

**Sándor Őze**

**Historiography,  
National Politics.**



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Sziget sorozat

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## Introduction

The Hungarian edition of this book was published in 2009. As a member of the young generation of regime change in Hungary, I had waited 20 years for the change that would put the country and my own society on an upward trajectory. What I saw instead was a deep economic crisis and masses of people protesting in the streets against the post-communist government. It made me think about existing historical models that identify key events and interpret Hungarian history as a series of periods, while distinguishing structures and trying to draw on a particular culture of remembrance to create a vision of the future. More than 10 years have passed since the publication of the book. The reception has been mixed. Many have praised me for my courage (though I never saw it as much of an act of bravery). Others, intentionally or not, misinterpreted my meaning. What they read between the lines was a disparagement of an entire generation of historians working in the communist era, even though my intention was far from scrutinizing specific oeuvres – which I generally hold in high esteem – rather than investigating the life strategies of intellectuals as defined by political predetermination and the zeitgeist, as I had previously done for historians of the nineteenth century and the Horthy era. This English edition is both more and less than the previous one since it is intended for readers less familiar with Hungarian historiography and the country's twentieth-century history in general. It is my hope that it will provide guidance and some novelty to such readers.

Piliscsaba, Christmas 2021



## Foreword

A few years ago, a tractor decorated with a Hungarian flag could be seen ploughing near Lake Neudsiedl, not far from the Austrian-Hungarian border. The driver was flying the national colours while toiling his own land, “to show the labantz that Hungarians still live here!” (He used the word labantz to denote his neighbours, who had bought Hungarian land as Austrian citizens through illegal pocket contracts. They then proceeded to receive agricultural subsidies from the European Union in Austria, which were unavailable to the Hungarian landowners. The neighbours would then sell their produce on the other side of the border, an option, also not open to Hungarian farmers.

Based on his name, the kurutz landowner was of German descent. Thus, if his ancestors had lived in the area at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they would not have swum their horses across the Leitha following kurutz colonel, *Ádám Balog de Ber’s* dun horse to set the cities there ablaze. Rather, they would have stood on the opposite side, just as during the raids of *Bocskai* and *Bethlen*. However, in the present, the landowner was looking for a period from the one thousand years of Hungarian history that could serve as a parallel to his situation, in which he believed that his neighbours and their “more equal” business opportunities were driving him to ruin. As a result, he applied the historical construct to his current time and situation, regardless of whether his family traditions tied him to it or not.

The twenty-year period after the end of communism brought great political turmoil to Hungary and the region. This has led the generations experiencing these changes to redefine their place and role in the process. Their reinterpretation was primarily based on – as can be seen from this narrative – historical points of reference. However, these points of reference themselves had been collected and organised into concepts by the researchers and schools of various ages. The foundations of these concepts always revolve around central questions and problems of their own time. Every generation must first react to the statements made by the past: rejecting or accepting elements of them, they must tailor them, to the questions raised by their own age.

“Personal and individual identity also emerges and develops through reflection. Here, though, the process through which the individual is connected into a social and cultural network is essential and unavoidable. We can call this



‘anthropological reflexivity.’ It is the process that G. H. Mead (1934) described as ‘mutual reflection’ (Thomas Luckmann) – the formation and stabilization of identity through identification with both ‘significant others’ and with the image of oneself mirrored by these others (T. Luckmann, in Marquard/Stierle 1979). Experience of oneself is always mediated; only experience of others is direct. Just as we are unable to see our face except in a mirror, we are unable to see our inner self other than by reflection, and it is the latter that creates awareness. Contact with others also entails contact with ourselves, and the self of personal identity is simply not available to us without communication and interaction. It is an awareness of oneself that at the same time involved awareness of the expectations of other and our resultant obligations and responsibilities. If contact with others is to lead to the formation of identity, the person concerned must live with them in a shared world of symbolic meaning. *This does not necessarily imply, however, that this shared world has to represent a collective identity. It only does so when the identity has been consciously formed and preserved;*<sup>1</sup> writes Jan Assman.

The chapters of this book attempt to provide an overview of the various historiographic evaluations of a single time period, the Ottoman occupation of Hungary. They aim to outline the view of the past that provided generations of historians and definitive leaders of national strategy experiences and historical material to analyse over the centuries following the events. Throughout my research into the most influential intellectual currents of over one hundred and fifty years of modern Hungarian history, I have been forced to remove deceptive and fossilised cultural sediment from *topoi* that drew completely different connections and fields of influence in their own time, and that have taken a new form by the present day, due the tensions of past and present.

It is surprising that only writers from outside the confines of academic history attempted to apply the overarching theory of a “history of national consciousness” to Hungarian history during the inter-war years. Ervin Szabó a librarian, Oszkár Jászi a sociologist, Erik Molnár a lawyer<sup>2</sup>, László Németh, a writer and doctor and István Bibó, another lawyer. Even the single historian, Gyula Szekfű should be counted amongst these, as his truly academic historical works (such as his habilitation on royal servants and feudal familiarity in Hungary, [Servienssek és familiárisok]) do not fall into this category. It is almost as if historians were content, to carve minor decorations based on their accumulated data in an almost positivistic way while leaving bigger ideas to politics and independent intellectuals. Naturally, there were outstanding re-

searchers among those who subscribed to the history of ideas school of thought, just as Marxist economic history published meaningful results if the original source publications of the 1950s and 60s are taken into consideration. (Despite the fact that these were edited by well-educated researchers who had been deemed ideologically untrustworthy and removed from their professional positions.).

This remained the case over the following decades, indeed, almost to the present day. Often, Western-European researchers with knowledge of Hungary will ask, why are Hungarian historians afraid to go beyond the uncovered facts, why are they afraid of abstraction; that is, why is theoretical thought so alien to many Hungarian historians? What roads have led us here? (One cannot simply blame everything on the fact that during the darkest years of the communist dictatorship in the 1950s, historians and their university departments were held under the direct control of the Party Headquarters. Such a degree of control was not typical, and only applied to philosophy and history.)

It is as if ideological camps and borders are not where they seem to be or where they have wanted us to see them for the last fifty years. How did the catholic priest Mihály Horváth become a founding figure of what was later named the protestant independent minor nation tradition? Why did István Bibó become a symbolic figure of the fall of communism in Hungary? What roads ran between the bourgeois radicals and the Gyula Szekfű led conservative traditions that brought these two unreconcilable schools of thought together within the walls of the Habsburg Institute before the fall of communism? What led László Márton, the author of the most original, outspoken and to the point pamphlet on the Hungarian assimilation of Jews to examine the fault-lines of Hungarian literary tradition following the classification of László Németh's *In Minority* (*Kisebbségben*). How has Aladár Mód, who criticised Austro-Marxist views borrowed from Erik Molnár and Ervin Szabó from a Marxist standpoint based on the arguments of Kálmán Benda and József Révai, become the "protector" of national tradition? Furthermore, how can the ideological arguments of the Habsburg Empire be applicable to the Soviet imperial hegemony after 1956, and also fit into the argumentation of globalist robbers in the years after 1989?

Hopefully, the reader will be pleasantly disappointed by this book. Instead of dry historical and biographical data, they will find the central problems of each specific age, which all lead to their own present. This may be why the following chapters do not examine which schools of thought these authors subscribed to, or their methodological or lexical prowess, but focus on deter-

mining political factors, that have influenced Hungarian intellectuals in almost the same way through the ages.

I am grateful for the advice and help I have received through conversations and discussions with my colleagues, teachers, fellow historians and students within Eötvös College and Pázmány Péter Catholic University, or at other conferences to complete this book. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Ágnes Hankiss and her colleagues, who have offered me the opportunity to collect my research and writings in the field into this volume.

## **Mihály Horváth and the Independence Tradition of the Southern Great Plain**

Historical thinking based on an anti-Habsburg independence sentiment is an integral element of Hungarian historiography and the national identity. It is generally derived from a Transylvanian identity bearing definitive protestant influences. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a series of ideo-political debates named it the “kurutz freedom-fighter” view.<sup>3</sup> The construct likely has strong ties to the independent Transylvania, the “second home,” which was often in conflict with the Habsburg-ruled Hungary of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and especially its cultural remembrance. However, the ideology was actually born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the 1848–49 war of independence. Mihály Horváth, Bishop of Csanád, Minister for Religion and Education in the first government of Hungary played a central role in its birth.

Mihály Horváth was born in Szentés. His father was a barber-surgeon. The family moved to the small town on the banks of the Tisza, which was part of the Károlyi estate at the time, from Upper Hungary. The Catholic nobleman attempted to fill administrative positions in the predominantly Calvinist town with members of his own church. Palóc Hungarians from Upper Hungary, German officials, Bulgarian refugees and Catholics from the Jászság moved to the town in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the boy would have had few memories of Szentés as his family moved fifty kilometres further south along the Tisza, to the largest and quickest growing town of the Great Plain, Szeged.

Szeged had a diverse population; its typical inhabitants were Hungarians who had lived through the Ottoman occupation of the region and spoke the ancient southern-Hungarian dialect. The majority of them were Catholics, but Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Germans, as well as protestant Hungarians called the city home.

### Szeged and the Piarists

Horváth was enrolled at the Piarist School in 1819 and studied there until 1825. By the time the institution already had a proud century-long history. The first lessons were held in 1721, in a building that had previously been a military hospital. At the time of Horváth's education, the school was the only gymnasium in the Southern Great Plain region, alongside the Calvinist school of Hódmezővásárhely, which was founded in 1722.

Latin was the central subject of the curriculum and was taught through grammar, syntax, poetics and rhetoric. However, the Piarists placed great emphasis on the natural sciences as well. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century two lyceum classes, logic and philosophy were also taught. Students who completed these were eligible for university studies, which provided a professional degree. At the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, 100–200 students attend the higher-level classes, while 200–300 students were enrolled in the lower years.<sup>4</sup>

The Piarists of Szeged educated several leading public figures of the Hungarian Reform Era. For example, József Beszédes, the engineer who accompanied István Széchenyi on his journey to plan the regulation of the Southern Danube, or Miklós Révai the famed lawyer, Károly Csemegi, József Katona, György Klapka, Gábor Klauzál, and the polyhistor, István Vedres.

The greats of other nationalities also studied at the school, such as Ivan Antunovich, Victor Babeş, and the later Serbian Patriarch, Rajic. (He attacked Szeged in 1848. The city left without a garrison was forced to defend itself. Those students of the school who were capable of bearing arms joined the ranks of the Hungarian National Guard.)

Several teachers influenced Horváth during his time at the school. Bernát Benyák, Jakab Fiala and András Dugonics are of note. The poet and playwright Fiala (1697–1733) taught rhetoric and poetics. His minor epic written in Latin detailed themes from Hungarian prehistory. The writer was allegedly told the tale by an old man, who in turn had heard it from the god Maros himself. Fiala adapted a local legend to align with the traditions of his contemporary nobility. According to tradition, Szeged was founded by Attila the Hun, who was laid to rest somewhere in the depths of the Tisza in a tripartite coffin. “The former served to strengthen Hungarian historical tradition in the multi-ethnic city. The latter aimed to develop a sense of local patriotism. The Piarist fathers always placed unique emphasis on incorporating Hungarian national spirit into their teachings;” wrote László Blazovich, the author of a monograph on Szeged's history.<sup>5</sup>

In 1801, Orbán Grün opened a printing house in Szeged, to which the Piarist were appointed Censors. At the time, book collections containing several hundred or even thousands of volumes were already existent in the city.<sup>6</sup> The Latin oration by László Deményi should be noted among the several works written by Piarists. The oration speaks about how the fine arts are neglected in Szeged and claims that intellectuals should advocate higher culture in areas once occupied by the Turks. School plays were performed in the building from 1722 onwards, but rhetoric and history lessons were also a forum for plays. In 1735 Deményi constructed an auditorium for the Piarist School, it was here that Menyhért Deák's play about Saint Ladislaus was first performed in 1748.<sup>7</sup>

András Dugonics passed away the year before Mihály Horváth began his studies. Nevertheless, the last years of his life in Szeged had an immense influence on the city and the school. One of his plays was among those performed by Miklós Wesselényi's Transylvanian troupe of actors between 1806 and 1807.<sup>8</sup> Dugonics was of Croatian descent, his brother served as the town judge for a longer period, while he taught at schools in Nitra, Mediaș, Vác and Szeged and universities in Trnava, Buda and Pest. He lived the last ten years of his life in Szeged. As per the Piarist tradition, he combined his knowledge of the natural sciences with proficiency in the arts. While writing university textbooks on mathematics, he played an active role in the birth of Hungarian playwriting and writing the first novels, in which he also endeavoured to blend Hungarian prehistory with local traditions.

Dugonics (1740–1818) also based his work on the Attila tradition. However, in his *Etelka*, he took care to align the traditional history of the *Kézai Chronicle* with the scientific demands of the Finno-Ugric origin theory. Thus, *Etelka* falls in love with a blond Finnish prince, with whom she travels to *Karjala*. While Prince Árpád's sly advisor, *Róka* (the Hungarian common noun for fox) does cause a few mishaps throughout the narrative, everything eventually falls into place. Incidentally, *Róka* is of Slavic descent, but northern (Slovak), not Southern as the Dugonics family.

The young Horváth wrote two studies in narrative form for the *Atheneum* periodical launched by Bajza in 1839 and 1840. In the two works, entitled *Notes From the History of Hungarian Folklore* [volkstümlich] (*Vázlatok a magyar népiség történetéből*) and *When and why were the Hungarian poor deprived of their right to move, and when and how it was secured again* (*Mikor és miért fosztatott meg a magyar pórosztly a költözési jogától, és mikor nyerte azt vissza?*)<sup>9</sup> resonated with the Piarist father's charity for the poor. Under the reign of Jo-

seph II, the number of students in the school dropped by 75% due to a conceptual crisis of the curriculum caused by aggressive Germanisation policies, and limitations established on providing free education for the poor, which was traditionally a major effort of the Piarists.<sup>10</sup>

Horváth wrote that the lower classes were formed when the Hungarians, led by Árpád, subjugated the native peoples of the Carpathian Basin. Laws brought by Saint Ladislaus and King Coloman eased their oppression, while King Louis I and King Matthias gave them the right of free movement. However, during the peasant revolt led by György Dózsa the raging, sinful, selfish nobility denied them this right, while also failing to protect their lands from Ottoman invasion. The work claims that this is why the peasants could not protect their homeland, and Christianity from the Ottomans (this is the nascent moment of the myth of peasants as defenders of the nation). According to Horváth, broken national unity could only be restored by correcting this 'original' sin.<sup>11</sup>

Horváth's concept went beyond that of the Chronicle written by Simon of Kéza, which was a fundamental source of the nobility's traditional history. The chronicle does not state that serfs were descended from Slavic peoples. In fact, Simon claims that the ancestors of the peasant classes were Hungarians that had refused to bear arms out of cowardice, thus were members of the Hungarian nation before being thrown into poverty. By avoiding mention of these points in his work, Horváth offered the multi-ethnic Southern Great Plain region an entry point into the Hungarian nation.

### The Dózsa tradition of Szeged and the Union of National Interest

The other legend that influenced Horváth's work is connected to the peasant revolt and György Dózsa, whose head – according to György Szerémi – was nailed to the gates of Szeged. Gyula Juhász collected the original Dózsa legends at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his interpretation of the events, Horváth denounced the cowardice of the nobility in the Jagellonian era. With this, Horváth reversed the theory of the 'original' sin, to favour Dózsa's crusaders – as he called them: the kurutz –, who wanted to defend the country but were prevented in doing so by the nobility.

Deriving the kurutz phenomenon from these crusaders became a major trend of Hungarian historiography (up until the works of Jenő Szűcs). While Horváth did not idealise their brutality, he accepted their justifications and

goals. Henceforth, the kurutz rebels became a repository of national spirit and the protectors of a new national unity. In the Rákóczi war of independence, they were seen as the guardians of traditional laws and the independent nation, who lost their fight for freedom, when the nobility did not free them from serfdom in exchange for their sacrifices. (In Horváth's view the events of Dózsa's age repeated themselves.)

In his first overarching work, 'The History of Hungarians' (*A magyarok története*) published in Pápa during the Hungarian Reform Era, Horváth was not in opposition to the Habsburg Dynasty.<sup>12</sup> (Joseph II appears similarly to Rákóczi, as an honest ruler working for the betterment of his nation.) Rather, Horváth endeavoured to bolster the ideals of the reform movement, its aspirations of a unified national interest, the emancipation of serfs and civil equality. In his work, Horváth used the historical traditions of Szeged, the largest Hungarian-majority city in the southern Great Plain region, including Dózsa and the Attila legend. As the latter was a central element of the nobility's historical tradition, this gesture raised the inhabitants of the city into the same nation as the nobility.

The young Horváth, as a consecrated priest, strictly adhered to his dogmatic Catholic background. Nevertheless, living in a diverse region, he had become accustomed to the idea of a religiously mixed society. Horváth was not sympathetic to the Reformation and believed that religious conversion had been accelerated in Hungary by the evangelizing activity of Lutheran German soldiers. Nevertheless, the Rákóczi he so respected was a leader who placed great emphasis on ensuring that Hungarians of different denominations coexisted peacefully in his camp.

"Rákóczi's medallion depicted three figures: a Catholic, a Calvinist and a Lutheran; each of them bringing wood to light the sacrificial fire of a shared altar; [...] When souls were filled with thoughts of duress and resistance; of freedom and constitution, it was the sacred names and sentiments of national unity that connected the members of this religiously divided nation once again [...] death or freedom rung from throats united by a common goal, who forgetting their past troubles, came together under the idea that no nation is worthy of survival that is not willing to sacrifice everything for its freedom."<sup>13</sup>

The functioning of a new bourgeoisie nation was fundamentally reliant on cooperating denominations that primarily serve their local communities and



not the state. Szeged's strong Catholic majority which had survived since the Middle Ages, its loyalty to the Szapolya family, and its isolation during Ottoman occupation were all proof of this. As the events of 1848–49 were to prove, there was far more common ground with Protestant communities than Muslim or Orthodox residents, who were worlds apart from the Catholic majority. Regardless of their background, this fundamental experience influenced the Croatian Dugonics, the German Lehnau, or later Ferenc Herczeg, and Mihály Horváth himself.

The religious diversity of the city was further entrenched by the fact that the bishop Pázmány Péter was unable to introduce the provisions of the Council of Trent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as the city was under Ottoman rule at the time. Thus, its ideas reached the city over 150 years later. An archaic form of Catholicism in line with medieval norms and safeguarding elements of folk or pagan origin thus survived. Centralised confessionalisation, in the spirit of Schilling, only appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sándor Bálints's religious-ethnographic research conducted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides ample proof of this.<sup>14</sup>

The influences mentioned above were compounded by the practical thinking of the Piarist, which combined the modern natural and human sciences. (An approach illustrated by Horváth's book on the industrial history of Hungary.) The Piarists trained knowledgeable individuals of independent thought. In Szeged, this was augmented by a generous dose of nationalism. Such individuals if the age were well-versed in their traditions and strove to rise above the legally privileged nobility with an almost technocratic arrogance. The diary of Széchenyi is illustration enough: the liberal aristocrat finds the bourgeois pride of the talkative Piarist-alumni engineer, Beszédes, extremely tiresome during their long boat journey to the Southern Danube.

### The Role of Transylvania

Following the unsuccessful war of independence, Horváth completed his largest analytical work on Hungarian history in emigration, similarly to his contemporary László Szalay.<sup>15</sup> Horváth justified the military occupation of Hungary in the Bach Era with a modernising policy that brought Hungary on par with the rest of Europe. While his technocratic justifications lacked historical arguments, 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-century Habsburg pamphlet literature provided ample ammunition for the argumentation. In such works, Hungarians are often embodied by Thököly, and depicted as the enemies of Christianity.

It should be noted, that the Szapolya family, especially the anti-trinitarian John Sigismund, had “bad press” in *antiturcica* literature. Both Horváth and the less moderate Szalay built their positivist methods and arguments on the historical traditions of the feudal nobility, and thus, adapted their results to its stereotypes. The ideology was entrenched in the independence movements of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries and was strongly anti-Habsburg. Nevertheless, Horváth consistently retained his Catholic point of view, despite the fact that this was generally Loyalist in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Horváth was born and raised in the Southern Great Plain, a region that once stood on the border of the Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman-occupied territories. In his age, the region was the home of the Resolution Party, for which national independence and freedom from Habsburg rule were a matter of policy. Horváth later became Minister for Religion and Education of the first Hungarian government formed in Debrecen, which dethroned the Habsburgs. It is no surprise that writing about the 16<sup>th</sup> century he was sympathetic to the Transylvanian cause.

It was in this overarching study that Horváth first called the stubbornness of Ferdinand I to fault, claiming that the foreign dynasty had endangered Hungary and the whole of Christianity for its personal gain. It was Ferdinand that ran Szapolya, an advocate of *realpolitik*, to the Ottomans. While Szapolya’s offer arrived only months before Ferdinand’s, the latter betrayed all plans of cooperation between Transylvania and the Habsburgs against the Ottomans to the Sublime Porte.

Horváth was the first to pen the theory later known as Suleiman’s offer, which gained prominence after another failed revolution in the 1660s and 70s. The theory outlined the existence of an independent, unified buffer state between the two empires, in which social order remained unchanged. (There were several examples of such nations within the inter-confessional regions of the Ottoman Empire.)

Horváth suggested that after ascending to the throne in 1520, Suleiman sent envoys with the idea of creating a neutral buffer state between the two empires. However, King Louis II imprisoned them, prompting the Sultan to begin his campaign for Belgrade. Horváth considered the justifications of the Hungarian court to be based on the influence of the Habsburgs through Queen Mary (who was sister to Charles V and Ferdinand, who aspired to the Hungarian throne based on a marital contract). It was this influence that Szapolya and the Hungarian “nationalist” nobles counterbalanced in the political struggles before the Battle of Mohács.<sup>16</sup> Horváth considered Mohács

an epochal moment because a foreign dynasty ascended to the Hungarian throne. The problem was not that the Polish-Lithuanian Jagellonian dynasty was replaced by the Habsburg house of Spanish–French descent. Rather, Horváth saw tragedy in the shift of the country’s administrative, economic and cultural centre into Austrian-German lands. This external centre defined the development of the country in his lifetime as well. The sovereignty of the country was lost. Its role shifted from a region that provided value, to a border zone protecting the more valuable central areas. This was tragic, even if the country – according to Horváth – was not only protecting its own borders but those of Christianity as a whole. This reasoning contained the seeds of the idea that Christian culture owes Hungary a debt for this protection. It is possible that Horváth was building his historical and legal arguments against the German half of the empire.

For Horváth, and Géza Perjés, who drafted a similar theory after 1956, the Transylvanian state that formed after this period was an ideal. As a state independent of the great powers, or at least showing sign of autochthonous development, it illustrated a model against consolidation with the great hegemonic powers that appear throughout history, against consolidation, which in the long run confuses the moral compass, and leads to the distortion of morality.

## Gyula Szekfű on the Ottoman Era in Hungary

During his studies, Kálmán Benda was one of Szekfű's leading pupils. The Professor was a senior teacher at Eötvös College and secured scholarships in Paris and Rome for Benda. The two were in regular correspondence. When Benda completed his dissertation on the Hungarian national spirit, based on the traditions of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>-century independence movements, his supervisor Szekfű praised him publicly. Nevertheless, behind closed doors, he told Benda “now this is a paper Gyula Szekfű doesn't believe a word of.”

What exactly did Szekfű not believe? Why was the Ottoman occupation important in his concept of Hungarian history? What results were drawn from his work after his death? How was he received by the researchers of the period? What of his work has stood the test of time and what could be continued? The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries appear to be one of the most, if not the most important subject of his oeuvre. Nevertheless, it is generally touched upon by scholars of Szekfű's work who have little in-depth knowledge of the period. The late-19<sup>th</sup>-century political parties saw the Ottoman occupation, and the long-standing opposition between the Kurutz and Labantz factions, as the antecedents of their political goals, and thus extended their legitimacy back through history age by age. The history of the Ottoman occupation is a fine example of persistent behavioural patterns in Hungarian history. The broad-minded Szekfű understood this and chose the period as the base of his research into the Modern Age. He studied the occupation as a young researcher, and it was the period that led his arguments back from overarching concepts to his well-known areas of study.

What does the Ottoman occupation mean in Hungarian identity, and why was it important in the study of Hungarian history before Gyula Szekfű's work? Positivist researchers in Hungary, Mihály Horváth and László Szalay considered the occupation to be a single time period. The ten-volume history of Hungary treats it similarly. The period began with the Battle of Mohács, which in their interpretation is a result of the poor and irresponsible rule of the Jagellonian Dynasty and ends with the Rákóczi war of independence. Thus, the chronology does not conform to the ends of centuries.

Mohács is a battle, mystified in Hungarian history, and decorated with apocalyptic overtones from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards: it brought the glorious

medieval nation to an end. Following Mohács many historians saw a two-century-long hiatus in everyday life, which only returned in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Only the military and political history of these two hundred years are of interest. The period spanning six generations is considered a transitional period, the end or beginning of an era. Researchers almost define the period as an apocalyptic section of Hungarian history, in which the nation rose from its broken state, and was capable of developing various models for redefining its national identity within the confines of its new geographic, cultural and ideological position.

However, even if the ideological focal points of an oeuvre are known, changes can be discerned in how historical periods such as the Ottoman occupation were understood. In the following, Szekfű's changing interpretation of the period will be examined through his selected works; these include: *Rákóczi in exile* (*A száműzött Rákóczi*);<sup>17</sup> *A Biography of the Hungarian State* (*A magyar állam életrajza*),<sup>18</sup> which was written in 1916 during the critical years of the war by order of the German Empire; the controversial *Bethlen Gábor*<sup>19</sup> published in 1929; *Hungarian History* (*Magyar történet*), a summarizing work, including his knowledge of the Ottoman occupation, published in the years after Trianon; his article on Hungarian national character from 1939, and *Hungary's Ethnic Minorities* (*Magyarország nemzetiségei*) published three years later.<sup>20</sup>

### Rákóczi in Exile – A száműzött Rákóczi

The study should be considered the starting point of Szekfű's work on the subject. For Szekfű, the Ottoman occupations were a break from European harmony. The work attempts to convince its reader that the political directions taken in the two centuries were centred around and illustrated the two poles of a national spirit and culture, which had been torn in half. One of these poles is useless, temporary and false. Rákóczi's "court of princely beggars," forced emigration, and flamboyant political fervour are enough for Szekfű to project the bleak hopelessness of the situation onto the entirety of the Early-Modern-history of Transylvania. Painting the principality as meaningless and politically unfounded.<sup>21</sup>

Szekfű applied this technique at various points throughout his career, for example, in his *Bethlen Gábor* during the 1920s, or his depiction of the elderly Kossuth in the 1950s. Although, in *Hungarian History*, he did review the

humiliating angle of his Rákóczi concept somewhat. Szekfű organised his source material tendentiously, forcing his readers to recognise and accept his views, often without comment. He drew pictures depicting the political dilettantism of his historical figures, highlighting their selfish actions, or paths of action they failed to recognise. The sweeping praise he often voiced was simply a method of counter-balancing his desire to discredit.<sup>22</sup>

In a study on Szekfű, Ferenc Glatz named this method ‘dotting.’<sup>23</sup> Szekfű first unobtrusively mentioned a fault of the figure in question and then proceeded with apologetic sweeping praise. This is how Rákóczi became a morbid and immoral figure, a womaniser enjoying the company of courtesans in the silk-thrown beds of Polish lords as his kurutz forces lost their livelihoods back at home,<sup>24</sup> and while Peter the Great formed the Russian colossus in the East.<sup>25</sup>

Szekfű continued to negate the possibility of an Eastern European alliance with the Polish or Russians in his later works, for example, *Hungarian History*.<sup>26</sup> In Szekfű’s eyes, the Polish were shallow and careless. He claimed that Prince Gabriel Bethlen of Transylvania “despised the Polish, as did most Hungarians in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. He found their proud and boisterous manner, which made them the most courageous warriors when drunk, but less so on the battlefield, unbearable.”<sup>27</sup>

Szekfű depicted the leaders of Transylvanian politics similarly throughout his oeuvre. The naive George Martinuzzi (known as Fráter György in Hungarian) playing at cunning politics. Stephen Báthory led on a Slavic leash. The erratic Machiavellian, George Bethlen, who was even unsure of his own goals.<sup>28</sup>

### **A Biography of the Hungarian State – A magyar állam életrajza**

The book begins by detailing the widespread devastation of regions with major Hungarian majorities.<sup>29</sup> The area occupied by the Ottomans saw a massive influx of Vlachs (Romanians) and Serbians in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Szekfű claimed that this necessitated a personal union with the Habsburgs. However, while Maximilian II (styled as Maximilian I of Hungary) and Frederick III could only hope to attack the Ottomans once the union had formed, Ferdinand I had no chance to do so after it came to fruition, due to the alliance between the Sultan and the French King, who betrayed the Holy Roman Empire. (Szekfű neglected to mention that members of the protestant alliance, all states of the Holy Roman Empire, were also allies of the French.)

Szekfű then highlights that previous personal unions under the Jagellonian and Angevin Dynasties had not damaged Hungarian independence. Furthermore, the imperial centralisation of the Habsburg Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries was successfully counterbalanced by revolts orchestrated by the Estates of the Realm. At this stage, Szekfű considered the three estates a positive force, as long as they were led by “Great Hungarians”, who were named traitors by eastern Hungarians and Transylvanians but managed to bolster the country within Europe. The cost they paid was immense: the destruction of the nation, loss of life, and the partial sacrifice of independent administration. (This is where the topos “the cost of staying in Europe”, a central motif of later scholarly literature, was born.)

Szekfű claimed that the series of compromises forced upon the centralised government through the opposition of the Estates of the Realm to total integration upheld the independent Hungarian state. Survival was balanced on a knife’s edge at two moments in history. First, when the polarizing and negative opposition rejected any possibility of compromise during the Rákóczi war of independence, and for a second time, in 1849, when the irrational and illusionist bravado of the kurutz legacy was revived in Kossuth’s rhetoric and infused with the ideals of liberalism, leading to the second dethronement of the Habsburgs.

Thus, the unity and advancement of the country were supported by those that strove to reach a realistic compromise within the monarchy and subdue the ethnic minorities that threatened its unity.

Szekfű did not attack historical figures in this book. Gabriel Bethlen was even shown to have anti-Turkic tendencies. The author, writing for a foreign audience, attempted to show internal unity and compromise. Even Thököly, one of the most contentious 17<sup>th</sup>-century figures of German historiography is shown in a positive light. He was forced to position the Principality of Transylvania against the Habsburgs to provide political counterbalance that the weakened three estates were unable to after 1660.

### Hungarian History – A Magyar Történet

The dictated treaty of Trianon that ended World War I for Hungary brought about a level of national fragmentation unknown to the nation since the Ottoman occupation. The borders of the new country were drawn almost identically to those of the three-part country 400 years earlier. The population felt



that Europe had taken revenge on the “Bastion of Europe” for its good deeds. The territory of the Hungarian Kingdom was divided between nations that had not participated in these conflicts or that had supported the Ottomans. Szekfű saw history through the glasses of Trianon. He authored the book together with Bálint Hóman as one of the leading ideologists of the era, writing the chapters on the Ottomans.<sup>30</sup> Several of the book’s characteristic statements and concepts became topoi in the historiography of later times.

In the preface of the volumes, Szekfű wrote that the two centuries could not be treated separately, as the challenges of the 16<sup>th</sup> were only solved in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He also drew a six-generation-long arc of. This allowed him to avoid passing judgement on the situational awareness and political actions of leading political factions in connection with the survival of their single generation. Instead, Szekfű limited his recognition to factions that dreamed of the transformation of the relative influence of the great powers as happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and acted accordingly following the Battle of Mohács, despite the fact that these goals led to destruction in their own times.

Sándor Domanovszky wrote a review of the work for the journal *Századok* defending the traditional interpretations of Hungarian history and claiming the new concept to be unproven. Domanovszky summarised the basic concept as follows:

“The fundamental concepts of this work are most apparent in the following words of the author: ‘Only western Royal Hungary of the two Hungarian states formed as a result of the disputed succession, had the possibility of political and cultural advancement. The kingdom of John I died slowly under the pressure of Turkish, Romanian and Polish influence, without meaningful cultural growth, and being unable to renew any element of the old Hungarian tradition. The Hungarian administration of the Eastern Hungarian Kingdom quickly disappeared and was replaced by the unique Transylvanian administrative institutions of George Martinuzzi, which could not represent the traditions of the Hungarian state. It was the western half, ruled by a foreign king and deeply connected to foreign lands that continued these traditions and connections to Old Hungary. Meanwhile, this part of the country was influenced by Europe more than ever before, since the age of Stephen I. Old Hungarian traditions and Western influences were the two forces that formed the Habsburg state, a 400-year institution of Hungarian political life.’ (IV., 61–62. I.) It is from this theorem that the work builds its apologetic view of the Habsburg state, contrary to the



widely accepted understanding of history based on detailed research. The theorem is further accentuated in another section: ‘All meaningful changes in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century state were born from the disputed succession and the counter Kingdom, as from an original sin or poisoned spring. The Ottoman occupation, the loss of political sovereignty and the centuries-long break in Hungarian national autonomy, as well as the loss of the Eastern borderlands, and the formation of Transylvania into a principality were all results of this internal conflict.’ (IV., 290. I.) While the strongly-worded condemnation of the disputed succession is understandable, it is hard to see, why all fault lies with the Eastern side, and why, everything described as natural in the Western half is dismissed in the Eastern.”<sup>31</sup>

### Divergent Development in Transylvania Foreshadowed Trianon

Szekfű’s historical arc is based on the most emotionally heated event of his time, the Treaty of Trianon. The royal court in Vienna was distrustful of the Hungarian nobility and did not allow the complete restoration of the country’s administrative integrity because continuous rebellions backed by the Principality of Transylvania made the Crown untrusting of the Hungarian nobility.

