The interior restoration also brought new figures onto the walls, the most prominent being the royal couple—King Carol and Queen Elisabeth—and the current and former bishops of Argeş. They demonstrate the Catholic monarchs' attempt to forge connections with the Orthodox faith and with Romanian history, being

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45   A total of seven historical figures were preserved (including the portraits of the founders, Neagoe Basarab, his family and successors), twenty-seven religious scenes or figures and one inscription, mostly from the lower part of the church. See Cernea and Pătrăşcanu, *Mărturii*, exhibits 1–35, 68–145.

46   Popescu, "André Lecomte Du Nouÿ," 300.

depicted next to Neagoe Basarab and his family as new founders of the church. King Carol, in full ceremonial attire, points toward the church plans, while Queen Elisabeth holds the Book of the Gospels, which she decorated herself and which was displayed in a special case inside the church (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Luc-Olivier Merson, Royal portraits, Church of Curtea de Argeş, around 1885
Source: https://melidoniumm.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/regele-carol-i-manastirea-curtea-de-arges.jpg

The surroundings of the monument were recreated with equal ambition. In 1881, the Minister of Religion, Vasile Alexandrescu Urechia, entrusted the French architect with an ambitious architectural program to replace the former monastic buildings with an imposing Episcopal Palace, a theological seminary, a royal residence, auxiliary buildings, a monumental gate, and a landscaped park.[47] Only the Episcopal Palace and part of the landscape design were completed, yet the overall project illustrates the will of Romania and its royal family to modernise the country—including its historical monuments.

Perhaps the best illustration of the significance of these restorations was the 1886 rededication ceremony, when the town of Curtea de Argeş witnessed probably the greatest celebration in its history. According to contemporary newspapers, some twenty-five thousand people from all over Romania gathered in the small town to

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47   "Scrisoare a lui Al. Săvulescu," 22 September 1881. *Restaurarea Monumentelor Istorice 1865–1890*, 119–20. See also "Raport," 1 November 1884. *Restaurarea Monumentelor Istorice 1865–1890*, 155–60.

attend the ceremonies and listen to speeches by the nation's leading statesmen, who praised the king, his patronage of the nation's cultural heritage, and the importance of its historical monuments[48] (Figure 11). King Carol himself declared—words that would often be repeated thereafter—that "nations that care for their monuments rise above their condition. Everywhere, monuments are the storytellers of history, the mirrors of the past, shining signs for future generations."[49] He later laid down in his testament that his own royal tomb should be placed at Curtea de Argeş, thus permanently linking his name with the historic monument.[50]

Figure 11 Reconsecration of the Metropolitan Church of Curtea de Argeş, October 1886
Source: Grigore Tocilescu and André Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii Curtea de Argeş restaurată în zilele M.S. Regelui Carol I şi sfinţită din nou în ziua de 12 septembrie 1886.* Bucharest, 1886

48   "Serbarea de la Curtea de Argeş," *Voinţa Naţională*, no. 656, 6. Tocilescu and Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii*, 67–92.

49   Tocilescu and Lecomte du Noüy, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii*, 80.

50   See "Testamentul Regelui Carol I," *Viitorul*; Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor*, 656–57.

Conclusion

The architecture of Curtea de Argeş is still largely viewed through the paradigm of "in-betweenness"—perhaps the most popular way to describe Romanian culture since the founding of the state in the nineteenth century. At the border between empires, as a "bridge" between East and West, Romanian culture is accordingly a mixture of various styles and influences. These ideas are still influential even if they have long been deconstructed and exposed as a way of thinking stemming from the tradition of the Enlightenment that reinforces a Western narrative of superiority.[51] Indeed, to be in-between might mean being original and interesting, but implicitly it also means being outside the canon, less than being incomplete or strange. It is something to be appreciated but from a distance because it remains foreign and mysterious.

As an alternative, I would like to advance a simple, perhaps logical statement about the church at Curtea de Argeş. Rather than a monument situated at the crossroads of empires with various styles, motifs, influences in an original yet eclectic architecture, I propose that it is a single, exceptional architectural work, incorporating many traditions, styles and cultures but transforming them into an original artwork. Its decorations, plan, towers, and apses are all new in architectural history and we should appreciate their originality. Perhaps we should even marvel at the fact that the church is not hybrid or eclectic. It is new and original. It is indeed not ground-breaking since the Curtea de Argeş church did not create a style or an artistic movement of any kind. It was hard to do this, particularly in Wallachia, since more than a century of great political instability followed the rule of Neagoe Basarab. But, as the chronicler Gavriil Protu noted in the sixteenth century, it surpasses in beauty many of the most famous religious sites in the world.

The article has focused on both the premodern and modern historiography of the monument to show various forms of continuity and offer a more complete explanation for how the church was turned from a princely foundation into a national monument. It has highlighted the obsession with authorship, which has to an extent diverted attention from the actual novelty of the architecture, but that has been a mark of art historical research since at least Vasari, who saw the authors as the central figures of the history of art. In the case of Curtea de Argeş, the search for its architects and sources in the nineteenth century became a means of asserting the monument as a product of local "genius" and therefore part of the Romanian heritage. At the same time, the focus on the unknown or legendary masons reinforced the idea that the monument is mysterious and hybrid.

Instead, a focus on the building's aesthetic appeal, together with its construction techniques and functionality, in line with the Vitruvian triad (firm-utility-beauty),

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51   Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*; Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans.*

is perhaps more appropriate.[52] In this way, the monument appears as embedded in the wider Ottoman context but adapted to the tastes and expectations of various, heterogeneous and conflicting actors: local Christian voivodes, Muslim rulers, local parishioners, Balkan and Ottoman painters and masons.

This research has also shown that the nineteenth-century history of Curtea de Argeş demonstrates the transnational formation of national heritage. The monument's architecture was first analysed by the Habsburg scholar Reissenberger and later reinterpreted by the Romanian architect Berindei. Reissenberger's study, accompanied by a scale model of the church, was exhibited by the Romanian delegation at the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition in line with the expectations of the French organisers. Ultimately, the monument was restored according to the Romanian government's directives but executed by a team of French architects and artists. These successive collaborations produced what became Romania's first national architectural monument. The Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeş was shaped once again through transnational exchanges—much like its original creation, at a time before modern nations existed but when its architects navigated multiple religions, languages, and competing political interests.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Constructing a Reactionary Modernity: "White" Counterrevolutionary Mentalities and the Transformation of Politics in Central Europe after the Great War

An Introduction

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Understanding the modernities constructed in both the practices and the imaginaries of radical right-wing movements in the early 1920s has important implications for historiography. Among other things, it compels historians to adopt a holistic approach to these movements and to the societal and political contexts into which they were embedded and which they often attempted to influence or subvert. Such an approach helps to avoid reductionism, in both explanation and analysis: the right-wing radicals of the first post-war decades possessed complex ideological ancestry and were linked to intellectual milieus in which continuities survived the rupture of the Great War. Their often-violent political practices and the processes of meaning-making after the experience of defeat in the world war and of the Bolshevik threat open themselves to analysis only when this broader setting itself is interrogated.

The following papers represent the second instalment of a series of papers on how East Central European late modernities were constructed in the wake of World War I. They focus on a specific chapter in the history of ideologies and political technologies in the region and continue to explore the period as an ambiguous, multifaceted era that pointed towards several alternative pathways into the twentieth-century world. In this contribution, we concentrate on the emergence and institutionalisation of alternative notions of politics and society that deviated markedly from the liberal patterns of the previous century, and generated distinct imaginaries

about how the political community—the referent object of ideologies—should ideally be configured.

The term "conservative revolution"—probably coined by Hugo von Hofmannsthal—was originally intended to capture more than just Weimar Germany's right-wing ideological laboratory. It can be productively extended to the numerous and partly interconnected intellectual milieus of Central and Eastern Europe.[1] The label denotes a forward-looking desire for radical change coupled with the claim that such transformation should be achieved by reclaiming values and identities allegedly marginalised by liberal modernity. In this sense, it provides a useful framework for situating paramilitary action within its political, intellectual, and social contexts.[2] Without such a framework, there is a risk of reducing right-wing radicalism in 1920s Central Europe to a mechanical afterlife of wartime violence or to a mere reaction to Bolshevism. Both factors were important—but taken in isolation they tend to explain purposive and ideologically saturated action through overly simple cause-and-effect models.

Taking the conservative-revolutionary milieu seriously as an analytical category highlights a more ambitious—and in many respects quintessentially modern—project: the search for new orders of meaning and authority after the collapse of empires and established certainties. Conservative-revolutionary thought drew on *Lebensphilosophie*, vitalist notions of regeneration, and social Darwinist imaginaries of struggle to reframe politics as a confrontation of life-forms rather than interests.[3] In this optic, anti-Bolshevism becomes not the origin but a potent symbol within a broader worldview. Violence, in turn, is not simply "brutalisation coming home to roost" but an instrument legitimised by a newly systematised language of national and racial renewal. Reconstructing this ideological fermentation restores historical agency and contingency: it reveals actors who did not simply react to crisis but set out to author an alternative modernity that re-shaped institutions, political cultures, and transnational horizons.

The conservative revolution, understood as a complex ideological "vessel" capable of channelling diverse impulses for action, is a practical starting point for such

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1   Hofmannsthal, "Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation."

2   Key discussions in the literature include Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism*; Gerstenberger, *Der revolutionäre Konservatismus*; Mosse, "The Corporate State and the Conservative Revolution"; Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*; Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*; Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*; Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution*, as well as Mohler and Weissmann, *Die konservative Revolution* as the final iteration of Mohler's—apologetic—series of interpretations, and more recently Kemper, *Das "Gewissen;"* Jones, *The German Right*.

3   Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken, 56–60.

a hermeneutic exercise because it itself was a melting pot of *fin-de-siècle*, wartime, and post-war experiences. When Hans Freyer claimed that "the state manifests itself in clearest form in war," he was at once echoing late nineteenth-century Wilhelmine *Staatslehre* in the tradition of Treitschke and reflecting on the lived experience of the world war. The legacy of turn-of-the-century *völkisch* and social Darwinist thinkers— and not only resentment at military defeat—fed into the conservative-revolutionary conviction, forcefully articulated by Edgar Julius Jung, that a people which can no longer express itself through violence is condemned to biological death.[4] Analogous arguments emerged in contemporary Hungarian political theory. Perhaps the most important example is Mihály Réz, the sociologist and influential public intellectual, who from the 1910s until his death in 1921 developed a similarly martial conception of the "natural" struggle for supremacy between peoples.[5]

The conservative revolution also integrated nineteenth-century *völkisch* discourse through wartime cult of the *Volksgemeinschaft*—an idealized image of the people as an ethnic community. This trope later functioned both as a critique of individualism (and thus liberalism) and of cosmopolitan communitarianism (and thus Marxism).[6] In foreign-policy terms, it underpinned the self-assertion of a people organised into a state, facing naturally hostile competitors. Predictably, this conception gained strength during the war years, but it could be reapplied to the post-war constellation of a defeated Germany, an Austria denied *Anschluss*, or a Hungary reduced to a truncated ethnic core.[7] In all cases, it served as a foundational trope around which actors advocating decisive action against internal and external enemies in the name of the nation/*Volk* could rally. Certain iterations of this logic could even be mobilised to justify continued thinking in terms of larger power blocs, in the footsteps of wartime *Mitteleuropa* projects, as a way of securing the strategic hinterland deemed necessary for the resurgence of defeated nations.[8]

Between 1919 and 1921 the perhaps most respected (if certainly not the most widely read) periodical of the early conservative revolution, *Gewissen* [Conscience], published numerous contributions on these questions.[9] They shared what might be called an "actionist" interpretation of the unity of the German people and of Central

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4   Freyer, *Der Staat*, 33; Jung, *Sinndeutung der deutschen Revolution*, 52.

5   Romsics, *Összeomlás és útkeresés*, 48–49.

6   Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges*, 44–45.

7   Mai, "»Verteidigungskrieg« und »Volksgemeinschaft«," 592–94; Faber, "Zur Vorgeschichte der Geopolitik," 393.

8   Bock, "Antipatriotismus, Westeuropa und Weltrevolution," 216–17; Heuss, *Deutschlands Zukunft*. For a political economy perspective of the day, see Herkner, *Deutschland und Österreich*. On the *völkisch* idea of Central Europe, see Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action*, 292.

9   Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair*, 280–90. Cp. also Gleichen, "Sagen, was soll."

Europe. Politics—understood as the battlefield of peoples and states—was framed as the arena in which the German people sought self-realisation and unity, and in which a future Central Europe was imagined as emerging under the leadership of a reborn German nation.[10]

After the shock of the war, the emphasis on preserving *Gemeinschaft* (the organic community) became a key theme. It was taken up not only by Ernst Jünger, the veteran theorist of the new war experience, but also by German industrialists who sought to fend off class-based challenges to their economic dominance.[11] The notion of protecting the *Volksgemeinschaft* was inscribed into the ideological core of most movements that we now classify as far-right paramilitary organisations of the 1920s. It provided a pre-existing framework that lent legitimacy and positive meaning to the struggle against Bolshevism. In Theodor W. Adorno's later terms, it functioned as a "jargon of authenticity," justifying action in the name of an idolised notion seen as capturing the deep, inner truth of the self, the essence of Germanness (and, by analogy, Hungarianness, etc.).[12]

The conspiratorial plans to overturn domestic and international orders, the choreographies of violence (and their subsequent staging in courtrooms), and efforts to build new organisations and dense networks of like-minded activists all reflected what Walter Benjamin diagnosed as the aestheticisation of politics.[13] Friedrich Georg Jünger argued that the "community of blood" *(Blutgemeinschaft)* trumped rationality. By doing so, he opened the way—as his brother Ernst had already done—to conceiving action in the name of that community as beautiful precisely because it was irrational, and to imagining politics as a self-referential activity capable of producing unity where there had previously been division. This line of thought was also used to justify violent transgressions in the semi-civil-war conditions of the early 1920s.[14] At around the same time, the discourse of *nemzeti öncélúság* (national autotelism; the nation as an end in itself) rose to prominence among Hungarian paramilitary circles, which also embraced the organic state theory popularised by the Austrian–German philosopher Othmar Spann. Both phenomena underline that the conservative revolution was a transnational phenomenon and that complex, multidirectional patterns of ideological transfer nourished the emerging ideologies of armed radicals on the far right.[15]

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10   Grunewald, "Reichseuropa gegen Paneuropa," 318–27.

11   Bures, "The Ineffable Conservative Revolution"; Föllmer, *Die Verteidigung der bürgerlichen Nation*, 197–204.

12   Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*.

13   Benjamin, "Theorien des deutschen Faschismus."

14   Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 28.

15   Pritz, "A fajvédők külpolitikai nézetei."

Finally, the specifically middle-class ethos of the paramilitaries deserves emphasis. It was more than a sociological descriptor of the groups' dominant social background. It also expressed a double movement: a step forward against old aristocratic and capitalist elites, and a step backward against communism. Jeffrey Herf's concept of "reactionary modernism" captures this paradox. Radical right-wing activism formed part of what he describes as the reinforcement of the socio-ethical milieus of the Weimar Republic: a *Mittelstand*-driven effort to consolidate a social order commensurate with an ascendant, anti-liberal middle-class sentiment.[16] This sentiment demanded a reinvention of politics and willingly combined the legacies of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the nation-in-arms.

Avoiding reductionism, the three papers approach the early 1920s counterrevolutionary right not as a set of local aftershocks of the Great War, but as a laboratory of ideas, institutions, and—importantly—transnational practices. They all demonstrate in their own way that far-right milieus adjacent to the conservative revolution were not simply reacting to Bolshevism or reenacting wartime brutalisation. They were experimenting with a distinct version of modernity around 1920—one in which anti-Bolshevism was embedded in a broader ideological synthesis drawing on *Lebensphilosophie*, vitalism, and social Darwinist grammars of struggle, decay and regeneration. The common thread binding these three studies is that they reconstruct how this ideological fermentation translated into political imaginaries, institutional habits and organised movements. Read together, they show a far right that was simultaneously anti-liberal and conceptually modern; insurgent and state-adjacent; nationalist in aims yet transnational in the process of constructing itself ideologically (Bodó), as well as in its methods and self-understanding (Bartha, Romsics).

A first axis of interpretation is the relationship between ideology and geographical scale. In Gergely Romsics's paper, he argue that counterrevolutionary actors in Munich, Vienna, and Budapest coordinated the post-1919 upheavals formed a diachronic, ideology-driven civil war across Central Europe, in which both left and right perceived the Other as an ontological threat. The result was a "civil-war habitus," sustained by myths of defeat and the spectre of Bolshevism, that produced a reactionary version of internationalism on the radical right. These actors imagined coordinated action, regime change in Vienna, and broader geopolitical reordering—mirroring the transnational logic that they ascribed to their revolutionary enemies.

The White International's conspiratorial horizon makes visible a paradox: movements that cultivated a cult of national sovereignty nonetheless embraced quasi "post-Westphalian" practices when they believed the struggle was existential.

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16   Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 1–13.

The paper describes this as a version of the "conservative dilemma," whereby sovereigntists endorsed transnational organisation and even bloc-like *Grossraum* ideas. The implication is methodological as well as historical: to understand early interwar far-right modernity, we must look beyond domestic arenas and follow the traffic of plans, emissaries, money, arms, and imaginaries across borders.

A second axis is the translation of violence into institutional form. Béla Bodó's paper, "The White Terror in a Global Context," shifts the focus from networks and geopolitical imaginaries to the internal mechanics of state transformation. Its core claim is that Hungary's early counterrevolution constituted not only a violent episode but also a decisive moment in the conversion of the *Rechtsstaat* into a *Rassenstaat*. It chronicles miscarriages of justice: the failure to prosecute antisemitic and political crimes committed during the hot phase of White Terror which created precedents and institutional habits that normalised legal inequality. Importantly, Bodó situates this transition in the broader context of modern racialist thinking rooted in eugenics and social Darwinism, showing how it penetrated liberal states and legal orders in the late nineteenth century, ultimately catalysed by the Great War and the subsequent period of upheaval. Bodó's piece does not reduce the flow of ideas to unidirectional transfers: he makes it clear that a broader Western/European attitude to race and specifically to Jews was combined with the impact of experience (that of defeat and the two revolutions) and the institutionalisation of racialism in Horthy's emergent Hungary.

This argument also suggests that brutalisation alone cannot explain the period's significance. The paper explicitly contests a historiographical drift that reduces the Red and White terrors to residual violence or episodes that can be understood separately from longer term processes in interwar Europe and Hungary. Instead, it argues that impunity was productive and the actors were also looking forward: the abuse of the justice system taught perpetrators that Jewish property and lives could be violated without meaningful state sanction, and such acts could even reappear in later theatres of violence and governance. By embedding this argument in a broader genealogy of the racial state—one that links modern biopolitics, social engineering, demographic thinking, and the fusion of scientism with nationalism—, the essay positions Hungary as an early, instructive case in a transnational history of racialized modernisation.

Importantly, this essay does not present the racial state as a fixed, fully achieved reality in Hungary by the early 1920s. Rather, it treats it as a trend and an ideal type, arguing that the counterrevolution created a "hot house" for political experimentation in which paramilitary actors and racist intellectual currents pushed the state towards new forms of ethicised social ordering. This theme connects it as much with the first paper as with Bartha's piece on the Hungarian political co-entrepreneurship behind the Anti-Semitic International.

Providing a third axis of interpretation focused on organisational form and political entrepreneurship, Ákos Bartha's study of Tibor Eckhardt's efforts of rebuilding a domestic radical movement (the Association of Awakening Hungarians or ÉME) while staking its claim to a leadership role in Europe's nascent antisemitic networks narrows the lens to a key movement that links paramilitary subcultures to mass politics. The paper shows how the ÉME rapidly evolved from a base of white terror into a nationwide organisation and a hub for transnational far-right networking. Eckhardt emerges as a political entrepreneur attempting to position the movement between the extreme right and the pro-consolidation conservative establishment, while also internationalising Hungarian racialist thinking through ties with Italian fascism, German *völkisch* circles, and Romanian, Austrian, and Russian partners.

The case of the 1925 antisemitic congress in Budapest—presented as the culmination of this transnational push and simultaneously a demonstration of its limits—offers a crucial bridge between the first two papers. It shows how the international imaginaries and networks highlighted in "The White International" could be institutionalised in the form of organised congresses, ideological exchanges, and movement-building. It also shows how the racialist logic analysed in "The White Terror in a Global Context" did not remain confined to state legislation or judicial precedent; it was cultivated and popularised through associations that mediated between street politics, scientific-racial discourse, and the increasingly consolidated authoritarian state.

Seen together, the three papers trace a coherent, though not linear, story about the conservative revolutionary milieu's relationship to modernity. The far right's early interwar 'modernity project' was not an abstract intellectual posture; it was all action and practice, in keeping with the voluntarist and activist philosophical underpinnings of these movements. Progress towards its goals could be achieved through transnational conspiratorial practice, a recalibration of the legality of violence in and against society, or through the building of racialist networks and organisations that operated partially in the public eye. The trilogy thus moves across levels of analysis—regional strategy, state institutions, and movement politics—while staying anchored in a shared historical problem: how to explain the far right's capacity to reinterpret defeat, revolution, and social dislocation not only as crises to be survived but as opportunities for ideological and institutional innovation.

This integrated perspective also helps refine the place of anti-Bolshevism. Across all three papers, Bolshevism functions less as a standalone cause than as a catalytic symbol within broader frameworks. In the first, it is the spectre that legitimises a reactionary internationalism and sustains civil-war mentalities across borders. In the second, it forms part of the context in which violence against Jews and political

enemies is rationalised and then retroactively normalised through legal concessions and exclusionary statutes. In the third, it remains a mobilising trope within a racial-protectionist agenda increasingly geared towards transnational alliance-building and the institutionalisation of far-right alternatives to liberal democracy.

The result is a three-part argument about the early 1920s as a formative moment in the genealogy of European far-right politics. The counterrevolutionary right, as these studies show, was not merely a consequence of wartime brutalisation nor a set of local epilogues to the revolutionary wave of 1918–1919. It was a creative—and dangerous—attempt to build new orders of meaning and power. Its actors imagined a new Central European architecture, experimented with the fusion of nationalism and racial biopolitics, and cultivated organisational structures capable of moving between domestic consolidation and international networking. By reading Munich, Vienna, and Budapest together; by connecting paramilitary violence to legal transformation; and by tracking ÉME's journey from terror hub to an activist organisation, the three papers demonstrate that the conservative revolution's 'ideological climate' was not a metaphorical atmosphere but a historically operative force—one that shaped the far right's sense of modernity, its enemies, and its plausible futures. The reverse is also true: paramilitary violence was not the necessary and quasi-automatic outcome of the experiences of defeat and revolution, but an ambitious undertaking to create a new politics and ultimately a new society framed in terms hammered out in the intellectual smelters of the conservative revolution.

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The White Terror in a Global Context

Miscarriages of Justice and the Origins of the Racial State in Hungary, 1919–1923

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Abstract. The study interprets Hungary's counterrevolutionary interwar regime at the intersection of paramilitarism in the immediate aftermath of World War I and the rise of the modern racial state. It traces how the failure to prosecute perpetrators of antisemitic and political violence and the enactment of exclusionary laws marked a decisive turn from the *Rechtsstaat* to the *Rassenstaat*. Drawing on judicial archives and comparative cases, the essay argues that Hungary's miscarriages of justice created both the precedent and the source of institutional habits for later racialised governance and persecution. The impunity granted to paramilitary perpetrators reshaped interwar political culture and fed into later extreme right-wing political cultures, including the political cultures and ideologies cultivated by Hungarian collaborators in the Holocaust. By contextualising Hungary's experience in transnational histories of race, law, and modernisation, the article redefines the White Terror as a formative episode in the global genealogy of the racial state.

Keywords: White Terror, Jews, antisemitism, racial state, Hungary, justice, *numerus clausus*, labor market, slavery, eugenics, *Rechtsstaat*, *Rassenstaat*

Introduction

This essay aims to accomplish three goals. First, it examines the prosecution of hate and political crimes committed during the "hot phase" of the counterrevolution (often described as White Terror, between August 1919 and March 1920). Second, it evaluates the long-term impact of the anti-Jewish legislation passed in the period of political consolidation from November 1920 until the end of 1924. Third, the essay puts the history of the White Terror and the counterrevolution in a global context, seeking to explain their significance for Hungarian and world history. More specifically, it evaluates the influence of these events on the rise and evolution of the racial state.

While the topic of justice served or aborted in the early 1920s is new, the narrative of the motives and social backgrounds of the perpetrators and the meanings and significance of right-wing paramilitary and mob violence in Hungary after August 1919 has a long history. The exiled leaders of the first democratic experiment and the defunct Hungarian Soviet Republic regarded the White Terror as a major event of both national and global significance. In a political pamphlet published in the early 1920s, the social scientist Oszkár Jászi, who had served as the Minister for National Minorities in the first democratic government at the end of 1918, described the White Terror as a unique regression in the process of civilisation.[1] In August 1919, Jászi argued that Hungary's "wild Asian soul raised its head again." The agents of violence, "the scum of the counterrevolution," were sadistic army officers, arrogant provincial administrators, degenerate noblemen, and semi-literate and antisemitic artisans, shopkeepers, white-collar workers, and other members of the German *(Sváb)* petty bourgeoisie. The goal of these reactionaries had been to "amputate the country's brain" by killing or driving into exile the progressive intelligentsia (of mainly Jewish, ethnic German, or Slav origin), which had been the driving force behind the Westernisation and the economic and cultural modernisation of the country before 1914. One may add to Jászi's acount that the traditional social and political elite had first tolerated their excesses and rejoiced over the demise of the progressive intelligentsia. However, the same elite came to recognise that unruly militias posed a threat not only to Jews, workers, and leftist intellectuals, but also to their power. With the help of the police, the old civil service, the officer corps, and conservative politicians such as Counts Pál Teleki and István Bethlen gradually pushed the militias, "the dregs of the counterrevolution," to the side and, by 1922, restored, with small modifications, the pre-war conservative social and political system.[2]

The exiled leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, such as the talented journalist and ex-social democrat József Pogány, described the White Terror as a world historical event comparable to the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871.[3] Wartime misery and post-war chaos had finally re-awakened the European working class from its Cinderella sleep. Frightened by the renewed militancy of the lower orders, the capitalists and landowners in Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Germany created their own private armies, the right-wing militias, to fend off the leftist threat. Led by military officers and university students, the paramilitary groups recruited their members almost entirely from the bourgeoisie. During the counterrevolution, the capitalist system, for the last time, had revealed its true nature, which was pure

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[1]   On the life of the moderate socialist Oszkár Jászi and his academic and political careers, see Litván, *A Twentieth-Century Prophet.*

[2]   Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution,* 160–61.

[3]   On Pogány's life and career, see Sakmyster, *A Communist Odyssey,* 36–52.

violence. "The Hungarian White Terror," Pogány argued, "is nothing more than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Its [specific] form is determined by the fact that the leaders of the dictatorship are professional soldiers."[4]

Building on this interwar precedent, after World War II, orthodox Marxist historians such as Erzsébet Andics and Dezső Nemes continued to describe the White Terror as a reaction to progress and an attempt by the ruling capitalist classes to hold on to power. According to their interpretation, the atrocities committed against workers and political activists after August 1919 had given birth to the first fascist state in Europe, which then had served as a model for both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The ex-militia men had supported Hungary's alliance with kindred states, such Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. They had also welcomed Hungary's entry into World War II on the side of the fascist powers.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of historians questioned the cardinal importance of paramilitary violence as the midwife of the new counterrevolutionary regime and expressed doubts about its fascist character,[5] but the full-scale attack on the rigid edifice of historical continuities between the White Terror and the Horthy regime came after the collapse of the one-party state in 1989. As a result of newer publications, the image of the violent phase of the counterrevolution, and its causes and consequences, has changed drastically over the course of the past thirty years. Modern historians tend to see violence as a sterile force. The Red and White terrors, they contend, fed chaos and misery, but they did not create anything new or permanent. The only exception is the pattern of violence: the enforcers' conduct in Stalinist Hungary did resemble the behavioural patterns established by the Red militias in 1919.[6] Interestingly enough, while modern historians recognise the points of continuities between the Soviet Republic and Socialist Hungary, they tend to underplay the links between the White Terror and the domestic and foreign policies of the interwar Horthy regime.[7]

With a few notable exceptions, Hungarian historians today attribute the waves of pogroms, armed robberies, bread riots, and other types of violent outbreaks after 1918 to the brutalising effects of the war, material deprivation, and cultural

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4   Pogány, "Fehérterror természetrajza," 29–32. First published by Arbeiter-Buchhandlung in Vienna in 1920; cp. also Pogány, "A munkásosztály kiírtása," 402–03. First published by Arbeiter-Buchhandlung in Vienna in 1920.

5   See Romsics, *Ellenforradalom és konszolidáció*.

6   See Hatos, *Rosszfiúk Világforradalma*.

7   On the sources of and the main trends in Hungarian foreign policy in the interwar period, see Pritz, "Huszadik századi magyar külpolitika," 202–04; Zeidler, "Mozgástér a kényszerpályán;" Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege*, 198–226.

disorientation.[8] They see the atrocities committed by the mobs and right-wing para-military groups as the last ripples of the war rather than the start of new era: the left-over of bygone age, rather than the foundation of a new regime and political culture. In contrast to the pre-1989 period, the White Terror and the counterrevolution in Hungary are no longer regarded as an event of major national or global significance. Instead, they have been reduced to a footnote in the annals of political violence.

Yet the continuity with later events and trends has not been completely erased. Holocaust historians, in particular, stress the continuity, in spirit, language, and agency, between the *numerus clausus* legislation of 1920, which was in part the product of paramilitary, especially student agitation and violence, and the antise-mitic legislations of the late 1930s and early 1940s.[9] In his seminal work on the history of fascism, Stanley G. Payne, for instance, describes the right-wing para-military groups and the Race Defenders in Hungary as typical representatives of right-radicalism and forerunners to fascism in interwar Europe.[10] In two important books and several articles, Krisztián Ungváry has restored some of the earlier sig-nificance of the White Terror and the counterrevolution. Ungváry argues that it was in this period when the political elite first tried to solve the country's most pressing social problems at the expense of Jews. The early attempts to "ethnicize social pol-icy" represented more than a kneejerk reaction to the war and Jewish participation in the democratic revolution and the Soviet Republic. The Race Defenders, whose time arrived after 1932, were, Ungváry argues, both modernisers and social reform-ers, similar, in regard to their political ideas and motives, to Roosevelt Democrats, Italian Fascists, and Soviet Communists. Their reforms paved the way for the Anti-Jewish Laws of the late 1930s and early 1940s. These legislations, Ungváry continues, were not borrowed goods, but the products of indigenous developments: logical answers to Hungarian problems.[11]

This article, too, describes the White Terror and the counterrevolution as events of both national and global importance. Like Ungváry's publications, this essay is also concerned with state-building and social engineering. However, instead of social policy, the focus of this article is on the operations of the justice system and the health of the *Rechtsstaat*: the "state based on the rule of law." More specifically,

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8   Cp. Révész, *Nem akartak katonát láni?* This is also true of much of the international literature on the interwar militias, which is more concerned with the origins of paramilitary violence rather than their long-term consequences. Cp. Horne, etc. For an exception to this rule.

9   See Braham, *The Politics of Genocide,* 1–39; Katzburg, *Zsidópolitika Magyarországon.*

10   Payne, *A History of Fascism,* 15–16.

11   Ungváry, "A szociálpolitika etnicizálása;" Ungváry, *A Horthy rendszer mérlege.* See also the reworked iteration of this important volume: *A Horthy-rendszer és antiszemitizmusának mérlege.*

this article is concerned with the issue of legal equality in Hungary during the years of political consolidation between 1921 and 1924. The main argument of this essay is that the state's failure to provide justice for the victims of hate crimes should not be perceived simply as a concession to the recent past and its "heroes," the right-wing paramilitary groups. These concessions cast a long shadow and could be regarded as one of the seeds of a new social, political, and legal system, the racial state *(Rassenstaat)*. In a more fully developed racial state, such as Nazi Germany, the legal inequality of ethnic minorities (first for Jews, later for slave labourers from the East) was taken for granted. The main function of the law in such a state was to synchronize and legitimize social and ethnic inequalities and hierarchies, thus making the humiliation, gross exploitation, and mistreatment of ethnic minorities a permanent and key feature of the system. This paper traces a similar logic and argues that the refusal of the authorities to provide justice for the victims of the White Terror by punishing the perpetrators of political and hate crimes was part of this larger scheme and drive. With the pogroms, the armed robberies, the violent attacks on Jewish students, the ethnic cleansing of towns and villages populated by Jewish farmers and merchants, and the antisemitic legislations passed in this period, these miscarriages of justice represented a pivotal moment in Hungarian history: an important shift away from the *Rechtsstaat* towards the *Rassenstaat*. Who was responsible for this shift, who paid the price for it, and what were the short and long-term consequences of this new trend? This article ventures answers to these questions.

Capitalism, technological modernisation, and the origins of the racial state, 1880–1918

The racial state (as a corpus of laws, institutions, and administrative practices, and biopolitics as political culture and practices of violence) was certainly a product of modernity. Its origins can be traced back to colonisation and the creation of the world economy in the early modern period and to the rise of imperialism in the nineteenth century. Its home was the settlers' colonies, such as the United States, Australia, and South Africa and the modernising imperial states. The ethnic cleansing practiced in the settlers' colonies testified to the determination, expansionist drive, and cruelty of the newcomers. While it led to the deaths of millions of aboriginals, ethnic cleansing tended to be a spontaneous process driven by local actors acting on private interests, rather than plans drafted in far-away capitals. This is not to say that the settlers did not enjoy the sympathy of their governments, and with only a few exceptions, they could, when needed, count on their political and military support. For example, in the United States, the new political class not only tolerated but aided the expulsion of Aboriginals from their native lands and the destruction of their culture between

1830 and 1900. As a result of this shared effort, the scale and intensity of ethnic cleansing in North America surpassed the death and devastation produced by the interstate conflicts and civil wars in Europe in the same period.[12] Paradoxically, the United States was a democracy at the time. The European liberal empires, including Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany, also sought to spread the benefits of modernity in the form of new social services, higher wages, and improved standards of living among the lower classes. By 1900, the modernising empires in Europe could be described as *Rechtsstaaten,* which treated their citizens equally before law, irrespective of social or religious background. Greater civility, improved standards of living, and expanding rights (including the right to vote in elections) in the metropoles went together with gross exploitation and increased formal and informal discrimination in the overseas colonies.

In these colonies, ethnic cleansing was inexorably linked to the institution of slavery.[13] Slavery was not merely a matter of economic profits. It also had many non-economic, i.e., cultural, political, and psychological benefits. "Whiteness" became a source of pride and the basis of cultural identity among the rural poor in the southern states of the United States (as well as other settlers' colonies). While the Civil War put an end to the institution of slavery, these cultural and psychological benefits, alongside economic factors, go a long way to explain why racism continued to persist in the South long after the military defeat of the Confederate armies. Racism not only persisted, but along with economic and social inequalities, it remained the main principle of social organisation in the South after 1870. The passing of a series of legislative measures, collectively known as the Jim Crow Laws, not only kept most Blacks in the South in bondage and in dire poverty, they also created administrative structures, reinforced political convictions, and entrenched habits. Many of the stipulations of the Jim Crow Laws (like the American constitution after the world wars) became export items. Rigid separation of the races in the

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12 American leaders from George Washington to Abraham Lincoln (some of the worst atrocities happened during Lincoln's presidency in the 1860s) justified the removal of native Americans on strategic, cultural, and increasingly racial grounds: as an alleged military necessity, as a price to be paid on the altar of progress, and finally as a proof of the settlers' cultural and biological superiority. Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy,* 91–100. Cited in Schlögel, *American Matrix*, 721.

13 Most of the statesmen who had gathered in Philadelphia in 1776 were slaveholders. Some, like Thomas Jefferson, the main author of the *Declaration of Independence* and the American Constitution, can be described as early and committed racists. Thomas Jefferson, who had six children from an African American woman, can be considered typical of the members of his class. However, by failing to manumit her, or indeed any of his slaves, Jefferson represented an exception (and it spoke volumes about his character). It is less known that the third president of the United States was also one of first public figures to use science in support of his notion of the alleged moral inferiority of African Americans. Schlögel, *American Matrix,* 693–96.

public arena, discrimination on the job market, and the interdiction of sexual rela-
tions between members of different so-called races found admirers and imitators,
from the South African Republic to Nazi Germany and its satellites in the twentieth
century. These elements of law came to be the key features of the racial state.[14]

The New South rested not only on laws, institutions, and the economic inter-
ests of the elites: segregation was also deeply rooted in the political culture, the
prejudices, and self-understanding of the general population. Everywhere, the foot
soldiers of the nascent racial state came from the middle and lower strata of society.
The dirty work of removing Native Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth cen-
turies had been the done by local national guards: citizens' militias which regarded
themselves as the backbone of White democracy. The slave patrols in the pre-Civil
War era in turn gave birth to the Ku-Klux-Klan (KKK) after 1865. While the early
militias in the frontier states had specialised in expulsion and murder, the slave
patrols and the KKK were more interested in confining, exploiting, and terrorising
African Americans, for instance via lynchings. The two practices (expulsion and
murder on the one hand and exploitation and terrorising on the other) were only
superficially at odds with each other; in fact, the forced removal of one group nor-
mally went with the subjugation and enslavement of others.

Ethnic cleansing in the settlers' colonies, in turn, was closely tied to restrictive
immigration policies and, after the 1880s, racial preference as an increasingly prom-
inent element of the majority's political identity. This meant support for the influx of
the "right kind" of immigrants and the exclusion of people perceived as a threat, as
well as the elimination, via medical measures, of those deemed a burden. In the final
decades of the nineteenth century, immigration and population policy became a
major concern not only for civil servants and politicians, but also for health officials,
doctors, and social scientists. Social hygiene and eugenics became an important
instrument in the hands of civil servants and various experts engaged in the process
of nation and state-building. Many of their policies, such as marital counselling,
motherhood training, and financial aid given to large groups seen as racially valu-
able and "deserving," were perceived both as rational and beneficial to the majority
population. However, eugenicists were even more interested in exclusion through
the elimination of the "undeserving," the "unworthy," the "antisocial," and the
"hereditary ill." Even before 1914, British, American, and German eugenicists began
to advocate voluntary (later compulsory) sterilisation to remove "dead weight,"
prevent degeneration, and solve the most pressing social problems.[15] Eugenicists
were also quick to forge a link between the elimination of the "burdensome" pop-
ulation via medical means and restrictive immigration policies. Early eugenicists,

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14   Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*. See also Burleigh and Wipperman, *The Racial State*.

15   Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*.

such as Charles Davenport, were among the main advocates of laws and regulations designed to keep allegedly inferior ethnic groups and races, such as the Chinese and the Japanese, out and maintain their continued segregation from the rest of the population.[16] The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 crowned their efforts with success. This law provided inspiration for nationalists in other part of the world. The same law, for example, inspired politicians in Austria–Hungary to introduce legislation in 1883 to exclude Jewish immigrants from the East.[17]

The Jim Crow Laws and anti-immigrant agitation were closely tied to paramilitary and mob violence. Vigilante groups, such as the KKK, followed Black migrants to the cities in the North before World War I. Hostile not only to Blacks but also to Catholics, Jews, and other minority groups, the KKK spread terror in the African American and immigrant neighbourhoods after 1918. Alongside the KKK, the American Legion (AL), which was the largest veteran organisation, organised and led attacks on immigrant communities. Regarding its ideology, the social backgrounds of the leaders and the rank-and-file, and its organisational structure, the AL bore an unmistakable resemblance to the interwar right-wing paramilitary groups in Europe. Like the antisemitic German *Freikorps*, the Nazi SA, and the Hungarian *szabadcsapatok,* the AL wanted to cleanse the land of "subversive" and "racially inferior" elements and maintain and strengthen social and racial hierarchies. Tied to the government and the political elite, the AL and the KKK became the most important agents of the racial state in the United States in the 1920s.

The right-wing paramilitary groups in Europe were the product of the war and the conflicts and tensions in its wake. At the same time, they prolonged the these conflicts and contributed to the outbreak of civil wars.[18] The presence of the militias ensured that the war would continue in the form of ethnic conflicts, border clashes, regional wars, and domestic political conflicts. Many of the interwar militias were outright fascist or proto-fascist (particularly in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy), but even those which later became the backbone of the new democratic states (like the Czech Legion and the Baltic militias) were fiercely nationalistic, embraced many authoritarian and even fascist ideas, and committed many atrocities against Jews and other minority groups between 1918 and 1921.[19] In the Third Reich, paramilitarism and the *Freikorps* were often celebrated as the "vanguard to Nazism" and

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16   Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics.*

17   Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna.*

18   Böhler, "Enduring Violence;" Tooley, "German Political Violence;" Gatrell, "War after War: Conflicts, 1919–1923;" Schnell, *Räume des Schreckens*; Jones, *Am Anfang war Gewalt*, 9–74; *Newman*, "The Origins, Attributes and Legacies of Paramilitary Violence in the Balkans."

19   Kučera, "Exploiting Victory;" Balkalis, "Demobilisierung, Remobilisierung. Paramilitaerische Verbaende in Litauen, 1918–1920."

a model for Nazi organisations, such as the SS, which was one of the pillars of the racial state. Although the lines of continuity between the *Freikorps* and the Third Reich were not as strong as many earlier historians believed, without the right-wing militias, the regime certainly would have taken a different form.

The deep roots of the racial state in Hungary, 1867–1919

The racial state in Hungary also had its origins in the immediate post-1918 period. However, at least some of its components, such as discrimination against minorities and limited social mobility for non-Hungarian speakers, already existed in the Dualist era. Like their Austrian counterparts, Hungarian liberals before 1914 were ready to concede active citizenship only to a small part of the population (relatively well-to-do men of voting age). The rest (more than 94 percent of the adult population) had to be content with passive citizenship.[20] The parliament and political life in general remained the domain of a small socially and culturally homogeneous Hungarian-speaking group. Representatives of the ethnic minorities, which made up about half of the population, continued to exercise little control over the legislative process. The ethnic minorities had many reasons to complain about discrimination. Non-Hungarian speakers were absent in the economic elite and remained underrepresented in the middle class, as well. The Constitution of 1867 guaranteed both individual and collective rights. However, with the onset of the "Magyarisation" policy in the final decades of the century, the state began to minority schools closely and restrict access to local administration in the minorities' languages. It also cracked down on minority organisations and arrested, tried, and jailed religious and community leaders on trumped-up charges.[21] It was of little consolation that police and the courts treated the ideological and political opponents of the liberal regime, especially the agrarian socialists and the social democrats, even more harshly and unfairly.

In addition to the policy of Magyarisation, the heavy-handedness of the police, and the ethnic and class biases of the judges, the rise of integral nationalism and racism and the spread of hostile and increasingly racist stereotypical images in newspapers and periodicals before 1914 also poisoned the relationship with the minorities and the neighbouring countries and left a heavy legacy for interwar Hungarian society.[22] As had been and was the case in Great Britain and France, the rise of racism in Central Europe was linked to imperial ambitions and conquest. Austro–Hungarian expansion into the Balkans at the turn of the century quickened the transition from

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20   Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 344–84.

21   Katus, *Hungary in the Dual Monarchy*, 428–78.

22   Tamás, *Nemzetiségek görbe tükörben*.

democratic nationalism and foreign policy, based on Lajos Kossuth's idea of the equality of small nations and states, to a more exclusivist type of nationalism and foreign policy moved by imperial ambitions and the fashionable belief in ethnic and racial hierarchies.[23] The rise of political antisemitism in the same period both testified to and quickened the erosion of the liberal foundation of Hungarian nationalism. Like their Austrian counterparts and nativists in the United States, Hungarian antisemites were obsessed with the influx of allegedly inferior and dangerous "aliens." Győző Istóczy was the first prominent figure in Europe to link the demand for anti-Jewish legislations and strict immigration laws to the necessity of social reforms. He was also one of the first antisemites to advocate the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and the resettlement of European Jews overseas in 1878. While Istóczy hoped to protect peasants from Jewish usurers and save the noble estates from Jewish speculators, Christian Socialists such as Ottokár Prohászka and Béla Bangha paid more attention to the material interests and the cultural and psychological needs of politically under-organised middle and lower/middle class groups (peasants, non-Jewish artisans and shopkeepers) and modern middle-class professionals and students. Moreover, the Christian Socialists were concerned not only with the material interests of their clients. They also wanted to cleanse elite and popular culture of liberal, socialist, foreign and Jewish influences. Thus, early on, political antisemitism in Hungary was linked to the fate of social and immigration reforms, cultural revival, "racial rejuvenation," and the vison of a state and society in which Jewish Hungarians would be stigmatised and excluded from vital aspects of national life.[24]

The link between nationalism and demographic policy (in the resettlement of Magyar farmers to the disputed border regions) had already been forged before 1914. The war revolutionised eugenics and gave its proponents more publicity and power. The establishment in 1917 of two new institutions, the Hungarian Society for Racial Hygiene and Population Policy and the National Welfare Office for Disabled Servicemen, testified to the growing interest of the political elites and the medical professions in eugenics. The new institutions played a key role in the diffusion of eugenic ideas. The eugenicists fused scientism with radical politics. "Race-breeding" with antisemitism and the fight against purported degeneration with the struggle to restore family life and improve the health of the population.[25]

The war undermined the liberal foundation of the economy and the social and political order.[26] Predictably, the position of the ethnic and religious minorities in

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23   Romsics, *Összeomlás és útkeresés*, 119–42.

24   Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, 295–301; Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*; Szabó, "A kontinentális Európa konzervatív ideológiájának új vonásai a századfordulón."

25   Turda, "The Biology of War."

26   Bihari, *Lövészárkok a hátországban*.

Hungarian society also deteriorated significantly during the war, as the minority leaders felt compelled to defend their communities against accusations of disloyalty and lukewarm support for the war. The minorities also resented that the Budapest governments failed to make concessions to their demands, concessions that might have averted the final collapse and the painful dismemberment of the country. The invasion of the country by the armies of the neighbouring states and the annexation of the disputed regions at the end of 1918 and early 1919 put an end to this debate. Hungary's loss of its historical territories became a source of national humiliation and innumerable individual tragedies. The fusion of revisionism and racism was not inevitable, but in the historical circumstances and political climate (and in the context of earlier intellectual and cultural developments), it hardly came as a surprise.

The counterrevolution

Modernisation opened new possibilities for social and political developments. The first path promoted liberalisation and democratisation. It favoured spontaneity in human relations, increased social mobility, the removal or at least the lowering of cultural and religious barriers, the expansion of individual rights, and more respect for ethnic and religious minorities. The second path led in a different direction. It reinforced rather than weakened the existing social and ethnic hierarchies and even created new ones. It did not strive to conceal such differences but rather made them more visible through laws, regulations, ideological indoctrination, customs, rituals of violence, and social pressure. In these societies, race and ethnicity came to replace class as the chief principle of differentiation, which divided society into antagonistic groups and largely determined one's opportunities and place in society.

In the survey of the pre-1919 period, I have identified several components of the future racial state. These features included demographic engineering (via forced settlements, strict immigration laws, ethnic cleansing, and genocide), social engineering (via laws, formal and informal discrimination on the job market, and social reforms at the expense of ethnic minorities, all aimed at creating a society in which social and ethnic hierarchies overlapped), biological engineering and the fusion of science/racism and nationalism (via medical surveillance, health reforms, breeding projects, sterilisation, and euthanasia), ideological indoctrination and propaganda, and, finally, political mobilisation and paramilitarism (via the creation of citizens' militias). The task of the paramilitary groups was to enforce racial laws and customs, censor behaviour, and punish deviation and deviants, or in other words, to keep the ethnic and racial minorities in line through violence.

Hungary was very far away from this state in 1919 or even in 1944, but it took important steps in this direction during the counterrevolution. The period of the White Terror served as a hothouse for political experimentation. The right-wing paramilitary groups and the fascist and proto-fascist parties, patriotic associations, and pressure groups were the most important agents of change.[27] These organisations did not simply want to restore the pre-1914 social and political system. They also sought to create a more egalitarian society.[28] The level of violence against Jews and political opponents was also new, as was the brutality and complexity of the assaults, which ranged from verbal attacks, muggings, and public humiliation to the confiscation of private goods, pogroms, armed robberies, kidnapping, extortion, torture, murder, and rape. The paramilitary groups bore responsibility for the expulsion of tens of thousands of Jews from their homes and the emigration of even more. The fate of Hungarian Jews mirrored the plight of the more than 300,000 ethnic Hungarians who had been forced to flee their homes in the border regions that had recently been annexed by the neighbouring states.[29] The White Terror taught Hungarian society that Jewish property was up for grabs and that Jews, under the right circumstances, could be robbed and killed with impunity. The expulsion of local Jews and the plundering of their property by the members of the paramilitary groups, the gendarmes, municipal employees, and even mere neighbours and acquaintances helped establish a pattern of behaviour that would be repeated countless times during both the deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1944 and the expulsion of ethnic Germans after 1945.[30]

The counterrevolution also created a second precedent. The Hungarian government and public opinion had been concerned about the influx of Jewish refugees from the provinces of the Dual Monarchy since the start of the war. While every government (including the Soviet Republic) had considered the repatriation of Jews from the east (whom the tabloid press had accused of all sorts of petty crimes) a priority, the actual arrest and deportation of these "illegal aliens" only began during the counterrevolution. Although there was no evidence that the refugees had played any role in the Soviet Republic, rumours to that effect and general paranoia solidified the alleged link between Jews and Soviet-Russia into received wisdom. Between 1919 and 1922, the militias and the police detained thousands of "illegal aliens." Those who could not prove that they resided in the country legally were put in internment

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27   Kántás, *Double Cross Blood Union.* For an excellent survey of social and economic problems, see Bódy, ed., *Háborúból békébe.*

28   Egry, "Armed Peasants, Violent Intellectuals and Political Guards."

29   Mócsy, *Radicalization and Counterrevolution.*

30   Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár,* 27–41; Karsai, *Holokauszt,* 236; Gerlach and Aly, *Az utolsó fejezet,* 131–277, cited in Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár,* 229.

camps, where they awaited deportation. The guards treated the detainees in the camps poorly. They raped women, tortured male prisoners, stole the inmates' food rations, and took their shoes and clothing. The arrest and deportation of "illegal aliens" did not end with the onset of consolidation in April 1921 but continued until the closure of the last internment camp in Zalaegerszeg in 1924. Like the expulsion of Jews by the local militias, the state-sanctioned deportation of Jewish immigrants set the precedent for administrators, politicians, enforcers, and the antisemitic public at large. The link is especially obvious regarding the behaviour of the gendarmes. The collection and deportation of unregistered Jews in the early 1920s foreshadowed the arrest and deportation of more than 20,000 "illegal aliens" in July and August 1941. Then, just like during the counterrevolution, Hungarian gendarmes who had robbed, tortured, and even killed hundreds of deportees on route handed, upon arrival at the border, the hapless people over to German SS units, who, with their Ukrainian henchmen, murdered more than 16,000 Hungarian Jews in Kamenez-Podolsk.[31] The White Terror and the deportation of Jews during the counterrevolution provided the blueprint and the excuse for the concentration of Jews into temporary camps before their deportation to Nazi Germany or the death camps in occupied Poland. Just like in 1919, in April and May of 1944, Hungarian administrators and military leaders used the well-worn argument that Jews were unreliable crypto-communists and traitors as a justification for deporting them first from the regions close to the frontline and later from the town and villages in the country's interior.

The perpetrators of anti-Jewish violence believed that they had done nothing wrong. The robbers thought that the acts that they had committed were a matter of justice and self-defence. Since Jews had gained their property through trickery and theft, the perpetrators had only taken back what had originally belonged to them (either as individuals or members of the race and the nation). The perpetrators of these acts of violence were convinced that the people they had victimised, whether Jews, democrats, socialists, communists, free-masons, spies, traitors, or alleged foreign agents, deserved their fate. In dozens of cases, the paramilitary groups created a spectacle before the executions. They tried the arrested Jews in kangaroo courts to establish their guilt or innocence. The ritualised process, called "the people's judgment" *(népítélet)*, bore an unmistakable resemblance to lynchings in the United States. The main difference between the two processes was that in the United States, the accused were normally charged with sexual transgressions. In Hungary, the detainees were believed to have committed political crimes (supported

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31   In July and August of 1941, the Hungarian authorities deported more than 20,000 "illegal aliens." Komoróczy, *A zsidók története Magyarországon II*, 623–26. On the connection between this early deportation and the genocide in 1944, see Eisen, *A magyar holocaust főpróbája*, 252–84.

communism, spread rumours, insulted the authorities, etc.). The punishments, which were inflicted in the wake of the mock trials, were meant to restore moral balance, provide justice to the injured party (the dominant group), teach the minority a lesson about proper behaviour and its place in society, and reinforce old and build new social and racial hierarchies. In other words, these punishments served to strengthen the foundations of the future racial state.

The counterrevolution also gave rise to the first laws and regulations that served as the cornerstones of the Hungarian racial state. Militia violence was about the social conflict between the Jewish and the non-Jewish members of the middle class, a fight over well-paying and high-status jobs, social prestige, and self-respect. However, the same people who had joined the militias and bore responsibility for anti-Jewish violence in 1919 also put pressure on their parliamentary representatives to pass legislation to turn temporary inequality and discrimination into law. The members of student militias not only terrorised their Jewish classmates, they also made clever use of their connections to public intellectuals, religious leaders, and influential politicians to enact the infamous *numerus clausus* law of September 1920. The alleged purpose of the new law was to remove temporary bottlenecks, produced by the mass influx of refugee and female students after 1918, in the process of university registration. The barely denied and more important purpose of the new law, however, was to remove Jews, both as fellow students and future colleagues, from the competition for well-paying and high-status jobs.[32]

Yet it was not only the students who seized the chance to improve their job prospects through violence and legalised discrimination. Local administrators fired thousands of civil servants on the grounds that they had served the democratic governments or the communist regime. In many cases, politics was only a cover for ethnic discrimination. As a result of this "cleansing" campaign, the Jewish presence in the public sector, while never high, had been reduced to a minimum by 1921.[33] In the parliament, the representative of the influential fascist organisations, the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete or ÉME), demanded that the *numerus clausus* be extended to the majority of the professions and trades, even those which required no academic qualifications. While no law was passed, in many places municipal and country administrators refused to renew (or issue new) licences to movie operators, tavern keepers, peddlers, and other types of petty merchants and small entrepreneurs. These measures destroyed the livelihoods of thousands of middle-class Jews. More importantly, these rather ad hoc measures created a precedent for the first two anti-Jewish laws, passed in the 1930s and early

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32   Karady, "The restructuring of the academic marketplace;" Szegváry, *Numerus clausus;* Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva.*

33   Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege.*

1940s, which seriously reduced the share of Jews in the professions. Equally ominous was the passing of the Land Reform Act in 1920. The lawmakers' professed goal was to satisfy the peasants' hunger for land at the expense of war profiteers and speculators, but these were mere codewords, which, in the political vocabulary of the day, stood for Jews. The law marked a new and more intense phase in the "ethnicisation of social policy" in the interwar period and the building of a new political system, the racial state.[34] This law, like the *numerus clausus* legislation of 1920, served both as a precedent and a model for later legislations. It presaged the Third Anti-Jewish Law of 1942, which forbade Jews from owning farmland and engaging in agricultural production. The confiscation of land from alleged speculators and wartime profiteers, which the public equated with Jews, did alleviate misery among and gave hope to millions of desperately poor peasants. At the same time, it increased greed and channelled hatred towards the Jewish rural populations, and this hatred broke out in orgies of violence in the forms of robberies and the pillaging of the property that the deported Jews and the expelled ethnic Germans left behind in 1944 and after the war.

Justice delayed, justice denied

These laws represented a break with the past (in particular with the idea of equality before the law) and the start of a new era: the dawn of the *Rassenstaat*. Most historians believe that political consolidation, which began in earnest with the appointment of Count István Bethlen as Prime Minister in the spring of 1921, led to the almost full restoration of the social, political, and legal system of the pre-1914 period. This article argues otherwise. It contends that the old system may have been, in the main, restored by 1922. However, Hungarian history took a different turn in 1919. Political violence (the White Terror) not only gave birth to new laws and regulations, which then cast a long shadow on subsequent events. It also changed political culture, especially the attitude of civil servants towards the ethnic minorities. The Jewish victims of the White Terror and their family members, who demanded justice and compensation for their suffering *after* the onset of political consolidation in the spring of 1921, sensed these changes immediately. Had the *Rechtsstaat* been fully restored, their just demands for justice would have been fulfilled. The perpetrators would have been punished and the victims would have been morally and financially compensated.