In Szekfű’s eyes, it was John Szapolya and later Transylvanian politics that first took the path of dividing the nation, which led to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century partitioning of the country. The Voivode of Transylvania filled his court with Slavs from the Balkans, making him illegitimate and unwelcome to European diplomacy. The South Slavs had grown accustomed to the Ottomans over the centuries and led Szapolya straight into the waiting arms of the Sublime Porte. Thus, Szapolya became foreign to the Hungarian spirit, Eastern, a friend of Islam, whom for his own personal gain disastrously divided Hungarian culture and the “nation’s soul”. The final decision in this regard was made by the Western-leaning Viennese-schooled Bocskai. While Bocskai believed he was acting in accordance with the demands of the *realpolitik* of the time, he abandoned the ideal of the indivisible unity of the nation, which historically foreshadowed the division of the Hungarian nation.

“By accepting the Turks as an axiom, Hungarians abandoned the possibility of uniting the territories of the divided nation for the foreseeable future, not long after the 1603 siege of Buda and Pest, during which breaking the

power of the Crescent Moon had not seemed so impossible. The opposition to Bocskai, which saw Transylvanian independence as a slight on the Holy Crown of Hungary and a mutilation of Hungarian statehood – is easy to understand. This opposition led the actions of Illésházy, and later the leader of the Augustana Lutheran estates, György Thurzó, who fought at the Battle of Buda, and penned a letter of discontent against the separation of Transylvania from Hungary. The general mood of the Western Hungarian nobility remained unchanged and following Bocskai's death led to a series of attempts, and military campaigns to unite the country. However, the conditions had changed drastically with Bocskai's rebellion. The unification policies of the Western nobility were less realistic than at a time when an independent Transylvanian had been but an Ottoman theory. The Treaty of Vienna and Bocskai's Last Will and Testament as read from pulpits in the protestant churches of Transylvania claimed that an independent Transylvania was in the best interest of the nation as long as 'the Hungarian crown rests with the Germans, a nation much stronger than ours,' as long as this is the case 'upholding a Hungarian principedom in Transylvania is worthwhile because it will serve and protect them, Western Hungarians, as well.' Bocskai's [Bocskai's] argumentation differed from both the Ottoman and the Western Illésházy reasoning. For the Turks an independent Transylvania is in the interest of the Ottoman Empire, to ensure Hungarian forces remain divided. Western Hungarians also accounted the existence of Transylvania to a unique geographical situation. Their only wish was that it be ruled by a Christian prince allied to them, rather than one friendly with the Ottomans. For them, an independent Transylvania was a necessary evil, until the Ottomans could be ousted from the country. Bocskai went beyond these, depicting the existence of the Principedom not as a necessary evil but as being generally advantageous, a question of national necessity, positioning the question as nationalistic, rather than geographical. Bocskai aimed to consolidate his personal position as protector of the constitutional rights of the Hungarian estates and religious freedom for protestants as created by the Treaty of Vienna and pass it to Transylvania: as long as Hungary was ruled by a foreign king, Transylvania should protect Hungarians from foreign oppression. While Bocskai's assessment of the fact that Transylvania could not be reunited with the western part of the country under the circumstances of the time was realistic, his motivation to position Transylvania to bear the lion's part of the burden in the protection of the Hungarian nation is idealistic and unfounded. Bocskai was also a realist when

he recognised that Transylvania was subject to Ottoman whims and could not be free of them without risking total destruction. However, similarly to how Western Hungarians burdened this realisation with the idealistic demand for reunifications, so did Bocskai burden it, by forcing Transylvania into a role it was ill-equipped to fill. The anti-Ottoman sentiment was deeply entrenched in the national spirit of Western Hungary, where reunification had been a century-long goal. The protectionism Bocskai demanded was a novelty, and the projection of his political success into the future, a postulate, that his heirs Sigismund Rákóczi and Gabriel Báthory were unable to and unwilling to fulfil. The population of Transylvania, the three ethnicities, and the estates of the realm had little understanding of this great mission at the time.”<sup>32</sup>

In Szekfű’s concept, the true culprit was Gabriel Bethlen, who finalised the separation of the two halves of the nation.<sup>33</sup> Domanovszky turned Szekfű’s assertions of realism against him in the above-quoted review:

“Szekfű ties the birth of Transylvania to the death of King John: ‘With the death of King John the true power of the King of Hungary ended in Transylvania. Ferdinand could not assert his authority in the region beforehand, and at the time, his armies were attempting to retake Buda. Thus the Eastern lands completely fell from the domains of the Hungarian throne.’ (IV., 300. I.) In effect, Transylvania was created by the command of the Ottomans: ‘If the events are viewed without the influence of later interpretation, it becomes apparent, that Transylvania was created due to Ottoman demand, the orders of Suleiman. Transylvanian will had little opportunity to resist this: Majlád joined Ferdinand at the bequest of his brother-in-law Nádasdy Tamás to no avail, it was to no effect that the other Voivode, Balassa, and the Saxon cities of Transylvania took the oath of allegiance. Ferdinand also sent a document similar to a charter of guarantee in vain: the future of Transylvania, as at several points during its history, was decided outside of its borders.’ (IV., 301. I.) It is well known that Transylvania was created not by order of Suleiman, but by course of the Ottoman occupation. Even from what Szekfű details on the following pages, it is obvious that there were two possible paths: Transylvania bows to the Sultan and avoids direct confrontation or becomes occupied land itself. That this second path did not transpire, is without a doubt, a result of the efforts of the George Martinuzzis and Stephen Báthorys of the land. Their merits

should not be diminished due to lesser successors. No nation in the world has been so lucky, as to only be led by outstanding rulers.”<sup>34</sup>

Domanovszky then closed his review with the following:

“But Szekfű, who so often stresses political realism, is completely preoccupied with the idea, that Transylvania should have devoted all its power to the protection of the territories under Habsburg control, or even attempted to reunite with them. (...) Were not George Martinuzzi’s decision to hand Transylvania over to Ferdinand, and Bocskai’s, to lead the Principality into an alliance with Rudolf, when the Ottomans were already sprawling over these lands, more noble and ambitious resolutions for the entirety of the Hungarian nation? Thus, everything raised by Szekfű to depict Transylvania as irrelevant before Bocskai is strongly subjective. Their continuous attempts to resume relations with the mother country prove that these were unsuccessful because they were met with little understanding and support in the Habsburg court. Western Hungarians could believe what they wished: the Habsburg secret council considered western politics to be of greater importance and viewed Hungary not as a nation, but as the borderlands of the Habsburg Empire, which must block the Ottoman attacks, and provide the Emperor with the freedom to act in the west. (...)”<sup>35</sup> Thus the traditional view must be upheld: the destruction of the Hungarian national armies without the abolishment of serfdom and thought for national welfare, and especially a lack of care for national literature, would have brought about the end of the nation. The only difference between the years leading up to and after 1670 is that after 1670, Viennese absolutism appeared ‘face bared and in its true colours;’ (V., 432. I.)”<sup>36</sup>

For the Catholic, Habsburg-loyalist Szekfű, the Ottoman occupation brought about a national division along the lines of Transylvania and Habsburg Hungary, in which the protestant Eastern Hungarian and Ottoman-friendly path was flawed. Salvation came in the form of the Habsburg-led Christian war of European liberation at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which the country returned into the wide arms of Western culture.

### Famed Hungary and Christian Solidarity

Szekfű claimed that the reputation of Hungary had improved during the Ottoman occupation. It is this reputation that kept Hungary in the mind of Europeans and presented the opportunity for liberation from Ottoman rule. Szekfű failed or neglected to realise that the “bastion” identity was an inescapable path forced upon the Kingdom of Hungary because the ideal of Christian solidarity was malfunctioning or even disappearing at the time. Szekfű, however, was predominantly preoccupied with the parallels the problem drew with his own time:

“Regarding the German Empire, it can be said that while the Empire did not save Hungary from Ottoman occupation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it did participate in its protection, though not to the degree it originally planned. Nevertheless, it maintained constant interest and support. Comparing the European situation to that after Trianon, it is impossible to not realise how the ideal of a Christian Europe has been continuously weakening. Ever since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, nation-states have run amok in perfecting autotelic politics and brutally ignoring European Christian connections. In the present day, it seems impossible that a foreign nation would maintain financial aid, military support and counsel, good or bad, against any enemy of Christian Europe, e.g. Soviet Russia, without hope of true victory, as the German estates did against the Ottomans.”<sup>37</sup>

Szekfű was, of course, aware that the Estates voted in favour of providing aid not simply out of generosity and solidarity, but primarily to guarantee the safety and peace of their own lands, ensuring that the protective line of forts against the Turks, and the scene of perpetual fighting, was not within the borders of the Empire.

Nevertheless, the struggle against the enemies of Christian Europe exalted not only Germans but Hungarians. Szekfű believed that through the battles of the border forts the Kingdom of Hungary was spiritually reborn while protecting Europe with its own “flesh”. This function earned Hungary a new place and general respect in Europe.

“But the tragic experiences of the first decades were rewritten by the greats who threw their own lives and bodies before the Turkish advance: the blood of Zrínyi, Losonczy, Szondi and the heroic life of Nádasdy and Dobo

gave birth to new life, new, hope, new youth. Life in the border forts, as it appeared in the second half of the century, raised a strong, youthful sentiment above the depths of the recent civil war. *The generation guilty for Mohács is finally dead, little of value was lost, thought the young Hungary...* [emphasis S. Ö.] It is this young Hungary's love of life that resounds through the songs about a life in the border forts, in which commoners and noblemen lived in peaceful harmony, raised from the bitter depths of social hatred. (...) These were the roots of the profound meaning of life in the border forts: first, the sense of camaraderie which built social peace without dismantling class differences; the second: an unstoppable national desire to restore the Hungary of old and stop the Ottoman advance."<sup>38</sup>

Szekfű was the prisoner of a fantasy, the possible territorial restoration of a unified Christian Europe and, within it, an integral Hungarian Kingdom. This applied to both the Ottoman era and his own.

### The Habsburgs Cultivated Hungarian National Culture

The Habsburg Dynasty worked to halt the Ottoman invasion by definition. Moving the royal seat out of Hungary aided the reorganisation of the collapsed defensive lines, at least, according to Szekfű. He claimed that despite the Ottoman invasion, the Hungarian nation was able to improve its relationship with its Western neighbours and halt the Ottoman advance with their support.

Szekfű reversed the topos of Hungarian historical literature – first penned by Mihály Horváth – that moving the Hungarian royal court to Vienna hindered the development of Hungarian vernacular culture. Szekfű equated the Habsburg rule of Hungary with Catholicism. In his review, Domanovszky evoked Péter Pázmány to refute this. (Mihály Horváth found the cause of the Reformation in Hungary in German military officers, an idea that also became a theme of Hungarian historiography). The depreciation of the cultural accomplishments of the Reformation in Hungary was a central element of the Szekfű–Domanovszky debate.

“Any modern ideas that reached Hungary in the period grew their roots in the Eastern part of the country. New humanist education spread through Bártfa and the North-Eastern counties. Renaissance art pushed through

Szepes and Sáros. The influences of Western culture reached Hungary more through the disparaged Poland than the lands ruled by Ferdinand. Where not Hungarian books printed in Krakow during the period, and was not the majority of Hungarian youth educated there? Though Szepes and Sáros were under the administration of Royal Hungary, they were two of its regions that turned against their ruler and cultivated national culture and connections with the East due to their Hungarian majorities. The pillaged Transdanubia and the Great Plain, which was destroyed towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century could not support the level of cultural activity that took place in Transylvania, the Partium and the Northern-Tisza Region, regardless of the fact that the government lacked the initiative to enable such growth.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Only the Habsburgs Could Support Modernization to European Levels**

Szekfű claimed that modernizing European influences only reached Hungary through Habsburg mediation. Transylvania fell behind in administrative reform; its economy slowly shrank, while the country culturally broke away from Europe without the Habsburgs. Statements penned by Szekfű in the book contain concepts and arguments that bear the seeds of later debates. For example, Elemér Mályusz later emphasised that the ideological-social debates and efforts that transpired in Transylvania in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were, in fact, more modern than the trends mediated by Austria.<sup>40</sup>

The same questions were at the fore of Szekfű's debate with László Németh. Németh believed that an alliance was needed to stop the expansion of the German and Russian Empires. Rather than functioning as a Little Entente, this alliance would be based on common interest and unite the countries of Eastern Europe in international brotherhood. (Russia was not a part of Németh's concept of Eastern Europe, but he was also averse to the German concept of Central Europe.<sup>41</sup>) The Habsburg Empire was the reason that such an alliance could never be born. It existed as a wall between Krakow and Rome, Transylvania and Western Europe, only allowing second-class ideas, technical innovations and cultural values to reach the region. For Németh, it is the Polish and Czech connections of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries that hold value.<sup>42</sup>



Opposed to this, Szekfű believed that the efforts of the Habsburg Dynasty, its Western centralised administration and military organization led Hungary towards European modernization. As a result, the Empire slowly eclipsed the power of the Ottomans by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, enabling their expulsion from Hungary. For Szekfű, the greatest danger to this effort occurred during Bocskai's war of independence, when Transylvania was able to formulate its position within the destiny of Hungary and found its place in international diplomacy.<sup>43</sup> According to Szekfű's view, the religiously and culturally divided, morally broken Hungarians were replaced by the disorganised rabble of the Romanian migration. The settled western culture was ground down by the nomad people of the later South Slav, Romanian and Slovakian population. Nations foreign to Western culture took the place of the defenders of Christianity.

### **A Brief History of the Questions of Ethnicities – A nemzetiségi kérdés rövid története, 1942**

The publication of this study was motivated by several factors, mainly the 1941 census, the occupation of Yugoslavia and the death of Pál Teleki. For the first time in Hungarian history, the census included a question asking inhabitants their ethnicity, not just their vernaculars. Meanwhile, census takers observed and reported on the general sentiment in the villages of the German minority. The first preliminary results of the census were published by the research group led by Lajos Thirring. The detailed explanations of the results include historical demographic data. Teleki was extremely interested in the census, saying "I don't want to see any paper Hungarians!" The Peace Preparation Committee had been at work for years by the time, compiling complete documentation grounded in historical demographical, economic and migration data, in order to ensure continued administration of the territories that had been regained through the war.

As seen above, the parallels between Trianon and the Ottoman occupation were a central question of the time. The demographic threat of the Balkans and the recurring Romanian-South Slavic theme was another, albeit deeply connected problem. Szekfű believed that it was the foreign influence of the Ottomans that tore the culturally entrenched Hungarian nation from the solidarity of Christian Europe. Ottoman-occupied territories were a constant breeding ground for poverty, economic ruin and destruction. As in the poem of the great Hungarian Romantic poet, Mihály Vörösmarty, Poverty "lay its



powerless head on the ashes of cities” in Szekfű’s vision of a future under Ottoman rule. For Szekfű, even the air was poisonous in the desolate Ottoman-ruled lands.

However, this was only partially true. Changes in settlement patterns had begun before the Ottoman occupation.<sup>44</sup> Available data does not seem to support the theory that the occupation caused a demographic catastrophe. Populations generally drop during larger conflicts, but the destruction is bi-, or multilateral. Both Ottoman and Imperial forces kill, including the *hajdús* of Hungarian ethnicity. Szekfű wrote that “as a result of the border conflict the most fertile and most Hungarian regions of the country, its Hungarian ethnic centres, were destroyed”<sup>45</sup> These statements are not supported by the geographic and demographic research of the present day. Szekfű and his contemporaries relied on the demographic data of Ignác Acsády published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Acsády over-stated the effects of the Ottoman occupation. He believed that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century one-third of the population was ethnically Hungarian, one-third descended from other ethnicities pre-dating the occupation, and one-third descended from immigrants who had moved into the desolate areas following the expulsion of the Ottomans. He claimed that by the 19<sup>th</sup> century half of the population was Hungarian. Many saw this data to reflect the unfathomable assimilatory power of the Hungarian nation. (For example, Gusztáv Beksic dreamed of a Hungary with a population of 30 million.)

Naturally, both Szekfű and Oszkár Jászi, whom the former considered an “atheist” from the opposition, incorporated this data into their respective histories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from different perspectives.<sup>46</sup> Research by Zoltán Dávid would be the first to meaningfully re-evaluate these data and provide new demographic figures after WWII.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, László Németh, who was better versed in what were the modern schools of historical studies in the 1940s than Szekfű, was working on a history of Europe.<sup>48</sup> By this point in his career, Szekfű no longer read international academic literature and relied on the methods of historical and philosophical schools from the pre-war years. While Németh often neglected to observe proper source criticism and his claims regarding the demographics of the Ottoman occupation are more than mistaken, he was, nevertheless, able to pinpoint – with an outsider’s intuition – Szekfű’s emotional exaggerations such as the country becoming a wasteland and the demographical catastrophe of the Ottoman occupation. Németh went on to criticise Szekfű for fearing

an influx of Balkan immigrants due to the history of the Ottoman occupation, while not fearing Germanisation.

In Szekfű's historical arc, Swabian immigration played a major role in repopulating the desolate, once Hungarian areas after the Ottomans were ousted. These settlers were peasants and farmers, unwilling to bear arms against the Hungarian Estates to support Austrian absolutism. The Serbian and Romanian immigrants were less peaceful, and the untrusting court in Vienna often positioned them between the Hungarians and itself.

Szekfű also often utilised the Mongol (Tatar) topos: the Tatars, allied with the kurutz, symbolised backwardness and destruction opposed to the Germans who were the builders and educators of Hungary. While the country was learning to rebuild, grow, work and repair the damage of 150 years of occupation, Rákóczi's kurutz forces call Tatar armies into the country.<sup>49</sup> However, these peaceful builders greeted them with pitchforks. They had grown.<sup>50</sup> The topos of the Mongol invasion could easily be used to denote Rákóczi's Principality a daydream,<sup>51</sup> one which hoped to turn back the wheels of time and brought destruction upon the nation with its dilettantism.<sup>52</sup> The topos activates a wide range of emotional and historical connotations in Hungarian readers: the dog-headed Tatar of folklore and Sándor Petőfi's classic epic, John the Valiant, or the memories of the first Mongol invasion led by Batu Khan. László Németh was the first to note that Szekfű's Rákóczi study mentioned the invitation extended to the Tatars in 1714 four times. Szekfű went on to prove Gabriel Bethlen's Machiavellianism through a promise he made to the Tatar Khan to allow Tatar troops through Transylvania into German lands.<sup>53</sup>

In the debates of the 1970s, another topos formed: that of the Hungarian population fleeing to the Tatars from the Hungarian garrisons in the border forts. This topos became an argument against the "national spirit" of these soldiers as coined by Szekfű above.

Naturally, just as the events of their own age, the loss of World War I and the Treaty of Trianon, influenced Gyula Szekfű and his contemporaries, so has the interpretation of the 1950s and 1960s been influenced by the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the Balkan War. The former brought Szekfű's explanation of Trianon to the fore again, which traced the psychological roots of Trianon to the Transylvanian Principality's decision to form an independent nation and break the national integrity of the country for the first time. The latter activated Szekfű's Romanian-South Slav topos, which saw a demographic threat in the population of the Balkans.

### **What is Hungarian? On Hungarian National Character – Mi a magyar? A magyar jellemről, 1939**

The book itself is a collection of essays published with the goal of creating a common intellectual front at the beginning of the war. Thus, the essay written by Szekfű does not hold academic weight but should be considered within Szekfű's reception as a whole. The essay is examined after his relevant scientific studies because of the lasting effect it had on the debates of the time and Szekfű's post-war reception.

His friends, Kodály, János Horváth and their peers from the mythos-breaking and provocative liberal Eötvös College had by the time become leading national conservative thinkers. After Trianon, they became the intellectuals responsible for the political thinking of a vulnerable minor nation. They had not the opportunity to conduct experiments in ivory towers or test new, unknown roads of European culture. Fearing another national tragedy, they called for national unity.

However, Szekfű's efforts were not unequivocally welcomed. For example, László Németh was offended. The hypersensitive writer, who was considered almost an ideologist for the national-traditionalist faction, or at least one of its most educated and versed members, believed that Szekfű, who was close to the ruling class and government, had gathered the traditionalist writers around the *Magyar Szemle* periodical to manipulate them and weaken their arguments. Meanwhile, Szekfű's interpretation of the Habsburg Baroque period remained unchanged. This resulted in a strongly worded book which attempted to literally destroy Szekfű.<sup>54</sup>

Overall, through the years before the war, Szekfű's generation was more interested in the models and behavioural patterns of the national consciousness, than truly academic research. Its members searched for a way to rebuild national consciousness before the next great war.

### **The Reception of Szekfű's Work after World War II**

The internationally renowned professor was not rejected, attacked or persecuted either in his reception or personally in the 1950s. However, the regime did attempt to compromise him by connecting Szekfű to the regime. This was the underlying goal of his posting as Ambassador in Moscow. Nevertheless, in the 1950s Aladár Mód's book was considered the definitive work in the in-

terpretation of Hungarian history. In it, the author claimed that Hungarians had withstood the invasion of Germanic culture for 400 years, and only Soviet aid brought lasting liberation. This historical arc also began with Mohács, and, naturally, contradicted Szekfű's thinking. Szekfű had only ever accepted the German influence, in the traditional framework of Hungary being stuck between Germanic and Slavic spheres of influence. However, this time, the Slavic sphere was in control.

During the Erik Molnár debate – which aimed to forge legitimacy for the Kádár Government after the events of 1956 – the Ottoman occupation was raised as an example of a period the historiography of which had been overly influenced by nationalist false consciousness, which had led to exaggerated fluctuations in the national identity, which erupted into events such as 1956.

The two main angles of attack were the soldiers of the border forts, and wars of independence led against the Habsburgs during the Ottoman occupation. Molnár recognised class conflict in these points and dubbed Szekfű's national consciousness as a false consciousness that hid social inequality. Over the course of the debate, Szekfű's world view was not directly attacked. Such attacks only followed in the 1960s from Jenő Szűcs.<sup>55</sup> Szűcs should be noted as his writings are of the highest academic quality and attempt to do more than stigmatise and stereotype Szekfű's studies. Nevertheless, Szűcs directed his attacks on the lacking academic background of Szekfű work on the latter's least academic text.<sup>56</sup>

Szekfű built his circle in 1939 in the spirit of a national anti-Fascist cooperation. Earlier, he had been in debate with national-traditionalists because of his Habsburg-loyal monarchist-revisionist thinking. As Szűcs noted, Szekfű's ideological thinking turned hard about in an attempt to overcome differences and integrate their ideas.

“The key to understanding Hungarian history and national consciousness is the self-movement of the Hungarian national character and spirit. Thus, the solution to the current troubles lies in unearthing the presumed ‘ancient Hungarian character’ that has virtually sunk under the nation and been diluted within the leading class since the 16<sup>th</sup> century but remains intact in ‘the people’ to the present day (that is the 1930s), like a treasure waiting to be found. In Szekfű's words, this treasure is “the prudent and cold-headed thinking of a lonely self-sufficient human and gallantly fought patriotism.” It takes little logic to apply the words of this historical introduction to the current situation, and realise which branch of Hungarian

nationalism, rampant during the war, its message belongs to. Szekfű did not mention his long-standing theme of “Christian-Germanic cultural community”, by 1939 he understood how to translate this idea to politics. The Hungarian spirit is autochthonous. Must independence now be protected? This calls for ‘wise’ politics! We must assume solitude as ‘prudent cold-headed thinking’ is needed. Naturally, as quoted above, the virtues of Leo the Wise are needed ‘against the chaotic charge of ideologies and propagandas attacking us,’ that is, against Fascism and Socialism.

From “Christian-Germanic cultural community” to “ancient Hungarian character”: Szekfű, a leading figure of the *Geistesgeschichte* school took hold of the political rudder and brought his ship hard about from its Germanic orientation to a ‘middle-of-the-road nationalism.’ Considering that he continued this manoeuvre through successive years, it can be said that there were worse shades of nationalism. (But better one as well.) However, in an academic sense, the ship was stuck in the same waters, or to overstretch the parallel, Szekfű was turning the rudder of an anchored ship. The ship turned around itself, the heavy anchor and chain holding it secure to the “problem of Hungarian character,” even when the question had lost all relevance, did not lead to, or solve anything, and stifled much needed social and political action. Szekfű was held slave to an outdated concept of the nation. Rather than calling attention to the need to respect historical categories, and the critical interpretation of sources, Szekfű himself gathered similar, but ultimately unconnected, phenomena from his sources according to arbitrary logic in a form of impressionist fervour. Thus, instead of sounding a resounding “halt,” the most knowledgeable and influential figure of Hungarian *Geistesgeschichte* created a methodologically dangerous precedent. He did so in an age when political hooligans were already collecting false analogies, quotes, and data to support their policies, from the older and newer centuries of Hungarian history, as if it were an unchecked hunting ground...”<sup>57</sup>

Szűcs was a hair’s width from accusing Szekfű of Nazism, for the antifascist alliance he formed with the national-traditionalist writers. The passage is uniquely grotesque because Szűcs applies the “Szekfű-method” mentioned above to describe the historian: he simultaneously lauds and accuses him.<sup>58</sup> Finally, he strongly condemns “the shadows of *Geistesgeschichte* and nationalism.”<sup>59</sup>

Thus, to achieve a compromise, Szekfű reconsidered most of his concepts regarding the Ottoman occupation in this essay. He no longer claimed that German Christian culture was the only viable path for survival. George Martinuzzi, Stephen Báthory, and Bocskai became heroes. Szekfű at times painted their actions as Machiavellian: their alliance with the Ottomans as a tool in their bid to protect the nation that did not affect their personal lives and moral integrity. The faults of the kurutz and labantz forces were equally listed.<sup>60</sup> Szekfű avoided the above-mentioned distorted data collection and the appearance of writing in bad faith. Both parties shouldered the blame for the fall of the nation.<sup>61</sup>

A younger generation which grew up in the 1970s also became opposed to the older researchers of Transylvania during the Ottoman occupation. (The emotive background of this was the deteriorating situation for Hungarians in Romanian.) However, no criticism openly condemned these young writers, despite the fact that they reused Szekfű's old arguments. The above-mentioned historians were mostly students of Eötvös College or Szekfű himself. (Maksay, Trócsányi, Benda and Kosáry were roommates.) Any dispute was handled behind closed doors, they respected Szekfű, even if they believed little of what he wrote.

In the 1980s Ferenc Glatz, András Gergely, Iván Zoltán Dénes<sup>62</sup> and others published books attempting to determine Szekfű's place in Hungarian historiography. Meanwhile, research into the Ottoman era was increasingly governed by the Kosáry – Szakály school, illustrated by how Domonkos Kosáry projected their thinking through the past in the preface of the Szakály Memorial Album. Kosáry emphasised that they had wished to continue the work abandoned by Szekfű.<sup>63</sup> Naturally, as mentioned above, a group of historians that continued to emphasise the traditional freedom fighter interpretation was still alive and well.

At the turn of the 1970s and 80s, two brick-yellow volumes of the newly published 10-volume History of Hungary were dedicated to the Ottoman era. These were edited by Ágnes R. Várkonyi, a dedicated expert and proponent of the Rákóczi era. Gábor Barta formulated a balanced and detailed position on the historical role of Transylvania, characterising it as a space of limited possibilities tied to an inescapable path determined by international factors.

## Conclusion

Szekfű had a clear vision of Hungarian history. Within it, the development of the county and its national spirit and culture, which had followed uniform European trends, was broken by the Ottoman occupation, in which the Hungarian state was upheld by the half that adapted to ideals from Western Europe (or at least, West of the Leitha). Nevertheless, the storms of history that affected his life, the disintegration of the Monarchy and then the country, later the slide into the Eastern-European, Soviet sphere of influence, appear in his works through changes in emphases and sub-meanings. Szekfű's view of the era remained largely unchanged in the 40 years that past between *Rákóczi in Exile* and the essay on Kossuth. However, Earth itself turned from under them and gained very different acoustics from period to period.

The demythologising provocation of the young scholar educated in the liberal Eötvös College had a different effect in the capital of a great power before World War I than the same attempt in Gábor Bethlen, regarding the Prince of the once Eastern Hungarian lands that had since been annexed by Romania, in the centre of a destitute minor nation on the edge of Balkans.

Szekfű fine-tuned his views on the integrity of the Hungarian state, and was more understanding of the leaders of the Eastern Hungarian state, or at least, did not voice his opinion, in the National-Traditionalist undertones of the *What is Hungarian?* volume, which aimed to forge national unity during the war. He reworded the permissive passages of *A Biography of the Hungarian Nation*, written when he could not even imagine his country falling to pieces, through the eyes of Trianon.

He reiterated these ideas with regard to the national ethnicities, Germans, Serbians, Romanians in *A Hungarian History*, and augmented them with the results of the census conducted in preparation for a peace conference in *The Ethnic Minorities of Hungary*.

Changing times tie different definitions of the national identity and geographical-cultural models to various political ideas. Szekfű reacted to these changes or attempted to bend the arch of historical narrative, in which the Modern Era always began with the Ottoman occupation, to fit within them.

Uncoincidentally, the reception of Szekfű's work adapted to the new situation following the Erik Molnár debate (1956). In the 1960s and 70s the Ottoman era, the soldiers of the border forts, or Mohács were often at the centre of the debate. The Ottoman occupation again became a starting point, for the



revitalised Szekfű-theories that spread before Hungary joined the European Union.

What did Szekfű discover? The above has shown what is obsolete from his summarising works. What is Szekfű's most lasting finding regarding the period? Possibly the chapters on the creation of the border forts, and the data he published regarding their financing is largely correct to the present day.

Later events were humiliating, even for Szekfű himself. Although he was able to strike back, at least academically. In his last written work, Szekfű attacked the cult status of Lajos Kossuth, who had been proclaimed a revolutionary-communist predecessor by the cultural policy of Erzsébet Andics. Following the same method he applied in *Rákóczi in Exile*, Szekfű devalued Kossuth's whole life's work by drawing his figure from his years in exile. (There is some irony in the fact that the entirety of Szekfű's oeuvre could also be devalued, with this method, based on his work in these final years.)

Kálmán Benda claims that he visited Szekfű in the 1950s – Benda was a practising historian but had been forced from his job by the time – and rebuked him, for a statement the old historian had made in the press praising the Rákosi regime. – “Slowly, we will be ashamed that we were your pupils.”<sup>64</sup>

Szekfű was not angered by the truth. He was generally patient with his students and the younger generation, often at the cost of defending his own views. (In the above-mentioned stinging essay, László Németh claimed Szekfű belonged to those few that still held ideals.) However, Szekfű believed that ideals and ideas did not need to be cared for; they survived on their own. It was a greater thing to teach a person to think and to practice a profession. Those taught would then move of their own accord and continue the historical analysis of their forefathers with new variations, fill them with new meanings and support them with newly organised data. It mattered little if their work focused on the history of the Carpathian Basin in the Ottoman era, or a new concept of the Hungarian national consciousness adjusted to the circumstances of their times.

As seen through the works examined, Szekfű's views on the Ottoman era changed over time. However, his views were always the opening act or final scene of a change in political direction, and not the results of research, or the development of the academic method. The final years of the Monarchy before the war, the end of the First World War, World War II, Teleki's suicide, military involvement in Yugoslavia against the Serbians, and the results of the first accurate national census all influenced Szekfű's approach, his organisation



of data, his voice and the ensuing debates. This does not mean (or not only means) that these writings were published by political order, or that Szekfű's characteristic professionalism did not extend to them. Historians, or intellectuals capable of influencing public opinion, are always strongly influenced by the world that surrounds them, and the changes in the life of the community of which they are members.

As a conceptual historian, Szekfű drew arches three or four-centuries-long. The influences of East and West appear as components of national identity in his works. For him, the paths open to the nation at any given time influenced the road that led to the present. He was well versed in both the available data and academic method. It is not his archive research in Vienna, nor his ideology that changed. As Domanovszky aptly wrote: "Szekfű always directed the light at different parts of his studio. He would always choose the West, over the East. He was averse to the historical and political path followed by Transylvania, even if he did not stress this through his whole oeuvre. Despite preaching tolerance at times, Protestantism remained unacceptable to him. These are the roots of what László Németh named his 'relapses into labantz thinking.'"

What remains of Szekfű's work? The knowledge that history lives with us, its image is shaped by the influences of our time, our interpretation of centuries past, such as those of the Ottoman era, is governed by our reactions to the present. His elegance remains, as does his sensitivity to problems, and his delightful historical arcs. Perhaps a few specialised studies. And above all, his pupils.

## Assessment of the Nation in the Works of László Németh and István Bibó

### Where are the Defensive Bastions of Europe?

“Why have the peoples of Eastern Europe, Hungarians among them – who it seemed in the letters of Pope Gregory VII, had become as the Germanic peoples of Charlemagne, ‘Western’ peoples, part of the European *res publica* – been stuck outside the walls of what they should have become a part of?”<sup>65</sup>

László Németh penned these words in his famous debate with Gyula Szekfű. Németh did not understand the central role Szekfű attributed to Vienna in Hungarian history. The city had risen as a wall, and shadowed the region in a paternal fashion, filtering the information about it that reached Western Europe, and at times organising Western nations against it, all the while casting a disparaging eye over the region. In the debate, Németh argued that it was in the fundamental interest of Vienna to sustain the foreground in its own protection. The foreground would bleed out, again and again, fighting Eastern forces and keeping third and second wave migratory peoples – the “new” (1000-year-old) nations – outside the walls, and social, cultural and economic unity of Europe.

According to Németh, the most significant periods in the history of the foregrounds of the Holy Roman Empire were those when they were able to make connections with the French and Italians. The truth is that Austria itself was not a central territory of the Empire but more a peripheral region itself. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, modernisation and urbanisation increased in the regional kingdoms (Czech, Poland, Hungary), while the smaller Alpine Principalities of the Empire lagged behind them and the Northern and Southern German cities, not to mention the most successful nation to join the Empire: The Netherlands, the Italian territories and the extremely diverse regions of Spain.

Hungary’s trade and cultural connections ran towards Poland, Italy and the central regions of Germany until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Németh claimed that not even the Reformation changed this, despite the religious divisions it caused in the country. Vienna was not even the seat of the Habsburgs. Innsbruck, where

the family crypt was also located, had served as the house's centre until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Charles V had also planned to continue holding his grandfather's court in the city. This was an understandable course of action as Innsbruck lay in a much more central location between Southern-Germany and the Italian peninsula. It was the power struggle to unite the kingdoms of the region between Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary and Emperor Frederick III that increased the importance of Vienna. Unification would have increased the influence of the weak Habsburg dynasty and the King of Hungary in the election of the Holy Roman Emperor, which was a vital element of preparing for the looming Ottoman threat.

“The Eastern European states were able to form because the Holy Roman Emperors were preoccupied in the Italian peninsula. When feudalism ravaged Germany powerful Hungarian, Polish and Czech states formed. Moreover, this was the Serbian and Romanian golden age, as well. But the formation of the enormous Habsburg-state and the Germanic regeneration brought about by the end of the Thirty Years' War condemned all of these to decline. Szekfű liked to write about natural allies and natural enemies. Well then, the natural allies of these nations were the French and the Italians; this is why rulers were invited from their houses and their wars of independence tied to them. Meanwhile, the natural allies of the Germans were actually the even more Eastern nations, the Russians and the Turks, who ground down the Eastern nations to a point they could divide them between themselves. German–Ottoman relations only soured when a shared border formed above our dead bodies. Thus, in this regard, Szekfű represented the eastern expansion of Germanic peoples within European history. He transformed colonisation with Germans into German colonisation. The Habsburg monarchy was an involuntary fact, which Eastern European nations accepted when they were forced to and rebelled against when they could. The Habsburgs' lack of political talent and their rank as Emperors made it impossible for them to follow the Angevin tradition and become an Eastern European monarchy and form an alliance of Eastern-European states in the interests of their subjects. The Eastern policy of the Habsburgs is easy to summarise: a lot of luck, little thought, European aid in vital moments, and domestic oppression in times of peace. To be liberated by Habsburgs was equal to being occupied.”<sup>66</sup>

Németh believed that the Hungarian nation had ceased to exist to broader Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In his eyes, the Habsburgs had aimed to create a unified German-speaking aristocracy and bureaucrat service for the whole monarchy. The only Hungarian to break these bonds was István Széchenyi as a course of his romantic deviance. To his peers, the only way for the “mad count” to return to his ugly homeland was for him to (re)learn the Hungarian language.

László Németh was also aware of contemporary geographic studies from the German Empire. He was versed in Haushofer’s (the leading political geographer of the German Academy of Sciences) theory, which formulated the concept of *Großraumschaft* from the *Mittel-Europa* (Central Europe) theory of the inter-war years.<sup>67</sup>

Here Németh calculated with the German occupation of *Zwischeneuropa* (literally, In-Between Europe), found between the two great powers, Germany and the Soviet Union, which were almost allied at the time, because of the possibility that the Soviet Union, could create Western beachheads in the region. This is why, he found a connection between the aspirations of the Habsburgs and Germanic unification, and this is why, he accused Szekfű of falsifying history by drawing processes, and planning scenarios for a new political entity, while failing or not wanting to realise, that Hitler was planning to steal the bed he had lain for a Habsburg prince. In the political situation following the Anschluss, Németh saw the Habsburg Monarchy as the state which prepared the outposts of German culture in the region and made the first steps towards Germanisation. Naturally, Németh did not realise that he was also reciting German policies.

### The Minor-Empire and Federalist Concepts

Szekfű’s concept for Central-Europe was imperial: the Habsburg-ruled state operated on dynastic grounds, based on a status quo of international consensus. According to the official policies of the Hungarian state, and within it, according to Teleki’s post-Trianon revisionist model, the Carpathian Basin held a central role in the economy, transportation and defence of Central-Europe. Teleki considered the region a geographical entity and believed the cooperation of this entity would be capable of resisting the German and Soviet threat.

Contrary to Szekfű's idea, Németh stated that the Habsburg Empire cut off the Eastern European states from Rome, Berlin and the states of the Atlantic region, where the heart of the Early Modern Age beat in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, it shared the states of the *Zwischenraum* (Inter-Empire region) with the aggressive Eastern powers, from which it could not, or did not want to protect them. Instead, the Empire opted to maintain peace with the Ottomans and Russians as the natural ally of these great powers.

Doubtlessly, Németh's criticism revisited the works of Mihály Horváth and László Szalay. As ambassador to the Frankfurt Parliament during the 1848–49 war of independence, Szalay pushed for cooperation between the democratic German state and the independent Hungary. While Horváth, as a Catholic priest, and Minister of Religion and Education in the first government following the dethronement of the Habsburgs, was well aware of the walls built around the country by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century educational and foreign policies of the Empire. The first of the two concepts was outward-looking, adaptive to international trends, the second based on the energies of the internal community. Szekfű emphasised the centralisation of the Enlightenment (while fundamentally refuting its ideas), Németh's view was based on the fundamentals of conservatism, and thus, built on the framework of tradition, local communities and the mobilisation of the energies of small circles (while Németh deeply respected the secular, scientific thinking and religious tolerance of the Enlightenment).

Based on his historical experience, Németh stated that not only large capital but the landholdings of the high nobility (which for Szekfű had been the refuges of the Ottoman Era and the reorganisers of Baroque Hungary), were forced upon the countries of the *Zwischenraum* by the Habsburg monarchy as foreign entities, disrupting the normal functioning of society in the region. (Németh called the region Eastern Europe. His view of the region did not include the Ottomans and Russia, as he saw them as primarily Asian powers and cultures.) The next great trauma for László Németh and his generation, following the Anschluss, was the division of Poland between the two powers. Németh was influenced by a fear of similar events unfolding in Hungary as he studied the geopolitical aspects of Hungarian history. As a result, he identified and projected a permanent effort for Germanisation that he believed had existed in the region since the 16<sup>th</sup>-century. Furthermore, Németh often confused concepts, equating the Holy Roman Empire with the Habsburg state, which in reality, changed periodically. What is more, they rarely spoke German in the Habsburg court of Vienna.

Unlike Szekfű, Németh did not see any solidarity in Christian Europe. For him, the Principality of Transylvania was a model in the sense that it was capable of organising itself around the goal of survival, in a period when identity could have easily been lost.

For Németh, the method, independent thought and action held value. This required a new courageous and competent type of man, in which Németh saw a future. He did not see subordinate diplomacy and tributary status as a danger. These did not harbour the possibility of losing national identity and destroying the future of the nation. Survival along these lines was less feasible in the Habsburg-ruled parts of the country, as the capital had been moved outside the national borders into a city with a foreign culture and language. In an Early Modern Europe that was developing into nation-states through the age of the Reformation, Hungary was not a bastion of the *Respublica Christiana*, so central to Szekfű's concept, but only its demoted foreground, more vulnerable to destruction than those parts of the country that became vassals of the Ottomans.

Opposing this, Szekfű's *Hungarian History* stressed that all modernizing influences reached Hungary through Vienna. Transylvania fell behind in administrative reform; its economy slowly shrank, while the country culturally broke away from Europe without the Habsburgs. Statements penned by Szekfű in the book contain concepts and arguments that bear the seeds of later debates. For example, Elemér Mályusz later emphasised that the ideological-social debates and efforts that transpired in Transylvania in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were, in fact, more modern than the trends mediated by Austria. Németh's Transylvania-metaphor had all the important attributes of independence. A diplomatic apparatus, an army, cultural and educational policies, controlled immigration. It was a "rising nation," organised to ensure survival, a society with purpose and without amnesia. In this Németh saw a great opportunity for a young generation, while Szekfű did not understand why it could have been beneficial for Hungary to leave the Empire.

In Németh's concept, an alliance was needed against the aggressive expansion of the German and Russian Empires. Not an alliance that functioned similarly to the Small-Entente but one that united the peoples of "Eastern-Europe" in a brotherhood of nations, founded on their common interests and cultural traditions. (As mentioned above, Németh did not count Russia into the geopolitical concept, but was equally abhorrent of the German concept of Central Europe). In Németh's eyes, the Habsburg Empire had eliminated the possibility of such an alliance. It acted as a wall between Rome and Krakow,

Transylvania and Western Europe, a result of which only second-rate ideas, technologies and cultural values reached the region. For Németh, it was the Hungarian–Polish–Czech diplomatic relations of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that were of value. This is framed by the concept of an alliance in Eastern Europe, which had been raised several times since the personal union of Louis the Great. The medieval and Early Modern federation plans of the Báthorys, Bogdan Helminski, Kossuth or Pilsudsky, to name only a few. Meanwhile, the sad reality was, that World War II was well underway, the two neighbouring powers were locked in combat to the death, and the would-be nations of Németh’s alliance hated each other more than they hated the great powers.

### Transylvania Was Not a Geographical Concept

The model for true survival was vital from Transylvania’s history in Németh view. It meant a self-organised Hungary, formed of several different groups with different traditions, cultures and privileges each protecting their values and retreating into their churches that survived in the face of adversity. Centralisation by the state would have weakened, killed and rendered these groups useless. The approaching demon of German or Russian occupation reminded Németh of this.

Meanwhile, Szekfű’s concept aimed to discredit this model.

“What I have named the emptying of Transylvania, is possibly the most astonishing phenomenon of our post-Trianon historiography. It pulls the past from underneath Transylvanian Hungarians at a time when they have no other footing.

One branch of the Hungarian nation, possibly its most outstanding in value, which in the long intermission of Hungarian statehood, showed a flourish of Hungarian state-administrative power, which in the oppression of the 18<sup>th</sup> century created a wonderful example of the tenacity of minorities. Now, that it falls again, unprepared, into minority status, following one hundred years of centralised rule: rather than being supplied by us, the lessons and policies of its past, the opposite is happening: the entirety of our historiography is revalued against it! Their predecessors are admonished as Ottoman-friendly minor Hungarians, its revitalising historical improvisations as unhistorical separatist Transylvanisms. This can hardly be



explained, by anything other than our historians', led by Szekfű, abhorrence of Transylvania."<sup>68</sup>

Naturally, for Németh, Transylvania marked a historical path and policy, not the conditions of the territory controlled by Romania in his time. The revision of Trianon was unrealistic to him within the framework of the time, and he penned a scathing critique of the politics of Transylvanian intellectuals in a diary written during his travels in the region. The only possibility he saw for the restoration of the historical borders of Hungary was within the framework of a Federation in Eastern-Central Europe.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was again a small part of the country that had been given independence and sovereignty in all branches of power—that within the post-Trianon borders. Németh wished to protect this at all costs and saw it threatened from two sides. He endeavoured to safeguard its sovereignty by influencing all classes of the new country through educational and cultural means: to raise them, their awareness and build a new intellectual class to stop the demographic, moral and economic trends that had led to the decline, to stop counter-selection.

Thus, a situation that seemed legally less binding was far less suited to preserving the cultural identity indicative of the almost Sanjak-like Transylvania, led by an independent ruler of Hungarian descent, culture and language. However, this Transylvanian country was tied to the Transylvania of his time only spiritually, not geographically.

### National Independence

László Németh considered national independence to be of the utmost importance, as he believed the free education of the next generation was only possible within its framework. (Education is a key concept in his oeuvre.) His goal was to create a new form of intellectual (not in education, but in spirit) that was independent, intelligent and could not be subjugated. Németh saw folk high schools as the tools of this educational work, targeting rural, middle-class peasants. The idea was not his alone. Kodály's method for teaching music, the exhibition of the Institute for Ethnology and Regional Research founded by the professors Zoltán Magyary and István Györffy with Teleki's support, and the Tata Training Centre attached to it and headed by Kálmán Benda, all served this shared goal. Students of István Szabó were trained in this spirit to



form a school of historical studies. The school of folk history founded by Elemér Mályus also showed similar characteristics. (However, Németh considered Mályusz a political worker for hire, a “political good boy, who now and again raised one of his ever-ready fingers for the homeland<sup>69</sup>.”)

This concept aimed to create a class of small-holders, similar to the Romanian, Czech and Serbian peasants resettled along the borders that would have felt the dangers facing the country as their own. This thinking had branches radically and less radically opposed to large estates and large capital. Németh blamed the Habsburg state for elevating these to positions of power. This view of history also appeared in Parliament, through the speeches of the sociologist Mátyás Matolcsy, who campaigned for the radical redistribution of land. Matolcsy had once completed a sociological survey of the villages in the North-Tisza region of Hungary with Imre Kovács, which provided the latter with the base material for his book *The Silent Revolution (A néma forradalom)*. Lacking support, Matolcsy later drifted to the far right. It is almost grotesque that the plan was eventually implemented by the communists, with their crash courses, vocational exams, and “pamphlet-men”, loyal careerists who were taught only the simplified basics of communist ideology. They later attempted to integrate this approach into the cultural model of the 1960s and 70s.

From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a latent terminological debate unfolded. Who are the Habsburgs? Who are Germans? What is Germanic culture? Are anti-Habsburg uprisings fought against the dynasty or a deeper level of Germanisation? The schizophrenia of nationalist loyalty to the king and resistance against a German emperor (who were one and the same person) gave birth to the freedom fighter anti-Germanic terminology used to describe the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>-century uprisings.

The terminology first appeared in connection with Protestant religious freedom in the Protestant historical works of Mihály Zsilinszky, from the rule of Bocskai to 1848 (the historians of the time went 250 years back into the past to find terminology to describe events that had happened 50 years prior). The view of the bourgeois radicals appeared opposite to these, or induced by them, provocatively stating that the freedom movements of the estates against the centralization of the Empire were retrograde and aimed to name Joseph II and enlightened absolutism as an etalon. While these views only reached back 200 years, they were also mainly motivated, just as the protestants, by religious freedom, especially because of their predominantly Jewish roots.

### Counter-Selection, Assimilation and the National Character

Németh claimed that the counter-selection maintained by the Habsburg state for centuries was the most damaging element of its power structure. He considered men of the imperial type – who filled positions of power, the seats of the intelligentsia – to be the most harmful. Intoxication with the Monarchy and the Empire gave birth to servile career bureaucrats and shallow political mouthpieces ('media men'), who twisted and exchanged, for small change, the great ideas that could have averted crisis, as the nation stood on the verge of catastrophe.

The opposition between quality and quantity appeared early on in Németh's work. This was, without question, a fashion of the time, which turned against the masses aligned to communism and fascism. Following in the footsteps of Ortega Y Gasset the question influenced a wide variety of intellectual groups, from Mihály Babits to Antal Szerb. For Németh, the question was which type was most vocal in decision making, who provided a model or an approach to follow, who created the frameworks of thought and the behavioural modes that psychologically and morally influenced the community. For Németh, assimilation was such a process at the whim of such factors.

In his essay, *In minority*, he examined Hungarian literature accordingly. It is true, that during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Hungarian language reform Ferenc Kazinczy and his generation elected to implement radical change through the copying of foreign, German formulas. The next generation, Ferenc Köcsey, Mihály Vörösmarty and János Arany, then inherited and continued this language and model. Therefore, none of them fit the "deep Hungarian" literary cliché, despite the fact that none of them were assimilated, unlike, Németh's favourite national hero, Count István Széchenyi. Németh styled Széchenyi as an aristocrat who broke free of Habsburg supranationalism and relearned the national culture and language, while Széchenyi was, in fact, the descendant of a noble family that had its roots among the soldiers of the Hungarian border forts.

The literary concept of the 19<sup>th</sup> century again decided to copy foreign ideals. Furthermore, Ferenc Toldy's definition of literature did not include the internationally renowned 15<sup>th</sup>-century sermon literature of Hungary, which was the leading genre of ecclesiastical literature and had built a unique tradition since the age of Pelbárt Temesvár in both Hungarian and Latin. (Pázmány and Bornemisza were rediscovered by László Németh's generation.)

The next fork in the road came with the launch of *Nyugat* (often translated as *Occident*), which resulted in the copying of Western modernism. Thus, *In minority* defined counter-selection in literature as a line from Berzsenyi to Ady characterised by subjugation to Western patterns. Therefore, the polarised question for Németh was, could the literary tradition of Hungary that begun with Pelbárt Temesvári and grew organically from its roots in Christian Europe be resumed? Could it be continued with an autochthonous Hungarian culture or – to draw from Endre Ady’s vision – was a corroboree needed? Németh aligned assimilation to and attempts to justify it within this framework.

### The Dangers of Centralization

The post-Trianon collapse was the decisive experience of Németh and his generation. Only devastation remained, of the imperial grandeur and the economic success of one and a half generations of Dualism, of its rail network with its uniform stations, and of a Budapest, which had followed in the footsteps of Paris. The well-planned rail network which had served the centres of the Empire and enabled free movement within its borders had been dismembered, its fleet of locomotives taken by the Romanians. As the century drew to a close, so did the paint peel off the façades to show the decorative plaster that had been used instead of masonry. The ostentatious poverty of a subservient nation showing at the seams. They ridiculed the Budapest built based on foreign patterns for its arrogance, and its so-called economic and cultural superiority.

According to Németh, the centralised Imperial model did not prepare the nation to survive the periodical catastrophes of the region. Imperial glamour and the suppression of critical thought and self-understanding by imperial propaganda created regimes that only lasted one and a half generations. Dualism, the Horthy-regime and the Kádár era were all such systems. In 1918, the country had no leadership, nor a truly functioning intelligentsia. This was the primary educative experience for Németh and his generation. They saw that the mocked Balkan minor-states had armies, diplomatic corps, and banking systems when the collapse happened. Even if unsubstantial and poor, they existed, and Németh believed this was a result of sovereignty. Meanwhile, Hungarians were still clinging to a skeleton, in which every bone was already broken, to a federation that was colloquially known as Austria, and named

after a province that was among the first to declare its independence from the Monarchy.

After the war, Németh's controversial and, in several elements, distorted work found a follower in the young István Bibó. While Bibó had close ties with several national-traditionalist writers, his Swiss schooling made him susceptible to the democratic values of the West. For Bibó, establishing democratic institutions was the only safeguard against the influenced masses.

### Responsiveness and Hungarian Character

Responsiveness, moreover, the responsiveness of entire communities – as their ability to react – was a keyword for Bibó following the loss of World War II.

“Thus, character does not consist of preserving certain characteristics, but primarily of healthy responsiveness.”<sup>70</sup>

Bibó re-centred the Szekfű-Németh debate on Hungarian character and assimilation around this idea. He claimed that both parties realised that the national character is not “unmoving or driven by a single key, but an evolving, multi-factored thing.” Thus, the question arose: what proves that the community has lost its identity?

“It is well known, that the majority of the country's youth dances international dances to international music, that both spoken and written language have lost much of their flavour, that we use far more subordinate clauses than our ancestors, and that the forms of Hungarian community are disarrayed and uncertain. However, these are more or less European and global trends, even if some Hungarian elements are more severe than the average.”<sup>71</sup>

Bibó was from a different generation than Németh and started on a smaller playing field. For Bibó, analysing a prospect was not considering the different possibilities, but examining whether an inescapable path presented any possibilities. Responsiveness is a vital characteristic of a community. For Bibó, this was something a cosmopolitan world and globalisation could not change.

“A uniquely Hungarian phenomenon (...) in the most recent history of the country, especially since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is the nation’s inability to realistically assess its situation and recognise what has to be done as a result, especially during decisive historical moments, such as 1914–1920 and 1938–1944. This goes beyond choosing the ‘wrong side’ in two successive world conflicts. Others did the same. In these decisive moments, the Hungarian nation failed to find, or bring to positions of power political, social and intellectual leaders that could find and protect its interests and lead it along the right path. The normal instinct of the community recognising its interests – which is not a mystified collective phenomenon, but built on the healthy judgement of community members – was fatally missing or distorted in leaders and certain members of the community at these decisive moments. Meanwhile, it seems that other nations in similarly dire situations ‘instinctively’ acted more correctly, honestly and more in line with their community interests. My point is not that other peoples live in perfect harmony and understanding, as opposed to the factious Hungarians. Rather, to call attention to the fact that in the Hungarian national community, decisive and divisive questions of general interest have been raised in a way that has continuously led the country into fruitless internal strife, making it blind to the real problems and tasks at hand.”<sup>72</sup>

Bibó accepted Németh’s theory of counter-selection, which caused a distortion of the national character and fuelled distorted assimilation as a starting point, one that he maintained regardless of any criticism he directed at Németh. Bibó never renounced Németh or turned away from him. Bibó considered the adjectives Németh used to describe the national character in *In minority*, weak and deep, to be realistic, rather than obscure or hazy as they were often considered. However, Bibó did debate the possibilities of distilling a denser concentrate of the national character or choosing a truer type of Hungarian from the past centuries. For Bibó, Németh’s intelligentsia was not a model that could be followed or pre-defined, but a variation – albeit a deeper and improved variation – of the many possibilities within the distorted national character.

“The most important factor is not that they and their peers increasingly lost positions of power after [eighteen]-sixty-seven, but that sound thought, judgement, morality, and sense of community, in general, fell into minority against the false realism and showmanship of those who prevailed.”

Nevertheless, Bibó saw no direct connection between the distortion of the national character and assimilation. In his view, it was not the assimilated that caused the distortion, as they had already inherited the deformities of Hungarian public life. At most, the deformity of communities accelerated assimilation. The proliferation of these deformed communities following the Austro-Hungarian Settlement of 1867 led to a general “loss of form” in society. Thus:

“the confused assimilated individuals continued to follow ready-made patterns.”<sup>73</sup>

However, Bibó placed emphasis not on the emotional power of ancestry, the surrounding culture or shared traditions in shaping identity, but rather on the mass psychosis induced by historical events.

“It is true, that the most incoherent political philosophies and most blatant political lies that could not even be formulated, let alone spread in a healthy society, have a tendency to flourish in this region. However, it would be childish to believe that political culture can be deformed by incoherent ideologies or malicious propaganda. True mass emotions can only be born from passion. Passion can only be born from real experience. The half-truths of incoherent philosophies and lies of propaganda can only take root in people who have lived through frightening and misleading experiences of great intensity that have left them susceptible to believing lies and half-truths. Thus, these can justify their self-deceptions, feed their false hopes, reaffirm their distorted ideas and satisfy some of their emotions. Half-truths and propaganda bounce of a healthy and balanced character. The question is, what has unbalanced the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe?” (The Suffering of Eastern European Minor States)<sup>74</sup>

According to Bibó the derailment of the national character was not caused, by the useless and unadaptable characteristics and ideas that had misled the community after being smuggled into the ruling intelligentsia through assimilation, as according to Németh, nor by a global ideology, liberalism, as according to Szekfű. Bibó considered the half-truths that had been solidified as lies by the inescapable paths of history to be the cause. These were symbolised by the most anti-democratic governments of the Russian Tsar and the Habsburg Emperor which had risen from the blood, spilt by the Holy Alliance in

1848–49. False realism – which, according to Bibó, was present in all nations of the region, not only Hungary – was the central feature of the phenomenon.

“This type had an unquestionable talent, supported by a degree of cunning and aggression. This made it exceedingly competent at falsifying democracy or upholding anti-democratic governance in the semblance of democracy or supporting violent political regimes in disguise. By doing so, they achieved the respect of being “great realists”, while forcing Western European politicians into the background as ‘doctrinists’ and ‘idealists.’”<sup>75</sup>

Similarly to Németh, Bibó also blamed the Habsburg Empire for the rise of false realism. Furthermore, he believed that the Empire had deprived the nations of the region the possibility of forming nation-states. The power centralised by the head of state caused the people to expect political advancement and government oversight from the gracious benevolence of the Emperor, rather than the democratic government of intelligent citizens. For Bibó, democracy was a general cure. However, the imperial foundations of dynastic and aggressive hegemony were already questioned by the democratic nationalist mass movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

“Modern democratic nationalism could not and – for good reason – was incapable of uniting these large political units (the Habsburg Empire, the German and Italian minor states, the Ottoman Empire) with its wild emotions and national efforts. Rather it turned to the frameworks – some of which remained in administration, others only in symbolism and memory (the German Empire, a unified Italy, the Polish, Hungarian and Czech Kingdoms) – which provided more bespoke political experiences, even in their various forms of anarchy and provincialism, than the existing, young and rootless imperial power structures.”<sup>76</sup>

In this regard, Bibó fully adopted and extrapolated on Németh’s concept of In-Between Europe, the countries of which were pushed into the amorphous and characterless Habsburg Empire, which offered an acceptable European minimum, against the aggression of Eastern, Asian despotism.

“The Ottoman Empire could not form a new national organisation above the Balkan peoples simply because of the invasive and military nature of its administration, and because of its cultural aversion to the Balkan peoples.



The Habsburg Empire, meanwhile, (...) was an ad hoc union, which was capable of weakening the nations it integrated, but not of dissolving their national identities.<sup>77</sup>

Bibó stated that throughout Europe modern nation-states were formed based on the oldest national frameworks throughout Europe – “these were not the awakenings of Austrian, Bavarian, Sardinian or Neapolitan nations, but German, Italian, Polish, Hungarian and Czech awakenings.”<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, Hungary could not preserve and capitalise on this framework, and thus reached a settlement with an already doomed ad hoc federation which was built on an outdated power structure, the Habsburg Monarchy. Keeping the cadaver of the federation alive drew on Hungarian vitality, contorted its true cause and fundamentally distorted its social values.

“It may have been only a small concession, but that was enough to start counter-selection, as it was impossible for the truest, most passionate, and smartest people to support lies with true energy. Over time, counter-selection replaced our complete leading class and logically led to the complete moral and intellectual corruption of our leaders. The first symptom of a community being stuck in a dead-end fallacy is its failure to find intelligent, realist leaders. However, such a community will find many pragmatic thinkers, for whom practical work or the possibility of social advancement is the most important, and who are willing to be ‘realists’ in the sense that they accept the existing and functioning construct of the fallacy as reality. Thus, their realism is limited to reinforcing a building founded on lies by alternating methods of false support. Perceptive, intelligent people meanwhile find other methods of self-expression or retire into different, smaller communities. As their isolation increases, so are they forced into resentful, sulking, eccentric or prophetic roles. As a result, the eccentric and the fierce prophets are forced to take up the mantle of expressing deeper truths.”<sup>79</sup>

In Bibó’s scenario, a group of perceptive possible leaders either sulking in isolation or fleeing into fierce prophethood stood against the counter-selected ruling class. However, these visionaries could not benefit from an active role in politics. Neither had the clergy, which had voiced its political role in apocalyptic tones throughout the Early Modern Era nor had the literary voice of poets, which had influenced communities throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century found a credible public figure who supported the interests of the community.



“There were several pitfalls to their efforts: if the uncovered true reality or its realist aspects were too cold, too rational, too dogmatic, then they ran the risk of becoming stuck as dogmatic and doctrinist groups. Their arguments would have had no effect on the emotional commitments of those living in the spheres of fear and fiction. Unable to dismantle these, they would have irritated and reinforced them. On the other hand, if they empathised too strongly with the fears and false hopes of the majority, if they embraced their emotional and conceptual language too deeply, then the intellectual strength of their arguments would have been compromised to a point where they had no effect.”<sup>80</sup>

Bibó divided the Hungarian intellectual life of the previous one-hundred years into two sides based on these principles and compiled a list of the most outstanding figures on both sides. He emphasised that the list was not created based on the opposition of conservative and radical ideals, but rather on the validity of the messages of those listed in their respective times, which were, of course, derived from their underlying truths.

“They spoke of the dynasty, Austria, the Compromise, ethnic minorities, Hungarianisation, revision, St. Stephen’s ideal state, democracy, land reform with such temperance and beautiful national spirit, as if they were speaking to the inhabitants of the moon,” he wrote of the incumbent ruling elite, also underlining the invalidity of their position:

“But everything they said, was founded on the idea that the immobile and false political constructs of their age, which had indeed prevailed at length, were equal to the true political and social reality. As soon as these constructs collapsed, everything they had said about them became obsolete.”<sup>81</sup>

The other side of this distorted society, the other half of the list was also damaged. Those who had been pushed aside by the counter selected elite with a wise smile became resentful, vatic ranters stuck in their roles, who – according to Bibó – “it was difficult to see as political leaders, governors, decision-makers in practical questions, or the knowers of ‘exigencies.’”<sup>82</sup>

For Bibó, Lajos Kossuth was the most important resentful, vatic figure. He believed the prophecy of Kossuth’s Cassandra letter had come true after the end of World War I.

“The dynasty was no more, the Habsburg Empire was no more, yet – as László Németh masterfully noted – after the fall of 1867, they managed to create a state in the spirit of 1867, in which respect for the political and ideological constructs of the Compromise was greater than at any time during their actual validity. This is why Szekfű was able to attempt the retro-active justification of the Compromise in 1920 when everything that had happened seemed to retroactively prove its uselessness or the damage it had caused. At a time, when Kossuth’s prophecy came true word for word: the fatal consequence of the Compromise was that when the nations rose up to dismantle the Habsburg Empire, there were Czech, Polish, Romanian, Serbian and Croatian legions but not Hungarian legions. The meaning of the events that transpired proved this prophecy, but for the Hungarian elite, fear fed by the ‘experiences’ of 1918–1919 reinforced the fear that led to the Compromise of 1867. With the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy the greatest fear of the Hungarian ruling classes, which had led them to accept the Compromise, democratic forces among them, became a reality: the territorial division of Hungary.”

Thus, in Bibó’s view, the deformation of national character caused by assimilation was not to blame for the loss of responsiveness, as assimilation can only follow change, as it conforms to given patterns.

“From this viewpoint, all effects, all assimilation become completely secondary, merely a symptom of deformation in the national character. Precisely through its reactions, actions and creations national character will also assimilate (...) as noted above, in Hungary, assimilation was at its strongest when community models collapsed.”<sup>83</sup>

In connection with national characters and assimilation, Bibó noted the changes of, and gradual impoverishment of the English and French national characters, as examples.

“For the English nation, the turning point was the adoption of Protestantism and the subsequent emergence of English Puritanism. For the French, it was the French revolution and before that, and later, in parallel with it, the birth of French rationalism. In their respective periods, both efforts required large swathes of the national character to be abandoned or changed: post-reformation England and post-Revolutionary France were

duller than they had been in the eyes of many of their contemporaries. However, it is these efforts that made these nations what they are today...”<sup>84</sup>

The example worked so well that it made a career of its own. Jenő Szűcs borrowed the idea from Bibó in the debates on national consciousness during the years of the so-called Kádár-consolidation and used it to debase the stability and historical influence of national character. Before their modern revolutions the English were the wild and the French the calm and refined, after their respective revolutions, the characters of the two nations were swapped. Considering historical events as the formative force of character and psychological traits was a continuation of Bibó’s thinking.

### Protestant Tradition and Democracy

A protestant tradition existed at the turn of the century, based on Ady’s view of the nation, which was born from the anti-aristocratic, anti-clerical traditions of the minor nobility. Opposed to the neo-baroque society, Németh adopted this anti-Habsburg radicalism. While his greatest heroes were Catholic or Evangelical, such as Széchenyi or Berzsenyi, he raised his voice against mainstream politics in the name of a kurutz tradition born from the works of Ady and Dezső Szabó.<sup>85</sup>

Bibó rejected the values of the minor nobility and considered them one of the most damaging social classes because of their blundering backwardness. He considered the democratic synod movement of the Reformation, and collective decision making – down to the smallest groups – to be the most progressive form of governance. However, he cited a Western, and not Hungarian example of this.

Bibó also reached back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but first leads his reader through the history of ideas in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era. As a result of his democratic viewpoint, he also named Dózsa’s peasant uprising as the original sin, just as Oszkár Jászi, Szekfű, or the national-liberal Ignác Acsády had done. Ady’s anti-Werbőczy thinking was a generational experience at the time.<sup>86</sup> Bibó’s focus then fell on the Enlightenment, which he considered the nation’s coming of age, alongside the Dualist period. In this, he agreed with Elemér Mályusz and László Németh. While Szekfű was disgusted by the ungodly period, Mályusz and Németh attempted to paint the Enlightenment as a period which was not primarily influenced by foreign factors. For them,

the period was not anti-religious, though they were both cultural Protestants, and celebrated Joseph II's compromise with Protestant intellectuals. They criticised the intellectual and spiritual preparations of the Reform Era, as it was these efforts that did not give birth to a Modern Era comparable to that of Western Europe's.

“The beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century can be considered the start of turmoil in the political and social development of Hungary. Following the suppression of the Dózsa uprising, Werbőczy's work was the first to conserve the balance of social power in Hungary. According to this, the minor nobility firmly separated itself from the peasantry, and despite continuous social opposition to the aristocracy, the two formed a common front of nobles at decisive times. This was when one of the most damaging elements of modern Hungarian society was born: a minor noble class filled with a hatred of the peasantry while hardly differing from them, but for their sense of nobility and demand for social privileges. (...)

From this moment onwards, Hungary definitively became a more Eastern European society, built on the oppression of serfs and strict feudalism. At the same time, its political unity collapsed, its political centre moved outside of the country, finally landing in Vienna. Despite these catastrophes, the country showed admirable vitality and efficiency over the next two centuries. In fact, it was this period when it first followed European intellectual trends with meaningful momentum and strength. This is a sign of the fact that the preparatory and adaptive measures of the Hungarian Middle Ages, and the political upsurge of the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries, matured – or would have matured in more favourable conditions – by the 16–17<sup>th</sup> century, to make Hungary a self-supporting and independent political and cultural entity within the European community. On a social level, due to faltering and limited embourgeoisement, international ideological currents were unable to truly endanger the feudal framework, but revolutionary social elements arose for a short time during the Rákóczi war of independence towards the end of the period. There were signs of a willingness to integrate into a multi-lingual but German-dominated dynastic framework by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, its sources – as they were never continued – have been forgotten by both Hungarians and Austrians. The effort to restore Hungarian independence continued, but the pursuit of political self-determination was firmly stuck within the feudal framework. However, the forces of social and intellectual advancement did not support

feudal nationalism. The policies of the Habsburg dynasty did not change because of the resistance of the feudal estates of the realm or the death of Joseph II, but because of the recoil of the French revolution, which broke the Habsburgs's reform spirit. It was this recoil that led to the birth of Ferdinand I's and Metternich's reactionary and conservative Holy Alliance policies, which compromised with the three estates.