Since the White Terror led to more physical attacks and caused more suffering among Hungarian Jews than all the anti-Jewish riots in the nineteenth century, serving justice after the onset of social and political consolidation was not a trivial

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34   Ungváry, "A szociálpolitika etnicizálása."

matter, but a political act of the highest importance. It tested the strength of the *Rechtsstaat* and the will of its representatives to obey the law and uphold the liberal principles upon which the Hungarian state after 1868 had been based. It also gave evidence (or would have given evidence) of the fitness of the justice system and the quality and integrity of civilian and military prosecutors and judges. Since the elite officers' companies were part of Admiral Horthy's National Army, their members were under the authority of the army. Their cases had to be tried in military rather than civilian, courts. Very few of the investigations started by the army reached the trial stage, however. Minor offenses, such as verbal attacks and physical assaults resulting in minor injuries, were normally ignored. In such cases, Major General Sándor Kontz, the Commander-in-Chief of the Gendarmerie, and Major Dr. Rezső Schmitz, the Gendarme Prosecutor, simply forwarded the letters of complaint to the commanders of the elite units with the request that the culprit be investigated and disciplined.[35] If the victim of abuse was a reserve officer, the Gendarme Prosecutor simply advised him to challenge the wrongdoer to a duel.[36]

For fear of retaliation, most of the victims of minor assaults tried to obtain justice by first contacting the source of their suffering, the army. However, in more serious cases, when their loved ones had been detained and had disappeared without a trace for days or weeks, for example, the victims' relatives normally felt compelled to ask for legal help. The better-off among them, and their attorneys, often conducted their own investigations. If they were able to locate the detainees, only then did they request that the Minister of Defence or Regent Horthy get involved and order the release of their loved ones. After liberation, the victims may have demanded justice and compensation. In one such rare case, Gendarme Prosecutor Dr. Schmitz claimed that his detectives had been unable to identify the officers who initiated the arrest. To add insult to injury, he also stated that the detectives had found no evidence to show that the victims had been tortured or otherwise abused

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35   The night of 15 January 1921, Lieutenant Dénes Bibó cursed at and then manhandled a civilian, Gyula Vásárhelyi, in Budapest. The incident was witnessed by several bystanders. The prosecutor of the Gendarmerie notified the radical detachment leader Lieutenant Colonel Baron Pál Prónay and asked him to punish his officer. As punishment, Prónay revoked Bibó's furlough for a few days. See HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 122. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, lieutenant colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie. Budapest, 14 May 1921.

36   In the Vigadó-building in Budapest, Lieutenant István Balassa, an officer of the Prónay Battalion, slapped Zoltán Koncze, an economist *(közgazdász)* or, more likely, a business major at the university, in the face. The victim claimed to be a reserve officer. The prosecutor of the Gendarmerie moved that the case be settled in a military honour court. HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 122. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie. Budapest, 10 June 1921.

in captivity.[37] The Gendarme Prosecutor normally sided with the accused men in uniform and accepted their stories at face value. Once, Dr. Schmitz even claimed that Prónay's men had saved the life of their victim, named Dezső Krausz, by placing him under arrest. Had they not detained him, the Gendarme Prosecutor told the victim's relatives, the crowd, which allegedly had been infuriated by Krausz' thoughtless remarks about the benevolent aspects of communist rule, would have torn him to pieces. Instead of denouncing the officers, Krausz should have thanked Prónay's men for having saved his life.[38]

In these cases, the Gendarme Prosecutor violated the principle of *in dubio pro reo* (in case of doubt, the plaintiff is always right), which had served as the basis of justice since Roman times. This violation was partially the result of solidarity with fellow officers. Even more importantly, however, the oversight had to do with the ethnic and religious background of the plaintiff. The Gendarme Prosecutor found the accusations of corruption made by Jewish civilians especially unnerving. When the attorney of a kidnapped Jewish estate owner claimed that his client had been tortured in captivity and that the officers had also tried to extort money from his family members, the Gendarme Prosecutor could barely control his anger. In a short letter written in abrupt language, he notified the attorney that he had closed the file because his detectives had not been able to locate the accused, who, in any case, had long since been discharged from the army.[39]

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37   See the case of Tibor Mann, who had been arrested by the officers of the Prónay Battalion in May 1920. He was released from captivity on the order by the Minister of Defence. The investigation into his case lasted for two years and produced no results. See HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 17 March 1922.

38   In October 1921, Aranka Klein asked the authorities to identity and punish the officers who had detained and tortured her friend, Dezső Krausz, at the Hotel Britannia. The members of the Prónay Battalion denied that they had beaten Krausz; telling the investigator that the physical abuse Krausz had suffered must have been work of the "enraged crowd." The prosecutor of the Gendarmerie closed the file citing insufficient evidence. See HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 122. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 5 October 1921.

39   György Löwy, an estate manager and resident in Siófok, was arrested by four soldiers on 17 August 1919. They took him to the well-known Hullám [Wave] Hotel. There, they forced him to hand over all his valuables and savings. He was then taken to Újpuszta, an isolated farmstead in the outskirts of the town, where he was tortured repeatedly and forced to do menial labor. The soldiers also robbed his house and the estate that he had managed. HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 1 June 1922.

The accusation of theft angered military officials not only because this crime was normally associated with lower-class civilians. It was also embarrassing because the sanctity of private property remained the foundation of the social and political system. Because of foreign and domestic pressure, state officials could not claim immunity for the officers simply because the victims had been Jews. They declared, instead, that Jews had become second-class citizens, who no longer had any claim on the Hungarian state. Their main line of defence thus remained that confiscations and other types of improprieties had taken place in the early phase of the counterrevolution, when the country had been in a state of civil war. Second, they argued that the officers' detachments had been permitted by the Ministry of Defence to collect weapons and uniforms and to requisition motor vehicles, carts, horses, fodder, and other vital supplies. Still, many of the confiscated goods (such as cash, watches, jewellery, clothing, hunting weapons, etc.) did not fall into these categories, and this fact humiliated the prosecutor and his underlings, who remained determined to defend the honour of their uniforms. Prónay's superior and the Supreme Commander of the Gendarmerie, Major General Kontz, also reacted with anger and shame to the accusation made by Jewish victims that the officers of the National Army had committed common crimes. Had his men indeed taken anything, the Supreme Commander countered, they would have surely given the injured party a receipt. The Supreme Commander of the Hungarian Gendarmerie expressed regret over the inconvenience and the loss of property, but he refused to apologise for his men's behaviour or promise compensation.[40]

Not only did the miliary judges fail to observe the principle of *in dubio pro reo*: the authorities also used every chance to question the credibility and integrity of the Jewish plaintiffs. Playing on a well-known antisemitic stereotype, the Gendarme Prosecutor claimed that the injured party had exaggerated his losses or had been mistaken or had deliberately lied about the identity of the attackers. To protect the reputation of the army, he alleged that no army or gendarme units had stayed in the community at the time of the incident and that the attackers most likely had been local peasants.[41] Accepting rumours at face value, Dr. Schmitz argued that the thieves had not been soldiers but civilian criminals and communists dressed in

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40   In Sörnye, a small village in the outskirt Kaposvár, Prónay's men took seven horses, one wagon, and various horse accoutrements from the estate of two Jewish entrepreneurs, Samu and Lipót Ringle in August 1919. HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 122. Ruling by General Kontz, inspector general of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie, no. 139/21. Budapest, 7 April 1921.

41   In late 1920, a squad of the Prónay Battalion plundered the farm of a Jewish entrepreneur, Miksa Szekulecz in Kunszentmiklós. The investigation, which lasted for almost two years, produced no results, or at least no one was found guilty, despite the significant damage, of any impropriety. See HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 2 June 1922.

stolen army uniforms. The goal of these unscrupulous provocateurs allegedly was to damage the reputation of the Prónay Battalion and the National Army.[42]

The *Rechtsstaat* was supposed to administer justice automatically and without consideration of the ethnic or religious background of its citizens. However, in the first half of the 1920s and after the onset of political consolidation, the Gendarme Prosecutor still failed to hide his prejudices towards and dislike of Jews. In his reports and verdicts, he described the injured party as a "Jew" both to deprive the injured party of the readers' sympathy and to trivialise the crime. Sometimes, as an even cruder form of dehumanisation, the Gendarme Prosecutor did not even name the victims.[43] The Gendarme Prosecutor's main task seems to have been to defend the perpetrators and excuse their crimes. In his readings of the events, Prónay and his men had merely followed orders. The situation in 1919 had been volatile, and the soldiers had had to show strength in the face of the country's enemies. The murders, in any case, had been the work of angry peasants, not officers. The Gendarme Prosecutor admitted that occasionally the officers of the Prónay Detachment and other paramilitary groups, who had lost family members to the Red Terror, may have taken the law into their own hands. However, such rare transgressions did not diminish the services they had performed for the nation. Since Regent Horthy, with his general amnesty order of November 1921, had already pardoned such mistakes, Dr. Schmitz informed the victims' family members that he had no option but to end the investigation and close the file.[44]

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42 A detachment, allegedly from the Prónay Battalion, occupied the municipal building in Szilasbalhás and took 3,000 crowns from its coffers on 15 August 1919. Dr. Schmitz argued that no squad from the gendarme reserve battalion had been present in the community at the time of the robbery. He suspected that unscrupulous civilians in stolen army uniform carried out the robbery. See HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 3 May 1922.

43 The language of the prosecutor's summary of the events speak volumes about his attitude towards the victims of paramilitary violence. The Prónay Detachment was said to have killed "several Jews" in the village of Lepsény in the fall of 1919. In Siófok, the same unit hanged thirty-two people, "all Jews." In the village of Tamási, the militia handed over "a number of Jews" to the peasants who had lost family members to the Red Terror. The peasants allegedly hacked "the Jews" to pieces with their hoes and spades first. Then, they plucked their eyes out. Finally, they hanged them all in "in revenge for the violent deaths of their loves ones." In the village of Simontornya, the Prónay Detachment executed the university student and the scion of a wealthy family, László Andor (born Lőwy). Later, municipal employees denied that in the town of Siófok the militias had killed thirty-two "Jews." They claimed that "every Jew in the town has been accounted for." HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 21 February 1922.

44 HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123.

Historian Tibor Zinner argues that in the summer of 1921 the military and civilian authorities dragged their feet because they expected that Regent Horthy would soon issue a general amnesty which would make investigation into the crimes committed during the counterrevolution unnecessary.[45] They turned out to be right. Indeed, the amnesty order of November 1921 greatly simplified the work of military and civilian judges. The amnesty decree in practice meant that the execution of political prisoners fell into the category of pardoned offences, and that the authorities thus were obliged to prosecute only common crimes, such as kidnaping, extortion, theft, and armed robbery. Since the borders between murder and robbery (between crimes committed out of "an overflowing love for the homeland" and patriotism on the one hand and misdeeds motivated by greed on the other) remained fluid, it was up to the Gendarme Prosecutor to decide which crimes should be investigated in depth and who should be prosecuted.[46] The letters sent to the victims' family members show that he believed that the amnesty order covered the overwhelming majority of the offenses committed by the elite paramilitary groups. They also show that providing justice for Jews was not a priority for the Gendarme Prosecutor.[47]

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45   Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 103.

46   On 16 August 1919, the members of the Prónay Detachment executed Károly István Faragó and three other detainees in Újpuszta on the outskirts of Siófok. His wife learned about the place of the execution from one of Prónay's men. An exhumation was ordered, and the authorities indeed found the remains. Lieutenant Orosz admitted that he had met Mrs. Faragó, but he denied he had told her about the unmarked grave. The case was closed in 1920. In 1922, Mrs. Faragó insisted that the Gendarme Prosecutor restart the investigation and indict the suspects. Dr. Schmitz refused the request, once again taking the side of the accused and violating the principle of *in dubio pro reo*. He also told the widow that the executions of political prisoners fell into the category of "excessive measures," which was covered by Regent Horthy's amnesty order. HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 7 April 1922.

47   In early May 1920, a squad of the Prónay Battalion, led by Lieutenant Endre Molnár, tortured and murdered five former functionaries of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and five apolitical Jews. They robbed the victims of all their possessions before the execution. The militia buried the remains in an unmarked grave in the garden of the Schwarz family residence in the village of Fegyvernek. The case dragged on for two years. In 1922, the prosecutor of the Gendarmerie informed the victims' family members that that he had found no evidence proving that it had been Molnár and his men who had robbed and killed the ten men. More likely, he argued, the perpetrators had been the local peasants (who had suffered under the communist regime). The execution, too, was covered by Regent Horthy's amnesty order. HL, Horthy kori csapatanyag, 1589. Szegedi vadászzászlóalj (Prónay), Kt. 2439-2947, Box 123. Ruling by Dr. Rezső Schmitz, military court prosecutor, colonel, prosecutor for the inspector general of the Hungarian Royal Gendarmerie, 16 May 1922.

The best-known example of military (mis)justice involved the prosecution of the kidnapping, torture, and brutal execution of two socialist journalists, Béla Somogyi, the editor-in-chief of the social daily, *Népszava* (People's Voice), and his young colleague, Béla Bacsó, in February 1920. The fact that both victims were of Jewish descent was not irrelevant. The perpetrators did not want to distinguish between Socialists and Jews. The investigators and the wider public also viewed the incident, and formed an opinion of the parties, through the prism of political antisemitism. The case offers a typical example of the brutality of the militia men and the way in which they murdered their victims and dispensed with the remains. What was unique about the double murder was the extent to which many influential politicians and institutions, from Admiral Miklós Horthy to his Army High Command *(fővezérség)*, the Army Prosecutor, the Ministry of Defence, General Béla Dány, the Supreme Commander of the Military District in Budapest, the chief veterans' organisation, the Hungarian National Defence Association (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület* or MOVE), became implicated either in the killings or in the cover-up. Even though the investigators found the damaged car which the kidnappers had used to transport the victims from downtown to a distant shore of the Danube River (where they had first tortured and then murdered their victims) and even though they were almost immediately able to identify the assassins as the members of the elite Ostenburg Battalion, the long investigation and prosecution did not lead to any conviction on the charge of murder. On 15 June 1920, five months after the event, the military court sentenced the two main defendants on a lesser charge (lending their unit's car, which was state property, to strangers) and with a mild punishment (thirty days' garrison duty). The victims' relatives and the opponents of the regime tried to get the investigation reopened in the mid-1920s. The authorities, however, were quick to suppress any new revelations about the double assassination case and severely punished the new whistle-blower, Ödön Beniczky (who had served as Minister of the Interior at the time of the murders).[48]

Local administrators were ambivalent about the prosecution of political and hate crimes. In the communities where the militias had taken control of the local government, they did everything to sabotage the investigations. Still, the letters of denunciation continued to pour in. Forced to act, the local investigators, with the assistance of detectives from the capital, were able to locate a mass grave (containing the remains of 190 people) in the forests of Orgovány in early December 1919. To escape prosecution in the civilian courts, Iván Héjjas and his company, the elite Prónay Battalion, placed themselves under military jurisdiction. On 1 February 1920, István Bárczy, Minister of Justice, sent a confidential memorandum to Admiral Horthy asking to take a strong stance against the militias. However, the Supreme

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48   Gergely and Schönwald, *A Somogyi–Bacsó gyilkosság*, 60–85.

Commander of the National Army dragged his feet. Instead of encouraging the prosecutors to finish their jobs, on 22 March 1920, Horthy invited all the parties—the Minister of Justice, the chief administrator *(főispán)* of Pest Country, the Crown Attorney of Pest County, and the main suspect, Iván Héjjas—to a meeting in the town of Kecskemét to work out a compromise. The meeting ended with the decision to put an end to the investigation into the militia's misdoings in the region. The decision did not silence the victims' family members, professional organisations, or the more liberal segments of the middle class, however, The Budapest Chamber of Attorneys *(Budapest ügyvédi kamara)*, the oldest and most important professional organisation of attorneys, continued to demand that the attacks on Hungarian Jews be stopped and that those responsible for the armed robberies and murders be brought to trial and punished. After the so-called Club Café incident (during which the militias killed an influential Jewish attorney) in the summer of 1920, the Bar sent a memorandum to both the government and parliament warning about the corrupting influence of injustice: that by failing to find and punish the guilty, all of Hungarian society would become an accomplice to robbery and murder. The professional organisation admonished the political class that "there can be only one kind of terror in the land: the terror of the law."[49]

Only in the summer of 1921, after the appointment of Count István Bethlen as Prime Minister in April 1921 and as a reaction to the public outrage over the murder of a Jewish merchant, Adolf Lederer, by the Héjjas militia, did the government finally decide to take a strong stance. Bethlen entrusted Albert Váry, who, as the Chief Prosecutor of Budapest had gained a reputation as an enemy of the paramilitary groups in 1920, to find the killer and investigate the extralegal executions and armed robberies committed in Central Hungary in 1919 and 1920. Váry, indeed, had made several arrests and had even prepared a long list of suspected assassins and robbers by the end of August. However, he could not proceed with the prosecution, because the suspects (the members of the Héjjas Detachment) had fled the region to join the militia uprising in Western Hungary. After the end of the uprising, in November 1921, Regent Horthy issued his famous order, which made it exceedingly difficult for Váry and his committee to make further progress. In February 1922, Váry's assignment ended. Claiming that the majority of the suspects had been military personnel, Váry had to send over the files to the Ministry of Defence and the Gendarme Prosecutor for further deliberations.[50]

Horthy's amnesty order infuriated the legal experts. The Budapest Chamber of Attorneys worried about Hungary's reputation abroad and the amnesty order's

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49   *A Nap*, 31 July 1920; "Az Ügyvédi Kamara közállapotainkról" [The Chamber of Barristers on the State of our Public Affairs]. *Világ*, 19 May 1922.

50   BFL Fond VII5e, Héjjas és társai [Héjjas and Associates] 20630/49, Vádirat [Indictment]. 13672/5, 1946. f. 935–36.

long-term impact on law and order at home. Democrats and liberals in the political class, such as Győző Drozdy, a member of the National Smallholders and Agrarian Workers Party, also voiced their frustration over Horthy's decree. In his parliamentary speech in early 1922, Drozdy described Horthy's decree as "an immoral compromise and [a manifestation of] irresponsible use of power. It has exposed the bankruptcy of the state and the abdication of its responsibilities. For the first time in world history, robbers and murderers have been pardoned only a few weeks after they committed their hideous crimes."[51]

Horthy's amnesty order made the prosecution of political and hate crimes exceedingly difficult after 1922. However, it did not completely end the process. Although the exact number is still to be established, in my estimate, about 150 people appeared in civilian and military courts in connection with the White Terror. The legal system was full of biases, not only towards the Jewish and socialist victims, but also towards the perpetrators. With a few exceptions, those who ended up before the judges were of lower-class background. Though aristocrats were overrepresented in the most violent paramilitary unit (the officers' company under Prónay), the commander Baron Pál Prónay was the only aristocrat formally charged in military court (on the lesser charge of extortion), in the summer of 1921. Baron Jenő Babarczy, who ran an extortion racket from Hotel Britannia in Budapest, too, spent a few months in prison after the government's crackdown on the civic militias in early November 1920. Thanks to his connections, however, Babarczy was released from captivity in early 1921, and his case was thrown out of court.

Though workers made up only a small percentage of the right-wing militias, the state succeeded in finding and punishing them as perpetrators. Four of the five people who were charged for the murder of police officer József Soltra in November 1920 came from working-class backgrounds. One of them, Imre Mészáros, was sentenced to death and was executed on 18 December 1920. His three working-class accomplices received long prison sentences. The only middle-class person among the attackers, a university student by the name of Attila Rumbold, who was also charged with having tortured and extorted money from Jews, was sentenced to death. However, unlike Mészáros, he was not executed. His sentence was subsequently reduced to fifteen years in a penitentiary. Rumbold was released from prison because of Regent Horthy's amnesty order at the end of 1921.[52]

The most important event concerning the prosecution of crimes committed during the White Terror was the trial of Iván Héjjas's men in a miliary court in Kecskemét in July 1922. As one might expect, every defendant was a peasant.

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51   *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, 15 December 1922, 15.

52   Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 103.

The leader of the unit, Héjjas himself, did not appear on the list of the accused. In the formal indictment, the Gendarme Prosecutor Colonel Dr. Rezső Schmitz described the defendants as common criminals. The purpose of the trial in his opinion was to show "the whole world that the rule of law exists in this country and that even though that monstrosity, known as the [Treaty of] Trianon, mutilated our country and turned us into beggars by depriving us of everything, it could not take from us the faith in justice—the most important of all moral possessions, and the guarantor of our future." To reach this elevated goal, the Gendarme Prosecutor asked the President of the Court to punish the defendants to the full extent of the law (by condemning them to death). The defence attorneys, on the other hand, praised their clients as patriots and soldiers who had only followed the orders of their superiors. They also tried to exploit the antisemitic prejudices of the judges and the audience by describing the two revolutions and the Red Terror as the work of Jews. Making a false comparison, one of the defence attorneys claimed that the atrocities committed by Héjjas's men in Kecskemét and Orgovány paled in comparison to the crimes committed by the communists.[53] In his verdict, the President of the Military Court Major Dr. László Győrffy repeated in a less blatant form the antisemitic arguments of the defence attorney. In the end, the court found the defendants guilty only of the lesser charges of theft or of having been an accessory to robbery.[54]

In November 1923, a second six-member squad of the Héjjas Detachment, led by Mihály Francia Kiss, was put on trial in Kecskemét for the kidnapping, torture, and brutal murder of five Jews, including the high-school student Jenő Wertheimer, in November 1919. The same military judge acquitted them of every charge, including armed robbery.[55] A few months earlier, Francia Kiss had faced trial for the murder of a Jewish merchant and commercial farmer, Vilmos Kalmár, in Pusztamérges (Csongrád Province) in late 1919. The corpse of the hapless merchant had been

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53   "Hétfőn lesz ítélet az orgoványi perben" [Ruling Expected on Monday in the Orgovány Trial]. *Szózat*, 8 July 1922, 5–6.

54   "A bíróság kihirdette Zbona János és társai ügyében az ítéletet" [The Court Announced Its Ruling in the Trial of János Zbona and Associates]. *Szózat*, 11 July 1922, 11; "Orgovány: Kihirdették az ítéletet." *Világ*, 11 July 1922, 7. Taking the extenuating circumstances, such as the defendants past lives and their service during the war, into consideration, the presiding judge Dr. Győrffy sentenced János Zbona to seven years, Mihály Danics to six years, István Juhász to five years, and Gyula Cs. Tóth to two years in prison for armed robbery. He stripped Zbona and Danics of their ranks and expelled them from the gendarmerie. The judge found Ambrus Tóth and Imre Tóth guilty of theft and accessory to armed robbery, sentencing them each to three years in prison. Every month, the defendants had to spend one day on bread and water alone and sleep on a hardwood bunk bed with no mattress and blanket. PIL, Fond 658, Unit 7, f. 13–14.

55   "Dr. Schmitz, koronaügyész a Héjjas-különítmény tagjainak esetében, 1923. november 27" [Dr. Schmitz, Prosecutor of the Crown in the Case againt the Members of the Héjjas Detachment, 27 November 1923], Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez* I, 271–76.

found in the forest of Orgovány in December 1919, along with the badly mutilated remains of thirty-seven other victims of paramilitary violence. The prominent militia man's arrogant behaviour, his callousness, and his open disregard for the rule of law scandalised even neutral observers in the courtroom. To the judge's question of why he made the arrest, even though the village authorities and his neighbours vouched for Kalmár's character, Francia Kiss responded that "he had to be arrested because he was both a dirty Jew and a communist." The militia leader lost patience with the process, and without the military judge's permission, he simply stood up in the middle of the process and stormed out of the building. As he was leaving, people in the audience noticed that Kiss had been carrying a gun. The military judge was kind enough to warn the victims' family members to leave the town immediately. After the trial, which predictably ended with the acquittal of the defendant on all charges, the military judge called a coach taxi (*fiáker*) to take the victims' family members to the local railway station. On the train, the conductor hid them in the separate compartment on the train. To confuse their pursuers, the witnesses got off the train in Kiskunfélegyháza and followed an alternative route to the capital. Kalmár's case was not tried again in the interwar period.[56]

The proceedings launched against Lieutenant Károly Kmetty, one of Prónay's officers, was one of the last trials of ex-militia men to attract great public attention. Accused of kidnapping, extortion, and murder, Kmetty had escaped Hungary before the conclusion of his trial in 1924. He applied for asylum in the centre of fascism in Milan. He was extradited to Hungary, however, and the authorities prosecuted his case. In the end, the court found him guilty of kidnapping and extortion, and the judge sentenced him to two and half years in a penitentiary. Much as had had happened with other people convicted of similar crimes, Kmetty spent only a few months in jail and was released from prison early, either at the end of the year or in early 1925.[57] Angered by the publicity surrounding his trial, Kmetty put the blame for his humiliation on the system and the "Jewish newspapers." In 1927, he accused the conservative liberal journalist Jenő Rákosi of libel and demanded financial compensation and an apology. He failed to get the latter, and Rákosi, backed by the victims' family members, raised the stakes by countersuing and raising new charges against the dreaded militia man.[58]

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56   BFL Fond XXV. 4.a. 1798/57 FB Bttö, Fr. Kiss Mihály. Statement by Mrs. Jenő Rácz, of Szeged. Protocol. Rácz Jenőné szegedi lakos bejelentése. 22 March 1957. f. 91–92.

57   He was acquitted in 1925, as a consequence of Regent Horthy's amnesty decree, on the more serious charge of murder.

58   "Fényképek Kmetty akasztásairól a bíróság előtt" [Photographs of Kmetty's Hangings Brought Before the Court]. *Népszava*, 2 October 1927, 9–10.

Kmetty's case was typical. The militia men not only escaped justice but, with a few exceptions, were able to pursue successful careers under the Horthy regime. The White Terror and the miscarriage of justice during the period of consolidation had grave consequences for the parties in the interwar period and beyond. The wave of antisemitic violence, which was by far the strongest before the Holocaust, taught the perpetrators and potential perpetrators two important lessons: first, that under the right circumstances, they could steal Jewish property and take Jewish life, and that neither the state nor the public would stand in their way. Second, that they would not be prosecuted or punished for what they had done. The failure of the authorities to provide justice for the victims both justified and legitimised their offences. The prosecutors' behaviour created a precedent and functioned as a licence to commit the same crime or a similar crime. The two lessons were not lost on the gendarmerie or the army, the two institutions most implicated in the White Terror and bodies in which many ex-militia men found employment after the onset of consolidation. These precedents explain the canny resemblance, in form as well as substance, between the atrocities associated with the White Terror and the actions of Hungarian paramilitary groups, gendarmes, and army units in Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, Yugoslavia in 1941, the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1943, and the Holocaust in 1944. Finally, the White Terror created new patterns of behaviours among and reinforced the ethnic prejudices of the military and civilian judges. It was no coincidence that only in a few cases and only under strong public pressure, such as during the prosecution of the Novi Sad Massacre of 1942, did the courts actually give any justice to the victims of war crimes during the Horthy regime.[59]

The racial state at its zenith

In this essay, I have described the racial state as an envisioned utopia (for some) and a constantly evolving trend rather than an accomplished fact. I have argued that this trend was present in most countries in Europe and in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But it enjoyed the greatest support in imperial states, settlers' colonies, and immigrant countries with large non-White populations and a long tradition of formal and informal discrimination. The best candidates for the racial state before 1914 were the Russian Empire in the East and the United States in the West, followed by the old imperialist states of Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and, as a distant third, by the new imperialist countries (Imperial Germany, Japan, and Italy).

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59   Klimó, *Cold Days.*

However, the Russian Empire did not survive World War I, and its successor, the Soviet Union, rejected (in principle if not practice) both integral nationalism and racism. While centralisation under Stalin favoured the revival of Russian national-ism, Soviet leaders, at least on the level of rhetoric, remained loyal to the founding principles of federalism and multiculturalism. They used, with varying intensity and commitment, affirmative action to preserve cultural diversity and reinforce established nations and even invent new ones.[60] Racism gradually loosened its hold on the cultural and political elite in the United States, as well. While segregation remained a fact of life in the South, in the northern states, and at the level of federal policy, history moved, with occasional setbacks, in the direction of expanding rights and greater equality. The strict immigration laws passed in the final phase of the war and its aftermath accelerated the assimilation of the immigrant masses. The success, both in social and cultural terms, of assimilation, in turn, raised the value of the new immigrants as voters, thus favouring their inclusion in the political process. Simultaneously, the mass migration of African Americans from the South led the emergence of a small but politically assertive African American middle and lower middle class, which increasingly raised its voice against informal discrimination in the North and the continued existence of an apartheid regime in the South. The new alliance of Blacks, Jews, Italians, and Eastern Europeans in the Democratic Party not only the changed the ideological, social, and ethnic profile of the Party in the North, it also brought tangible benefits to and improved the social standing of minority groups under Roosevelt and subsequent Democratic administrations. The KKK and other racist organisations survived and even gained more members, especially in the North, in the interwar period. The anti-immigration laws, too, remained in effect. During World War II, the Roosevelt Adm administration deported more than 120,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast into government camps. In Hawaii, where the Japanese represented the largest ethnic group, they were treated as potential traitors. The government withdrew their fishing licences, thus destroying the livelihoods of countless families. The police searched their homes and subjected about 10,000 Japanese Americans to humiliating interrogations.[61] These setbacks notwithstanding, the general trend after 1932 was to expand rather than restrict the rights of the minorities.

History moved in a different direction in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s. Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess aptly described Nazism as "applied biology." The Third Reich came to approximate best the ideal of a racial state in Europe and the world. Nazi doctors and scientists registered many important alleged breakthroughs in the field of medicine, from preventive care to fighting cancer, syphilis, and heart disease

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60   See Martin, "Affirmative Action Empire."

61   Schmitz, *Enemies Among Us.*

and reversing falling birthrates.[62] Even more important than these developments were the measures taken to remove the so-called "ballast population" and prevent the procreation of people deemed mentally and physically unfit. Under the new laws, an estimated 400,000 Germans who suffered from one of the illnesses defined as hereditary by Nazi scientists were sterilised.[63] In the Third Reich, the role of the political police also changed. In the first two years of Nazi rule, the Gestapo filled the concentration camp with political opponents. After 1935, however, they arrested mainly those who alleged had violated moral codes and transgressed ethnic lines (via elicit sexual relations with "Aryan" women, for example). The main task of the political police in the Third Reich after 1935 was to "cleanse" the German nation of homosexuals, anti-socials, and criminals and remove threats posed to the supposed purity of the race.[64] The mass arrests (and the emerging racial state) enjoyed significant popular support. The understaffed Gestapo offices could respond to only 10 percent of the denunciations.[65] The process of so-called breeding and demographic engineering moved into a higher gear with the euthanasia campaign ignited on the eve of World War II. The medical personnel employed in the program killed about 250,000 disabled patients in Nazi Germany and the recently conquered territories over the course of the next two years. Until 1941, German society failed to react to the euthanasia campaign. The victims' family members normally received thinly disguised letters of condolence sent by the hospitals and health authorities with a mixture of indifference and relief. Their reaction, in turn, encouraged the Nazi authorities to embark on even more daring experiments.[66] Most of the doctors and nurses who had participated in the euthanasia campaign were transferred, after its completion, to Yugoslavia and the Eastern front. There, they put their accumulated experience in poisoning and mass murder at the disposal of the SS, thus making the link between nation and state-building, "breeding," and genocide explicit.

The new Nazi government regarded the solution to the so-called Jewish question as a priority. In the first five years, the Nazis' goal was to segregate, impoverish,

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62   Proctor, *The Nazi War on Cancer.*

63   The Marital Health Law of October 1935 banned unions between the "hereditarily healthy" and persons deemed genetically unfit. In 1936, the Reich Central Office for Combating Homosexuality and Abortion was established to step up efforts to prevent acts that obstructed reproduction. On 14 July 1933, the Nazi state enacted the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which mandated voluntary sterilisation. They included feeblemindedness, schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder, genetic epilepsy, Huntington's chorea (a fatal form of dementia), genetic blindness, genetic deafness, severe physical deformity, and chronic alcoholism. See Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 1–75.

64   Herbert, *Best,* 163–225.

65   Gellately, *Gestapo in German Society.*

66   Aly, *Wie konnte das geschehen,* 347–82.

and socially and culturally marginalise German Jews. The first anti-Jewish laws served to "cleanse" the civil service, army, universities, and professions of Jews and build an ethnically (religiously) homogeneous middle and upper class.[67] Jews in the racial state could do menial jobs or look after, as doctors, dentists, and other professionals, the needs of their Jewish clients only. The Nazi proposal to solve the so-called "jewish question" did not stop with the synchronisation of ethnic and social hierarchies. After 1938, the main goal of the Nazi state and the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) changed from segregation and social marginalisation to deportation and forced emigration. The campaign achieved almost complete success under the leadership of the Jewish expert and later transportation and logistics expert Adolf Eichmann in Germany and the recently annexed Austria. By the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the Third Reich had become virtually *Judenfrei.*

The expulsion of Jews worked against German interests. The need for workers increased drastically during the war, as millions of German men were forced to put on uniforms. Since German women, because of practical political consideration and Nazi ideology, could not take their places in the workplaces and factories, the Third Reich became dependent on foreign workers. Workers from friendly or neutral states (the Netherlands. Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia) were lured into Germany by the promise of higher wages. However, most slave labours were POWS and forced recruits, whom the Nazis simply kidnapped from the streets of the occupied countries of Eastern Europe. Historians estimate that about 15 million people worked as slave labourers during the war in Nazi Germany. These conscripted workers may have made up as much as 20 percent of the German work force at the height of the conflict. [68] It was not only arms manufacturers and the Nazi state that profited from the influx of free labour. Working-class Germans received higher wages and rose in the social hierarchy by becoming foreman, and peasant wives were able to hire Polish POWs to work on their farms for free, and the population at large benefited from forced labour. In addition to the material benefits, the racial state gave wives, children, and disabled men the chance to vent their frustrations over the war and the allied bombing on helpless inmates.[69] Nazi militias, such as the SA, and civic organisations, such as student fraternities, had already played an important role as the leaders of pogroms and the enforcers of Nazi laws before the war. The importance of these civic and political organisations as the guardians of the racial state only

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67   The "Blood Protection Law" (better known as the Nuremberg Laws of 1935) prohibited marriage and sexual relations between Jews and "Aryans." The state severely punished those who violated the law.

68   Panayi, "Exploitation, Criminality, Resistance."

69   Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers.*

increased during the war. The Hitler Youth and, in the final phase of the war, the national militia or *Volkssturm*, which mobilised mainly disabled and elderly men, committed countless atrocities against slave labourers and deserters.[70]

The racial state in Hungary, 1921–1945

The switch from the *Rechtsstaat* to the *Rassenstaat* proved more difficult in authoritarian Hungary than in Germany, which had a longer experience with democracy in the interwar period. The reason for this difficulty was manifold. The sciences were not held in such a high regard in Hungary, and modern professionals, such as doctors and their professional organisations, had less influence on decision-making processes and public opinion. Second, Hungary had nearly become an ethnically homogeneous nation state by 1920. The minorities simply were not present in large numbers. The future of the racial state in Hungary, thus, became dependent on the success of revisionism and imperial expansion. However, the country possessed neither the resources nor the outside support to retake its old possessions or conquer new lands and create a large empire. In addition to the lack of foreign support, the relative backwardness of Hungarian society and the conservatism of the political elite also hindered the quick transformation of the *Rechtsstaat* into a *Rassenstaat*. Traditional social groups and institutions, such as the aristocracy and Catholic Church, remained opposed to social experimentation. The middle class in Hungary was also smaller, less confident, and more divided along political and religious lines than its counterpart in Nazi Germany. The members of the radical right, who after 1932 shared power with the traditional political elite in Hungary, had made too many compromises and had been too wedded to the existing social and political system to represent a real alternative. The socialist left exercised limited influence on politics after 1920, while the right-radical, fascist and national socialist groups, though more prepared to embark on drastic social and political reforms along Italian and German lines, remained divided. They could not even agree on the introduction of a dictatorship. Civil servants, army and gendarme officers, and minor aristocrats rarely make good revolutionaries, after all.[71]

The formation of racial states implied the conflation of social and ethnic hierarchies and the reduction of minorities into pariahs and slaves. In the Hungarian context, it also meant the "cleansing" of the professional class of Jews and the redistribution of Jewish wealth among Christians. The *numerus clausus* law of 1920 did dramatically reduce the share of Jews in the student population by the late 1930s.

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70   Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*.

71   Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár*, 71–98.

Furthermore, the law also failed to lower academic unemployment or significantly cut the number of Jewish professionals.[72] The vanguards of the racial state (the paramilitary groups and patriotic associations) had either been dissolved or their influence had been drastically reduced after 1921. The most radical of these old and surviving pressure groups, the student fraternities, continued to terrorise Jewish students and demand the introduction of new antisemitic legislation in the interwar period.[73] The agitation efforts of radical students and liberal professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and engineers, who had feared and wanted to eliminate Jewish competition, proved successful in the end. Modelled on the *numerus clausus* of 1920, the first two Anti-Jewish laws (introduced in 1938 and 1939) and the accompanying decrees achieved one of the most important demands of the advocates of the racial state. By the spring of 1944, when the Germans occupied the country, the Jewish presence in the modern professions had dwindled. The destruction of Jewish wealth also proceeded in stages. It began with the first antisemitic laws in the 1930s, switched into a higher gear with the passing of the fourth Anti-Jewish Law of 1942 (which prohibited Jews from owning land), and took the form of naked robbery after the German occupation of the March 1944. The appropriation of businesses, apartments, and valuables during the Holocaust bore an unmistakable resemblance to the White Terror (but on a much larger scale). As had been the case in 1919, the beneficiaries in 1944 were political activists, civil servants, and the members of the local elites. Often, apolitical neighbours also took their share in the plunder, in the form of stolen bicycles, radios, and other household items.

The advocates of the racial states tied the elimination of Jewish influence in the cultural realm and the reshaping of social hierarchies along racial lines to alleged health improvements and the supposed biological rejuvenation of the Magyar population via social hygiene and eugenics. No one did more than Prime Minister Pál Teleki to turn utopic visions and plans based on eugenic ideas into reality.[74] Paul Hanebrink has rightly described Teleki's last major achievements, the Act XV of 1941, better known as the Third Anti-Jewish Law (which prohibited sexual relations between Gentiles and Jews and also made medical examinations before marriage and claiming social welfare assistance compulsory), as a key piece of legislation and the law that transformed Hungary into a *Rassenstaat*.[75] Earlier health legislation, such as Act VI on the Prevention of Tuberculosis and Venereal Diseases

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72 Ladányi, "On the 1928 amendment to the Hungarian numerus clausus act," 111–12.

73 Kerepeszki, "The racial defense in Practice."

74 Many of the institutions created and the laws passed allegedly to improve the health and racial qualities of the Hungarian nation either enjoyed his support or had been drafted by him since the early 1920s. Ablonczy, "Bethlen István és Teleki Pál konzervativizmusa."

75 Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary,* 170.

(Lex Veneris), introduced in early 1940, and Act XXIII of 1940 on the National Fund for the Protection of Family, was also intimately linked to the passing of the third Anti-Jewish Law.[76] Yet, in spite of eugenics and health legislation, the process proved slow and was never really completed. There were many medical institutions and experts who, on Nazi models, advocated sterilisation and euthanasia on a mass scale. However, they seem to have lacked both the resources and the political support to carry out their plans.[77]

The plans of the advocates of the racial state in Hungary went beyond health legislation and anti-Jewish laws. These people also dreamed of the complete reshaping of the ethnic map of the region during and after the war. Their plan to bring back the more than one million Hungarian peasants who had emigrated overseas before 1914 never came to fruition, however. The much advertised resettlement of the 13,000 Székelys from the Romanian region of Bukovina into the newly returned Bácska (the northern part of Vojvodina) in 1941, as well as a few thousand Csángós from Moldavia, was certainly a success. The campaign, however, bought few economic or political benefits, and it barely changed the demographic makeup in the region.[78] The division (by the Axis powers of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) of Transylvania between Hungary and Romania in 1940 created a new wave of migration (during which 190,000 Hungarians left the southern part of the region, while 220,000 Romanians fled their homes over the course of the next four years). Despite the larger numbers involved, these events, too, failed to alter the demographic balance in favour of Hungary. On the other hand, the deportation of about 18,000 Hungarian Jews from the north-eastern part of the country in 1941 and the Holocaust in 1944 clearly reduced the share of the Hungarian population in the ethnically mixed and politically disputed regions.[79]

While partially successful, the revisionist foreign policy of interwar Hungarian governments did not significantly change the position of the country in the international system. Hungary remained a mid-sized, weak, and relatively backward East-Central European state even after 1941. The size of the minority population increased drastically after the return of some of the lost territories. However, the poor Romanian, Serbian, and Slovak peasants, confined to their native villages and historical regions, had no desire to become industrial workers. Nor did the Hungarian state have the means or the will to transform these ethnic minorities and women, following the Nazi model, into slave labourers. The Magyar administrators

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76   Turda, "In Pursuit of Greater Hungary."

77   Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár*, 198–210.

78   Vincze, "A bukovinai székelyek és kisebb moldvai csángó-magyar csoportok."; Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár*, 171–98.

79   Ablonczy, *Az utolsó nyár*, 152.

treated the native Romanian and Serbian population in the newly returned provinces dismally. In Transylvania, for example, native Romanians were permitted to do almost exclusively menial jobs.[80] Yet the synchronisation of class with race did not progress far enough to call Hungary a fully-fledged racial state at the end of the war.

Like the Nazis, the Hungarian advocates of the racial state achieved their greatest (and cruellest) successes in the realm of anti-Jewish policy. The forced emigration of Jews had been one of the oldest demands of the radical right. The conservative segment of the political elite, led by Prime Minister István Bethlen, did not consider the issue of Jewish emigration a priority, neither before nor during the war (even though the conservatives, too, accepted the idea that Jews had to find a new homeland after the war). The radical part of the political elite around Pál Teleki, on the other hand, wanted most Jews to leave the country as soon as possible, and they were prepared to take extreme measures to force them out. Thus, in the summer of 1940 (more than one year before the first instance of mass genocide in Hungary), Teleki told Hitler that he wanted to deport Hungarian Jews with German help.[81] However, the conservatives in the Kállay government, in office between 1942 and 1944 continued to resist the demand of the Hungarian radicals and, after the spring of 1943, the demand of the Nazi government to follow the course of the neighbouring states. The refusal of the Kállay government to address the so-called Jewish question through deportation and genocide was one of the reasons, if not the most important one, why Hitler decided to occupy the country in March 1944.[82] After the entry of the *Wehrmacht* and (with German assistance) the establishment of the government under the resolutely pro-Nazi figure Döme Sztójay, the construction of the racial state moved into a higher gear. The series of anti-Jewish laws and regulations put into effect in March and April 1944 surpassed in their numbers, sophistication, and cruelty even those of the Nazi original. With Horthy's knowledge and approval, the Sztójay government, the local administrations, the gendarmerie, and the German SS deported more than 430,000 Hungarian citizens in the spring and summer of 1944. The number of Hungarian Jews who died between 1941 and 1945 exceeded the wildest expectations of the most fanatical antisemites. The genocidal wave of massacres brought the project of the Hungarian racial state closest to realisation.[83] The Holocaust, coupled with war and the expulsion of ethnic Germans in its wake, also ignited a social revolution in East-Central Europe.[84] Yet, from the perspective of the racial state and its advocates, the social revolution came too late.

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80   Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély*.

81   Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege*, 368–69.

82   Borhi, *Magyarország a hidegháborúban*; Ránki, *1944. Március 19.*

83   Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*; Kádár and Vági, *Self-Financing Genocide*.

84   Abrams, "The Second World War and the East European Revolution."

By the mid-1940s, as a result of the Nazi defeat, race, the ideas of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*, and the racial state as its legal and political form had lost all credibility. In East-Central Europe, the small nation states of the region, under the watchful eyes of Soviet political and military leaders, began to replace intense competition and contestation with one another, which had been their traditional *modus operandi*, with solidarity and close cooperation. In 1945, "[f]aith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small" became enshrined, as a guiding principle, in the foundation charter of the new United Nations, a document which was signed by both the United States and the Soviet Union. In the 1950s and 1960s, following the allied victory over Nazism and, then, the increasingly rapid processes of decolonisation, imperialism, racism, and demographic engineering via restrictive immigration policies, notions of breeding, and ethnic cleansing became taboo practices. They may still have been practiced piecemeal, but they could no longer be publicly acknowledged or embraced.[85] The idea of race as the foundation of the social and political order survived only on the margins of the Western civilisation, such as in South Africa. Even there, it slowly lost its legitimacy and was finally dismantled after 1995. Many right radical parties in Eastern Europe rediscovered integral nationalism and racism after the collapse of state socialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Pronatalism, too, became popular among the new patriots, who were and are concerned with declining birthdates and the alleged disintegration of traditional family structures. Yet the political programs of these parties and this movement have remained eclectic. They lack the clarity of vision, conviction, and determination of their interwar predecessors. The radical and fascist right in Europe today is far more conservative than its interwar predecessor was. Its main goal is to defend and preserve established social and ethnic hierarchies rather than to engage in so-called breeding and social experimentation. The liberal and socialist parties, on the other hand, have remained committed to the postwar system, which is based on multiculturalism and respect for individual and human rights. Still, whether the ideal of a racial state, where social and ethnic hierarchies overlap and reinforce each other and where the ethnic privileges are inscribed in law, remains a taboo in the Western world is not clear. The strong counterrevolutionary current in European and American policies, especially illustrated by the elitist schemes of techno-billionaires like Elon Musk, bears a partial resemblance, in scope and mendacity, to the utopias of the eugenicists and population experts of the interwar period.

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85   Until the 1970s, British government every legal loophole to prevent the influx of unwanted immigrant ex-British colonies, such as India and Pakistan. See Holmes, *John Bull's Island*.

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The White International

Sources of Counter-Revolutionary Thinking about a New Central European Order around 1920*

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Abstract. This paper reconstructs the political worldview and transnational practices of the "White International," the loose network of counterrevolutionary paramilitary actors operating across Munich, Vienna, and Budapest after 1919. It argues that the Central European upheavals of 1919–1923 constituted a diachronic, ideology-driven civil war in which both left- and right-wing movements perceived the Other as an ontological threat. Drawing on cases from the three capitals, the study shows how a civil-war habitus, shared myths of defeat, and the spectre of Bolshevism produced a reactionary, conspiratorial internationalism on the radical right. These networks envisioned coordinated action, regime change in Vienna, and even broader geopolitical reordering. By analysing their strategies and foreign-policy imaginations, the paper highlights how counterrevolutionary actors mirrored the transnational logic of their revolutionary enemies.

Keywords: Central European civil war, counterrevolutionary networks, paramilitarism, transnational radical right, White International

The Central European civil war

1919 marked the beginning of an ideology-driven transnational civil war in Central Europe that lasted for several years.[1] While this war did not encompass the entirety of what is usually referred to as Central Europe or *Mitteleuropa*, one of its main

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1   Traverso, *Fire and Blood*, esp. chapter 2; Payne, *Civil War in Europe*, 70–90; Read, *The World on Fire*, esp. 25–50 and 149–70; as well as Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, passim and with regard to the concepts used in this paper, see especially Newman, "Revolution and Counterrevolution," 96–120; Gerwarth and Horne, "Bolshevism as Fantasy," 40–51 and Gerwarth, "Fighting the Red Beast," 52–71.

zones extended along the southern east–west axis of the region, linking Munich, Vienna, Budapest, with many related episodes occurring from the Ruhr to the Crimea. Apart from being a transnational phenomenon, another unusual characteristic of this civil war was its diachronic nature. The most brutal phase, which affected the entire region, took place between 1919 and 1923, but it was not continuous: the 'hot' periods were interspersed with "cold" periods of confrontation.[2] While these conflicts never produced World War I levels of mobilisation, given that tens of thousands of people saw action with further hundreds of thousands massed in paramilitary organisations (counting only Bavarian, Austrian, and Hungarian right-wing militia, around 1921 the number would come to about one million), the academic convention of referring to this period as a civil war-type constellation appears justified. Another aspect of this conflict, which in some cases complicates analysis, is that it was embedded in and repeatedly intertwined with the broader spectrum of hostilities following World War I, which were primarily aimed at changing the territorial arrangements of the Versailles peace system.[3] After a brief conceptual introduction, this paper will focus primarily on the first element of this conceptual triangle (transnational, diachronic violence fitting into the post-World War I conflict field) and analyses the civil war habitus fuelled by a sense of mutual threat, which quickly became characteristic of both left-wing and right-wing movements, and how this can be used to interpret the international political imaginations of white counter-revolutionaries in Central Europe.

The central dimension of World War I was the struggle between states. On the Western European front, nation states fought each other, while in the east and south, groups striving to create their idea of an optimal state and facing multi-ethnic empires often articulated their war aims in the name of their nation-building movements.[4] The nature of the war did not change significantly during the four years, but parallel with the war, processes unfolded, primarily from 1917 onwards, which, after the formal end of the global conflict, increasingly influenced the new international system. This new system, contrary to the intentions of the leaders of 1914, was not shaped solely by the will of the nations that had taken up arms. The challenge was at least twofold. Wilsonian (liberal) internationalism and related peace movements saw peace as an opportunity to eliminate the source of conflict represented by rival (nation) states, and made the "soft" institutional transformation of international politics its programme.[5] While it also envisioned an order based on nation states, it

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2   Murber, "Die Staatswerdung Österreichs und Ungarns," 197–210.

3   Böhler, "The Central European Civil War," 97–106, esp. 100–02.

4   Soutou, "War Aims." For a focused discussion about the region and the antecedents of power bloc thinking during the war years cp. Vermeiren, *The First World War*, 145–82.

5   Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, 51–63, 125–34.

was very different from the vision of the 1914 European statesmen, who would have balked at the idea of an international institution limiting their freedom of action and discretion in matters of foreign policy. The other challenge was posed by the cosmopolitan-revolutionary stream, which gained dominance within the Bolshevik branch of Marxism (and gained strength in all Marxist movements). Adherents saw the global and especially the European crisis as an opportunity for even more fundamental change: the overthrow of the capitalist order to take a decisive step towards a just society of workers. Together, these "western" (liberal) and "eastern" (Marxist-revolutionary) challengers posed an even greater threat to the international order established by the governments of the states in the Westphalian sense and, naturally, provoked a negative reaction from those who sought to preserve the old order or wanted to create a new system based on the nationalism fuelled by the momentum of war.[6]

After the war, the challenges of economic crisis management and reconstruction were inextricably linked to the question of politically reorganising Europe and the world. At the time, few thought that the former could be addressed without the appropriate reshaping of the international order. The advocates of Wilsonism sought free trade and stability so that capitalist economies could prosper again, but their 'right-wing' social democratic allies also expected such transparent international relations to lead to a shift towards a new transnational democratic order that would break the power of finance capital and pave the way to slow transformations to socialism.[7] The conservatives may have wanted only a return to the economic systems that had been in place before 1914, but their radical nationalist allies continued to advocate the economics of power blocs, combining the ideas of Friedrich List and Friedrich Naumann (and anticipating Nazism and Carl Schmitt's theory of the *Grossraum*).[8] Communists and radical socialists, on the other hand, rejected any notion of reviving the old order and would have moved towards a global regime beyond classes and states in the traditional sense through an "intermediate" phase of large regional federations.[9]

The conflicting views about domestic and international political orders and economic development were sufficient—not mentioning the cultural factors not analysed here due to lack of space—to maintain a permanent field of conflict in which radical political communities saw in the radicals of the other side the synec-dochical representations of the entire "right" and "left," and construed these artificial entities as representing an existential "Other" to their own communities. This meant

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6   Newman, "Revolution and Counterrevolution."

7   Costa, "The Comintern," 223–42.

8   Vermeiren, *The First World War*, 145–82.

9   Imlay, "Socialist Internationalism," 213–42; Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 16–40.

that especially the committed adherents of the two radical poles were inclined to view their opponents as an ontological threat, i.e., as a hostile political movement denying them the legitimacy of their very existence as a group (as "nationalists," as "workers," etc.). This mutual sense of threat logically ruled out deliberative politics and turned their interactions into a zero-sum game.[10] This was the field of civil war, the Central European variant of which, analysed below, bore marked transnational characteristics. Surprisingly at first glance, these characteristics became a constitutive part not only of the cosmopolitan left, but also of the politics of right-wing radicals who professed communitarian ideas and saw themselves as rescuers of the idea of the strong national state.

The transnational thought patterns and action characteristic of left-wing movements require little explanation. The thinking of Soviet revolutionary leaders like Lenin and Bukharin, as well as that of radical left-wing leaders in Central Europe, was permeated by a logic that predicted the westward transcontinental spread of the revolutionary wave. Since the enemy was weakened and vulnerable as a result of the imperialist war, while at the same time striving with all its might to consolidate itself, the war waged against them had to unfold in all potentially revolutionary areas.[11] According to this logic, the capitalist reaction sought to act directly—with Western troops—and indirectly, through local allies, against the forces of revolution across national borders. To give one example: the Hungarian Soviet Republic was naturally linked to the Russian Revolution, but also to the hoped-for uprisings in Vienna, Prague, Munich, and Berlin—the Russian and Hungarian Soviet leaders were just as aware of this as the participants in the peace conference in Versailles.[12] Even if they did not admit it, they assessed the challenge posed by the revolutionary left in the same way. Tactically, Paris negotiators might have hoped that the weak Hungarian council state could be temporarily pacified, or Budapest communists could surmise that the great powers preoccupied with the German question would not launch a war of intervention for a while. At the same, both sides saw the peaceful overtures of the other as only buying time to consolidate and go on the offensive—meaning that neither party had incentives to genuinely prepare for a future based on co-existence.[13] This logic all but prescribed permanent transnational activism for the Bolshevik leaders and any ideological allies.

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10 For a discussion of the Other as an ontological threat to the self, following the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas cp. Sims, "Absolute Adversity," 223–52.

11 Haslam, *The Spectre of War*, 14–57; Albert, "International Solidarity," 33–50, esp. 36–43.

12 Borsányi, *Kun Béla*, 141–49.

13 Low, *The Soviet Hungarian Republic*, 44–48; Hatos, *Rosszfiúk világforradalma*, 128–29; Egedy, "Nagy-Britannia," 125–46, esp. 139–43.

The transnational logic characteristic of right-wing radical movements is more difficult to interpret. It is a common idea in historiography that, aware of the "Red Menace," they themselves were forced to apply similar considerations in their strategic plans.[14] This is certainly true—and several examples are given below—but it is not sufficient to explain the depth and naturalness with which they developed and then applied their various transnational strategies, which were primarily conspiratorial in nature and were intended to form a united front against the communist threat. At least in Central Europe, the transnational mode of operation of the latter was facilitated not only by the common perception of the red menace, but also by a culture of defeat, a sense of shared destiny reinforced by comradeship in arms and the myth of a war almost won from an underdog position.[15] The two were often linked: the overthrow of the Versailles order and joint action against communism formed a unity of thought whose two great pillars legitimised each other and, according to plan, would have helped each other along. Wolfgang Schivelbusch observes that defeat also gave rise to innovation. In this case it was the nationalist paramilitary elites who accepted that in the new world it was necessary to create larger, ideologically related blocs, especially in the face of the liberal-cosmopolitan or Bolshevik-cosmopolitan challenge. Their programme, therefore, did not aim to restore the shaken Westphalian order, but to create a counterpole to cosmopolitan forces, one held together by a reactionary ideology in a newly arrived era of ideological confrontation.

It follows from this dynamic that the confrontation became permanent and morphed into a civil war mentality, being based on the sense of an ontological threat posed by the political Other. It did not disappear later either, and erupted from time to time, as in Austria in 1927. It persisted even when various right-wing formations came to power (in Hungary from 1919, in Austria and Germany from 1932–1933) and were able to assert their political will, essentially eliminating or forcing underground the radical—and eventually also the non-radical—left-wing forces. Also, at least up to 1923, there was a real chance that the conflict would quickly and decisively "heat up." During this period, the forces interested in consolidation in Germany and Austria—the political "centre"—did not fully align themselves with either pole, but they were not strong enough to pacify or marginalise the radicals on either side.[16] Hungary was an exception in this respect: from the moment the

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14   Gerwarth, "Fighting the Red Beast," 55–57; Gerwarth and Horne, "Bolshevism as Fantasy," 43–45.

15   For the canonical discussions of the concepts, cp. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, and Horne, "Defeat and Memory," 11–29. For a perspective on the experience of defeat of the Central Powers and the post-World War I Central European context see Gerwarth, "Fighting the Red Beast," 53, and Gerwarth and Horne, "Paramilitarism," 11–29, esp. 13–15.

16   Gerwarth and Horne, "Vectors of Violence," 489–512, esp. 498–503; Kučera, "Exploiting Victory," 827–56, esp. 854–55.

counter-revolutionary regime came to power, there was no chance of the civil war escalating. However, neither can we say that it was brought to an end by unilateral (white) political violence. Instead, the white radicals continued their "parallel" politics of violence and transnational conspiracies, having access to—if not control over—the branches of government.[17]

The third factor—border uncertainty—also influenced the events in the region up to around 1923. The Polish occupation of Vilnius/Wilno marked the final act of territorial changes in the wider region, but it was around this time that plans involving direct and rapid territorial changes were marginalised. This fed into the relevance of radical movements, as seen *inter alia* in the example of paramilitaries migrating from Bavaria to the Silesian conflict zone in 1921.[18] Only after 1923 did the more "responsible" part of the radical movements and their allies drift towards the political centre. A paradigmatic example of this shift was the distancing of Bavarian Prime Minister and later Government Commissioner Gustav von Kahr from the paramilitary formations and his earlier cooperation with Hitler, which, at the decisive moment, culminated in his actions on the side of the Weimar state—surprising not only the participants in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923.[19]

A reconstruction of no more than the main elements of this civil war would require a monographic undertaking. For this reason, the next sections present only three characteristic episodes from the political dynamics of three Central European cities involved in the conflict and considered key by all parties. These episodes reveal the transnational nature of the conflict as well as the fundamental characteristics of the participants' thinking about it. In the spring and summer of 1919, Munich and Budapest were the scenes of real, "hot" civil war actions, as well as the sites of the communist takeover, carried out in cooperation with elements from the social democrats in tow. The communist leaders of both cities attached great importance to the events taking place in the other, and Budapest sought to support the Munich Soviet government with propaganda and other means. This dynamic did not change later: at the turn of 1919–1920, both regional metropolises were counter-revolutionary strongholds, and both the Kahr government and National Army Commander Miklós Horthy's entourage, as well as the paramilitary organisations of both states considered the *de facto* alliance with the other of paramount importance.[20]

The situation in Vienna was even more special, if possible. Although Béla Kun, acting in coordination with the Third International, tried on two occasions to

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17   Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary*, 3–12, 21–40.

18   Fenske, *Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus*, 52–53.

19   Koepp, "Gustav von Kahr," 740–63, esp. 752–62.

20   G. Soós, "Magyar–bajor–osztrák titkos tárgyalások," 1–44, esp. 12–17.

provoke a mass uprising of the working class, this did not happen in the end, despite the huge sums of money smuggled into Vienna from Hungary, then partly spent, and partly stolen from the embassy.[21] However, the white takeover also failed after 1919, despite influential Bavarian and Hungarian paramilitary circles having repeatedly proposed feverish plans in this regard. In Vienna, it was the moderate parties —the Social Democrats and the Christian Socialists—that proved to be stronger and resisted, at least for now, being chain-ganged by the radicals into a course of action that would have rendered large-scale armed conflict all but unavoidable. The major parties were distrustful of each other, but they also resisted the radicals' coup plans, despite personal connections between radical organisations and party leaderships.[22]

This thinking also turned Vienna into a target. The Austrian capital developed into an element in the radicals' thinking on both sides, the control of which became a *sine qua non* condition for the implementation of their plans. From a communist perspective, many thought that a truly red, Bolshevik Vienna would have virtually guaranteed the spread of the world revolutionary wave.[23] From the point of view of the "whites," the Austrian capital was a similarly indispensable prerequisite for the birth of the desired Central European reactionary bloc.[24] The opponents agreed that Vienna's shift to the left in 1919 or the rise to power of a reactionary regime after 1920 could easily have proved to be a decisive step for the respective side towards bringing the Central European civil war to a triumphant conclusion.

The dynamics of the confrontation outlined above can also be clearly seen in the polemics taking place in the various regional capitals. The civil war began with the Munich alliance between the independent (radical) German Social Democrats and Communists, the strong left-wing Social Democratic movement in Vienna (with

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21 Szabó, *A kommunizmus bűvöletében*, 13–15. On the Bankgasse theft, the best reconstructions are still the ones offered by the Vienna police of the time. See: OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 723, fasc. I/9 Vienna Police Directorate to Foreign Ministry, 3–7 May 1919. I-3526, I-3606 and I-3611, 1136–40. [Austrian ministries often changed their official appellations in the post-war years. In this paper, I simply refer to the two relevant ministries by their short, commonly used, but unofficial names.]

22 Cp. Edmondson, "Early Heimwehr," 105–47.

23 "Bolsevizmus és világbéke [Bolshevism and World Peace]." *Vörös Ujság*, 1 June 1919, 1.; also cp. Borsányi, *Kun Béla*, 179.

24 The diary of Eleonóra Zichy, the wife of the last joint foreign minister of Austria–Hungary, count Julius Andrássy Jr. provides the perhaps most illustrative anecdote, with the Regent of Hungary, Miklós Horthy proposing "to put an end to socialist rule in Vienna with the Bavarians" and establish a white power centre in Central Europe. See her report on a conference convened by PM Pál Teleki around 9 August 1920. Andrássy, *Napló*, 262–64. A memorandum handed to a Hungarian envoy around the same time by Bavarian prime minister von Kahr echoed similar sentiments about the importance of "flipping" Vienna. MNL OL K64 fasc. 20 (1922), no. 207res. Annex to a report by Count Olivér Woracziczky, 9 July 1920 – 7 August 1920.

their leader Julius Deutsch holding the important portfolio of State Secretary for Defence, i.e., Minister of War), and the coalition formed between the social democrats and communists in Budapest. These seemed to confirm the fears of the right wing that had been developing in all three as yet unrecognised states since the war defeat in late autumn 1918. The mere existence and reform plans of the Bavarian council government led by Kurt Eisner, the rapid militarisation of detachments of Austrian social democratic workers and their potential transformation into a revolutionary armed force under Deutsch's supervision, as well as the external wars and internal dictatorship of the Hungarian Soviet Republic made the fears of the spread of Bolshevism a tangible reality—even though none of the above represented genuine or purely communist enterprises.[25] In all three countries, these fears quickly led to the formation of various right-wing militias and the outbreak of a struggle for control of the army. In Hungary, this struggle was quickly resolved after the fall of the Soviet, while in Bavaria and Austria, after a few heated or tense episodes, there followed prolonged periods of cold war.[26] During these periods, the decisive question was always the same: would the moderate parties, or a significant portion of them, be willing to join the radicals, thereby emptying the political centre, or would they continue to be essentially supportive of the existing order and reject violent action?

Budapest

From late autumn 1919, Budapest had been ruled by a counter-revolutionary regime that sought to integrate both traditional and radical right-wing platforms with anti-communist slogans and nationalist-revisionist ones. Nevertheless, the civil war mentality persisted in the Hungarian capital. In the last days of 1919, Hungarian newspapers reported as a real press sensation that communists arriving from Vienna were plotting an assassination attempt against the commander-in-chief of the National Army Miklós Horthy (allegedly, they wanted to kill him with a poisoned needle) and would have destabilised the country's internal order with further bombings.[27] At that time and thereafter, Vienna appeared as the centre of the red threat, infecting

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25   On the Budapest–Vienna–Munich axis envisioned by Béla Kun and other foreign policy decision-makers of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and prefiguring the White International's plans for a structurally similar, but ideologically of course diametrically opposed geopolitical constellation, see Romsics, *Összeomlás és útkeresés*, 262–63.

26   Edmondson, "Heimwehren," 274–88; Nußer, *Konservative Wehrverbände*, vol 1. 145–76.

27   "Merényletet terveztek Horthy fővezér ellen [An assassination Plan against Commander in Chief Horthy]." *Az Ujság*, 27 December 1919, 2; "Borzalmas bolsevista merényletterv [Despicable Bolshevik assassination plot]." *Délmagyarország*, 27 December 1919, 5; The same day, in a rare interview given to Austrian print media (!), Horthy emphatically denied any interventionist designs against Vienna or Czechoslovakia: "A politika eseményei [Political Events]." *Pesti Hírlap*, 27 December 1919, 2.

the entire region and preventing right-wing cooperation (the forces of order) in Danubian Central Europe. Not only was this reported in the radical right-wing press, but the reports also found their way into the columns of respected newspapers such as the *Pester Lloyd*, despite being a direct expression of the worldview of the secret organisations led by counter-revolutionary officers and the military high command.[28]

The obsession with plots that threatened to turn the region "red" was also evident in military intelligence reports. The assessments of the so-called S-Group operating in Vienna—a network of undercover intelligence agents and informants—repeatedly framed the "red menace" in such exaggerated terms that they seemed like unintentional caricatures.[29] These rumours and news served as a myth legitimising the counter-revolutionary order, but all sources indicate that the perception of this threat was not simply created for its own sake and in a cynical manner. Many genuinely believed—from the violent detachment leaders to the head of intelligence unit of the chief of staff—that Central European Bolshevism was still seeking to revolutionise the region (where they may have been right), and that it had extraordinary resources at its disposal to do so (where they were wrong).[30]

In this environment—where there was no real danger of a communist coup, and at most only the infiltration of communist agents could be proven—, the news of the planned assassination attempt against Horthy, made public after Christmas, had the effect of a bombshell. To demonstrate the threat, it was sufficient to cite the statements of certain secret sources and the confessions of arrested "persons involved," which were effective precisely because the idea of a red Vienna had already become canonical, lending credibility to these assumptions.[31] Between 1919 and 1923, there were constant reports of propaganda, money, weapons, and people flowing from Vienna; thus, news of the assassination attempt fitted into this pre-existing context.

The pro-government press, including radical right-wing newspapers, also reported countless times that communist *émigrés* were moving about freely in Vienna

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28   "Zum geplanten Kommunistenputsch." *Pester Lloyd*, Abendblatt, 27 December, 1919, 2.

29   HL VKF Box 156, no. 2677, document no. 77. Letter from Vice-Admiral Horthy to the prime minister, the foreign minister and the council of the allied military mission. Annex: Reports on the conspiracy. 31 December 1919. esp. 15–20.

30   For the general context of Hungarian officers' entanglements in Vienna, cp. Árokay, "A rejtett magyar katonai attasé szolgálat," 356–81; For reports of the communist threat, a representative, longer summary piece is the intelligence report prepared for the Hungarian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference: HL VKF Box 160, no. 2942 and 2943, document no. 209_401/ált. Study prepared for the Paris Peace Conference by Section 2 on Bolshevism, 10 February, 1920. 373–90.

31   "Kommunista merénylet készült Horthy és a kormány ellen [Communist Assassination Attempt Planned Against Horthy and the Government]." *Uj Nemzedék*, 28 December 1919, 5; "Lenin és a bécsi kommunisták összeesküdtek Európa ellen [Lenin and the Viennese Communists Conspired Against Europe]." *Kis Ujság,* 30 January 1920, 3.

and plotting against Hungary. These reports at times found support in documents leaked by the military intelligence services, which continued to produce threat assessments, blowing the communist threat out of proportion. A report on the imminent threat of terrorist acts concluded that "the present Austrian government or some of its members are actively and passively aiding the communists currently in Austria, which renders illusory the efforts to eliminate the threat they represent, the most dangerous outlaws threatening the entire civilised world."[32] Importantly, the claim was not true, as communist leaders were placed in particularly strict detention camps, while other communists were under milder control, but still held outside Vienna, with their movements under surveillance.[33] Only social democratic centrists and moderates, as well as members of the progressive left-wing intellectual circles supporting the progressive revolutionary leader Mihály Károlyi could move freely in Vienna and carry out high-profile press work. However, in Hungarian right-wing thinking and press, these groups were uniformly presented as part of the red emigration. Even the terrorist plot against Horthy was suggested to have been orchestrated by Mihály Károlyi and set in motion with the support of social democrats.[34] By concealing the differences—and specifically the Social Democrats' anti-communist campaign—it was possible to maintain both the public image of communist Vienna and the civil war mentality of separating not just Hungary, but all of the Danubian region into two opposed camps, pitting "us" against "them."

It was no coincidence that news of the assassination attempt came to light at the end of 1919. A little less than a month earlier, Hungarian agents had entered Austria, where the signs seem to indicate that they were trying to track down the interned communist leaders. It is unlikely that the plan was to kill them; kidnapping seems more likely.[35] Whatever the plan may have been, it did not come to fruition, as the Austrian intelligence services, which were already focusing heavily on

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32 HL VKF Box 156, no. 2689, document no. 10005 Situation report of the High Command of the National Army, 1 January 1920. The sitrep includes the report by Captain Elemér Novák, document no. 20/37, 28 December 1919.

33 OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 723, fasc. I/3 no. I-5583, Letter from the Provincial Administration of Lower Austria to the Foreign Ministry of German Austria on preventive measures concerning the Drosendorf camp for Hungarian communists, 14 July 1919, 102–04. The letter specifically noted a second high security camp near Rottmühle restricting the movement of communist leaders held there, exempting from the restrictions only women, children, social democrats, and other progressives.

34 "Kommunista merénylet készült Horthy és a kormány ellen." *Uj Nemzedék*, 28 December 1919, 5; "Lenin és a bécsi kommunisták összeesküdtek Európa ellen." *Kis Ujság*, 30 January 1920, 3.

35 For an initial report on the illegal crossing of a convoy of cars and their progress to Vienna see OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 723, fasc. I/3, no. I-7110, Report of the Vienna Police Directorate to the Foreign Ministry, 28 November 1919, 111–12.

Hungarian nationals, were able to take effective action, and this was followed by an intensive anti-Hungarian campaign in both the Hungarian language and the workers' press in Vienna.[36] For this reason, the assassination plan and the elimination of known communist cells in Hungary appears to have been primarily an attempt to justify, at least domestically, the accusations levelled against the Hungarian regime and its paramilitary supporters for their troublemaking in Austria, and perhaps to force the departure of social democrats from the coalition government forced on the Hungarian right by the entente's special representative Sir George Clerk in exchange for international recognition only a month and a half prior.

The Hungarian side also informed the Austrian government of the assassination plans. However, the Austrian police found no evidence of any preparations of this nature in Vienna or elsewhere, even though action was not taken by a social democratic-led body, but by the central police administration under the leadership of Johannes Schober, a right-wing figure with links to paramilitary organisations.[37] The power of right-wing networks is well illustrated by the fact that the incursion into Austria appears to have been carried out independently of the Hungarian government and even of the intelligence services of the national army's general staff, as there is no trace in the relevant files of such an operation being prepared or carried out, nor is there any mention of it in the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (At the same time, a large contingent of Hungarian intelligence officers and detectives was operating in Vienna—very much with government approval.)

Meanwhile, arrests were taking place in Budapest, and the anti-communist sentiment that had reached its peak during the winter period was evident in the press, as well as in the capital's police reports and the materials of the military counterintelligence service.[38] Thus, the diversionary operation, necessitated by the failure

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36   For the arrests made in late November and in mid-December, see esp. OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 723, fasc. I/20, Reports of the Vienna Police Directorate to the Foreign Ministry nos. I-7113, I-7363, I-7364, 28 November and 20 December 1919, 196–201.

37   OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 724, fasc. I/19. Pr.Z-2210. Vienna Police Directorate to the Foreign Ministry. Communist plot against the Hungarian government and Admiral Horthy, 17 February, 1920, 155-8. The report dismantles the Hungarian claim that the anarchist Arthur Weiler could have been selected as the terrorist to murder Horthy, and lays bare how Hungarian reports regarding terrorist conspiracies involving social democrats such as Vilmos Böhm had no merit to them. Importantly, the source of this document is the central intelligence office at the Vienna police commissariat, police chief and soon to be chancellor Johannes Schober's brainchild and favourite project which employed detectives and agents who harboured no leftist sympathies—as evident from other reports.

38   The reports were all over the Hungarian press as László, the brother of former communist terror leader Tibor Szamuely, was apprehended and sentenced to death within a month, with the sentence to be carried out only days after the trial—all suggesting the desire to create a clean and

of a covert, presumably non-state sponsored paramilitary action itself, proved a powerful fuel for the red scare.

This danger—as the assassination plot would have proven—was assumed to be transnational in nature from the outset. A global ideology and its centre, Moscow, were symbolically responsible, but the actual risk was interpretable in the Central European constellation, in which the mere existence of red Vienna posed an existential threat to white Hungary. In the dynamics of the manufactured crisis, this logic clearly had a configurative force, even in retrospect: it not only explained the plan for the assassination (how could such a plan have been devised?), but also interpreted it, concluding that this threat could only be overcome if a counter-revolutionary turn took place in Vienna, integrating the Austrian capital into the axis of white Central Europe stretching from Munich to Budapest. The self-perception of the white reactionaries was concisely captured in an assessment by the military intelligence service that affirmed:

> "the main nest of Bolshevik propaganda in Europe is doubtlessly Vienna […] Hungary is the biggest thorn under the fingernail [of the communist plotters]."[39]

White counterrevolutionaries in Hungary at around this time also realised the need for efficient foreign partners. From at least September 1919 onwards, an anti-Bolshevik reactionary coalition in East Central Europe was taking shape as an idea in Hungary, serving, *inter alia*, as a better vehicle for facing down the Bolshevik enemy than unilateral incursions in foreign territory.[40]

Vienna

In early 1921, the Austrian Foreign Ministry received alarming news from the embassy in Berlin. A well-meaning French diplomat sent a signal that France would not only tolerate but even support the occupation of Vienna by Hungarian troops if circumstance dictated. The warning was that if there was a radical left-wing shift in Vienna, containing Bolshevism would take precedence over all other considerations in the plans of the victorious great powers.[41] Although this warning referred to an

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rapid closure to the sensational case. For a representative example, see: "A bécsi középeurópai bolsevista középpont tervei [The Plans of the Central European Bolshevik Centre in Vienna]." *Budapesti Hírlap*, 30 January 1920, 5. For the broader context of anti-Bolshevik propaganda, cp. Csunderlik, *A „vörös farsangtól" a „vörös tatárjárásig,"* esp. 175–81. and 321–28.

39 HL VKF Box 161, no. 3041, document no. 22227/ált. The file contains two memoranda titled "Situation report on Russo-bolshevism" and "Situation report on bolshevism in Hungary," both dated 5 September 1920, 118–23.

40 Romsics, *Összeomlás és útkeresés,* 484–85.

41 OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 721, fasc. I/II no. 576. Telegram of the Austrian envoy to Berlin to the Foreign Ministry, 31 January 1921, 160.

extreme case scenario, given the tense situation, the parties involved did not necessarily perceive it as such. In Hungary, preparations had long been underway for a possible 'reversal' of Vienna with the help of Bavarian and Austrian paramilitary organisations, and these preparations did indeed intensify in 1921. Although the Hungarian government stipulated that it would only participate in such an action in the event of a Bolshevik coup, Hungarian paramilitary forces, in agreement with Colonel Max Bauer, who represented the Bavarian far right in Austria, and the leaders of a number of Heimwehr formations (notably from some of the Vienna, Lower Austria, and Styria branches) had more ambitious plans.[42]

Occasionally reported in the Austrian press, these plans also served to mobilise the social democratic base. Under Mayor Jakob Reumann, Vienna sought to position itself as an almost independent social democratic republic, and the more formal organisation of the left-wing paramilitary *Schutzbund* began, while the weak Mayr cabinet fought a stalemate with its own capital.[43] In this situation, it was not inconceivable for many workers that their own right-wing government would, if necessary, accept a Hungarian-backed "law and order" action, thereby attempting to organise a right-wing Austria. The increasingly demonstrative exercises and the organisation of workers' battalions were also intended to show that Vienna could not be easily occupied by white interventionists.[44]

This mobilisation was coupled with suspicion about Hungarian intentions. From the spring of 1919 onwards, there was a succession of reports of actions carried out by counter-revolutionary Hungarian organisations in Austria or with Austrian connections. Following the previously discussed occupation and robbery of the Hungarian embassy in Bankgasse by white officers, members of the same cadre were clearly visible throughout the entire period of the Soviet Republic, especially in Vienna and Graz. In the autumn, there were reports of detachments

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42   Cp. the documents published in Kántás, *Diverzió*, notably "Memorandum by Staff Lt. Colonel József Schitler on the secret negotiations between the Hungarian government and Austrian and Bavarian nationalist organisations, May 11, 1921 and Memorandum by Ervin Morlin, departmental councillor on secret negotiations between the Hungarian government, and secret Bavarian and Austrian nationalist paramilitary organisations »Orka« and »Orgesch«." 100–15, as well as Soós, *Burgenland*, 30–32. Also see MNL OL K64 Bundle 6, fasc. 20. (1922) no. 1921/197res. Joint memorandum by Rudolf Kanzler and [special envoy of the Hungarian government] Gedeon Ráday, 4–5 February 1921, 2–6.

43   Gruber, *Red Vienna*, 13–43, and specifically in the context of the paramilitaries: Blasi, "Der bedrohte Staat," 86–97.

44   OeSta AdR BMLV AR Abteilung 2, Karton 929, no. 16/17 Report of the Vienna Police Directorate to the Defence Ministry, 2 September 1921. Field exercises of the Simmering Workers Defence (*Arbeiterwehr Simmering*) and no. 16/24. Report of the Burgenland Brigade Headquarters to Defence Ministry, 4 October 1921, on exercises in the vicinity of Wiener Neustadt.

travelling to Vienna; news of police detectives and informants arrested for searching for Hungarian communist *émigrés* reinforced this impression at the end of 1919.[45] During the Fürstenfeld arms robbery at the end of July 1920, Hungarian paramilitary units simply entered Austrian territory and, with the cooperation of Austrian soldiers, robbed the border weapons depot. From a left-wing Austrian perspective, the Austrian aspect of the robbery was just as disturbing as the fact that Hungarian units simply crossed the border and then left essentially unhindered after completing their task.[46] From the autumn onwards, the left-wing press was preoccupied with the recurring question of why the Austrian government was allowing Budapest to station more than a hundred officers in Vienna in connection with the liquidation of the joint army of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, when the same work was done by far fewer people on the Austrian side, and it was clear that most Hungarian officers were engaged in intelligence and other covert activities.[47]

The outlines of the opposing Austrian parties' perceptions of political dangers and the underlying logic that shaped their thinking can be clearly seen in connection with the revelation in 1920 that an Austrian Legion had been recruited for intervention purposes. As an increasing amount of information was leaked out about the Hungarian assembly camp for the White Guards recruited (also) in Vienna, the Hungarian government also wanted to take action, as the small number of troops caused more diplomatic embarrassment than the benefits they may have brought.[48] However, Hungarian and Austrian radicals saw the situation differently: for them, this unit, which legitimised their existence and their relationship, was important. The radical segment of the Austrian right wing, which was most open to Bavarian–Hungarian cooperation, especially sought to maintain the transnational scheme of harbouring Austrian veterans and even some former German *Freikorps*-men under arms in Hungary. Prince Johannes von Liechtenstein, a former naval officer who

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45   OeSTA AdR Liasse Ungarn, NPA Karton 723 I/20 i-7378. Report of the Vienna Police Directorate to the Foreign Ministry, titled Hungarian Police Officers in Vienna, 21 December 1919, 202–04.

46   See the collections of evidence and reports under OeSta AdR BMLV AR Abteilung 2, Karton 929, fasc. 17/1 on the Fürstenfeld robbery from August 1920, as well as the collection of documents under Liasse Ungarn, Karton 724, fasc. I/22 dedicated to the same affair. See also Kerekes, *Von St. Germain bis Genf*, 201; Bodó, *The White Terror*, 75–76.

47   The issue dragged on through 1920–1922 and became sufficiently uncomfortable for the Austrian government to merit a long memorandum in preparation for the planned meeting between Chancellor Ignaz Seipel and Hungarian PM István Bethlen, noting the difficulties with the social democratic press and the general unease of Viennese citizens about Hungarian military presence. OeSta AdR NPA Liasse Ungarn, Karton 721, fasc. I/III, no. 3559. Memorandum titled "Budapest Visit", 5 November 1922, 207–10.

48   See the collection of documents and press reports from the summer and autumn of 1920 under OeSta AdR BMLV AR Abteilung 2, Karton 634, fasc. 38/1.

was most prominently involved in the matter on the part of the Austrian paramili-
taries, had already established close ties with Hungarian (and Croatian) reactionary
officers in Graz in 1919, and later, alongside the leading Carlist figure Albin von
Schager, he also managed Hungarian financial support for paramilitary organisa-
tions in Vienna, Lower Austria, and Styria. These regional groups were the least
supportive of the *Anschluss* to Weimar Germany and the friendliest to Catholic-
legitimist ideology, in contrast to the *Heimwehr* networks in other provinces. This
aligned well with Bavarian preferences, as in Munich many sought to form a counter-
revolutionary bloc also against the perceived "socialism" and antipatriotic policies
of the Berlin government.[49]

From an Austrian paramilitary point of view, red Vienna posed a similar threat
to that seen from Budapest—only even closer and more immediate. Ever since the
Ministry of Defence, long headed by Deutsch, began (or would have begun) disarm-
ing the *Heimwehr* associations in 1920, a significant segment of the right wing had
been living in fear of an armed opponent and a possible left-wing coup forced upon
their own defenceless side. At the same time, the right-wing press and politicians
demanded the disarmament of the workers' militias, and the feuding parties mutu-
ally inspected the arms depots in Vienna. Control of weapons was the paramount
concern, as neither side placed particularly high value on the regular military units,
which were indeed very weak and had unreliable morale and loyalties.[50]

Both the Hungarian government and the paramilitaries had a vested interest in
fuelling the confrontation, while the large number of Hungarian officers sent to Vienna
also formed a bridge between official foreign relations and paramilitary networks.
Both the Hungarian and Austrian members of the latter wanted the plan for possible
Hungarian "help" to take shape, while as the liaison between the Bavarian organisations,
Bauer was particularly keen to promote this.[51] The white organisations naturally saw

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49   On the decision of the Hungarian government to downscale the operation MNL OL K64 Bundle
     6, fasc. 20 (1922), no. 1922/155res Note by Colonel [Tihamér] Siménfalvy [head of covert oper-
     ations at the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs], undated, and the correspondence with
     Johannes von Liechtenstein, ibid, 28 February 1921.

50   Botz, "Political Violence," 133–59, esp. 139–42; McLoughlin, "Heimwehr und Schutzbund,"
     46–53. A good discussion on how the logic of legitimising one's own organisation and creat-
     ing an image of the opponent as an ontologically threatening Other is found in Edmondson,
     "Heimwehren," 261–76.

51   HL VKF Box 161, no. 3050–3051. Document no. 1920/23130/ált. Report by Lt. Col. Béla Janky
     [Regent Horthy's secret envoy to Bavaria] on the situation in Germany, 30 August 1920, 458–65;
     no. 1920/23152/ált. Report by Lt. Col. Béla Janky Béla on his discussions with General Erich
     Ludendorff, 10 September 1920. 467–72; and under no. 3055. Document no. 1920/23880/ált.
     Report by Col. Lehóczky Béla [military attaché in Vienna] on his discussions with Lt. [Josef]
     Field Marshall Metzger, 23 September 1920.

themselves as a transnational network, just like their opponents, with communists and social democrats seen as two sides of the same coin. Such perceptions were also canonised and disseminated by the considerable right-wing press portfolio of pro-Heimwehr outlets supported by the Hungarian government. (The portfolio was especially strong with regard to regional newspapers, especially Styria and rural Lower Austria, natural sites of right-wing mobilisation.)[52] They defined themselves as part of a struggle whose global outcome depended in no small part on the development of the struggle in Central Europe. In this, Vienna continued to be the key element, representing both the greatest threat (as the centre of a new communist wave and a base feeding communist/social democratic movements) and the main goal (as key to a geographically congruent Central European reactionary alliance).

Munich

The Bavarian capital was, as is well known, one of the most successful areas for left-wing revolutionary government in the months following World War I. There were several changes of power, but essentially revolutionary ideologies, if not equally revolutionary programmes, were embraced by subsequent regimes from late 1918 until May 1919.[53] This led to a comparable level of hostile mobilisation in conservative rural areas—very high even by German standards—and led to the establishment of the paramilitaries commonly referred to as the *Einwohnwehren* (citizen defence associations). The Bavarian paramilitary networks that emerged from these, *Freikorps* formations such as the Epp brigade and officers arriving from the north after the failure of the Kapp Putsch in the spring of 1920, found themselves closer to power after the Bavarian People's Party, representing many shades of the right wing, came to power in a situation reminiscent of counter-revolutionary Hungary.[54] In contrast to Hungary, however, there was still an independent left wing that was difficult to force into compromises against its will. In 1920, social democrats even regained control of municipal politics in Munich, although for mayor Eduard Schmid, it was never possible to start building a left-wing hinterland similar to that in Vienna.[55]

Unlike in Vienna, in Bavaria the remaining stockpiles of weapons, the most significant issue of contention in the cold phase of the civil war, were disproportionately

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52   MNL OL K58 Box 47 (1921) 171res. Report by outgoing foreign minister, Gusztáv Gratz, 9 May 1921.

53   Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*.

54   Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria*, 176–210; Large, *The Politics of Law*, 5–14, and 31–43. On Epp and the Freikorps, see Jones, *Hitler's Heralds*, 140–44.

55   Angermair, "Eduard Schmid," 89–102.

distributed: the majority were in the possession of paramilitary groups.[56] The Bavarian case is therefore instructive: fears of the Austrian right-wing movements were repeated in their press and leaflets, even though there was no strong leftist movement in Munich similar to that in Vienna, armed and undefeated in battle. This suggests that a pre-existing martial mindset, a logic of war that was an integral part of the worldview, was at work here, maintaining the twin notions of enemy and threat even when these threat perceptions were difficult to substantiate. Most victims of the Bavarian *Feme* murders (punitive assassinations carried out by clandestine right wing organisations) were unreliable members of right-wing militias and others who would have sold information about weapons caches to the authorities. However, the most famous left-wing victim, Carl Gareis, was assassinated by right-wing circles precisely because he had strongly spoken out for complying with the disarmament order issued by the Allied Control Commission, which at the time was threatening sanctions against Germany.[57] The murder was framed by right-wing outlets as revenge on a politician who had betrayed his own people, while the same newspapers also brought reports from the session of the Bavarian state parliament, where Prime Minister von Kahr argued that it was red radicalism that had brought forth right-wing nationalist radicalism—implying that the Left was responsible for the violent situation it had created.[58]

At other times, even less was enough to mobilise the radical press and paramilitary organisations. As a wave of rumours about an imminent communist takeover in Vienna reached Munich, it provoked a strong reaction when Friedrich Adler, the Viennese Social Democratic leader associated with the party's leftist platform, who had assassinated the Austrian Chancellor Stürgkh in 1916, travelled to Bavaria to give a speech. The right wing saw this trip as an attempt to export the (expected) revolution and protested vehemently, while Adler apparently left Bavaria prematurely, having received news of the paramilitaries readying to move against him. The right-wing reaction, as in the case of the Hungarian stories about a plot against Admiral Horthy, may also have served the purpose of deflecting attention from an inconvenient situation—in this case, the failed Kapp putsch in Berlin, which had been met with considerable support from Bavarian hard-right circles.[59]

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56   Koepp, *The Einwohnerwehr*, 150–55.

57   Hofmann, "Der Tod von Karl Gareis," 229–47.

58   "Der Fall Gareis im Landtag" vol. I–II. *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, 22 and 23 June 1921, 4 and 5; "Die Politik der bayerischen Regierung, Der Fall Gareis im Landtag – Rede des Ministerpräsidenten v. Kahr." *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, 23 June 1921, 1, where von Kahr was quoted as saying "Gäbe es keinen links gerichteten antinationalen Radikalismus, so gäbe es auch keinen rechtsgerichteten nationalistischen."

59   OeSta AdR BK Staatskanzlei – Bundeskanzleramt alt, Konsulat München, Politische Korrespondenz 1919–1930, fasc. 1, Pol. Berichte 1919–1930, no. 1225/8. Report of the Austrian

From the perspective of the Bavarian radical right, Vienna represented the same transnational risk factor as it did from the perspective of Budapest. Even the "insufficiently German" Austrian consul was subjected to threats in Munich—seen as a representative of the "red" government, when he hosted the French consul on the occasion of a charitable action to help Austrian society. The intrusion into the consular building happened despite the fact that the right wing Mayr government in Austria had been in power for some time.[60] Behind the persistent linking of the red menace and the Austrian capital, as in the Hungarian example, it is reasonable to assume both a perception of reality distorted by reflexive civil war thinking and the efforts of far-right leaders to justify the existence of their own organisations.

Munich also had other ties to Austria. While in Hungary, despite enticing promises, it was barely possible to simultaneously train more than a hundred "legionnaires" in the Csót, then in the Zalaegerszeg camps, in Bavaria, several thousand veterans had served with the Bavarian mountain troops on the Italian front, in close comradeship with the Austrian *Jägers*, and many of them later joined the volunteer formations fighting in the border defence battles in Carinthia. Together with radicals who had "fled" from Austria, this group, consisting mainly of veterans, maintained numerous associations, which in some cases even defied the will of Prime Minister von Kahr. They engaged in intensive Bavarian–Tyrolean propaganda in favour of a "mini-*Anschluss*" of Tyrol to Bavaria. They energetically supported with weapons and other resources the Heimwehr units organised by Richard Steidle in Tyrol and, in and beyond, especially in Carinthia.[61] Although these were precisely the associations with a Greater German spirit that the Hungarian government and the "professional" Bavarian paramilitary leaders seeking French goodwill tended to avoid, they represented additional layers of Bavarian–Austrian interdependence.

The foreign policy horizons of the White International

The red menace ultimately justified why Bavarian paramilitary organisations could legitimately take up arms in Austria if necessary. While Hungarian units would have sailed up the Danube, Bavarian volunteers would have travelled down from Passau

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consulate in Nuremberg to the Chancellor's Office, 10 April 1920. See also the newspaper report, very much in the spirit of the radical right, "Wo stehen wir heute?" *Der Bürgerrat* (Munich), 19 March 1920, 1.

60   "Ein Bubenstück." *Münchener Zeitung*, 14 January 1921, 5.

61   For a systematic review of the Austrian entanglements of Bavarian veterans, see OeSta AdR BK Staatskanzlei – Bundeskanzleramt alt, Konsulat München, Politische Korrespondenz 1919–1930 fasc. 1. Pol. Berichte 1919-1930 no. 3/pol. Report of the Consul General [Günther] to the Chancellor's Office on the Deutsch-Österreichischer Volksbund, Tiroler-Club and the Leibregimentsvereinigung, 3 March 1926.

to reach the Austrian capital.[62] These Bavarian volunteers were to be provided for by the Organisation Escherich *(Orgesch)*, the semi-covert network established to preserve the more organised segments of the civic militias *(Einwohnerwehren)* consolidated under the leadership of Georg Escherich, a representative of the governing Bavarian People's Party. It integrated the Organisation Kanzler *(Orka)*, headed by the veteran officer Rudolf Kanzler, which was responsible for any planned Austrian operations. The fact that the idea of a joint invasion remained on the agenda for a long time (even when Prime Minister Kahr had already begun to distance himself from the networks more or less brought together under the umbrella of the Escherich organisation) clearly demonstrates the Central European regional mindset, which was perhaps most markedly present in the worldview of these leaders, even more so than in Hungary.[63] Orka, which gradually integrated with Orgesch, did not prove to be much more durable than the umbrella organisation. Yet in 1920–21, it efficiently promoted the idea of cooperation between the defeated Central European peoples, for which the Munich–Vienna–Budapest axis would have been "only" the basis.[64] The final goal, in addition to supplementing Central European satellites, would have been to reconquer Russia, which was envisioned with various white or renegade Bolshevik leaders.[65] Although the Russian dimension regularly proved to be

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62   Memorandum by Staff Lt. Colonel József Schitler on the secret negotiations between the Hungarian government and Austrian and Bavarian nationalist organisations, 11 May 1921 and the Memorandum by Ervin Morlin, departmental councillor on secret negotiations between the Hungarian government, and secret Bavarian and Austrian nationalist paramilitary organisations "Orka" and "Orgesch," in: Kántás, *Diverzió*, 100–15; HL VKF Box 161, no. 3077, Document no. 1920/25905/ált. Report of the Vienna mission about the dealings of Baron Imre Biedermann, 29 October 1920, 649–50.

63   The fact that von Kahr had reservations vis-a-vis the radical faction of the paramilitaries was noted by Hungarian special envoy Count Olivér Woracziczky as early as summer 1920, due to Escherich's and Kanzler's obvious dealings for private profit and using von Kahr's name without permission to gain access to Hungarian leaders. MNL OL K64 fasc. 20, no. 1922/207res. containing the original report dated 3 August 1920 and in a different context by the Hungarian consul in Munich, Zsolt Denghy soon after: MLN OL K64 fasc. 20, 1920/337res. Report by Consul Zsolt Denghy to Prime Minister Pál Teleki, 6 September 1920, 1–4.

64   This appears in the summary compiled by the international con artist Ignác (Lincoln-)Trebitsch and also in a *pro memoria* on the discussions between Kanzler and Bauer in person representing Orka and Gyula Gömbös and Tibor Eckhardt representing both the Hungarian paramilitaries and the Regent's inner circle. Both are preserved among the papers of the head of Hungary's news agency, Miklós Kozma, himself a "white" officer of Horthy's National Army. MNL OL, K429 Bundle 1, Compilations, 8–11, and 16–20. No date is given on these documents, but it is clear that the Trebitsch piece dates from late 1920 or early 1921, while the pro memoria was written in June or July 1920.

65   Letter from Field Marshall Erich Ludendorff to Miklós Horthy, 19 August 1920, published in Szinai and Szűcs, eds, *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, 33–39.

a money-making scheme for swindlers, as in the the white Russian émigré leaders Komaroff and Vasily Biskupsky,[66] its persistence indicates that, in its most radical form, the idea of a Central European reactionary alliance was indeed a mirror image of Bolshevik expansionist ideology and sought (or would have sought) to turn the wheel of history in the opposite direction on a similar scale.

Several traces of this thinking have survived; taken together they allow for the reconstruction of the foreign policy horizons of the organisations involved in radical paramilitary cooperation. They date from 1920 and, in contrast to the anti-communist propaganda that was naturally conducted in public, they mainly contain secret plans. These include the Budapest meeting between Kanzler and his confidant Bauer with the leader of the largest Hungarian paramilitary organisation, the Hungarian National Defence Association (MOVE), Gyula Gömbös, and Tibor Eckhardt, who headed the press department of the foreign ministry at the time, but was also known as a radical former officer. In the same context, the well-known letter they "delivered" from General Ludendorff to Miklós Horthy remains especially relevant.[67] A further document, written in early autumn 1920, was handed over by Prime Minister von Kahr to Horthy's personal envoy. It bore the title *Gedanken über ein Zusammengehen der infolge des Krieges unterdrückten Völker Europas.* Its authorship is unknown, because Kahr himself requested that the text be anonymised, and the Hungarian side unfortunately complied with the request. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this text, which contains the most concrete and at the same time general ideas, originated from the confluence of Bavarian government branches and paramilitary circles.[68]

At the same time, the value of documents originating from the circle of the Russian *émigré* leader Vasily Biskupsky, who understandably pursued his own goals and sought to secure Bavarian and Hungarian state resources, such as the document entitled *Memorandum über die geschichtliche Entwicklung* should be viewed as articulating ideas not necessarily shared by the core elements of the Munich–Vienna–Budapest axis. Biskupsky was an energetic leader and an important organiser of the *emigré* circles in Germany, who built up perhaps the largest network of far-right

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66   MNL OL K64 fasc. 2 (1919–1920). Unnumbered document to be forwarded the prime minister's office and the ministry for foreign affairs: "Memorandum über die geschichtliche Entwicklung," 25 September 1920. In this document signed "B"—very likely Biskupsky himself—the Hungarian government is reminded of the financial commitments it made over the course of the summer, while also outlining an ambitious plan that makes German–Russian cooperation the key element of bringing about a new white Central Europe.

67   See footnote 64 and 65.

68   MNL OL K64 Bundle 2., fasc. 41, no. 1920/453res. Report No. 8 by Lt. Col. Janky [about his Munich mission]. Annex: "Gedanken über ein Zusammengehen der infolge des Kriegs unterdrückten Völker Europas," 18 October 1920, 7–8.

contacts of all white Russians in the country—ending up as a supporter of Hitler by 1923 at the latest. However, the documents bearing his imprint differ from the bulk of surviving plans only in that they emphasise the importance of the creation of a white "Grossrussland" regaining its imperial character and engage in unrealistic speculation about the possibility of overthrowing the Bolshevik regime.[69] At the same time, the Russian dimension remained of particular importance to Bavarian–German circles; ultimately, establishing a close alliance with a rejuvenated Russia was very much the foreign policy goal of the Bavarian radical establishment. Unlike that of the Hungarian and Austrian sides, Munich's strategic horizon extended far beyond Central Europe in the strict sense.

Unfortunately, no document has been identified in which an Austrian leader open to cooperation and accepted by the Hungarian and Bavarian sides laid out similar far-reaching plans, including General Josef Metzger, loyal to the emperor and seeking to unite the paramilitaries, his Greater German rival General Alfred Krauss, the legitimist leader Friedrich von Wiesner, the Styrian provincial chief Anton Rintelen, or any other comparable figure.[70] However, it is clear from the surviving meeting protocols and 1920–21 post-meeting reports that Austrian thinking was similar to that of the Hungarian parties in that it remained more Central European in scope. Austrian leaders probably also considered that the plans should have some appeal at least to conservative French military and political circles, a demand shared by the Austrian Christian Social (conservative) government circles to whom they had connections. The latter would have been ensured by the fact that a South German–Austrian–Hungarian Catholic bloc could have found understanding in the anti-Prussian French capital, especially within the general staff. This also explains why the 'Alpine' network of Austrian paramilitary organisations was left out of the conspiracy: in those provinces, the Greater German sentiment was clearly dominant, and, with the exception of Salzburg, the *Anschluss* was taken to mean assimilation into a large and unified German empire.[71]

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69   See footnote 66.

70   Perhaps the proposal by Field Marshall Metzger came closest to a programme. It considered the cooperation between reactionary organisations and an eventual Bavarian–Hungarian intervention in Austria, without major novelties anywhere among its six points. MNL OL K64 fasc. 20. (1922), 1921/90res "Proposal for the case of a change of course in Austria," the file contains the document titled Military Agreement between the Hungarian Government and the Commander of Austrian Heimwehr forces in Vienna and Lower Austria, Lt. Field Marschall Metzger, 2 March 1921.

71   This is evident from the "Memorandum" by Staff Lt. Colonel József Schitler on the secret negotiations between the Hungarian government and Austrian and Bavarian nationalist organisations, 11 May 1921, and the "Memorandum" by Ervin Morlin, departmental councillor, on secret negotiations between the Hungarian government, and Bavarian and Austrian nationalist

The Hungarian positions remained unequivocal. As early as autumn 1920, Horthy sent word to von Kahr that the Russian dimension was irrelevant for Budapest. As the response to the memorandum about the alliance of oppressed peoples stated, "the Russian question is for us a crucial, but for now also quite distant problem. […] The next agreed-upon task has to remain the creation of a secure connection between Bavaria and Hungary."[72] This focus is made all the more understandable when seen through the prism of Hungarian westward foreign policy. During the very same period, the head of the Regent's military office was on a mission in France to secure the goodwill of French military leaders and conservative circles for a Bavarian–Austrian–Hungarian alliance, officially to join forces against communists.[73]

Looking at the surviving documents with the above caveats in mind, the paramilitary political logic is shown to have developed in response to Bolshevism, the *par excellence* transnational threat, but also carrying other ideological legacies. The interpretation of the international system—if you like, the foreign policy worldview of the White International—reveals the fundamental conceptual tension that Stefano Guzzini describes as the conservative dilemma. Guzzini highlights the conceptual conundrum that arises when a movement with a reactionary worldview seeking to restore the sovereignty of states has to fight against the revolutionary ideologies that threaten the state-centric way of doing politics, but in the process becomes ideological itself and comes to resemble the image of the enemy it has created.[74] This was also the case with the White International, whose spokespeople set the restoration of humiliated states and of their own sovereignty as an explicit goal in foreign policy, but at the same time deviated from this principle in two ways. On the one hand, they recommended to decision-makers explicitly transnational practices, and on the other hand, they envisioned a strongly bloc-like "great space" as their ultimate goal, in which the independence of individual states, especially

paramilitary organisations "Orka" and "Orgesch," in: Kántás, *Diverzió*, 100–15. The Hungarian side made it clear as early as autumn 1920 that it was not interested in Russian adventures (see footnote 64).

72 MNL OL K64 fasc. 20. (1922), 1921/244res containing the original document 1920/384res. Response in the matter of the alliance of oppressed peoples, to be delivered by Lt. Col. Janky, 9 October 1920.

73 MNL OL K64 Bundle 1, fasc. 11 (1920), 1920/403res. Memorandum by Staff Col. Boldizsár Láng, 20 October, 386–89. Láng had stated already in August that personalities of the French Chiefs of Staffs, notably the acting head General Henri Desticker were inclined to support "a South German–Austrian corridor that would establish a direct path from France to Hungary and Romania. Especially in the Bavarian conservatives they are placing great trust." MLN OL K64 Bundle 2, fasc. 41. (1920), Telegram no. 344. from the Paris mission to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, containing Láng's report, 19 August 1920, 13.

74 Guzzini, "The Enduring Dilemmas," 533–68.

smaller ones, would have been at least uncertain. This may partly explain why the Austrian and Hungarian parties, familiar with the German-centred *Mitteleuropa* plans during World War I, sought to plan on a smaller scale: a Munich–Vienna–Budapest axis would have posed less of a threat to their foreign policy autonomy than the new, radical right-wing versions of Germany's World War I victory plans laid out in the ambitious concept of a league of "oppressed peoples."[75]

However, there was no disagreement between the parties that, from the outset, the Central European/Danube region was to be seen as a single entity, where the borderless threat of Bolshevism was both a risk and an opportunity. They conceptualised communism as a danger that, if victorious, would wipe out the very foundations of the region's nation states, but since it also posed a threat to the victorious Western powers, in their anti-Bolshevik plans, they hoped for a certain degree of generosity from London and Paris. The position of the Hungarian and, to some extent, Austrian state and provincial leaders therefore made it a *conditio sine qua non* for joint action that a 'red' shift should occur or riots should break out in Vienna, and only then would intervention in Austria take place.[76] The paramilitary leaders on the other hand adopted the radical position of Orgesch and its Austrian branch Orka in Vienna, Graz, and Budapest alike. For them, whether Orka's Bauer or the Hungarian Pál Prónay and Iván Héjjas, Vienna was sufficiently threatening and 'red' to merit intervention even in the absence of further upheavals. As Ludendorff's memorandum and the other documents cited from Orgesch circles reveal, they expected passive approval from the Entente and considered that swift action creating a *fait accompli* was sufficient for this. The same argument is found in a petition to the Hungarian government on behalf of the largest Hungarian paramilitary organisation, the Hungarian National Defence Association (MOVE), which was signed by Gyula Gömbös, who played a central role in the officer networks.[77] Austrian and Hungarian government circles first sought to secure French goodwill, and as the case of the French diplomat who warned his Austrian colleague of the danger of Hungarian intervention seems to prove, they achieved at least partial success.

A further universally accepted element foresaw a larger international paramilitary concentration in Hungary, following the example of the Austrian (and Croatian)

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75   MNL OL K64 Bundle 2., fasc. 41. no. 1920/453res. Report No. 8 by Lt. Col. Janky, Annex: "Gedanken über ein Zusammengehen der infolge des Kriegs unterdrückten Völker Europas," 18 October 1920, 7–8.

76   HL VKF Box 165. no. 3340. "Case Right" military plans [to occupy the regions east of Vienna] by Lt. Colonel Vilmos Rőder, head of the operational planning group of the Chief of Staff, and Opinion on "Case Right" by the Foreign Ministry of Hungary, 22 January 1921, 695–702.

77   MNL OL K64 Bundle 1, fasc. 11 (1920), unnumbered document, Memorandum by Gyula Gömbös, 28 July 1920, 396–97.

Legion, which had been founded in the autumn of 1919, using the military facili-
ties in Csót, and later moved to Zalaegerszeg. In 1920–1921, plans for Russian and
Ukrainian collection camps also emerged. However, from the perspective of the White
International, it was of primary importance that additional German and Austrian
veterans should be able to come and find accommodation in Hungary.[78] This was the
only country where it could be assumed that such a move would not cause any press
scandals during the build-up of forces. (It should be noted though that in Hungary
too there were scandals, and from the spring of 1921, the Hungarian government's
intention was to disband the Austrian Legion, not to deploy it.)[79]

The initial phase of gathering strength would have been followed by the "rever-
sal" of Vienna, in connection with which radical officer circles were already plan-
ning action by the autumn of 1920, but which most decisively came on the agenda
in the spring of 1921. The parties agreed that if an uprising consisting of Bavarian
and Austrian paramilitaries could achieve this (while Hungary sought to prevent
any Czechoslovak intervention without risking war), the main obstacle would be
removed. In this context, the Hungarian side would have been a main financier of
the venture, in line with its previous practice of supporting reactionary movements
from the end of 1919.[80]

The reconstruction of the Danubian region along conservative revolutionary
lines was to be followed by a revision of the Versailles Peace System. The moral
capital gained in the fight against the communists would have been used primarily
to "break up" Czechoslovakia without real intervention from the Entente. In real-
ity, this would hardly have proved possible, but it is all the more instructive that
paramilitary thinking bridged this contradiction. Like pulling rabbits out of a hat,
authors presented the topos of the communist threat once again, arguing that if a
new communist offensive were to be launched, Czechoslovakia would inevitably
turn red, creating an opportunity for intervention.[81] This "copying," the application

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78   Letter from Field Marshall Erich Ludendorff to Miklós Horthy, 19 August 1920, published in
      Szinai and Szűcs, eds, *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, 33–39; MNL OL K64 fasc. 20. (1922) 1921/90res
      "Proposal for the case of a change of course in Austria," containing [a proposal for a] Military
      Agreement between the Hungarian Government and the Commander of Austrian Heimwehr
      forces in Vienna and Lower Austria, Lt. Field Marshall [Josef] Metzger, 2 March 1921.

79   MNL OL K64 Bundle 6, fasc. 20 (1922), no. 1922/155res Note by Colonel [Tihamér] Siménfalvy
      (head of covert operations at the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs), undated.

80   MNL OL K64 Bundle 6, fasc. 20. (1922), no. 1921/197res. Joint memorandum by Rudolf Kanzler
      and [special envoy of the Hungarian government] Gedeon Ráday, 4–5 February 1921, 2–6.

81   This proposition circulated widely following Ludendorff's letter and the memorandum about
      the league of oppressed peoples and was discussed openly by personalities close to paramilitary
      circles. HL VKF Box 161, no. 3075, document no. 1920/25482/ált. Report of the Vienna mission,
      21 October 1920 [pagination illegible].

to another but different situation of a cognitive schema that is not unrealistic in a given context is as natural a learning process in group thinking as it is far-fetched. The idea of the "Czechoslovak action" was not based on any real possibility; in the eyes of those sufficiently invested in the project, it merely 'solved' the theoretical problem of how to begin overturning the Paris Peace System. It is no coincidence that those who remained outside the ambit of paramilitary "groupthink," such as Hungarian government politicians, did their best to nip these wild ideas in the bud.[82]

The final step for the White International would have involved establishing large-scale regional cooperation. This would have made it possible to definitively defeat communism, but also to break with the victorious Western powers and, in particular, with the influence of liberalism. "The formation of a nationally conscious, socially sensitive, uniformly thinking, militarily organised national society"—that is, the preservation of the much-emphasised military spirit and the restoration of militaristic traditions—did not appear in paramilitary thinking merely as a condition for an effective fight against communism.[83] It was primarily an end in itself, and Bolshevism, with its similarly military spirit, was not posited as its alternative. Militarism was in fact directed against the pacifist ideas propagated by liberalism, the foreign ideology that was seen as threatening and seducing the German and Hungarian peoples from within, inspiring them to turn against the ideas that helped these nations survive the trials of history.[84]

The idea of regional blocs organised by the great powers proved to be the point where the internal contradictions of far-right thinking were most clearly revealed. Within the "traditional" framework, the Eastern superpower Russia had always been seen as posing a threat to German Central Europe, not least because of the laws of geopolitics and the Russian *Drang* to the West. This was acknowledged countless times by the right-wing geopolitical thinkers who remained highly influential after World War I, including militant veterans and paramilitary organisations. (Even Ernst Jünger, who later saw the Soviet system as a new strong state, followed this line of thinking in the early 1920s, as a legacy of the World War years.) In the White International, true to its name, ideology resolved this contradiction: a shared worldview promised the possibility of peaceful cooperation against a common enemy, and thus the sovereigntists became reactionary internationalists. This idea was closely linked to one of the popular conceptual pairs of the conservative revolution, which

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82 Prónay, *A határban…*, 209.

83 Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula*, 98; Bodó, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 133–63; Bartha, *Törzsökösök*, 10–11; Bartha, *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre*, 106.

84 MNL OL K64 Bundle 2, fasc. 41, no. 1920/453res. Report No. 8 by Lt. Col. Janky, Annex: "Gedanken über ein Zusammengehen der infolge des Kriegs unterdrückten Völker Europas," 18 October 1920, 7–8.

contrasted the domination of the old Western nations with the rise of the young Eastern nations, as Arthur Moeller van den Bruck did in his *The Third Reich*.[85] For veteran officer circles, who often admired the confident demeanour of Russian *émigré* soldiers, this idea was easy to incorporate into their own conspiratorial worldview. Armed with this idea of ideological kinship, the decisive moment in the fight against Bolshevism also became a promise of victory that would have enabled taking revenge on the enemy of World War I and create a new, reactionary Europe.

Conclusions

The White International's foreign policy worldview and the ideas about international politics of those involved in the Central European paramilitary conspiracies were based to a lesser extent on the experiences of World War I, fought between states. Instead, the chief source of inspiration was the grand myth built around the experiences of the "Red Menace." This intentionally vague term is very accurate and useful for historical analysis, as the right-wing paramilitary worldview was based in part on the thesis of a fundamental identity between the revolutionary and parliamentary left, subsumed under the heading of red movements. Although they feared a communist revolution, they defined agents of subversion in a more encompassing manner, assuming a deep organic interconnection between all left-wing currents and believing that, at the right moment, the supporters of social democracy would also fall in line behind the radicals of the left.

This was a *par excellence* civil war mentality, as it not only identified internal enemies, but also divided society itself into "us" and "them," an in-group facing down enemies that were trying to destroy it. This opposition could only be resolved by the victory of one side, with the other defined not as a political alternative but as a threat to the existence of the collective self. This element was much more prominent in the thinking of the radicals than it generally was on the right. The mainstream currents were linked to the far right by revisionism and the rejection of the peace treaties that ended World War I, but this was not sufficient to legitimise either the ideology of civil war or the far right's mode of operation and institutionalisation, which included both extra-legal and legal elements, and focused on clandestine organisations.

The conscious transnational self-image and operational code of the paramilitary milieu also differed from the truly state-centric thinking of the traditional right wing. Of course, radicals sought to win over friendly conservative governments and enjoyed the resources provided by ideological friendships, covering a wide range of activities from police cooperation to export-import transactions helping to build an economic hinterland for them. But they did not hesitate to negotiate in secret

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85   Geyer, "Ostpolitik," esp. 51–53; Cp. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Dritte Reich*, 91–92.

either—thus, Prime Minister von Kahr learned from the Hungarian secret emissary about the negotiations Kanzler and Bauer had conducted in Budapest a few months earlier.[86] In some cases, they even defied the express will of the government, for example when paramilitary leader Pál Prónay attempted to activate plans for action against Czechoslovakia by sending his saboteurs into Slovak territory.[87] More importantly, since they perceived their enemy as an omnipresent threat that reduced state borders to fiction, they often resorted to similarly 'post-Westphalian' attitudes in organising their own operations.

Taking the above considerations into account, it is understandable why the experiences of cold and hot conflicts approximating those found in a civil war in Munich, Vienna, and Budapest played such a significant role in determining the direction of paramilitary conspiracies in Central Europe. The experiences regarding the nature of the enemy were almost identical, and although the decisions regarding how to best combat the threat differed in their radicalism, they were consistent in their basic logic and civil war mentality. This mentality gave rise to a worldview that can be likened to the "conservative dilemma:" organisations acting in the name of nations and building a cult of the strong state themselves developed a supra-national or inter-national ethic of action. In this spirit, they built a network that, like the Holy Alliance of Europe a hundred years earlier, actually became more similar to its enemy than its members would have cared to admit. The White International, as an informal but contemporary appellation of their network, reflected this transformation and established a model for far-right movements that remained recognisable throughout the twentieth century in the thinking of the heirs to the radical counter-revolutionary movements before, during, and even after World War II.

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87   Prónay, *A határban…*, 209.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Building an Anti-Semitic Network in Europe

Tibor Eckhardt at the Head of the Association of Awakening Hungarians, 1923–1927

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Abstract. This study analyses Tibor Eckhardt's presidency of the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete, ÉME) between 1923 and 1927, showing how he intended to position the movement between the far right of the Horthy era and pro-consolidation conservatives dominating the government. The ÉME quickly transformed from a base for white terror into a nationwide mass organisation and a hub for a transnational network. Involving Italian Fascism, the German *Völkisch* movement, as well as Romanian, Austrian and Russian partners, Eckhardt's efforts were aimed at the transnational expansion of Hungarian racialist thinking. The process culminated in the 1925 anti-Semitic congress held in Budapest, while it also showed the movement's limitations. Internal contradictions within the organisation, conflicts of its transnational allies, political isolation, and pressure from the consolidated authoritarian system ultimately led to the decline of the ÉME. The study points out that the ÉME was not only an important part of Hungarian history, but was also significant in the intertwined histories of the far right in (Central) Europe. Thus it serves as an example of the networked, permeable nature of early Fascism. Through the figure of Eckhardt, it also highlights the key role of political entrepreneurs in the institutionalisation of the far right.