The Habsburgs's dynastic community-building efforts were much newer and lacked roots. As a result, the new democratic movements ignored the frameworks freshly formed and built by the Habsburgs. All efforts of these democratic social movements were built on the pre-existing national frameworks of the region, based primarily on common language, and swept social, political and intellectual life in this direction.<sup>87</sup>

The majority of national-traditionalist writers were Catholic. To be exact, they held secularised views based on a positivist concept of science. (See the correspondence of Illyés and Áron Márton, or Bibó and László Ravasz). For Bibó, the roads from here led to certain forms of socialism. Was this a protestant viewpoint?

Németh was continuously drawn to a Hungarian cultural-protestant tradition. László Kósa assumes that Németh had a unique God-concept, which had reached him through, and then grown from, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century works of the liberal protestant Kant Schleiermacher. The mentality of his father's Trans-Danubian Calvinist ancestors became a central element of his character. However, as Kósa wrote "Németh rethought the ideas of the reformers from his own point of view. From his belief in an immanent God, it is obvious that the writer could not simply integrate the Gospels, repentance, and the 'Christ-case' (Christ as the only intermediary), as he had other philosophical thoughts, because this would have meant the introduction of the transcendent into his unique personal faith and God-concept."<sup>88</sup> Németh claimed that liberal Protestantism had been relayed to him by Ady, Dezső Szabó and Zsigmond Móricz. The three of them were awed by how the Biblical language of the Reformation, which heavily leaned on the Old Testament, created a new form of visual thinking and considered it to be the first, and possibly most important language reform of Hungarian. Thus, the Bible became a book of the Hungarian nation as well, alongside the Jewish, a parallel they often stressed. In a more polarised form: Protestant intellectual leaders saw some form of Hungarian religion emerge, following the Jewish model, in their Protestantism (Calvinism mixed with 16<sup>th</sup>-century Lutheran eschatological elements).

As Kósa emphasised, these views lack anti-Catholic overtones in Németh's work, as opposed to those of his predecessors. Despite this, his viewpoint founded in the natural sciences does not allow him to consider God as an axiomatic starting point. Even when he was attacked by the existential doubt so common among thinkers at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he was embarrassed to find any form of dependence on the transcendent in himself. "As easy it is for me to empathise with the religious convictions of Gregory VII, Kata Bethlen or even a peasant wife from Szilas, each appropriate in their own age, it is as difficult for me to imagine the soul of someone, who is religious, knowing what I know."<sup>89</sup> This divides him from any form of dogmatic religion.

However, for Németh, this secularised Protestantism no longer meant a practical everyday connection between God and Man (he despised piety) or hope in solidarity with North-Western-European protestants. He did not believe in the myth that had formed around the Western English-speaking countries in his own age and did not value the Western connections, and Protestant solidarity Transylvania had built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Belief in the universal divine had disappeared from this form of protestant thinking. It eventually withered, baroque Catholicism, which negated the influences of the Enlightenment and secular liberalism, was more popular among the youth following the fall of communism.

### **Bibó and Socialism**

The word socialism is rather common in the argumentations of both Bibó and Németh. It is especially common in Bibó's work. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they were forced to adopt a terminology fitting of the new world order following World War II, nor that Hungarian intellectuals did not know of the socialist "heaven on Earth" in the Soviet Union. Rather than the lost world war was followed by a period of reflection in which intellectuals attempted to find paths leading out of the neo-baroque world of the Horthy era. Bibó aimed to align his concept of democracy, traceable to Rousseau and intertwined with social commentaries, to the American model of a welfare state.

For Bibó, the baroque estate, which, according to Szekfű, guarded the historical traditions of the country and protected it against Ottoman invasion, was, and always had been, a foreign entity. It stood in opposition to the nationalist and modernizing gentry, the free smallholders, and military classes. While

it was a natural ally of the Habsburg court and large capital that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is without a doubt that the viewpoint shares themes with protestant historiography and Dezső Szabó's thinking. For Szabó, democracy was founded on the grassroots movements of small communities, subsidiarity and self-governance. For Németh, it was built of units with sovereign ideological unities, traditions and internal moralities, of "shuffling tiny islands." He attempted to reconcile this with the state apparatus of Western democracies (Németh had little confidence in these). (Communism later integrated them with its expropriation of the concepts of democratic decision making and social welfare.). This is why later ages have designated Németh as being only a hair's breadth from Fascism, and Bibó, who seemed naive in the questions of everyday politics, but penned long-running concepts, to have marched with the Communist Party. (Because of, for example, passages such as this:)

"The collapse of the economic, psychological and power structure of the feudal system was an immense relief in the life and living conditions of hundreds of thousands, or millions of people. And this relief is apparent, even if sometimes hidden under the surface of discontent, in the momentum, optimism and reconstruction of Hungary since the Liberation. However, there should be some doubt that a community with such bad habits as ours, would draw the right conclusions from the great shock of confronting reality. This shock was not only felt by the middle-class intelligentsia, but by everyone, who was not left-wing at the time of the Liberation. This allowed the counter-revolution to revitalise the typical Soviet-Communist-Jew phantom of the middle classes and spread it in a wider base than before. The detachment and emigration of the right-wing branch of this coalition have bolstered this fear, rather than weakened it, even if its visible symptoms have become rarer."<sup>90</sup>

This is why, the young political generation following the fall of communism, bored of the democratic media's servitude of world-powers, saw Szekfű's long-term perspective of conservatism as an example to be continued, despite the fact that Szekfű had collaborated most with the dictatorship, as Ambassador to Moscow and a member of the Presidential Council.

Similarly to Németh, Bibó also expected moral and conceptual leadership from regional intelligence. However, Bibó did not aim to raise a new nobility but to revive a role of the intelligentsia, which had strong 19<sup>th</sup>-century traditions in the region. He hoped to align 20<sup>th</sup>-century occupations with the roles



of the professional intelligentsia, the politician with the educator (an idea especially popular in the years following the fall of communism). Due to a lack of endangered communities, professional intellectuals did not have to fill double roles in Western nations. These tasks are carried out by the political elite, and the large-scale political establishment that was born in the second half of the century: the press, think tanks, party and campaign staff. In Eastern-Europe, the secondary tasks of 19<sup>th</sup>-century intelligentsia remain unchanged: leadership and political governance in the public sphere.

Stars rarely or never become political opinionists in the “free world.” The media industry casts them for leading roles in popular music, film, sex, and as TV-clowns and insect-collector quiz-show heroes. In Eastern-Central-Europe Soviet dictatorship conserved the 19<sup>th</sup>-century roles of the intelligentsia. Cultural figures, scientists and artists have been drafted as opinionists, as those who have held political responsibilities did not carry out the work they were tasked with. Moreover, as the region and its countries were continuously at the whim of richer, more powerful, stronger powers, these external goals overwrote realistic regional goals and plans. As a result, public servants have learnt to, or have been counter-selected to, serve the needs of the hegemonies, rather than the communities that have delegated them into their roles.

“The most characteristic feature of the unbalanced political spirit of Central and Eastern Europe stems from existential fear for the community. All of their lives have been overshadowed by foreign, rootless states – either in European form or as intolerable external pressure – that deprived them of their sons, offered careers to the most talented and prisons or the gallows to the most honest, regardless of whether they were called Emperor, Tsar or Sultan.”<sup>91</sup>

Bibó claimed that the concept of the nation being endangered is an Eastern-Central European phenomenon caused by the region being on the periphery.

“The embattled nature of historical and ethnic borders quickly led the peoples of the region to fight each other, and if they had the chance, they tested what they had learnt from the Emperors, Tsars and Sultans on each other. They all came to know the feeling of being endangered, of losing or seeing it under foreign rule or having a part of or their entire nation ruled by foreign states. Each of them had regions that they rightly feared for, or rightfully claimed, and none of them were far from total or partial



destruction. For a Western European hearing, an Eastern European statesman talk about the ‘death of the nation’ or the ‘destruction of the nation’ is like hearing an empty phrase. Western Europeans can imagine extermination, subjugation, or slow assimilation, but for them sudden political ‘annihilation’ is simply grandiose rhetoric, while for Eastern European nations it is a palpable reality. There is no need to annihilate a nation here or resettle it to make them feel endangered. It is enough to simply question their existence strongly enough, or with enough force.”<sup>92</sup>

Based on this Bibó claimed that despite its internationalist stance, vulgar Marxism was able to utilise national ideas in the Eastern-European region to reinforce its positions.<sup>93</sup>

“Confronting the uncertain consciousness of the Eastern European masses with exaggerated patriotism, the much-propagated national idea has often been grotesquely narrow in this region. This is the root of why the negation of the national idea as formulated in Vulgar Marxism has garnered a different response in Central and Eastern Europe, than in Western Europe. In the West, where the framework of the nation has been a long-standing historical real phenomenon, the Marxist views were seen as a possibility, a slightly dogmatic, but at least instructive theory. Contrary to this, in Central and Eastern Europe the thought that the national idea is, in fact, an ideology that serves to hide the interests of a narrow ruling capitalist class, was seen as a deadly threat to the nation, precisely because, there was truth to it in this region. Not because the capitalist bourgeoisie had been the primary stakeholder and bearer of the national idea in these countries. They were not. Its primary holder was rather the so-called national intelligentsia, which was less connected to, and because of this did not collapse alongside the bourgeoisie capitalist class. Nevertheless, it is true that in these countries the masses, for whom the forming national framework did not align with the dynastic reality of the nation, first viewed the national idea with a degree of passivity. As a result, the national intelligentsia invested greatly in ‘teaching’ the people the national idea. Naturally, only history could truly teach them, but in the meantime, the idea of vulgar Marxism, that the national idea was supported by a narrow class, was a deadly threat to the educational effort of the national intelligentsia.”<sup>94</sup>

### Bibó after 1956 and 1989

1989 brought an opportunity for agreement between the different groups of Hungarian intellectuals. The magical name behind this agreement was István Bibó. As with the *Bibó Memorial Album* of the Seventies, the mediatory role of the name in finding common ground between the two types of Hungarian intellectuals was obvious. Bibó was a good candidate to become a symbol of the new, unified opposition. Bibó supported the peasant classes, was a national-traditionalist and also a democrat, and the only non-Jewish author of a meaningful study on Hungarian responsibility in World War II. Following 1956, László Németh enjoyed a renaissance in the Sixties and Seventies. 1956 brought an end to Bibó's active years. He was blocked from public knowledge because of his involvement in the revolution. It was Jenő Szűcs, who brought his ideas to a wider audience in the 1980s placing them in parallel with those of Kundera and connecting them to the myth of 1968 (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*), in his study of the three historical regions of Europe. Both works examine this stolen region and define Bibó's and Németh's In-between Europe as a region that is Western in its structures and culture is moving in the direction of Western Christian democracy but is stalled by Eastern, Byzantine, and caesarapist influences.

It is no coincidence that the Protestant Open University was the first to publish Bibó's collected works in Switzerland. At the time, the independence traditions and its creative figures were classified as part of the Protestant cultural and ideological tradition. In the 1980s, Bibó's naivety was astounding when contrasted to the recent past, but it was this naivety that contained the possibility of a long-term perspective beyond alliances in the everyday politics of the time. He had a unique influence on those in their twenties and set intellectual life alight. (FIDESZ was founded in the Bibó College, while the book published by the Protestant Open University went from one student to another in the M. Kiss-seminar at Eötvös College on Ménesi Street. Everyone was allowed to keep it for one night.)

A reinterpretation of Bibó's legacy was again utilised to legitimise the new power structure in the period after the fall of communism. Naturally, conference audiences were only interested in parts of the oeuvre. His concept of democracy and his position as Minister of State in 1956 were of interest to the forming new ideologies. From the historical arc he drew, from the Ottoman Era, through his criticism of Dualism, to post-World War II peace, his works on Jewish emancipation became the most popular. It became fashionable to

study Bibó (insiders would pronounce his name with a long ‘i’ instead of the short ‘i’). A subculture raised on bourgeois radicals quoted him most often. His name was also used to support intellectual integration. László Németh was opposed because of questionable passages found within *In minority* and his 1943 *Speech at Szárszó*. Meanwhile, bourgeois radicals could not support integration because of their strong anti-clericalism and their demythologised view of history.

The integration characteristic of the fall of communism was no longer needed in 2000. Thus, András Gerő presented an anti-myth, which pitted the amateur historian, the dilettante philosopher against the paragon of holding the moral high ground. With this, he took the substance, the written word out of the statue’s mouth, which continues to stand as a Golem that cannot move or act and slowly becomes irrelevant.

“Bibó invalidated everyone who became a part of the political establishment within his concept. Losing with this – I repeat – the possibility of a truly critical position and the possibility of differentiation. He said, their solutions to the problems of Hungarian society were all invalid by the 1940s. He listed names, Ferenc Deák, Gyula Andrassy the elder to name a couple. Of course, he could have been right, as things change, so can the words of a politician become obsolete. But he was simply wrong. In 1948, following the inequality of the Horthy era, and at the doorstep of the Rákosi era what would have invalidated the words of Ferenc Deák, one of the key figures of equality in Hungary, and what could have turned civil liberties into intellectual mumbo-jumbo? Or his advocacy for the separation of Church and State and the rights of ethnic minorities? What could have invalidated Andrassy’s credo on foreign policy that Russia was the greatest threat in 1948, when Soviet troops were occupying Hungary?”<sup>95</sup>

Gerő deemed his own liberal values unquestionable, despite the fact that all the intellectuals of a broken country, from Gyula Szekfű to István Bibó, had considered the fact that in times that require quick decision making and action, even partial equality can provide more value than the chaos to which the demagogy of the proclaimed civil liberties can lead, and did so, in a country dismembered in the name of ethnic tolerance, surrounded by successor states that have never applied this tolerance themselves while referencing the interests of the majority in their continuously functioning states.

The last sentence of the passage quoted above is the most distorting argument against Bibó's views. It is true that Andrásy's main argument in favour of the Compromise was the growth of the Russian Empire, which not only relied on more drastic methods than the Habsburgs but represented a different culture group, and by Bibó's time the soviet mutation of the empire had arrived in Hungary and the region. However, Gerő and Bibó were talking about different things, as the latter claimed that the Compromise had led the country to two hopeless and lost wars with the colossus.

Gerő later moderated his ideological loyalty to democracy and liberalism.

"It goes without saying that parts of the political elite in a democracy can be morally and emotionally corrupted or can become obsolete quickly. However, it takes an immense loss of proportion and deep ahistorical sentiment to invalidate the leading class of more than half a century."<sup>6</sup>

The reality is, this is exactly what happened in this half of Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The counter selected, corrupt and perverted communist leaders of the last fifty years were written off in an immense loss of proportion and deep ahistorical sentiment. That is, such changes happened in the luckier countries of the region. The twenty years that have passed since have proven they were right. The case was different in Hungary. The fossils of the failed establishment and their influence was carefully preserved by undercover activists expressing the most rabid anti-communist views and secret international protection. The young successors of the Rákosis, Gerős, Kádárs, Czineges and Károly Némeths are climbing into their places, continuing their policies of alignment to and collaboration with the great powers in order to preserve their positions of power, instead of propagating national interests. Counter-selection continues.

"Thus, the situation was simply not as Bibó saw it, and Bibó could only see it the way he did because the conceptual framework of his narrative was more important to him than the material to which he applied it. Thus, I believe, that in Bibó's case, lack of knowledge in the classical sense is incidental – although it cannot be ruled out, as he was not a trained historian.

From my point of view, it is likely that this is what – 'the other history' – symbolical politics is capable of when translated into a conceptual framework. It creates latent or articulated contradictions, conceptual traps,

glaring losses of proportion, one-sided and simplistic conclusions, and generalisations that lead to collective stigmatization, and ahistorical ideas.”<sup>97</sup>

Gerő has remained a part of the system, and thus aims to protect it. Similarly, to how the political media of the turn of the Millennium claimed that everyone shouldered some blame for the devastated state of the country, that everyone had been part of a collective decision, that no one could be made responsible, stigmatised or evaluated, especially the elite. Naturally, it was ‘revealed’ that this elite had always ‘resisted’, that it was not a beneficiary of the system, but suffered because of it. Thus, the elite was still entitled to rule the country. Gerő applied a similar method to debunk Bibó’s criticism of the ruling class before World War I.

Bibó retired from political life, that is, he was lucky, he survived. He did not compromise himself as an employee of Imre Nagy’s Ministry of the Interior (or at least no such documents are known), he did not settle and give up his values. He even had the strength to support a different position than the official, or the Peasant’s Party line regarding the relocation of Germans. He was again lucky to survive after 1956, though he lost the right to publish. He substantiated his ideas with his own life. Those who remained a part of political life, or even stayed within the confines of the intelligentsia were burned by the so-called Kádár-consolidation. The “Monarchy” had been saved again, only this time the compromise had been reached with the post-Stalinist Empire, the Krushchenian Soviet superpower which had temporarily recovered from its crisis. Following its collapse, Hungary once again sank ever deeper, clinging to half-truths for twenty years.

Today, Hungary is featured on the front pages of Europe’s leading newspapers as the most vulnerable country in the Union. In an attempt to conserve its power, the ruling elite is again searching for points of compromise, but Bibó is no longer needed. After two terms of unscrupulous governance, the MSZP–SZDSZ alliance is in tatters. To stay in power, they have announced a new Compromise. They have founded the Habsburg Institute.

## Demystifying the national consciousness

### The Erik Molnár debate and the Mohács syndrome

#### “Field of mourning red and lone” – Or Where Are the Borders of the Balkans for Europe and Hungary? The Periodical and Geographical Vision of National Remembrance

The study of the connections between spaces of national remembrance and the system of national symbols has been a global trend in the past years.<sup>98</sup> When certain factors have acted together this symbolism has grown into a national mythology. Research into the culture of remembrance and collective memory has been based on the sociological studies of M. Halbwach.<sup>99</sup>

The political systems of the present day are struggling with the questions raised by remembrance. The historicisation of history, its expansion with historical panels and the reverse-politicisation of history are pluralistic processes that run in parallel. Thus, political myths and mythical politics are born.

Any re-evaluation of the past is oriented towards the future.<sup>100</sup> The available system of national symbols, its models of interpretation and how these can be used and mobilised are vital questions for the political actors of any period if they wish to legitimise, stabilise or loosen, destabilise positions of power or the entire power structure. Their goals can vary greatly, for example, the above-mentioned legitimisation of a ruler is one possibility, while the elements of national memory can also be used to achieve social mobilisation, or the opposite: the polarisation of groups or the disruption of society by denouncing its fundamental ideas.

The elite can use remembrance culture to influence the masses or to form a reserve of political mobilisation. In such cases, it exchanges the created collective identity for political legitimacy. Inhabited memory is based on working memory. Its various characteristics can be selective, group-oriented, bound by values, future-oriented, etc. Functional memory is only unchanged as long as it has use, once its elements no longer have a role to play they can be replaced.<sup>101</sup>

The 16<sup>th</sup>-century topos, or specific national Mohács-myth within the national remembrance, to be examined in the following is not a unique phenomenon in this region of Europe. It denotes a lost battle and a date, 29<sup>th</sup> August

1526, on which the national community and its state were destroyed, its right of self-determination curtailed in the long-term, and its future tied to inescapable paths defined by foreign powers. It also denotes the end of an era: a happier statehood is replaced by a more vulnerable existence accompanied by religious and cultural subjugation.

The boundary between these eras is stronger in the national, community memory, the closer the event occurred to the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era. Several macro-spatial phenomena indicated this change, such as humanist proto-nationalism, the Reformation, the formation of nation-states, these were the new phenomena that loosened and atomised centuries-old ideological and cultural movements and catalysed the formation of new groups.

Every nation considered the death of a king in battle a catastrophe. For example, the Battle of Flodden (1513) can be drawn as a parallel to Hungarian history. King James IV of Scotland and the majority of the Scottish nobility fell on the battlefield. The defeat led to the end of the country's independence, only in that case, the historical enemy were the British.<sup>102</sup>

The influence of Mohács on the national memory is reinforced by the slowly but continuously growing divide between the nation's self-identity and the European opinion of the nation, which formed over the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The country fell from a position within the walls of Christian Europe, to become a bastion of Europe, one of the many small nations facing Ottoman invasion, and is considered part of this space, the Balkans, to the present day. These are, of course, virtual, non-existent spaces but are characterised by strong stereotypes. While realistically, the fall and transformation happened over a century, when seen through the retrospective eyes of historical remembrance, it can be connected to one event, one place: Mohács.

Historical allegories of this type are always drawn from the bible. The model is the Battle of Megiddo (601 B.C.) in which King Josiah fell, and the suffering of the Jewish people began. According to certain techniques of interpretation, the place raises the past event (the Battle of Megiddo) to allegorical status, denoting a future eschatological chain of events. Four major methods of biblical interpretation have arisen in biblical hermeneutics: the literal, moral, allegorical, and analogical.<sup>103</sup>

Medieval tradition was further reinforced by the Reformation's interest in Jewish Kaballah, which searches for the hidden meaning in the written word. Note the Reuchlin – Melancthon connection as an example. The concept was integrated into the Reformation's approach to history. Pál Ács claimed



that the historical viewpoint of Hungarian literature utilised this apocalyptic, prophetic voice for centuries. The songs of the Ottomans in Kőlcsey's Hymn, "O, how often has the voice / Sounded of wild Osman's hordes, / When in songs they did rejoice" were threatening because they were the "precursors" of the nation's death rattle.<sup>104</sup> The Battle of Mohács, as a chosen sacred moment in which a guardian of the nation died, also fits into the category of another biblical allegory: punishment for the sins of the chosen people.

Ultimately, the reformation, while rejecting the cult of saints, provided a new actualisation of the Bible by allegorically connecting figures from the Old Testament to its present day. It detailed this layer of its meaning, while other layers provided a sacred, cultural background.

Returning to Mohács. Contemporaries of the battle did not see it as an apocalyptic end. The country had suffered similar great defeats at Varna and Kosovo Field under the Hunyadis. (The King also died at Varna.) The country had always recovered, mostly because of its place in Christian Europe and its dynastic connections. (This is at least, how the people of the nation saw it.) This was why Bishop Stephanus Brodericus, the witness and humanist chronicler of the battle, did not consider Mohács an apocalyptic catastrophe either. It took one and a half generations for the successors of the generation that fought at Mohács and who became the leaders of the country to realise, after the fall of Buda, and the Treaty of Adrianople that not only could they no longer think in imperial terms but that their space for movement as an independent minor nation was also limited. War, everyday apocalypse and a feeling of shock became perpetual. The following generation, to whom, it was evident that the country was stuck in endless war and destruction as the border zone between two empires and cultures, mythologised the event.

This was also how neighbouring countries saw it. The new situation could no longer be characterised with the traditional *antemurale* myth, with the wolf outside and the lamb behind the walls, because this time, the wolf stayed within the walls.

Johann Nel's visual representation reflects this view relatively early, in the final third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A naked and crowned female figure is led in chains by two Turks with swords, who have already cut off her hands and fed them to dogs. On the right side of the image lie the innocent heroes who have sacrificed their lives to protect the country. János Hunyadi, György Thúry, Pavle Bakić, Miklós Zrínyi, Władysław of Varna, King Matthias, and finally – breaking with chronology – the figure of Louis II drowning in the Csele



stream. Thus, the wood print showcased a glimpse at the future of the Mohács myth.<sup>105</sup>

There are several similar places in the region that have become the bases of national myths. For many Southern Slavic peoples, the Battle of Kosovo polje (1389) is such, where again it was the Muslim Turks that embodied tragedy and the apocalypse.<sup>106</sup> The Battle of White Mountain, which brought a different type of change from 1622, is similar for the Czech. According to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century remembrance, the Catholic Habsburgs brought about the downfall of Hussite-Protestant proto-nationalism. The Polish also have similar virtual spaces, to which remembrance is connected, or to which it has been connected by posterity. Such are the Ukrainian plains, which present-day readers can only imagine based on 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. The Jasna Góra Monastery of Częstochowa has also been elevated to a sacred and transcendental role in the remembrance of national history since the Swedish invasion.

However, such Mohács-myths never become the starting points of a messianic theory. Their approach is passive; they do not contain theories for spiritual development or community growth. Thus, they never bind the population to action in their own time.

Not even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did these nations wish to save the world with their suffering (Dostoyevsky), or their legions, as they identified themselves with the crucified Christ or the wandering people of God (Mickiewicz). The apocalypse was passive. The myth could provide national unity in times of adversity, but was useless for combat, or expansion.

The following sections aim to provide an overview of the roles that the Ottoman Era, and an event, the Battle of Mohács, played in Hungarian history and Hungarian national remembrance, through the work of influential historiographers and historical debates. Namely, how it was born and how it influenced the later national remembrance, the concepts it was a foundation for, or element of, and how its constituent elements changed in different political situations.

Naturally, the author is aware that a historical concept is not created by a historian simply through voluntarily or involuntarily reorganizing the extant data to support new political trends. A historian's concept is formed in light of the source material of the studied period and previous academic research and is influenced by their personality, education and the philosophical and ideological environment in which the latter happened. The concept is then inter-

preted (or misinterpreted) by the community that becomes its audience, based on the code of its own studies and experiences.<sup>107</sup>

In many cases, communities use the events of the Early Modern in a way that their actors and parties correspond to the events of the present day. A society living under dictatorship will always search for hidden meanings behind the party jargon and firmly class struggle-driven approach to history. It will think symbolically. In these societies, many find mythical meanings in their past turns of fate, in historical events that grow to symbolic importance. This not only frees the emotional response fuelled by the metaphorical reaction but through it they can project their own alternative actions into the inescapable paths of history, which are known and familiar to them and their readers. The framework is similar in all cases; it suggests a solution, or underlines how a situation is impossible to resolve.

### “The Field of Mourning”<sup>108</sup>

*Hősvértől pirosult gyásztér sóhajtva köszöntlek || Oh, field of mourning red and lone, oh, grave*

*Nemzeti nagylétünk nagy temetője Mohács! || Of our dead greatness, with a heavy sigh*

*Hollószárnyaival lebegett a zordon Enyészet, || I greet thee! Harsh decay has trailed her wing*

*S pusztító erejét rád viharozta dühe, || Across the earth wherein our heroes lie.*

*Ezt visszavonás okozá mind s durva irigység, || All caused by discord and beastly envy,*

*Egységünk törten törve, hanyatla erőnk. || Our broken unity broken; our strength has failed us.*

*A sorvasztó lánc így készülve árva hazánkra, || The withering chains thus catch our homeland,*

*Nem! Nem az ellenség – önfia vágta sebét. || No, not the enemy, its son struck the fatal blow.*

(Károly Kisfaludy: Mohács, 1824)<sup>109</sup>

“‘The Turkish Emperor is gathering his complete might and marching against us... We will fall, fall, unless God and your holiness help us soon;’ beings a letter from Louis II to the Pope written in April 1526, and continues: ‘We will fall, fall (...)’ Looking back through the past from the

present day his almost suicidal forbearing of destruction he felt to be inevitable is strange, nearly frightening. This melancholy rush to doom, this vulnerability, this nothing matters any more mentality. Maybe if the Pope helps (...) the Emperor (...), Europe. That we could have saved ourselves? The possibility barely arose (...) Harsh decay may have unfurled its wings but it had not struck yet – posterity’s bloody vision of this battle, as drawn in the romantic lines of Károly Kisfaludy, was only truly valid for the mediæval court of the Jagellonian dynasty, and the high nobility that had sentenced themselves to death. These two destroyed themselves. They were unwilling to adapt to a new age, new ideas, a new economic situation and new power structures.” (István Nemeskürty 1966)<sup>110</sup>

Almost 150 years past between when these two quotations were originally written. Nevertheless, their statements are concordant. The latter is the introduction of a book, which conceptually highlights the 19<sup>th</sup>-century line that was chosen as the book’s title: “Its son struck the fatal blow.” This consciously activated the historical and emotional tradition associated with the romantic text and connected it to a cornerstone of the periodisation and national self-reflection characteristic of a community in a given time.

Both texts were written to influence the general public. This is to be expected in a romantic elegy, but 20<sup>th</sup>-century historiography also relied on explicitly literary tools, and the book uses a slightly elevated form of colloquial language instead of official historical terminology, as it was not written for historians. The former text connected the resignation characteristic of its time to a 100-year-old judgement, which designated the negative turn in the nation’s fate, to be the successful Islamic invasion which destroyed the independent Hungarian Kingdom, caused by the battle, which had over the centuries had become a symbol of this, Mohács. Furthermore, it named the moral crisis of the community as the cause of the devastation. Thus, it is obvious that the text attempted to mobilise against the subservient and disrupted society of its time by invoking the emotional and symbolic elements of a historical collective consciousness.

Nemeskürty’s text had a similar goal, with the slight difference that it added the elements of the bourgeois national consciousness – which had formed following the Reform Era – to the picture. It thus contrasted this historical information, symbolism and the emotional backdrop of these, with the economic legitimisation of the post-revolution consolidation between 1963–67.

The aim of the current study is to examine the 450-year reception history of the Ottoman Era in Hungary following Mohács, and its influence on the social consciousness, and the effects of inescapable paths on historiography. While research has, naturally, taken all extant work into consideration, the study shall focus on the works written for a broader audience and the debates these sparked. Summarizing historical overviews written before the romantic 19<sup>th</sup>-century and the works of denominational and humanist informants, that influenced Kisfaludy's elegy are also not examined in the current study. As a result, only official summarising works of academic merit and with support from the general public are compared. Furthermore, due to their number and scale the in-depth analysis of even the most important interpretations is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, its goal is to define typical approaches and, after revealing weaker, less convincing argumentations, to supplement these with the author's interpretation and views at certain points.

### **The Historical Arguments Used Against the Habsburgs by Mihály Horváth in the 1850s**

“This battle can be considered epochal, the start of a new era.

It is when the long suffering of the nation began; it is where the conditions which opened the country to Ottoman invasion, and which placed a foreign dynasty on the throne – which, as the ruler of several different countries held its major political interests elsewhere – were created.”<sup>111</sup>

Mihály Horváth, Bishop of Csanád, begins the 4<sup>th</sup> volume of his history of the Hungarian nation with these words. He names the battle, in which, Louis II of Hungary died the overture of a new era, which led to the darker days of Hungarian history. Horváth, who had been considered the official historiographer of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences during the Reform Era, expanded his earlier work into a five-volume history following his 1849 emigration to Brussels. In the nation's historical memory, Mohács had been a negative turning point, the consequence of collective sins, even before Horváth's time.<sup>112</sup>

Horváth accepted the periodisation that considered the Battle of Mohács and the fall of the unified Hungarian Kingdom as the end of an era. However, Horváth did not reference the economic shift that swept through Europe following the discovery of the Americas, nor the religious and intellectual changes catalysed by the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation, which could have justified his

torical periodisation. The academic who held a European perspective and who had taught in Vienna connected this periodisation to 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian tradition. This tradition was not the fall of King Matthias's Renaissance empire, nor the occupation of Buda in 1541, which solidified the fragmentation of the country as caused by the Ottoman occupation. Horváth definitively connected the change of era to the lost Battle of Mohács.

Horváth wrote his book in Hungarian for Hungarian readers, and it carried political messages that were current in its age. As publishing and printing were difficult in Hungary due to the censorship, the émigré community hoped to bolster the spirit of the national community through books published abroad.

Unlike the works of his contemporaries of different nationalities, for example, the German-language study by Jan Palacky on his own national history in an international context, Horváth's depiction of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reflected the questions and problems of the suppressed war of independence.<sup>113</sup>

The protestant László Szalay<sup>114</sup> was most similar to Horváth. Szalay also published a five-volume summary of Hungarian history written for the oppressed country around the same time. Surprisingly neither he, nor Horváth, nor anyone in the period wrote an informative book for foreign readers, while their lives as émigrés would have supported such an effort. (It should be noted, that this was due, at least in part, to the fact that, while Palaczký did not speak Czech, both Horváth and Szalay not only knew their mother tongue but had sizeable audiences of aristocratic-bourgeois Hungarian readers. Furthermore, this audience grew quickly after the war of independence as the solidarity-driven assimilation of German inhabitants continued.) As a result, following the Latin and German works of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, no modern foreign-language summaries of Hungarian history written according to the standards of the current age were published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The question of the Habsburg Dynasty became a central element of the Mohács-myth for the Catholic historian. Similarly to earlier historians, he traced the cause of the invasion to the corrupt lifestyle of the Jagellonian age and dissension within the elite, rather than the growing strength of the Muslim empire. Furthermore, Horváth considered Mohács an epochal moment because, as is apparent from the quote above, a foreign dynasty inherited the throne of Hungary. The problem was not that the Polish-Lithuanian Jagellonian dynasty was replaced by the Habsburg house of Spanish–French descent. Rather, Horváth saw tragedy in how the country's administrative, economic and cultural centre was moved into Austrian-German lands. This exter-

nal centre continued to define the development of the country throughout his lifetime.

The sovereignty of the country was lost. Its role shifted from a region that provided value, to a border zone protecting the more valuable central areas. This was tragic, even if the country – according to Horváth – was not only protecting its own borders but those of Christianity as a whole. This reasoning contains seeds of the idea that Christian culture owes Hungary a debt for this protection.<sup>115</sup> It is possible that Horváth was testing his historical and legal arguments against the German half of the empire.