Keywords: Tibor Eckhardt, Association of Awakening Hungarians, racial protection, transnational networks, far-right movements

The Association of Awakening Hungarians and Tibor Eckhardt

At the end of 1924, the Association of Awakening Hungarians (Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete—ÉME) held a two-day national congress at the headquarters of another characteristic Hungarian far-right organisation, the Hungarian National Defence Association (Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület—MOVE), attended by four hundred guests. The event, which turned out to be a parade for the Hungarian far right, was attended by the national leaders, the leaders of rural districts, and illustrious speakers.[1] On the first day, President Tibor Eckhardt, Co-President Dezső Buday,

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1   Both were regular speakers at events organised by racialist movements. Kund, "Méhelÿ Lajos és a magyar fajbiológiai kísérlete," 246; Kund, "A faj uralmi akaratának útja," 43.

and two heavyweights of Hungarian racial biology, Lajos Méhelÿ and Sándor Keltz, gave presentations. On the following day, the radical priest Ottokár Prohászka and Budapest politician Károly Wolff spoke alongside several prominent racialist politicians. Eckhardt argued for "close and strong international cooperation between nationalist peoples and nations" and summarised the main points of the racialist worldview. On the one hand, he claimed that having Hungarian as one's mother tongue was not sufficient for someone to be Hungarian. On the other hand, he also stated that "in a biological sense, we can hardly speak of races today. However, we can speak of historical races."[2] His lecture was more permissive and moderate in this regard. It differed from the views of Méhelÿ, who spoke at the same event, idealising "pure-blooded Hungarianness" and demanding anti-Jewish "race protection laws." Keltz also denounced "blood mixing" and referred to "mongrels."[3] However, most of the audience were certainly not historians of ideas, and their interests were probably better represented by Iván Héjjas, who, after arriving amid great ovation, immediately "jumped onto the presidential podium and said the following: »I am fed up with speeches. If you have come to the same conclusion, then we have already achieved the goal we set for ourselves.«"[4]

We do not know whether President Tibor Eckhard, who closed the meeting after this—and who in the meantime had to arrange for the evacuation of a liberal press employee[5]—reflected on the nature and importance of his association and his own role in the ÉME.[6] Furthermore, additional complications arose at the evening

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2   "A zsidó nagytőke okozta a világháborút" [Jewish Big Capital Caused the World War]. *A Nép*, 23 December 1924, 3–4.

3   Iván Héjjas (1890–1950 or 1951), landowner in Kecskemét, punitive detachment commander, politician. He served as an officer in World War I, retiring as a reserve first lieutenant. After the war, he was one of the leaders of the counter-revolutionary movements in the Kecskemét area. As commander of a National Army military police unit, he was responsible for the massacres carried out between the Danube and Tisza rivers. He and his men also took part in the 1921 uprising in western Hungary, and he was one of the leaders of the Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete (ÉME—Association of Awakening Hungarians). Between 1927 and 1931, he was a member of parliament for the Hungarian National Independence Party, commonly named as Fajvédő Párt (Racial Protection Party). He played a nominal role in the 1938–1939 Subcarpathian small war. After World War II, he settled in Spain, where he died. Bodó, "Iván Héjjas, The Life of a Counterrevolutionary," 247–79; Kántás, *Héjjas Iván paramilitáris vezető* és *különítménye*.

4   "A magyar feltámadás útján a keresztény nemzeti gondolat jegyében" [On the Path to Hungarian Resurrection, in the Spirit of Christian Nationalism]. *Szózat*, 23 December 1924, 2.

5   Gál, Imre. "Az ébredő kongresszuson botrányos jelenetek közben inzultálták az *Esti Kurír* munkatársát" [In Scandalous Scenes at the Awakening Congress, a Staff Member of *Esti Kurír* was Insulted]. *Esti Kurír*, 23 December 1924, 1–3.

6   On the alleged rivalry between Eckhardt and Héjjas, who represented the most extreme elements in the organisation: "Cselekvő Magyarok Héjjastól kértek védelmet a rendőrséggel szemben"

banquet when, following a toast, the police launched an investigation against an unknown perpetrator on charges of contempt of Regent Miklós Horthy.[7] Eckhardt probably did not know about the investigation the next day when he reported on the association's annual activities to the general meeting. He correctly stated that in 1924 the focus was on developing the organisational structure, which he believed the government had hindered by prohibiting university students (as well as college and high school students) from joining, and sought to keep civil servants away from the ÉME through a confidential decree. As suggested by Eckhardt, the congress decided to send Hitler a telegram "greeting him on the occasion of his release from captivity."[8] The Bavarian delegate, who was none other than Kurt Lüdecke, who also gave a presentation to the assembly entitled "An Introduction to Related German Movements," listened to all this with great pleasure.[9] The Nazi envoy praised by Eckhardt tried to skirt the debacle of the Beer Hall Putsch with a rhetorical sleight of hand, while watching the Hungarian movement's show of force with envy. Afterwards, behind closed doors, he tried to convince Gyula Gömbös,[10] who was more sceptical, and in this case somewhat more realistic than Eckhardt, that he was serious about Hitler's unbroken chances of coming to power.[11]

What were the strengths and profile of this Hungarian organisation apparently capable of bringing together several factions of the extreme right wing? Who was the highly capable president, Tibor Eckhardt, who had to navigate between the far-right political ecosystem that had developed in the early 1920s and the Horthy-era government elite, which had already begun to consolidate and had joined the League

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[Active Hungarians Asked Héjjas for Protection against the Police]. *Esti Kurír*, 6 January 1925, 1–2; "Héjjas Ivánt akarják vezéreknek a cselekvő ébredők" [The Active Awakening Movement Wants Iván Héjjas as Their Leader]. *A Mai Nap*, 6 March 1925, 3.

7   Eckhardt suspected that István Lendvai's toast was misinterpreted, as he did not mean to refer to the governor who excused himself from the congress when he said that "it is not enough for Christian society to be with us in spirit and thought, but it must also bear witness to its convictions through deeds". Cp. "Eckhardt garantálja, hogy az ÉME-vel kapcsolatban nem lesz több rendzavarás és bombamerénylet" [Eckhardt Guarantees that There Will Be No More Disturbances or Bomb Attacks Related to the ÉME. *Esti Kurír*, 30 December 1924, 5.

8   "A magyar feltámadás útján a keresztény nemzeti gondolat jegyében" [On the Path to Hungarian Resurrection, in the Spirit of Christian Nationalism]. *Szózat*, 23 December 1924, 1–4; Cp. MNL OL P2249. Az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének alapszabályai és fegyelmi rendtartása. Budapest, 1924, 30.

9   "Sorakozó az ébredő gondolat mellett" [Lining Up Alongside the Awakening Thought]. *A Nép*, 19 December 1924, 6.

10 Gyula Gömbös (1886–1936), military officer, far-right politician, one of the first presidents of MOVE. He was the leader of the Hungarian racialists and then Prime Minister of Hungary between 1932 and 1936.

11 Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 242–44.

of Nations, led by Prime Minister István Bethlen?[12] In addition to these simpler questions, we should also understand who Kurt Lüdecke was, how he came to Budapest, and what he was doing at the most important event of the Awakening Hungarians. In my study, which summarises Tibor Eckhardt's activities as president of the ÉME between 1923 and 1927, based on the available Hungarian and foreign-language literature, the contemporary press and archival sources, I will highlight, after providing a background to the Hungarian context, the transnational ideological and institutional network in which the ÉME operated, an organisation that usually features primarily in connection with its activities in Hungary. Therefore, I place particular emphasis on describing the international embeddedness of the ÉME and mapping the contemporary far-right networks, pointing out that the connections they established in the early 1920s, during the heyday of early radicalism, continued to function in the middle of the decade, albeit with some changes. This was despite the fact that these years—marked by the names of Gustav Stresemann, Ignaz Seipel, and István Bethlen—are usually interpreted as a period of the consolidation and strengthening of the right-wing centre. However, a closer look at the period also reveals that the far-right movements' reserves of strength were soon exhausted, and that by the second half of the decade, the large networks had worn themselves out. At the same time, the transnational dimension of the ideology remained very much intact: even in their marginalised state, in Hungary the ÉME and Eckhardt were among the main sources of the discourse promoting the applicability of Italian Fascism in Hungary. In this respect, they paved the way for the general right-wing radicalisation of the 1930s.

The ÉME was formed during the Hungarian democratic revolution of 1918 and came to the attention of the wider public in January 1919.[13] Initially, its main objective was to preserve (and later regain) Hungary's historical borders. In addition, members of this far-right association were characterised by vociferous anti-Semitism and a counter-revolutionary 'White' sentiment that was later common to the movement. The ÉME developed into a social base for the Hungarian counter-revolution led by Miklós Horthy, who came to power in the autumn of 1919. It was a genuine mass organisation, although partly due to its size, the membership was not homogeneous. And the issue of legal continuity with regard to the office of the monarchy in Hungary also divided their ranks. In addition to the free electors (i.e., the anti-Habsburg camp) closely associated with Regent Miklós Horthy, the legitimists, who stood on the ground of Habsburg legal continuity, also played an important role in the ÉME. In March 1920, i.e., at the time of Horthy's election as governor, the well-known legitimist György Szmrecsányi even became the president of the

12   In detail: Romsics, I., *Bethlen István*, 276–377.

13   "Az »Ébredő Magyarok« gyűlése a Gólyavárban" [The Gathering of the 'Awakening Hungarians' in Gólyavár]. *Alkotmány*, 21 January 1919, 6.

organisation.[14] The question of the legitimate ruler, which emerged as a major watershed divide, was still secondary at that time. The issues that united the membership proved more significant: monarchism, irredentism, and anti-Semitism.

Tibor Eckhardt, a prominent politician in the free electors and the racialist movement, was already a member of the ÉME in October 1921, at the time of the break between the free electors and the legitimists, i.e., during Charles IV's second attempt at returning to Hungary.[15] Between 1920 and the summer of 1922, the young politician, who had become related to the Regent through his first marriage in 1913, headed the press department of the Prime Minister's Office. Given the nature of press control at the time, this was a fairly extensive portfolio—in contemporary terms, he may be called a "press dictator"—while at the same time putting his conspiratorial skills to the test meddling in the White International around 1920.[16] The initially pro-government racialist group lost much of its political weight after the consolidation of the government's powers and the 1922 elections. Thus, in the summer of 1922, Prime Minister István Bethlen was able to part ways with his press secretary, who had been heavily attacked by the opposition and who could console himself with a seat in the National Assembly (which he had won before his departure). The conflicts between the racialists, who were unwilling to come to terms with the consolidation process, and the government did not subside afterwards. In fact, in August 1923, the radical group broke away from the ruling party, and in October 1924 founded the Hungarian National Independence Party, commonly known as the Racial Protection Party (Fajvédő Párt). The leader of the opposition party was Gyula Gömbös, with Tibor Eckhardt as his second in command.

During the early counter-revolutionary period, the ÉME was synonymous with white terror,[17] then with the street violence that continued throughout 1922–1923, and with various far-right conspiracies. The threads also led to the ÉME in connection with the 1923 "Ulain Coup," an abortive offshoot of the early Bavarian Nazi conspiracies, and Tibor Eckhardt himself was also compromised in this matter. Although the liberal opposition demanded that the ÉME should be banned because of the terrorist acts, and the government occasionally made gestures and promises in this regard, a thorough investigation and public scrutiny of the association's early years was not at all in István Bethlen's interest.[18] Meanwhile, the association, which

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14   Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 56.

15   *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 27, 316–18 (19 November 1924).

16   Romsics, G.*, Összeomlás és útkeresés*, 532.

17   Bodó, *The White Terror*.

18   The complicated relationship between the ÉME and the government is reflected in the recurring but never fully clarified issue of the weapons left behind in the association's premises. *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 19, 384–86 (23 January 1924); *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 27, 316–18 (19 November 1924).

was operating in a rather uncoordinated manner and had seen better days, was experiencing an internal crisis.[19] István Pálóczy-Horváth, the national president, resigned in the summer of 1923 and was replaced by a five-member steering committee, including Pál Prónay and Iván Héjjas.[20] The Minister of the Interior obliged the association to elect a new leadership and draw up new statutes or face a ban, but the renewal of the association kept being delayed.[21]

Eckhardt, the former press secretary, was elected national president at the ÉME's national assembly on 16 December 1923. "Without waiting for the question of whether he would accept the nomination, the audience stood up and celebrated Tibor Eckhardt at length," whom Iván Héjjas announced as the new national president. In his inaugural speech, the new president promised to devote "all his activities" to the association and launched a lengthy tirade against the Jews and Freemasons, setting himself the goal of winning the trust of the working class. "[W]e must cooperate with the triumphant Fascism led by Mussolini, Spanish Prime Minister Primo de Rivera, who launched the fight against corruption in Spain […], and our Bavarian swastika-wielding comrades," said the president of the social association, who was confident that "the first congress of the White International" would be held in Budapest. The politician, who was not yet affiliated with any party at the time, committed himself to "strictly keeping party politics away from the association" and expected iron discipline and the avoidance of "individual actions" (i.e., atrocities) from its members. The general meeting finally accepted the statutes amended.[22]

It is quite possible that Eckhardt consulted with certain members of the government about the conditions under which the association would operate,[23] but the new president of the Awakening Hungarians did not arrive at the headquarters on Sörház Street as Bethlen's liquidator.[24] On the contrary: he wanted to forge a political hinterland out of the *pro forma* depoliticised ÉME, similar to what Gömbös had done earlier with MOVE.[25] However, Eckhardt's presidency could not have started

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19   According to a police report dated 10 December 1945, the association's stronger rural groups, concentrated in large cities, at one time had "tens of thousands of members." BFL VI.15.c 1. small box (26). Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete elnevezésű feloszlatott egyesület adatai.

20   "Az Ébredők Héjjast és Prónayt választották vezéreiknek" [The Awakened Chose Héjjas and Prónay as Their Leaders]. *A Nép*, 19 June 1923, 2.

21   "Eckhardt Tibor lesz az Ébredők elnöke" [Tibor Eckhardt Will Be the President of the Awakened]. *Esti Kurir*, 16 December 1923, 3.

22   "A keresztény, integer Magyarország az ébredő programm" [Christian, Greater Hungary: The Awakening Program]. *A Nép*, 18 December 1923, 3.

23   Serfőző, "A titkos társaságok és a konszolidáció," 35.

24   Later, he himself expressed this opinion. Kádár Lynn, *Eckhardt Tibor amerikai évei*, 43.

25   Vonyó, *Gömbös Gyula és a hatalom*, 153–64.

worse,[26] because no sooner had he been elected than another assassination attempt shook the country. On 26 December 1923, a bomb exploded at a ball held by the Jewish Women's Association in Csongrád, injuring several people and killing a guest and a waitress. Once again, the clues led to the ÉME and Iván Héjjas.[27] Immediately after the incident, calls for the dissolution of the ÉME intensified,[28] and Eckhardt distanced himself from the attack.[29] His move proved successful, as the association's amended statutes were approved by the minister of the interior in February 1924.[30]

In subsequent months, Eckhardt fulfilled his promise and devoted almost all his energy to the ÉME. He began a nationwide reorganisation[31] and, according to a 1925 propaganda article, spent five to six hours a day at the headquarters dealing with the association's affairs.[32] According to an enthusiastic article by Lehel Kádár, within a year the association had "transformed into a large, well-structured organisation capable of mobilising huge crowds, the likes of which no other country in Europe except the Fascist state could boast."[33] While the president proclaimed that "the Association of Awakening Hungarians was not a political association,"[34] it did in fact openly acknowledge its political goals, such as defending the Numerus Clausus Law that restricted the admission of Jewish students to higher education.[35]

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26 For Eckhardt's aims, cp. "Az ÉME megújhodása" [The ÉME Revival]. *Szózat*, 18 December 1923, 1.

27 Kántás, ed., *A csongrádi bombamerénylet*, 46–47.

28 Cp. "Csongrád" [Csongrád]. *Világ*, 29 December 1923, 1.

29 "Eckhardt Tibor a merényletről és a liberális offenzíváról nyilatkozik *A NÉP*-nek" [Tibor Eckhardt Comments on the Assassination Attempt and the Liberal Offensive in an Interview with *Nép*]. *A Nép*, 1 January 1924, 3.

30 MNL OL P2249, ÉME. Az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének alapszabályai és fegyelmi rendtartása. Budapest, 1924.

31 MNL PML XIV.2.a. 6. box, 72. pallium, 3–4. Letters from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre. August 4 and August 6, 1925. Endre was chief magistrate of Gödöllő at the time, and his name was associated with radical anti-Semitic measures and social policy developments. During the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, Endre, as State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, was one of the main figures responsible for the deportation of Hungarian Jews. In 1946, he was sentenced to death and executed. Vági, *Endre László*.

32 e. e.: "Látogatás az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületében" [Visit to the Association of Awakening Hungarians]. *Szózat*, 20 August 1925, 1.

33 Kádár, Lehel. "Ébredő magyarság és nemzet" [The Awakening of Hungarian Identity and Nationhood]. *Szózat*, 21 December 1924, 2. For the reasons mentioned above, a "close correlation" can be observed between the new leadership of ÉME and the prominent figures of the later Racial Protection Party. Zinner, *Az Ébredők fénykora*, 183.

34 *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 37, 126 (1 December 1925).

35 "Eljön a pillanat, amikor összetörünk minden árulót" [The Moment Will Come when We Crush All Traitors!]! *A Nép*, 17 February 1925, 3–4. Eckhardt was an honorary *dominus* of

The ÉME in far-right continental networks

However, the ÉME served not only as a political springboard for the president, but also as a domestic bastion for the White International's plans, which were not abandoned even after 1920. From Sörház Street, the Austrian–Bavarian–Hungarian conspiracy could also be developed in the direction of Italy, as the three leaders of the association had already made contact with the Fascists striving for power in Italy in July 1921.[36] In the summer of 1924, the new president of the ÉME travelled to Paris, London, and Rome on a four-week "study trip,"[37] during which he "established contact with the leaders of similar organisations in Western countrie."[38] In fact, he attended an anti-Semitic congress in Paris, which was convened to "organise the White International," as Lüdecke recalled in his memoirs.[39] Lüdecke was a dubious character, who made his wealth through fraud. He saw an opportunity in the emerging National Socialist movement and sought connections and capital for Hitler primarily abroad.[40] In the last week of August 1923, he had already visited Budapest on Hitler's behalf to secure foreign policy support for the planned far-right coup in Germany. Lüdecke came into contact with Hungarian racialists, including Eckhardt, while working to deepen relations between Mussolini and Hitler.[41] One of the driving forces behind the 1924 initiative was Umberto Benigni, an Italian Fascist priest and journalist with a university chair, who operated an anti-modernist network of Italian Fascists, French Catholics, Russian *émigrés*, Spanish monarchists, British ultra-Tories, and German National Socialists under the name Intesa Romana di Difesa Sociala (Roman Social Defence Agreement). He maintained contacts in Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Egypt, Canada, the United States, Romania, and

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the Werbőczy Fraternal Association, which brought together law students of the broader Turul Association, the largest and markedly right-radical student association of the time. Cp. "Verbőczy B. E. tb. dominuszai-nak felavatása" [Inauguration of Verbőczy B. E. tb. as Dominus]. *A Nép,* 20 March 1925, 10.

36   On Tibor Herkély, Egon Turchányi and Pál Lipovniczky's trip to Italy: MNL OL P2249 Series 7/3. AZ ÉME története, 10.

37   "Eckhardt Tibor külföldi tanulmányútra ment" [Tibor Eckhardt Went Abroad on a Study Trip]. *Szózat,* 2 July 1924, 6.

38   "Eckhardt Tibor az ÉME választmányi ülésén beszámolt külföldi útjáról" [Tibor Eckhardt Reported on His Trip Abroad at the ÉME Board Meeting]. *Szózat,* 17 September 1924, 3.

39   Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler,* 231–32.

40   Smith, Jr.: *Kurt Lüdecke,* 597–99.

41   Thoss, *Der Ludendorff-Kreis,* 471–75; Fenske: *Konservativismus und Rechtsradikalismus,* 130; Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler,* 128–29. On Lüdecke's characterisation: Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris,* 316–17. Lüdecke later continued his dubious business dealings and National Socialist agitation in the United States, then returned to Germany after Hitler had come to power, where he was arrested. On his release, he returned to the USA. Fischer, *Hitler & America,* 26.

Hungary. Between 1923 and 1926, this secretive network organised international anti-Semitic conferences in Rome, Paris, Salzburg, and Budapest.[42]

Another key figure in contemporary anti-Semitic internationalism, alongside Benigni, was Georg de Pottere, a retired diplomat of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, who founded the Aryan–Christian Cultural Association in Vienna around 1923.[43] The series of conspiratorial, secretly organised European conferences, in which Eckhardt and the ÉME also participated, began with the meeting Pottere organised in Vienna on 11–13 March 1921. At the 1921 Vienna conference, it was decided that a "world congress" would be convened in Budapest in September of that year for the "protection of Christian nations," but at that time this did not take place. Instead, in 1923, with Benigni's effective cooperation, a "study conference" was held in Rome on "research into the Jewish question," followed by a meeting in Paris at the end of June 1924, attended by Eckhardt. Its participants issued a joint statement declaring that the materialistic Jewry operated as a secret organisation with the aim of world domination.[44]

In order to continue organising, the Hungarian politician travelled from the French capital to London with Lüdecke—who had been convicted of blackmail in Munich a few months earlier.[45] In London, Eckhardt spoke with "friends of the Hungarian cause," such as Lord Newton and the editors of *The Morning Post* and *The Times*.[46] Of these, *The Morning Post* was also disseminating the Judeo-Bolshevik myth, thus could be counted amongst ideological allies.[47] From London, Eckhardt travelled on to Rome. Here, too, he was able to spend his time usefully, thanks to the "comradely agreement" concluded between the leadership of the ÉME and the "presidium of the Italian Fascists," as phrased by Hungarian newspaper reports. In the second half of September 1925, a twelve-day "pilgrimage" to Italy at a discount price was advertised for ordinary members of the association, signalling the tighter

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42   Valbousquet, "Transnational Antisemitic Networks," 59–61. There is also data on an interna-
       tional conference with a similar theme held in Florence in 1923. Brechtken, "Madagaskar für
       die Juden," 31, 37.

43   De Pottere lived in Budapest during World War II. On his adventurous life: Benz, ed., *Handbuch
       des Antisemitismus*, vol. 2/1, 649–50.

44   Hagemeister, *Die 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion' vor Gericht*, 68–70. Representatives of the
       ÉME participated in the 1921 Vienna Conference on behalf of Hungary. At their suggestion,
       Budapest was designated as the next venue, and following their proposal, a decision was made
       to establish a "Christian World Alliance" to be managed from Budapest. É.M.E. *Hivatalos
       Tudósító*, 15 April 1921, 15.

45   Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler*, 232; Smith, *Kurt Lüdecke*, 599; Eckhardt's and Lüdecke's joint journey
       is mentioned in: Schubert, *Die Anfänge der nationalsozialistischen Aussenpolitik*, 188.

46   *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 43, 106 (10 May 1926). On Lord Newton: Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat*,
       114, 164.

47   Hanebrink, *A Spectre Haunting Europe*, 18, 30, 34.

links.[48] The president of the ÉME did not miss the anti-Semitic congress de Pottere organised in Salzburg in April 1925, which was also attended by three leading Nazi politicians, Alfred Rosenberg, Heinrich Himmler, and Ernst Boepple, in addition to Lüdecke, Benigni, and the White Russian *émigré* leader Biskupsky.[49] For all these reasons, Miklós Kozma, the head of the Hungarian Telegraph Office called Eckhardt a member of the "interparliamentary international anti-Semitic alliance."[50]

The ÉME published its own international bulletin. *The Courrier Danubien/ Donaukurier* was intended to help build foreign contacts. Published at least weekly in French and German (and "when necessary" also in English and Italian), a lithograph "reproduced in limited numbers on a copying machine" and distributed abroad, it also sought to connect Hungary to the "anti-Bolshevik international network." Editors even approached Prime Minister István Bethlen to request support for their initiative. Pál Lipovniczky was listed as the publisher, Tibor Eckhardt as the editor-in-chief, and the ÉME headquarters at 3 Sörház Street served as the "temporary" headquarters of the periodical. According to the association's notary, in the mid-1920s, the ÉME's lithograph was shipped to 250 newspapers and organisations.[51] Meanwhile, according to the German ambassador to Rome, by mid-August 1925, another visit by ÉME representatives to Rome had become "imminent."[52]

In late September 1925, Eckhardt was organising a "confidential" conference with the participation of nationalist and anti-Semitic organisations from twelve countries. He was also expecting representatives of Hungarian students to attend the meeting. A letter by Eckhardt confirms that he had been "in constant contact with the invitees for years."[53] He had indeed spent several months organising the

48   "A tegnapi ellenfelek – a mai barátoknak és – a holnapi testvéreknek" [Yesterday's Opponents—Today's Friends and Tomorrow's Brothers]. *A Nép,* 29 July 1925, 4; "»Mindenki adja meg a fejbőségét! A nyakbőségét is!«" ["Everyone Give Your Head Size! And Your Neck Size Too!"] *Népszava*, 7 August 1925, 3.

49   Hagemeister, *Die 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion' vor Gericht*, 71. Biskupsky was one of the key figures in the 1920 Bavarian–Austrian–Hungarian–Russian military cooperation experiment in Budapest. Kolontári: *Szélhámosok, kalandorok, fantaszták*, 218–23.

50   MNL OL K429 small box 47. Amerika 1921–1926, 102. Letter from Miklós Kozma to Vilmos Mayer, 27 May 1925.

51   MNL OL P2249 Series 7. Letter from an unknown author to István Bethlen, 9 June 1925. MNL OL P2249 Series7/3. Az ÉME története, 18.

52   Németh, *Magyarok és németek (1914–1934)*, 614. The planned journey to Rome is confirmed by a letter from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre, 29 August 1925. MNL PML XIV.2.a. 6. box, 72. pallium, 6.

53   Letter from Tibor Eckhardt to Béla Oláh, 23 September 1925. Facsimile published in: Falus, Ferenc. "A Cuza-Eckhardt-Gömbös kongresszus titkaiból" [Secrets of the Cuza–Eckhardt–Gömbös Congress]. *Az Est*, 7 February 1926, 5.

conference held in Budapest between 3 and 6 October 1925. The press reported on the preparations,[54] and there were several preliminary meetings abroad.[55] The *Esti Kurir* was the first Hungarian newspaper to report on the Budapest event, which was attended by Benigni and de Pottere,[56] highlighting that Professor Alexandru Cuza, the anti-Semitic "prophet" of the Romanian far right, was also present.[57] Perhaps Eckhardt even recalled his own family memories of Czernowitz and Radautz in conversation with Cuza, the professor of political economy from Iaşi, whose obsessive antisemitism may have impressed him. That said, the Romanian professor's ethno-nationalism was not confined to Jews, and his xenophobia also amply extended to the Hungarian minority, which represented a problem for Eckhardt's circle and the broader public alike.[58] After the publication of a critical article in the liberal *Esti Kurir*, the radical mouthpiece *Szózat* was forced to say that the event was no more than a "private" meeting in the Hungarian capital, with guests coming "on behalf of the entire civilised world." The participants also agreed that "their peoples were not each other's enemies, that all nations have only one enemy, the […] Jewish power." In order to jointly fight this "Jewish power," they issued a written agreement (signed by Tibor Eckhardt on the Hungarian side). Subsequently, the national ÉME leadership decided to "immediately establish contact with the anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik organisations of the two neighbouring countries [meaning Austria and Romania]."[59] De Pottere also proposed the establishment of an international anti-Semitic office based in Vienna, which he immediately undertook to lead.[60]

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54   "Eckhardt Tibor A NÉP és a SZÓZAT kultúrestéjén bejelentette, hogy legközelebb összeül a nacionalisták nemzetközi kongresszusa Budapesten" [Tibor Eckhardt Announced at the Cultural Evening of *Nép* and *Szózat* that the Next International Congress of Nationalists Will Be Held in Budapest]. *A Nép*, 28 April 1925, 5. Cp. "Ez már döfi! Vagy a nacionalisták internacionális kongresszusa Budapesten" [That's Awesome! Or the International Congress of Nationalists in Budapest]. *Népszava*, 28 April 1925, 13.

55   MNL OL P2249 Series 7/3. Az ÉME története, 18.

56   Forno, "Comunisti, ebrei e massoni," 89; Heinen, *'Arhanghelului Mihail,'* 304.

57   "Nemzetközi titkos antiszemita kongresszus volt Budapesten, melyen a román Cuza professzor is résztvett" [There Was an International Secret Anti-Semitic Congress in Budapest, which Was also Attended by Romanian Professor Cuza]. *Esti Kurir*, 13 October 1925, 3.

58   Cuza protested against the inclusion of a section protecting minorities in the Romanian constitution. Cp. Gombos and Neumann, "Antiszemitizmus és numerus clausus," 160. On Cuza's anti-Semitism, which combined cultural and biological as well as anti-Judaistic approaches: Trencsényi, *A nép lelke*, 135–38; Miskolczy, *A Vasgárda*, 21–22. Tibor Eckhardt's paternal grandfather, Wilhelm Eckhardt, was born in Radautz (Rădăuţi) and attended secondary school in Czernowitz (Chernivtsi). ÖStA KA CL UR 8. 1853. Karton 623.

59   "Az antiszemitizmus és antibolsevizmus európai vezérei a magyar fővárosban" [European Leaders of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Bolshevism in the Hungarian Capital]. *Szózat*, 14 October 1925, 1–2.

60   Hagemeister, *Die 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion' vor Gericht*, 72.

On the Romanian side, it was the short-lived but important far-right organisation Alexandru Cuza founded in 1923 under the name Liga Apărării Naționale Creştine (National Christian Defence League) that was represented at the Budapest congress.[61] The party founder was accompanied by the ultra-nationalist Romanian student leader Ion I. Moța, who by then had already committed a politically motivated murder.[62] The third delegate was Corneliu Şumuleanu, a chemistry professor who, like Moța, later joined the leadership of the Iron Guard.[63] General Wrangel's namesake, Baron Constantin Wrangel, a leader of the Russian colony in Hungary during World War II, also checked into one of the hotels used by the guests.[64] The Budapest meeting was attended by Russian *émigré* General Aleksandr Nechvolodov, who had also appeared at the 1924 Paris conference, and Jules Molle, the anti-Jewish politician and mayor of French-ruled Algiers.

The German contingent was more significant. Eckhardt's invitation was accepted by Theodor Fritsch, the doyen of German *völkisch* anti-Semitism, Ulrich Fleischhauer, who specialised in publishing anti-Semitic work, and Ernst Boepple, who ran a Nazi publishing company. Fritsch had participated in the first international anti-Semitic congress in Dresden as early as 1882 (!), while Fleischhauer was one of the main propagandists of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, who, after the National Socialists had come to power, founded the *Welt-Dienst* propaganda and news agency together with de Pottere, intended to be a "supranational aid and information office."[65] An NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) leader, Alfred Rosenberg was also present at the Budapest conference. The Nazi politician with Baltic roots was the most important ideologue of National Socialism and one of the initiates of the White International between 1920 and 1923. After Hitler had been released from prison on 20 December 1924, Rosenberg devoted all his time to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, of which he was editor-in-chief, and to the magazine *Der Weltkampf*, which he founded in mid-1924 to deal specifically with the Jewish

61   To this organisation: Iordachi, "Charisma, Politics and Violence," 38.

62   MNL OL P2249-7-2. Kivonat az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének 1925. évi október 7-én tartott igazgatósági ülésének jegyzőkönyvéről [Summary Minutes of the Association of Awakening Hungarians Directors' Meeting on 7 October 1925].

63   Cârstocea, "Native Fascists, Transnational Anti-Semites," 221.

64   "Cuzát és társait mint irredentákat szállásolta el az Ébredő Magyarok Egyesületének titkára a Bristolban" [Cuza and His Companions Were Accommodated as Irredentists by the Secretary of the Association of Awakening Hungarians in Bristol]." *Esti Kurir*, 17 October 1925, 2. On Wrangel: ÁBTL 3.1.6.–P–432, 179–180; 3.1.6.–P–431, 37–41; 3.1.6.–P–110, 23; 26. I would like to thank Attila Kolontári for his help in identifying Constantin Wrangel.

65   *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 2/1, 235–36, 259. *Handbuch des Antisemitismus*, vol. 5, 644–46.

question.[66] On 20 October 1925, after being listed among the participants, Rosenberg wrote an editorial in the *Völkischer Beobachter* about the anti-Semitic conference in Budapest. He called the event a "personal meeting", which Eckhardt disguised as an ornithological congress. In the same article, Rosenberg outlined the need to deport European Jews, mentioning Uganda as a possible destination.[67] However, according to his later recollections, Madagascar was chosen at the Budapest conference.[68] What seems certain is that the plan for deportation to Madagascar, which was originally conceived in one of Paul de Lagarde's 1885 articles, was revived during the series of the international anti-Semitic conferences held between 1921 and 1925.[69]

All this should not blind one to the difficulties of working out shared positions between the various platforms of the European far right. There was the question of race—and Hungary's racialist leaders themselves tended to reflect the complex Central European origins of the Hungarian population, German and Slovak ancestors being especially common. Perhaps influenced by this or by the realities of "Christian" Hungary, the concept of race tended not to be reduced to the notion of biological descent. Eckhardt's article in a 1926 German-language volume, which compiled the writings of "anti-Semitic leaders of nations" such as Rosenberg, highlighted these disagreements. The president of the ÉME, who represented his country in the volume, does not mention Hungary's revisionist goals here, but claims that the Hungarian people need to fight only against the Jews in order to liberate themselves. Eckhardt, quoting sociologist Gustave Le Bon, also argued that due to centuries of continuous intermarriage, it is no longer possible to speak of race among civilised peoples in a biological sense. "Only with mutual respect and mutual understanding—and not with chauvinism striving for superiority—can we successfully defend the legitimate demands of nationalist groups in a peaceful and sincere manner against the international revolutionary movement," he wrote in 1926.[70] However, this thesis was incompatible with National Socialist ideology. The NSDAP and its leader consistently rejected the idea of internationalist nationalism in the first half of the 1920s.[71] As

66 Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg: Hitlers Chefideologe*, 84–88. On Molle: Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism*, 132–35. On Rosenberg: Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism*, especially ch. 1–2. On Fritsch, other participants in the Budapest congress, alleged plans, and conflicts: "A budapesti antiszemita »világkongresszus« nemzeti diktatúrák kikiáltását határozta el Közép-Európa államaiban" [The Anti-Semitic 'World Congress' in Budapest Decided to Proclaim National Dictatorships in the States of Central Europe]. *Világ*, 21 April 1926.

67 A. R.: Der "Raubvögel" Kongreß in Budapest. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 October 1925, 1.

68 Hagemeister, "Die »Protokolle der Weisen von Zion« vor Gericht," 72.

69 Brechtken, "Madagaskar für die Juden," 16, 31–38.

70 Eckhardt, "Internationaler Nationalismus," 47–52. (The text is a revised version of his speech delivered at the 1924 national assembly of ÉME.)

71 Szinai, *Antiszemita internacionálé*, 16.

early as 1920, Hitler had already made the superiority of the Nordic race party doctrine, a thesis that was propagated first and foremost by one of Eckhardt's National Socialist acquaintances, Alfred Rosenberg.[72] Published in two volumes in 1926, *Mein Kampf* envisioned a worldwide struggle of the superior "Aryan" race against inferior races, above all "the Jews."[73] The position of the Hungarian people in this hierarchy was unclear. While such disagreements did not destroy the anti-Semitic cooperation outright, they represented areas of (potential) conflict and may at least partially account for the divergent paths many of the movements took in the 1930s.

However, the pro-government, liberal, and social democratic Hungarian press did not take issue with Rosenberg's presence, but rather with that of the Romanian participants,[74] and focussed especially on Eckhardt, who at that time was accusing the Hungarian Social Democrats of being influenced by foreign powers.[75] The president of the ÉME proudly accepted responsibility for inviting Cuza, which the racialist newspapers sought to defend,[76] while Hungarian-language newspapers in Romania were already reporting that Gömbös and Eckhardt would be speaking at Cuza's upcoming public event in Oradea (Nagyvárad, Großwardein).[77] This was too much to bear in the revisionist Hungarian public climate of the day. Predictably, the cooperation came to nought. In fact, the anti-Semitic international was fraught with several conflicts of interest,[78] and although a conference was held in Denmark in 1926 (with Hungarian participation), there is no data on any significant gatherings

72   For a contemporary quote from Hitler, see: Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans*, 23–24, 29.

73   Hitler: *Mein Kampf, I–II*; Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936: Hubris*, 400–04.

74   Cp. e.g., "Magyar fajvédők barátkozása román magyarfalókkal" [Hungarian Racialists Befriending Romanian Hungarian-Haters]. *8 Órai Ujság*, 15 October 1925, 3; "Eckhardték a magyar gyűlölő román vezérrel" [Eckhardt's Circle with the Hungarian-Hating Romanian Leader]. *Az Est*, 15 October 1925, 3–4; "Cuza barátai és szövetségesei"[Cuza's Friends and Allies]. *Népszava*, 15 October 1925, 8.

75   "Eckhardt Tibor két arca a mentelmi bizottság és az antiszemita konferencia tükrében [The Two Faces of Tibor Eckhardt in Light of the Immunity Committee and the Anti-Semitic Conference]." *Pesti Napló*, 15 October 1925, 7; *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 35, 78 (20 October 1925); vol. 35, 160 (22 October 1925). "Eckhardt az ülésterem helyett a folyosón védekezett a Cuza-ügyben" [Eckhardt Defended Himself in the Corridor Instead of in the Chamber in the Cuza Affair]. *Pesti Napló*, 17 October 1925, 6.

76   Cp. e.g., "Az új fajvédők" [The New Racialists]. *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék*, 16 October 1925, 1.

77   "Csörög a szarka, vendég jön" [The Magpie is Chirping, a Guest is Coming]. *Szamos*, 26 November 1925, 1; "Betiltották a Cuza-Eckhardt találkozást"[The Cuza–Eckhardt Meeting Was Banned]. *Aradi Közlöny*, 29 November 1925, 5.

78   Valbousquet, "Transnational Antisemitic Networks," 77–78. The fact that, in addition to the Hungarian race protectors, Schager and Teufel also appeared to be compromised in the counterfeiting of francs may have contributed to the decline of the organisation cp. "A frankhamisítás bécsi epilógusa" [The Vienna Epilogue of the Franc Forgery Case]. *Hirlap*, 12 December 1926, 4.

in the last years of the 1920s.[79] As for Eckhardt, his position became completely untenable after the Budapest conference had been exposed. The scandal further eroded the political prestige of the Racial Protection Party and, at the same time, the president of the ÉME,[80] especially after Eckhardt's excuse attempts in parliament turned into a physical altercation, almost witnessed by former British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald, who was to visit the session.[81]

In addition to the Romanian delegation, there were other surprise guests at the Budapest conference. The front page of the "democratic opposition" *Mai Nap* announced in bold letters that "Gömbös and his followers have made a pact with the imperial legitimists."[82] Considering the Austrian participants' background, in fact, this statement was not entirely unfounded. The most prominent person in the circle was Albin Schager von Eckartsau, former property manager of Charles, the abdicated emperor and king, and an important figure in the 1921 attempts to restore the monarchy. At this time, Schager was already considered a semi-schismatic legitimist insofar as he placed *völkisch* interests for the unification of all Germans in one empire above dynastic considerations in his Conservative People's Party.[83] During the Budapest conference, on 5 October 1925 Schager met with Miklós Kozma, whom he tried to persuade to support the National Socialist *Deutschösterreichische Tages-Zeitung*.[84] At the anti-Semitic congress—which was also attended by his party colleague, Oskar Teufel[85]—he allegedly proposed that Central Europe should be divided between the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Wittelsbachs. According to this idea, the Hohenzollerns would return to the throne of the German Empire, while the Austrian crown would go to Otto of Habsburg, who would be ruled by Crown

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79   "Der Internationale Antisemitenkongress." *Wiener Morgenzeitung*, 22 August 1926, 2; Hagemeister, *Die 'Protokolle der Weisen von Zion' vor Gericht*, 73.

80   Cp. press interpretations of the anti-Hungarian atrocities in Oradea (Nagyvárad) in December 1927, e.g.: "A román fajvédők és a magyar fajvédők" [Romanian and Hungarian Racialists]. *Népszava*, 11 December 1927, 1–2. Regarding ÉME: "Egyesületi életünk megbénult, anyagilag tönkremen [sic!], romokban hever az ÉME – mondják az aggódó ébredők" [Our Association Life Has Come to a Standstill, We Are Financially Ruined, ÉME Lies in Ruins – Say the Worried Awakened Ones]. *Esti Kurir*, 20 December 1927, 5.

81   "Gömbös Gyula és Fábián Béla összeverekedtek a Ház mai ülésén" [Gyula Gömbös and Béla Fábián Got into a Fight at Today's Session of the House]. *8 Órai Ujság*, 21 October 1925, 3.

82   "Gömbösék lepaktáltak a császári legitimistákkal" [The Gömbös Faction Made a Pact with the Imperial Legitimists]. *A Mai Nap*, 18 October 1925, 1. Schager and Eckhardt's alliance is caricatured in: "Nepos: Schagers diplomatische Sendung." *Der Morgen* (Vienna), 26 October 1925, 5.

83   Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 36.

84   MNL OL K429. small box 46. Az MTI bécsi tudósítójával való levelezés, 1920–1926. Letter from Albin Schager von Eckartsau to Miklós Kozma, 10 November 1925.

85   Szabó, "Wessen Feind," 220.

Prince of Bavaria, Rupprecht until he came of age. Schager intended the throne of Hungary to go to Albrecht, in accordance with the wishes of his hosts in Budapest.[86]

While the president of the Conservative People's Party, Albin Schager bombarded the widowed Queen Zita with his memoranda to no avail,[87] he forged ever closer ties with the Hungarian racialists.[88] In early March 1926, he returned to Budapest, where, after dining with Gömbös and Eckhardt, his memoranda were published by the radical daily *Szózat*.[89] Press reports stated that the racialists would indeed have supported the accession to the Hungarian throne of Archduke Albrecht, who had been elected governor-president of the Federation of Social Associations (Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége) in November 1925 and who, according to their plans, together with Rupprecht and the former German Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, could have begun redrawing the map of Europe by implementing the Anschluss.[90] Although the racialists rejected this combination,[91] the 1925 national congress of the ÉME, with the support of the governor, Mussolini, and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka, nevertheless considered it important to send a letter of homage to the Archdukes Joseph and Albrecht—the Habsburgs living in Hungary.[92]

86   Szemere, Pál. "A reakció középeurópai diktatúrája. II" [The Dictatorship of Reaction in Central Europe. II]. *Miskolci Napló*, 11 March 1926, 3.

87   In 1926, Schager and Gömbös wrote a joint memorandum to Queen Zita, arguing that the Anschluss was inevitable. Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 36–38.

88   Szemere, Pál. "A reakció középeurópai diktatúrája. III" [The Dictatorship of Reaction in Central Europe. III]. *Miskolci Napló*, 12 March 1926, 3.

89   "Schager báró tegnap a fajvédő vezérekkel vacsorázott [Baron Schager Had Dinner with the Leaders of the Racialists Yesterday]." *8 Órai Ujság*, 4 March 1926, 2. According to the liberal newspapers, Schager's trip to Budapest was supposed to be part of another Bavarian–Austrian–Romanian congress in Budapest, which, however, did not happen due to the lack of interest on the part of Rupprecht and Cuza. See, for example, Szemere's articles under fn. 87 and 89. "Zita exkirályné még mindig az összmonarchia gondolatkörében él" [Former Queen Zita Still Lives in the Spirit of the Monarchy]. *Szózat*, 4 March 1926, 3; »Szent István koronájának viselője nemzeti királynak és csakis annak tekintheti magát«" ["The Bearer of St Stephen's Crown May Consider Himself the National King and Only the National King"]. *Szózat*, 5 March 1926, 3; "IV. Károly egyik fia sem jut trónra, ha a Habsburg-ház nem szakít a nemzetek feletti császárság gondolatával" [None of Charles IV's Sons Will Ascend to the Throne unless the House of Habsburg Abandons the Idea of a Supranational Empire]. *Szózat*, 6 March 1926, 3.

90   "Készülődnek a Kalandorkirályságra" [Getting Ready for the Kingdom of Adventure]. *Népszava*, 19 November 1925, 3–4. According to an Austrian police report dated 15 October 1925, Schager, who was flirting with the Nazis, supported Albrecht's claim to the throne in Hungary and even in Austria, in collaboration with a faction of the ÉME. Fiziker, *Habsburg kontra Hitler*, 37.

91   "»Olyan király után vágyódnék, aki Budavárában lakik«" ['I Long for a King who Lives in the Buda Castle']. *Szózat*, 21 November 1925, 5.

92   "Az ÉME üdvözlő okiratot küldött Mussolininak, a Kormányzónak, József és Albrecht királyi hercegeknek, valamint Prohászka Ottokár püspöknek" [The ÉME Sent a Letter of Welcome to

Eckhardt in decline: spokesman for Italian Fascism

However, some members of the ÉME felt that even the renewed association, which organised international anti-Semitic conferences, was not anti-Jewish enough. István Lendvai, at least, publicly justified his resignation by saying that it had "deviated from anti-Semitic thinking."[93] It is possible that Lendvai was more annoyed by the promised and actually implemented crackdown on violent radicals,[94] the success of which was acknowledged by Interior Minister Iván Rakovszky.[95] These signs certainly indicate that dissatisfaction with the president was growing within the association, as he was playing ping-pong with "Jews" despite his fierce anti-Semitism.[96] The conflicts were exacerbated by personal rivalries and differences of opinion, for example on the question concerning the monarchy—which, as we have seen, resulted in numerous combinations—and in a guessing game about the ideal relationship between the Racial Protection Party and the ÉME.[97] Eckhardt tried to demonstrate strength. "We are not staging a coup […]. But if the other side wants to stage a coup, we will be there!"—he threatened, but his bluster was a symptom of failure.[98]

Opposition media outlets reported that at the end of 1925 only a few hundred people attended the ÉME's national congress, which was combined with a flag consecration ceremony.[99] According to a lengthy article in *Szózat*, no larger plans were discussed at the event, which focused on the usual topics.[100] In addition, two

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Mussolini, the Governor, Prince Joseph and Prince Albrecht, and Bishop Ottokár Prohászka]. *Szózat*, 30 December 1925, 7.

93   *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 41, 61. (26 March 1926).

94   In his report from Cegléd, Lendvai stated that "right-wing terror will stand up to left-wing terror." Lendvai, István. "Szamueli kése megjelent a legnagyobb közjogi méltóság kezében" [Samueli's Knife Appeared in the Hands of the Highest State Dignitary]. *Szózat*, 10 November 1925, 2.

95   *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 31, 155–59. (18 March 1925).

96   Eckhardt's ping-pong battle with Baron György Ullmann and János Zwack, among others, caused a great stir in the press. Endrődy, ed., "Társas élet," 44.

97   In addition to the Lendvai case, see: "Eckhardt lemondatja Petrichevichet, az Ébredők lemondatják Eckhardtot" [Eckhardt Dismisses Petrichevic, the Awakened Dismiss Eckhardt]? *Magyarország*, 10 December 1925, 1; "Cselekvésre készülnek az ébredők és a fajvédők – Klebelsberg gróf vezérlete alatt" [The Awakened and the Racialists Are Preparing for Action – Under the Leadership of Count Klebelsberg]. *Világ*, 6 January 1926, 6. Eckhardt tried to refute this: "Nyilatkozat [Declaration]." *Szózat*, 26 January 1926, 6.

98   "Legitimisták és szabad királyválasztók elismeréssel nyilatkoznak Bethlen tegnapi beszédéről" [Legitimists and National Monarchists Express Appreciation for the Speech Bethlen Made Yesterday]. *8 Órai Ujság*, 27 November 1925, 5.

99   *Esti Kurir*, 22 December 1925, 1. "Nagy kudarc az Ébredők díszgyűlésén" [Major Setback at the Awakening Party's Gala Meeting]. *Friss Ujság*, 20 December 1925, 7.

100   "A jövő a fajvédelemé" [The Future Belongs to Racialists]. *Szózat*, 22 December 1925, 1–3.

other mainstream Awakening Hungarians leaders, Lehel Kádár and Pál Prónay, left the association alongside Lendvai.[101] Many people were repelled by the dictatorial proceedings of Béla Rákóczi, Eckhardt's trusted confidant, who was known to have a crude manner as executive director of the ÉME.[102] The board tried to ease the tension by "clearly delimiting" Rákóczi's powers, while Eckhardt appointed another confidant, Ferenc Balogh, as his deputy to handle administrative matters.[103] They tried to entice Prónay, Lendvai, and Kádár to return—but without much success.[104] In fact, another stalwart, Menyhért Kiss, who was averse to the national president's influence-building and had already left the Racial Protection Party because of its alleged pro-government stance, also resigned from the association. Eckhardt initiated disciplinary proceedings against Kiss because he had sent a condolence letter to the widow of Vilmos Vázsonyi, a recently deceased prominent Jewish democrat.[105]

Eckhardt continued to visit the ÉME member organisations conscientiously, but it is telling that on 15 March 1926, the association "celebrated with a warm, comradely dinner" the anniversary of the 1848 Revolution, which was only reported in a single-column article on page 10 of the formerly servile *Szózat*.[106] The ÉME found itself on the verge of bankruptcy, embroiled in scandals,[107] and at the end of the

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101 "Lendvai és Kádár »lezárták az ébredőség aktáit«" [Lendvai and Kádár 'Closed the Files on the Awakening']. *Esti Kurir*, 14 January 1926, 7; "Nyilatkozat" [Declaration]. *Uj Nemzedék*, 31 January 1926, 8.

102 Cp. e.g.: "Az ÉME villamosvasúti szakcsoportja ki akar válni az egyesületből" [The ÉME Tramway Section Wants to Leave the Association]. *Pesti Napló*, 22 January 1926, 8.

103 "Eckhardt Tibor nyilatkozik az ÉME ügyvezetéséről" [Tibor Eckhardt Comments on the ÉME Management]. *Uj Nemzedék*, 6 February 1926, 3.

104 "Az ÉME erélyesen tiltakozik a Központi Anyagbeszerző felállítása ellen" [ÉME Strongly Protests Against the Establishment of the Central Procurement Agency]. *Magyarság*, 31 March 1926, 6.

105 "A keresztény eszme annyira szent, hogy nem szükséges a pártpolitika kedvéért Kun Béla bűnei miatt megtaposni Vázsonyi Vilmos hantjait – írja levelében az Éméből kilépő Kiss Menyhért képviselő" [The Christian Ideal is so Sacred that It Is Not Necessary to Trample on Vilmos Vázsonyi's Grave for the Sake of Party Politics because of Béla Kun's Crimes, Writes in His Letter Menyhért Kiss, a Representative who Left ÉME]. *Esti Kurir*, 23 October 1926, 5.; "Valahányszor kemény harcra került a sor: a fajvédő párt nem megbuktatni, hanem megmenteni igyekezett a kormányt" [Whenever There Was a Tough Battle, the Racial Protection Party Tried to Save the Government rather than Bring It Down]. *Esti Kurir*, 10 February 1926, 2.

106 "A MOVE és az ÉME márciusi ünnepsége" [MOVE and ÉME Celebrations in March]. *Szózat*, 17 March 1926, 10.

107 Németh, Károly. "Az Ébredők Egyesülete, amely súlyos anyagi válsággal küzd, nem akar Gömbösék karjaiba esni, de esetleg szanáltatná magát a legitimistákkal" [The Association of the Awakened, Which in a Serious Financial Crisis, Does Not Want to Fall into the Arms of Gömbös and His Followers, but It May Seek Assistance from the Legitimists]. *Esti Kurir*, 12 May 1926, 9. "Az ÉME ügyésze azt vallotta a bíróság előtt, hogy a BSzKRT burgonyaüzletre

year, was forced to move from its headquarters on Sörház Street.[108] Returning "sun-tanned" from the shores of Lake Balaton,[109] in the autumn the president switched to campaign mode before the general election, and once again had a daily newspaper defending the interests of the racialists, using *Magyar Ujság*, the successor to *Szózat*.[110] In addition to press agitation, Eckhardt also led a delegation of miners from Salgótarján dressed in black uniforms and presenting social policy demands to Minister of Social Policy József Vass. He then visited the mining town, where the miners "saluted with raised hands" the delegation from Budapest.[111] It is not insignificant in the context of the hallmarks of fascistisation, that the "Eagle" (Sas) section of the ÉME, which was linked to Eckhardt and Rákóczi and had to receive special permission from the minister of the interior[112] received military-style training and, in addition to protecting strike-breaking workers, also carried out intelligence, surveillance and counter-espionage activities both within and outside the country's borders.[113]

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kölcsönt adott az Émének" [The Prosecutor for ÉME Testified in Court that the Budapest Public Transport Company (BSzKRT) Had Granted a Loan to ÉME for Its Potato Business]. *Esti Kurir*, 1 June 1926, 9. "A debreceni ébredők »testvérharca« a bíróság előtt" [The Internecine Fight of the Debrecen Awakened]." *Pesti Napló*, 10 September 1926, 4.

108   Németh, Károly. "Megszűnt a sörház utcai fellegvár, a villamoskalauzok is otthagyták az ÉME-t, az ébredők összevesztek Budayékkal és rettegnek Héjjas Iván előre látható parlamenti kudarcától" [The Stronghold on Sörház Street Has Been Dismantled, the Tram Conductors Have also Left ÉME, the Awakened Have Fallen Out with the Budays, and they Fear Iván Héjjas's Predictable Parliamentary Defeat]. *Esti Kurir*, 25 December 1926, 20.

109   "A Ripka-párt hozzájárul Sipőcz Jenő polgármesterségéhez" [The Ripka Party Supports Jenő Sipőcz's Candidacy for Mayor]. *Magyar Ujság*, 8 September 1926, 1.

110   "A salgótarjáni bányászok fascista ingben és ÉME díszjelvénnyel jelentek meg Vass miniszter előtt" [The Miners of Salgótarján Appeared before Minister Vass Wearing Fascist Shirts and ÉME Insignia]. *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék*, 2 October 1926, 4; "A salgótarjáni ébredő »sasok«, akik – mint mondják – lecsapni készülnek a szocialista »csókák«-ra, ma feketeinges kosztümben megjelentek Vass József miniszter előtt" [The Awakening 'Eagles' of Salgótarján, who, as They Say, Are Preparing to Strike Down on the Socialist 'Magpie,' Appeared Today in Black Uniforms before Minister József Vass]. *Esti Kurir*, 2 October 1926, 13. Cp. "A fajvédők éles támadása a szénbányavállalatok ellen" [Sharp Attack by Racialists Against Coal Mining Companies]. *Magyarság*, 24 September 1926, 1.

111   "Ezerhatszáz bányász az ébredő lobogó alatt" [One Thousand Six Hundred Miners Under the Awakening Flag]. *Magyar Ujság*, 19 October 1926, 1.

112   BFL IV 1402b, 1927/2310. Decree of the Minister of the Interior on the supervision of the activities of the Eagles Sports Section of the Association of Awakening Hungarians. Cp. e.g.: "Buday Dezső, az ébredők új elnöke kitiltotta az ÉME-ből Rákóczit, Zsabkát és a többi »renitens sasokat«" [New President of the Awakening Movement Dezső Buday, Expelled from the ÉME Rákóczi, Zsabka, and the Other 'Rebellious Eagles']. *Magyar Hirlap*, 28 December 1927, 1.

113   Paksy, *Nyilas mozgalom Magyarországon*, 59.

Clearly, the president's enthusiasm for fascism did not wane with the years. He continued to regularly quote or cite Mussolini as an example to follow,[114] sent a certificate of honour to the Fascist dictator on behalf of the ÉME,[115] and at the association's general meeting in June, planned to speak about the "the salvation of the nation through the forces of Fascism."[116] Only before the parliamentary elections did he try to tone down his rhetoric, slipping into blatant self-contradiction at times. In Miskolc, for example, he spoke about how Fascism was not necessarily a dictatorial and authoritarian system.[117] He visited the factory town for clear political reasons, and it is indeed difficult to view the ÉME's large gatherings in the autumn of 1926 as anything other than campaign events at which FP politicians sought to mobilise their supporters and strengthen their party's support. The elections showed, however, that the mobilisation met with little success. Eckhardt also left parliament. In addition, the president was charged with "mismanagement of ÉME funds and other […] serious allegations,"[118] so that at the annual general meeting in January 1927, it was no longer possible to hide "personal disputes." The leadership offered their resignation in a theatrical gesture, only to immediately confirm the president in his position during the re-election. Although it was considered a great success that, with the support of the National Central Credit Union, cooperative branches had been established,[119] in reality, the association was struggling with

114 Cp. e.g.: *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 42, 230. (30 April 1926); *Nemzetgyűlési Napló*, vol. 42, 279 (4 May 1926); vol. 46, 107 (30 October 1926).

115 "Eckhardt Tibor átadta az olasz követnek az ÉME Mussolininek küldött díszoklevelét" [Tibor Eckhardt Presented the Italian Ambassador with the ÉME's Letter of Commendation to Mussolini]. *Szózat*, 21 March 1926, 16.

116 "Az Ébredők június havi beszámoló nagygyűlése" [The Awakening's Monthly June General Meeting]. *Magyarság*, 18 June 1926, 10. He did not give his speech, citing family reasons. Cp. "Naplopónak, Sigray gróf lovának két percig kell elszaladni a Király-díjért, az ébredőknek azonban Zsirkay szerint esetleg hatvan évig kell loholniuk" [Count Sigray's Horse Naplopó, Has Two Minutes to Run for the King's Prize, but According to Zsirkay, Members of the Awakening Movement May Have to Struggle for Sixty Years]. *Esti Kurir*, 22 June 1926, 9.

117 "Legitimizmus, szabadkirályválasztás, fasizmus a felekezeti ellentétek és a munkásság problémája az ÉME miskolci és vasgyári nagygyűlésén" [Legitimist Movement, National Monarchism, Fascism, Denominational Conflicts, and the Problem of Labour at the ÉME General Assembly in Miskolc and at the Iron Works]. *Magyar Jövő*, 9 November 1926, 2–3.

118 Regarding Prónay's statement: "Prónay Pál és Kádár Lehel kijelentik, hogy őket nem buktathatták ki az ÉME elnökségéből, mert – nem is tagjai az egyesületne" [Pál Prónay and Lehel Kádár Declare that They Could Not Be Removed from the ÉME Presidency because They Are Not Even Members of the Association]. *Magyar Hirlap*, 18 January 1927, 3.

119 "Az ÉME szétbontotta a nemzetközi szociáldemokrácia egységét" [The ÉME Broke Up the Unity of International Social Democracy]. *Magyar Ujság*, 18 January 1927, 3. It should be noted that the sporting life of the MOVE, led by Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, also flourished from the mid-1920s onwards. Lajkó, "A Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület," 59.

declining membership fees and supported itself by operating a cinema in Budapest and another one in Debrecen.[120]

Eckhardt himself had major financial problems at the time: he exchanged his five-room rented flat in Budapest on the elegant Múzeum boulevard for a two-room flat in Balatonföldvár, and then "passed his supplementary law exams with distinction."[121] In his student years, he had planned to pursue a career in public administration and therefore only took the state exams in public service and policy, but now he planned to supplement his falling income as a lawyer. In fact, from the autumn of 1927, he was working as a trainee lawyer in Ferenc Ulain's office.[122] Even before that, his name appeared in the news as the administrator of the fabulous Szemere estate, because István Szemere, the heir who married the daughter of a former Eckhardt associate, Károly Halmos, entrusted him with the settlement of the inheritance. "My main goal is to preserve an ancient Hungarian fortune. In short, I want to turn foreign financial assets into Hungarian real estate." This is how the president of the ÉME, who happened to be a guest at the wedding, summarised his lofty goals.[123]

Even after his election defeat, Eckhardt visited the organisations and rallies conscientiously—he had more time due to his lack of parliamentary commitments. He still promoted the successes of Italian Fascism in Pécs, Debrecen, Eger, and Szeged, concealing in this manner his own failure.[124] But different winds were blowing, with

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120   Based on the official correspondent of ÉME, see: "Miből él az ÉME, amely fokosokon tavaly százötvenezer koronát keresett és elégtétellel számol be Rákosi Jenő elitéléséről?" [How does ÉME, which Earned 150,000 Crowns from Tomahawks Last Year and Reports with Satisfaction the Conviction of Jenő Rákosi, Make a Living?] *Esti Kurir*, 19 January 1927, 7. MNL OL K429 small box 14. "Parlamenti választások, 1926. Információ." 15 November 1926.

121   "Vidékre költözött Eckhardt Tibor" [Tibor Eckhardt Moved to the Countryside]." *Ujság*, 26 May 1926, 8; "Hírek mindenfelől [News from All Over]. *A Mai Nap*, 26 June 1926, 2.

122   *Budapesti Közlöny*, 18 September 1927, 1.

123   "Eckhardt Tibor érdekes nyilatkozata Szemere István házasságáról és a többszázmilliárdos Szemere-vagyonról" [Tibor Eckhardt's Interesting Statement about István Szemere's Marriage and the Szemere Fortune Worth Hundreds of Billions]. *A Mai Nap*, 5 August 1927, 2. Eckhardt and the high-profile Francophile adventurer had known each other for a long time. Cp. e.g.: Halmos' letter addressed to his "Sweet Tibor". Vienna, 9 April 1920. MNL OL K66, 1920 – I. 6, 39. For Halmos' portrait: Ablonczy, "Rettenetes év," 12–13. The fortune came from István Szemere's uncle Miklós Szemere (1856–1919), founder of the far-right magazine *A Cél*. Cp. Godinek, "Fajvédő eszme," 40–58.

124   "Az ÉME vidéki gyűlései" [Rural Meetings of ÉME]. *Magyar Ujság*, 15 April 1927, 10; "A debreceni ÉME követeli a magyar munkatörvényt" [The Debrecen ÉME Demands Hungarian Labour Law]. *Magyar Ujság*, 24 May 1927, 6; "ÉME hírei." *Magyar Ujság*, 3 June 1927, 3; "A polgári társadalom és a magyar munkás együttes működése teremtheti csak meg Nagymagyarországot" [Only the Joint Efforts of Middle-Class Society and Hungarian Workers Can Create Greater Hungary]. *Szegedi Uj Nemzedék*, 14 June 1927, 1.

the revision of Hungary's Trianon borders raised in the conservative British press. When he returned from his trip to Paris and London in the autumn of 1927, the black-shirted Eagles marching in his honour were certainly confused by the news of the changed direction of cooperation with the former enemies. Only when Eckhardt committed himself to "the cult of Hungarian power, the strengthening of Hungarian national defence" and "Hungarian militarism" could they relax a little.[125] He continued to emphasize his unwavering integrity and revisionism to the Eagles, *inter alia* in the speech he made on tour in Sátoraljaújhely.[126] But the contradiction was too great to conceal. Hungarian Fascism could not be organised with a French and English orientation even if some leading figures in the United Kingdom seemed ready to support the cause of Hungarian revisionism. On the other hand, the radical tone was not advantageous for the head of government, who was negotiating at the League of Nations in Geneva. Initially, the police even refused to allow the ÉME to hold its national congress in Miskolc. When the event was finally approved, it was broken up by the police because Eckhardt insisted on discussing sensitive foreign policy issues.[127] Eventually, on 15 December 1927, the president announced his resignation to the board. Allegedly, he was discouraged by a leaflet circulated in the ÉME against Béla Rákóczy.[128] "I see complete chaos," summarised the issue of the association's management Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, who at the same time resigned from the leadership of MOVE.[129] In this chaos,[130] which naturally also affected the Racial

125   "A magyaroknak nincsenek jó politikusai, de jó katonái vannak – mondotta Rothermere lord Eckhardt Tibornak" [Hungarians Lack Good Politicians, but they do have Good Soldiers, Lord Rothermere Said to Tibor Eckhardt]." *Magyarság*, 2 October 1927, 8.

126   "We, the awakening Hungarians, will never give up the separated territories. We have one ideal, and that is Greater Hungary," he said. Cp. "»A magyar nemzetnek sokkal jobbak a katonái, mint a politikusai« – mondotta Rothermere" ["The Hungarian Nation Has Much Better Soldiers than Politicians," Said Rothermere]. *Magyar Jövő*, 29 November 1927, 3.

127   "A rendőrség megvonta a szót Eckhardt Tibortól az ébredők miskolci kongresszusán, mire a kongresszus feloszlott" [The Police Silenced Tibor Eckhardt at the Congress of the Awakening Movement in Miskolc, Whereupon the Congress Was Dissolved]. *Magyar Jövő*, 6 December 1927, 1–2; "Az ébredők miskolci kongresszusán rendőri beavatkozás vetett végett Eckhardt Tibor szélsőséges beszédének" [Police Intervention Put an End to Tibor Eckhardt's Extreme Speech at the Awakened Congress in Miskolc]. *Reggeli Hirlap*, 6 December 1927, 5.

128   MNL PML XIV.2.a. Box 6, pallium 72, 21. Letter from Tibor Eckhardt to László Endre. 4 January 1928; "Eckhardt Tibor lemondott az ÉME elnökségéről" [Tibor Eckhardt Has Resigned from His Position as ÉME President]. *Magyarság*, 18 December 1927, 3.

129   MNL OL K429. small box 14. Zsilinszky. Budapesti lapok, 60. Letter from Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszy to Miklós Kozma, 17 December 1927; Bartha, *Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre*, 137.

130   For more on the scandal-ridden succession issue, see, for example: "Az ÉME igazgatósága Rákócziék ellen határozott és Buday Dezsőt erősítette meg az egyesület vezetésében" [The Board of ÉME Took a Firm Stance Against the Rákóczi Circle and Confirmed Dezső Buday as the Association's Leader]. *Magyar Hirlap*, 30 December 1927, 1–2.

Protection Party, Gyula Gömbös returned to the ruling party, while Tibor Eckhardt became the executive director of the "pacifist" Hungarian Revisionist League.[131] This can be seen as the beginning of his long journey toward the political mainstream.[132]

Conclusion

Tibor Eckhardt's time at the helm of the ÉME illustrates the contradictions of the early far right in the Horthy era. In the counter-revolutionary political ecosystem that emerged after the collapse in 1918–1919, within a few years the ÉME was building a national mass organisation and an international network of contacts from its symbolic and, in some cases, very real base of "white terror." Eckhardt's 1923 election as president was accompanied by promises of reorganising the ÉME, coupled with "political rehabilitation," although internal divisions and excessive ambition quickly undermined these achievements.

As a prominent figure in the racialist free-election group, Eckhardt sought to reconcile the logic of government consolidation with the programme of radical nationalism. It could be regarded as his success that under his presidency, after the assassination in Csongrád, there were no similar terrorist acts linked to the association compromising his political goals. Because although he called the ÉME a "non-political association," its activities were clearly political: defending the *numerus clausus*, linking anti-Semitic movements, and promoting Fascism as a model were at the centre of its activities. As ÉME president, many of his foreign partners were politicians. Domestically, Eckhardt cherished the vision of a disciplined, modern mass organisation, but the ÉME membership was heterogeneous and difficult to control. The association was weakened by rivalries within the leadership, financial abuses, and opposition to the charismatic leadership style. In the years following 1925, the mass base melted away, and the ÉME stayed in public life in a more symbolic sense. Thus, Eckhardt's Fascist sympathies and his attempts to introduce foreign models did not lead to a political breakthrough.

His connections with the Italian and German far right (Benigni, Lüdecke, Rosenberg) show that after the period of the "White International," the ÉME wanted to fit into the reconfigured transnational network of the far right, and the 1925 conference in Budapest was a spectacular but risky result of this endeavour, even

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131 OSZK Kt. Fol. Hung. 2734. Revíziós Liga. vol. IV, 99. Statement by Ferenc Herczeg, undated. For more information about the Revisionist League of Hungary, see: Zeidler, "A Magyar Revíziós Liga."

132 In the 1930s, Eckhardt became the leader of the Smallholders' Party and a well-known anti-Nazi politician in Hungary. In 1941, he emigrated to the United States, where he organised the Independent Hungary movement.

if today we know that international anti-Semitic cooperation was to remain fragmented, burdened by conflicts of interest, and short-lived. At the same time, the study highlights that the activities of the ÉME offer a rich repository of examples of cooperation of the far right not only in Hungary but also in Europe. The international newsletter *Courrier Danubien*, ongoing correspondence, and conferences turned the Sörház Street centre into the Hungarian hub of a diverse right-wing extremist international network. This network of contacts later provided a refined language and rhetoric for the radicalism of the 1930s. The slogans of "national defence," "racial purity" and "Christian Europe" became firmly established in the Hungarian political imagination, partly through the work of Eckhardt and his colleagues. Eckhardt's resignation in 1927 marked the end of a process: the attempt at far-right cooperation proved unviable in the consolidated authoritarian system. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which the legacy of the ÉME— its racialist rhetoric, its demand for the application of Fascist models in Hungary, and its experience in transnational networking—made a lasting impact on the subsequent development of the Hungarian right wing.

The study also argues that the history of the ÉME under the presidency of Tibor Eckhardt is better understood from the perspective of transnational historiography. Between 1923 and 1927, the association did not operate as an isolated Hungarian phenomenon, but as a hub of a broader, interconnected European radical right-wing space. Its trajectory clearly shows that the mobilisation of the far right in Central Europe after World War I was not due not only due to domestic political developments, but was also the consequence of the cross-border, multidirectional movement of individuals, ideas, and organisational models. The ÉME attempted to localise foreign models while exporting its own racialist and Christian-nationalist rhetoric. Eckhardt's leadership was a product of this interaction. Building on his previous experience as a press chief and government official, as well as his connections in Vienna, Bavaria, and Italy, he sought to position the Hungarian radical right as a productive and important part of a broader, transnational new ideological grouping. He was influenced by the discipline of Italian Fascism, the language of German *völkisch* thinking, and the Romanian and Austrian discourse on "Christian Europe." At the same time, he regarded the Hungarian far-right tradition as valuable and as a reflection of universally valid (and therefore exportable) experiences. These interactions were therefore never mere imitation: the Hungarian political milieu localised and reinterpreted the influences through its own traumas—Trianon, the desire for revision, the monarchist tradition. From this perspective, the 1925 anti-Semitic congress in Budapest was not an episode, but a space of interaction, where different national radicalisms temporarily met and mutually shaped each other. At the same time, it seems that the conspiracy was primarily based on personal relationships, and there was a lack of mass support for more serious institutional cooperation.

The participants faced insurmountable obstacles due to the ongoing social consolidation, economic reconstruction, and political stabilisation, which all strengthened the political mainstream. After the turbulent years following the Great War, Hungary successfully integrated into international politics. This period of calm came to an end with the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s. The congress also revealed the limits of far-right transnational convergence: national conflicts, denominational differences, and divergent imperial ambitions shattered the possibility of cooperation, and the following years proved that without the driving force of major economic and political processes, the far right was unable to maintain its influence in the long term. The tide only turned in the 1930s.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

The Change of the System and Myths in Hungarian History in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract. This article is an outsider's attempt to understand and even to reconsider the multifarious aspects of myths concerning the twentieth-century history of Hungary, created and subsequently dismantled and busted from the change of the system in 1989/1990 to around 2004, the period when myth-building appears to have been a vogue. Most examples come from Ignác Romsics's 2002 *Mítoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről* [Myths, Legends, and Misconceptions about Hungary's Twentieth Century History], the articles of which tackle the issue with a keen historical-analytical grip. In reassessing them, here "myth" is defined as an untrue or fallacious everyday story (legend), belief, or misconception. In history writing also, they are often strongly value-laden, stereotypical, or imaginary representations of an important event, process, phenomenon, or personality, and in times of radical political change, ductile amateurish historians can manipulate them to promote their political ends. Using this definition, the article also aims to show that in the processes of myth-building in Hungarian history writing there have been misguided historians and public history-mongers at work who first gained ground and then became the object of serious scholarly criticism by academic historians, who defended a realist interpretation of certain key moments in Hungarian history. The contention between these two "parties" lingers on.

Keywords: myth, historiography, history politics, history culture, myth-busting

Introduction

This article analyses certain myths in Hungarian twentieth-century history which some historians have created, while on the other hand, some have tried to bust since the change of the system in 1989/1990. Here "myth" is simply defined as an untrue or fallacious everyday story, belief, or misconception often based on legends. In history, it is often a strongly value-laden, stereotypical, or imaginary concept of an important event, phenomenon, or personality.[1] The change in the Hungarian political and economic system from János Kádár's "soft dictatorship" to a "democratic"

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1   Cp. *Oxford English Dictionary*, definition of myth, no. 2.

multi-party system and from state-geared socialism to market-oriented capitalism in 1989/1990 prepared a fertile ground for their birth and subsequent dismantling. The so-called "free publicity" boosted the use and abuse of history as a political tool or weapon and the politicisation of historians, but it also offered opportunities for serious academic historians to find more truthful or realistic historical factuality against dilettante interpretations. The period under scrutiny spans from 1989/1990 to about 2004, when numerous reinterpretations of important turning points in Hungarian contemporary history started to emerge. Consequently, we can review them for the given purpose. Since that time, innumerable historical works have been produced that are out of the author's reach, and only passing references to a selection of them can be made here.

The change of system in Hungary inevitably brought with it a revaluation of the 1956 revolution, as well as of practically the entire twentieth-century history for Hungarians.[2] There are two richly symbolic landmark events: the rehabilitation and reburial on 16 June 1989[3] of Imre Nagy, the PM of the 1956 revolutionary government, soon followed on 6 July 1989 by the death of János Kádár[4]—ending his thirty-three-year career as the leader of the country. Thereafter, along with revised academic works, politicised histories flourished. They tended to tarnish the unfavourable, and glorify the favourable personalities, and to distort processes and phenomena as well as their consequences. A league of legends and misconceptions were born, new myths were fabricated, and some old ones were resuscitated. Liberation from the straitjacket of the dogmatic pseudo-Marxist-Leninist view of history[5] contributed to the mythologisation and mystification of history.[6]

The radical turn in 1989/1990 caused a crisis in the communist party apparatus. It was at least partly pushed aside, introducing an atmosphere of political uncertainty. Politicians started to pose themselves as interpreters of history, and

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2   A well-composed synthetic reappraisal is *The Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*. More polemical is *The Hungarian Revolution. Reform, Revolt and Repression*.

3   There is a solid biography in Rainer, *Nagy Imre*.

4   Tibor Huszár produced a slapdash biography with long citations: *Kádár János politikai életrajza*. A more reliable biography in English is Gough's *A Good Comrade: János Kádár, Communism and Hungary*.

5   Maybe it can be noted that it applied also to the interpretation of Finnish history. See: Dolmányos, *Finnország története*.

6   This is the vantage-point of Ignác Romsics's *Mítoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről*. Romsics's "production" is bafflingly wide: he earned his laurels with *Bethlen István* and his early *Magyarország története a XX. században* accompanied by the two volumes of *Magyar történeti szöveggyűjtemény, Vol. I–II,* which has been translated into English: *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*. It rivals László Kontler's *Millennium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary*.

historians stepped into politics.[7] This state of affairs has continued for decades, and it seems that every party has found its myths in history that they can use, for instance, during election campaigns. It may be argued that this "instant history" helped to form collective myths. The more realistic historians try to warn against politicising research institutions and universities, but they seem to have been forced into defensive positions.

It is not always easy to tell which of the myths are old, and which ones are more recent, but they can be vaguely classified into four categories: 1) conspiracy "theories," 2) beautifying or black-painting of some periods, 3) sanctified locations/places, myths of suffering/saving, and 4) "predestined, chosen people" and rebirth/origin-myths.[8] Hungarian history offers an array of examples: various explanations of the Trianon catastrophe, Admiral Miklós Horthy as the saviour of Hungary (cp. the Mannerheim-cult in Finland),[9] Kádár as a "good leader" or a "traitor,"[10] living standards and the political atmosphere of "goulash-communism," and romantic ideas connected to St. Stephen and the birth of the Hungarian Kingdom—an entire arsenal of manifold and politically appealing myths that have often become folklore.

Some realistic historians oppose the tweaking of history to serve political goals and demand rational explanations even if the reading public would expect engaging answers—such as the *Terror Háza* [House of Terror Museum] exhibits with horrible scenes of red terror during state socialism, leaving the earlier white terror in the shadows. Mostly (liberal/conservative) professional historians have been in the frontline of the myth-busters who tend to stay aloof from party politics. Their realistic analyses have rectified or disproved often traumatic and resistant legends and myths and have unveiled illusions projected onto the past.

The Collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy and Trianon

A major question that has preoccupied Hungarian historians is why the Dual Monarchy collapsed with the end of World War I. Explanations range from combinations of social and national factors to expositions of foreign countries' plans to divide the Monarchy. Despite the tendency to combine internal and external factors to create an umbrella explanation, there is no unanimity about the primary

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7   Nyyssönen, *The Presence of the Past in Politics. '1956' after 1956 in Hungary*, passim.

8   This is an application of Girardet's, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 9–24; Schöplin, "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths," 28–35.

9   *Cultic Revelations. Studies in Modern Historical Cult Personalities and Phenomena*; Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós*.

10   See e.g., *Rubicon*, dedicated to János Kádár: 1998: 1, 2000: 6 and 2000: 7–8.

causes of the collapse. One way to approach the dilemma has been to analyse the interpretations contemporaries or historians gave soon after the catastrophe in the light of their recently gathered knowledge. Gergely Romsics has compared sixty-five Hungarian political memoirs with fifty-five Austrian ones—they represent different politicised collective memories and images of history and reveal a spectrum of historical myths.[11]

To begin with, the Austrians had an identity problem: on the one hand, they were German citizens of a state, on the other hand, citizens of the Dual Monarchy. On the political map of Austria in the 1920s and 1930s, "Old Austrian" (conservative) theories of the break-up were nostalgic and elegiac and contained a paradox: they point to the signs and omens of disintegration but at the same time present it as an unexpected and unnatural disaster. Nostalgia is highlighted in the memoir of the former Minister of War Alexander Freiherr von Krobatin,[12] in which the demise of Franz Joseph is depicted as the loss of last hope, ruining the stately conglomeration. This "unexpected" collapse was not at all regarded as the Germans' fault; the culprit was one of the three possible plots, not the much-used freemasonry, not the Jews, nor the Jesuits but the entire Entente, perjurers in the army (the *Dolchstoss*-theory), Hungarians, or all of these together. The main cause of the military catastrophe was not seen in the failure of the military leadership but in the activities of Hungarian defeatists, other disrupting forces, rebellions, strikes, socialist agitation, and defection. No mention is made of the rebels in the army either. This means that in this perspective Austria is completely acquitted. In a social-psychological sense, they could be understood as rather obscure but definitely contributing causes.

The bourgeois-liberal theory, in turn, portrayed the collapse as a tragedy: the Dual Monarchy was exhausted, and it was left in the lurch. The theory was very much in demand in internal politics; it could be used to hit the Austrian national socialists, who claimed the ruin was due to "internal rottenness." Again, the Hungarians (Sándor Wekerle, Albert Apponyi, and István Tisza[13]) were blamed, as they had stopped all reforms and cherished their national pride and separatism. According to the theory, their short-sightedness had precipitated the ruin, as they failed to understand the core of Austrian policy, the civilising mission, which all the nationalities in the Empire should have supported.

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11   Romsics, "A Habsburg Monarchia felbomlásának osztrák és magyar mítoszai az emlékirodalom tükrében," 87–131. For the debates concerning the primary causes of disintegration, see Sked, "Explaining the Habsburg Empire," 123–58.

12   *Erinnerungen an Franz Joseph, Kaiser von Österreich, Apostolischer König von Ungarn* (1931).

13   Cp. Tőkéczki László describes István Tisza as a person willing to compromise, obstinate to go to war, and a cautious politician, who as a liberal-conservative supported German–Hungarian relations. See Tőkéczki, *Tisza István eszmei, politikai arca*.

Liberal memoirs and histories are coloured with pessimism and feelings of defeat, whereas in national-socialist writings moral decay and unavoidable disintegration could be radically turned into an opportunity for revival and a key to the future. As in Germany, their authors proposed a new start for Austria.[14] This neo-Austrian policy was represented also by the paramilitary organisation called *Heimwehr*. In opposition to "Old Austrians," it did not regard the Monarchy as a golden age, but rather as a period when the seeds of destruction had been sowed. To them, Hungarian federalists were traitors and supporters of the Great German ideology. These views helped alleviate the disappointed military elite's trauma of defeat. In general, right-wing movements shunned the idea of an imperial mission and proposed a national awakening as their solution for revival.[15]

Moving toward the left of the Austrian political spectrum, we find a vision diametrically opposed to that of the right. Among the socialists, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer believed that the Monarchy had had no chance to survive because it was a relic of a feudal order. Nevertheless, they accused the military and the bureaucracy of keeping up a "forced state" *(Zwangstaat)*. They argued that the colossus, labelled as the "prison of nations," had not been democratised into a multinational state that would have been able to recognize the autonomy of its separate parts. In their view, after the collapse, only the independence of the nations could promise a better life for the previously suppressed nations.

Romsics's analysis reveals that the disintegration of the Dual Monarchy was not the primary impulse for Hungarian myth-mongers, but it was the 1918 revolution, the short-lived republic, and in particular, the longstanding trauma inflicted by the peace treaty of Trianon (1920).[16] With Trianon, Hungary lost two thirds of its territory; the part transferred to Romania alone was larger than the new Hungary. Hungary's population decreased from 25 million to 8 million, and over a third of Hungarians remained outside the borders of "Rump-Hungary"—all this was bound to raise deep bitterness and demands of revision. Hungarians' explanations for the break-up of historical Hungary were political rather than structural; they mainly referred to the wrong decisions made by leading politicians and to general political crisis of the Monarchy (the unresolved nationality question, the delay of the land reform, and debates over election laws[17]).

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14   E.g., von Bardolff, *Soldat in alten Österreich: Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*.

15   One representative example of this was: von Sydacoff, *Die Wahrheit über Habsburgs Ende: Politische-feulletonistische Aufzeichungen*.

16   For a reliable interpretation, see Romsics, *A trianoni békeszerződés*. On the trauma: Romsics, "Nemzeti traumánk: Trianon," 327–68.

17   E.g., Ernő Garami of the 'hurtful labor pains of Hungary' in his *Forrongó Magyarország: Emlékezések és tanulságok*.

Soon after the Trianon Treaty, however, the so-called *Horthyist* interpretation aimed at the consolidation of the nation gained ground and a myth was born implying that historical Hungary would have been quite viable if its political elite had been composed of wise statesmen. It gave merit to the nationality policy managed by Hungarian leaders before the break-up, and pointed at revolutionary socialists, proud aristocrats, Jews, and Germanophiles as guilty of the catastrophe.[18] Particularly during Gyula Gömbös's government (1932–1936), the radical right began to popularize race theories, search moles, agitators, and defeatists.[19] A "dagger-stab" theory (Charles IV's mistakes and dilettantism) was laid down, and a myth of undermining the national sense of self-defence was disseminated. The main trauma of Trianon was inculcated into the minds of Hungarians and all political parties, socialists included, blaming both the Entente and pre-Trianon Hungarian politics in general as the main factors that led to a national suicide.[20] The trauma needed special healing not only from politicians but also from poets, writers, historians, and philosophers, and the political-psychological panacea was a demand for the revision of the Trianon borders.[21]

The culprit discourse became folklore, and some of the legends it generated are still alive.[22] One of them is connected to the leader of the Hungarian delegation in peace negotiations, Count Albert Apponyi. He was accused of intriguing and irritating the French—who machinated the shameful peace treaty—as well as of selling the Hungarian cause at too low a price. The truth, however, is more complicated. The border issue had been broadly resolved already in the summer of 1919, and it was only Lloyd George and some Italian politicians who had some sympathy for the Hungarian conditions. Their rejection by the French sealed the matter when Great Britain reached an agreement with it in the Near East. Apponyi's negotiation position was weak from the outset; he was not scheming about anything, nor did he represent Hungary disrespectfully at the negotiation table. Clemenceau's cooling attitude towards Hungary was an undeniably decisive factor—and it was not influenced by the unsuccessful marriage of his son to a Hungarian woman, as legend in Hungary had it. The French Foreign Ministry no longer saw the Monarchy, let alone Hungary, as a counterweight to Germany but sided with the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes).

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18   Here the Magyarisation-policy (Grünwald's) was forgotten. See Pók, "Utószó," 415–443.

19   Gyula Gömbös is still respected on the right as a "defender of the Hungarian race." See e.g., Marschalkó, *Gömbös Gyula. A fajvédő vezér.*

20   E.g., Prónay, *Emlékeiből és válogatott beszédei.*

21   The internationally distributed book arguing for revision titled *Justice for Hungary* (London, 1928) found its way to Finland also in the early 1930s and received appreciation among some leading politicians.

22   Ablonczy, "Trianon-legendák," 132–61.

After the ratification of the Trianon Peace Treaty, new legends, impregnated by political illusions concerning its drafting, were rampant. Widely popularised was the misconception that the heirs of the Dual Monarchy, who were hostile to Hungary, especially Czechs and Romanians, had manipulated to their advantage the maps and other material that were shown to the peace negotiators. Consequently, the negotiators did not know exactly what they were doing when they drew up the new borders of Hungary. In Hungary, the peace treaty with its unfair borders was deemed fraud, and its revision was claimed. Documents show that the Czechs (Beneš, Masaryk) demanded more territory (a so-called Slavic corridor) from Hungary than what they were finally granted. It has been corroborated that in Paris the negotiators had sufficient information about the local conditions and ethnic relations near the borders, and the border lines were initially planned accordingly. However, strategic considerations overruled ethnic relations and, for instance, the railways between Hungary and Transylvania were transferred to Romania. On the other hand, the border commission did not accept the Romanian demand to move the border to the Tisza River. Obviously, this decision did not satisfy the Romanians, and a legend was born that the Hungarians had bribed the Entente powers. Nevertheless, the Trianon borders of 1920, with minor revisions in Western Hungary, roughly correspond to the present border line.

It was widely believed in Hungary that the Trianon Peace Treaty would be valid only for a certain period and that the League of Nations could change it in Hungary's favour. The Treaty document,[23] however, does not say anything about its validity, but its nineteenth article states that it may be reopened "if it threatens peace in the world."[24] The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 annulled the Trianon Treaty, but the Hungarian borders stayed the same—except for a small territory opposite Bratislava (Pozsony) that was granted to Czechoslovakia. It also left minorities unprotected.

Interwar Hungary

In the interwar period, Hungarian foreign policy concentrated on creating favourable power-political constellations that would rectify the "injustice" of Trianon.[25] Studies on this policy, called "revisionism," were on a sidetrack in the Hungary of the 1960s and 1970s, because Marxist–Leninist historiography simply stamped the

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23   *A trianoni békeszerződés.*

24   *A magyar békeszerződés,* 24.

25   Nicely balanced synthesis on 1914: Ormos, *Magyarország a két világhárorú korában 1914–1945.*

Horthy regime as revanchist and fascist.[26] That was an ideologically correct myth. When the system change gave historians the opportunity to blow this myth, there was some shift in the opposite direction: Hungarian foreign policy was shown as a somewhat independent agent in the games of the great powers. Urges to find new interpretations and tendentiousness led to the overestimation and apology of the Horthy regime. They also contained contradictory lessons from World War II: Hungary was Hitler's last ally, and at the same time a friend of England, wanting to get out of the war. Hungarians were presented as enthusiastic irredenta-mongers but, at the same time, were shown to have suffered from the deviousness of their neighbours.

A more serious interpretation of Hungary's participation in World War II was put forward at a conference on the History of the World—History of Hungary, held at Bloomington University in 1983. György Ránki maintained that although Hungarian hopes and demands for revision could have been realised only by a major change in power-political relations, this did not mean that Hungary wanted to join the war. Nor did it mean that Hungary wanted to join as an ally of Nazi Germany. Ránki concluded that Hungary had practically no other choice but to join the revisionist bloc and be drawn into a reluctant partnership with the Germans. In this way, Hungary became a walker on "a forced path" and eventually a traveller on a "drifting ferry" (cp. the legendary "drifting wood" theory in Finnish military history). Ránki's view was widely accepted;[27] only more recently, has there been criticism against it.[28]

The weakness in Ránki's argument is that it presents the interwar foreign policy of Hungary as if there had been some genuine alternatives and its leaders would have had a choice between them. In fact, it has been shown that their strategy calculations could not work, since as a small country Hungary was at the mercy of greater forces and its leaders found themselves in unexpected and extreme situations.[29] The room for manoeuvring was very limited, and politicians faced uncertainty where they often had to improvise. They no longer had real choices but were forced to do an *ad hoc* weighing of disadvantages and possible advantages. Accordingly, the "forced path" can be defined more precisely: it applied to a situation in which Hungary's foreign

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26 The Horthy regime has been labeled as a "parliamentary-authoritarian" system, rather than truly dictatorial. See Püski, "Demokrácia és diktatúra között," 206–33; Püski, *Horthy-rendszer (1919–1945).*

27 See e.g., Lengyel, *Mozgástér és kényszerpálya*. Cp. Sipos, *Magyarország külpolitikája a XX. században*, which contains a more moderate and sensible interpretation. Cp. Sipos, *Magyar külpolitikai goldolkodás a 20. században.*

28 Szakály, *Volt-e alternatíva*; Zeidler, "Mozgástér a kényszerpályán. A magyar külpolitika választásai a két háború között," 162–205.

29 Something similar can be said about Finnish foreign policy decision-makers before the Winter War.

political interests and goals did not determine the course of actions, because some external agent intervened. The definition of Ránki's concept of the room for manoeuvre *(mozgástér)* may be reformulated as the "room to play the game," meaning the possibility of influencing European politics and pursuing Hungarian interests and goals in its vicinity. That "room" was dwindling during the war. Whereas for some other small countries (e.g., Sweden) even a small "room to play" could yield profits, for many others it only gave negative or suspicious alternatives (cp. Finnish policy).

At the beginning of the 1920s, Hungarian foreign policy was searching for an outlet. The country was isolated, and it was difficult to practice independent foreign policy because its goals were far too ambitious and followed the general opinion that demanded an extensive revision of the borders. Hungary did not have any "friendly" states to support it; on the contrary, the Little Entente opposed it, and the League of Nations could not do anything. The policy of "fishing in the storm"[30] brought only a small catch: "on December 14, 1921, the legendary referendum took place in the western Hungarian town of Sopron according to the Venice Protocol whether a total of 257 km² should belong to Hungary or Austria. This was the only major territorial revision of the Treaty of Trianon that was permanently accepted by the Great Powers. After 72.8 percent voted for Hungary, the city was awarded the title of »Civitas Fidelissima« (most loyal town)."[31] Pushed hard, Italy turned out to be willing to start the revision process but with the rise of Nazism, it was impossible to reach any international agreement. A turn took place in 1932–1933 after anglophile Prime Minister István Bethlen had resigned in 1931 and Gyula Gömbös came to power. He counted on Germany's support, but Hitler was not warming to a definitive rapprochement yet. Some critical experts warned that aligning with the Reich could be dangerous—support in foreign policy might lead to foreign political slavery.[32] If Germany expanded to the borders of Hungary, the revision policy would become just a pawn in Hitler's power politics.

Hungarian hopes were running high when possibilities for revision were actualised before the outbreak of World War II. Hitler gave vague hints that Hungary might gain territory from Czechoslovakia, but Hungarian leaders hoped that all the four great powers would acquiesce to the changes in border lines (First Vienna Award on 2 November 1938, Second Vienna Award on 30 August 1940). In return, Hungary had to make concessions to Germany by joining the Anti-Comintern Pact

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30   Quoted by Zeidler, "Mozgástér a kényszerpályán. A magyar külpolitika választásai a két háború között," 169.

31   Sopron Chose Hungary 100 Years Ago. *Hungary Today,* 14 December 2021.

32   Miksa Fenyő's study of Hitler from the year 1934. Bethlen regarded Germany's defeat so likely that he drafted a peace plan for Hungary only with the Western powers. See his "Emlékirat a nagyhatalmak béketerveiről és Magyarország revíziós céljairól," 364–85.

and resigning from the League of Nations. Hungarian policy took a chance that closed certain foreign policy options and made the "room to play the game" smaller, since the Western powers did not recognise the move, although Germany did.

In November 1940, Hungary aligned with the Axis. Its obligations and consequences turned out to be damaging, leading Hungary to a war against the enemies of Germany. Those who opposed Teleki's plans, like Bethlen who to the very end warned against intervening in great power conflicts, could easily condemn it afterwards.[33] Teleki surmised that if Hungary was dragged into the war, its defence forces could be saved to defend the acquired territories. His calculation failed when Hitler suggested that Hungary should attack Yugoslavia, and promised in return the territories where there were some 400,000 Hungarians living. Aware of the opposing British stance and suspecting the German defeat, Teleki found himself in a corner and shot himself. Less sceptic Prime Minister László Bárdossy[34] directed the Hungarian army against the Soviet Union with the *Wehrmacht*, a fateful move which did not give Hungary any advantages. Instead, the country had to stay in the war to the bitter end, as the way to a separate peace offered to Finland was not an option for Hungary.

Mythical stories of the "forced path" of Hungary to World War II and the hard times as its consequences have camouflaged the real nature of the failure of its foreign policy. The first contributing factor to Hungary's demise is that its goals were far too ambitious. Secondly, it did not give up on any of its territorial demands even when no other state supported it. Thirdly, Hungary pursued revisionism in times when there was no certainty of keeping the territorial acquisitions. Fourthly, the acquisitions were bound up with the external German goals of seizing more *Lebensraum,* that most European powers could never accept. Finally, poorly armed Hungary went to a war in which it had more unreliable allies than reliable and strong enemies.[35]

The myth created in the period of Socialism that Hungary had already been at war when its army occupied Yugoslav territories (11 April 1941) is distinctly ideological.

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33   Bethlen, *Hungarian Politics during World War II*, 10.

34   During his one-year premiership, Bárdossy declared war on England and the United States, and started ethnic cleansing among Serbs and Jews. In this paper, it is impossible to deal with the Hungarian Holocaust (see Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*; Sipos, "The Fascist Arrow-Cross Government in Hungary," 109); and its mythology, let it suffice to add that Ernő Szép in his *Emberszag* [The Smell of Humans] mentions how Hungarian military circles spread the legend that Jews directed the Allied bombers over Budapest public buildings by giving light signals from the roofs of houses and how children had learned from primary school teachers that Jews would kill and eat them. Bibó's *Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után* gives a dismal picture of Hungarian postwar antisemitism—his remarkable contribution to the issue and its background are succinctly analysed by Tuomas Laine-Frigrén in his "Antisemitismi Unkarissa," 121–34.

35   Zeidler, "Mozgástér a kényszerpályán," 201–03.

Also, the myth from the 1960s that Hungary went along the "forced path" only when its army attacked the Soviet Union is repudiated by the fact that it joined the Axis earlier and launched an invasion in the south. Freedom of action was lost as early as 1940–1941. In fact, international opinion and also politicians at home were convinced that Hungary could not deviate from the path staked out by the Axis powers.

The myth of liberation

One of the most persistent myths in Hungarian twentieth-century history was born in aftermath of the World War II. The change of power in 1945 which began with the Soviet occupation was called "liberation" *(felszabadulás)* for almost fifty years. Again, it became ideological, a sort of dogma in the official political usage. Although the Red Army chased Nazis out of Hungary ("liberated"), the question of what really happened soon afterward began to preoccupy the minds of historians after 1989/1990. The pivotal question was: what had Stalin planned for the future of Eastern Europe and Hungary particularly? Two different answers have been given.

According to the traditional view, the Soviets had from the very beginning aimed at the Sovietisation of the countries they had occupied. This has been criticised by the so-called leftist-revisionist group of historians. They refer to the attempts of the United States to build an "informal empire" (financial and economic) to which the Soviet Union had to react. Some historians argue that the Sovietisation of Hungary was not decided in advance, but the Soviet Union acted later for security reasons when the United States started the Cold War.[36]

The revisionists' argument can be divided into several statements: 1) when the United States started the Cold War, the Soviet Union acted pragmatically and pursued a peaceful solution in Europe, but the Marshall-program forced it into action; 2) thus, the later Sovietisation of Eastern Europe was a reaction to the economic threat coming from the United States; 3) the Soviet Union would have continued co-operation with the Western powers for longer, and it had not planned the establishment of "people's democracies" early on but rather restricted the home-communists in their eagerness (cp. in Finland the "years of danger") to take power—they had to agree to forming the so-called 'peoples' fronts'. The conclusion was that the Soviet Union acted on pragmatic evaluations of the developing constellation, rather than on ideological grounds. However, it has been shown that all the statements contain only half-truths.[37]

The statement about the economic pressure of the United States is correct but the Soviet Union also needed economic support. It is also true that Hungarian

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36   See Ungváry, "Magyarország szovjetizálásának kérdései," 280.

37   Ungváry, "Magyarország szovjetizálásának kérdései," 282.

communists had some room for manoeuvring but only within the limits set by the Soviets. Rákosi was advised to steer toward a national form of Sovietisation and was exhorted to self-criticism.

As far as Stalin's pragmatism, it contained a fair dose of cynicism. Concerning the Sovietisation of the Baltic states, Moscow saw that the communists could do the trick when the time for takeover was ripe. The policy of gradualism did not necessarily mean Stalin's will to use peaceful solutions. Instead, he held onto the division of spheres of interest laid out in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, made his stance known in diplomacy, and waited for the weakening of the "imperialist" states and the escalation of class-wars in Eastern Europe. As to the tactics for moving on with Sovietisation there, he was introduced to a three-step plan: first, dissidence among home communists should be subdued,[38] then a temporary "peoples" front led by the communists should be formed, and finally all "bourgeois" parties should be smoked out it.[39] When the Sovietization of the occupied Eastern European countries was finalised, the Soviet Union could claim that it would not allow another great power on the continent. This claim was pure propaganda, since Great Britain's influence had weakened. Instead, the talk about "peaceful co-existence" was propaganda because the mission of Soviet diplomacy was to incite conflicts, even war between the "imperialist" powers. The final goal was worldwide revolution and power. In this context, Hungary's fate was predestined, and there was no power to stop its realisation, especially because the United States had no vested interest in it. With support from Moscow, communists in Hungary increased their grip on power, although at times Moscow would apply brakes to harness their ambitions.

There remains the question about the nature of "liberation." One should find a definition or at least some fitting characterisation to treat fairly the victims of both the Nazis and the Soviet occupation. The minimum interpretation would be "liberation" from Arrow-Cross terror followed by "free" but dire living circumstances under Soviet occupation and a gradual tightening of the communist rule. Those who hardly ever use the concept of "liberation" do not think that the Russians brought "freedom" but they say that they saved people from the threat of death and the country from total devastation. But "liberation" did not mean anything to the people who were harassed, oppressed, raped, persecuted, or hurled to Siberia (also those whom the Russians "deported" from the Budapest ghetto). Their families could never think of the postwar times as "free."

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38 In 1945–1949, the Hungarian elite and intelligentsia, some twelve thousand people were "cleansed," and communists took over student and research organisations. In 1971, some 64 percent of intellectuals were members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. See Papp, "A NÉKOSZ-legendája és valósága," 337–38.

39 Ivan Maiski's plan from the year 1944. *Külpolitika* 3–4 (1996): 154–84.

On closer inspection, we find that "iberation" was an individual or a group experience. If a man declared to the Russians that he had been a communist during the war, he was sent to prison. As a historical concept, "liberation" does not suit Hungary, and as the communist rule consolidated and Russian occupation continued, it became ideological in a totalitarian sense. For instance, Sándor Márai felt that "There was no liberation anywhere—neither in me, nor in the outside world—but release *(megszabadulás)* happened since the caricature [prewar semi-feudal Hungary of nobility] finally disappeared."[40] We may conclude that in our case "liberation" can be interpreted as "getting rid of" the burden of past subjugation without any feeling of "liberty" in the present. To what extent the communists felt liberated, while they preached the 'liberation' sermon and organized "liberation" exhibitions, is still an intriguing question.

The uprising of 1956

The 1956 uprising and its suppression had been such a painful experience and memory for Hungarians that it has been a fertile feeding ground for myths. After 1989, the uprising was an open topic, and in 1990 it was codified by a law as 'revolution*,*' which conclusively removed the stamp of counter-revolution. The system change also revolutionised history writing; the themes surrounding the uprising exploded giving room for speculations, legends as well as serious studies.[41] My intention, however, is to tackle only one myth about the uprising, namely that the "revolution," which was an uprising at the outset, could have exacerbated into a real revolution if certain conditions had been fulfilled. The myth can, however, be overturned by the critiques which prove beyond doubt that the Soviet onslaught could not have been defeated.[42] The Soviet army was superior to that of the revolutionaries, and no outside power could, or indeed want to, intervene on their side.

The wide international support was of a moral kind. Why not military? There were several reasons. Only the United States could have challenged the Soviets, but there were many obstacles. Preparations for presidential elections were on the way, leaving no space for sufficient attention to the Hungarian predicament. The State Department had not been provided with the necessary instructions on how to act,

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40   Márai, *Föld, föld*, 101–2. Quoted by Ungváry, "Magyarország szovjetizálásának kérdései," 308.

41   The present author has found *1956. Forradalom és szabadságharc* (by Zoltán Ripp) and *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom (*by György Litván) the most easily accessible in style.

42   Békés, "Győzhetett-e volna a magyar forradalom 1956-ban," 339–60. Lauri Hjelt, the Ambassador of Finland, reported from the scene that the uprising was not going to succeed. See Halmesvirta, "Unkarilaisia illuusioita ja reaalipolitiikkaa," 127–38.

and the legation in Budapest proved incompetent. Secretary of State Dulles was hospitalised when the crisis was acute, and when President Eisenhower was asked about the possibility of intervention, he remarked that "Hungary is as inaccessible as Tibet."[43] The way through Austria was diplomatically closed and any military action would have been dangerous, risking the outbreak of a world war. Despite these considerations, it was still argued that if the Suez crisis had not tied down Western powers, the Soviet Union could at least have been criticised with its position defied more vigorously.[44] All this was wishful thinking.[45] With hindsight it has become clear that no international demonstrations or declarations could have stopped the Soviet intervention, and the Western powers had to finally accept that military action was impossible. Suez provided a good excuse for them. Misconceived is also the retrospective view that the United Nations could/should have acted as a mediator, uniting the Western front against the Soviet Union in the crisis, and stopping the intervention. During the Cold War, the United Nations did not have any efficient say in matters concerning the interest spheres of great powers.

One version of the success myth of the uprising had it that the Soviets were seriously weighing the pros and cons of the intervention until the last moment (30 October). If they had decided to back out, the revolution might have succeeded, and Hungary could have become independent (!). The documents from the Moscow archives indisputably show that the leaders gave Imre Nagy a few moments of grace and were watching if he could keep Hungary communist and within the Soviet bloc. If Nagy had managed to do so, Hungary might have avoided intervention like Poland did. However, Nagy announced withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact—the main demand of the revolutionaries—and consequently, Moscow made the decision to intervene.

Yet another myth concerns the still widely accepted belief that János Kádár's regime guaranteed social security, work, and relative well-being, produced material and technical progress, developed into consumer socialism, and could thus be called goulash or fridge-socialism of "little liberties" with a bright future ahead.[46] Kádár and socialism itself were merited for this state of affairs. There is still a considerable amount of nostalgia among the elderly: in the summer of 2001, it was proposed that a statue should be erected to Kádár. The opinion of the "man of the street" seems to be that he was irreplaceable to Hungary.[47] Like Kekkonen was to Finland.

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43   Eisenhower's remark in *Presidential Personality and Improvisational Decision-Making: Eisenhower and the 1956 Hungarian Crisis*, 309.

44   See e.g., *1956 Intézet Évkönyv V. 1996–1997*, 242–45.

45   President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, tried to make Khrushchev change his mind asking him to avoid bloodshed, but to no avail.

46   Gerő and Pető, "Bevezetés," 5–12.

47   The author of this article has heard this opinion mostly from retired professionals and workers.

Behind the welfare myth lies the shock effect of the system change. When the standard of living and GDP suddenly dropped, many Hungarians remembered how everyone had been ensured at least the minimum income and social services during the Kádár regime. The 1989 swift turn to the market economy and "wild" capitalism brought with it unemployment and insecurity in the lower social classes. The ensuing "democratisation" seemed to mean only a growing inequality and the enrichment of the new elite.[48] The great expectations of the overwhelming majority of the population were disappointed.

In order to gain insight into the realities of the Kádár period, we should take a closer look at the prevalent living standards, consumption, and material and technical development in comparison to the previous, dictatorial period of state-socialism (1949–1956) at the end of which Hungary faced economic distress followed by the 1956 uprising.[49]

From 1957, the Kádár regime used carrots and sticks to punish[50] and placate citizens. The party took measures to stop the irritating political surveillance of citizens' private lives, but the socialist propaganda kept its educating role at schools, workplaces, unions, and in other, more voluntary social associations. Perhaps the greatest difference between the Rákosi and the Kádár systems was that Kádárism did not apply everyday intimidation, harassment, or pressurizing, and gradually abandoned political trials.[51]

Uncontrolled criticism of the party-state and reform ideas could hardly grow in the 1960s, when a great majority of Hungarians concentrated on acquiring material goods for their living. The system legitimised itself by promising an ever better tomorrow. It tried to avoid the mistakes of the Rákosi period in oversized economic planning and megalomaniac industrialisation and invested more in the production of consumer goods to keep people satisfied. It was still proclaimed that the socialist economy could overcome capitalism, but in the long run technical and organisational backwardness, lack of quality control and competent personnel, as well as the

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48   This was more bitterly experienced by Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia. See Halmesvirta, "Reflections on the New Capitalist Culture and Identity," 73–82.

49   This section is largely based on Valuch, "A gulyáskommunizmus," 361–90; *Magyarország társadalomtörténe a XX. század második felében.*

50   Between December 1956 and summer 1961, 341 of them were hanged (299 were sentenced to death for participation in the revolution), 26,000 were brought to court and 22,000 were sentenced, more than half of them more than five years in prison (e.g., István Bibó's sentence was for life, but he was pardoned in 1963 but was not returned his citizen rights). Besides, in 1957–1960, about 13,000 were interned, tens of thousands were evicted, dismissed from work, and placed under police control. All these punitive measures concerned some 100,000 persons and their families. See *The 1956 Revolution: A History of Documents*, 375.

51   Huszár and Szabó, *Restauráció vagy kiigazítás.*

low level of infrastructure hindered the achievement of the targets of the grandiose five-year plans. The planned 40–50 percent growth in consumption in the years 1961–1965 could not be met, and the production of some basic foodstuffs (milk, flour, potatoes, and vegetables) was less in 1967 than in 1960.[52] Continuous failures to satisfy the needs of consumers and low salaries motivated and gave rise to the so-called "second economy:" e.g., selling garden products on markets, exchange of services, small businesses, without which the system would have collapsed.[53] In the mid-1970s, Hungary had to resort to foreign loans to finance its domestic demand. It was difficult to obtain raw materials and energy in the required quantities. The party-state ran into deep debts, which was one of the main reasons of the fall of the system.[54]

Up to the year 1975, Hungarian workers' incomes were increasing but did not reach Western European levels. Real incomes increased in 1960–1980 by 3.8 percent a year but in the same period, prices doubled and consumption more than doubled. In the 1980s, 40 percent of the income accrued from unregistered sources. Nevertheless, in 1968 the average income of two wage earners was enough to maintain a family of five, while 3.3 million people lived on a minimum subsistence level, and of them 1.4 million could be classified as poor (14 percent of the population). Concomitantly, the consequences of goulash-socialism started to show in people's state of health:[55] alcoholism, suicides, coronary disease, and depression rose to alarming levels, and national health in general deteriorated. At the same time, differences in incomes increased considerably, and the huge bureaucracy ate up resources. The positive image of goulash-socialism that it would feed and take care of everybody was tarnished but its ideology emphasised (apologised) that a socialist man/woman is different from a capitalist one: he/she does not accumulate fortunes but thinks of the "common good." Pragmatic Kádár declared that "it is proper to save up for buying a TV, a fridge, a motorbike, or a car, to own a house and to travel" but all excesses (i.e., luxury) would be seen as hoarding.[56] No wonder, possessing a car became a sort of socialist status symbol of the 1970s. Many Hungarians lived in the so-called shortage economy, which was called "fridge-socialism" because to buy a fridge one had to work harder than before, and to fill it up was more expensive than before.[57]

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52   Valuch, "A gulyáskommunizmus," 370–71.

53   See esp. Holger Fischer's article in *Agriculture and Rural Life in Finland and Hungary*.

54   Földes, *Az eladósodás politikatörténete 1957–1986*.

55   See Halmesvirta, *Co-operation across the Iron Curtain*, esp. Chapter II.

56   Kádár, *Hazafiság és internacionalizmus*, 83.

57   This was reflected in jokes one example of which is the following: One comrade complained that although it was announced on the radio that large amounts of meat, milk and butter had been

There was a typically human way out of misery: enterprising people improved their standards of living by starting their own businesses independently of the system, which gave them more room to operate. Their entrepreneurship provided the means required in the transition to the consumer society. This applied also to the lower classes. The more the socialist system in Hungary allowed private businesses, the more it lost its economy-based legitimacy. The propaganda declaring that the socialist economy paved the way to prosperity for all was gradually losing its credibility.

As myths in general, and in the same way as several myths in twentieth-century Hungarian history testify, the ones of goulash-socialism contain an element of truth.[58] They tend to generalise from a small, selected group of points, and a desired positive picture is painted. It seems that nowadays these generalisations are rather imaginations used in giving justification to build cultic spectacles around certain bygone statesmen, for instance, during reburials (e.g., Admiral Miklós Horthy's reburial in 1993 or the nineteenth-century poet Sándor Petőfi's "reburial" at the Kerepesi Cemetery in 2015). They stir—often with religious liturgy—deep sentiments and imaginary visions and keep up collectively a trumped-up tradition of cultic commemoration.[59]

Such cult occasions incite heated debate, and realistic historians resent their falsification of history.[60] This juxtaposition points to the difference between public and academic history: politicians dealing with public history promiscuously use "history" for day-to-day purposes,[61] while academic historians either remind them of the pitfalls of the abuse of history or simply ignore them because they will not listen. The import of their work[62] and a deep understanding of the latest directions of the theory of history[63] provide ammunition to the younger generation of histori-

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produced lately, his fridge remained empty. His friend had a solution at hand: "Connect the fridge to the radio." In: Kaasalainen and Lounela, *Ole totinen, toveri. Kaskuja kansandemokratioista*, 34.

58   Although the Hungarian and East German security services produced misleading information about the people surveilled, there was some truth in it that could somehow convince the superior officers. Cp. Dalos, "Testvérszervek – Az NDK és a Magyar Népköztársaság állambiztonsági szerveinek együttműködése," 82–95.

59   *Mindenütt felyül ég. Gyász, temetések és újratemetések a magyar kultusz- és irodalomtörténetben.* Cp. *Cultic Revelations. Studies in Modern Historical Cult Personalities and Phenomena.*

60   See e.g., Ignác Romsics's article on the Horthy-cult in *Cultic Revelations. Studies in Modern Historical Cult Personalities and Phenomena.*

61   Jeremy, *Using History.*

62   Ignác Romsics has quite systematically helped to lift Hungarian history writing to an admirable level. See his *Múltról a mának. Tanulmányok és esszék a magyar történelemről; Clio bűvöletében; A múlt arcai; Magyarország története* and his two-volume *Egotörténelem. Hetven év*, which is an autobiography revealing much about Hungarian history politics.

63   Gábor Gyáni is distinguished in this sector: see especially his *A történeti tudás*, reviewed in the *Hungarian Historical Review* 12, no. 2 (2023). It crowns an imposing series of studies on

ans to bust myths and legends that only tend to aggravate the Hungarian historical traumas. One reminder, however, is appropriate here: the literary scholar István Margócsy, who has tried to bust the persistent Petőfi myths, reminds us that such myths are so convincing to their believers that historical facts cannot disprove them. Misconceptions as beliefs have such power that a myth as a tale or a legend can satisfy the needs people have for cults and their rituals. Consequently, historical or other explanations become impossible because the rational argument against the mythical fortress of cults is doomed to defeat them.[64] And this leads to a situation in which we have to be constantly aware of the emergence of ever-new legends.

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history-theoretical topics. Some of them: *Postmodern kánon*; *Identity and Urban Experience. Fin-de-siècle Budapest*; *Relatív történelem*; *Nép, nemzet, zsidó*; *A történelem mint emlékmű*; *Nemzeti vagy transznationális történelem*; *A nő élete*.