Horváth justified the military occupation of Hungary in the Bach Era with a modernising policy that brought Hungary on par with the rest of Europe. While his technocratic justifications lacked historical arguments, 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-century Habsburg pamphlet literature provided ample ammunition for the argumentation. In such works, Hungarians are often embodied by Thököly, and depicted as the enemies of Christianity. Furthermore, as a precursor to this the Szapolya family, especially the antitrinitarian John Sigismund, had “bad press” in antiturcica literature.<sup>116</sup>

### Szapolyai, the Legitimate Pragmatist

It follows from the above that both Horváth and the less moderate Szalay built their positivist methods and arguments on the historical traditions of the feudal nobility, and thus, adapted their results to its stereotypes. The ideology was entrenched in the independence movements of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries and was strongly anti-Habsburg. Nevertheless, Horváth consistently retained his Catholic point of view, despite the fact that this was generally Loyalist in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Horváth was born and raised in the Southern Great Plain, a region that once stood on the border of the Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman-occupied territories. In his age, the region was the home of the Resolution Party, for which national independence and freedom from Habsburg rule were a matter of policy. Horváth later became Minister for Religion and Education of the first Hungarian government formed in Debrecen, which dethroned the Habsburgs. It is no surprise that writing about the 16<sup>th</sup> century, he was sympathetic to the Transylvanian cause.

Of the two kings crowned after Mohács, John of Szapolya and Ferdinand I, Horváth considered the nominee of the Hungarian Gentry to be legitimate. Not only because he was crowned a few months before his rival, and he had

greater domestic support, but because Ferdinand's expansionist policies swept the country, which had already suffered a great defeat at the hands of the Turks, into further danger. However, as it turned out, Ferdinand was unable to protect his new lands. Moreover, it was the Habsburg–Valois rivalry that drew the French king's potential ally, the Sultan into the conflict. Thus, a new eastern front was opened against the Habsburg Empire in Hungary. This angered the Ottomans, who would never have allowed another great power to border them while controlling Hungary.

It is here that Horváth first called the stubbornness of Ferdinand I to fault, claiming that the foreign dynasty had endangered Hungary and the whole of Christianity for its personal gain. It was Ferdinand that ran Szapolyai, an advocate of *realpolitik*, to the Ottomans. While Szapolyai's offer arrived only months before Ferdinand's, the latter betrayed all plans of cooperation between Transylvania and the Habsburgs against the Ottomans to the Sublime Porte.

### Suleiman's offer

Horváth was the first to pen the theory later known as Suleiman's offer, which gained prominence after another failed revolution in the 1960s and 70s. The theory outlined the existence of an independent, unified buffer state between the two empires, in which social order remained unchanged. (There were several examples of such nations within the interconfessional regions of the Ottoman Empire.)

Horváth suggested that after ascending to the throne in 1520, Suleiman sent envoys with the idea of creating a neutral buffer state between the two empires. However, King Louis II imprisoned them, prompting the Sultan to begin his campaign for Belgrade. Horváth considered the justifications of the Hungarian court to be based on the influence of the Habsburgs through Queen Mary (who was sister to Charles V and Ferdinand, who aspired to the Hungarian throne based on a marital contract). It was this influence that Szapolyai and the Hungarian "nationalist" nobles counterbalanced in the political struggles before the Battle of Mohács.

Alongside the Habsburg influence, the other reason was that the ruling class of the nation was unwilling to accept the risk of accelerating the country's separation from Christian Europe by allowing Ottoman forces to march through the country and supplying them throughout. For Horváth, and the military historian who later formalised the theory, this meant the concept of



a state independent of the great powers, or at least showing sign of autochthonous development; it illustrated a model against consolidation with the great hegemonic powers that appear throughout history. Against consolidation, which in the long run confuses the moral compass, and leads to the distortion of morality.

### **The Concept of the Millennial 10-Volume History and the Myth of Peasants as Defenders of the Nation**

To celebrate Hungary's millennial existence, the country, newly operating within an imperial framework following the Compromise, published an ornate series detailing the national past for the general public. The series was edited by Sándor Szilágyi, the president of the Historical Society. The volume on the 16<sup>th</sup> century was written by Ignác Acsády, while Szilágyi himself wrote the next volume on the Ottoman occupation. The series as a whole does not paint a consistent picture, or rather, it reflects the different identities characteristic of the second generation of intellectuals following the Compromise.<sup>117</sup>

While in the volume on the 17<sup>th</sup> century Szilágyi took an anti-Habsburg stance reminiscent of the behaviour of the Gentry, Henrik Marcali sang a panegyric of Habsburg loyalism in the volume on the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Acsády, a liberal intellectual of the period, who as a historian studied the financial policies of Ferdinand, worded a balanced opinion of the Dózsa uprising, while openly expressing his sympathy for the rebels. Acsády then presented Szapolyai as unfit to rule from both a personal and dynastic perspective, while the other alternative, the Habsburgs who ruled from Vienna, remained a foreign power. Nevertheless, the series solidified templates in the national consciousness regarding the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which later became elements of the ideological canon of the 1950s. The myth of peasants as the defenders of the nation can also be traced to Horváth but was elaborated by the monographer of the peasant war, Sándor Márki.<sup>118</sup>

The theory claimed that due to the laws passed in 1514 following the suppression of the revolt, which bound serfs to the land they lived on and banned them from carrying arms, and because of the narrow-minded gentry, the peasant class was alienated from warfare. What the Dózsa-studies of the period failed to notice was that both King John and Ferdinand abolished the law binding them to the land and that serfs were explicitly obligated to bear arms



against the Ottomans not long after the battle of Mohács. Regardless, the theory has stubbornly resurfaced time and time again.

### Sándor Takáts

Sándor Takáts is a figure of the interesting post-Compromise generation who attempted to process the remembrance of 1848, in which relations with the dynasty and Austria are the most problematic point. While he did not write an overarching summary of history, his work must be noted, as his studies were widespread, and his views have remained influential to the present day.

Takáts was a Piarist monk who lived the majority of his life in Vienna, organizing the material in the joint Royal and Imperial archives. He reviewed an immense amount of material from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The data he published on life in the border forts are used to the present day. He held a strong anti-Habsburg and anti-Austrian position, alongside an organic loyalty to the crown. As a member of the young generation that did not fight in 1848–49, he sought historical identity and a background for mythologisation in the Ottoman Era. Similarly to Kálmán Thaly, Takáts also wished to pursue a career in the most respected and popular profession of the age. He wanted to be a writer. As a result, the majority of his writings are literary works based on authentic historic data and not academic historical studies.

### Gyula Szekfű, or the Two Centuries Concept and Morals, again

The dictated Treaty of Trianon that ended World War I for Hungary brought about a level of national fragmentation unknown to the nation since the Ottoman occupation. The borders of the new country were drawn almost identically to those of the three-part country 400 years earlier. Only this time the lands of Royal Hungary were mostly given to Czechoslovakia, those of the Principality of Transylvania to Romania. Almost all of what remained part of the independent state had once been occupied by the Ottomans. (The rest was attached to the newly formed Southern Slavic state. It was in these lands that the Ottomans orchestrated a population transfer immediately in the years following Mohács to settle the more reliable Serbs along the border in place of the untrustworthy Hungarians.) The minor-empire dreams of the monarchy had to be abandoned quickly in the independent, so-called Trianon-state.

As even the other member state of the dissolved Monarchy received Hungarian land in the Treaty of Trianon, the population felt that Europe had taken revenge on the “Bastion of Europe” for its good deeds. The territory of the Hungarian Kingdom was divided between nations that had not participated in these conflicts or that had supported the Ottomans. Thus, turning from the treacherous Christian West, Hungarians began to study Eastern connections founded in stories. Or – similarly to Gyula Szekfű,<sup>119</sup> who turned from Monarchist party historian to a supporter of Western orientation – attempted to enlighten the “blind west,” identifying isolationist policies as the cause of Trianon. It is no coincidence that an English-language book on the history of the Hungarian state was published for the first time since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>120</sup>

Szekfű saw history through the lens of Trianon. He published his five-volume summarising work as one of the leading ideologists of the era in cooperation with the later Minister for Religion and Education, Bálint Hóman. Szekfű wrote the chapters on the history of the Ottoman occupation. The volumes were organised to be strong intellectual and historical arguments by the hand of a historian in command of a vast number of sources, and a deep understanding of the most modern, chiefly German, historical methods.

Szekfű, summarised the concept of the books in his Foreword as follows:

“The two centuries that begin with the Battle of Mohács are so tightly intertwined that it is almost impossible to examine them separately, one by one. From intellectual, political, economic and social standpoints, the two centuries follow one another like the opening and closing act of the same age. Separately both are only a half, the two only form a whole together. The situations born in the 16<sup>th</sup> century matured through the following century and were resolved in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A purely chronological presentation would provide only a fragmented picture. The Ottoman occupation defined both centuries, the Habsburg–Transylvanian, German–Turkish, Danube–Tisza oppositions started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and became central questions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The military organization of the nation by the grand estates also defined both centuries, while the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was followed by the Counter-Reformation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. To summarise, it can be said that in the 100-year history of the nations, these two centuries can only be treated as a unit.

The first book on the 16<sup>th</sup> century aims to shed light on the questions that had to be solved in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: moving the royal court abroad, the royal organisation of defence against the Ottoman invasion, the westward

diplomatic connections of Hungary while at the whim of the Ottomans, the creation of a new central administration, the formation of the new grand estate, the existence of a new Transylvania, and the Reformation. Every element denotes an opposition, which attempted to tear the mediaeval unity of the nation apart. The conflicts first flared up in the Bocskai uprising, a description of this ends the books, so the next (...) may provide an overview of the solutions presented in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>121</sup>

### The Concept

In this concept, Szekfű first accused John Szapolya and later Transylvanian politics of being the root cause of the Treaty of Trianon. The Voivode of Transylvania filled his court with Slavs from the Balkans, making him illegitimate and unwelcome to European diplomacy. The South Slavs had grown accustomed to the Ottomans over the centuries and led Szapolya straight into the waiting arms of the Sublime Porte.

Thus, Szapolya became foreign to the Hungarian spirit, Eastern, a friend of Islam, whom for his own personal gain disastrously divided Hungarian culture and the “nation’s soul.” For the Catholic, Habsburg-loyalist Szekfű, the Ottoman occupation brought about a national division along the lines of Transylvania and Habsburg Hungary, in which the protestant Eastern Hungarian and Ottoman-friendly path was flawed. Salvation came in the form of the Habsburg-led Christian war of European liberation at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which the country returned into the wide arms of Western culture, from where it was torn by the Battle of Mohács and the xenophobic ranting pretender, John Szapolya.

The Habsburg Dynasty worked to halt the Ottoman invasion by definition, even before the Battle of Mohács, through its representative Ferdinand. While Szekfű did not dispute that the Battle of Mohács caused the royal seat to be moved outside of the country, he claimed that this aided the reorganization of the collapsed defensive lines (which no longer protected the country, but utilised the demographic reserves of the centre of the country to protect Austria). Szekfű claimed that despite the Ottoman invasion, the Hungarian nation was able to improve its relationship with its Western neighbours and halt the Ottoman advance with their support. As a result, Szekfű saw a nation more entrenched in Western culture than before, the only actors he feared in connec-

tion with the administration of the border forts were the Czechs, a clear result of the shock caused by Trianon.

### **A New Nation Was Born in the Border Forts – Spiritual Unity**

It is in the border forts of the Ottoman era, with Habsburg support, that the Hungarians rediscovered the spiritual unity that had existed between them in the Middle Ages but had later been destroyed. In the border forts, social and military tensions were diffused, and all parties lived in a naive, paradise-like patriarchy, which was only occasionally disturbed by the attacks of the uninitiated Ottoman-friendly Transylvanians (during which most of the border forts generally side with the Transylvanians).

“This degree of discipline, which was truly self-discipline, is what differentiated the Hungarian mercenary from the foreign ... the Walloon, German, and Spanish were undisciplined all over Europe... Hungarian soldiers lived in spiritual unity with their commanders, and this spiritual unity spread in harmony from the magnate to the last rider. This was a homogeneous army, which was not only accustomed to each of its different parts but predestined by its national past and common fate to harmonious cooperation. ... Hungarian land and Hungarian fate moved the leaders and the masses in the same direction, life in the border forts thus became one of the most beautiful realisations of national life, almost unparalleled in our history, when the divides of society seemed to bury themselves, and when the personal ambitions of Hungarian history through themselves to the ground, so the nation could pass on their backs for the restoration of the old country, and the old state.

Placing life in the border forts within the perspective of the millennial history of our nation, we must see the miraculous youth of the nation in it. From the time of St. Stephen, the development of the Hungarian nation had followed the European path without major incident. Its smaller catastrophes differed little from those of Western nations; its wounds healed quickly in the quick advancement. Thus, the nation reached the fateful 16<sup>th</sup> century in full possession of its national vitality. The troubles that preceded Mohács, the suppression of serfs and slowing urban development had shown how real the danger of the nation being divided between the privileged and the oppressed was. But this was only an early precursor to the

subsequent social divide, the Ottomans were the imminent threat, which the nation, due to the unfortunate circumstances, was unable to protect itself against. This led to the catastrophe of our “great” nation, from which the first generation – lost in bitter self-loathing– could find no way to escape. However, the tragic experiences of the first decades were rewritten by the greats who threw their own lives and bodies before the Turkish advance: the blood of Zrínyi, Losonczy, Szondi and the heroic life of Nádasdy and Dobo gave birth to new life, new, hope, new youth. Life in the border forts, as it appeared in the second half of the century, raised a strong, youthful sentiment above the depths of the recent civil war. The generation guilty for Mohács is finally dead, little of value was lost, thought the young Hungary...

It is this young Hungary’s love of life that resounded through the songs about life in the border forts raised from the bitter depth of social hatred, in which commoners and noblemen lived in peaceful harmony. (...)

These are the roots of the profound meaning of life in the border forts: first, the sense of camaraderie which built social peace without dismantling class differences; the second: an unstoppable national desire to restore the Hungary of old and stop the Ottoman advance.”<sup>122</sup>

(The coming ages would use these sentences as the foundation of their search for soldiers who harassed the peasant population, and officers who exploited the lower social classes.)

The efforts of the Habsburg Dynasty, its Western centralised administration and military organization led Hungary towards European modernization. As a result, the Empire slowly eclipsed the power of the Ottomans by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, enabling their expulsion from Hungary. According to Szekfű, Transylvanian politics generated centrifugal forces through its incomprehensible, narrow-minded nature, which was driven by personal interests.

The magnates and their great estates supported the Habsburg effort, while the nationalistic Gentry impeded it. For Szekfű, the greatest danger to this effort occurred during Bocskai’s war of independence, when Transylvania was able to formulate its position within the destiny of Hungary and found its place in international diplomacy. According to Szekfű’s view, the religiously and culturally divided, morally broken Hungarians were replaced by the disorganised rabble of the Romanian migration. The settled western culture was ground down by the nomad people of the later South Slav, Romanian and

Slovakian population. Nations foreign to Western culture took the place of the defenders of Christianity.

### **Nationalist Internationalism: the Mohács-Myth in the Ideology of the 1950s**

The leading historical study of the decade was Aladár Mód's book entitled 400 years: Fighting for an Independent Hungary.<sup>123</sup> The book considers the 400-year battle to be against German colonisation in an attempt to find or create a wide-based ideological background for the popular front-style cooperation of the communists during World War II. This is how the feudal anti-Habsburg (the Germans in this context) movements became the central focus of the pamphlet.

The re-masked figures of the book, Dózsa, Zrínyi, Rákóczi, only fought against the colonial Habsburgs to ensure the future socialist social order, an style of thought that was reflected in the controlled culture of the period. As the Habsburg Dynasty began its career in Hungary with Mohács, their influence is apparent throughout the history of Hungary in the Modern Era.

The Soviet-friendly author linked the uprisings against them into the chain of Hungarian history and then continued to identify them with Hitler's Germany, unperturbed by the fact, that the Habsburg court was only dominated by German in rare and exceptional periods.

The Soviet occupation, and the Muscovite clique put in power by the Soviet, were foreign imports, Soviet citizens. Their ideology was more strongly founded on arguments that could be traced to the historical thinking of the Gentry than that of more accepted communist leaders in other countries. Aladár Mód's pamphlet was useful to this over-exaggerated position. Quotes taken from the Forwards written before and after the war illustrate this perfectly:

“As it has been for centuries, a working democratic national unity is the most important requisite of an independent and free Hungary. The country has regained its independence. Thus the struggle must now continue by fulfilling the requirements of social and democratic advancement. There must be no doubt, that even when led by the working class, under the given circumstances, these goals must be achieved in the spirit of national unity.” (Foreword to the 1943 edition)<sup>124</sup>

“This is why I believe the book remains relevant. The great teachings of national history did not reach the wider masses, could not serve the public good during the oppression. It helps awaken the national pride that is needed for our country to rise from servitude, the path of backwardness and national catastrophes, and turn onto the road to freedom, independent national and social advancement.” (September 1945, Foreword to the second edition)<sup>125</sup>

Mód also applies the myth of peasants as defenders of the nation, placing the Dózsa peasant revolt in the centre.

“In the point where fledgeling Habsburg influence from the west met Eastern expansion, the free advancement and independence of the nation could only have been guaranteed by the deepest and largest masses of the Hungarian people, just as they had been at the time of John Hunyadi’s battle for Belgrade. The enormous number of people that joined the crusade showed that there was a willingness among the working people to fight again. Peasants gathered under Dózsa’s flag to march against the Ottomans; however, they also wished to ensure their old freedoms and social demands. The nobility did not understand their requests. Instead of making the serfs’ movement the foundation of the country’s independence, it put down the movement through force of arms and thus destroyed the possibility of successfully defending the nation.”<sup>126</sup>

Mód also referenced Suleiman’s offer, the *topos* created by Horváth, and national sins.

“Nobody complied with the orders of Parliament, lacking money and soldiers they dragged out negotiations for a ceasefire with the Turks in the hope of joint European action.”<sup>127</sup>

The centre being moved outside of the country is also a basic element of Mód’s concept. However, he emphasises the economic disadvantages of the situation: “The natural path of national development was broken. Feudal petty kings were replaced by an absolute monarchy under a foreign dynasty, which relying on foreign industrial and commercial development became a hindrance to Hungarian advancement, rather than its catalyst.”



According to Mód's concept, a national unity or "popular front" was formed, which the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries aimed to widen. The high of the struggle was the Rákóczi war of independence. "Through the successive phases of the struggle, the leading role moved to lower and wider social classes. However, at its height, the Rákóczi uprising united all classes and layers of Hungarian society, just as the 1848 war of independence."<sup>128</sup>

"Bocskai united the different layers of the ruling class through his outstanding political talent ('the greatest strength of all our hopes lies in unity'). Meanwhile, by settling the hajdús and winning the support of the Székely, he gained democratic backings for the movement."<sup>129</sup>

Mód cleverly combines the Marxist approach with the traditional nationalist kurutz mentality. It is characteristic of his ability to integrate different viewpoints that Mód is capable of utilising the words of Székely, as well, which were from a completely different viewpoint.

"This was the first time since the emergence of modern serfdom that the members of the privileged nobility saw a possible ally in the tax-paying, working peasants for the protection of the nation. The proclamation no longer simply demanded the traditional privileges of the nobility, but called the nation to arms against the tyrannous and pompous imperials who stole their salt and bread.

The red silk flag of the Prince, embroidered with the words 'Cum Deo pro Patria et Libertate', was first raised by serfs from Tárpa and Berehove led by Tamás Esze and Albert Kiss, the descendants of serfs and minor nobles, 'who for the first time belonged to the sweet homeland and nation.'<sup>130</sup>

### The Erik Molnár Debate (1958–1965)

Erik Molnár was a paragon of reliability.<sup>131</sup> He carried out all instructions to the letter; he executed anyone, signed and undertook everything without question. His brother, as a communist, fell victim to Stalin's purges. He himself spent years in a Soviet World War I prisoner of war camp in the Far East. He had known the Soviet system since its inception and knew how to survive it. He led a series of different ministries after 1945, not because of his versatile expertise, but because he was reliable in a centrally controlled political system.



He had a strong understanding of history, despite being a lawyer. “Grateful posterity” spread the legend that as Minister for Justice he would sit at his desk covered in legal documents with the drawer open so that he could read the historical study hidden within. If someone were to disturb him, he would quickly close the drawer.

Meanwhile, he signed death sentences without hesitation. As President of the Supreme Court, he proposed (or it was proposed on his behalf) that the age minimum for the death penalty be lowered.<sup>132</sup> Among his historical studies, his book on the Árpád Era, which did little more than align it to Marxist terminology, shows some similarity to Aladár Mód’s concept. Not only because it was also published between the two World Wars, but because German influence was considered damaging to the country, as opposed to the “friendly and domestic” Slavic.<sup>133</sup>

Alongside his activities as a prosecutor and judge, he was a member of the group that oversaw historical studies. This is important because opposed to the Mód-Andics-Révai group’s anti-Habsburg kurutz-friendly approach, and he backed Ervin Szabó’s Austro-Marxist views. He never stepped into direct confrontation with the official line, but his appointment as head of the newly established Institute of History in 1949 did show the increased influence of the wider group that supported Szabó’s views. This is how the secondary school teacher Zsigmond Pál Pach became deputy director of the Institute of History and its de facto controller. It is here that his former students, Iván T. Berend and György Ránki, were given the opportunity to try their hand at controlling historians. (The Teleki Institute, which was founded in the Inter-war years had newly been renamed as the Institute of Eastern Europe, was filled with new staff, and pressured through various means.<sup>134</sup> State Security believed the former head of the Institute, Domonkos Kosáry to be a man of the British Secret Service, believing this to be the reason why he was given such an influential position at only 30 years old. Following the 1949 reorganisation of the Institute both Kosáry and his deputy, Kálmán Benda, were removed.)<sup>135</sup>

### **The Metamorphosis and Legend of Bag-Carriers**

A legend formulated during the years of the consolidation surrounds Molnár. The absent-minded professor who was constantly distracted from his true calling by hateful public responsibility (drumhead trials). The theoretical thinker, who did not understand the intricacies of practical life and thus shouldered

no responsibility for his actions. The ageing colleague who used his authority to protect his institute and its people, and to protect his fellow historians from persecution. The professional, immovable in historical debates, but never vengeful in private life.

The Molnár-legend was fuelled by the young historians of the time, who had Molnár to thank for their accelerated career advancement. This insignificant group was placed front and centre to ensure the continued influence of the older generation and to counter-balance the new views and reform policies of a middle-generation that had formed once the elite of the older had been eroded by the historical changes of the time. Henceforth this process shall be referred to as the metamorphosis of bag-carriers: The grateful young generation, which had been granted positions of the greatest influence without merit shrouds the generation that helped them to power (often weak, old or eroded by political change) in legend. The goal is to justify their own positions and hide the crimes of the older and allied generation, whom they serve without question or thought, as it destroys the dangerous middle generation. Trustworthy, young and inexperienced juniors are then placed into the newly vacant positions to be controlled from behind the scenes. The legend is created to hide the crimes of old and young alike.

This was not the first time that ideological changes created such systems in Hungary. Domonkos Kosáry is an apt example: he was elevated to head the Teleki Institute from a student's desk in Eötvös College. (See Rónai: *Mapped History*, in which the internationally acclaimed researcher complains about how the young generation of historians had swept him aside due to his democratic views.<sup>136</sup>) Kosáry's swift career advancement was supported by his marriage into the Huszty family. (His father-in-law was second in charge within Bálint Hóman's cultural ministry.) However, it was because of his many research trips to English-speaking countries that the State Protection Authority later suspected that Kosáry had been recruited by the English secret service.

The 1945 change of regime put members of the Muscovite communist elite into key positions of the historical sciences. Erzsébet Andics and Dezső Nemes, for example, survived Stalin's purges – as opposed to Molnár's younger brother, René – because they enrolled in university. As a result, they mastered Marxist–Leninist terminology and its method based on economic history and economics, in which every historical datum had to be integrated into the house of cards formed by the economic foundation and ideological structure without raising any flags.

Erik Molnár criticised László Németh and other intellectuals in the Inter-war years for not adopting this methodology. Molnár had spent considerable effort in publicising the terminology in his writings before entering public life in 1945 and published a History of Hungary on a base of 19<sup>th</sup>-century positivist economic research reorganised into a Marxist-Leninist framework. Thus, while it may seem that he was not a member of the Muscovite clique, it is hard to believe that he had no connection to them.<sup>137</sup>

This is probably why he was a University professor, Director of the Eastern Institute, later the Institute of History, while also holding senior government positions. After Molnár's death, György Ránki became head of the institute and edited a collection of essays and studies in his predecessor's memory. Thus, the first legend about Erik Molnár was born.

“There is no need to detail how difficult it was to work in public welfare and social politics in the hardest two years following the liberation. Due to the deep wounds inflicted by the war, the poverty caused by inflation, the difficulties of reconstruction the Minister of Welfare post held by Molnár until September 1947 was, if not one of the most influential, but one of the most important in Government. Naturally, Molnár dealt mostly with social poverty, and many sides and forms of it, rather than social welfare. War widows and war orphans, the disabled and invalids, the weak and the robbed all turned to him, or his Ministry for aid. Molnár and his staff did everything possible, within the limitations of the time, to live up to their expectations, and build the foundations of a new, democratic social welfare system. (...) He was Minister of Foreign Affairs, due to his international outlook and knowledge of languages, for almost a year from the Autumn of 1947 to Summer 1948. While the results of his earlier work were schools and hospitals, orphanages and social care, he now worked to prepare and bring to fruition contracts and agreements with friendly nations. In both posts, his task was to heal the injuries caused by the war, internal or external. Ending Hungary's international isolation, bringing peace to the Danube-valley and building a new foundation for peaceful coexistence in the region were all tasks close to his heart. As a result of the continuously changing political situation he was moved from position to position, he served as Ambassador to Moscow for a year, replacing Gyula Szekfű. Later, possibly due to his legal training, he became Minister of Justice, and later again Minister of Foreign Affairs. By this time, his closest friends and comrades were imprisoned due to the unlawful actions of the Rákosi-regime,

and several factors indicated that Molnár would not survive either. (...) However, the shift of 1953 not only saved him from illegal persecution, but allowed him to work towards remedying the illegalities of the ‘personality-cult’-era, and rehabilitating its victims as President of the Supreme Court. He was again Minister of Justice in 1956, and one of the few who had clear vision even throughout the chaotic events of the Autumn. Those few were the first to recognise the counter-revolutionary tendencies, but it was Molnár who spoke up firmly against the crimes of dogmatic politics in the newly reorganised Tánácsics Club for intellectuals of the Party. Molnár attempted to analyse the events, place them within historical, social progress, and opposed all who reacted to past events like the Bourbons – forgetting nothing but learning nothing.”<sup>138</sup>

In fact, Molnár was himself the continuous leader of the judiciary in the “personality-cult” era. He served Rákosi and his clique both as Minister of Justice and then later as President of the Supreme Court.

Ránki was forced to justify why he had become a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at 30 and awarded the Kossuth prize at 33. The young historian painted Molnár as a well-meaning figure invested in the public interest, who was sometimes lost in the labyrinth of political life as an overly theoretical thinker, but who was simultaneously committed to a high-quality career as a historian. In reality, the two areas were not separate; Molnár did not move between them. Ránki’s argued that anyone raised to a position by Molnár must hold unquestionable talent and commitment and that political shortcuts had nothing to do with their career progression in any way.

Miklós Lackó (also from Ránki’s generation), also took part in the debate, and worked in the Institute throughout his life as a researcher, and later as Director. As a historian of ideology, he published an analysis in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of *Századok* in 2008.<sup>139</sup> Lackó stood true to the legend in this study as well.

In reality, Molnár was a secretive and somewhat mysterious figure. Why and how he spent four years in a prisoner of war camp is unknown. Little is known about how the Russian Revolution influenced his thinking. There is no information on whether he maintained contact with his brother, or following his execution, anyone else in the Soviet Union.<sup>140</sup> There is no information on whether he was in contact with the Soviet security services, but this seems likely, as Molnár was transported from his boring rural life to the national assembly in Debrecen by the Red Army, where he was immediately made Mi-

nister of Welfare, and later filled four other ministerial positions and became President of the Supreme Court.

It seems incomprehensibly naive (or simply deceptive) to say that Mátyás Rákosi did not even know that Molnár was a member of the Communist Party when Rákosi nominated him for positions of the greatest trust and loyalty.

“Save for a few minor harassments, mainly in 1944, public agencies did not bother him. In 1944 when the new national assembly was being formed in Debrecen, the organisers – probably following Ferenc Erdei’s recommendation – thought to include Molnár, who was immediately brought to Debrecen,<sup>141</sup> and elected into the national assembly. Molnár remained a representative until his death. Some say that even Mátyás Rákosi was surprised to learn that Molnár was a communist. According to a statement of the time, he was chosen to head the Ministry of Welfare in the first People’s Democratic government as an independent.”<sup>142</sup>

Rather, Molnár’s career seems to indicate that his strings led to the Soviet Union and that even Rákosi himself had little control over them. It is probable that he received his orders from the Soviet Union, and had learned, either in the camp or through the example of his brother, that he must carry out these orders without question.<sup>143</sup> This has nothing to do with human behaviour, collegiality, or positive personality traits. His withdrawn character and middle-class behaviour also support the above.

It is true, that Molnár, similarly to Aladár Mód, who later became his opponent in the debate, was a home-grown communist and not a Muscovite émigré, and was thus open to attack during the Rajk Trials. During World War II Mód had been an advocate of the Popular Front, which Molnár – as a staunch doctrinist in the Interwar years – had rejected.<sup>144</sup> While during the war Mód – the Jewish boy from a rural background – penned his work on the popular front, around which a radical anti-German resistance formed, and which became an ideological book for the communists of the popular front, and later participated himself in the resistance of the Újpest partisans; Molnár survived the war and German occupation in Kecskemét, in almost comfortable surroundings, with minimal harassment as a descendant of the Jeszenszky family.

Miklós Lackó found it interesting that Molnár ignored both the National and Popular Fronts during the war.<sup>145</sup> Why would he have dealt with either? If he was opposed to the forced alliance as a doctrinist, he still could not oppose a resolution of the COMINTERN. Or, if he was a sleeper agent of the

Soviet state, then it was not his role to be on the front line but to patiently await the arrival of Soviet forces, who would reactive him, and allow him to continue his work at the highest levels.

Miklós Lackó wrote:

“In their debate, Aladár Mód also reproached Molnár for his rejection of the Popular Front. Molnár brushed this criticism aside, saying that he had thought the Popular Front to be acceptable under the threat of Fascism, but disapproved of the Communist Party’s continued belief in it. Naturally, this was a result of his inflexible Internationalism. Molnár rejected not only the type of nationalism that he had experienced under the Horthy-regime but any attempt to align national-nationalist thinking with communist ideology. In a unique contradiction to this thinking, Molnár was friendly with and honoured political alliances with communists who quickly accepted the politics of the Popular Front in the thirties (for example Sándor Haraszti),<sup>146</sup> or became communists because of its ideology (e.g. Szilárd Újhelyi, István Tariska, Géza Losonczy);”<sup>147</sup>

The “national-nationalist” modifier is problematic, its meaning unclear. Furthermore, I fail to see how the friendships of a doctrinist communist who placed loyalty to Moscow above everything prove anything. These friendships were extremely questionable, if they were not formed because of orders or to enable observation, they might have (even this is a possibility) been used to gauge his loyalty to the party. (Kádár was a naming parent, the communist equivalent of a godfather, to Rajk’s son. The child was handed to different guardians every two months following the arrest of his parents, to avoid conspiracy. While Rajk was Minister of the Interior<sup>148</sup> Olga Bakszant was reported by her husband, who also worked for the State Protection Authority, so he could ensure a plea deal for himself.<sup>149</sup>) Thus, it is not a contradiction, but rather a unique characteristic of the communist perversion, that friends imprison or hang each other, as subordinates of the leaders of internal affairs, out of loyalty to the party.

Laczkó’s criticism of Erik Molnár cannot be taken seriously:

“As Andics said, Molnár did not resolve the relationship of the working class with the progressive elements of the past. While nationalism must be resisted, it must be noted that beyond its nationalism the *Geistesgeschichte*

school was cynically cosmopolitan in its clerical and Habsburgian nature.”<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, I agree with the following statement:

“However, Andics did limit her criticism. While the complete debate was a part of the series of ideological conflicts that unfolded in 1949–50 culminating in the Lukács-debate and criticism against writers, it is obvious that the Révai–Andics duo did not want to mount a full-scale assault against Molnár in historiography.”<sup>151</sup>

But not with the below:

“At the time of the Tito-affair – when the plans, carried out in 1950, to arrest all all-grown communist functionaries had been formulated – the future Minister of Justice, Molnár, who was passive in larger political questions and deemed impressionable by Rákosi and his clique, had to be handled with caution.”<sup>152</sup>

Molnár was also a home-grown communist, an unreliable actor, why would they have trusted him as Minister of Justice, with the fate of the lawsuits against his fellows?

Lackó described Molnár as one who would often retreat out of tactical considerations, but who continued to hold and protect the truth, revealing it at vital moments.

“In later years Erik Molnár would hide something – if only a sentence – of his own opinion in his work as he carried out his party functions (celebratory speeches at the Academy according to Rákosi’s requirements, writing forewords to books, e.g. Rákosi and Hungarian Historiography etc.)”<sup>153</sup>

Was this really a way of taking a stand, or more a task, a slap on the wrist from those in power to show an ideological faction that believed it had won that loyalists of the other party were ready in the background? This strategy was used often in later times, note, for example, Kálmán Benda’s volume on Bocskai which was shredded by the orders of Erzsébet Andics.



Following the damning debate held at the Historical Society, the accusation against the book was that it uncovered feelings of “national unity” between the magnates and commoners in the sources it cited. The book was retracted because of one sentence.<sup>154</sup> The ominous sentence was connected to an episode after the siege of Nové Zámky when the Ottomans demanded prisoners after victory. Bocskai’s general replied with a partial offer: he would hand over the Germans but not the Hungarians. The source is unclear on who was to be handed over, who the Germans and Hungarians were. However, Benda alluded to the idea that a form of national cohesion could have been at work between the aristocrats and commoners. Thus, Erzsébet Andics and her followers destroyed the book for referencing the national independence concept through its sources. The same national independence concept that was central to the period within the national communist ideology of Aladár Mód.