64   Margócsy, "…hány helyen nincsen Petőfi," 183–206.

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One Story – Several Interpretations

Post-Yugoslav Historiography on Yugoslavia*

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Abstract. The Yugoslav state was founded on 1 December 1918, when Serbia and Montenegro united with the South Slavic provinces of the disintegrated Austria–Hungary. This state emerged from the unification of South Slavs, each being at a different stage of identity formation. Yugoslavia was destroyed in 1941 during World War II, but it was later re-established as a federal republic, with a strong internal cohesion built on the ideals of "brotherhood and unity." However, in 1991, the Yugoslav state collapsed once again. The experience of living in a common state was different for each of the nations involved, and today's national historiographies present different perspectives on the Yugoslav era. This study aims to explore the main historical narratives of each nation, emphasising diverging interpretations. Among these national historiographies, the Serbian one tends to adopt a more positive view of the former state, while Slovenian historians regard the years spent in Yugoslavia as a developmental phase that also yielded certain achievements. Croatian historiography, on the other hand, perceives the Yugoslav period primarily as a time of resistance against Serbian dominance and centralism in the context of national development.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, historiography, national perspective, centralism, federalism, coexistence

At the end of World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established as part of sweeping geopolitical changes. This newly formed Yugoslav state brought together nations that had never before coexisted within a single country. Two decades later, during World War II, the royal Yugoslavia disintegrated, only to be reconstituted in the final phase of the war with a new leadership and a restructured state apparatus. Throughout the existence of Yugoslavia, the relationships among its constituent nations and peoples—and their interpretations of coexistence within the

South Slavic state—was a largely taboo subject in both historiography and public discourse. Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, each nation produced its own narrative of the shared statehood, resulting in comprehensive monographs and thematic compilations, particularly in connection with the centenary of Yugoslavia's founding.[1] In all the cases, the interpretation of the past is shaped by national perspectives. The central questions include: How did a given nation or territory come to be part of the South Slavic state? What were the historical periods and circumstances that facilitated or hindered the economic and cultural development of the nations and regions? What are the events that specific ethnic groups regard as grievous or tragic?

Formation of the Yugoslav state: royal Yugoslavia

Due to shifts in security policy and other contributing factors, the previous European order—based on the balance of great empires—was replaced by a new system of alliances and security arrangements. At the time of the dissolution of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, each South Slavic nation was compelled to redefine its concepts of state organisation and reconcile them with the realities of the international political landscape. On 1 December 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established. Officially, the new state was formed by Serbia (which had already unified with Montenegro and the region of Vojvodina) and the short-lived, unrecognised State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, proclaimed in Zagreb on 29 October 1918, encompassing the South Slavic territories of the Monarchy. The question of the internal structure of the state arose during the preparatory negotiations and remained a central issue throughout subsequent historical turning points. The institutional framework of the first Yugoslavia was constructed along centralist and unitarist lines; the constitutions of 1921 and 1931 did not recognise any form of territorial or national autonomy. Nevertheless, the formation of a unified Yugoslav nation and the integration of the country did not progress as the political leadership had expected. In response to persistent regional nationalisms, King Alexander introduced a royal dictatorship in 1929. The tensions among the constituent nations were not alleviated by the imposed ideology of Yugoslavism. Consequently, Prince

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1   On the occasion of the centenary, two contrasting compilations were published in Belgrade. *Istorija jedne utopije*, edited by Petrović et al., offers a sympathetic account of Serbia's role in Yugoslavia and foregrounds Serbian grievances. In contrast, *Jugoslavija u istorijskoj perspektivi*, edited by Perović et al., adopts a broader historical lens, examining the lived experiences of various national groups and addressing socio-economic dimensions of the Yugoslav state. For comprehensive overviews, see: Dimić, *Srbija u Jugoslaviji*; Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja*; Fischer et al., eds, *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*; Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918–2008*; Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska zgodovina*.

Regent Paul attempted a political compromise with the Croats, and the creation of the short-lived Banovina of Croatia in 1939 may have represented a potential step toward overcoming the centralist structure. The trajectory of these developments remains speculative, as the invasion by German and neighbouring state forces in early April 1941 brought an end to the existence of the first Yugoslavia.[2]

Serbian historiography emphasises that Serbia was the driving force behind the unification process. In the final phase of the war, when the Allies no longer insisted on the preservation of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, the international circumstances increasingly favoured Serbia. The unification was not a product of chance. From the nineteenth century, Serbian political movements of various ideological orientations regarded the "gathering" of Serbs living in different states as a central mission. Moreover, the political appeal of the Yugoslav idea—based on the linguistic and cultural kinship between Serbs and Croats—grew steadily stronger. This vision entailed the creation of a large South Slavic state stretching from Maribor to Split, and from Subotica to Ohrid. For Serbs, the Yugoslav concept consistently served as a tool of resistance against the expansionist ambitions of the great empires.

> "Pašić asserted, unification with the Croats was necessary, because in the future, under the pressure of great powers, only large states would be able to survive."[3]

According to Miloš Ković, the Serbs actively pursued the creation of a Yugoslav state, even assuming the responsibility of protecting Croatia and Slovenia from Italian territorial ambitions. This position was already evident when the Entente powers, in the Treaty of London (1915), promised South Slavic territories to Italy. In later public discourse and political commentary, the idea of establishing a "Greater Serbian state" frequently emerged as an alternative vision. However, this concept was explicitly rejected by both Prince Regent Alexander and Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić.[4]

Serbian historians often situate the creation of the Yugoslav state within the broader process of Europe's democratic and liberal transformation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This trajectory includes the unification of Germany and Italy, followed by the collapse of empires and the emergence or re-establishment of nation-states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia—developments interpreted

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2   The literature on Yugoslavia is virtually inexhaustible. For comprehensive overviews, see Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavia*. For the royal Yugoslav period, see Bíró, *A jugoszláv állam*.

3   Ković, "Srbi i jugoslovenska ideja," 603. Ković argues that Croatian Yugoslavism, particularly in its early formulations, served as a vehicle for diminishing Serbian political influence and facilitating Habsburg penetration into the southern Slavic territories.

4   Ković, "Srbi i jugoslovenska ideja," 609.

as "the triumph of the national idea over imperial ideology."[5] In this context, the Yugoslav state held considerable geopolitical significance within the new European order shaped under the leadership of France and Great Britain.

> "At first, Yugoslavia represented a barrier to Germanic domination in the south-east of Europe. Then, it was part of a sanitary cordon towards Soviet Russia, which had tried, throughout the previous century, to get through to the Mediterranean. The mixed religious and national composition of the Yugoslav state also eliminated the fear of British experts on the Balkans (Robert Seaton-Watson) that, after the disappearance of Austria–Hungary, the creation of a big, united Serbian state, would represent a latent danger of Russia dominating the region in the future, due to its historical ties and kindred Orthodox and Slavonic characteristics."[6]

Serbian historians depict the process of unification as follows.[7] In 1914, the Serbian parliament adopted a declaration in Niš, identifying the liberation and unification of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as a central war aim. More intensive negotiations regarding the establishment of a new state began in the final years of the war, involving Croats and Slovenes with Yugoslav sympathies. For most of these actors, the prospect of a shared state was not inherently appealing; rather, their position was shaped by fears of German and Italian expansionism, as well as concerns over social unrest and potential anarchy. The formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was carried out with the consent of legitimate representative bodies, including the Montenegrin parliament, the Vojvodina assembly, and the National Council in Zagreb. Serbia—having made the greatest sacrifices for the common state—carried the legacy of statehood and, at the end of the war, was counted among the victors. This status provided Serbia with advantageous conditions during the peace negotiations.

A particularly emphatic point in Serbian historiography is that post-World War I Yugoslavia was the first state to encompass the vast majority of the Serbian population. Leading Serbian politicians perceived the new state as an enlarged Serbia and sought to establish Yugoslav unity under their leadership. This effort was facilitated by the fact that, despite being a numerical minority across the country, Serbs held influential positions within the party structure, even in Croatia. Serbian historians regard positively any attempt aimed at overcoming "provincial nationalisms," viewing such efforts as intended to preserve the integrity of the state. At the same time, they acknowledge that the official ideology failed to penetrate the broader layers of society, which continued to adhere to their pre-existing national identities.[8] State

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5   Terzić, *Etnički sastav stanovništva,* 11.

6   Baraković, "The Balkan Piedmont," 62.

7   Baraković, "The Balkan Piedmont," 55–64.

8   In this context, religious divisions are often cited as a contributing factor, with some Serbian

policies designed to promote development are praised in contemporary Serbian historiography, though it tends not to emphasise which regions benefited most from these measures. Objectively, it is also recognised that throughout Yugoslavia's existence, neither the society nor the economy was successfully integrated.

Serbian historiography acknowledges that the contemporary Serbian elite either failed to understand or consciously rejected the federalist vision advocated by the Croats. It does not condemn this stance; rather, it accepts that the Serbian elite, invoking the concept of national unity, dismissed the Croats' appeals to historical rights. The only significant criticism is directed at the Serbian political leadership's lack of preparedness in 1939, when "centralism was replaced by a federation." At that critical juncture, there was no unified Serbian position or cohesive political-cultural organisation to defend national interests. Unlike the Croats, who were consolidated under the Croatian Peasant Party, the Serbs did not establish a large administrative unit to represent their collective interests. The Serbian–Croatian agreement (Cvetković–Maček Pact) and the creation of the autonomous Banovina of Croatia did not resolve the Serbian or Slovenian questions. Outside the ruling party, the Serbian population met the agreement with widespread rejection.[9]

In discussions surrounding the Serbian–Croatian agreement, a recurring question concerns how Serbs and Croats perceived the shared state. For Serbs from the Kingdom of Serbia, Yugoslavia represented the expansion of Serbian statehood, parliamentarism, and democracy. For Serbs from the former Austro–Hungarian territories and Montenegro, it embodied the realisation of national unity. By contrast, Croats and Slovenes continued to pursue the affirmation of their national identities and statehood even during the royal Yugoslav period. Croatian separatism persisted—only "Belgrade replaced Vienna."[10] Due to his consistent opposition to the agreement, Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović has received increasingly positive historical evaluations. His tenure is interpreted as an effort to preserve Yugoslav unity and to counter both Croatian political currents—Maček's moderate autonomism and the radicalism of the Ustaša movement. The international context was also unfavourable to Stojadinović. Following the Munich Agreement, the threat of violent border changes in Europe became tangible, and British foreign policy encouraged Prince Regent Paul to make concessions to the Croats.[11]

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historians explicitly blaming the Catholic Church for deepening interethnic tensions. See Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja,* 384.

9   Serbian works on Royal Yugoslavia: Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija*; Dimić, *Srbija u Jugoslaviji*, 35–213; Petranović, *The Yugoslav Experience*.

10   Svirčević, "Milan Stojadinović i hrvatsko pitanje," 85.

11   Svirčević, "Milan Stojadinović i hrvatsko pitanje," 85–97. For Stojadinovć's latest assessment, see also Đurković, ed., *Milan Stojadinović.*

Most Serbian historians attribute the failure of state integration primarily to Croatian political behaviour. Croats are often portrayed as perpetually dissatisfied without cause, as separatists, obstructers of state cohesion, and opponents of necessary development initiatives.[12]

Numerous studies reflect the view that "both the Yugoslavia of King Alexander and that of the AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) could have been replaced by a decidedly better alternative: namely, the creation of a unified state of Serbian lands."[13] More recently, several historians have adopted the position—cited by Milorad Ekmečić in his book, without indicating whether he personally agrees—that the creation of Yugoslavia was a strategic error for the Serbian nation. In their view, Serbia forfeited its internationally recognised statehood by merging into a Yugoslav framework. "Serbia drowned in the improvisation of Yugoslav statehood, with which it suffered the greatest defeat in its history." The idea of Serbian national sovereignty and statehood was significantly weakened. For Serbs, the creation of Yugoslavia amounted to a Pyrrhic victory: following a war marked by immense sacrifice, the Serbian national movement was forced into a defensive posture.[14]

Contemporary Croatian historians evaluate the history of Yugoslavia almost exclusively from the perspective of Croatian statehood. They acknowledge that genuine efforts were made to create a joint Serbian–Croatian–Slovene state, based on the belief that liberation from the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy would provide the foundations for the free economic and cultural development of the Croatian nation. Today, however, some historians view the activities of the Yugoslav Committee as a mistake—firstly, because it tied the Croatian cause to the Serbian question, and secondly, because in the Corfu Declaration it effectively renounced Croatian statehood. The State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, proclaimed in Zagreb on 29 October 1918, comprised territories formerly belonging to the Monarchy, including Slovenia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Vojvodina. In principle, it could have chosen between independence and unification with another state. In practice, however, there was no real alternative: Serbian and Italian troops had entered

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12   In this regard, we refer to Ekmečić's periodisation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: the years 1918–1921 were marked by anticipation of a new constitution, expected to establish a parliamentary monarchy on democratic foundations; 1921–1929 witnessed a period of Catholic resistance to the unitary state, culminating in a tragic confrontation in the Yugoslav parliament, after which royal dictatorship was introduced to stabilise the country; 1929–1939 saw a phase of mutual rapprochement, including the establishment of Croatian political autonomy; and finally, between 1939 and 1941, demands emerged for a federal arrangement and, among some Catholic actors, for secession from the common state. Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja,* 390.

13   Marković, "Smisao stvaranja Jugoslavije," 60.

14   Ekmećić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja,* 371.

its territory—the Italians occupying large stretches along the Adriatic coast, while Serbian forces were in several places, such as Split, greeted as liberators. Ultimately, the National Council decided in favour of creating a joint state with Serbia. Serbia, however, offered no guarantees regarding the structure of the new state.

> "Serbia had two fundamental interests: to strengthen itself as a state, to increase its territory, and to unite all Serbs in one state."[15]

In the South Slavic state, which stretched from the Alps to nearly as far as the Aegean Sea, the Croats found themselves in entirely new circumstances—most notably, separated from the Central European sphere that had long been significant for Croatia. In the conflict between centralist and federalist visions, the latter was defeated, and as a result of the centralist structure of royal Yugoslavia, the Croats quickly became disillusioned with the new state. Within Yugoslavia, a "Greater Serbian" program was realised: neither the Croatian nation nor its distinct historical rights was recognised. The political system allowed key state decisions to be made without Croatian participation, while the dominant Serbian political forces sought a disproportionate share of the most influential positions in government. Croatian territories were fragmented and administratively separated from each other, and with the support of state power, the Serbs exploited the non-Serb regions of the country. Throughout the royal period, Croatian lands paid higher taxes than Serbia proper, while receiving only a small fraction of state investment. Croatian political representation fell below the level of the previous era—for example, the provincial government ceased to function. Arising from accumulated grievances and unmet aspirations, the entire Croatian nation soon rallied behind the Croatian Peasant Party, which waged an unyielding and consistent struggle for some form of Croatian statehood.

The constitutional structure generated political and social tensions, ultimately threatening the stability of the state. From 1935, in the spirit of a certain political consolidation and in light of changing international circumstances, the Croatian question could once again be placed on the agenda. The 1939 agreement creating the autonomous Banovina of Croatia (the Cvetković–Maček Pact) might have marked the beginning of a resolution to the Croatian issue. It remains uncertain, however, whether the Serbian political elite would have accepted this change, given its view that Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković had capitulated to the Croats. As Croatian historians emphasise, the Banovina was not an independent state but remained one of the constituent units of the Yugoslav monarchy. From the perspective of Croatian statehood, the arrangement was only a partial solution—yet it entailed no sacrifices and, under the prevailing conditions, nothing more could have been achieved.

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15   Radelić, "Hrvatska i Jugoslavija," 758.

The shortcomings of the agreement, however, opened the way for the two extremist movements—the Communists and the Ustaše—whose activities ultimately set Croatia on a tragic course.[16]

World War I, the demise of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the formation of the Yugoslav Kingdom in 1918 were radical turning points in Slovene history. Before that year, the Slovene political elite had always envisaged the existence of the Slovene nation within the framework of a larger state. For a long time, Slovenes hoped that a trialist reform of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy would grant them an autonomous province. On 17 May 1917, acting on behalf of the South Slavic Club, in the Imperial Council Anton Korošec read the relevant proposal in German. When no favourable response was forthcoming, the possibility of a Yugoslav solution gradually entered Slovene political thinking. Slovenia joined the South Slavic unitary state not directly, but through the short-lived—never internationally recognised—State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. The significance of this development lies particularly in the following fact:

> "The formation of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs on 29 October 1918 was a turning point in Slovene history. The new state only actually existed for just over a month, far too brief an existence to organise in detail its internal relations and powers, but politically and administratively it was a »confederal republic«, in which Slovenes governed themselves for the first time."[17]

Nevertheless, it was not easy to reconcile Slovene society to the idea of a South Slavic state; in the end, the appearance of Italian troops proved decisive. In the face of rapidly unfolding events, by late November—all three major Slovene parties, even if differing in their views on the state's internal organisation —supported unification with Serbia.

> "The »proclamation of unification« on 1 December 1918 was not met with the same level of celebration as had greeted news of the end of Austria–Hungary, but there were no vocal protests. The general conviction was that the unresolved border issues with Austria and Italy meant there was no real choice."[18]

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16   Croatian works on Royal Yugoslavia: Matković, *Povijest Jugoslavije,* 58–230; Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest,* 60–119; Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918.–2008,* 15–404; Goldstein, "Hrvatska i Hrvati u Jugoslaviji," 115–29; Šokčević, *Hrvatska od stoljeća 7. do danas,* 372–406.

17   Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *A Slovene History,* 349. Since the 1990s, research into the history of the Slovenian–Croatian–Serbian state has also gained importance. See Perovšek, "Položaj Slovencev v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov."

18   Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *A Slovene History,* 352.

Slovene historiography emphasises that the separation from the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was the correct course of action, as was the fact that—given the circumstances—the Slovenes ultimately joined the South Slavic state voluntarily. However, the politicians of the time could not know what kind of Yugoslavia they were entering; an idealised vision of the new South Slavic state stood before their eyes. In many respects, this vision proved illusory—first, when the powers of the provincial government in Ljubljana were significantly reduced, and later, when it was abolished altogether.[19]

In the Royal Yugoslavia, Slovenes found themselves in an unfamiliar cultural environment and had to adapt to a new political system in which, to advance their interests, they were compelled to align with the court and the centralist Serbian ruling parties. The catholic Slovenian People's Party effectively governed the Slovene territories autonomously, owing to the successful lobbying of its prominent representatives at court. When parliamentary circumstances allowed—or when it was deemed necessary from the court's perspective—the leading Slovene party entered the government. Their leader, Anton Korošec, served twelve times as minister, twice as deputy prime minister, and once—as the only non-Serb—to hold the office of prime minister in the royal government. This political practice lost its influence in the era following the Serbian–Croatian agreement.[20]

From the standpoint of national development, it was a considerable achievement that, within Yugoslavia, the majority of Slovenes were at last united in a single state. Slovene became the official language, and the Slovenes freed themselves from Italian and German influence; as a result, Slovene cultural institutions underwent vigorous growth. This expansion occurred despite the limited budgetary allocations for education and culture within the relatively impoverished Yugoslav state. Notwithstanding their dissatisfaction with the authoritarian and centralist political system, Slovenes experienced an unprecedented phase of dynamic cultural development—one oriented towards and open to Europe. In the sphere of culture, one of the most significant milestones was the establishment of the University of Ljubljana, a national-language institution representing the highest level of education. Likewise, the artistic scene was renewed, while Slovene-language journalism and publishing advanced by leaps and bounds.[21]

19   This opinion was expressed by participants at a conference of historians in 1994. See the presentations in *Časopis za zgodovino in narodnopisje* 1994/1. For example: Melik, "Jugoslavija – zgodovinska zmota ali nuja?"

20   Fischer et al., eds, *Slovenska novejša zgodovina,* 186–506; Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska zgodovina,* 338–96; Perovšek, "Slovenians and Yugoslavia 1918–1941," 47–66; Repe, "Slovenija i Slovenci u Jugoslaviji," 172–87.

21   Dolenc, *Kulturni boj: slovenska kulturna politika.*

The Slovene regions which, before 1918, had formed part of the poorly developed southern periphery of the Habsburg Monarchy, emerged within the Yugoslav state as the most developed and most industrialised areas of the country.[22] In recent decades, however, there has been a marked increase in scholarly interest in a wider range of subjects, reflecting the diversification and expansion of thematic approaches within historical and cultural studies.[23]

The second Yugoslavia: federal reconstruction

Following the disintegration of the first Yugoslav state, the idea of Yugoslav statehood did not vanish into historical oblivion. On the contrary, from 1943–1944 onwards, the Allied anti-fascist coalition explicitly endorsed the restoration of Yugoslavia. This vision was embraced and redefined by the communist-led partisan movement, which placed the preservation and renewal of the Yugoslav state at the centre of its political program—now with a markedly different approach to the national question. At its second session in 1943, the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) resolved to establish a federation composed of six equal republics, grounded in the principle of national self-determination. This federal reorganisation was formalised in 1944, when the local liberation committees—functioning as proto-parliaments—were integrated into the Yugoslav federal framework. Over time, these six republics acquired increasingly autonomous competencies, and in practice, each began to operate with many of the attributes of a nation-state.

The federal restructuring of Yugoslavia elicited markedly different responses from its constituent nations. Serbia, favouring a centralised and unified state model, viewed this structure as more conducive to its national development. Consequently, Serbian political elites often sought to temper initiatives aimed at expanding the rights and autonomy of individual republics. In contrast, Croatian and Slovenian actors perceived federalism and autonomy as safeguards against the potential hegemony of

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22   Lazarević, *Slovensko gospodarstvo v prvi Jugoslaviji.*

23   "The picture of the interwar period painted in Slovene historiography today is much more complex and less nationally biased than thirty of forty years ago. New, politically and ideologically balanced research was done on the Slovene opposition against the Serbian and Yugoslav centralist and authoritarian political pressures. […] Economic and social historians published innovative studies on the economic modernisation, industrial development, banking system and social conditions in the Slovene part of the Yugoslav kingdom. Cultural historians studied the political orientations and ideological divisions of the intelligentsia more extensively than before. And at the same time, political historians continued and still continue to argue that the unsolved national issues and what was until 1939 a rigid centralist system were the main reasons for the quick Yugoslav defeat and disintegration in 1941." Vodopivec, "Slovene Historiography," 103.

other national groups—particularly Serbian dominance. In the late 1960s, calls for reform intensified across the federation. Advocates pushed for more rational economic policies and sought to soften ideological rigidity through liberalising measures. Simultaneously, national demands were becoming increasingly vocal, reflecting a growing discontent with the status quo. In the early 1970s, the federal leadership moved to suppress republican governments deemed too liberal. Yet paradoxically, in 1974, the regime adopted a new federal constitution that significantly expanded the powers of the republics, further institutionalising their autonomy.

As Yugoslavia entered a prolonged economic crisis in the late 1980s, the leadership of the north-western republics—particularly Slovenia and Croatia—began to view the federal framework as an impediment to their progress. Newly emerging political parties, often organised along national lines, echoed these sentiments, leading to escalating tensions between republics and national communities. By this point, the prospect of a modernised, reformed federation had lost all credibility. In 1991, following declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia, the Yugoslav state disintegrated.[24]

Serbian historiography often emphasises that the post-1945 Yugoslav state was reconstituted in the spirit of "partisan Yugoslavism." According to this perspective, the Communist Party—even during the interwar period—pursued a vision of national balance that entailed the creation of nation-states at the expense of Serbian territorial integrity, followed by their integration into a federal framework. The party adopted the theory of "Greater Serbian hegemony" as a negative construct and systematically targeted the Serbian bourgeoisie as a reactionary force. The Soviet Union also viewed the royal Yugoslav state and the contemporary Serbian elite with hostility, reinforcing the delegitimisation of pre-war Serbian political and intellectual structures. During World War II and in its immediate aftermath, the Serbian bourgeoisie was effectively dismantled, the Serbian national movement suppressed, and the Serbian intelligentsia subjected to persecution.[25]

The federal reorganisation of Yugoslavia after 1945 resulted in each constituent republic being structured as a centralised nation-state—except for Serbia, which was uniquely federalised through the creation of two autonomous provinces. Serbian public opinion has perceived this arrangement as unjust, particularly in light of the fact that other republics were delineated largely along national territorial lines. For example, the unification of Croatia and Dalmatia into a single republic facilitated Croatian national consolidation, whereas Serbs were dispersed across multiple republics. Similarly detrimental to the development of the Serbian nation was the

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24   Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias.*

25   Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija,* 63–185.

effort by Tito's communists to construct distinct Montenegrin, Macedonian, and Bosniak national identities during the delineation of federal units. Driven by Titoist ideology, these efforts are viewed as having fragmented Serbian ethnic cohesion and undermined its political representation.[26]

Between 1945 and 1991, the Yugoslav state evolved primarily according to the Slovenian and Croatian federal visions. Rather than ensuring equality among nations, the system prioritised parity among federal units. Tito's governance was underpinned by the belief that a coalition of "national-communist oligarchies" could neutralise the perceived threat of "Greater Serbian" hegemony. This strategic orientation was encapsulated in the slogan: "Weak Serbia, Strong Yugoslavia."[27]

Serbian historiography complains that the borders between the Yugoslav republics were (for the most part) not drawn along geographical, historical, or ethnic lines, and that they were not established through democratic agreement, but were determined at the end of the war by a few leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party based on the Yugoslav communists' position on the national question. Serbian critics argue that this process systematically disadvantaged Serbs, as substantial Serbian populations in Croatia, Macedonia, and Vojvodina found themselves outside the confines of the Serbian republic. Within the communist ideological paradigm one can discern the inheritance of Austro–Hungarian imperial thought, the instrumentalisation of the struggle against "Greater Serbianism" as a means to maintain equilibrium among Balkan nationalisms, and the Comintern's internationalist theory and praxis, which portrayed interwar Yugoslavia as a Versailles-era "construct" and, after 1935, actively sought its dissolution.[28]

The post-war Yugoslav state was initially organised as a centralised party-state, and although it later underwent decentralisation, it remained under the firm control of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia throughout its existence. The Party positioned itself as a staunch opponent of all forms of nationalism, chauvinism, and religious exclusivism, yet simultaneously suppressed intellectual pluralism and independent thought. Following Yugoslavia's break with the Cominform in 1948, the regime gradually abandoned its monolithic social and political practices in favour of a self-managing federal model. This transformation marked a significant ideological shift: from that point onwards, no official Yugoslav ideology was promulgated. Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a deliberate effort to cultivate a shared Yugoslav consciousness.[29]

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26   Ković, "Srbi i jugoslovenska ideja," 611.

27   Terzić, *Etnički sastav stanovništva*, 14–15.

28   Terzić, *Etnički sastav stanovništva,* 13; Čavoški, "Druga Jugoslavija," 141.

29   Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija,* 63–185.

From the 1960s onwards, the Yugoslav party leadership grew increasingly divided over the future of the federation. Republican elites began to prioritise their own regional interests, gradually distancing themselves from the idea of a unified national agenda. The social transformations that emerged in the mid-decade contributed to the strengthening of republican sovereignty and the weakening of the federal state apparatus. Internal power struggles within the League of Communists culminated in the dismissal of Aleksandar Ranković in 1966—a powerful and influential Serbian politician who also oversaw the state security services. Serbs widely perceived his removal as a targeted, anti-Serbian measure. Similarly, the silencing of voices such as Dobrica Ćosić, who called for action against the rising Albanian nationalism in Kosovo and the displacement of Serbs from the region, was also interpreted by many as part of a broader pattern of anti-Serbian policies.[30]

Serbia voiced strong opposition to the 1974 Constitution, which elevated its two autonomous provinces—Kosovo and Vojvodina—to constituent elements of the federation, granting them rights equal to those of the republics. This restructuring, coupled with the republics' growing self-identification as nation-states, effectively obstructed the possibility of Serbian national integration within a unified state framework. During Tito's lifetime, Serbian political actors refrained from assertive action. It was only in the latter half of the 1980s that national concerns and demands were articulated more sharply—most notably in the *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts—and organised political mobilisation intensified, culminating in the so-called "anti-bureaucratic revolution" that facilitated Slobodan Milošević's rise to power. Serbian historiography identifies a series of grievances stemming from this period: the marginalisation of Serbia's economic interests, the fragmentation of its territorial integrity, the perceived overemphasis on minority rights, the expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo, and the rise of Albanian irredentism. These developments, it is argued, prevented the formation of a coherent economic, cultural, and administrative unity across Serbian-populated areas.[31]

Due to these accumulated grievances, the "Serbian question" resurfaced, bringing to the fore the perceived necessity of restructuring the Yugoslav state.[32] As a result

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30 Bogetić, "Nacionalno pitanje i Jugoslavija," 63.

31 Dimić, *Srbi i Jugoslavija,* 98–185; Perović, "Srbi i Srbija u novovekovnoj istoriji," 238–48; Čavoški, "Druga Jugoslavija," 133–45.

32 It should be noted, however, that some authors emphasise that, over time, the Serbs abandoned their role as guardians of Yugoslavia and ceased to identify Yugoslavia with Serbia. Within the Serbian political leadership, there was also a growing willingness to restructure the federation. Marko Nikezić's program marked a profound ideological break from the dominant Serbian elite of the twentieth century. Bešlin, "Reforma jugoslovenske federacije." For more on Serbian modernisation and this ultimately unsuccessful policy, see Bešlin, *Ideja moderne Srbije.*

of the reconfiguration—or rather the "federalisation"—of the federation, marked by the introduction of confederal elements through constitutional amendments between 1967 and 1971, the values of Serbian nationalism were re-consolidated. By the late 1960s, the protagonists of the so-called Serbian question had started to emerge publicly. Leading figures of the Serbian critical intelligentsia—such as Dobrica Ćosić, Mihajlo Đurić, Mihajlo Marković, and Pavle Ivić—abandoned the Yugoslav unitarist perspective and increasingly advocated for Serbian national and territorial integration as the only viable alternative to the delegitimised and exhausted centralist model. After 1987, the leadership of the League of Communists of Serbia also embraced the national idea.[33]

In identifying the causes of Yugoslavia's dissolution, Serbian historiography primarily emphasises the selfishness of individual nations and republics, as well as the economic measures that weakened the shared economy. It also considers the international circumstances that played a key role in the collapse of both Yugoslav states. Germany, in particular, was a decisive factor.[34] Following German reunification and the Soviet Union's defeat in the Cold War (which ultimately led to its own disintegration into constituent republics), Yugoslavia lost its strategic position in international relations. British and French interest in Yugoslavia waned, and France—aligned with Germany in pursuit of the "European project"—chose to support the newly independent states. The Versailles system was definitively dismantled, and Yugoslavia, alongside Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, was one of its final casualties.[35]

In the newly constituted federal order, Croatia assumed its place as one of the six constituent republics. The borders between these republics were drawn with careful regard to ethnic composition and historical precedent, the republics themselves being organised to reflect the dominant nationalities—save for Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a sense of long-standing historical unity was deemed paramount. In this reconfiguration, Croatia surrendered the Bosnian-Herzegovinian

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33   Bešlin, "Reforma jugoslovenske federacije."

34   According to Ković, "The Yugoslav state collapsed due to changes in the balance of power among the great powers. It was dismantled by external factors, not because of the internal weaknesses of the Yugoslav idea." Ković, *Srbi i jugoslovenska ideja*, 612. Ekmečić similarly argues that each dissolution of Yugoslavia was driven by external forces: in 1941 by fascism, in 1992 by "the American form of democracy," and in 1945 by the communists who abolished the monarchy. Ekmečić, *Dugo kretanje između klanja i oranja*, 372. The motif of external forces conspiring against Serbia is a longstanding theme in Serbian historiography. It can be traced back to the hagiography of Saint Sava about Stefan Nemanja, which already portrayed the Serbs as God's chosen people and Serbia as the "New Israel." This ideology has continued to influence modern Serbian identity. Gál, *Egy ismeretlen ismerős*, 166–67.

35   Ković, "Srbi i jugoslovenska ideja", 611.

territories it had held during the period of the Independent State of Croatia, along with the region of Srem; in exchange, it acquired Istria, the city and port of Rijeka, several islands in the Adriatic, and the Baranja district.

In the postwar reconfiguration of Yugoslavia, the federalist renewal ultimately prevailed over the most extreme separatist and unitarist ambitions. Initially, federalism served chiefly to demonstrate that the nationality question had been resolved; moreover, in accordance with Marxist–Leninist doctrine, the significance of the nation was expected to diminish and, in time, to wither away altogether. From 1945 until the mid-1960s, however, the country functioned in practice as a centralist state, in which "the centrally structured Communist Party dictated, led by a single man or a small coterie, which decided every essential matter."[36] As Zdenko Radelić observed,

"Yugoslavia was a federation according to the Constitution, but in practice it was a unitary autocratic centralist state organised according to the Stalinist model. The right to self-determination, including the right to secession and sovereignty, were turned into mere phrases. The party principles of democratic centralism of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) negated the state principles of federalism, so the proclaimed federal order remained ineffective, and the republics were reduced to the executive organs of the central government, namely the communist leadership headed by Josip Broz Tito, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia."[37]

By the close of the 1950s, economic growth had slowed markedly in Yugoslavia following the suspension of Western aid. At the instigation of the Croatian and Slovenian leaderships, a programme of economic reforms was launched in the mid-1960s, accompanied by a measure of political liberalisation—symbolised most visibly by the fall of Aleksandar Ranković. At the same time, movements emerged in nearly every part of the federation seeking to strengthen the autonomy of the individual nations and republics. Among these, the Croatian movement proved the most consequential, spanning developments from the 1967 Declaration on the Croatian Language to the suppression of the "Croatian Spring" in 1971. Broad in its social reach, the movement saw the republic's party leadership dominated by reformists who pressed for a transformation of federal economic policy: a greater role for market mechanisms and the retention, to a larger extent, of foreign exchange revenues in the regions where they were generated—most notably, the channelling of tourism profits into Croatia's own development. While the republican reformers demanded greater autonomy within the framework of Yugoslavia, the intellectuals and students

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36   Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918–2008,* 417.

37   Radelić, "Hrvatska i Jugoslavija," 760.

grouped around the Matica hrvatska, though refraining from explicit statements to that effect, had advanced to contemplating the idea of an independent Croatian state. The Matica, moreover, established an extensive network across the countryside.[38]

At the party plenum convened in Karađorđevo on 1–2 December 1971, the leadership acted decisively to halt the ongoing political currents. The movement advocating democratisation and national objectives was suppressed, and leaders who had tolerated or supported it were removed from office across the federation—including in Serbia. Yet, this did not bring the process of further federalisation to a standstill. Subsequent constitutional amendments, followed by the 1974 Constitution, under the stewardship of the old conservative wing, conferred broader powers upon the republics. The principles of parity, consensus, and veto by republican representatives, together with collective leadership and rotation at all levels, were instituted, and Yugoslavia moved ever closer to the character of a confederal state. Only a single centralised institution endured: the Yugoslav People's Army, while the considerable authority of Tito himself still served at that time as a stabilising counterweight.[39]

Tito's political career is often characterised by his skill in navigating between rival factions within the Communist Party, thereby retaining power over an extended period and exerting a decisive influence on both domestic and foreign policy. The foundation of his approach lay in balancing the competing interests of the Yugoslav nations during the implementation of the federal system. He resisted the hegemonistic ambitions of the Serbian leadership in Serbia, while simultaneously thwarting Croatian aspirations for a confederal arrangement or outright independence. Through a combination of coercion and deft political manoeuvring, he succeeded in preventing national tensions from erupting into open conflict. As one assessment noted,

"This policy, instead of resolving interethnic relations on a democratic basis, resulted only in sweeping the contradictions under the carpet. In Tito's Yugoslavia, not a single apparent or real political liberalisation (which came about as a result of the forced opening towards the West) changed the basic features of the dictatorship of the party state, while Tito rejected a real democratic solution, just like the leaders of other socialist federations (Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union). First of all, precisely because there was no democratic solution to the relations between the stateforming nations, Yugoslavia was only on the surface a »multicultural paradise«, while in reality it was torn apart by numerous serious contradictions."

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38 Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest,* 553–628; Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918–2008,* 532–52; Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji,* 379–467.

39 Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest,* 528–51; Šokčević, *Hrvatska od stoljeća 7. do danas,* 518.

In this sense, Tito proved a successful statesman only in the short term, for the Second Yugoslavia survived him by but a brief span.[40]

In the 1980s, Yugoslavia was once again shaken by a severe economic crisis, a development that accelerated the country's disintegration. Economic cooperation and trade among the republics declined sharply, while cultural ties also weakened. Within Croatia, the republican leadership during what came to be known as the "years of political apathy" was regarded as conservative and displayed little flexibility. The closing months of 1988 and the early weeks of 1989 witnessed the blossoming of organised opposition parties. By the end of 1989, even the League of Communists of Croatia had accepted the principle of a multiparty system, and in January 1990, following the example of the Slovenian communists protesting against centralisation, the Croatian delegation withdrew from the last congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia—a step that effectively marked the organisation's collapse. The new parties were primarily concerned with two issues: the introduction of political pluralism and the national question. Over time, a majority opinion crystallised within Croatian society that the republic's future did not lie within Yugoslavia, a view decisively expressed in the 1991 independence referendum.[41]

Beyond the economic factors and the aspiration to join the West, Croatian separatist ambitions were further fuelled by the rejection of Slobodan Milošević's centralising policies. At this stage, the federal leadership was no longer capable of balancing interethnic relations the way it had during Tito's era. Following the proclamation of Croatia's independence, a war of several years ensued, as the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian paramilitary units launched offensives, partly citing the need to protect the Serb population in Croatia. The majority of Croatian Serbs aligned themselves with the policies of the Serbian homeland, making clear their refusal to recognise the new state authority, their unwillingness to live within an independent Croatia, and, invoking the principle of national self-determination, demanding changes to established borders. For a considerable period, the international community sought to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia. Only when repeated negotiations proved fruitless and the intensity of the fighting became undeniable did it accept the dissolution of Yugoslavia along republican borders, and extend recognition to Croatia's independence.[42]

Zdenko Radelić identified the reasons behind the failure of the Yugoslav state as follows: the persistent national aspirations, the fear of cultural erosion, and the perception that Yugoslavia ultimately represented too great a compromise in terms

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40   Šokčević, *Hrvatska od stoljeća 7. do danas,* 529.

41   Bilandžić, *Hrvatska moderna povijest,* 749–77; Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji,* 579–98; Goldstein, *Hrvatska 1918–2008,* 409–643; Goldstein, "Hrvatska i Hrvati u Jugoslaviji," 132–45.

42   Šokčević, *Hrvatska od stoljeća 7. do danas,* 540–49.

of national existence—one that its inhabitants eventually were unwilling to accept. As he put it:

> "The new state of Yugoslavia was created in 1918 by fully formed nations, and during the time of their common history this new state did not and could not build a new Yugoslav nation. A true and genuine defender of Yugoslavia was not built. In other words, it will be shown that the lack of a common identity or, at least, common values is one of the essential reasons for the future disintegration of Yugoslavia. […] When communism—Yugoslavia's strongest cohesive force after 1945—collapsed, the nations remained: Croats with the desire to create an independent Croatian state and Serbs with the aspiration for a more unified and centralised Yugoslavia or, alternatively, an independent Serbia or a union of Serbian states within the borders determined by centuries of Serbian settlements. Other nations, led by the Slovenes, chose a similar path to the Croats, weighing how best to satisfy their economic and national interests."[43]

Slovenian statehood after World War II developed within the republican framework of the Yugoslav federal state. The second Yugoslavia was shaped by the dual vision of the Yugoslav communists, combining national self-determination with class-based revolutionary goals. As historian Zdenko Čepič notes:

> "According to the principle of the federal system of the Yugoslav state, the Republic of Slovenia, like all the other republics, had its own legislative body, the Assembly, its own government, as well as its own national communist organisation, which had been established in 1937. However, despite all of the Slovenian bodies of state authority the most important politics was created and managed in Belgrade, in accordance with revolutionary statism and centralism. Slovenia only enjoyed considerable independence in the field of culture and education, as no federal ministries existed for these areas. In this sense the nations were independent, while the central authorities or the federal ministries were in charge of all other aspects of the functioning of the state and the lives of the Yugoslav citizens. In the first post-war period the opposition between the federal principle and centralist practice did not appear to be problematic."[44]

Unlike in Croatia or Serbia, where bourgeois parties demonstrated more visible resistance to communist consolidation, post-war Slovenia saw relatively limited political opposition. However, signs of dissent emerged in the economic sphere.

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43   Radelić, "Hrvatska i Jugoslavija," 766.

44   Čepič, "The Time of Tito's Yugoslavia," 187.

In the 1945 elections, some Slovenian regions recorded a notably high proportion of blank ballots—far exceeding the Yugoslav average—indicating latent dissatisfaction with the People's Front. The first overt tensions between Ljubljana and the federal government arose over economic and financial policy. The Communist leadership's push for rapid centralisation, including the creation of state-wide enterprises and the imposition of detailed regulatory frameworks, provoked resistance from Slovenian republican ministries. These ministries objected to side-lining republican competencies in favour of Belgrade's centralised planning apparatus.[45]

Following the decisive break with the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia embarked on a path of political and social transformation. The introduction of the self-management system in the early 1950s marked a radical shift in post-war development. A more modern form of socialism emerged for Yugoslavia, in contrast to the practice in the Soviet Union, despite the regime's frequent vacillation between more liberal and more authoritarian positions. Despite these reforms, the League of Communists retained its unchallenged ideological and political supremacy. The decentralising pressure did result in increased powers for the republics and municipalities, particularly in economic and cultural matters. However, the Communist elite and their subordinate officials continued to dominate decision-making. These changes could have little effect, given that the ruling Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) did not change considerably, remaining a hierarchical and authoritarian organisation.[46]

Although Yugoslav leaders insisted that the national question had been definitively resolved after World War II, ethnic and republican tensions resurfaced in the 1960s. The economic boom of the previous decade was stalling, prompting calls for reform and new development strategies. Slovenia emerged as a leading advocate for market-oriented reforms, pushing for greater economic liberalisation and decentralisation. Some of these reforms were implemented locally, reflecting the republic's desire for increased autonomy in managing its economic affairs. At the November 1965 session of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the most prominent Slovenian party leader, Edvard Kardelj, advocated for a fundamental reform of the Yugoslav federation. He proposed that the republics should be granted full sovereignty, while the federal government would serve merely as a technical coordinating body. The longstanding debate between centralism and federalism was ultimately resolved in favour of the latter—symbolised by the removal of Aleksandar Ranković from the leadership. The subsequent constitutional reforms expanded the rights and competencies of the republics. However, the accompanying economic reforms failed to fully meet expectations.[47]

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45   Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *A Slovene History,* 454.

46   Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *A Slovene History,* 465.

47   Čepič, "The Time of Tito's Yugoslavia," 193.

The first major public conflict between Slovenia and the Yugoslav federal centre erupted over the so-called "road issue." Despite prior approval, the federal government ultimately refused to support Slovenia's request for a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to improve its road infrastructure. Instead, it prioritised road development projects in Serbia and Montenegro. This decision sparked outrage in the Slovenian press and public discourse, which condemned the federal government and voiced concerns that Slovenia was unable to assert its interests within the federation. The central leadership, in turn, viewed Slovenia's actions as a threat to Yugoslav unity. It also rejected Slovenia's broader economic vision. Slovenian Prime Minister Stane Kavčič not only sought to liberalise the party—an idea that had supporters in other republics—but also aimed to modernise the economy. He advocated for the rapid development of the service sector and the introduction of alternative forms of ownership alongside the dominant model of social property. Kavčič emphasised the importance of strengthening economic ties between Slovenia and Western European countries. In the early 1970s, Kavčič, like other liberal-minded Croatian and Serbian leaders, was removed from office. His dismissal marked the limits of reformist ambitions within the federation and underscored the federal centre's resistance to decentralisation and liberalisation.[48]

Despite the political friction and economic disputes with the federal centre, the 1960s and 1970s were marked by relatively favourable social and economic conditions in Slovenia. As historian Vodopivec observed,

> "The 1960s and 1970s in particular were marked by relatively favourable social and economic conditions, and Slovenia is believed—despite the dissatisfaction of its politicians and population with federal economic and financial policies—to have developed into a modern industrial society precisely in the time of the second Yugoslavia."[49]

Following Tito's death in 1980, interethnic relations within Yugoslavia were shifting, and within just over a decade, the state disintegrated. Slovenian historiography has long grappled with the question of why Tito was able to hold Yugoslavia together, and why the federation unravelled so quickly after his passing. Analyses of his more than three decades of leadership consider multiple dimensions: his pivotal role in the anti-fascist liberation movement, his international stature as a respected statesman, and his autocratic methods of governance. Tito simultaneously led the state,

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48   "The 'Road Affair' was the clearest manifestation of the aspirations for the 'liberalisation' of the relations in the Yugoslav state and the Slovenian society." Čepič, "The Time of Tito's Yugoslavia," 198.

49   Vodopivec, "Slovene Historiography," 107–8.

the Communist Party, and the military, which granted him extensive and centralised authority. Moreover, the geopolitical context of the Cold War—where Yugoslavia occupied a unique non-aligned position—reinforced the stability of his regime.

From the perspective of Slovenian history, it is often emphasised that during the intra-party struggles of the mid-1960s, Tito sided with the federalists—thereby not only shaping the federation's trajectory but also preserving his own authority and power. Yet, one of the most pressing questions, according to Božo Repe, is whether Tito genuinely improved interethnic relations or merely "froze" the underlying tensions through his personal authority and the political practices of the socialist system, postponing an inevitable collapse. Repe argues that while a confederation based on mutual agreement might have offered a theoretical solution, this model was fundamentally incompatible with the essence of Titoism:

> "However, this path would not be a socialist state, and the revolution carried out after the war would lose its meaning, while Tito would lose his integrative function."

In this view, Tito's leadership was both a stabilising force and a barrier to deeper structural reform. His integrative role depended on a centralised, revolutionary legacy that resisted pluralistic or negotiated alternatives.[50]

From the 1980s onwards, Slovenians were viewing Yugoslavia with increasingly mixed emotions. The growing assertiveness of Serbian centralist policies sparked concern, while the longstanding worries about German and Italian influence—so prevalent in earlier periods—had largely dissipated. Amid a deepening economic crisis, Slovenian society experienced a marked shift toward the West, both culturally and politically. A widespread perception emerged that Yugoslavia was hindering rather than enabling Slovenia's development. During this period, various proposals circulated on how to democratise the system and make the Yugoslav state structure more efficient.

> "The Slovene political leadership was unable in the first half of the 1980s to create a »national programme« of its own that would define its relationship with the federation in detail. […] However, the public opinion in Slovenia in the mid-1980s was still very contradictory: on the one hand it was critical of the Communist authorities, the wavering and irresolute nature of Slovene politics and the federal pressures, while on the other hand it was still in favour of a solution for the political and economic crisis within the framework of the existing political system and the state of Yugoslavia."[51]

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50   Repe, "Tito kot tretja »institucija«," 427.

51   Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *A Slovene History,* 524.

In the 1980s, tensions between the Yugoslav republics intensified dramatically. The clash between opposing visions reached a level of brutality and intransigence unprecedented in the history of the Yugoslav federal state. The Serbian and Slovenian party leaderships held fundamentally divergent views on the nature and organisation of the Yugoslav community. The new Serbian political elite sought to leverage the size of the Serbian population to assert dominance over Yugoslavia, invoking the principle of "democracy" through the formula of one person, one vote. This approach would have dismantled the very foundation of the federal system—namely, the equality of nations—by granting the Serbs the largest representation in the federal assembly. Serbia aimed to dominate Yugoslavia much like it had attempted in 1918, though the creation of a Greater Serbia—often referred to as "Srboslavija"—ultimately failed at that time. Drawing a historical parallel, historian Čepič argues that "Milošević wanted to complete the work or desires of Nikola Pašić, whose goal was for Yugoslavia to become an enlarged Serbia." The Slovenians emerged as the leading force resisting this renewed centralisation, soon joined by the Croats. By then, both republics had already undergone significant democratisation and distanced themselves from Yugoslavia, a process in which anti-communist and nationalist political forces played a decisive role.[52]

By the late 1980s, the gap in attitudes toward the Yugoslav federation had disappeared between the significantly rejuvenated Slovenian party leadership and the opposition intellectuals. As early as 1987, the journal *Nova Revija* openly advocated for Slovenia's withdrawal from the Yugoslav federation and the creation of an independent Slovenian nation-state. By the end of 1989, the leaders of the League of Communists of Slovenia—who had by then embraced political pluralism—had also come to see independence as the only viable solution to both the economic and political crises, particularly as a way to escape Serbia's centralising ambitions. By the turn of the decade, a broad consensus had emerged within Slovenian society regarding the necessity of independence. The newly formed Slovenian government, elected in the first multiparty elections of 1990, continued to actively prepare for the country's secession from Yugoslavia.[53]

Conclusion

Among current national historiographies, the Serbian narrative remains the most attached to the former Yugoslav state, perceiving its existence as having intrinsic value. This is understandable, as never before or since have so many Serbs lived

52   Čepič, "Bilo je nekoč v Jugoslaviji," 50–51.
53   Čepič, "The Time of Tito's Yugoslavia," 183–202; Repe, "Slovenija i Slovenci u Jugoslaviji," 187–99; Repe, *Jutri je nov dan.*

within a single state as they did in Yugoslavia, and at various points they were able to secure a leading role. Slovenian historians tend to view the decades spent within Yugoslavia as a stage in their national development, acknowledging several positive aspects of the period. They emphasise Slovenia's primary objective: to find a way to secure the most favourable position within a (con)federal framework. In both Yugoslav states, there were influential leaders committed to the state's existence (Korošec, Kardelj). Croatian historiography, by contrast, expresses little to no nostalgia for Yugoslavia, finding few positive contributions to Croatian national development. The resistance to centralism and Serbian dominance—often the central theme of Croatian political discourse—is frequently reflected in the titles and chapter headings of historical writings. Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Bosnians have also produced their own assessments, which could be the subject of a separate study. This paper may serve as further evidence—echoing Emil Niederhauser's emphasis—that the national question remains a defining factor in Eastern Europe.[54]

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54   This study is based on the presentation delivered at the commemorative conference *Nation, Statehood, and Historiography in East- and East-Central Europe*, organised on the occasion of Emil Niederhauser's 100th birthday (Budapest, ELTE, September 28–29, 2023).

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Places of Authentication in the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary

Recent Approaches Concerning the Fields of Ecclesiastical Society and Countrywide Competence

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Abstract. Places of authentication *(loca credibilia)* were legal institutions regarded as specifically Hungarian. Due to the substantial volume of related documents—approximately one-third of the surviving diplomatic sources from medieval Hungary were issued by these institutions—, they have long been at the forefront of historical research. However, thanks to recent technological developments, particularly the DL–DF database of the Hungarian National Archive, researchers now have incomparably improved the opportunity to address both longstanding and newly emerging questions. For this reason, a thorough understanding of these institutions is crucial for the study of medieval Hungarian history. The first part of this paper summarises essential background knowledge on *loca credibilia* through a historiographical overview. The following sections explore three widely recognised and relatively new directions in current research, along with recent findings: 1. The application of place-of-authentication charters in the reconstruction of the personnel of the church institutions involved (cathedral and collegiate chapters, as well as convents); 2. The countrywide competence of some centrally located *loca credibilia*; these have been known for centuries, but have only recently become a subject of scholarly analysis due to previous difficulties in accessing the charters, and 3. An overview of the activities of the places of authentication at the beginning of the Early Modern era, a particularly turbulent period in Hungarian history marked by the double election of kings.

Keywords: place of authentication *(loca credibilia)*, diplomatic sources, charter, pragmatic literacy, Kingdom of Hungary, church institutions

Introduction to research on a special institution

In 2022, Hungary commemorated the 800th anniversary of the Golden Bull of Andrew II (1205–1235). A range of academic conferences and informative public presentations were held, alongside the publication of several scholarly studies and

books exploring the historical importance of this document.[1] These events may help familiarise the public with the fact that the Golden Bull of 1222 is a charter confirmed by a *bulla aurea*. This distinction highlights the significance of non-narrative written sources in medieval Hungarian history. While chronicles, legends, annals, and biographies are more commonly referenced in educational settings and everyday discussions, they represent only the tip of the iceberg. Charters represent the largest, relatively unbiased, and most comprehensive body of source material, much of which remains unexploited in various respects. However, it is important to note that, within the broader Hungarian context and by definition, the term "charter" is applied to any document issued prior to the Battle of Mohács in 1526, provided it is non-narrative in nature.[2] This collective term encompasses not only privileges but also litigation and administrative documents, missive letters, economic records, and other related sources, with or without legal value. Altogether, approximately 300,000 diplomatic sources have survived and—this is absolutely unique—all of them have been available online (mostly) in high-resolution photocopies, free of charge, through the Hungaricana (so-called DL–DF) database since 2010.[3] A simple search in the database reveals that approximately one-third of these documents were issued by places of authentication; indeed, their number slightly exceeds that of royal charters. Hence, it is essential to examine these special institutions in the context of research on medieval Hungarian history.

By definition—primarily based on László Solymosi's article in the *Lexicon of Early Hungarian History* (1994)—places of authentication (Latin plur. *loca credibilia*, Hungarian plur. *hiteleshelyek*) were special institutions of pragmatic literacy in the Kingdom of Hungary. These institutions were operated by cathedral or collegiate chapters, as well as Benedictine, Premonstratensian, Templar, Hospitaller, and Stefanite convents, from the late twelfth century until 1874. They provided services comparable to those of public notaries elsewhere in Europe: drafting contracts at the request of natural or legal persons *(fassio)*, issuing authentic copies of documents either preserved by them or presented to them *(transsumptum)*, and accompanying a *homo regius* to witness legal acts on-site, acting on the mandate of the king or any other high-judge of the country *(relatio)*. The authenticity of these documents depended on their confirmation by an authentic seal.[4] Public notaries co-existed in Hungary as well—primarily associated with ecclesiastical matters—, but society generally preferred the services of the *loca credibilia*. What is considered particularly

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1   For the most detailed English synthesis, see Zsoldos, *The Golden Bull of Hungary*.

2   Érszegi, "Oklevél," 504–05.

3   https://archives.hungaricana.hu/hu/charters/ (Accessed: 5 May 2025) Cp. Rácz, "Collectio Diplomatica Hungarica," 423–44.

4   Solymosi, "Hiteleshely," 263–64.

special in this context is that the principal institutional framework for pragmatic literacy was constituted by ecclesiastical bodies (corporations). These institutions not only recorded and authenticated transactions, but also fulfilled judicial and administrative functions.

In order to understand this unusual phenomenon, it is essential to first examine its historical origins. On the one hand, cathedral chapters served as the settings for ordeals as early as the eleventh century. These were predominantly trials by fire, in which the defendant's wound was bandaged and sealed for a designated period after touching a hot iron. Such ordeals marked the first instances in which the members of secular society encountered the seals of the chapters. Furthermore, the church institution was required to produce a brief written record of the ordeal's outcome, thereby establishing its influence in secular justice in Hungary at an early stage.[5] On the other hand, until the reign of Béla III (1172–1196), the majority of Hungarian society functioned in a culture defined by orality. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *pristaldi* (bailiffs) served as persons of public trust. For a specified fee, they acted either as delegates of a judge or as witnesses at the request of the parties involved. Their legitimacy was signified by a badge worn around the neck, which closely resembled a seal. The problems are obvious: the knowledge of a single *pristaldus* was limited to one (life)time, and they were corruptible. Consequently, the renewal of the mentioned Golden Bull in 1231 sought to regulate and restrict the role of the *pristaldi*: as stated in Article 21, "because many people suffer harm from false bailiffs, their summons or testimony shall not be valid without the witness of the diocesan bishop or the chapter."[6] From this point onward, the *pristaldi*—increasingly referred to as *homines regii* from the mid-thirteenth century—were required to be accompanied by a member of a chapter or, somewhat later, a convent. The secular authority continued to bear primary responsibility; however, when the learned cleric was present as a *testimonium*, he was required to submit a written report. Additionally, around the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, societal demand for charters grew significantly, while the royal chancery—newly established during the reign of the aforementioned Béla III—proved insufficient to meet the needs of a vast kingdom.[7]

Although Hungary takes pride in its distinctive institutions and unique systems, the disadvantages inherent in the operations of *loca credibilia* must also be recognised. The first concern is the absence of professionalism. The members of these ecclesiastical institutions were not as educated and professional as public notaries

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5   The records of the cathedral chapter of Várad (Oradea) have survived from the period 1208–1235 in a printed version from the sixteenth century, see Solymosi and Szovák, eds, *Regestrum Varadiense.*

6   Article 21 of 1231, DRMH I, 38.

7   Engel, *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 122–23.

elsewhere.[8] This discrepancy is evident in both the text and the layout of these charters, particularly during the early period, before the set of *formulae* became fixed.[9] The second issue concerned the minor convents. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, numerous monasteries—likely Benedictine—were founded in Hungary. However, it later became apparent that society, due to its distinctive inheritance system in which all male relatives were entitled to inherit, was unable to sustain such a large number of institutions, both in terms of land and human resources. It was challenging for minor convents to provide services comparable to those of the larger houses. Furthermore, in privately founded monasteries, the substantial influence exerted by the patron family heightened the risk of document forgeries. Finally, Louis I (1342–1382) regulated this issue. In 1353, he requested the seals from all places of authentication and—pursuant to the laws enacted two years earlier[10]—returned them only to the larger and more reliable institutions. The seals of minor convents were withdrawn and broken to prevent further misuse. Two places of authentication within the same settlement were operated only in the most important pilgrimage sites: in Székesfehérvár (the collegiate chapter and the Hospitallers' convent) and—with a longer interruption—in Várad (the cathedral chapter and the Premonstratensian convent; the latter became later a collegiate chapter as well); these cities were the burial places of Kings St Stephen and St Ladislaus.[11]

Following the definition, the *loca credibilia* issued two types of documents. The contributions for requests of natural or legal persons outside of litigations are the *fassiones* (Hungarian: *bevallások*). These documents include contracts, deeds, records, testaments, protests, and the issuance of authentic copies *(transsumpti)*, which is a subcategory of the confessions as well. The other principal category of documents produced by places of authentication resulted from external fieldwork. In the case of a *relatio* (Hungarian: *jelentés*), a member of the chapter or the convent was required

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8   Concerning the activity of the public notaries and other institutions of public authenticity in different regions of Europe, see Hunyadi, "Administering Law," 26–27.