It should be noted that the categories and cliques that Miklós Lackó placed individuals in, without question, before and after 1956 may not have existed as he saw them. Kálmán Benda is the perfect example. He never condemned Aladár Mód.<sup>155</sup> Not because they were both communists but because he found approaches similar to his own in Mód’s concept of history. Furthermore, where did Benda fit within the categories created by Lackó? Benda was persecuted because of his father, who was a teacher at the Ludovica Academy, a student of Szekfű and the descendant of Calvinist Bishops, but close to the Popular Front in the inter-war years. Was he a conservative (Catholic) thinker similar to Szekfű, middle-class, or a kurutz protestant, possibly a left-wing populist?

The Kádár-consolidation made every attempt to dismantle and polarise the unified resistance of intellectuals that had existed in the days of the revolution, through blurring the known borders and twisting facts and memories. These efforts were only successful in the 1970s. In the seventies a new generation of bag-carriers divided everyone into categories along their pasts, views, and goals, allowing them to function with limitations within their own groups. The opinionists were careful to ensure that the groups were closed and to control or kindle various conflicts. The same groups are used to study history to the present day. However, the true borders may not have been exactly as they were drawn.



Lackó also sensed the unfocused confusion after 1956, even in the party leadership.

“These questions became central during the debates held before an audience of (according to the leaders of the Tánacsics-group) several hundred members of the communist movement, and contrary to the official report in the Group’s newspaper,<sup>156</sup> the views expressed were far from uniform. According to the official party account,<sup>157</sup> opinions were split between those that supported Molnár’s views, and those on the left, who criticised him. (Molnár’s most influential supporter was Aladár Mód, who later became his opponent.)<sup>158</sup> The lecture was strongly criticised by both members of the Group and Kádár’s inner circle. Kádár himself is said to have stated that the lecture and the debate should never have been held.<sup>159</sup> Molnár did not know that the views he presented directly contradicted Kádár’s opinion at the time. Kádár’s third goal – if more hidden than the first two – was to ensure continuity with the first years of the 1950s, while propagating policies that corrected the errors of the ‘personality-cult’-era. Thus, Kádár was strongly opposed to any position that supported breaking ties with the past, and this is why he rejected Molnár’s view of the Rákosi-regime.”<sup>160</sup>

Ránki continued the legend also depicting the politician as a dedicated historian:

“He [Molnár] continued to play an active role in cleaner public life as a Member of Parliament, and a member, later president, of the Hungarian delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Nevertheless, he was able to devote more time and effort to academia in the last decade of his life. He became a member of the reorganised Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1949, and director of the Institute of History, and also the head of a university department. While his thoughts and academic writings were undoubtedly influential, he barely participated in administrative duties and the organisation of academic life. Molnár filled many positions only in name. However, from 1957 onwards, his primary focus was directing the Institute of history within the Academy, Molnár gave regular lectures and led work within the Historical Materialism Department of Eötvös Loránd University, and also became a central organiser of academic life as a member of the board of the Academy. Molnár accelerated the rebirth of academic and scientific life as the president of various academic committees and

organisation – the Hungarian Historical Society among them –, and the editor of several journals. Nevertheless, it does not diminish his contribution in this area to state: the most valuable elements of Molnár's oeuvre are his academic works. He should be considered one of the greats of Hungarian historiography mainly because of his books and studies."<sup>161</sup>

"In the second half of the 1930s, the main focus of the Hungarian Communist party was the protection of national independence which was endangered by German fascism. The Communist's sought to unite all liberal forces into a united national front to protect independence. Did this goal contradict the statement of the Communist Manifesto that the working-class had no home in a bourgeois society? Not in the slightest. The expansion of German fascism over Hungary, which destroyed all forms of freedom, would have hindered the fight for democratic rights and socialism. Thus, the protection of national independence provided better conditions to continue the class struggle for socialism. The national Popular Front that was organised by the Communist Party – and partially realised, during the war – was formed mainly from members of the working class. Thus, not counting its bourgeois minority, was none other than the seeds of the socialist nation that was to be formed, the creation of which, is the second task of the Working Class according to the Communist Manifesto."<sup>162</sup>

Ránki then aligned Molnár's activity with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU:

"The 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU – the organic and logical continuation of the ideological struggle against dogmatism that begun with the 20<sup>th</sup> congress – provided the incentive and opportunity, for Molnár to re-examine the question of national identity in Hungarian historiography. (The 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress and Socialist Patriotism.) In this article, Molnár mainly examined how the false political clauses of the Fifties regarding national unity affected our historiography, and what remnants of it had survived. He criticised the schematic opposition of peasants as defenders of the nation and the treacherous nobility to showcase why this view was historically unrealistic. At the same time, he stated that the study of history in the 1950s did not consider 'how the ruling and oppressed classes thought', or 'the ideology, which was never studied in its historical reality, just created according to dogmatic demands' as fields relevant for historical research."<sup>163</sup>

As seen, those of Molnár's articles which are founded on Marxist "sources" are little more than political pamphlets, just as Aladár Mód's. (Until 1989 educators of scientific socialism referred to works considered the classics of Marxism as sources. As the Head of the Department of Historical Materialism, Molnár also relied on the unquestionable nature of these works, rather than the analysis of historical sources, similarly to Mód, who was the Head of the Department of Scientific Socialism.)

A few years later, in the period of re-organisation after the revolutions, the Institute of History became Molnár's main field of activity. Molnár's "expertise and experience" were best put to use here to oversee the debates that were organized during the consolidation. The formerly removed heads of the institute were not sacked again, but Pál Pach Zsigmond was again named Deputy Director and the staff was closely monitored. (For example, three independent agents prepared reports on Domonkos Kosáry's activities.) In the spirit of consolidation, even figures considered untrustworthy by the party were given well-defined specialised tasks. The debate served the same purpose.

The so-called 'nation debate' born here, continued into the 1960s and into the preparative work of the new Marxist reference book on Hungarian history – written along the lines of the ten-volume work edited by Sándor Szilágyi – which was led by Pach, after Molnár's death in 1966.

In any case, the former judge was tasked with overseeing the academic community of historians and refereeing its "free" debates. Due to his political reliability, he had no opponents among his colleagues, and was thus protected from the professional community, and worked to strengthen his position. After 1956 Erik Molnár was removed from the front lines of political life because of his past. It may seem that he was parked on the sidelines. It can no longer be discerned, whether his review of the ideology was an attempt to break out of this situation, or that these thoughts were fed to him in the midst of the debates around consolidation.

### Ervin Szabó

Throughout the twentieth century, changes in Hungarian national consciousness were documented not by historians but intellectuals from other professions: writers (László Németh, who was also a physician), legal professionals (István Bibó and Erik Molnár). Having mentioned Sándor Takáts above and considered him a writer, the works of the librarian Ervin Szabó, and their de-

layed reception should also be mentioned, as they remained influential throughout the century.

Throughout his life, Szabó debated the different interpretations of the 1848–49 revolution and considered the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-century initiatives of the noble estate to be its precursors.<sup>164</sup> As the left-wing theorist of the Hungarian social democratic movement, he rejected the nationalist nature of the revolution. He penned his criticism in a liberal system, from the security of an imperialistic viewpoint, or as a thought experiment, to be published at a later date.

His doctrinist method of demystification was aimed at the national independence rhetoric of 48, which was difficult to digest at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For Szabó, the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire and the national shock caused by Trianon were unimaginable. Delayed reception allows the same ideas to be used effectively for different goals in different historical times. Szabó first drafted the problem in his works commissioned by the Habsburg court, for example, *Social and Party Battles in the History of the 48–49 Hungarian Revolution*. He summarised his concept as follows, in another study, the Foreword written to the Hungarian edition of an Engels study:

“The Hungarian Revolution has successfully been portrayed as an outbreak of a nation’s pure desire for liberty. An event in which a whole social class surpassed its unparalleled merits from the battles of the past centuries. A struggle, in which the inspiring words of poets were fulfilled: ‘Great times. The prophecy of time has been fulfilled: one flock, one pen. There is one religion in this world: Freedom!’

‘There is only one spirit, one heart, one arm... The homeland is one man...’ There are no miracles in history. There are no events that have truly united a nation divided by various interests. There is no class that has renounced its privileges out of simple generosity. Would this miracle have by chance happened only in the history of the Hungarian people? (...) In Hungary, the magnates became the allies of the ruling Habsburg house. The repeated national uprisings were the class struggle of the Gentry. National kings were raised on the shoulders of the Gentry. The single claim these movements had to the modifier ‘national’ (only used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) was the fact that they were fought against a foreign ruling dynasty which was allied with the Hungarian magnates. However, truly nationalistic ideas never appeared in these struggles. For this, neither praise nor reprimand is due. The national idea is simply so new, and so deeply entwined

with the economic revolution that swept through Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with embourgeoisement that the criticism of Béla Grünwald and other chauvinistic judges of Hungarian magnates is just as unfair as the ill-placed irony of those who criticise the national idea when attacking the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian Gentry. The Hungarian Gentry could not have been nationalistic before nationalism was even born.

Therefore, it should be accepted as a simple fact that if the role of the Hungarian Gentry in the advancement of history is evoked, it can by no means be an expression of a desire for national independence and was not nationalistic in character, at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>165</sup>

The partially published oeuvre was of interest in the inter-war years, not only to Elemér Mályusz, a researcher of ethnographic history but also to the national-traditionalist writers, because of its social criticism.<sup>166</sup>

It is no coincidence that Szabó's Marxist criticism of the Early Modern Era in Hungary – penned against the critique of József Révai – also appealed to Erik Molnár, who based the 1959 ‘nation debate’ on it against, among others, Révai himself (the same Révai, whose works were published under his name between the two wars). Furthermore, certain topical elements that appear in Szabó's work reappeared in the demystifying historiography of the 1960s: a glorified representation of Dózsa,<sup>167</sup> or criticism of King Matthias.

Thus, Erik Molnár's first review in 1936 was penned in-line with József Révai, against Szabó's views.<sup>168</sup> Révai himself was uncertain in the Thirties and was more open to Szabó's views on Hungarian history while imprisoned. He strongly opposed Szabó's doctrinist views in a study published in the Twenties entitled *Ervin Szabó and the Myth of 48*. However, he became more accommodating later. In a study from 1936, he recognised and accepted Szabó and “the great deeds of the national past,” which “have served the betterment of humanity” in the spirit of the Popular Front and the “fight against Fascism.”<sup>169</sup>

The complete oeuvre of Szabo was published in Hungarian in 1946, accompanied by an acknowledgement from Zoltán Horváth.<sup>170</sup> Aladár Mód published a criticism of the work in the name of the Communist Party, along the lines applied by Révai. Szabó's approach, however, was mainly integrated by Molnár following the events of 1956. Molnár and others borrowed the aspects of Szabó's work that enabled compromise with the existing Imperial power structure.

“– One of these was Austro-Marxism, which was labelled as Czechoslovakism following the reform movement born in the region in 1968 and played against the “nationalist-fascist” tendencies of the Hungarian revolution, and from which liberals hoped for the wider unification of the region.

– Another was the demystification of the leaders of independence movements, which were treated as anti-nationalist phenomena.

– Another, within the above, was the approach that equated the national kingdom (Matthias Corvinus) with the Habsburgs.

– Again, within the above, criticism that questioned the national character of independence movements in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were treated as a form of ‘false consciousness.’”

Connected to all of the above, possibly in opposition to Gyula Szekfű or the protestant views of the national-traditionalist writers:

– Questioning the early modern consciousness of the inhabitants of the border forts.

– Ignoring the Reformation, or the change in mentality caused by the Reformation’s approach to history, and the different range and scope of possibilities and challenges available due to the Ottoman conquest, opposed to those available to Western nations.

– Presenting the national identity born from the Treaty of Trianon, and the nation’s fate as a minority as a false alternative, primarily by portraying the history of Transylvania as subordinate and negligible.

### The ‘nation debate’

The professional debate amongst historians on the national consciousness took place between 1959 and 63 and is one in a series of politicised debates that aimed to push the absolutist terrorism of the government installed by a foreign invasion towards social consolidation. To achieve this, the government sought an ideological foundation acceptable to the wider masses.

The debate was purely professional and centred not on its own age but one on the edge of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era that seemed entirely indifferent. The lectures given during these debates, apart from the ideologically charged opening and closing remarks, were of a high professional standard. Efforts were made to present methodological diversity, in which

methods and examples were taken from Western sources as well. (This was characteristic of all debates organised for different professions in the period.<sup>171</sup>)

Erik Molnár's concept of history aimed to provide a foundation for the new party leadership which came into power on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1956. In it, Molnár accused the earlier historical-national school of thought, connected to Aladár Mód and Rákosi) with nationalism. Surprisingly, Molnár traced the national ideas of the intra-party opposition that led to the revolution to the same roots.

Molnár aimed to give the post 4<sup>th</sup> November 1956 leadership a concept of the nation built on a new foundation, to lead to either social or party unity. His theory did not consider the increasingly sophisticated forms of feudal resistance to Habsburg rule as a progressive line in Hungarian history, as Mód or earlier Horváth had done. In fact, he considered them explicitly inhibiting and retrograde factors. The centralising policies of the Habsburg Empire, (or in the Marxist terminology used by Molnár) the absolutism aimed at empowering the bourgeoisie, was progressive within Molnár's historical framework, the resistance of the Hungarian Estates of the realm conserved feudalism. Thus, Viennese absolutism became the driving force behind Hungarian development in the 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, while Bocskai and Bethlen fought to conserve feudal power.

Regarding the debate Miklós Szabó wrote:

“Erik Molnár did not extend this line of reasoning to the Rákóczi war of independence or 1848–49, but the conclusion was implicit in the framework. Thus, the broad range of intellectuals, far beyond professional historians, that had followed the debate from the beginning, deduced the consequences of this framework on their worldviews.

It was obvious that the new concept was related to Ervin Szabó's thinking, which considered even 1848–49 to have been a revolt of the estates and questioned its bourgeois nature. The popularity of Erik Molnár's concept led to the rediscovery of the bourgeois radical movement, which became an important element of political thought, mostly through a book by Zoltán Horváth, who had always been a supporter of the tradition. In light of the bourgeoisie radical tradition, anti-Habsburg independence efforts were reactionary movements and inhibited embourgeoisement. The concept provided the new leadership with an ideological weapon.”<sup>172</sup>

As expected, the debate raised hopes of a truly open discussion in a few 1956 émigrés. László Péter, a historian living in London wrote:



“The nationalism debate was initiated by the 1959 theses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, but quickly turned into a spontaneous debate between historians. (...) The debate did not lead to the unification of viewpoints, simply to the formulation of a wide range of different views held by historians, even in theoretical questions. No attempt was even made for a Party ruling or an autocratic statement from a leading Marxist historian to bridge the divides and end the debate.”<sup>173</sup>

### **False consciousness, or “Mátyás Rákosi was the greatest Hungarian Nationalist”**

Molnár discussed the events of the Early Modern Era in the expected framework of class conflict. This enabled increasing the support for consolidation by putting criticised views in Mátyás Rákosi’s mouth, blaming him for the ideological miscarriage, and making him responsible for the “false consciousness” born of nationalistic ideas that led to the revolution of 1956.

“It has been fourteen years since Marxism became the dominant school of Hungarian historiography. However, despite the fact that Marxism has permeated through our view of history, and the fact that 1956 has shown us the full extent of the danger posed by bourgeois nationalism, it cannot be said that nationalism has been eradicated for our historical thinking. Remnants of nationalism continue to survive, sometimes even in the minds of those who are convinced that their view of history is founded on Marxist ideals.

This situation is connected to the fact, that prior to the most recent past, not even our historiographers applied the ideas of Marxism to the questions of nation and homeland consistently.

Instead, they accepted Mátyás Rákosi’s concept of nation and homeland in the early phases of Marxist development, failing to realise that elements of bourgeois nationalism were hidden within. Furthermore, these views were not revised when Mátyás Rákosi was swept aside by the currents of history.

Mátyás Rákosi said that the Hungarian nation was not only upheld by workers and peasants through their work but that they had protected it with weapons in hand. He considered Hungarian history to be not only a series of class conflicts but a series of insurgencies and wars of independ-



ence. He claimed that national unity from the Gentry to the peasants was achieved in 1848, albeit the national unity was pressured by class divisions from within. He even regarded the Hungarian Soviet Republic to be the organic continuation of a series of Hungarian revolutions and wars of independence that began with Bocskai.

Mátyás Rákosi attempted to resolve the contradictions of class conflict based on the implicit idea of classes united in a common homeland. He considered working classes to be national and patriotic, while accusing the ruling classes of treason. Thus, the myth of peasants as the defenders of the nation was born, making them the heroes of the longest period of Hungarian history, the Feudal period. However, by placing patriotic peasants opposite treacherous nobles, Rákosi turned the logic of history, which is the logic of interests, on top of its head. According to the framework, the peasant, who received nothing from the homeland, stubbornly defended the country, while the nobles, who received everything, continuously betrayed the country.

Another, less obvious but no less fundamental, flaw in Rákosi's approach, was to blend the objective and subjective processes of history. Marxism distinguishes objective historical actions and the significance of these, from their subjective motives, the influences under which figures act, and their subjective illusions, according to which they interpret their actions.

The Marxist concept of false consciousness is based on this: people fight their material struggle – until the age of socialism – in the form of false consciousnesses or ideologies. This distinction was completely missing from Rákosi. He only talked about peasants defending the country, but never posed the question, which *motives* or *illusions* (...) [emphasis S. Ó.] drove them to do so. This is perfectly understandable. He did not ask the question, which motives and illusions led peasants to defend the despised feudal order, because the answer, or even asking the question, would have destroyed the myth of peasants as the defenders of the nation.<sup>174</sup>

As seen, Molnár attacked Horváth's and Acsády's myth of peasants as the defenders of the nation, which was the starting point of Mód's historical concept. He continued to bolster his claims with out-of-context quotes from the period that emphasised the class conflict between the peasantry and the nobility.

The centre of this statement was the so-called ‘false consciousness,’ with which the nobility deceived the oppressed peasantry by applying the ideas of noble nationalism, which it had formulated for itself, to them as well. The serfs, suspending the class conflict with their antagonistic enemies, became a secondary base of the nobility, even adopting its phraseology. This tragic deceptive phenomenon, according to Molnár, had little in common with the later bourgeois nationalism that was born after the French Revolution, the inherent possibility of which, western democratization, was severely delayed or never happened in Hungary due to economic underdevelopment. It follows – wrote Molnár – that Hungarian national consciousness to date has been an illusion.

Only socialist patriotism will permanently dispel the illusions of false consciousness. He considered the 1956 revolution a last reactionary attempt of resistance, which is why he believed dealing with ‘false consciousness’ to be of primary importance.<sup>175</sup> Molnár expressed support for the term as used by Ervin Szabó in the Interwar years and received mild criticism for his views from the Party’s Andics-led cultural governance.

Molnár carefully phrased a response to the criticisms at the time.<sup>176</sup>

“The ideals of homeland and national community remained largely the same in bourgeois society as they had been in Feudal society, albeit in an advanced form: a method in the hands of the ruling class to deceive the exploited masses. It is only when the socialist revolution ends the class structure of society that these methods change from false consciousness to elements of an ideology that reflects social reality. This radically alters the social content of the national community. The nation is no longer a community of exploiters and exploited, but a community of workers in a society that has eliminated all forms of exploitation. On this foundation, the true patriotism of socialism, inextricably connected to proletarian internationalism, feudal-bourgeois false patriotism.”<sup>177</sup>

### Did Hungarians ‘Sin’ Before Mohács?

Molnár also quoted the report of the papal envoy to prove the national sins committed before Mohács. However, for Molnár, nobles did not commit sins against the nation, he did not even believe that the battle, lost due to poor leadership, led to a break in nation development, as earlier historians had.

Molnár followed Ervin Szabó loyally: the concept of a nation was anachronistic at the time.

According to his approach, the nobility, as an oppressive class, acted according to its role. It inflicted immeasurable damage by enforcing its own phraseology on the peasantry and deceiving it with the illusion of unity, forcing it to fight against its own interests.<sup>178</sup>

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the papal envoy Burgio wrote:

“There is so much hatred and envy between the Estates that if the Turks were to promise freedom to the peasants, one could fear that they rise up against the nobles more cruelly than at the time of the crusade.”

He supported the quote taken from the Papal envoy with further quotes from John of Szapolya, Miklós Esterházy, Ferenc Rákóczi, and Mór Jókai, declaring national unity to be hollow with words from a leading figure of each age.

What is grotesque in this compilation of citations – which were used repeatedly throughout the debate – that in them the “representatives of the oppressive class” are not whistle-blowers uncovering their own manipulations, but express honest astonishment in a tragic situation affecting the whole national community when they believed that the unity of the community truly existed.

“In 1540 John of Szapolya said: the peasants ‘bend according to the wind when the Turks come, and they kiss their kaftans, and then bless the Germans when they arrive the next day... They always seek their own benefit, betraying the country if they have to.’<sup>179</sup>

“At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Palatine Miklós Esterházy stated that ‘the nobility has no greater enemy than the peasants.’ And at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ferenc Rákóczi repeated the sentiment: ‘Peasants are led by an innate hatred against their lords.’<sup>180</sup>

“This period lasted until 1848. Rákosi’s statement about the national unity realised in 1848 is strange when contrasted with the testimony of those alive at the time. In 1849 Jókai wrote the following in *Életképek*:

‘We have deceived ourselves at length. We believed; we have a nation. We do not. We had nobility, but the word homeland was unknown to the masses that till the earth. Even now, they are grateful for freedom to every-

one but their homeland. If you tell them to rise up to protect the country from the Russians they will burst into tears and cry: they prefer to starve and work, they hate men in coats... for them, no law is law, until the Emperor's seal is not next to it with the two-headed eagle. For us, they bear no arms; they do not believe our words, or support our goals. This is how God punishes us for the sins of our fathers."<sup>181</sup>

Erik Molnár published his concept in numerous articles between 1959 and 1964, but the idea, as seen above, arose earlier and was related to the Austro-Marxist views of the bourgeois radicals. Its reasoning questions the existence of a national consciousness in earlier centuries, claiming that no such concept existed in economically more advanced countries until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, it became an ideology to explain the economic changes, integration and internal markets ushered in by early capitalism. Thus, as it did not exist in more advanced Western European nations, it could not exist in Hungary. Molnár's indirect argumentation mainly lists examples from Western Europe.

Only the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries came into his sights. In any case, it is interesting that Molnár turned away from Ervin Szabó's guiding framework that he had previously followed, most likely for political reasons. He avoided the *kurutz* age in his articles, as its 'between two pagans' approach would have been risky at the time as it propagated an in-between ideology balanced between East and West. While he assumed that a consciousness capable of embracing society as a whole, including its working classes, existed as a later time, he did not consider it to have formed completely by 1848. In an article published in 1960, he wrote:

"The Hungarian bourgeois nation was a deficient formation, and remained a deficient formation for the entirety of its existence because it was not created by the bourgeoisie through the revolutionary destruction of the feudal system, as the French bourgeois nation, but by the feudal lords themselves, who accepted the peasantry and bourgeoisie into the feudal nation. Only the radicals of 1848 sought change in the French form."<sup>182</sup>

According to the quoted concept, the Hungarian nation could only emerge following the destruction of the semi-feudal framework, in the form of a socialist national consciousness. Thus, the population of the country had no unifying cause against the invaders in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as it could not have a shared concept of the nation. Its people had a local consciousness connected

to their place of residence, and a primitive “us consciousness” against the others, which was fundamentally different from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century bourgeois national consciousness that emerged in the economically developed regions of Europe.

Molnár followed the same line of thought in his articles published two years later, with the difference that he newly accused Rákosi of being a nationalist, and categorised the sense of community which he noted regarding the Rákóczi war of independence as the false consciousness of the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He wrote:

“The religious, patriotic or national forms of the feudal ideology were nothing more than the various historical forms of false consciousness. However, this does not mean that they could not play a role in development for a certain time or in certain circumstances. (...) The material driving force of their struggles was not apparent to acting historical figures. Thus, they fought their material battles in the form of false consciousnesses or ideologies. This is also how Hungarian peasants fought their own battles.”

Aladár Mód and the ultra-leftists supporting him were the most outspoken critics of Erik Molnár’s concept. The debate itself centred around two questions of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries: the first was preachers as a social class, the second, soldiers of Hungarian descent as a social class.

“The feudal peasants were silent,” – wrote Erik Molnár “and the further we go back through history the more silent they were. When serfs wrote letters to their lords under normal circumstances, these letters spoke in the humble voice of intimidated peasants. But if peasants rose up in arms to fight for their class goals, the historical source material, as written by the ruling class, undoubtedly distorted reality.”<sup>183</sup>

Later the debate tended towards the view that the aggressive, militant group consciousness of the nobility was the only defining influence on the formation of Hungarian national consciousness in the Early Modern Era. Aladár Mód penned a distinction between minor national and major national nationalism. He claimed that minor national nationalism did not become completely reactionary, even after 1867.<sup>184</sup> The debate thus shifted to the emergence and the bearers of this national consciousness in the Early Modern Era, which often

appeared in the form of political-religious shock therapy at times of crisis, and was a result of the unique situation caused by the danger of Ottoman invasion.

### A Debate Around Two Groups of Sources

“Of course, there were the preachers, and the members of the military class, which at times *seemed* to represent the ideology of the peasantry. [emphasis S. Ó.] But did these preachers and soldiers represent the anti-feudal elements of the peasants’ class struggle? No, they supported cooperation between the classes; they had no interest in dismantling feudal society, their goal was to increase their rank within the same feudal system. Thus, sources of this kind must be examined carefully when researching the true ideology of the peasant class.<sup>185</sup>

These two source groups became central to the debate because both contain several statements with national undertones, which were also often quoted by earlier historians.

1. Postil books written in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries contain a concept that names all social classes and everyone in the geographically divided country to be a member of the Hungarian nation, this is always independent of the fact that someone was Transylvanian or from Western Hungary, or supported a selected party.

2. The second widely accessible group of sources are the records of hajdús and soldiers in the border forts. Molnár considered foreign mercenaries and Hungarian defenders equally as soldiers. While the hajdús often outdid the mercenaries in cruelty and bestiality, the two groups should not be mixed, as a layered, albeit ambivalent, a relationship can be proven between the Hungarian soldiers and the Hungarian population. The possibility of social movement and the possibility of bidirectional ideological influence was much greater than Molnár assumed. Later debates at the end of the Sixties also examined the source groups at length.

From an academic point of view, the debate was free, counterarguments could be made. Invited historians and representatives of connected disciplines were allowed to present opposing views. Nevertheless, not all lectures were published (for example, Antal Pirnát’s was not).<sup>186</sup>

Tibor Klaniczay also expressed his opposition:

“According to Erik Molnár’s concept, and other excellent studies presented at the debate session, the formation and propagation of the concepts home and nation, the birth of the “national” ideology was solely influenced by tendencies from the top of society. That is to say, everything started with the ruling class, and thus, was only valid to the ruling class. Everything else was false consciousness and did not reflect the true state of society. I believe this concept to be one-sided and mechanical. Through the notes above from preachers that represented the 17<sup>th</sup>-century citizens of market towns, and those of Zrínyi, I have attempted to emphasise that, in the case of the national idea, grassroots influences should also be taken into consideration. Without questioning for a moment that in the age of feudalism the national ideology was fundamentally the ideology of the ruling class, just as the culture of the feudal age was is fundamentally the culture of the ruling class, I cannot accept the view that it mechanically follows from the above that every form and every element of the ideology, and by extension the national ideology, reflects only the interests of the noble class. Thus, extending it to include the unprivileged classes is simply political mischief or a view that sinks to the lower layers of society in the spirit of ‘gesunkenes Kulturgut.’

I am certain that the issue is more complicated. Sooner or later concepts or the elements of concepts of nation and homeland will be found from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that must not be considered false consciousness.”<sup>187</sup>

A sharp exchange took place between Géza Perjés and László Benczédi, which addressed an issue central to continuing the debate. Namely, Perjés questioned the fundamental argument:

“The following sentence from László Benczédi is unclear in his discussion of the connections between the concept of the nation and freedom in the border forts: ‘While the soldiers of the border forts borrowed their national consciousness from the nobility, they adapted the conceptual framework to demand their freedom above all else.’ Soldiers in the border forts already enjoyed a great deal of freedom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as the protection of the border could only be maintained by providing certain rights and privileges. Serfs became soldiers to enjoy these rights. I fail to see why the nation concept of the nobility would have been needed to formalise this freedom.

Is the fundamental argument of the debate, namely that the ideology of the ruling class is the ideology of the nation, not applied too strictly here?"<sup>188</sup>

And he continued:

"...in the West – and in the past in Hungary as well – the power of the state was legitimised by the Church. This vital role of faith was non-existent in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary, as the state was Catholic, while the majority of serfs Protestant.

Based on this, I feel that Erik Molnár's statement on how serfs were indifferent to whether the state was foreign or of their own nationality is problematic. Based on the above, they could not have been indifferent! To summarise: opposed to the West, where the authority of the state would have been unquestionable to serfs, this was not the case in Hungary."<sup>189</sup>

In his reply, Benczédi acknowledged Perjés's arguments but claimed that his 'opponent' had misunderstood his reasoning.

Two opinions on the two source groups have been quoted above from Klaniczay and Perjés. However, a systematic summary of the whole debate is beyond the scope of the present study and would provide little insight regarding its main subject, as the majority of lectures did not align with or confront ideological expectations.

Lackó connected Molnár's research to Elemér Mályus's work in ethnography and the history of the Gentry.<sup>190</sup> While Molnár overshadowed Mályusz, he also protected him, and saw an ally in him for the formulation of the new ideology and national consciousness, mainly against the inter-war studies of József Deér, who had since been forced into exile.<sup>191</sup>

### The Guilty Gentry

The debate was the nascent moment of the negative view of the Gentry. As seen above, the Swiss-schooled István Bibó, traced the anti-democratic mentality of later gentlemen to the bravado of 'minor nobles' in the age of Dózsa. The doctrinist framework in question was one that considered Western development an etalon and democracy the only uplifting form of government. It is no coincidence that Molnár and his successors also integrated Bibó's theories on regional and dead-end Hungarian development. (There is no



reason to believe Miklós Lackó's claim that Bibó's views, who was imprisoned at the time, were not widely known.)

In both Hungary (and the Poland-focused studies of soviet academia) the privileged layer (the *szlachta*) was the greatest obstacle to democratisation, as it created a community that conserved and professed national characteristics, thus, served in the military, and rose up in times of foreign hegemony. Among the border peoples that protected Europe from nomadic or Islamic nations (the Spanish, Catalan, Basque, Portuguese, Polish-Lithuanian, Hungarian, Croatian, etc.) military communities formed differently than those in the central regions of Europe due to their historical circumstances and unique way of life. They lived in part, as a result of the fort systems in cities (thus could be called burghers or citizens in the Western terminology), or in market towns and villages (thus could be called peasants).

The nobility, which was regularly engaged in military service, and the various privileged military classes (minor nobles) of the land (*kozaks*, *hajdus*, *Jasz-Cumanians* etc.) together became, in some form or other, the base of the intellectual and bureaucrat layer of the Western European bourgeoisie, and could account for up to 20% of the population in certain regions. They gave these areas a character distinct from the very different urban development on inner European territories, and simultaneously became the stabilisers of society and a unique middle class with a stated group identity. They were the ones, who bled out as the leaders of national uprisings resisting the empire conglomerates at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also suffered brutal extermination and resettlement (note the hundreds of thousands of Poles moved to Siberia and the Caucasians). Nevertheless, they simultaneously served as a model for the peasant classes in forming their own mentalities, and to continue their uprisings (e.g. in 1863). The Polish nobility was the enemy of the teleological imperialist ideology of the Russian Empire, envied by the Soviets, and also the greatest enemy of the Communist regime.

### French Examples and Soviet Reality

The West-admiring European doctrinists and the communist elite trained in Moscow found a common meeting ground in French examples. Molnár was a member of both schools. This was why his French examples adhered to the demands of Soviet scholarly literature. Ránki added this to the legend in 1971 as follows:

“In his article ‘On patriotic National Ideology’ he primarily clarified the role of ideology. He rejected simplified, dogmatic view and stated: ‘The theories of ideologists are created to justify the existence and goals of their classes, by representing the interests of their class as the interests of society as a whole. Thus, these ideologies are rooted in the material conditions of their existence. However, the ideologists are not aware of this; thus their theories form unconsciously under the influence of their material interests and conditions of life. Thus, ideology becomes even more like ideology in the strictest sense of the word, thus, according to Engels, a process which is completed by the thinker in a state of false consciousness because its true driving forces remain hidden from them.

He continued to compare the development and characteristics of the patriotic national ideology through a comparison of French and Hungarian sources. The main goal of his work was to pinpoint the circumstances which caused this ideology to have more democratic undertones in France. The fight for national independence and the oppression of ethnic minorities are elements characteristic of the increasingly bourgeois Hungarian national ideology from the beginning. As a result of noble leadership, the Hungarian national ideology ruled out democracy to a certain degree, and thus the progressive role of the national ideology ended with 1867. However, this does not mean – emphasises Molnár – that it then played a negative role. “The national idea continues to be popular among the masses to the present day and has in part become an irrational force among them. Its roots can be traced to the ideology of the feudal-bourgeois nobility and has thus collected reactionary, nationalist undertones. However, it contains elements, such as the love of homeland and language, which can be integrated into socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism in the current stage of building socialism.”<sup>192</sup>

The French revolution was unique in exterminating the leading noble elite by the 17<sup>th</sup> century and levelled the many-cultured and multi-lingual French monarchy with drastic methods by the end of the century. Soviet modernization utilised a similar methodology in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Hungarian model is less comparable. The population of the country spoke mainly Hungarian, and its dialects were understandable everywhere in the country and did not differ greatly from the current language, and thus cannot be truly compared to the French examples brought by Molnár and later Jenő Szűcs).