9   The first *formularium* used exclusively by a specific place of authentication—the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár—has been revealed only recently in Kassa (Košice). The fragmented text of sixty folios contains more than seventy examples from the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The edition of this formulary is in progress by Gábor Mikó, Bence Péterfi, and András Ribi. Cp. https://abtk.hun-ren.hu/images/2024/naptar/kozepkori-estek_20241211.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2025). Other formularies—which are mostly related to certain notaries—also contain examples of place-of-authentication charters. See Szovák, "Formularies in the Medieval Hungary," xvii–xl; Dreska, *Magyi János közjegyző formuláskönyve*, xvi.

10   "Minuti etiam conventus ab emanatione litterarum suarum super perpetuatione possessionum conficiendarum cessent et eorum sigilla omni careant firmitate." Article 3 of 1351, DRH I, 131.

11   For the list of the places of authentication operated until the Turkish occupation, see Engel, *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 123.

to travel with one or more secular *homo regius* to the location of a legal act, pursuant to a mandate issued by the king or any other high-judge of the country (e.g., the palatine, the judge royal, the ban in Slavonia, and the voivode in Transylvania). The mandate letter was usually copied into the body of the report, giving these documents a framed structure. As a result, many royal charters were preserved within these texts, even though their originals were lost during the Turkish conquest and the subsequent destruction of the Royal Archive in Buda. The *relationes* may be further divided into two subcategories. The first includes legal procedures, such as inspections, inquiries and summons—that is, actions of a non-definitive nature. The second comprises introductions into property or rights. In the case of the latter, if no objections were raised, the places of authentication issued a charter in the form of a privilege, as these proceedings were considered final.

Historiography and new research possibilities

The first and, thus far, only comprehensive monograph dedicated to the places of authentication in the Middle Ages was written by Ferenc (Franz) Eckhart and published in 1914 as part of the *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* series.[12] Although Eckhart primarily relied on edited sources, many of his conclusions have remained valid and have been confirmed by subsequent scholarship. As his work was accessible exclusively in German until 2012, it occasionally happened that scholars—citing it without a thorough reading—unwittingly "rediscovered" findings he had already presented.[13]

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, several significant studies on the places of authentication were published by scholars such as Imre Szentpétery, Lajos Bernát Kumorovitz, György Bónis, László Mezey, and László Solymosi, among others. However, the decades of communist rule in Hungary were not conducive to historical research on the Middle Ages, particularly in the field of church history.[14]

A turning point came in the 1990s, when László Koszta established an academic school and research group known as *Capitulum* at the University of Szeged.[15] He assigned the topic of places of authentication as thesis subjects to his talented

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12   Eckhart, *Die glaubwürdigen Orte*. For the Hungarian translation by Gábor Dreska, see Eckhart, *Hiteleshelyek*. In the following pages, the references were prepared for the German version, and both the page numbers of the special edition and the (original) edition were indicated as well.

13   Cp. Dreska, "Fordítói megjegyzések," 164.

14   For a detailed bibliography, see Dreska, "Fordítói megjegyzések," 164–82.

15   Koszta's first related studies date back to the turn of the 1980s and 1990s and are about the chapters of Pécs and Pozsega. For the summarising articles, see Koszta, "A pozsegai káptalan hiteleshelyi tevékenysége 1353-ig," 3–46; Koszta, *A pécsi székeskáptalan hiteleshelyi tevékenysége*.

students, thereby fostering the emergence of a new generation of church historians. Koszta recognised that this field provided an ideal training ground for young scholars to develop their skills in collecting, reading, and analysing medieval sources.[16] Today, many of his former students are part of the cohort of mid-career medievalists throughout Hungary (e.g., Zsolt Hunyadi[17] and Tamás Kőfalvi[18] in Szeged, and Tamás Fedeles[19] in Pécs). The only critique of the project is that the upper chronological limit of these studies was typically set by the aforementioned seal revision initiated by Louis I in 1353. As a result, our understanding of the earlier period is disproportionately extensive compared to the later one, even though the latter is incomparably richer in available sources.

Significant change in this attitude can only be observed since the end of the first decade of this millennium.[20] In this regard, the contributions of Gábor Dreska deserve special recognition. Between 2007 and 2013, he edited and published *in extenso* the entire corpus of charters—more than 1,000 documents—issued by the Benedictine convent of Pannonhalma, spanning from the beginnings until 1526. This accomplishment is acknowledged as unique and most likely will continue to be regarded as such.[21]

Another turning point in the research occurred in 2010, when the National Archive of Hungary launched the aforementioned DL–DF database. This development significantly expanded our research capabilities, making the process incomparably easier and faster while enabling us to compile a comprehensive collection of surviving material from various perspectives. Given the large volume of place-of-authentication charters, this is a field of study in which comprehensive questions can only be answered through the analysis of a substantial body of sources.[22] The exploitation of this opportunity has already begun over the last decade and a half; however, there are obviously many unresearched topics (e.g., the diplomatic characteristics of late medieval place-of-authentication documents).

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16   The old (and due to the early death of Koszta, non-updated) website of the research group is: https://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~capitul/capiteng.htm (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

17   In English, see Hunyadi, "How to Identify a 600 Year-Old Forgery?," 87–94; Hunyadi, "Regularities and Irregularities," 137–49; Hunyadi, "The *Locus Credibilis* in Hungarian Hospitaller Commanderies," 285–96.

18   With an edition of documents see Kőfalvi, *A pécsváradi konvent hiteleshelyi oklevéltára*. In English by the same author, see Kőfalvi, "Places of authentication," 27–38; Kőfalvi, "Written Records at Place of Authentication," 229–41.

19   E.g. Fedeles, "A pécsi székeskáptalan hiteleshelyi vonzáskörzete," 9–22.

20   For a notable example from 2009, see Fedeles and Bilkei, eds, *Loca credibilia*.

21   Dreska, *A pannonhalmi konvent hiteleshelyi működésének oklevéltára*, Vol. I–IV.

22   "Regarding the details of the operation of places of authentication, we should not look for information in the laws, but primarily in the charters themselves." Szentpétery, *Magyar oklevéltan,* 218.

New approaches—the personnel

In addition to the traditional use of the *chirographum* and the later widespread adoption of authentic seals, many *loca credibilia* employed the *series dignitatum* as a supplementary method of authentication. While originally functioning as witness lists, these gradually evolved into standardised lists of officials or dignitaries of the respective ecclesiastical institutions. After a considerable period, these became increasingly difficult to forge, as not only did the names differ, but also the listed officials. For instance, the cathedral chapter of Várad included only the provost and the columnar canons *(lector, cantor, custos)*.[23] In contrast, the cathedral chapter of Eger additionally listed the archdeacons, the two archbishops of the country, the local bishop, and the king.[24] In the fifteenth century, the collegiate chapter of Székesfehérvár listed the provost, the columnar canons, and the two deans.[25] However, in the same period, the collegiate chapter of Óbuda never listed the provost and the dean; instead, it included the columnar canons and several other canons.[26] In addition, even within the convents, the titles of the officials varied depending on the religious order.

These lists, and the names of the sent out members, were included in the *relationes*, and are excellent sources for researching the personnel of ecclesiastical institutions functioning as places of authentication. They easily enable the collection of numerous canons, choir members, or brethren, which in turn facilitates the construction of the archontology and, subsequently, the prosopography of the respective chapters and convents. However, several challenges exist in this area of research, including the absence of "family" names or information regarding the origin of the clerics until the mid-fourteenth century for chapters (and even later for convents), as well as the limitations of the available data.[27] However, aside from the documents of the Roman Curia, the most important sources for understanding medieval ecclesiastical society in Hungary are the place-of-authentication charters. Recent research has significantly enhanced our knowledge in this area: in the footsteps of the mentioned László Koszta, József Köblös[28] and Tamás Fedeles[29] many new studies

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23   E.g., *Transsumptum* from 7 January 1432, MNL OL DL 104 770.

24   E.g., *Fassio* from 29 June 1371, MNL OL DL 5947.

25   E.g., *Relatio* from 23 June 1451, MNL OL DL 86 378.

26   E.g., *Relatio* from 7 October 1448, MNL OL DL 14 197.

27   Obviously, we have information about promotion in ecclesiastical benefices, university degrees, and sometimes the place of origin or family background of a given cleric. However, with the exception of some extraordinary cases, the place-of-authentication charters do not inform us about everyday life or material culture.

28   Köblös, *Az egyházi középréteg.*

29   Fedeles, *A pécsi székeskáptalan személyi összetétele a késő középkorban.*

and books have been published, especially by Norbert C. Tóth,[30] who aims to present a revised interpretation of ecclesiastical society, challenging the outdated views put forward by Elemér Mályusz.[31] In addition, in 2019, a research group was established by the Hungarian Research Network (HUN–REN), the University of Pécs (PTE), and Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) to—among other tasks—compile a comprehensive list of all members of the Hungarian church from the period 1000–1387, marking the end of the Angevin period. The mass database that has already been published will play a significant role in the future synthesis of this topic.[32]

New approaches—the countrywide competence

The countrywide competence of some places of authentication is typically a phenomenon long recognised by scholars; however, until 2018, no paper had been written on the subject. Even the most basic questions had not been addressed; not because the topic had not attracted interest, but because it could only be properly examined with access to all surviving documents issued by the relevant *loca credibilia*.

It is evident that each place of authentication operated within a defined geographical area. In the case of the confessions *(fassiones)*, the most important point of view was the knowledge of the parties. However, in several cases—like protests and *transsumpti*—it was not required, since the place of authentication did not take any responsibility for the content of the charter.[33] It was not so simple in the case of reports *(relationes)*, since the members of the chapter or the convent had to travel for proceedings according to the written mandate, thus their spatial coverage had to be defined. The country was not strictly divided into districts, and jurisdictions often overlapped, as—in contrast to the general practice in Europe—no one could issue a charter concerning their own case. The typical jurisdictional limit was one or two counties; however, in Eastern Hungary, where the number of such institutions was lower, the limits extended further.[34] However, István Verbőci's *Tripartitum* (1514) highlights that four places of authentication possessed countrywide competence *in executionibus*: the collegiate chapter of Székesfehérvár (Virgin Mary), the collegiate chapter of Óbuda (St. Peter), the cathedral chapter of Bosnia (St. Peter),

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30   E.g., C. Tóth, *Az esztergomi székes- és társaskáptalanok archontológiája*; C. Tóth, *A váci székeskáptalan archontológiája*; C. Tóth and Horváth, *A győri székeskáptalan archontológiája,* etc.

31   Mályusz, *Egyházi társadalom*. For the critics, see C. Tóth, "A »mályuszi modell« érvényessége," 11–34.

32   Ribi and Thoroczkay, eds, *A középkori magyar egyház intézménytörténeti és archontológiai kézikönyve*, Vol. I–II.

33   Dreska, "A pannonhalmi konvent hiteleshelyi tevékenysége," 20, 31–32.

34   Eckhart, *Die glaubwürdigen Orte*, 62 [454].

and the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár (King St. Stephen).[35] According to Ferenc Eckhart, there was a dual need for such institutions. On the one hand, this concept was brought into being by the demand of the people affiliated with the court, because they had some places of authentication in the vicinity where they could conduct their litigations. On the other hand, in cases of large, scattered land donations, this arrangement enabled faster, more cost-effective administration. It was faster, as for issues involving estates located in different counties, there was no need to visit multiple competent places of authentication one by one, and more cost-effective, as only a single privilege fee needed to be paid.[36]

Among the institutions of the Hungarian Middle Ages that dealt with institutional legal literacy, those ecclesiastical institutions that could act throughout the entire territory of the country were in a special position.[37] This privilege—as it involved significant income for the *loca credibilia* concerned—was first mentioned in a letter by Esztergom canon Péter Palicsnai in 1460. According to his account, the collegiate chapters in Óbuda and Székesfehérvár had acquired such a licence through customary law; thus, it must have been in a similar manner to that of the Hospitallers' convent, particularly in the context of investigations and inhibitions.[38] The cathedral chapter of Bosnia, in an effort to address its poor financial situation, joined this long-standing trio as a result of the laws of 1498 and, most probably, the lobbying activities of the locally influential Keserű family.[39] It is not surprising that a case-by-case assessment proved that the place of authentication based in Diakóvár (Đakovo) could not develop a genuine countrywide competence due to its modest number of personnel and peripheral situation.[40] This stood in contrast to the three

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35   "[…] demptis testimoniis capitulorum Albensis, Budensis et Bosnensis ecclesiarum, atque conventus Cruciferorum de Alba, qui in quibuscunque executionibus per totum regnum Hungariae et partes sibi subiectas procedendi habent authoritatem" *Tripartitum*, II. 21 [280–83].

36   Eckhart, *Die glaubwürdigen Orte*, 66–67 [458–59].

37   For a detailed study of this topic, see Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység.* Short, selected sections of the previous monograph concerning the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár are also available in English, see Hunyadi and Ribi, *The Knights Hospitaller in Medieval Hungary*, 230–41.

38   "[…] quia nec capitula nec conventus extra comitatum possunt mittere homines suos ad inquirendum vel inhibendum demptis paucis capitulis Weteris Budensis et Albe Regalis, et est de consuetudine regni Ungarie." Letter of Péter Palicsnai from Siena, 6 May 1460; C. Tóth, *Az esztergomi székeskáptalan*, II. 142.

39   "[…] item de capitulo Boznensi, quod ex quo totaliter destructi esse dinoscuntur, pro reformacione ecclesie illius, que in honorem sancti Petri constructa est, habeant facultatem ubique per totum regnum pro testimonio capitulari ambulare ad instar capituli Budensis […]" Article 12 of 1498, DRMH IV, 94–95.

40   Ribi, "Miért működött," 94–95; Ternovácz, "A szerémi és boszniai latin püspökségek története," 124–28.

wealthy, centrally located institutions founded by the monarch, which succeeded in managing such responsibilities more effectively.

Regarding the antecedents of the activity of the places of authentication with countrywide competence, Hungarian historiography is faced with two phenomena in the Angevin period. On the one hand, the public literacy operation of the *Comes Capelle* in the royal court may seem a similar amenity,[41] but barely a tenth of the remaining documents issued by this office can be classified among the proceedings, which are more important from the point of view of countrywide competence. The office operated in Visegrád, except for the period between 1347 and 1355. Its dissolution in 1374 imposed significant additional tasks on the chapter of Óbuda, particularly in cases of confessions. After the seal revision, this chapter functioned as the sole place of authentication in the capital area, even though the court itself did not settle permanently in Buda until around 1385. A closer examination of the charters of the royal chapel also reveals that, even when parties made preliminary agreements before the *Comes Capelle*, proceedings benefiting those at court were typically carried out by the regionally competent places of authentication.[42]

On the other hand, following the findings of Imre Hajnik, scholars have regarded the continuous presence of members of the chapter of Székesfehérvár at the general congregations of the palatines as a precursor to the countrywide competence later attributed to this ecclesiastical body.[43] The newly released study, focusing on the collection of all testimonies from places of authentication at the palatial congregations, demonstrated that, until the mid-fourteenth century, territorially competent churches were involved in these proceedings. However, the palatinate of Miklós Kont (1356–1367) proved decisive in this regard: during his tenure, the delegates from the chapter of Székesfehérvár accompanied the *congregationes generales* by order of the king. However, their exclusive role in this context only emerged following the civil war in the early fifteenth century. By 1435—a year considered a turning point due to the spread of proclaimed congregations—,[44] representatives of the chapter of Székesfehérvár, most of them secular persons *(litterati)* who, in the traditional sense, could not have served as delegates of a place of authentication, had participated in general congregations held in a total of thirty counties.[45]

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41   Gárdonyi, "A királyi titkos kancellária," 174–96; Kumorovitz, "A királyi kápolnaispán," 460–64; Solymosi, "Hiteleshely," 264.

42   Ribi, "Az udvari hiteleshelyként működő királyi kápolna eljárásai," 247–68.

43   Hajnik, *A magyar bírósági szervezet és perjog*, 71; Istványi, "A generalis congregatio," 68; Solymosi, "A székesfehérvári káptalan," 191–94; Ribi, "Miért működött," 83.

44   Tringli, "A kikiáltott közgyűlés," 575–604.

45   There were no palatinal congregations in Slavonia, Transylvania, and in several southern counties. See Istványi, "A generalis congregatio," 191–205.

This extensive involvement significantly contributed to the chapter's familiarity with the kingdom and enhanced the institution's overall credibility.[46]

In the case of the three ecclesiastical institutions that acquired their country-wide competence without explicit legal regulation, a comprehensive analysis of their approximately 9,000 extant records—focusing primarily on the *relationes*—proved necessary. With respect to the chapters of Óbuda and Székesfehérvár, as well as the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár, this research made it possible to identify the "larger core areas"[47]—comprising between five and nine counties in Central-Hungary—which, when considered alongside other significant factors, laid the groundwork for distinguishing between countrywide competence and ordinary cases.[48] Moreover, it became evident that this form of privilege certainly did not develop in the case of any institution during the Árpádian Era.[49]

Regarding the beginnings of countrywide competence, the Angevin period posed several challenges, even though the donation of large estates across multiple and diverse counties was not a defining characteristic of the era. Although the places of authentication in Székesfehérvár rarely operated beyond their core area in the fourteenth century—typically in cases that can be attributed to specific other factors[50]—the number of reports issued by the chapter of Óbuda increased significantly following the relocation of Charles I's (1301–1342) court to Visegrád. Moreover, until the laws of 1351 and the closely related seal revision two years later, the delegates of the church left the core area on numerous occasions. Although this was largely dependent on court decisions or annual mandates,[51] the vast majority of beneficiaries were linked to the royal court. It is therefore not surprising that participation in distant missions became more common during the period when Louis I had his seat in Buda, much closer to Óbuda. After 1353, however, and during the remainder of the Angevin period, the number of such distant missions declined. From that point onward, delegates *(testimonii)* of the chapter of Óbuda left the central regions of the country in cases of legal disputes involving clergymen or ecclesiastical institutions.[52]

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46   Ribi, "A nádori közgyűléseken közreműködő hiteleshelyek," 745–66.

47   Cp. Kubinyi and Fügedi, "A budai káptalan jegyzőkönyve," 9; Dreska, "A pannonhalmi konvent hiteleshelyi tevékenysége," 121.

48   Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 37–48.

49   For earlier literature on this question, see Kubinyi and Fügedi, "A budai káptalan jegyzőkönyve," 10–11; Solymosi, "A székesfehérvári káptalan," 191–94; Hunyadi, *The Hospitallers*, 110, 203; Zsoldos et al., *Székesfehérvár története,* 82, 126, 241; Kertész, *A székesfehérvári káptalan*, 182–86.

50   E.g., neighbouring ecclesiastical institutions (AOklt. XLVI, no. 172.), personal relations (AOklt. XII, no. 394, AOklt. XLIV, no. 150.), or the scenes of the cases were close to the properties of the given place of authentication (MNL OL DL 42 154).

51   About the concept of annual mandates, see Dreska, "Az éves parancsra adott hiteleshelyi jelentések," 115–21.

52   For numerous examples, see Ribi, "A budai káptalan," 373–88.

A significant turning point occurred with the establishment of Buda as the royal seat and the coronation of Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437). Thereafter, the chapter of Óbuda functioned as the place of authentication for the royal court.[53] Additionally, the value of the donated properties increased, which, in turn, led to a rise in the number of land donations during the final decades of the fourteenth century.[54] For some of them, the chapter of Óbuda carried out the introductions, sometimes also in remote locations.[55] At the same time, Sigismund's plan to establish a university in Óbuda, along with his lost decree dated to the spring of 1397, significantly impeded further development. The former greatly constrained the church's capacity,[56] while the latter—similarly to litigations—required that introductions be carried out by territorially competent places of authentication. In some individual cases, until the Council of Constance (1414–1418), certain *loca credibilia* were permitted to act differently than usual, but only if the king specifically ordered it.[57] The system reflects the fact that, during the early part of Sigismund's reign, there were no places of authentication with countrywide competence in the Kingdom of Hungary at all.

The situation began to change slowly in the 1420s with the monarch's return home after several years. Although the energies of the smaller chapter of Óbuda were still tied up with university affairs and issuing the documents taken over from the *Comes Capelle*'s office, members of the chapter of Székesfehérvár appeared more and more frequently around distant estates as delegates of the place of authentication, but in fact, this did not require special permissions. Between 1424 and 1437, the members of the chapter of Székesfehérvár appeared in the counties of Bars, Bodrog, Győr, Hont, Pozsega, Sopron, Valkó, Varasd, Vas, and Zaránd in connection with such prominent figures as palatine Miklós Garai (1425),[58] the Ban of Macsó Péter Lévai Cseh (1428),[59] and the Master of the Horse Lőrinc Hédervári (1433).[60] The demand

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53   "[…] eo quod capitulum vestrum memoratum (Budense) propinquior locus testimonialis pre aliis locis capitularibus et conventualibus ad nostre specialis residentie regalis habitationis locum fore dinoscitur situatum […]" King Sigismund's mandate to the chapter of Óbuda, 24 June 1397, MNL OL DL 8234.

54   Engel, *The Realm of Saint Stephen*, 200.

55   E.g., introduction into Keselőkő (Podhradie) castle in Nyitra County, 10 February 1388 (ZsO I, no. 430.); summon in Szatmár County, 4 April 1388 (Géres, *A Károlyi-család oklevéltára*, Vol. I, 428–29); introduction into some estates in Tolna County, 6 December 1392 (Tringli, *A Perényi család levéltára*, no. 166–67); perambulation of the boundaries of several estates in Borsod County, 13 June 1396 (ZsO I, no. 4443).

56   Font, "A siker reménye," 85–88.

57   C. Tóth, "Zsigmond királynak a hiteleshelyekről szóló elveszett rendelete," 49–64.

58   17 May 1425, ZsO XII, no. 527,

59   13 December 1428, ZsO XV, no. 1324.

60   3 November 1433, MNL OL DL 88 076; 10 November 1433, Radvánszky and Závodszky, *Héderváry oklevéltár*, Vol. I, 177–78.

for countrywide competence, which began to solidify in the second half of the 1430s, was undoubtedly articulated by the court and the aristocracy. Behind the implementation of this reform, which can be considered rather administrative, one can discern the influence of one of Sigismund's most important diplomats and advisors, Benedek, provost of Székesfehérvár (1410–1439).[61] Consequently, the prelate secured significant additional income for his church in the following decades, precisely when the opportunity to participate in the general congregations came to an end.

In the period following Sigismund's death—except for a brief interval during the civil war—the chapter of Székesfehérvár retained its countrywide competence. However, due to the increasing number of cases and, most probably, the influence of Bishop Simon Rozgonyi, a key advisor of King Władysław I (1440–1444), the chapter of Óbuda was also granted the licence and frequently participated in distant proceedings.[62] It was not accidental that Péter Palicsnai noted in 1460 that, in effect, these two places of authentication were capable of operating throughout the entire country.

The development of the Hospitallers' convent, which became the third institution to acquire countrywide competence, occurred in several stages. From the 1450s onwards, a preliminary territorial expansion of competence can be observed —closely linked to the capacity limitations of the other two churches[63]—which was eventually replaced by genuine countrywide competence in the final third of the 1460s. In addition to the favourable geographical conditions and the royal foundation, the positive relationship between the leaders of the preceptory and the Hunyadi family certainly played a significant role, as did the personal connections linking the convent to the neighbouring chapter of Székesfehérvár.[64]

The reconstruction of the activity of the places of authentication with countrywide competence provided an opportunity to analyse the relevant charters and documents from multiple perspectives. With regard to the characteristics of the proceedings, the data confirmed Ferenc Eckhart's earlier observations on the subject, which he articulated more than a century ago. Overall, considering the institutional characteristics, 60–70 percent of the proceedings were introductions, while the proportion of cases involving more than one county ranged from 26–39 percent. Slightly more than half of the beneficiaries belonged to baronial families or the prelate faculty; however, individuals of lower rank who were in some way connected to the royal court also appeared among them. Among the beneficiaries were the most

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61   For further details on his life, see Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 74–76.

62   Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység,* 77–79.

63   The problems of the chapter of Székesfehérvár were summarised in the letter of Pope Sixtus IV in 1480, see Köblös, *Az egyházi középréteg*, 72. For the complaint of the provost of Óbuda due to the lack of professional personnel in 1485, see Eckhart, *Die glaubwürdigen Orte*, 73 [465].

64   Hunyadi and Ribi, *The Knights Hospitaller in Medieval Hungary*, 232–33.

prominent secular and ecclesiastical leaders of the Kingdom of Hungary, including members of seventy baronial families (e.g., Alsólendvai Bánfi, Battyányi, Corvin, Cudar, Enyingi Török, Ernuszt, Frangepán, Garai, Gúti Ország, Hédervári, Hunyadi, Kanizsai, Kinizsi, Pálóci, Perényi, Rozgonyi, Szapolyai, Szécsi, Szentgyörgyi and Bazini, Thurzó, Újlaki or Vingárti Geréb), as well as many bishops from ten dioceses (e.g., Tamás Bakóc, archbishop of Esztergom, Zsigmond Ernuszt, bishop of Pécs, Gábor Matucsinai, archbishop of Kalocsa, Simon Rozgonyi, bishop of Veszprém, Dénes Szécsi, archbishop of Esztergom and István Várdai, archbishop of Kalocsa). Castles and their dependencies were particularly frequently involved, so it is not a coincidence that the delegates of the places of authentication appeared in forty-six to fifty-seven counties across the country (out of a total of sixty-seven). As might be expected, property relations and geographical factors also played a significant role in this context; in fact, regions in closer proximity were visited more frequently by the delegates. Nevertheless, it can be affirmed that centrally located places of authentication with countrywide competence were capable of operating effectively throughout the entire territory of the late medieval Kingdom of Hungary.[65]

Over time, beginning in 1438, the chapter of Óbuda increasingly participated in the proceedings requiring countrywide competence, gradually expanding its involvement in a relatively balanced manner. By the end of the 1470s, roles had changed in Székesfehérvár. This meant that a shift had occurred there: in the six- teenth century, the chapter of Székesfehérvár scarcely undertook distant missions, and its charter-issuing activity declined both relatively and in absolute terms.[66] Simultaneously, the number of *relationes* issued by the Hospitallers' convent increased significantly in both countrywide and non-countrywide cases. Two places of authentication with countrywide competence operated quite intensively at the same location in the country, in Székesfehérvár, for only a brief period, in the 1460s and 1470s. Since the countrywide competence of the chapter of Bosnia had minimal consequences in practice, the underlying reasons were more strongly related to per- sonal and personnel problems. On the one hand, the conflict between King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) and Miklós Györgyi Bodó, provost of Székesfehérvár (1444– 1474),[67] and on the other hand, the king's favourable relationship with *preceptor* István Simontornyai (1468–1490) likely contributed to the shift. Additionally, the collegiate chapter faced increasing staffing difficulties in the second half of the fif-

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65   Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 83–108.

66   The final recorded introduction into the possession of a castle was conducted in Körös County on 13 June 1511, MNL OL DL 26 077. The last truly remote proceeding concerning the estates of the collegiate chapter of Szepes (Spišská Kapitula) in Abaúj County took place on 2 May 1501, MNL OL DL 22 536.

67   Ribi, "Az utolsó Fehérvárra temetett prépost," 253–54.

teenth century due to the large proportion of non-residential canons. By that time, charter-issuing activity had become the primary focus of the convent, in contrast to the chapter, which was burdened with multiple other responsibilities and relied on several distinct forms of income.[68]

By examining the texts of the reports, one gains insight into the daily operations of places of authentication that obtained an extended licence. One of the most notable features of these *loca credibilia* was their high degree of flexibility, as they adapted to the specific needs of distinguished beneficiaries. During the implementation of the proceedings, the beneficiaries and their representatives—who were typically responsible for organising the process and selecting the contributors (such as *homines regii* and places of authentication)[69]—were often confronted with more demanding tasks than usual, due to the considerable distances involved and the large number of estates concerned. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the rapid resolution of many cases, they frequently succeeded in overcoming these challenges. For example, during the introduction of János Corvin into the possessions of the town of Debrecen and the castle of Munkács (Mukacsevo), the delegates of the Óbuda chapter were in Debrecen on 13 January 1485. Five days later, they appeared in Munkács—approximately 165 kilometres away—and their return journey to Óbuda, covering around 350 kilometres, took ten days. This indicates that, under winter conditions, they likely travelled 30–35 kilometres per day, most probably on horseback—obviously, in favour of the king's natural son and designated heir.[70] The chapter of Székesfehérvár had to resolve a more complex proceeding in 1494. Following the order of King Władysław II (1490–1516), the delegates were required to travel across nearly the entire southern region of the Kingdom in favour of László Geréb, bishop of Transylvania, and Zsigmond Ernuszt, bishop of Pécs. Between 11 April and 25 July, they visited eleven castles, ten towns, and two other possessions located in the counties of Baranya, Körös, Zala, Valkó, Bács, Csanád, and Fehér, as well as in the district of Fogaras. The entire journey covered more than 2,000 kilometres.[71]

Obviously, there are examples of slower-progressing cases as well. The division of the estates of the Garai and Szécsi families in 1478 extended—across multiple stages—over nearly a year. In response to the palatinal order issued on 1 December 1477, the delegates of the Székesfehérvár chapter conducted surveys at various locations: Somló castle and its dependencies (Veszprém County) in January, Csesznek

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68 Hunyadi and Ribi, *The Knights Hospitaller in Medieval Hungary*, 162–63.

69 Dreska, "A pannonhalmi konvent hiteleshelyi tevékenysége," 100; Tringli, *Hatalmaskodások*, 365, 369, 443.

70 *Relatio* of the chapter of Óbuda, 28 January 1485, MNL OL DL 37 661.

71 *Relatio* of the chapter of Székesfehérvár, 18 August 1494, MNL OL DF 208 535. For more similar examples with maps, see Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 140–60.

castle (Veszprém County) in April, Simontornya castle (Tolna County), as well as Gara and Vicsadal (Valkó County) in May, Szentlőrinc (Valkó County), Cserög (Szerém County) and several possessions in Bács and Csongrád Counties in June, some villages in Pozsega County and the domain of Siklós (Baranya County) in July, and additional possessions in Temes County in October. Given the nature of the task, which required their physical presence at each estate, it is understandable that the resulting report took the form of a forty-six-page booklet.[72]

In such cases—and during the early period of their countrywide activity—the places of authentication often relied on the services of royal court envoys rather than local *homines regii*.[73] However, a high degree of agility was also expected from the delegates of the places of authentication. Although dignitaries also appeared in this role in the early period, following the consolidation of countrywide competence, one mainly encounters the names of the simple members of the convent *(cruciferi)* and canons in the charters. Some individuals demonstrably spent most of the year carrying out missions of countrywide competence for the places of authentication.[74]

After Mohács—directions for future research

Regarding the daily operations of church institutions, political changes did not necessarily have any real significance. However, the loss of the Battle of Mohács against the Ottomans on 29 August 1526 had serious consequences for the existence of several places of authentication. On the one hand, many ecclesiastical institutions were destroyed in 1526 (e.g., the chapters of Bács, Bosnia, Pécs, and Titel, as well as the Benedictine convent of Szekszárd), and even the *loca credibilia* with countrywide competence ceased their activities following the fall of the Buda area (1541) and Székesfehérvár (1543).[75] On the other hand, the places of authentication were important participants in administration and justice. It is well known that after the death of Louis II (1516–1526), the Hungarian aristocracy elected and crowned two kings: John I (1526–1540) and Ferdinand I (1527–1564). The medieval kingdom was divided into two parts, but the boundary between the spheres of influence was unstable: aristocratic families and town councils frequently altered their political alignment, and both kings led several campaigns against each other. The civil war affected the places of authentication as well: parallel appointments to ecclesiastical

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72   Relatio of the chapter of Székesfehérvár, 24 November 1474, MNL OL DL 18 145. See more Kubinyi, "A nagybirtok és jobbágyai," 197–226.

73   Eckhart, *Die glaubwürdigen Orte*, 41 [433].

74   Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 132–35.

75   Papp, *A hiteles helyek története az újkorban*, 7.

offices, internal divisions, and looting characterised this era, all unfolding in the shadow of the Turkish occupation.[76]

In addition, only a very limited amount of scholarly literature addressing the history of places of authentication in the Early Modern period is available. The most comprehensive work is László Papp's short book from the 1930s; however, it offers a general overview rather than an in-depth analysis.[77] Fortunately, in recent years, the Hungarian National Archive has launched a new project to supplement the afore-mentioned DL–DF database up to 1570 ("The Age of Reformation"), which significantly facilitates future research by making a large number of additional charters easily available.[78]

Overall, while the most recent research is still forthcoming—conducted under significantly improved conditions compared to earlier studies—several partial findings have emerged over the last decades. It appears that in the first fifteen years following the Battle of Mohács, the operations of the places of authentication remained largely uninterrupted, as this served the interests of both parties. Ecclesiastical institutions acted in accordance with the directives of the reigning authority, adapting to the current political climate; however, the number of proceedings diminished considerably.[79] Notably, contemporaries sought to address the issue within a broader legal framework: according to Ferdinand's 1536 laws, if the competent place of authentication was under John's influence, the proceedings of institutions "in close proximity" were also deemed valid and legal.[80]

From the perspective of the places of authentication with countrywide competence analysed in Section 4, the situation during these turbulent times was particularly complex. Both the area around the capital and Székesfehérvár changed hands several times due to the rivalry of the kings.[81] As a result of the double election, the number of legitimate recipients of property donations doubled, and the medieval royal court in Buda—the primary beneficiary of the privilege under discussion—also ceased to exist in its original form. The situation was often similar to that in other parts of the country. First, at the turn of 1529 and 1530, both places of authentication in Székesfehérvár acted in favour of the same families or institutions, but on the

76   Papp, *A hiteles helyek története az újkorban*, 14–16; Barta, "Illúziók esztendeje," 1–30; Pálffy, *A Magyar Királyság és a Habsburg Monarchia*, 50–76.

77   Papp, *A hiteles helyek története az újkorban*.

78   https://adatbazisokonline.mnl.gov.hu/adatbazis/reformacio-kora-mnl-ol-1526-1570 (Accessed: 5 May 2025). Cp. Laczlavik, "Záró beszámoló," 157–64.

79   Jakó, *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei*, I, 79–80; Bilkei, "A zalavári és kapornaki konventek hiteleshelyi tevékenységének néhány sajátossága," 49.

80   Article 58 of 1536, CJH IV, 36.

81   Ribi, *Az országos hatáskörű hiteleshelyi tevékenység*, 163.

order of the other king within one year.[82] Second, it frequently occurred—an issue even addressed in the laws of 1543[83]—that proceedings were obstructed because the defendant had pledged allegiance to the opposition king. For example, the chapter of Székesfehérvár acted in favour of the Hospitallers' convent at Söréd—located only 18 kilometres from Székesfehérvár—on the authority of a mandate from King John; however, the action was ultimately in vain, as the members of the local noble family had declared themselves followers of King Ferdinand.[84]

However, traces of countrywide competence can still be observed in certain proceedings of the chapter of Óbuda during the relatively peaceful period between 1537 and 1540, when the majority of Hungary was under the control of King John.[85] In the summer of 1537, the chapter of Óbuda assisted in the introduction of John's judge royal into the castle of Simontornya (Tolna County),[86] and two years later, in the introduction of the Podmaniczky brothers—who were, incidentally, protestants—into several castles recently regained from supporters of the Habsburg party: Várpalota, Bátorkő (Veszprém County), Lednic, and Ricsó (Trencsén County).[87] These proceedings represent typical activities of places of authentication with countrywide competence: the estates involved were extensive and situated far from Buda, included castles, and were granted to prominent aristocrats loyal to the king.

All in all, despite the fragmentary nature of the data, it suggests that the consequences of the Battle of Mohács affected the activity of the *loca credibilia*. If the scope of the research is narrowed to the places of authentication with countrywide competence, it can be stated that the double election of the kings, the civil war, and the destruction and disintegration of the royal court in Buda led to the relegation of this type of privilege to the background during these decades—despite the fact

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82   *Relatio* of the chapter of Székesfehérvár by the mandate of János Thurzó, judge royal of King Ferdinand in favour of the Hospitallers' convent, 29 April 1529 (MNL OL R302. 2.11.114), and *relatio* of the chapter of Székesfehérvár by the mandate of King John in favour of the Hospitallers' convent, 25 February 1530 (Érszegi, "Fejér megyére vonatkozó oklevelek," no. 327.). Relatio of the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár by the mandate of King Ferdinand in favour of the Héderváry family, 6 March 1529 (Radvánszky and Závodszky, *Héderváry oklevéltár*, Vol. II, 14), and relatio of the Hospitallers' convent of Székesfehérvár by the mandate of King John in favour of the Héderváry family, 19 April 1530 (Radvánszky and Závodszky, *Héderváry oklevéltár*, Vol. II, 22–24).

83   Article 29 of 1543, CJH IV, 116.

84   26 February 1536, MNL OL R302. 3.14.9.

85   Fodor and Oborni, "Két nagyhatalom között," 120.

86   10 August 1537, Lukinich, ed., *Podmaniczy-család oklevéltára*, Vol. II, 612–16.

87   3 September 1539, Lukinich, ed., *Podmaniczy-család oklevéltára*, Vol. II, 92–96; 13 September 1539, Lukinich, ed., *Podmaniczy-család oklevéltára*, Vol. II, 97–102; 15 September 1539, Lukinich, ed., *Podmaniczy-család oklevéltára*, Vol. II, 102–05.

that the laws of 1556 continued to acknowledge the matter.[88] However, many questions remain unanswered in the research of the special Hungarian legal institutions known as places of authentication during the post-Mohács period and the Early Modern era. Therefore, further contributions to this field are warmly encouraged.

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Local Forms of Everyday Life in Hungary in the Light of Eighteenth–Twentieth-Century Archival Sources

About a New Momentum ("Lendület") Research Project

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Abstract. The novelty of historical ethnographic, micro-historical, and historical anthropological research focusing on locality is that it does not examine the vertical stratification of society and does not consider the thematic knowledge constructions arising from this. Instead, research approaches the horizontal: local cultural patterns, life worlds, and everyday life; the opinion-forming role of local intellectuals (priests, pastors, teachers, clerks, etc.), local power structures, and the coexistence of economic, social, and political interest groups. By using archival and manuscript sources as widely as possible, in addition to the material side of everyday life, folkloristic areas of knowledge (e.g., narratives, gestures, customs, rites, beliefs, religious images and practices) can also be studied and revealed. The problem of religious and ethnic diversity makes these issues particularly relevant. As a final outcome of the research, we expect that with the help of local sampling and "thick descriptions" prepared on the basis of a large-scale source base, intricate shapes of everyday life can be identified. By focusing on historical localities, the research can take a decisive step towards rejuvenating the twentieth-century study of "folk culture" through a more modern approach that broadens the social vertical spectrum.

Keywords: locality, local society, local culture, migration, everyday life, historical ethnography, historical anthropology, microhistory

Brief topic designation

The research conducted by the MTA–ELTE Lendület "Momentum" Historical Folkloristics Research Group[1] is an organic continuation of the 2018–2023 project of the same research group (Lower priesthood in the eighteenth–twentieth-century century local communities in Hungary and Transylvania), which focused on

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[1] This project is funded by the Momentum Program of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; the author is the leader of the MTA–ELTE Lendület "Momentum" Historical Folkloristics Research Group.

the cultural mediating role of a well-defined ecclesiastical social stratum, namely Catholic priests and Protestant pastors in local communities.[2]

The new five-year-long research, which started in October 2025, covers the region of historical Hungary, and its thematic focus will be shifted to historical *localities*[3] and *local communities*. In contrast to the traditional approach of the "local history' school," for us, localities provide an opportunity for deep historical excavations and data acquisition to help us understand broader social and cultural historical contexts along the lines of the questions and themes of historical anthropology, using the method of microhistory. In Hungarian ethnography, investigations into local cultures have been ongoing for decades, but in recent times they have increasingly lost their historical orientation, while Hungarian economic, social, and cultural history research—compared to Western European models—applies less often than it should the possibilities offered by the method of microhistory.[4]

There are still numerous basic questions to be answered regarding the thousands of modern local communities in historical Hungary. We have few exemplary studies based on the widest possible archival source base that, for example, focus on the socialisation and formation of new rural and urban communities emerging in the eighteenth century at the time of the repopulation following the Ottoman conquest, and on migration and integration as relevant issues to this day. Who and with what tools, channels, and culture-forming mechanisms formed the local cultures that became prevalent and characteristic of the population coming from all over and settling in the given locality? How can these processes be interpreted from the perspective of local power structures, lobby and interest groups, dominant personalities (families), and especially the highly active and influential intellectuals (priests, pastors, teachers, clerks, doctors, etc.)? The coexistence of religious and ethnic diversity renders these issues particularly exciting. In relation to intellectuals (as in our earlier research focusing on priests), it is considered that intellectuals were the (almost) exclusive creators of sources, and they were the ones, rather than peasants, who produced ego-documents of outstanding importance.[5] As a final outcome of the research, it is expected that with the help of local sampling and "thick descriptions"[6] prepared on the basis of a large-scale source, the intricacies of everyday life will be revealed.[7] By focusing on historical localities, the research can take a major

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2   Cp. Bárth, "The Lower Clergy;" Bárth, ed., *Lower Clergy*.

3   Cp. Appadurai, "The Production of Locality."

4   Magnusson and Szijártó, *What is Microhistory*; Szijártó, *A történész mikroszkópja*.

5   Schulze, ed., *Ego-Dokumente*.

6   Cp. Geertz, "Sűrű leírás."

7   Frykman and Löfgren, ed., *Force of Habit*; Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life*; Gyáni, "A mindennapi élet"; Brewer, "Microhistory."

step towards rejuvenating the twentieth-century academic tradition of "folk culture" through a more modern approach that broadens the social vertical spectrum.

Operationalisation and expected outputs

The research breaks with the interdisciplinary tradition in which the localities to be subjected to historical and ethnographic investigations are selected based on personal ties, local requests, wills, or other criteria that cannot be supported by source data. Instead of an external system of criteria, it seemed necessary to develop an internal, immanent scientific system of argumentation, that will enable us to decide where deep drilling should be carried out. To this end, in the first year of the project, the research group will conduct a macro- and meso-level source exploration and review to decide which members will map out the coverage and objective archival capabilities of the state, church, and demesne archives of early modern and modern Hungary. Data visualisation techniques are used for this purpose. Accordingly, the regions where the density surfaces of available and actually usable archival document (funds) are located will be selected. With the help of metadata tags and visualisations that go beyond the data clouds of archival records, the regions most suitable for the investigation, i.e., localities with the most relevant source documentation, are then selected for analysis.

By creating locality-based digital collections, the project makes the results accessible in the Digital Collection of the Folklore Department of ELTE[8] already while the research is ongoing. Placing them in a public collection ensures the professional digital archiving and publication of the data, meeting both domestic and international metadata standards. At the same time, our goal is that our research project should comply with the latest trends in research data management.

For the selected localities, in the second year of the project, we intend to launch the process of source extraction using the methodologies of micro-history (basic research in archives and making copies) and organising them into databases. The investigations focus on the two (long) centuries between 1750 and 1950 (however, the establishment of specific time limits obviously depends on the unique characteristics of localities). The thorough collection of the archival documentation will be partly done in groups, and partly individually. In the first two years, extending the theoretical background of the research, mapping out the international literature, and the critical review and discussion of their adaptability are the main tasks.

In addition to the primary objective of the research project, the open-source digital knowledge base created for each locality brings social benefits, as it satisfies

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8   folklorearchive.elte.hu (Accessed: 16 November 2025).

the continuously growing interest in ethnographic and local history research: it offers a reliable and verified knowledge base to the wider public interested in local history and to the related sciences. From the third to the fifth year of the project, the results will be published in joint and individual studies and monographs.

Ethnographers and folklorists with a historical approach, and historians with an ethnographic and social history approach are taking part in the project. It is a stated goal of the project to involve in research, data processing, and publishing the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students of the host institution. (Thereby, historically oriented research can also enable students' local fieldwork.)

The group expects to prepare at least fifty studies and articles. Five monographs are to be produced on five selected localities (partly single-authored, partly multi-authored). The group also plans three editions of source materials. In addition, four workshops, a large international conference, and a congress panel (SIEF) will be held on the topic. The ultimate goal of the project is to build professional relations in Central Europe (primarily: German, Austrian, Czech, Slovak, Romanian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian contacts) to form the basis of consortia for future ERC research grants.

Ten thematic focal points of the research

The material foundations of everyday life: farming, production, subsistence

The archival sources from the eighteenth to the twentieth century enable a complex examination of the "way of life" as it is addressed in ethnographic interpretation. It is a methodological question how we can grasp this complexity in a way that the lifestyle elements of localities are not separated from each other (on the basis of later research fields), instead, are represented as an integral unit. The sphere of daily subsistence is inseparable from (habitual) actions and social gestures (with such largely overlooked elements as hygiene, body image, alcohol consumption, and others) organised around it. A subtopic to this question is how the local individuals who left behind source materials lived and managed their lives, the structure and existential situation of their incomes, and the temporal changes of these aspects within a given locality.[9] At the same time, the question arises how intellectuals (priests, pastors, teachers, clerks, doctors, etc.) were provided for, putting a financial burden on the village community, or within a household/family.

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9   Frykman and Löfgren, *Culture Builders*.

Social "histology": interactions, groups, networks

Intense and thorough local research allows for a micro-historical approach to social interactions, networks, and groups. Special attention is given to the peasant family, the household, kinship, and the neighbourhood. In addition, such less investigated aspects as the military, women's networks, or the problems of intellectual families and households are also examined. Where relevant, the network of connections between small and middle-class landowning families, either within a locality or between localities, cannot be neglected. The role of these families in shaping the locality's culture can also be presupposed (cp. the role of benefactors, building churches, employing teachers, supplying priests/ministers/teachers with books, etc.). The representation of local and denominational interests of small and medium-sized noble families in county forums may also be important.

Local factors of power: dominant roles, dependency relations, interests

In our previous research cycle, we tried to present the local relations of priests/ministers. It transpired that the complexity of local power relations can be grasped through the complex micro-analyses of all actors. Now, the life world and interest network of serf-peasant interest groups, the *communitas*, manorial officials, local state officials, local intellectuals, and church officials will be subjected to this kind of resource exploration. All this is supplemented by the visualisation of the local network of dependencies.[10]

Intellectuality and local culture: mediation, uniformity, local character

In addition to the priests/ministers, the role of cultural mediators and other local representatives of the intelligentsia (teachers, clerks, notaries, doctors, etc.) is in our focus, which can be grasped through the sources documenting their daily activities, especially their ego-documents in the given period. The local intelligentsia's life paths, studies, and book culture constitute the basis for the presentation of the complex local impact mechanisms of their activities.

Local religion

The concept of "local religion" in its current sense was developed in the works of the religious historian William Christian, especially in his 1981 book.[11] The concept has figured prominently in historical and anthropological religious research and is still relied on as a terminological and conceptual option. Among his followers, we should highlight the religious anthropologist David Stewart's book about the demon world of the Greek

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10 Cp. Sabean, *Power in the Blood*.

11 Christian, *Local Religion*.

island of Naxos, published a decade after Christian's book.[12] It is instructive that Stewart considered that the concept was usable in connection with his twentieth-century theme. In fact, as he argued, it is only worthwhile to approach real religious practice in this way, through thorough local fieldwork. For him, local religion was a focal point that included not only the religious elements called "folk" by historians and ethnographers, but also the "official" religious practices of local clerics and—what is especially important—the terrain of non-religious beliefs and customs (labelled as magical and superstitious) as well. Some anthropologists of religion continued this line of research in the twenty-first century.[13] It has brought about a particularly considerable paradigmatic shift in Hungarian ethnographic studies, where strongly interrelated phenomena had earlier been artificially broken up into materials studied using the methods of divergent academic disciplines. In this framework, separate researchers dealt with the folk customs of the given settlement, separating its folk beliefs and its popular religiosity (that is, the popular practice of the official religion). Ethnography did not consider that the manifestations of the official religion and liturgy, represented by the local clergy, belonged to its subject. In our own research, we continue to examine local forms of religion in everyday life as an indivisible unit.[14]

Legal custom, morality, legal structures

We plan to conduct studies on the role of laws/customs/norms/morality/legal custom in local communities at several levels.[15] At the community level, interaction between the law and the community, the acceptance, rejection, or specific transformations of the law appear as aspects of the research. At the family level, it is questionable how the official law influenced family life (marriage, adultery, domestic violence, [step]parent-child relations). At the level of the individual, there is the additional issue of legal awareness, legal perception, and legal knowledge, which might also lead to conflicts: it was not necessarily clear what people considered a crime, what made them feel guilty, and how they tried to circumvent the rules applicable to them. These factors cannot be separated from the ecclesiastical system of rules and the interweaving of religion and morality in the era examined.

Ethnicity, religion, migration

We focus on the ethnic and religious factors of migration from the perspective of the social and cultural transformation of emerging local communities. In the eighteenth

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12   Stewart, *Demons and the Devil.*

13   For example, Pócs, ed., *Vannak csodák.*

14   Cp. Bárth, "Lower Clergy."

15   Tárkány Szücs, *Magyar jogi népszokások.*

century, we see less harmonious, mostly conflictual patterns of ethnic and religious coexistence emerging from the sources, with the help of which the complex process of the formation and unification of local cultures can be clarified in our case studies. According to our research hypothesis, from the middle of the nineteenth century, changes in the population's religious rights, social and financial status, and spatial segregation contributed to the intensification of ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic settlements. To obtain a clearer picture, we focus on the management and regulatory practices of church and state in the Bordieuan sense of "symbolic violence."[16]

Social and individual gestures

The research focuses on the concept of gestures, because they help us interpret the mentality, thinking, and habitual action patterns of historical actors when faced with the normative system of the local society. This is assisted by the situational exploration of gestures considered a fundamental element of everyday life (e.g., with the help of legal/trial documents and testimonies).[17]

Communication systems

The examination of verbal and non-verbal communication may include verbal aggression (swearing, threats, cursing), ways of expressing social and individual perceptions of time, ways of expressing and experiencing feelings, or the use of the body (arms, hands, facial expressions) in everyday communication. In addition, public (media elements, news, announcements) and hidden (rumor, gossip, social gathering) channels of local communication are also waiting to be explored.[18]

Individual life worlds, individuality and world view, individual reconstructions

Ultimately, the research aims to capture the individuality and worldview of historical individuals living in the places explored. For this, it is essential to uncover and analyse a sufficient amount of informative ego-documents (diaries, private letters, testimonies, etc.).[19]

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16   Cp. Bourdieu et al., *Reproduction*.

17   Cp. Frykman and Löfgren, ed., *Force of Habit*.

18   Ehn et al., *Exploring Everyday Life*.

19   Schulze, ed., *Ego-Dokumente*; Bárth, *The Exorcist of Sombor*.

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Slave Trading in the Early Middle Ages. Long-distance Connections in Northern and East Central Europe. By Janel M. Fontaine.

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025. 280 pp.

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The history of slavery in the early Middle Ages has undergone vigorous investigation since the publication of Michael McCormick's *Origins of the European Economy* in 2001, with scholars puzzling over the many shades of unfreedom. There has also been a flood of publications on the Viking diaspora and the trade-routes it stimulated. Meanwhile, historians of the Abbasid caliphate have uncovered the workings of the "single market" between the Atlantic, the Persian Gulf and the Aral Sea, which the Abbasid authorities fostered from the mid-eighth century onwards. One important underpinning of the single market was a stable currency—in the form of dirhams of fairly stable weight and silver content. That many thousands of dirhams reached the Baltic region has long been known. But recent lead-isotope analysis of silver artefacts like arm-rings suggests that dirhams began to reach Baltic markets in substantial quantities in the early ninth century, considerably earlier than previously supposed.

The question arises as to how far our written sources register this. Torrents of fresh numismatic and archaeological data surge in, whereas the corpus of written evidence is static and, even when plentiful, inclined to consist of prescriptive texts. Even functional texts such as wills and charters are not shortcuts to firm conclusions, given the ambiguousness of terms like *servus*. Our one firm basis for defining a slave comes from those at the bottom of the heap, lacking any kinsmen or other connections, and thus chattels at their owner's disposal. In such conditions, Janel Fontaine writes, "of a flexible and pervasive slavery […] legal or juridical status did not necessarily dictate the types of labour performed"; one may learn more "by focusing on the demand for slave labour within areas of intensive slaving", assessing "where we find demand for slave labour and why" (p. 20). Her book sets out to

investigate two regions where such conditions seem to obtain, regions far apart with different geopolitics, yet susceptible to similar transregional developments.

The regions Fontaine investigates are the Czech lands straddling the Morava and Vltava Rivers, with the Upper Elbe to the north and the Danube to the south; and the British Isles. The period covered runs from the seventh century to the earlier twelfth. These constitute "case studies," areas whose every scrap of written evidence is examined along with a mass of archaeological data, viewed against the broader Eurasian background. The advantage of focusing on two regions and sets of societies is that one may gauge change over time more precisely: the extent to which slaves' activities remained much the same, along with the extent to which demand varied over *la longue durée*—internal demand within those regions but also external demand from far away. What Fontaine's case studies reveal is that internal demand remained substantial and fairly steady from the seventh to the eleventh centuries, if one allows for the sparseness of sources for the seventh to ninth centuries; but that the marked upswing in demand of the later ninth and, above all, the tenth and eleventh centuries is due to *external* demand. Fontaine points to the commercial networks linking Iceland to the British Isles and Baltic emporia, along with the plethora of routes along the Russian riverways as far as the Caspian and the Black Sea. And she traces the upsurge in demand for slaves in all these peripheral regions: Iceland (where slaves, especially women, were needed to populate the island); the courts of the Abbasid caliphs and their emirs, who paraded ranks of male and female slaves as marks of wealth and power; the Umayyad caliphs of al-Andalus, whose armed forces included many *Saqāliba* from Eastern Europe; and Byzantium, where slaves were much in demand. All this is the Bigger Picture of vast, ever-fluctuating, external demand. This is the background to changing patterns of slave-taking and slave-trading, which the Czech and British Isles case studies reveal.

What Fontaine has done is to take in the torrents of new data mentioned earlier, and channel them into providing an explanation for the changes in slave-trading seen over time in her chosen regions. Or, as she puts it, "integrat[ing] case study and network perspectives" (p. 7). Her choice of the Czech lands and the British Isles was made with care. There are similarities in that in neither does one find tightly-knit polities before the tenth century and, even then, the ruler's writ did not run smoothly or unchallenged: recent research has shown how the unification of England under the West Saxon kings is exaggerated by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, whose writers worked under their aegis. English written records are markedly fuller than their Czech counterparts, but the categories of laws, churchmen's *Lives* and homilies and so forth are broadly similar. And, most strikingly, in both regions there is a falling-off in mentions of slave-making or -trading from the late eleventh century onwards: Czech examples peter out after the first quarter of the twelfth century,

and the same goes for lowland England, even if slave-taking and -trading carried on around the Irish Sea and Britain's northern shores. This is not to deny the differences between the Czechs' location and the British Isles, or the distortions caused by our heavy dependence on Frankish sources featuring the Slavs as captives or casual raiders rather than as engaging in any more systematic activity. But, as Fontaine notes, we are not wholly dependent on Frankish sources, especially once Bohemian rulers began issuing charters and laying down rules from the late tenth century onwards.

If slave-trading in the Czech lands has not received the attention it deserves, this owes something to the Marxist dogma dominating Czech historiography in the middle and later twentieth century. Slaves have received much more attention in the British Isles, but one should not underestimate the unwillingness to acknowledge the persistence of everyday violence and honour-killing among English historians, or the reluctance of some Irish historians to acknowledge Dublin's role as, in effect, a hub for the slave-trade. Influential English historians have seen in the spread of Christian teaching and the writings of figures like Archbishop Wulfstan of York an explanation for an apparent decline in slave-trading in Britain in the eleventh century. Fontaine questions this view of Christian churchmen as unequivocally hostile to slave-trading, pointing out that Wulfstan—not unlike the Bohemian duke Břetislav I reportedly banning penal enslavement, or Adalbert of Prague—were condemning particular aspects, rather than the practice of slavery itself. Thus, Adalbert's principal objection was to the sale of Christians to Jews, not all slave-trading. By combing through all available sources for the British Isles and the Czech lands, Fontaine casts serious doubt on the view that the Christian Church was through its very expansion responsible for putting an end to slaving.

One must highlight the sheer range of written sources underpinning this important conclusion: not only Frankish chronicles but also prescriptive texts in Welsh and Irish alongside Saints' *Lives* and annals. The Slavic sources are scantier, but sharp-eyed *Quellenkritik* can extract nuggets from the *Lives* of Cyril and Methodios, Přemyslid charters and the *Zakon Sudniy Liudem*, nearly half of whose clauses mention slavery. A couple of examples are worth noting. The *Někotoraja Zapověd* is a penitential probably originating in Bohemia between the ninth and eleventh centuries. One clause bans castration of a boy by force or by parents for purposes of sale. Selling one's children into slavery is not banned outright, but the clause tries to stop sale for obvious profit or when the child would probably end up in non-Christian hands. This canon is unique among Western and Eastern European penitentials. Noting the demand for enslaved eunuchs in the Islamic world, Fontaine detects a clue as to the importance of Islamic markets to Bohemian slave-trading, thus a network spanning Prague, Byzantium and the Middle East. Careful *Quellenkritik* also sheds light on the uses of slaves for monastic land-management in Ireland, England,

Bohemia and Moravia. The charters of Olomouc and Kladruby suggest the new foundations' need for agricultural labour, stimulating demand for slaves in eleventh- and twelfth-century markets. This bolsters scepticism as to whether Christianity's spread was inimical to slavery—while also showing what scanty Central European sources can divulge.

Besides offering such nuggets, this book aims to demonstrate how slavery was engrained in the fabric of the societies of the British Isles already in the seventh century; likewise in the Czech lands from when source-materials increase in the ninth century. Fontaine reviews the various modes of making slaves—selling one's children, penal enslavement, kidnapping and capture in war. And, undeniably, slave-trading was going on. But this was often fairly short-distance and is what she terms "opportunistic," carrying on in this manner in later centuries. There was, however, a step-change in the ninth century, when evidence abounds in the British Isles of slave-taking *en masse*, with preference shown for young women and children. Irish annals tell of raids mounted by Vikings but also by Irish warlords specifically to take slaves in their hundreds. And the ninth-century *Life* of Findan has its hero being taken captive, sold and resold, escaping just before transportation across the North Sea. These goings-on, Fontaine observes, match with the evidence of massive demand for exotic slaves among Abbasid and Central Asian elites. They also fit with the aforementioned evidence of Eastern silver flowing into the Baltic Rim—and still further west—around this time. Fontaine does not discount demand for other commodities, notably furs. Nonetheless, the pattern of evidence points towards an upsurge in demand for slaves from far-flung regions triggering slave-taking and -trading on an almost "industrial" scale.

If external demand set off the rise of organised slave-trading across the British Isles and the Czech lands alike, one might suppose that slackening in external demand would have a negative effect. And that, in broad terms, is what happened. The purchasing-power of the Abbasids and Samanids waned in the late tenth century, along with the rationale for displays of slave-girls and -warriors. And the same goes for the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate in al-Andalus by the 1030s. This does not mean that all external demand evaporated. Byzantine markets were buoyant, as were Fatimid Egypt's. And Fontaine highlights evidence for the robustness of slave-trading across the Czech lands, justifying one of her chapters' subheads, "All roads lead to Prague." There are hints of Prague's trade links fanning out in all directions—to Hungarians, Rus and Byzantium. And judging by an eleventh-century rabbinic text, someone living in Przemyśl knew that he could easily sell a boy in Prague's markets. Through such examples, Fontaine demonstrates Prague's unique position astride several riverways and land-routes. She also suggests why slave-owning and -trading persisted long after the coming of Christianity. Even if not slave-taking himself,

a ruler could greatly profit from the tolls and market-dues generated by the trade. In England and Prague alike, this probably dampened their enthusiasm for banning slave-trading outright. The same goes for senior churchmen like Wulfstan presiding over the market in York and those managing Bohemian monastic foundations like Olomouc.

This remarkable book seems to succeed in addressing Big Questions by investigating finite bodies of evidence—using the "micro" to resolve issues in the "macro." Minor queries arise, of course. Firstly, the forcefulness and rigour of Reformist churchmen from the later eleventh century on will have curbed royal appetites for slave-trading. Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury finally got his way with William the Conqueror, overcoming William's objection to losing revenue from ports like Bristol. Churchmen like Lanfranc could offer to underpin the administrative framework in non-monetary ways, and what holds for Anglo-Norman England might apply to the Přemyslid polity in the twelfth century, too. Secondly, shackles deserve rather more weight as potential "footprints" of slaves and slave-trading. After all, six iron shackles have been found at Hedeby, most by the harbour, and this was certainly an emporium for the slave-trade.

These, though, are quibbles, in no way detracting from this major reassessment of the chronology and significance of slavery and slave-trading not only in the Czech lands and the British Isles but across Eastern Europe and far beyond. This book has much to offer students of the early medieval economy and state-formation in general. Comprising little more than 250 sides, it is a classic case of "Less is More."

HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Flowing Progress: Transforming the Danube Through Infrastructure. Edited by Stefan Dorondel and Luminita Gatejel.*

Central European Studies. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2025. 338 pp.

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Writing the histories of rivers has become popular in recent decades. Richard White's book on the Columbia River and Mark Cioc's seminal book on the Rhine provided important methodologies for scholars concerning how to approach the transformation of rivers in modern times. Most works, of course, have focused on rivers in Western Europe and North America, while many of the world's rivers remain understudied by environmental and technological historians due to language barriers and a lack of sources. This imbalance is common across many fields of environmental history as well, but thanks to a series of influential works by a circle of environmental historians affiliated with the Institute of Social Ecology and Verena Winiwarter, this is not the case for river histories, especially not for the Danube as a whole. Winiwarter, Martin Schmid, and others have contributed numerous methodologically important and nuanced case studies on the Viennese and other Austrian sections of the Danube, as well as some tributaries of this "most international" river. Still, the historiography of the Danube remains largely segmented in at least three ways: temporally—lacking long-term analyses—, spatially—most works focus on only one, usually shorter section—and finally, methodologically. The volume reviewed here is a welcome exception regarding all three aspects, as it consciously examines a longer period, spanning the sixteenth century to the present, and covers sections of the Danube from Austria to Romania. Most notably and impressively, through its methodology, the studies consider the river's "dynamics between hydrological processes and technopolitical and economic practices" (p. 2) as "disturbances"

—a concept introduced by the editors Stefan Dorondel and Luminita Gatejel. Unlike many edited volumes, most articles in this collection reflect on and use the concept of disturbance to explore the changing relationships between the Danube and the people inhabiting its floodplains.

The first article by Deniz Armağan Akto and Onur İnal studies the preindustrial Lower and Middle Danube. They look at the role the river played in the infrastructure associated with the Ottoman Empire's expansion into its northernmost areas. Using previously lesser-known sources, they look at how the Danube and its tributaries facilitated (and posed obstacles to) the military campaigns of the Ottomans in the 1550s and 1560s toward Hungary.

Natural disasters, as several studies have argued, were important in nation-building processes, as on the one hand, states could show strength and solidarity for citizens during such times. On the other hand, similar crises were moments to express and enhance group solidarity and a sense of belonging. Luminita Gatejel shows that in the period of the emergence of the independent Wallachian Principality, the protection of the people of Giurgiu from the Danube floods was used to demonstrate the strength of the newly emerging polity.

Constantin Ardeleanu's contribution presents how different interests clash when transforming riverine infrastructures. He looks at the different economic and ecological interests of the actors involved in utilising the Danube Delta and its waterways in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the European Commission of the Danube facilitated and invested in creating an easily navigable straight riverbed, the Romanian state and the local board for fisheries had a completely different agenda. For the local economy, it was key to consciously manage and make use of the resources in the Danube Delta, which, with the modified Danube riverbed, made several technological arrangements necessary. The complex project, involving engineering experts from Western Europe, placed great emphasis on "grey infrastructure" in supporting the fishery economy of the delta area.

Steven Jobbitt's article focuses on a partially unexplored aspect of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. He presents one of the arguments of Hungarian scientists against cutting the Kingdom of Hungary into pieces; that is, the disturbance of the water system, the loss of Hungary's control over the watershed of the Danube in the central (Carpathian) Basin area. Interwar geographers and hydrologists recurrently argued that only central governance, i.e., Hungarian domination, over the watershed could ensure a just and fair distribution of water resources. This is somewhat contradicted by research demonstrating that large-scale nineteenth-century Hungarian regulation projects created a more polarised society in the rural countryside by prioritising the interests of the manorial economy over those of smallholders.

The chapter by Stelu Șerban also touches upon the lower section of the Danube. Similar to Gatejel's contribution, Șerban demonstrates how floods created opportunities for the Bulgarian state to express its authority while also caring for its citizens. The chapter uses the example of the flood of Vidin in 1942 and the government's response to the threat of the Danube, and how this presented the state with an opportunity to forge ties with urban dwellers. As Șerban argues, this was much needed, as flood protection measures in the region were seen with suspicion, since the drained areas were used to settle post-World War I refugees.

Robert Nemes looks at 1956's Hungary, however the focus is not on the Revolution but on the large winter flood of the Danube. He demonstrates how the flood was mediatised and presented by Rákosi's regime as a war, with significant military involvement in the fight against the related events. While the contemporary press and state represented the phenomenon, including the protection of the small town of Dunavecse, as an organised and successful event, in the light of the archival sources presented by Nemes, this is far from true.

The contribution by Constantin Iordachi presents the different stages of the construction of the Danube–Black Sea Canal and the strong ties of its phases of building to the changing political circumstances and regimes. It shows how, after decades of theoretical considerations about a similar canal, the project came close to fruition as part of Stalinist planning to overcome nature, but was halted under a changing political climate in Romania in the second half of the 1950s. Iordachi also shows how the plan was revived by Ceaușescu's government decades later to demonstrate the superiority of socialist life and showcase the oversized infrastructural projects of late socialism (and the infrastructural decay following regime change).

Stefan Dorondel's contribution, in many ways, continues the previous article by pointing to the processes that followed the dissolution of the Ceaușescu regime in Romania. It presents how privatisation and unequal access to resources contributed to villages being submerged for months (!) in the aftermath of the Danube flood of 2006. Dorondel's careful analysis, based on written sources and interviews, shows how this disaster is a prime example of overreliance on preexisting infrastructure and a lack of control over water management during the years of liberal capitalism in Romania—a combination that has proven rather disastrous in several countries of East Central Europe.

Milica Prokić deals with an alluvial island at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers in the heart of today's Belgrade. The Great War Island's history is in many ways exceptional. As a floodplain ecosystem, it was threatened with destruction for many years due to various political circumstances, as Prokić argues, but somehow always escaped and was never incorporated into urban infrastructure, making it a unique example in an urban setting and, in some ways, a fascinating ecological laboratory in the Danube valley.

The last contribution to the volume is, methodologically, perhaps the most complex of all. Gertrud Haidvogl and her colleagues' article presents three case studies from the Austrian Danube catchment on the transformation of floodplains in the age of industrialisation. Their analysis entails the transformation of the Danube in the Austrian Machland, in Vienna, and finally, the regulation of a tributary of the main river, the Traisen. The authors argue that in responding to floods and other challenges, these landscapes shift from being socio-ecological systems to socio-ecological-technical systems.

Flowing Progress is fascinating yet slightly distressing reading (something the introduction also alludes to). It is an exceptionally well-edited volume that is also richly illustrated, with contributions that consciously use the same theoretical approach to study the transformations of the Danube floodplain. Unlike many books on East Central Europe that do not reach this very audience because of their price, the one reviewed here is open access, making it an even more important study of the environmental history of the Danube. Let us hope that the authors will soon provide more stories of the Danube or another river!

HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Putin's Dark Ages: Political Neomedievalism and Re-Stalinization in Russia. By Dina Khapaeva.

London–New York: Routledge, 2024. xvi+275 pp.
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With recent global crises—including pandemics, the eruption of full-scale military conflicts, and the global authoritarian turn—presentist appropriations of the medieval past have become more and more popular in contemporary societies. Dina Khapaeva's book, *Putin's Dark Ages*, is among the latest successful attempts to critically understand this political "mobilisation" of the Middle Ages. Currently a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Khapaeva has devoted nearly two decades to the much-needed globalisation of medievalism studies by shifting the focus from Europe and the Americas to Russia. In her previous monographs, *Goticheskoe obshchestvo* [The Gothic Society] (2008) and *The Celebration of Death in Contemporary Culture* (2017), she asserted that a growing interest in medieval history and aesthetics in Russian popular culture reflected deeper anti-humanist and anti-democratic trends. *Putin's Dark Ages*, published in the *Routledge Histories of Central and Eastern Europe* series, represents a logical continuation of this research on Russia's cultural and political fascination with the period. The book's introduction, seven chapters, and conclusion, supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography and index, provide a compelling interdisciplinary analysis of how various actors have deployed medieval-themed references in Russian memory politics, public discourse, and popular culture for anti-democratic purposes from 2000 to 2023 (p. 11).

The book opens with an introduction that carefully sketches the development of pro-Western intellectual currents in Russia from the late seventeenth century to post-Soviet times. Khapaeva skilfully demonstrates that the continuous failures to implement Western-oriented political and cultural ideological projects in the Russian milieu have become a necessary historical condition that paved the way for the successful revision of historical memory, including that of the Middle Ages, under Vladimir Putin. The introduction thus provides the necessary contextualisation,

which readers with no prior knowledge of Russian political and intellectual history may find particularly helpful.

The first chapter sets out the threefold theoretical basis of the research. It starts with explaining the concept of "political neomedievalism," defined in line with other similar studies as a means of anti-democratic and populist memory politics about the Middle Ages. Much more innovative are the concepts of the "memory of perpetrators" and "mobmemory" (sic!), which political neomedievalism is part of. The author coins the former term as the exaltation of cruel but strong historical figures and the marginalisation of their victims. In turn, mobmemory is understood as collective representations of the past that focus on justifying controversial figures from national history through "discovering" the hidden reasons behind their actions (p. 28). In such a way, Khapaeva firmly situates her research within the field of memory studies.

While Chapter Two offers a general overview of how the collective memory about several disputed medieval warlords has been reconstructed through Russian legislative and cultural initiatives since 2000, Chapters Three, Four, and Five take a more focused approach and concentrate on the figure of the notorious sixteenth-century tsar, Ivan the Terrible, and his repressive policy, *oprichnina*. Through the analysis of a wide range of sources, including historiography, texts of individual reactionary politicians and organisations such as the Izborsky Club, as well as novels, films, and TV series that have been produced in Russia over the past two decades, the author attempts to reconstruct the public representation of Ivan the Terrible and his rule. She argues quite convincingly that the blood-soaked *oprichnina* has been publicly advocated as the most suitable form of governance for contemporary Russian society. More particularly, as the analysis affirms, hatred of the West and the anti-individualist ideas of *sobornost* and *tsarebozhie* have become integral to promoting this neomedievalist "mobmemory of terror" (pp. 120, 133).

Despite Khapaeva's careful use of various types of sources, the investigation of the public "re-assemblage" of historical memory about Ivan IV and the *oprichnina* in Chapters Three to Five might have benefited from incorporating additional materials. In particular, although state-led and grassroots commemorative initiatives, cultural representations, and historiographical works are, indeed, key instruments in forging the collective memory of Ivan IV, the school curriculum provides another crucial perspective on how this neomedievalist discourse has been orchestrated. For instance, while the majority of textbooks in use in the 2000s–2010s evaluated the outcomes of the tsar's reign in predominantly pessimistic terms, the 2021 textbook edited by the former Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinsky, presents a much more favourable interpretation. It praises Ivan IV's earlier policies for centralising the state and stimulating its economic development. At the same time, it depicts the *oprichnina* merely as an unfortunate episode that "darkened his successful reign"

and slowed down the state's centripetal political dynamics.[1] Given that the Russian Ministry of Education proclaimed Medinsky's historical textbooks the only officially approved means of teaching history to schoolchildren in 2023, the analysis of the state's education policy could have further enriched Khapaeva's investigation of how neomedievalist narratives permeate everyday forms of anti-democratic knowledge transmission, particularly among younger generations.

Remarkably, the discussed contemporary rehabilitation of the *oprichnina* terror through various cultural forms recalls Joseph Stalin's earlier efforts to legitimise the Soviet totalitarian police-state by challenging negative portrayals of Ivan IV and presenting him as a wise and able statesman in both scholarship and film. It is therefore unsurprising that Khapaeva juxtaposes the neomedievalist normalisation of inequality and terror with the ongoing processes of re-Stalinisation in Russia in Chapters Six and Seven. As her detailed analysis shows, the Russian state has been promoting the veneration of the victorious Great Patriotic War, fought between June 1941 and May 1945. By extension, this "boom in memory politics" has affected the renewed glorification of Stalin at the price of reconsidering the outcomes of his political repressions (pp. 163–65). The book's final case study on Vladimir Sharov's prose serves to shed light on the romanticisation of Stalinism and the sixteenth-century *oprichnina* in Russian contemporary culture and further demonstrates convergences in the fabrication of memories about these problematic historical periods.

It should be noted, however, that while the author did not intend the last two chapters to be a full-fledged study on re-Stalinisation and has included them in the monograph to draw parallels between the ways of remembering Stalinism and Ivan IV's rule (p. 158), the comparison between political neomedievalism and re-Stalinisation in Putin's Russia remains somewhat imbalanced. For instance, Khapaeva effectively supports her argument about the reforged popularity of Stalin with public opinion data (pp. 170–74). However, no equivalent evidence is provided regarding the reception of the artificially reconstructed image of Ivan IV. Such evidence is, however, available: a 2016 survey by the Levada Analytical Center reported that nearly half of respondents (49 percent) considered this medieval ruler to have brought more good than harm to Russia, compared with only 13 percent who held the opposite view.[2] The absence of this kind of data in the book leaves the impression that political neomedievalism, unlike re-Stalinisation, is analysed mainly through the prism of state-supported initiatives and cultural production, thus leaving behind the question of its broader public reception.

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1   Ср. Medinsky, ed., *История России,* 83–84.

2   "Иван Грозный: Знание и Оценки" [Ivan the Terrible: Knowledge and Assessments], Levada Center (Accessed: 20 September 2025) https://www.levada.ru/tag/ivan-groznyj/.

To conclude, Dina Khapaeva's monograph offers a thorough interdisciplinary examination of the refurbished image of Ivan the Terrible and his repressive regime in contemporary Russia. It should be duly appreciated for clearly showing how the revised collective memory of this medieval figure can be mobilised to incentivise public backing for anti-democratic and even militaristic transformations. The author has utilised an impressive source base on the subject and has provided an innovative theoretical framework that may be applied to the study of other medieval figures in Russian history or similar illiberal regimes of other countries. I recommend this book to historians, sociologists, specialists in political science, and the general public who are interested in populism's relationship to national history.

Literature

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HSCE | Historical Studies on Central Europe

Die Publikationsprofile Göttinger Professoren von 1750 bis 1830 und die Organisation der Wissenschaft. By Martin Gierl.

Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2025. 298 pp.

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As the title of Martin Gierl's latest volume indicates, the author has undertaken a distinctive and indeed unique methodological enterprise in reconstructing the scholarly careers of fourteen professors and one private lecturer active at the University of Göttingen between 1750 and 1830. The book is not a conventional collection of juxtaposed biographies. Rather, it is an ambitious experiment in the history of science and knowledge, which—as the author notes in the introduction—articulates the personal, institutional, local, disciplinary, and medial dimensions into a coherent reconstruction of individual scholarly careers, understood through the ways in which the execution of institutional tasks was shaped, oriented, and progressively delimited by emerging disciplinary frameworks and their growing demands for specification (p. 17).

Gierl uses the publication profile for the examination of Göttingen's evolvement that re-examines the organisational, medial, and disciplinary conditions of scholarly publishing, thereby giving a specific slant to the functioning of the early modern university. In sketching the profiles of the fifteen scholars arranged into three successive generations who form the empirical foundation of this "experiment," in each case, he organises the analysis around the questions of how often and how regularly they published, what they published and where, or what media they used for publication. In doing so, he elucidates the gradual structural transformation that led from the world of *Gelehrsamkeit* to a modern science organised into distinct academic disciplines.

Of the nearly seven hundred scholars who taught at the University of Göttingen between 1734 and 1830, fifteen are selected whose publication practices form a comparable pattern within the generational and disciplinary matrix devised by the author. It is here that Gierl's methodological innovation becomes visible: he shifts the analytical focus to the modes and media of scholarly publication. Rather than

asking what the celebrated professor of physics Georg Christoph Lichtenber thought about positive or negative electrical charge, or what Caspar Mende considered the proper use of the obstetrical forceps, he looks into how, across the three generations examined, the oeuvre of each professor, conceived as a paradigmatic case, constituted a temporally and medially structured publication trajectory. Gierl investigates the phase of life, the periodic rhythm, the genres (textbook, review, dissertation, monograph) they chose; the point when they turned, as authors or editors, toward the newly emerging scholarly journals; and the shift in language (Latin, German) and the intended readership of their publications.

The first generation, designated as the *Universitätsväter* and comprising professors born in the first third of the eighteenth century, emerged as the principal architects of Göttingen's scientific and institutional ascent after 1750. Albrecht von Haller in botany and physiology, Johann David Michaelis in Oriental studies, Johann Stephan Pütter in public and constitutional law, Christian Wilhelm Franz Walch in ecclesiastical history, and Christian Gottlob Heyne in classical philology and ancient studies appear in the volume as the founders of a new architecture of knowledge. They played a decisive role in establishing the organisational, communicative, and representational forms through which scholarship could be produced, disseminated, and legitimated: they secured the foundations of institutional infrastructure, the regularity of scholarly labour, the credibility of inquiry understood as an empirical and increasingly complex scientific system, and the international reputation of the university.

The library founded concurrently with the establishment of the university in 1734, the scholarly journal that had appeared from 1739 (*Göttingische Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen*, renamed *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* in 1753, and later *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* from 1802 onward), and the Göttingen Scientific Society *(Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften),* established in 1751 under the leadership of Haller, Heyne, and Michaelis, functioned as a modern apparatus for the circulation of knowledge. They integrated the mechanisms of knowledge production, collective control, rapid access to the latest results, scholarly discussion, selection, and verification, that is, mechanisms that jointly defined the effective organisation of knowledge.

Through the activity of the *Universitätsväter* generation, a new pace of scholarly communication emerged within this research infrastructure, one structured by regular intervals of publication. Journals appeared in weekly and monthly cycles; the meetings of the learned society followed a fixed temporal sequence; and the library itself was organised on principles of immediate access and circulation. This new temporality and new rhythm generated a transformed metric of scholarly value: authority grounded in ancient authors and tradition was gradually superseded by

the principle of the "current" and the "most recent." One may therefore say that the infrastructure of knowledge—the new sites and stages of scholarly practice—placed knowledge production within a fundamentally new temporal framework. Beyond all this, the professors also assumed active roles in the social life of the city, organising orphanages, various student activities, concerts, and other communal endeavours. In Gierl's interpretation, this meant that the university as a space of knowledge was also a space of social representation.

The next generation, designated as the *Schülergeneration* and composed of scholars born in the middle of the eighteenth century, appears in the volume as the cohort that actively advanced and reshaped the institutional and medial frameworks established by their predecessors. Gierl demonstrates with considerable analytical acuity how the work of August Ludwig Schlözer in history and political science, Johann Beckmann in technology, Christoph Georg Lichtenberg in physics, Christoph Meiners in universal history, and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in zoology and biological anthropology meant new turning points in the selection of genres, the rhythms of publication, the linguistic medium, and, by extension, the organisational logic of scientific communication. He convincingly shows that the period is hallmarked by rendering publication into a recurrent scholarly practice: the professors listed above founded and edited a total of ten journals, several of which circulated not only within the academic sphere of the university but exerted their influence beyond it. Equally significant—both epistemologically and socially—was the shift that this new generation, unlike their predecessors, no longer published in Latin but in German. This enabled scientific discourse to move beyond the closed world of the academic elite and target a broader, cultivated readership, thereby altering the social reach and cultural embeddedness of scholarly knowledge.

Thereby, the production and circulation of knowledge were no longer understood simply as institutional obligations; they became forms of intellectual practice that required continuous cultivation. The regularity of journal publication, the intensity of scholarly correspondence, the writing of reviews, and the practices of research, collection, translation, and teaching all came to function as constituents of a single integrated process of knowledge communication with increasingly international reach. Within this framework, publishing ceased to be a supplementary task; instead it became a defining condition of the scholarly profession.

The author characterises this growing reliance on journals—and the way it organised scholarly work into periodic structures—as a process of the "journalisation" of science, linking it to a broader redefinition of the the *Schülergeneration's* scholarly ideal. The changing status of publication brought along a new work ethos: the sequential activities of reading, excerpting, reviewing, and writing required self-discipline, regularity, and the conscious planning of publication cycles.

Accordingly, the internal dynamics of the scholarly community were shaped by the day-to-day effort to maintain status and position, as well as by the shifting balance between competition and cooperation through which recognition was sought within both local and wider scholarly networks.

The third generation, termed the *Schülerschüler* and born in the final third of the eighteenth century, already thought in disciplinary terms. In their case, practices of professional self-representation, journal editing, and sustained publication in periodicals were dominant patterns. Through the publication trajectories of Carl Friedrich Stäudlin, professor of church history, theology, and the history of religion; Karl Ludwig Harding, professor of astronomy; Ludwig Julius C. Mende, professor of medicine and obstetrics; Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, professor of classical philology and archaeology; and Friedrich Albert A. Meyer, private lecturer in zoology, Gierl effectively illustrates the emerging research habitus characteristic of scholars operating in increasingly differentiated disciplinary fields, and thus the broader process of the professionalisation of science. By the early nineteenth century, the scientific field had been so differentiated that the earlier figure of the universal scholar was replaced by specialists working within increasingly narrow domains of expertise. University journals gradually transformed into disciplinary periodicals of imperial and, eventually, international reach. These shifts produced a series of profound changes in Göttingen's scholarly culture. At the organisational level, the university no longer functioned merely as an institution of instruction; it evolved into a centre of scientific knowledge production, where seminars, laboratories, clinics, collections, and journals were integrated into a single system, thereby giving rise to the European model of the research university. At the communicative level, knowledge increasingly took shape within domain-specific journals and the review systems that generated critical spaces of scholarly discourse. At the epistemological level, the principal aim of knowledge production was no longer the comprehension of the world as a whole but rather the construction of more narrowly defined systems of objects.

The professional lives of the third generation were no longer marked by rootedness in Göttingen; many of its members built mobile academic careers that led them through multiple universities. In Gierl's rendering, this transformation yields a vivid picture of the changing internal relations of research, publication, and teaching, in which disciplinary knowledge is organised through projects, networks, professional societies, and, above all, journals. Within this modern field, the university professor appears simultaneously as teacher, scholar-researcher, editor, administrator, and manager.

Gierl's use of the publication profile as an analytical "formula" reveals with remarkable precision that modern scholarship emerged less from new ideas than from the gradual transformation of institutional infrastructures and systems of

knowledge exchange. Although the author promises a separate volume devoted specifically to journals as a distinct publication medium, the reviewer notes only one minor omission: it would have been helpful to include clear, easily readable summary tables of the genres that constitute the publication profiles—especially journals—for each generation. This feature would have made the volume even more accessible to readers.

Taken together, the methodological approach and the conceptual architecture the volume presents may also be read as a synthesis of the author's longstanding engagement with the "Göttingen phenomenon" from multiple analytical perspectives. This is compellingly documented by the bibliography, which lists Martin Gierl's fourteen earlier publications, an impressive corpus both in scope and scholarly quality.

The Last Peasant War: Violence and Revolution in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe. By Jakub S. Beneš.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2025. 400 pp.*

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The author's first book, the original and innovative *Workers and Nationalism*,[1] set high expectations for his second one. The former exposed the dialectic between proletarian internationalism and workers' nationalism in *fin-de-siècle* Bohemia, convincingly presenting both as reactions to the essentially middle-class and broadly liberal nationalisms of the era. It showed how German and Czech workers could both ostentatiously put their brotherhood on display at outdoor political events and scuffle with each other in pubs. In a restrained polemical tone, it pointed out that balanced individual bilingualism was rare in real life and that in "German" places like Teplice (Teplitz), the division between native speakers of German and Czech was fraught with the connotations of local versus immigrant. While socialist propaganda successfully promoted proletarian internationalism as an antidote to divisive nationalist strategies, the network of socialist institutions simultaneously worked to emancipate the working classes, integrating them into national high cultures modelled on the ideal of *Bildung*. The bourgeois press denigrated the socialists as cosmopolitans without a fatherland, but the argument that the toiling masses were the true representatives of both nations could prevail by the time of the suffrage movement of 1905–1906.

This second book now turns to the peasants of East-Central Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, re-examining their agency in the cataclysmic changes that are usually assumed to have simply happened to them. Its primary focus is on the Czech, Croatian and Slovene lands, where Beneš can rely in part on his archival research, but it also covers other lands that belonged to Habsburg Austria until 1918, as well as Ukraine and European Russia. The narrative spans an arc from resistance

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1   Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*.

to the command economy of World War I to resistance to state collectivisation in the 1950s. The Green Cadre, gangs of armed deserters in war-torn Austria–Hungary who emerged from hiding after the collapse of state power to uphold peasant grievances and try to put the peasants' ideas of a just society into practice, occupy an emblematic place. Blending egalitarian goals, pacifism and class-based internationalism with a heterodox and traditionalist version of nationalism, as well as anti-urban and often anti-Semitic sentiment, the Green Cadre embodied the radical, disruptive side of peasant politics. From there, Beneš leads the reader through the short-lived peasant ministates of 1918–1919, social banditry, the ambivalent integration of irregular military units into new, national armies, to the interwar agrarian movement, the partisans of World War II and resistance to the forced collectivisation of land. A separate chapter is devoted to each of these, with the story of the South Moravian Slovácko Brigade illustrating the fate of peasant militias in the successor states and the Slavonian "Band of Mountain Birds" used as an example to tell the story of the descent from brigandage with a cause to simple banditry.

The book's most ambitious aim is to refute Marx's quip in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that the peasantry was as incapable of articulating its own class-based politics as a sack of potatoes and instead portray it as an autonomous actor that shaped the modern world. This included the withdrawal of Russian peasants from the front in their hundreds of thousands, which sealed the fate of the Kerensky government; the mutiny of peasant soldiers in Radomir, which overthrew the rule of Bulgarian tsar Ferdinand; widespread peasant unrest in Croatia, which made the Croatian political elite dependent on the Serbian army and indirectly paved the way for a centralised (as opposed to a federal) Yugoslav state; and the anti-Bolshevik backlash in the Russian and Ukrainian countryside, which forced the Bolsheviks to abandon the war economy and introduce the NEP. However, peasant politics also took on a more respectable, orderly aspect in the interwar period. In addition to agrarian parties from Bulgaria to Croatia, the book also analyses the workings of the Prague-based Green International and even uncovers a link between the Green Cadre and the influential, heterodox peasant Marxism of Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh via the figure of Tomasz Dąbal, the head of the Komintern-aligned peasant international, the Krestintern.

The book is theoretically lean in not making much of a statement about its conceptual apparatus, but it often captures peasant action through the anthropological lens of James C. Scott, especially the concept of the moral economy of peasants. It prominently features Gramscian thought and references Eric Wolf, though other classics on peasants and peasant violence, such as those of Guha or Redfield, whose work could otherwise sharpen its message, are missing.[2]

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2   Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*; Guha, *Elementary Aspects*; Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*.

According to Beneš, the apocalyptic years of World War I set off a sea change in peasants' attitudes towards politics. The absence of most men from the fields itself turned the economy of peasant households on its head, and, as if that were not enough, the wartime government adopted the command economy from Germany, with regular inspections of barns, the mandatory selling of grain and maize to "grain offices" at low prices, while the prices of consumer goods experienced runaway inflation. The dramatic increase in state power put a chokehold on peasant livelihoods and clashed with peasants' moral economy, just as the traumatic confiscation of church bells in 1916 stripped the emperor, who traditionally embodied the state in the eyes of the peasants, of his sacred legitimacy. The attack on grain offices, "spontaneous requisitions" carried out on behalf of locals, and bloody acts of revenge against gendarmes, foresters, and other lower state representatives reveal the backlash that such policies caused and the rejection of the central power by the rural masses.

While I agree with Beneš's autopsy of the dynamics at work here, my findings from researching Romanian peasants in Dualist Hungary contest his rigid chronology. Not denying that wartime developments accelerated the process, the more piecemeal but still radical state penetration of the preceding decades, the steep rise in taxes, and the expansion of bureaucratic rules had already put pressure on rural people, which often gave rise to violence. In particular, everything that Beneš has to say about gendarmes as the most omnipresent and visible representatives of state power—from the fear and hatred they inspired among peasants to the attacks on gendarmerie posts—can also be documented in *fin-de-siècle* Transylvania. Judging by Stefano Petrungaro's excellent monograph, state-sponsored modernisation led to similar resentment in the pre-war Croatian countryside.[3]

In the later years of the Great War, villagers' desperation and growing hostility towards the state brought local solidarity and survival strategies to the fore and gave popular support to the gangs of deserters collectively known as the Green Cadre. In Austria–Hungary, the 'Greens' could most easily find networks of accomplices among the rural population of Croatia and Slavonia, eastern Moravia, western Slovakia and western Galicia, identified by Beneš as the hotbeds of peasant unrest. In fact, most "Greens" camped near their home villages, frequently changing their exact location to avoid being captured but returning home as often as possible for food, fresh clothes and a warm bed. However, such "home boys" mixed in the same gangs with other deserters who came from other Habsburg provinces and spoke other languages. The total number of the Green Cadre was estimated at two hundred and fifty thousand in the Habsburg Empire in October 1918.

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3   Petrungaro, *Pietre e fucili.*

The former prisoners of war from Russian captivity, who joined the Greens *en masse* in 1918, had a major influence on their political ideas. Many of these returnees took to the woods as they were confronted with the prospect of being politically vetted and locked up in one of the re-education camps run by the Common Austro–Hungarian Army, only to be sent back to the front. They spread news of the Russian revolution among Habsburg peasants, fleshing it out with their own eyewitness accounts. It must be stressed that what they had experienced first-hand in Russia was a countryside view of the early days of revolutionary euphoria after the Bolshevik takeover in St. Petersburg, when locals took matters into their own hands and set about redistributing land. While slightly misleading, such an outlook electrified the agonised rural masses of Austria–Hungary, who then combined this with a vernacular understanding of national self-determination, a cornerstone of anti-Habsburg nationalist propaganda in 1918.

Often styling themselves after the haiduks and other outlaws that romantic nationalist mythology had transformed into social bandits and national freedom fighters, Green Cadre forces came to the fore in October 1918 in their attempts to push through fundamental social change and lay the groundwork for a system they called "republican"–popular government based on participatory democracy and local autonomy, a political system organised from below, for and by the people understood primarily as agriculturists. They had no intention of abolishing private property, but they proclaimed the end of large estates, seized and dismantled manors, and turned a blind eye to, or even participated in, the looting of shops, because they saw shopkeepers as war profiteers. They would sometimes exploit the rumours about an alleged conspiracy by Queen-Empress Zita against the monarchy to playfully invoke the imperial couple as their protectors. Beneš concludes that the involvement of the Greens amplified the revolutionary ambitions behind collective violence.

Beneš dwells on the actions and reactions of peasants in this chaotic, transitional period because they reveal aspirations and a political imaginary that endured in the long term and were also shared by the constituency of interwar agrarian politics. They were by no means specific to landless labourers, since smallholders who had suffered relative deprivation during the war, actually played a more prominent role in the violent post-war restoration of the moral economy.

This political imaginary and this understanding of social justice found their embodiment in the small peasant republics that sprang up during the 1905 Russian revolution and in 1918–1919. They emerged from popular assemblies, confiscated neighbouring landed estates, refused to pay taxes to imperial centres and organised self-defence. However, Beneš specifies that not all ephemeral statelets of these years were, in his sense, peasant republics, even when peasants participated in their

leadership. The Hutsul and Lemko republics, for instance, were "republics *by* peasants but not clearly *for* peasants" as "their primary aim was nationalistic" (p. 130).

Perhaps the greatest merit of Beneš's book is connecting the dots between spontaneous postwar revolutionary action and interwar agrarian populism, thereby showing the latter's popular roots. This link is often overlooked because the former Green Cadre irregulars who pursued political careers in the successor states toned down their social radicalism, and agrarian parties in general shifted towards the political mainstream. Some of their main ideological planks, however, can be traced back to the ideas underlying peasant action in the immediate postwar years; e.g., the devolution of powers, pacifism, international cooperation (often with Pan-Slavic overtones) and primarily the belief that democracy inevitably assigned a leading role to the peasantry, as the demographic majority. More significantly, Beneš argues that peasants continued to act on similar ideas as they were forced to regain agency during the later upheavals of World War II and Soviet-style collectivisation campaigns. In fact, Beneš opens the horizon at the end of his book, explaining how the latter fit into global patterns of peasant political attitudes.

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„Ha levelem elolvastad, add tovább": Bonczidai Dezső kézírásos gyülekezeti levelei a két világháború közötti Kidén ["If You Have Read My Letter, Pass It On": The Handwritten Congregational Letters of Dezső Bonczidai in Interwar Chidea (Kide)]. Edited by Emese Ilyefalvi.

Cluj-Napoca: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2024. 197 pp.

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Emese Ilyefalvi, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnography, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), has recently prepared for publication—and in her introduction—interpreted the pastoral letters of Dezső Bonczidai (1902–1946), a Calvinist minister of Chidea (Kide) in Cluj County, Romania. Between 1932 and 1935, Bonczidai wrote and, using a hectograph, duplicated a series of inner-mission circulars which, at the time, functioned as influential devotional texts, instruments of community building, and aids to understanding the wider world. Their significance is underscored by the fact that they entered communal memory: several households still preserve copies. In addition to publishing the texts, Ilyefalvi seeks to interpret them by asking fundamental questions: What motivated the minister of Chidea to write letters produced and circulated in partly traditional ways? How did this personal mode of address shape their content? What could justify such an endeavour in an era marked by the boom of ecclesiastical periodicals in Transylvania? How did these texts fit into Bonczidai's wider pastoral work? To approach these questions, Ilyefalvi proceeds methodically: before presenting the letters, she reconstructs the circumstances of their discovery, outlines the challenges of pastoral vocation in the period, sketches Bonczidai's life and the village milieu in the interwar years, and surveys the local Calvinist press. She then weaves these elements into an analysis of pastor–community relations, interprets the handwritten letters, and offers a synthesis; thereafter, the edition itself gives ample space to the sources.

Based on Ilyefalvi's research, these are indeed presented as historical sources. The volume includes not only the pastoral circulars but also Bonczidai's official correspondence and several contemporary entries from the registers of the Chidea

Calvinist congregation. Jointly, they offer a nuanced picture of the conditions of pastoral work. A rich photographic section follows the introductory study and bibliography, and the book concludes with summaries in English and Romanian; the back cover features a commendatory note by Vilmos Keszeg.

Although Ilyefalvi's conclusions are framed primarily in relation to Transylvania, Bonczidai's activity can also be read within a broader regional context, which further underlines the importance of the book. Since the turn of the twentieth century, the accelerated transformation of peasant society may be described as a structural shift in which previously self-evident communal roles required radical reinterpretation. Demographic change tied to altered mortality patterns, laicisation and denominational fragmentation accelerated by the experience of World War I, the loosening of traditional frameworks of family life, and the growing desire to adopt urban lifestyles—especially in dress and leisure—collectively placed new emphasis on the pastor's role in strengthening the community, from southern Transdanubia through Upper Hungary to the Szeklerland. This role was particularly significant where communities perceived their very existence as endangered. In the Borşa Valley, increasingly populated by Romanians, this was especially true for Chidea, a small Hungarian enclave.

It was in this context that Dezső Bonczidai—who had arrived in Chidea from the Sălaj region with his wife, Sára Ajtai—found his inner mission intensified. Drawing on the recollections of those who still remembered him, Ilyefalvi reconstructs the image of a frail, physically weak minister; yet beyond the figure of a committed and effective preacher dedicated to community development, the testimonies also reveal the stricter, at times confrontational aspects of his personality. Equally revealing are the weary, disillusioned lines of his own autobiographical note: "Do not become a pastor—humanly speaking—if you do not have the outward appearance and patronage. You will always be the last. You will remain in Chidea, that everyone has always fled" (p. 18). These are the words of a man living in an intellectually less inspiring and existentially precarious situation, echoing the experience of many contemporaneous pastors who longed for broader horizons.[1]

The carefully reconstructed image of the village of Chidea —chosen in the 1940s as a field site for the social-science research of the Transylvanian Institute—further highlights the character of a community practising birth control and visibly adopting urban culture, thus posing particular challenges for pastoral work. Bonczidai and his wife had to invest substantial effort to pursue their goals, as evidenced by the

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1   See, for example, Kránitz, Zsolt, ed. „*A késő idők emlékezetében éljenek…*" *A Dunántúli Református Egyházkerület lelkészi önéletrajzai, 1943* ["May They Live in the Memory of Later Times…" Pastors' Autobiographies of the Transdanubian Calvinist Church District, 1943]. A Pápai Református Gyűjtemények Kiadványai, Forrásközlések 13, Jubileumi kötetek 2. Pápa: Pápai Református Gyűjtemények, 2013.

activities of the men's and women's fellowships, as well as the organisation of devotional evenings and Bible-study meetings several times a week. Their tragically early deaths almost certainly contributed to the ennobling of their memory in Chidea to the extent that they were the only ones buried next to the church, and Bonczidai's nephew was called to succeed him as pastor.

The handwritten pastoral letters bring us closer to several key historical questions. Above all, they demonstrate that communicating modern knowledge through more traditional forms could enhance the effectiveness of knowledge transfer. In this respect, the striking arithmetic of invisible women's labour in the 29th letter is particularly noteworthy: in a six-member household over twenty years, a mother spreads 175,200 slices of bread with butter, peels 87,000 potatoes, and so forth (p. 120). Whether or not strictly accurate, such stark figures sit uneasily with the dominant pronatalist discourse of the period, which in this region placed special emphasis on the survival of the Hungarian national community. Yet the significance of the letters lies not only in how they anchored broader social tendencies locally. However, this was substantial, mainly if, as Ilyefalvi suggests, they contributed to increased newspaper readership. At least as important was the communicative sphere generated by passing the letters from hand to hand: one copy, typically shared among four or five families, ended with the injunction that gave the book its title. In this process, the pastor communicated with his congregation; the congregants with one another—since it is hard to imagine that the letters' often highly personal content was not discussed—and, indirectly, with the pastor himself. The very fact that the letters were read and passed on constituted a form of feedback, all the more so when their content reappeared as points of reference in interactions with him. Thus, the community not only came to accept Bonczidai—who, alongside his wife, pursued innermission work with great zeal—but was also shaped by him: statements relating to the history of the village and the local Calvinist congregation were reverently preserved for decades, and his enduring memory testifies to his substantial personal impact.

Two observations in Ilyefalvi's conclusion invite further reflection. Her regret that the collector "arrived late" is justified only in the sense that not all of Bonczidai's letters and related memories could be recovered. Even so, the surviving material delineates a coherent, community-shaping role, and it is doubtful that a larger corpus would fundamentally alter this picture. It is also true that the lives of Bonczidai and his wife ended tragically—and tragically early—yet through their work and aspirations, they left behind a rich and complete life's heritage. That their memory is still alive today attests to this—and thanks to Ilyefalvi's book, it now extends beyond Chidea.

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Hungary as a Sport Superpower: Football from Horthy to Kádár (1924–1960). By Lorenzo Venuti.

Berlin–Boston: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024. 328 pp.
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This book is a well-documented study of the history of Hungarian football from 1924 to 1960. However, it goes far beyond sports history by exploring the fields of political, international and transnational history. Football is not merely an object of research, but also a lens that allows an in-depth exploration of almost forty years of Hungarian history.

The subject of investigation mainly focuses on cultural and social aspects, more specifically on the relationship between football and politics. This includes an analysis of how political transformations before and after World War II influenced the development of Hungarian football and its global reach. The volume also proposes an extensive study of international football relations, examining how the national team and clubs played a diplomatic role in certain circumstances. Given the focus of the text, there is understandably little room for in-depth analysis or statistical comparison.

The adopted chronology meets both sporting and political criteria. It covers the period from Miklós Horthy's reign until the János Kádár government hat followed the suppression of the 1956 revolution. Worthy of note, however, is that both the beginning and the end of the book refer to sporting events, such as the Olympic football tournament at the Paris Games in 1924 and at the Rome Games in 1960.

The book is divided into two sections. Each of them has an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The first part is dedicated to the "Interwar Years and World War II (1924–1945)." In the first chapter, "Football in the Admiral's Country (1924–1927)," the author analyses the steps that followed the unexpected defeat against Egypt in the second round of the football tournament at the Paris Olympics in 1924. Such a crucial event determined the embrace of professionalism. The study also emphasises the growing political significance of national football team matches and their composition. The second chapter, "Sport and Revisionism (1928–1938),"

focuses on the Hungarian contribution to the establishment of two significant international competitions (the International Cup and the Mitropa Cup). It also explores how revisionist aspirations for "a place in the sun" were manifested in the realm of sport. The third chapter, "A New Spirit for Hungarian Football (1939–1944)," examines the evolution of Hungarian football during World War II, demonstrating the influence of international politics on sport in general. As proof of this, Hungary played against Poland just four days before the German invasion, and then hosted the German national team in Budapest three weeks later. Additionally, the chapter deals with the inclusion of teams from territories that Hungary annexed in the early years of the war, as well as the consequences of the defeat.

The second part of the book is dedicated to the "People's Republic (1945–1960)." The fourth chapter, "A Fragile Democracy: Football before the People's Republic (1945–1948)," focuses on the disputes between social democrats and communists over the reconstruction of Hungarian football organisations, the transformation of football clubs, and the reorientation of football relations towards countries within the Soviet sphere of influence. The fifth chapter, "The Most Beautiful Product of Socialism (1948–1954)," analyses the "Golden Age" of Hungarian football. The author illustrates how the success of the national football team (particularly the historic victory at Wembley in 1953) became a propaganda tool and a diplomatic asset.

Having described the success of the "best ambassadors of socialism," the author goes on to discuss the consequences of the unexpected defeat against Germany in the 1954 World Cup final. Such defeat "provided opposition forces with the first opportunity to demonstrate against" the Hungarian government (p. 239). Finally, the last chapter's focus is on "The End of the Mighty Magyars (1955–1960)." This analyses the impact of socialist patriotism and the consequences for Hungarian football of the 1956 Revolution and the latter's repression.

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New York – Washington – London. Fejezetek a pártállami hírszerzés angol–amerikai osztályának történetéből, 1950–1970. [New York – Washington – London. Chapters from the History of the Anglo–American Department of the Intelligence of the Single-Party State, 1950–1970]. By István Pál.

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On 17 May 1967, news broke that János Radványi, *chargé d'affaires* of the Hungarian Legation in Washington, D.C. and a member of Party Secretary János Kádár's inner circle, had left his station and sought asylum in the United States. This was the third defection of a high-level diplomat from the People's Republic of Hungary within the span of two years, and while the other two did not cause such public stir, they were at least as impactful for the country's foreign intelligence. László Szabó defected from London in 1965, and Ernő Bernát from Washington a few weeks before Radványi. Unknown to the public at the time, both were "resident spies" (the equivalent of a station chief of the CIA for the intelligence agencies of the Eastern Bloc) of the Hungarian state security at their respective foreign missions, which means that by switching sides, they compromised their entire intelligence network. This put a fitting end to two decades of largely unsuccessful activity by the Anglo-American Department of the Hungarian State Security, the topic of István Pál's volume. The book contains eight studies by the author, who is assistant professor at the Department of Modern and Contemporary History at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest.

István Pál's main research area is the history of US–Hungarian and British–Hungarian relations in the twentieth century, with a special focus on the operation of intelligence services. In this work, Pál covers episodes from the first twenty years of the state security organisations of the Ministry of the Interior of the People's Republic of Hungary against the United States and the United Kingdom. During this

period, relations between the People's Republic of Hungary and the two Western countries were at their lowest point. The first half of the 1950s was characterised by the repressive regime of Mátyás Rákosi, and after the crushing of the 1956 Revolution, bilateral relations hit rock bottom. While there was some significant improvement during the early Kádár regime in the 1960s, it was only in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the end of the period presented in the book, that Hungary's relations with the West were normalised. Being a member of the Eastern Bloc, in the period covered, Hungarian state security viewed the United States as the "main enemy," and the United Kingdom as the "second greatest enemy."

After acknowledgements, the volume starts with an extended Introduction to be followed by the eight case studies of individuals who were in some way involved with Hungarian intelligence in the United Kingdom or the United States—as officers, agents, or prospective agents. The book ends with a useful bibliography and an index of names. The Introduction defines the relevant topical and temporal frameworks, provides an overview of the operation and the organisation of Hungarian state security in the period, and touches upon certain methodological and theoretical issues. Accessing the relevant sources is a common challenge for historians of intelligence services, given that the files often contain classified material. The reasons for the classification are often national security, or that they contain sensitive personal information. In the countries of the Eastern Bloc, civilian intelligence agencies generally operated under the Ministry of Interior, while military intelligence was part of the military, and eventually, the Ministry of Defence. The focus of Pál's research is the operation of the civilian intelligence service, whose documents can be found in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, ÁBTL). The documents of the military intelligence of the People's Republic of Hungary (MNVK-2) are not at all available for research—even though the biggest Hungarian-related spy scandal of the Cold War, the Conrad case, was the outcome of their work. Pál explains that this is because the targets of military intelligence were NATO and neutral countries (Austria, Italy, West Germany, etc.), which are now Hungary's allies. In several cases, the information given about these countries' military structures or order of battle is still relevant, which is the justification for keeping the documents classified (pp. 9–10).

Considering the documents available in ÁBTL, there is a debate among Hungarian historians about their source value (pp. 42–44). A large number of the files of the civilian intelligence are missing from the archives, and the ones that can be accessed are often incomplete and have considerable bias. Pál agrees with György Gyarmati that, for this reason, materials in the ÁBTL should be approached with considerable source criticism, and ideally, their content should be compared to that of other archives. It is a major problem that it is even more difficult, often impossible, to

access the material of the intelligence and counterintelligence agencies of the United States and the United Kingdom, especially for a foreign researcher. Almost every chapter in the book contains a reply from the relevant British or American agency to Pál's inquiry, usually stating that they cannot even confirm or deny whether the requested documents exist. Thus, the source material mostly comes from Hungarian archives, first and foremost the ÁBTL. For secondary sources, Pál uses the findings of the most recent Hungarian scholarship, including the works of Magdolna Baráth, Mária Palasik, Krisztián Ungváry, and many others. With regard to the work of the American and British agencies, he also cites the most prominent scholars of the field, such as Nigel West, Cristopher Andrew, and Tim Weiner.

In his Introduction (Bevezető), Pál divides the 1950–1970 period into two sections considering the activity of the state security of the People's Republic of Hungary in the United States and the United Kingdom. Before the 1956 Revolution, Hungarian intelligence was characterised by "total amateurism:"

"[…] in selecting officers, loyalty to the regime was more important than competence. Many of the officers were completely unsuitable for the task, were not properly prepared, some did not even speak English, thus could achieve very limited results, if any. During the Revolution, the security of the documents of the Ministry of Interior, including state security, was compromised, and the identity of many officers and their agents was revealed. As a consequence, after 1956 the foreign intelligence networks of the state security had to be completely reorganised. The new generation of intelligence officers were better prepared than their predecessors: they were »well-educated, spoke a number of languages, [and] had the power to enlist the services of intellectuals and public figures perceived to be independent of the regime […]«"

—which, from the perspective of their adversaries, made them more competent and dangerous (pp. 15–16).

Each of the eight chapters presents a different episode from the history of Hungarian intelligence: in the first four chapters, episodes in the United Kingdom, and in the second four, episodes in the United States. The first story is that of István Kennedy, a doctor who had been involved in the communist movement in Czechoslovakia before the war and personally knew one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Still, it was difficult to convince him to cooperate with the Hungarian state security, and even when he did agree, he failed to provide any useful information. The cooperation ended when in 1956, Kennedy started praising the Petőfi Circle, an organisation in Hungary that was openly critical of the regime. Pál argues that this was a conscious decision on his part, his way of getting

out of this entanglement.

In the second chapter, we read about the state security's failure to approach another Jewish doctor. László Blitz, who was also tending to the Hungarian embassy in London, held moderate political views, and though he had rejected the Horthy regime, could not identify with the communists either. Pál argues that while he was in contact with the Hungarian state security, Doctor Blitz was probably secretly cooperating with the British authorities.

The third case study presents Éva Delfin, a young computer scientist, a Holocaust survivor who left Hungary after 1956. Other than the difficulty of approaching young intellectuals and professionals, many of whom were weary of the regime in Hungary, this episode sheds light on the professional shortcomings of Hungarian state security, whose members failed to respect operational security by, for example, giving instructions on the telephone.

In the fourth chapter, we read about the case of István Komáromy, an accomplished sculptor. Gábor Pados, an officer of the Hungarian intelligence, managed to establish good rapport with the sculptor, which caught the eye of the British services. They warned Komáromy that Pados was an intelligence officer and probably enlisted the sculptor to their service. Pál concludes that this episode clearly shows that MI5 had been familiar with the Hungarian officers' identity and their intelligence network already before Szabó's defection.

The first story from the United States is that of László Back, who used to work as a tourist guide in Budapest. Before moving to the United States, he had already been reporting on tourists to the Hungarian authorities, and given the expectation that he would continue working for the state security, he was allowed to move to New York. This was unusual at the time, especially considering that he was of military age. Once he settled in America, Back did not follow instructions from Budapest and practically sabotaged cooperation, thus he was eventually dismissed from service.

The protagonist of the sixth chapter is Fülöp Katz, who was a prominent member of the influential Jewish freemason lodge and non-profit organisation *B'nai B'rith*. Given that Zionist organisations were among the Hungarian state security's main targets after the Six-day War in 1967, they attempted to recruit him. While the Hungarian officials managed to establish a good relationship with Katz and he praised the treatment of Jews in Hungary, further cooperation became impossible, when he criticised the Soviet Union for its antisemitism, and even tried to get János Kádár to intercede on their behalf. This was, of course, not realistic.

The topic of the seventh chapter is the relationship between János Radványi and the influential American foreign policy journalist Bernard Gwertzman. Gwertzman worked for the *Washington Evening Star* at the time but later became editor of *The*

New York Times. Unknown to the Hungarian state security at the time, in addition to the State Department, he had good connections with the CIA as well. In the 1960s, the leadership of the People's Republic of Hungary was aiming to improve their image in the American press, thus they were hoping to be able to influence Gwertzman. János Radványi established a close relationship with the American journalist—but eventually, it appears that it was Gwertzman who ended up having an impact on the Hungarian diplomat, contributing to his eventual decision to switch sides.

The last chapter is about Ernő Bernát, whose defection caused even more damage to Hungarian state security than that of Szabó in the United Kingdom. Unlike the British services, the Americans had probably not been familiar with the Hungarian intelligence network before. Szabó's act did not just compromise the (relatively few) active agents that the Hungarian intelligence had in the United States, but also the intelligence officers themselves, as well as the forty–forty-five prospective agents that they were hoping to enlist.

As noted in the blurb, at first sight, the cases introduced in the volume seem to have little in common. But in fact, the episodes provide insight into the operation of the civilian intelligence services of the People's Republic of Hungary in the Rákosi era and the early Kádár years. Pál fills a historiographical gap, shedding light on a practically unknown and understudied side of Hungarian–American and Hungarian–British relations. *New York – Washington – London* is based on meticulous and extensive archival research, ideal for Cold War historians, scholars of intelligence, and students of Hungarian–American relations. The Introduction provides an especially valuable overview of the organisational structure, personnel, and activity of Hungarian intelligence. The studies clearly demonstrate that while between the 1950s and the 1970s, state security was a feared institution in Hungary, in their activity abroad, at least in the cases the book presents, they seem to have been far less formidable. It is laudable that Pál offers a vivid picture of the personal dilemmas of those involved in the Cold War espionage games, be it potential candidates, intelligence officers, or diplomats like Radványi.

The volume uses an academic tone, with occasional dry comments on the regime, which suits historians, but may deter general readers. Its extensive documentation, the bibliography and the index enhance scholarly value. Unfortunately, however, the volume lacks a cohesive thread beyond the topic, which could have strengthened its impact—but at the same time, given that it is a collection of previously published studies, this is understandable. One important element that is missing from the book is the Soviet connection, which should have been addressed, at least in the Introduction. Considering Hungary's position in the Eastern Bloc, it would have been useful to show how Hungarian intelligence activity fit into the larger picture. How did the Hungarian services cooperate with their counterparts in

the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries? Was there a "division of labour" between the agencies? Still, the largest shortcoming of the book is that at least half of each story, namely the American and British side, is missing. Admittedly, this is due to the topic and the circumstances, and is definitely not the author's fault, as he clearly did everything within his means to gain access to the relevant documents. But until (if ever) researchers have access to all the sources on all sides concerned, the history of intelligence during the Cold War remains incomplete.