Molnár's criticism of the negative image painted of the Gentry, and the Hunyadis as seen from its perspective,<sup>193</sup> as well as the anti-Habsburg movements<sup>194</sup> of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries defined research and academic support in the following years. Molnár did not discuss the Rákóczi war of independence<sup>195</sup> and the events of 1848–49, thus the positive nature of their unified national consciousness remained unquestioned until the end of the Millennium.<sup>196</sup>

According to Jenő Szűcs, the Gentry's group and national consciousness – was formulated based on the chronicle by Simon of Kéza and conserved through the age of the Hunyadi's for Werbőczy's book of laws by the political party of the Gentry – was the base of a national consciousness of the nobility.<sup>197</sup> Both Molnár and Szűcs considered this national consciousness to be characteristic of a narrow social class and not the nation as a whole. Molnár stated that the proliferation of this consciousness constituted an anti-democratic false consciousness, which from the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries became increasingly retrograde.

Szűcs attempted to define a separate and local “bourgeois” consciousness, built around places of residence, opposed to the nobility's consciousness, which he deemed widely unacceptable to the ethnically diverse peasants of the country. He dated the first instances of such to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century monastic orders and the sermons of Osvát Laskai.

The aversion to the nobility's national consciousness is shown by the fact that the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup>-century groups and parties that supported its ideology were presented in a negative light by research around the turn of the Millennium, for example, Pál Engel on the court and political parties around the Hunyadis or Ferenc Szakály on those around Szapolyai.

Following the successful consolidation, the country's political leadership began to support a new generation of young historians in the second half, the last third of the 1960s. These researchers had previously been deemed untrustworthy because of their father's lives or their backgrounds.<sup>198</sup>

“However, other personal incentives also played a role. The majority of those who took part in the debate supported the revolution. Nevertheless, there were some who were critical of it, especially its possible outcomes. Following the revolution, several of these researchers agreed if not with Molnár's answers, but the questions he raised, despite their doubts; they considered the study of the national-nationalist ideology a historical neces-

sity. As a result, they were less inclined to confront the immediate political and ideological contexts of their stance and how these supported Molnár. Several of them felt that 1944 and the Horthy Era were still too close, and while supporting the revolution, were afraid of a right-wing or even far-right restoration. This defined their views following the revolution. Others simply did not face the internal questions of Marxism, or what was called Marxism at the time, and this created points of contact between them and Molnár;<sup>199</sup> – wrote Miklós Laczkó.

It should be noted, that while the internal politics of the party defined the historical consideration and terminology used with regards to 1956, not all researchers – even those who participated in the debate – accepted and applied it. Only those who wished to build a career by serving the new (old) administration, from its outset.

“In principle, this young generation was tasked, alongside others, with raising and examining this question. A similar process ran its course in the more drastically effected Germany, where the ‘self-purge’ was not led by intellectuals who had been active in the 1930s and either submitted to the Nazis or remained silent. Rather, a younger generation, born in the Twenties worked – despite national losses and frustrations – to transform society’s thinking and strengthen democratic national consciousness.”<sup>200</sup>

Thus, the young were assigned with consolidation. Following the German example brought by Lackó, they showed repentance for the sins of their fathers during the Horthy era and integrated themselves into the new elite and system with an anti-nationalist and anti-fascist ideology.<sup>201</sup>

### **“The Party Summary” or “The Error of Objectivity Leads Into the Trap of Bourgeois Nationalism Modernised with Revisionism” (1965)**

The debate that began in 1963 was closed by a book published with a Foreword from Zsigmond Pach Pál in 1965, entitled *Debate on Class Struggles in Hungary and the Fight for Independence (Vita a magyarországi osztályküzdelmekről és függetlenségi harcokról)*. The volume contained a selection of studies from the debate, while the Foreword brought it to a close. The first steps to-

wards consolidation had been made. The government had reached a compromise with the intelligentsia. The country was past the first amnesties granted after the post-revolution retaliation, the Party no longer needed an ideology.<sup>202</sup> It sailed between the Scylla and Charybdis of right and left in calm waters. There was no need for debates that brought opinions into opposition and defined the front lines.

The party jargon, again easily understandable by all, closed the debate at full volume (only computers that do not understand the symbolic language of the time underline the quotes taken from the period as if they were grammatical mistakes or mixed metaphors). ‘Professor Pach’<sup>203</sup>, the new leader of historical studies, shook his head disapprovingly one last time at the third way, ethnic-focused ‘Hungarian globe’ school of historiography and closed the debate. Nevertheless, to ensure that historians and those of the community who were interested in their past did not fall into the error of objectivity, original source publications were suspended at the end of the 1960s. Only professional historians were allowed access to the Giftschränk of history due to the dangers inherent in giving access to the incompetent. The following major debate on Mohács can only be understood from this viewpoint. Pach, thus, attempted to close the debate with the following:

“Above all, they covered up and obscured the fact that class conflict was the main driver of Hungarian history, and that the history of Hungarian society is, in fact, a history of class conflicts. Instead, they depicted the early periods of our history to be some form of patriarchal idyll and brought various oppositions to the fore in later centuries. Mainly the kurutz-labantz struggle (and its constantly renewed variants), later the opposition in public law, and finally ethnic conflicts (the Jewish). The various representatives of our earlier historiography have been equal in hiding the fundamental class conflict, as is the quintessence of bourgeois nationalism. Even the most influential historian of the years before and after the Liberation, Gyula Szekfű, forgot to mention the underlying class conflict of feudalism in his study of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when listing the ‘oppositions that arose with Bocskai’s uprising’ (starting with the Transylvania–Habsburg conflict) that ‘prepared to tear apart the unified national consciousness of the Middle Ages.’

The above necessarily served as a breeding ground for the emergence of various bourgeois-objectivist and revisionist ideas, which in part feeding

on the virulent bourgeois past, in part as a form of opposition to sectarian dogmatism, led intentionally or unintentionally to some researchers finding the meaning of their work in meticulous technicalities and the organisation of large datasets. As a result, they consciously or unconsciously renounced theoretical generalisation and a universal approach, or in the worst case threatened a return to the ‘Hungarian Globe’ ideology, and lead into the trap of the well-known ideas of bourgeois nationalism modernised with revisionism, the ‘unique Hungarian path.’”

“Thus now, as we attempt to answer a few relevant questions of our discipline towards the end of our second liberated decade, we must not only consider the results of our Marxist historical studies, as opposed to the quality of Hungarian bourgeois historiography, and in overcoming the bourgeois nationalist view of history, but must also examine whether and to what degree, we have been successful in freeing ourselves from the pincer of dogmatic constraints and revisionist influences, and the remnants of the bourgeois approach stuck to these as weeds, since 1956–57. Have we successfully avoided, and if yes, to what degree, the pitfalls, and sandbanks, the Scyllas and Charybdises that endangered our progress from the right and “left” but all pulled us back towards the past?”

### **The Historical Afterlife of the Debate**

Despite these efforts the debate could not be ended and ran until the 1980s under titles such as “The history of national Consciousness” and “The National Atmosphere”, realising a campaign of moral and academic terror against professionals and the general public. The debate truly only came to close in the years before the fall of communism. Over one hundred books, articles and collections were published dealing with the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries from this perspective. The vast majority of these are journalistic heckles, but meaningful academic articles were also released.

Despite the influence of Western approaches, all participants continued to move within a Marxist framework, utilised its arguments, selected elements of its iconography, and relied on its apparatus of legitimizing citations and topoi. If the Party leadership believed it was capable of controlling the debate, it was mistaken.

The debate was only an example of freedom of thought, and methodological pluralism for foreigners, as proven by documents preserved in the Archives of the State Security Agency, the informants who reported on historians also detailed the views these held in the debate.<sup>204</sup>

On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1960 an agent named “Vili” reported on a Historian:

“It was only after the events of 1956 that he really understood the Thököly-problem. Thököly led an anti-Habsburg uprising, supported by the Ottomans in 1568, at a time when there was international intent to drive back the Ottoman Empire through a coalition led by the Habsburgs. In this situation, a successful rebellion, which would have achieved independence from the Habsburgs, would have meant the continued rule of the Ottomans over Hungary, while they strangled the economic power of the country with their Asian feudalism. Emigration was a personal solution for Thököly, but it could not be one for the whole of society, just as it was not a solution for his kurutz fighters, who defected to the Imperial forces fighting the Ottomans. – Here in Hungary, socialism is being built, while the West is ruled by the Capitalist free market. He compared Thököly’s emigration to Béla Király’s defection, saying, while he may have made a living for himself in the West, which remains impossible for the masses of society, but if he were to return to Hungary with American support, he would be unable to realise his ideals, and be forced to serve the political goals of the Americans.”

The parallel here is obvious. According to the reports, just as the route to end the isolation of Kádár’s government in international politics led through the French left-wing, it was the French who were the first to understand the academic changes as well. The report speaks of possible scholarships and applauds the fact that Fernand Braudel leaned to the left.

Without bringing further citations from this period, one other aspect should be noted. The same Vili reported on Péter Hanák<sup>205</sup> that he hoped the 1968 events in Prague, would lead to the formation of a bloc similar to the Habsburg Monarchy, which was not independent of the Soviet Union but removed national borders and created a federation. One of Hanák’s favourite ideas was that the disintegration of the Monarchy into nation-states had been disadvantageous for the region. He hoped for a historical chance of unification to arise from the events in Prague, with – according to the agent – national character falling into the background. This is a form of the “Czecho-Slo-



vakism” that became popular later, which was acceptable to intellectuals who followed Ervin Szabó’s ideas, rather than those of 1956.

### The Missing Reception of Bibó

The reception of the other great thinker, and critic of the national consciousness after World War II was fatally delayed. In the 1960s and 70s, during which Bibó suffered a fatal heart attack while organising a storeroom in the basement of the Central Statistical Office after being released from prison, and during which the historical committee refused to publish his works citing professional inaccuracies, the “Hungarian historical development that deviated from the European road” theory coined by Pach – who had meanwhile become the Deputy President of the Academy –, which was also propagated in the West, was very similar in its idea and elements to the Bibó’s study entitled *Disfigured Hungarian Character, the Dead-Ended History of Hungary* (*Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem*).

Similarly, the circle around Pach, which was delegated to propagate Hungarian history in Western Europe conferred over Bibó’s study entitled *The Misery of Eastern Europe’s Minor States* (*A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága*). Jenő Szűcs was alone in referencing Bibó’s theory in his *The Three Regions of Europe* (*Európa három történelmi régiója*).<sup>206</sup> The study was written for the Bibó Memorial Album, which aimed to reconcile two groups of intellectuals that were in opposition to each other.

The increasingly Western-oriented country finally allowed the Bibó debate to go ahead, due to the influence of 1956 émigrés, but the debate was too late, the world had changed in the years that passed. For example, his careful and balanced ideas in *The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy* (*A magyar demokrácia válsága*) seemed naive and inexplicable after 40 years of targeted and scheming left-wing dictatorship. The third-way policies seemed idealistic in a country under the yoke of the Soviet troops stationed within. The concept which examined the history of the national consciousness through the eyes of the national-traditionalist movement seemed obsolete and historical after 1956 when the peasantry had lost all political influence, and the demographics of the country were completely redefined.

Despite the above, the oeuvre was impressive and varied, usable in fragments. However, it seems, little effort was even made to utilise it in its entirety, with all its interconnected elements. Thus, the Bibó reception was lopsided.



Not only, because it was those who had silenced him beforehand that later attempted to integrate his views into their work, but because only elements of his critique of the national consciousnesses were ever used.

There was no interest in his criticism of the Compromise, as it was deemed false realism, not only because after the Erik Molnár debate, historiography could only imagine the country within the Habsburg Empire, and examined the various concepts of the intelligentsia with the eyes of Mariahilferstraße, but because Bibó's views symbolically represented his life, which refused to compromise with another empire. In the first case, the Habsburg Empire, which stood on feet of clay, offered false illusions and paid with the national apocalypse. In the second case, the reformed Soviet system, which he refused to legitimise. The third was Euro-American globalisation, which in reaction to the demands of both East and West the Aczél-ideology, was only capable of modelling as similar to the century-old ideology of the imperial two-headed eagle, the Habsburg Empire.

Bibó's small democratic communities assumed the gradual creation of a national community. Thus his ideas fundamentally refuted the possibility of compromise with dynastic or ideological empires.

The 'nation debate' continued. However, as the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century of the country was placed centre-stage rather than the 20<sup>th</sup>, nobody was at risk of being "reckless." The symbolism of the debate was understood by circles far wider than the small professional audience, which also followed the debate. Nevertheless, the formulation of ideology stayed at a euphemistic level, and the Party was not forced to intervene, to retaliate, or even understand any attacks worded against it out of prestige. At the same time, the debate offered the Administration feedback on the state on specific elements of consciousness, and by following reactions to the symbolism used, the questions that irritated society dangerously, and how groups were formed around these.

The debate continued in 1967, with an article by Vilmos Faragó entitled *Small Country (Kicsi ország)*. At this stage even if historians (e.g. Géza Perjés or László Benczédi) weighed in on the debate, their contributions were more journalistic. The fervour that had died down by the 1970s was rekindled by István Nemeskürty's study on Mohács. Later the debate continued with the Géza Perjés's book entitled *Country Left on the Side of the Road (Országút szélére vetett ország)*.

The national consciousness remained at the centre of the polemy even in its journalistic period. The debate continued to keep pace with political changes.

1959–63: was the period of consolidation, 1967–68 when the debate re-started, was the period of the New Economic Mechanism, 1972–73: when the New Economic Mechanism was curtailed.<sup>207</sup>

In August 1959 József Révai died. In September the periodical *Társadalmi Szemle* (The Social Review) published a statement of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party with the title: *About Bourgeois Nationalism and Socialist Patriotism (A burzsoá nacionalizmusról és a szocialista hazafiságról)*. The statement defined the viewpoint of studies on the national consciousness for the following years, governing the arguments published in the debate.

### The 'Mohács Debate' or the Betrayal of the Intelligentsia (1966–1978)

The debate resumed with István Nemeskürty's *What Happened After Mohács (Ez történt Mohács után)* and lasted for nearly one and a half decades.<sup>208</sup> As the title alludes, the book accused the national community of failing to act in a time of crisis. The topoi that first appeared in Mihály Horváth's summarising work also make an appearance, and similarly to the leading works analysed above, Nemeskürty also relied on morally embedded arguments.

The picture of a society characterised by cowardly carelessness and the chaos of atomised interests is drawn. The author depicts a mass of egoistic sins and an elite incapable of ruling. In the background a half-hearted audience, that leaves the game at half-time due to the rain and weathers the storm at home. Nemeskürty primarily accused the nobility, which while buried under the collapse refused to take responsibility for it.

The author's use of Mohács as a metaphor is easy to understand, as it serves as a parallel to his own time.<sup>209</sup> The book was first published in 1966. The debate around it sparked in the second half of the next year. Géza Perjés first published a formal professional critique of the book from the perspective of military history.

Nemeskürty was a literary historian well-versed in the time period, who published a monograph on Péter Bornemissza, thus should not be considered to have come from outside the discipline, as was accused.<sup>210</sup> Nemeskürty was a well-educated, talented writer, and one of the fathers of Hungarian film in the Aczél-era, and thus, had a formative effect on the culture of the period. Alongside the vast amount of collected data, the book is an embodiment of the period of consolidation that lasted from 1956 until 1965. A foreign rule that

fluctuated between compromise and a rule of terror was similar for Nemeskürty to the events that followed Mohács. (Punitive expeditions, collection of prisoners, the appointment of a foreign governor, the establishment of a collaborative government, polarising domestic opposition factions against one another, the submission of the leading domestic opposition to foreign rule.) The model was the same, as was society's reaction. The author depicted a treasonous intelligentsia that primarily supported its own causes, stubbornly refused to face reality, was unwilling of sacrifice and disrespectful towards its dead.

The book could almost be considered as a modern paraphrase of János Arany's *The Gypsies of Nagyida* (*Nagyidai cigányok*). It spoke a symbolic language that everyone, including its attackers, understood. The military historian Perjés Géza retired because of the upheaval caused by the book. Its contents were proof-read by Kálmán Benda,<sup>211</sup> who flagged several historical inaccuracies in his review. However, the author did not correct several of these, as the book was not primarily about the time period. It did not falsify the historical period but gave voice to a scathing moral condemnation of a society that had put down its arms by 1968.

It remains unclear why the Government allowed the book to be published, or why it allowed (or even encouraged?) the debate – which was fought by a younger generation from the shadows of older researchers. Whether the integration of this younger generation served to silence the middle-class children of those who were involved in 1956 or aimed to probe the unity of the national consciousness during the revolution is difficult to discern.

In 1964 the Government still feared a second revolt. However, society was suspicious of those released from prison, rather than greeting them as heroes. By 1967 the Compromise was final and had spread through the whole of society with self-censorship and complete amnesty. The new unique economic system provided new legitimacy for the system. The Government proclaimed it as the unique Hungarian path, the New Economic Mechanism within the Socialist Bloc, not the politically independent Hungary of 1956 which could have existed between the Superpowers.

Nemeskürty questioned the unified spirit of those living in the border forts, as penned by Szekfű.<sup>212</sup> During the overwhelming events of 1956, a similar feeling seemed to arise, yet in 1966 Nemeskürty wrote about grave robbing. It is not the often unhistorical or naive questions raised by Nemeskürty that are interesting. (Is it possible to field as many soldiers as needed to stop the Ottoman, Eastern advance?) The author brought a diagnosis of spiritual

failure, surrendered goals and amnesia. Perjés was late to realise that the book was not a specialist study, but rather a requiem for a country, a requiem for a revolution.

Ferenc Szakály responded to the book on behalf of the historian community, and the doctrines of Erik Molnár, which continued to bind intellectuals, can be seen in his words:

“It was, of course, to be expected that Hungarian Marxist historiography that emerged after 1945 could not rely on the support of an audience that was under the influence of illusions of Hungary becoming a great power and revisionary chauvinism. This was barely changed by the fact that the historiography of the Rákosi-era conserved a great deal of earlier bourgeois historical views, as a result of its unique popular front policies., and thus gave what Erik Molnár named the ‘nationalist remnants of Hungarian historiography’ (*Új Írás*, November 1962, 1236–1237.) ample opportunity. Naturally, these concessions, born of hybrid concepts, were unsatisfactory for everyone: they were insufficient to win over those opposed but were enough to prevent the consistent dismantling of the old and the true, working presentation of the new. Compounding these errors were the faults of the whole ideology: dogmatism, schematism, overlooked branches of research or forgotten scientific disciplines. Naturally, the Marxist re-evaluation of Hungarian historical sciences was a more profound process, than to be prevented on a professional level by these faults. However, it is beyond doubt that these factors limited its efficiency and penetration. From an aspect that considers the experience of the reader, it should be noted that the retrograde elements of Rákosi-era’s historical approach had the most negative effect on the field of political historiography. Meanwhile, at the same time, research into economic and social history began to fill the blanks left by bourgeois historical studies and delivered outstanding results.

However, the history of major events and political situations garners more interest with the general public, than economic history, which requires a great deal of background knowledge. (This may be why Nemeskürty neglected to detail the economic changes of the period.)<sup>213</sup>

(A young generation of economic historians ran dizzying careers after 1956 and the change in ideology. They were awarded Doctor of Sciences degrees and Kossuth prizes at the age of thirty and were the new trustworthy faces to take the place of the compromised old guard.)

This is why Szakály claimed the better works of the period were less known:

“Similarly to him, others are also worried by the destruction of illusions and myths. When it is found that an actor is unworthy of the respect bestowed upon them by posterity, then they all seem to fear that nothing will remain of Hungarian history other than dry datasets and a series of examples not to be followed. To these, I can answer nothing but that they themselves are the ones who underestimate the progressive traits and forces of Hungarian history, despite the fact that they accuse others of this. The time has come to replace the ‘values’ of the fallen classes with, time to truly appreciate the role of, the forces of those truly working classes that ensured the continuation of life in any conditions and for the whole of society. [Emphasis S. Ó.] Naturally, this does not mean that moving forward the working classes should be treated without criticism. This would only lead to the formation of a new myth. It can also not result in ruling everything that used to be considered valuable, or complete social classes, as backwards and a hindrance to progress. It simply means – and this is no small feat – that the inherent value of all these, is measured through the procession of history. And this is a task worthy of a historian!”<sup>214</sup>

Ferenc Szakály published a detailed critique of the Nemeskürty book. He assigned the outstanding success of the book the interesting, albeit superficial descriptions of events it provided. However, his criticism was more directed at Géza Perjés, who attacked Nemeskürty in the December 1967 issue of *Kortárs* from an approach founded in military history, *The intellectual and emotional components of patriotism (A hazafiság és történelemszemlélet értelmi és érzelmi összetevői)*.

Kata Beke claimed that Szakály was again aiming to fight on two fronts. Against the stranger, who had come from outside the inner circle of his discipline on the one side, and against the “illusions of the struggle for independence” on the other. He cited Erik Molnár’s article as a doctrine to be followed. Thus it had remained a compulsory view,<sup>215</sup> despite Molnár’s death.

According to the Molnár canon, modern European nationalism is a relatively young concept, born in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>216</sup> Jenő Szűcs penned a modernised approach to Molnár’s ideas. This was a new younger generation that had been schooled almost entirely after the war by teachers such as Elemér Mályusz and Domonkos Kosáry. Among them were (and are)

outstanding talents, credited with outstanding academic achievements and impressive oeuvres.

Of these, research conducted by Jenő Szűcs into the national consciousness and ideology is the most relevant to the subject of the current study; thus the following will focus on his concept. The following chapters will concentrate on ideas that were first coined by Ervin Szabó, placing emphasis on the writings published in Szűcs's collection of studies entitled *Nation and History* (*Nemzet és történelem*), in which the ideas of Ervin Szabó were reconsidered from a new angle and integrated into the Molnár canon.

Szűcs penned his two fundamental articles on the subject in a concise style, relying on an argumentation founded on international professional studies and mainly French secondary literature. These two papers were: *The Historicism of the Nation* (*A nemzet historikuma*) and *The National Viewpoint of History* (*A történet szemlélet nemzeti látószöge*).

Szűcs's leading opponents in the debate of the Seventies was not another historian, but again a leading intellectual figure of the time, Gyula Illyés.<sup>217</sup>

### “National Independence” in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century or There Was Never a Unique Hungarian Path (1968–69)

The debate was sparked by two historians who were both descendants of elite families of Calvinist pastors and attended Eötvös College at almost the same time. Zsolt Trócsányi objected to Jenő Szűcs's *The Historicism of the Medieval National Ideology*, sparking a debate around the 17<sup>th</sup>-century independence movements and the existence of the Transylvanian state.

In his article, Szűcs traced the concept of a virtual nation, which excluded all other social classes, to the mediaeval nobility. He claimed that this virtual nation was only willing to defend its homeland with words from as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Despite this, the false emotions raised by its rhetoric were able to mobilise large swathes of society against the centralist rulers, the Habsburgs at certain times.

“Lacking the required number of mercenaries, a ‘military class’ – formed partially of declassed nobles and partially of peasants – defended a number of the border forts. This class filled a unique role positioned between the nobility and the peasantry. On the one hand, it looked down on serfs with a military arrogance, and as an underpaid military, it demanded brutal con-

tributions from the peasants (while defending them against Turkish raids). On the other hand, due to familial ties to the peasantry, it also continuously mediated the ideas of the noble and military classes towards the peasantry. The hajdús had played a similar role since Bocskai, especially in the areas between Transylvania and Royal Hungary, the so-called Partium.”<sup>218</sup>

The parenthesis in the citation speaks for itself; it diminishes the role of the military in protecting the livelihoods, culture and lifestyle of the population. The positive side of the military class was placed in parentheses.

Furthermore, Szűcs again applied the concept of “false consciousness” to explain why the military class, which should have served with the oppressive classes, cooperated with the nobility and the peasantry. (Szűcs neglected the earlier terminology, which claimed that soldiers, nobles and peasants rediscovered their common lingual, cultural, traditional and spiritual roots in a deplorable situation to unite against the common enemy of a foreign empire, or empires. These notions only need to be explained in an occupied country.)

Szűcs rejected Erik Molnár’s theory while applying it: the independence movements should not have turned out this way, the peasantry should not have cooperated with its oppressors, because of the nobility’s ability to capitalise on Habsburg dilettantism and false consciousness. The peasantry should not have called “sweet homeland” and deviated from the class struggle.

“The Habsburg court – in its incompetence – first created its own potential enemy, then later its potential ally in this non-noble military class, by betraying the burghers and peasants, eventually even making enemies of them through the counter-reformation, cruel taxation and the looting of uncontrolled mercenaries. Thus, a situation unique in European terms was created: by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the peasantry had become the political ally and manpower reserve of the nobility, which was its true and potential enemy. When the Hungarian Estates of the Realm moved, they were often successful in rallying peasants. The battle cries of these movements often formed against a foreign empire, or centred on freeing the “sweet homeland”, and these spread amongst the peasantry as well.”<sup>219</sup>

While this statement is more cautious than the stance Molnár took, when he voted for Habsburg centralisation, the genetic connection is obvious.



“Then, how should we deal with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century ‘independence movements’?” – asked Szűcs and replied: “In their historical place.” The response deprives these movements of all previously used progressive and retrograde modifiers.

The debate continued on the pages of *Valóság* in 1969. Zsolt Trócsányi published an article entitled *The Debatable Questions of our 16<sup>th</sup>-century History (16. századi történelmünk vitás kérdései)* in response to Szűcs’s study.<sup>220</sup> Trócsányi aimed to flag one side of the Szűcs article, which compared the events of Hungarian history to other events of the Middle Ages that were less specific or unique when seen from Western Europe.

Trócsányi highlighted a barely obtrusive sentence from the article “he states that it was a unique situation in European terms that /in Hungary/ the peasantry became the political ally and manpower reserve of its true and potential enemy by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>221</sup> He then notes that this situation was not unique (at least in Eastern European terms) and referred to the decisive period of the Second Northern War (1655–57) which devastated Poland for nearly two decades.

“In 1655 Charles X Gustav, King of Sweden attacked Poland, his large, exceptionally trained, disciplined and well-lead armies made impressive initial gains. The Polish King John II Casimir fled, and only a handful of Southern magnates, General Potocki, Lubormirski and a few others attempted to organise resistance. This was when the peasantry became their unexpected ally. The peasantry was heavily burdened by the taxes collected by the Swedish King and supplying the moving Swedish armies and garrisons – not to mention the swift retribution for delayed payment of either. Beyond all these, it was deeply aggravated (as a country with a Catholic majority) by the looting of Catholic churches etc. The peasants’ rebellion began in the south (against smaller garrisons sometimes successfully, at others with failed attacks). The leaders of the southern noble resistance (primarily Wielopolsky) allied with these anti-Swedish peasant movements. (Of course, it came organically from the course of events that the Catholics rebels and their aristocrat leaders sacked the manors of Protestant Polish nobleman as well, as they considered them to be loyal to the Swedish.)

This noble-peasant alliance became a constant (or at least lasting) element of the Second Northern War. The peasant “colluvies” were always beside the armies of Polish mercenaries and nobles that fought with Scythian tactics, not committing to larger battles, but constantly attacking the ene-



my's flank. Thus, the phenomenon was not unique to Hungary – at the most, its intensity and continuity in Hungary can be considered such. Especially in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, no similar formation can be found elsewhere.”<sup>222</sup> Szűcs “criticised the illusion that the noble republic, of form of national kingdom (with no realistic base in either domestic or European affairs), which led the nobility in its fight, would have brought freedom to the serfs of Hungary, who accounted for 90% of the population.”<sup>223</sup>

Trócsányi argued that as there was no external opportunity to liberate and unify the country following the death of Matthias, until the wars that ousted the Ottomans, these ideas were an illusion. The liberation and independence movements founded on the Principality of Transylvania were attempts to “satisfy a desire”: to maximise the amount of land and wealth concentrated in the successor state that maintained its claim to unifying the country.

Trócsányi asked the question:

“What could be the healthier influence on the development of a group, community (or whatever we call it): to at least try to satisfy the desire, (even if the issue is only resolved by a compromise), or to refrain from the risky attempt?”<sup>224</sup>

Trócsányi believed that Szűcs was jousting windmills when he demanded the release of the masses in serfdom during these conflicts. At the time, there was simply no means to achieve this in Western Europe, let alone Eastern Europe. With its free soldier-peasants Transylvania went to the limits of what was possible. Trócsányi also highlighted the strength of denominations and religions in community building throughout the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, citing the topos of what has become known as the Swedish Deluge – following in the footsteps of the Sienkiewicz novel – in Catholic Poland as an example. Stood in the centre of the topos is the siege of Jasna Góra, which became a Polish-Catholic national myth.

(Interestingly, István Király also reached back to the same place in his *Vácrátót* Political Pamphlet. He also cited a Polish example from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to illustrate how national myths spread in large communities, against those who used the bludgeon of scientific method, to question the continuity of national consciousness due to its anachronistic nature.)

Trócsányi called Szűcs's attention, who applied his mediaeval arguments to the Hungarian Early Modern Era as well – to the similar effects of the Reformation in Hungary. He explained that post-1945 historiography underestimated the effects of the Reformation, despite the fact that it was the most significant intellectual change in Hungary since conversion to Christianity, and also affected the whole of society.

**“The Czechoslovakians are coming”  
or When the Unique Hungarian Path is Cleared by the Winds  
of the Revolution in Prague, not the Winds of the “Great October”  
(1968)**

The well-known phrase was first used by an acclaimed radio journalist following the defeat of the Hungarian national football team at the hands of the Czechoslovakians, who were more experienced in playing hockey than football. The phrase ‘The Czechoslovakians are coming’ thus indicated a new ‘national rock bottom.’

The Czechoslovak topos was a powerful voice in early 1970s Hungary. The Interwar democratic Czechoslovakia was the model state for the bourgeois radical layer of society. Mihály Károlyi's and Oszkár Jászi's efforts to establish contact with the Masaryk-Benes system marked the route that gained prominence during the post-1956 consolidation. One element of this was to reject the notion of a unique Hungarian path in national development, as seen in the works of Erik Molnár. The participants were given for a new debate.

“The ‘Czechoslovakian’ nation concept coined by Masaryk-Benes was the only official – in lack of a better word – national ideology in the region with several progressive and democratic features (...) as great as the difference between the socio-political structures of Hungary and Czechoslovakia was, so was the difference between the internal structure of the two types of nationalism. While the Masaryk-Benes concept also built on historical arguments, it was not imbued with as many analogies taken from past centuries as the surviving variants of Hungarian nationalism. It was rather dominated by a myth of ‘chosenness’ that was founded in its present day.”<sup>225</sup>

Szűcs wrote these words in 1968 when the Institute of History within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was no longer debating 1956 but 1968. Do they have a national consciousness, and if yes, why? In 1971 Szűcs prepared a new conceptual language for the joint conference of Hungarian and Czechoslovakian historians, which was characterised by “raging self-criticism.” Nevertheless, a unified, modern and Marxist regional history of ideas was not born. “Inexplicably” even the Slovaks were beginning to forget the humanism of the progressive and democratic Masaryk-Benes nation concept.

The debates that began in 1968 were not about the subject at hand. The question was not, what was happening to the Czechs. Rather, the matter to be discussed, was that as they could not have had a hereditary consciousness, what happened to them, should not have been able to happen.

The part of the left-wing opposition in Hungary – which called itself democratic because it wanted to avoid the ‘nationalist’ ‘national’ word – created a Czech myth for itself, following in the footsteps of the bourgeois radicals of the turn of the century. Czechoslovakism became fashionable, Prague and 1968 became a symbol instead of the suspiciously nationalist 1956 revolution. Both official taste and fashion deemed the modern Czech national consciousnesses more desirable, over the false Hungarian. This trend lasted until the neighbouring union state dissolved.

### Suleiman’s Offer, Again (1971)

The new and most important element of the Mohács debates was the possibility of realising a third path between two empires. A model for a path committed to the nation. As noted above, this was an element of the thinking of the national-traditionalist writers between the two world wars (independence between Stalin and Hitler) and was condemned by a party ruling in 1958, as the ideology that had led to 1956. At the same time, the notion of the neutral nation of 1956 was connected to the debate, as it symbolised independence between the two blocs that formed after World War II.

The study *Country left on the Side of the Road* was first published by Géza Perjés in 1971, and then issued in book form as part of the *Quickening Times* series. It added further detail to the possibility of a unique Hungarian path as an independent buffer state. It revived Mihály Horváth’s motif of Suleiman’s offer and gave new life to the Mohács debates. The theory is based on the assumption that in 1520 the emissaries of the new Sultan offered Louis II and

his court the possibility for Hungary to exist as a buffer state if it remained loyal to the Ottomans in its foreign policy. Horváth, however, did not detail the basis of his assumption.

Examining the Ottoman conquest of Hungary in an international context, Perjés claimed that the Sultan had little interest in warring with Hungary, while conflicts vital to the future of the empire played out in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. He supported this claim with arguments ranging from foreign policy, through economic and military history to logistics (action radius). However, Hungary could not accept the offer as a nation of Western Christianity and the centuries-old calling of “*Propugnaculum Christianitatis*” (Hungary as a bastion of Christianity), even though the united Christian Europe, the *Universitas Christianitatae*, was no more.

The second half of the booklet praised the intellectual layer of priests and pastors, who after Mohács and the disintegration of the country, comforted and supported the nation, and reinforced the image of a unified Hungarian culture and homeland that stood above state borders. Perjés named this community-building through denomination after Mohács the ‘stroking reflex.’

The notion was connected to the arguments Trócsányi brought in the Szűcs debate, which emphasised the role of the reformation in the formation of the early national consciousness. He described a connection that encompassed the whole nation. It was this priestly, pastoral class that provided a unifying idea, that connected the peasantry and the nobility. Their ideas and their emotional background remained largely unchanged until Kölcsey Ferenc’s Hymn, which later became the county’s national anthem.

It was again Szakály and Szűcs<sup>226</sup> who responded. Szakály relied mainly on political and military history to negate the new Perjés-theory, while Szűcs wrote a Marxist history of ideas. In this, Szűcs criticised the elements of “*Geistesgeschichte*” apparent in the Szekfű school, of which the Eötvös-College-trained, francophone Kálmán Benda was also a member, and which gave life to the highest quality works of the Interwar years, in a emphatically anti-Fascist atmosphere. (For example, the members of the Minerva Circle, or the Sziget (Island) Circle: Hamvas, Kerényi, Németh).

Szűcs relied on the fashionable sociological methods of his time and applied them to the past. Following the Erik Molnár debate, Hungary built ties with the generally left-wing Annales School, which applied the methods of economic, social history, and the history of mentalities. Szűcs was also swept in this direction by the French-leaning traditions of the Eötvös College.

As a result of his approach, Szűcs had no sense of continuity. He continued to emphasise earlier arguments from the Middle Ages and saw a firm, or as he called it, qualitative difference between different ages. He did not see processes as interconnected. Illyés Gyula spoke of rootlets when he joined the debate.

### “History is the Sociology of the Past”

The following quote is a good example of how ideas could go awry when the fashionable methods of sociology were applied to historical research.

“The loyalty that tied people to the Kingdom was of a different quality than the ‘traditions and morals’ which tied people to ethnic communities; feudalism created smaller circles, while the Christian faith much larger circles, than the frameworks of the ‘nation’.

If the 19<sup>th</sup>-century population were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their group identity, the responses would have followed similar patterns: one was primarily French or Hungarian, then Catholic or Protestant, then radical or conservative, a Breton or from Zala, and only finally, a member of this or that association, a supporter of this or that football team, etc.

If the same questionnaires had been distributed sometime between 1300 and 1500 (and a historians task is nothing else than to fill out such a questionnaire relying on extant sources), then the typical responses would have been as follows: primarily they were members of the Holy Roman Church (or Orthodox, or Muslim, etc.) secondly, they were the vassal or familiar of X dominus, Breton or from Zala, a citizen or a peasant (serf), a subject of, “loyal to” the French or Hungarian crown, and finally French (as in the nationality, which at the time only encompassed the French north), or Hungarian. In the latter case, an individual could be *gente Hungarus*, while being *natione Latinus*, in other words, speaking a Latin language and being of Latin descent (Walloon, French, Italian).<sup>227</sup>

I myself do not believe the above to have been the case then, as such self-descriptions are not typical in the present day either. Humans are not logical beings. Their identities are not construed of hierarchical elements, and their thinking is influenced by opposing stereotypes. It is the situation at hand that determines which elements of the identity will be activated. In a battle of Mus-

lims and Christians, Christianity, however, during a noble-peasant opposition, the participants probably did not spare the Turks much thought. The importance of their home region grows for those trapped in a besieged castle. An era filled with anticipation of the apocalypse is even more unique, as its population would have been even less predictable. The model created goes awry because it is the situation that makes an individual Christian or Hungarian. In the above, the examples from medieval France are misleading.

Szűcs distinguished two forms of national consciousness in Europe: one can be traced to Rousseau, the other to Herder. Followers of Rousseau's nation-state theory attempted to identify the nationalism of the nobility as a precursor to their Modern concept. While Herder's theory, which operated with cultural communities, saw the peasantry as the social class that conserved national ideas.

“It would be a mistake to believe that the ‘national’ consciousness of the nobility was forged through the battles fought against the Ottomans. Even more so, because by the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries a very small minority of the nobility was truly engaged in fighting the Ottomans, or any foreign invader, as it would have been useless from a military point of view, even if its main goal had not been to withdraw itself from military service based on its ‘ancient rights and freedom.’ If several noblemen did shed their blood in defence of the country, then they did not do so as members of the national community of the nobility (a translation of the Hungarian phrase used for *communitas*), but as the familial soldiers of a magnate, Voivode, Ban or another Ecclesiastical or secular leader. The ‘foundation’ of the nobility’s existence, by the time, had become the ‘endless sacrifice of blood’ by their forefathers. The Hungarian nobility referenced this sacrifice ever more often, as their swords increasingly only left their sheath’s in the tumultuous scenes of the national assembly.”<sup>228</sup>

The citation showcases why applying the method is mistaken. In the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries the nobility was once again one of the most significant layers in the border forts. The majority of the 15,000 soldiers in the forts were nobles. Thus, most of those fighting, and shedding their blood were of noble birth. The exact role in which they did so, as a familial, or mercenaries in the royal army, or within a noble revolt was decided by the situation. They carried out their duty regardless, as Hungarians and as Christians (and at times, they

could choose which denomination it was worth serving) the situation was in constant flux.

Szűcs was not familiar with the political terminology of the Early Modern Era, which was different in the mainly protestant country: “foreign nation, living amongst us, natural enemy” etc. Szűcs was unfamiliar with the period. He proved the Early Modern Era in Hungary to have a fake consciousness by viewing it from the viewpoint of his Medieval knowledge and understanding.

He did not see growing rootlets, but believed that quantitative change had been replaced by qualitative change in European development, and, as a result, the phenomenon of national consciousness only appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this is why he believed that there was a qualitative difference between the consciousness of the period and that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Furthermore, the battles fought against the Ottomans could not have been the source of a ‘national’ feeling or argumentation, because the anti-Ottoman propaganda of the period relied solely on Christian views, even in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Turks were not the enemies of the ‘nation’ but of Christianity and ‘Christian freedom.’ At the time, this was a stronger argument than that of a ‘national enemy.’”<sup>229</sup>

In Szűcs’s mediaeval approach, peasants and serfs are found in villages and local communities. He did not consider the cataclysmic effects of the Ottoman Era, and thus, was unwilling to take more than local patriotism into consideration.

“The village, the estate, possibly the county, were the only understandable communities for serfs, while Christianity was the ideological community it could understand, as the ‘nation’ had been appropriated by the nobility and adjusted to its socio-political interests.”<sup>230</sup>

### Vácrátót, or “let’s kick the labantz to the afterlife!”

The hopes connected to the New Economic Mechanism faded by the beginning of the 1970s. Political change brought about a new debate, which examined the rehabilitation of the tradition of the kurutz independence movements. The prelude to the debate was, in fact, a party ruling brought in 1958,



at the time of the Erik Molnár debate, which admonished the national-traditionalist writers. Among other points, the ruling accused their nationalist ideology of being the intellectual root of 1956. The Investigative Committee appointed by the Party included István Király, Pál Pándi and Miklós Szabolcsi. Király was sympathetic to the national-traditionalist writers, while the latter two were averse.

Király penned a several hundred-page-long study on the evaluation of the group. The members of the Committee forced him to write the damning resolution. (As noted above, the historical and national ideas of the national-traditionalist writers were connected to the traditions of the kurutz independence movements, attacked by Erik Molnár, in several ways.) Király prepared a study, which advocated the rehabilitation of the tradition, and urged the denouncement of cosmopolitanism. However, György Aczél blocked its publication. Finally, in 1972, during the ‘purge’ of the Institute of Philosophy, he drove Király home after a reception and pushed Király to publish the study.<sup>231</sup>

The above-mentioned study by István Király published in 1973, called for a party ruling denouncing cosmopolitanism, alongside nationalism, which had been found the root cause of 1956.<sup>232</sup> Vácrátót was the scene of a political debate on the subject, in which the centuries under discussion and the Rákóczi war of independence provided the historical background. On one side stood István Király and Mihály Czine, opposite to them – and this is no coincidence – Zsigmond Pál Pach, Miklós Szabolcsi, and Pál Pándi, while Jenő Szűcs – who stood apart from the faction in both quality and motivation – provided professional historical backing for the latter group.

In this round, the ‘party’ supported the ‘kurutz,’ as it was the ‘labantz’ who had ‘sinned.’ Moving forward, Béla Köpeczi continuously represented a direction which supported a national legitimisation, which even received official party support but remained a minority within academic history.<sup>233</sup> The plummeting standard of living towards the end of the 1970s decreased the popularity of Erik Molnár’s concept the debate died down. Since Erik Molnár’s death, elements of bourgeois material values had replaced the independence of the state as the most valuable national idea. The goal of the period was the legitimate integration of economic factors into the national consciousness.<sup>234</sup> Thus, the search for a historical-political analogy began.

József N. Pál wrote the following about this, from the view of literary studies:



“The Erik Molnár debate was two-sided, as everything else was in the period. Its aim was to attack the nobility’s national consciousness as a ‘false consciousness,’ and thus expel the formative elements of the national consciousness that were derived from the traditions of the independence movements and remove ‘nationalism’ from the Hungarian view of history. This concept attacked, with good reason, the Révai–Andics–Aladár Mód ‘independence’ approach and aimed to rehabilitate elements of the ‘non-national’ revisionism of 1953–56, and its lesser-known proponents. Thus, it directed its focus (and that of historiography) towards the post-revolutionary ‘pro-Compromise’ period of Hungarian history, which had provided the most promising possibilities of growth. These views – as if some form of intellectual manifesto – deeply coincided with Kádár’s consolidation goals. However, it is true that the ‘re-evaluation’ of the fields of study that could newly be researched more freely (namely the absolute monarchy that followed the Rákóczi war of independence, and Dualism after the Compromise of 1867) was completed most meaningfully by a group of academics who had grown from the Erik Molnár concept but gradually abandoned its ideological ballasts and Marxist hocus-pocus. Research into the Monarchy increased. The intellectual and civilizational values of the embourgeoisement of the period became central elements of the research, while descriptions of the period praised its quick capitalisation and modernization of consciousness. The question marks over the period were placed above elements that inhibited or, seemed to inhibit this process: the conservative pro-independence approach.”<sup>235</sup>

### **Where Are the Borders of the Homeland in Time and Space? Debates around Transylvania (1972)**

The hunt against the national community-building topoi of 1956 had lost its relevance by 1968. By the 1970s, a symbolism that had existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century was no longer desirable for other reasons.

After the New Economic Mechanism ground to a halt in 1972, the economic legitimacy of the government decreased, and it feared the formation of a new group identity after 1972–73. The other aspect of the resurgent debate was the situation of Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin. Transylvania again played a central role here, as it remained the most central element

of the national consciousness of the areas annexed after 1918, due in part to its historical role.

The Erik Molnár debate already carried the seeds of a debate around Transylvania. Namely, if no democratic national consciousness existed prior to 1918, and creating one is the task of the socialist era, then the Hungarian minorities outside of the nation's borders cannot be a problem, as their prosperity and developing identity must be formed together with the country they are located in, despite the apparent lingual differences.

The Kádár government did not respond to the growing anti-Hungarian sentiment in Romania. (In fact, the Soviet superpower allowed the increase in the anti-Hungarian policies as punishment for 1956. Meanwhile, Romania referred to a Hungarian independence movement, elements of which had existed and flared up in several centres, during the revolution.<sup>236</sup>)

The Government blocked all forms of protest from Hungarian intellectuals when the Bolyai University was closed, and László Szabédi and two other Hungarian professors committed suicide. It was this point that became the centre of conflict between the central government and the national-traditionalist opposition, which was not only esoterically present in the country but had true influence over the masses. The differentiation of patriotism before the 19<sup>th</sup> century coined by Szűcs caused some controversy.

“The modern notion of ‘homeland’ did not form because the masses simply felt as at home “in this great homeland”, as at home they felt in their hometowns, villages and well-known regions. The concept of a political homeland was placed alongside the notion of birthplace, without the value of the latter being diminished. The two are fundamentally different. A birthplace is an experience and memory. A political homeland is an idea. At its beginnings, a closed group of intellectuals: politicians, writers, lawyers, historians, philosophers, the “propagators” of national consciousness, formed it through speeches, theories of public law, doctrines and poems about the nation's past, place and destiny, in political pamphlets and national anthems, until the whole ideology was spread to the masses through schooling, and the ever more diverse methods of mass communication: newspapers and books. At times serving honest and just goals, at others demagogic tendencies. The motivation in this aspect is not born of primary emotions, but a secondary ideology: the learnt and accepted national idea. This “homeland” was at times – especially in Eastern-Central Europe – born in ideology before political reality allowed for its existence. The fact that as

the national idea has permeated through every aspect of life, so has patriotism become increasingly independent of its artificial genesis, and often seems to be an organic, psychological characteristic. Indeed, patriotism has taken on the marks of a ‘natural feeling’ since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, similarly to love of one’s mother tongue. This is understandable, as it is first learnt with sweet words of the mother tongue. As a result, it absorbs a number of irrational factors as well (at this point, it becomes the subject of psychology). All the while, its ‘artificial’ nature is never truly hidden, as it has as many forms of patriotism and as many objective functionalities, as many political ideologies call it into their service. Modern (bourgeois) patriotism was born of the ideas that equated ‘society’ and ‘nation’ with the category of ‘sovereign people’ in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and made this concept the repository and holder – in the sphere of ideas – of justice, freedom and power. Consequently, everything was subordinated to uphold, protect and guard the values that were symbolised by the concept of ‘homeland.’ As the ‘people’ – in the sphere of reality – never became the true holders of power, so did bourgeois ‘patriotism’ become increasingly illusionary, demagogic, and false.<sup>237</sup>

As, in common knowledge, the rejected conservative-nationalist or “St. Stephen’s state” concept was rooted in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the “true Hungarian and diluted Hungarian” opposition (reminiscent of László Németh’s views) in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Szűcs hoped for a less aggressive tradition to form within the new socialist national consciousness, which was centred on Ady, Radnóti and the music of Bartók through to the values of his present day.

During the debate, Trócsányi questioned the relevance of the distinction between the concrete love of one’s birthplace and ‘abstract’ patriotism. Claiming that the feeling usually denotes a concrete connection, and while Szűcs detailed some form of emotional activity, this emotional connection to what he refers to as birthplace, did not change through the ages. At the most, a broadening perspective and increase in culture coloured and varied its scale.

“The emotional connection is always concrete, regardless of who is examined: a serf from Nagymaros made destitute by Ottoman taxes, or a Hungarian intellectual of this century, whose patriotism is primarily defined by their emotional connection to (the positive and negative aspects) of Hungarian history, the past and present works of cultural relevance, and the problems of the present (an emotional connection to this may not always

be patriotism, though it should be noted that a purely emotional connection to the questions of the present day is not something to be expected of a healthy intellect). It is difficult to understand why the connection of our contemporary intellectuals to Ady's poetry or Bartók's music would be more 'abstract' than that of a non-intellectual's connection to a city district 'in Szolnok?' Should patriotism be considered 'intellectually filtered emotion?' That would also miss the truth. The emotional connection, I repeat, must always remain concrete. That this emotional connection (in the case of patriotism, similarly to many other cases) can drive action, and that will and moral commitment are often also considered elements of patriotism, is another question."<sup>238</sup>

Trócsányi did not dispute the mediaeval historian's account of the Matthias era. However, Szűcs treated the traditions of Matthias's rule as the precursors of the anti-Habsburg independence movements, which he also traced to a 'false consciousness' created by the nobility, as the absolutism of the great Hungarian king, was more similar to the absolutism of the Viennese court, than what the nobility's consciousness enshrined it to be.

### **Matthias is Dead, but who Remembers the Truth?**

"And to add another question to this delicate issue. Our common historical consciousness is inclined to believe that the downfall of Matthias's national centralisation, was the catastrophe which brought about total collapse, leading national defiance in the face of foreign centralisation to spark up as a new phenomenon in the historical abyss following 1526. Two elements of the nobility's 17<sup>th</sup>-century view of history, which was adopted by the bourgeois, survived in this regard. The first is that Mátyás was working to create a unified 'nation'-state. The second, that Mátyás and the 'nation' lived in peace and harmony between 1458–90;"<sup>239</sup> – wrote Jenő Szűcs.

While this may be true, Szűcs made a methodological mistake but ignoring the fact that it is not the true conditions of Matthias's rule that survived, but what later historiographic traditions intentionally or unintentionally saw in the period. This is a fundamental question of historiography. Despite this, and because of it, the existence of all social layers was more threatened following Mohács. The magnates and nobility fled together. While two generations of

the peasantry lost their footing, the wars that had until then only endangered the Southern Balkan states now filled the caravans of Ottomans slave-traders with the Hungarian populace.

The strong kingdom Matthias had built, with its political centre in Buda, became a symbol of safety for all social classes. In the nobility's humanist histories, a period of strength, safety and the Golden Age, and in folk stories Matthias became the just king. The same considerations became central to the 'bourgeois tradition' as well.

Over a foreign ruling dynasty that protected a 'German' Vienna at the cost of destroying the Hungarian parts of their empire, a Hungarian king, who organised the defence of his own country, or countries, and who held court in Budapest, became the role model of the Batthyánys in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Croatian Ban, Miklós Zrínyi in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant Princes of Transylvania, the authors of folk stories, or historiographers who wrote according to the nobility's tradition.

In any case, it is interesting to note that Szűcs did not realise why the distinction between Matthias's Buda and the ruling house of Vienna which suffered from his "dark array" was relevant to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century noble intellectuals who were in confrontation with the Habsburgs, among them the author of the national anthem, Ferenc Kölcsey.

It was not defined by the ethnicity of the ruling dynasty or the various connections with the different countries under its rule, but the protection of the country's territorial integrity, the lives, livelihoods, and personal freedom of its inhabitants, against the slavery which destroyed families and went against Christian norms. For intellectuals, it was defined by the royal court, which offered unity, an intellectual and humanist forum and trust.

The main threat to all the above were the Ottomans, a foreign culture to which the nation would have had to adapt. The ruling house could not protect the nation from being forced to replace an autochthonous development path with a course of necessity, from these aspects, their nationality and mother-tongue were indifferent. Their contemporaries and later historians had no trouble with the Angevin Dynasty, the Jagellonians or Albert Habsburg who died fighting the Ottomans.

The country hoped for an independent, protected development path, without courses of necessity and capable of adapting to the changing times and saw the last example of such, in the rule of Matthias. Mohács was the symbolic loss

of this possibility. The Habsburgs were not blamed for the above, at most for not fulfilling their promises, which had meant life and death through the ages.

The nobility's historical traditions blamed itself for the end of the Golden Age, an element that was later borrowed by bourgeois historiography, as noted at the beginning of the study. The 16<sup>th</sup> century was the age of the mother tongues. Matthias did not have to face this, but his court could have become a centre that stimulated the development of the Hungarian language, had it remained in Buda, rather than been moved to Vienna.<sup>240</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that Szűcs blended and distorted two historical eras in both his primary and secondary analysis of how later ages interpreted the events, passing a common summary judgement over both from a Marxist approach.

As a historian of the Middle Ages, he was unaware of the *modus operandi* of the Early Modern Era and ignored the changed military and psychological circumstances that influenced Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

“Naturally, these conflicts were reconciled by the formation of traditions in the misery of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries. And there was some truth in the tradition, to compare the ‘once great King Matthias’ with the Emperor enthroned in Vienna or Prague. Ultimately, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century experiment would have better served the modern development of the nation – precisely because it targeted the feudal ‘nation’ –, than the policies that were later pursued in Vienna, or the ‘national’ outrage that subjectively drove the masses of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century nobility.”<sup>241</sup>

If the nobility only bore arms in speeches, if the traditions of Matthias are also a false consciousness, then where are the rootlets of Hungarian national consciousnesses to be found? Szűcs gave the answer: The proper, working peasants of Dózsa's crusade engaged in respectable class conflict.

“It would have better served the Hungarian ‘ethnicity’, if the concepts of Matthias had been continued by a successor. However, the subjective motive and the objective goal was largely unchanged among the nobles who rebelled against royal power in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first ‘national independence movement’ similar to those that were led against 17<sup>th</sup>-century kings, actually formed against the Hungarian Matthias.

One major difference is beyond doubt. No one thought to mobilise peasants against the king around 1460–80, from the 1670s onwards this policy not only become a recurring element but at times the peasants mobilised themselves. Nevertheless, as early as 1456, an army of peasant crusaders liberated Belgrade, just as the peasant revolt of 1514 also grew from the crusade called against the Ottomans. It is from the name of these old crusaders, the *cruciferi* as those who wear the cross, that the name of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century *kurutz* was born.<sup>242</sup>

Despite all efforts, no link that proved historical continuity between the revolt and the *kurutz* could be found. The etymology *Szűcs* mentioned above was already brought into question in his own time and has been rejected by the present day. Nevertheless, new ideas could be connected to the peasant revolt, such as the embourgeoisement of the peasantry, and its increasing wealth in market towns which was reminiscent of certain Western phenomena, and the fact that these remained faithful to the role Marxism set out for them, in their ‘anti-nobility’ stance.

Dózsa’s peasants could be considered precursors of the early national consciousnesses of the lower classes within an anti-feudal framework. Naturally, only as an auxiliary of the main anti-feudal motivation. All other movements were the result of the feudal estates spreading a “false consciousness” amongst the peasantry. Thus, if a link between the *kurutz* and the democratic Dózsa revolt – which was by extension uninfluenced by “false consciousness” – could have been proven, then the continuity of an auxiliary element during the Rákóczi war of independence would have been visible, which later generations could have theoretically used as a foundation. However, according to the concept, this had little to do with the nobility.

In fact, this is the starting point of the theses formulated in the Erik Molnár debate from 1964 onwards. In Aladár Mód’s approach from the Fifties, Dózsa and Ferenc II Rákóczi are the two emphasised points of class conflict, which these historians attempted to align with the traditions of national history. As mentioned above, Erik Molnár did not brand the Rákóczi war of independence with ‘false consciousness.’



### From the Bastion of Christianity to the Enemy of Socialism

The question in the title has always been fundamental to the judgements passed over the historical period in question. The current study has examined it from several aspects, from Gyula Szekfű to Zsigmond Pál Pach, to Erik Molnár. It has been fundamental because a country that is the border of the Muslim and Christian worlds for centuries could not ignore the relationship that formed with the military forces stationed there, especially if the majority of the military force was made up of the country's inhabitants.

While Gyula Szekfű saw a rebirth of the Hungarian national spirit in the ancient Christian-like circumstances of the border forts, in which the Austrian double-headed eagle was the Holy Spirit, following the Erik Molnár debate the Hungarian soldiers became, alongside the nobility, the destroyers of the nation.

The roster evoked by Szekfű was turned on its head. Miklós Zrínyi – the hero of Szigetvár – was branded a robber baron, László Kerecsényi an enemy of people, István Dobó greedy, Mekcsey a peasant murderer. All of them died from a historical perspective (but the demythologising period refused to recognise for what and why).<sup>243</sup>

Erik Molnár's view that the soldiers of the border forts should be considered mercenaries prevailed. Not only were they not a formative element of the national consciousness, but they were also barely connected to it. They were driven by money and could be used for anything. If needed, they borrowed rhetorical templates from the nobility to justify their actions.<sup>244</sup>

Szűcs drew an arc: the nobility's nationalism as formed in the Middle Ages was codified in the words of Werbőczy, the "feudal rights" and "constitutional" ideas were the emotional base of the historical consciousness, national virtues and "destiny" of the "free Hungarian nation" until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The national destiny had been penned as the "shield or bastion of Christianity" from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards after the first elements of the idea arose at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>245</sup> However, Szűcs claimed this was a rhetorical template.

"What do most people remember, when asked about the concept of 'national traditions?' The struggles. First and foremost, the struggles. Never-ending struggles against the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, especially the perpetual wars of the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries until the Peace of Szatmár and their organic continuation in 1848–49. As if we were stood in armour today,



and were forced to repeat these examples, as not to forget whom we are fighting against. While this approach was perfectly acceptable on the eve of 1848 (notwithstanding, '48 was not a continuation but the beginning of something new), it became increasingly grotesque after 1867, after which an approach increasingly relying on the formalisms of public law hoped to find a heroic predecessor in this tradition. In a certain sense, it had a place in the years after 1933 as well. However, the 'between two pagans for one homeland' motto of the 17<sup>th</sup> century served to enforce a false analogy between 1930–40, thus solidify the confusion, rather than clear it.

Nevertheless, it is time to think realistically beyond simple actualisation. Hungarian history has seen won battles, but no won wars since the campaigns of King Matthias. We have only lost wars since 1485, except for the single campaign for liberation at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was mostly completed by foreign forces. The success achieved by Bocskai, Bethlen, György I Rákóczi, should thus be seen as won battles in a permanent war lost in 1711. The last great Hungarian military leader, who can rightly be named amongst the greatest strategists of his time, and who won meaningful battles, was János Hunyadi.<sup>246</sup>

In the remainder of the article, as he had done previously, the author encouraged research into social and economic history, which would have formed the base of a new socialist national consciousness. He wrote these lines during the spring of 1968; there was no need to raise arms against anyone, as if we were stood in armour in the present day, the approach acceptable in 1848–49 was then unneeded.

By the time, society had long buried the hatchet, and even forgot whom it had once used it against. It had forgotten, as it tried to forget that a "national-traditionalist" patriotism which had encompassed society as a whole had existed before socialism.<sup>247</sup>

"When socialist patriotism becomes the subject of propaganda in the new framework of our time, it must express a new relationship which is formed in the reciprocal relationship of socialist development, the state and the nation. Centuries past have only known 'state patriotisms', that have exclusively relied on a narrow 'political community' and the state. Bourgeois patriotism became a function of national patriotism, the theoretical-practical realisation of the 'nation'-theory of nationalism, and thus bore all the contradictions inherent in bourgeois nationalism, which Marat noted during

the French revolution and were later summarised in the Communist Manifesto: ‘the working men (or with Marat’s words: the poor) have no country.’ Socialist patriotism is at once ‘state patriotism’ in that it must reflect the relationship of the entirety of society to the socialist state, and ‘national patriotism’ in that draws for the negative example to create a new concept of the ‘nation.’<sup>248</sup>

A recently republished historiography which was written for teacher training colleges closed the 20-year-long ‘nation debate’ with the following words:

“Molnár’s rigid, dogmatic approach, which obviously underestimated national factors ‘won’ the debate in the sense that the Institute for History adopted it. However, its merits in exposing the independence-leaning kurutz mentality of the Fifties as false, rootless and foreign to Marxism are beyond doubt. The most definitive loss to date, has been that of the national consciousness.”<sup>249</sup>

### Speech In Mohács (1991)

The fall of communism came about after a lifetime of waiting. Relying on Szekfű’s favourite biblical topos, it could be said that the sinful generation which knew of the times before Canaan had died out. The “democratic Czech” national consciousness recommended as the medicine to Hungarian nationalism was replaced by a more democratic democracy, and the union state collapsed as the international pressure that had supported and enforced its existence collapsed. Old symbols, mentalities, emotions and “methods” were revitalised in the southern Baltic state, which was blown apart by change.

When the Hungarian political leadership feared that the border transgressions of the Yugoslavian Army might pull the country into the conflict, József Antall, the leader of Hungarian politics at the time gave a speech in Mohács, in which he referred to the spirit of the place, historical symbols, and the joint struggle against the Ottomans to express Hungary’s solidarity with the people of the Balkans.<sup>250</sup> The speech caused some controversy. The opposition condemned the “bad taste of the historical symbolism” and although it comparable to the Treaty of Eternal Friendship that Horthy signed with the Yugoslavians in similar historical circumstances.

This is the current state of the Mohács myth. As Lajos Terbe<sup>251</sup> recorded the vitality of the Antemurale myth in the Inter-war years between the dangers of Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism, not expecting World War II, let us hope the symbolism of Mohács is not revived in any form for current political means in the near future.

### Summary

The Mohács myth was fuelled by the ideas of romanticism and historicism in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, Károly Kisfaludy, Soma Orlay Petrich, Bálint Kiss, Viktor Madarász and Bertalan Székely reached back to a tradition that had existed since the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Hungarian Kingdom fell in status from a major power to a segmented country.

The literary figures of the period hoped to raise the nation from a state of enervation or ‘sleep.’ The memory of the sad ruins referenced by Ferenc Kölcsey was conflicted with the present, which looked towards a new future. The desperation caused by the failed war of independence in 1848–49 gave this approach new aspects and form. A national history of suffering appeared in artistic depictions.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards from Johann Nell’s engraving entitled *Suffering Hungary*, through neo-Latin poetry in the form of the Ovidian *Heroids*, and Hungarian jeremiads connect the idea to both universal and national traditions.<sup>252</sup> The traditions of Jewish-Christian hermeneutics and the considerations of many meanings hidden in written texts carry the apocalyptic-prophectic voice through Hungarian literacy until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A central element of this tradition was drawing a parallel between the battles of Megiddo and Mohács.

In the fine arts Mohács and the struggles against the Ottomans become one of the most common subjects. In fact, this is where Mohács truly became a symbol. *Battle of Mohács* by Than Mór, and *Finding the Body of Louis II* by Soma Orlay Petrich are paintings of note.<sup>253</sup>

The strength of the arguments used in this approach, and their emotional background was weak by 1867 and slowly lost relevance within the new circumstances. The historical sciences also played a vital role in mythologizing Mohács. Horváth Mihály presented it as an epochal event which led to the country being ruled by a foreign dynasty and its political centre being moved outside of its borders. A minister during the war of independence, he was educated in the Reform Era. His summarising work, however, was written in

the lethargy of emigration and influenced the generation that took a leading role after the Compromise. Several of Horváth's theories, such as Suleiman's offer, surfaced again and again in different situations with the same meanings.

The 'science of national remembrance' replaced universal historical summaries in historiography,<sup>254</sup> while historicism turned into rigid academicism in the arts. The ten-volume summary of Hungarian history published for the millennium served the same purpose. Not only did it aim to provide information of historical events but illustrate and interpret them with images in an attempt to manipulate its readers.<sup>255</sup>

While a handful of trends did oppose the mainstream and attempted to use topoi of the Ottoman Era in a negative light, such as Csontváry's depiction of Zrínyi sallying out, or Ady's anti-Mohács myth as worded in his poem *We Need Mohács*. However, even these relied on the same ingrained meanings, forms and emotional background.

The post-Trianon shock further amplified the interpretation of Mohács and the national history as a story of suffering. Even Szekfű, who had previously been critical of the historiography of the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries found new life for the national spirit in the soldiers of the border forts following the cataclysm.

A new critical method formed among the national-traditionalist writers in an attempt to demystify the period. Lajos Fülep sought clear, simple and natural forms in the fine arts.<sup>256</sup> While music found new directions for a minor nation in Bartók's and Kodály's work, and literature in the writings of László Németh.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century was no longer a quest to restore old glory, but a precursor of the period, a source of related themes, material and behavioural patterns for the mainly protestant group of artists. They were rescuing the national culture which had lost its elite, that is building a church.

Towards the end of World War II both Szekfű and the Communist Party tried to find ideological connections with the national-traditionalist. This led to Aladár Mód's book, which placed major emphasis of the Ottoman Era as the beginning or a distorted historical arc, and the beginning of Hungarian history as a series of wars of independence against the Germans (Habsburgs).

During the Consolidation period after 1956, Erik Molnár took up arms against both the right-wing national-traditionalist ideas and the left-wing approach to history coined by Mód. He wielded a double-bladed sword. Molnár introduced the concept of "false consciousness" in his analysis of Ottoman Era Hungarian society, deeming the existence of an idea of national unity between

the peasants, and the main antagonists of his Marxist approach, the nobility, impossible. Reviving the theories of Ervin Szabó, he called the anti-Habsburg movements of the Early Modern Era retrograde elements. He believed that a lack of democratic legitimacy inhibited the formation of Western bourgeois national consciousness. Erik Molnár claimed that true national consciousness could only be formed through socialist patriotism, and as a result, there was no reason to build connections with Hungarian minorities living in the Carpathian Basin.

This led to the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries featuring prominently in the debates on national consciousness in the following years. These debates, regardless of whether they centred on Mohács, Transylvania or the soldiers of the border forts were not professional, historical debates, or not only those. Rather, they created a legitimising discourse in a symbolic language, the shadow play of which was rendered unintelligible by the collapse of the Party-State ideology. Nevertheless, its criticism is lacking, or poor to the present day.

## What came after?

Unlike in most neighbouring countries, the regime change in Hungary was not in any real sense followed by a cleaning of the ranks. Since the historical sciences were highly politicized, a large number of former intelligence operatives had been placed covertly into related positions. At his funeral, Domonkos Kosáry, a close confidant of Prime Minister József Antall, was praised in several eulogies for resisting the pressure to perform a witch hunt. Krisztián Ungváry, in a glowing piece of investigative journalism, painted a rather disheartening picture of the relationship between Hungarian historical sciences and the communist secret services, and especially of historians posted on foreign work assignments. What we can see here, however, are only the already disclosed files of the same exposed agents. The truth is, the services are probably still using the information that could affect the living members of that generation. There is no accessible documentation. If necessary, their files might still be put to use. (It is also strange that Ungváry should single out Ferenc Glatz as the person that the services have never been able to recruit. True, as a member of the upper echelon, Glatz was indeed impossible to enlist. Within the intelligence community, he probably acted as client rather than operative.)

After the older generation, the contemporaries of Kosáry have passed on, they left no hiatus behind. On the principle of familiarity, these old-and-new members of the elite felt confident to appoint their successors. After the regime change, the ‘old master’ having retreated home East (or at least appearing to have done so), finding a new one became a priority. Following the proven recipe, the elite of historical sciences conspired against national interests and traditions to fulfil a subservient role towards the great powers. In this case, this meant indulging the whims of venture capital and globalism. Their old reflexes simply pointed them in this direction. While the ruling administration found them easy to handle, they were also readily available to any faction. And, of course, they placed similarly minded successors into key positions. As historians, they felt persistently threatened by a national identity, ensuring that the “negative selection” described by István Bibó was maintained.

In the Hungarian political discourse, this approach was billed as “social liberal”. It would be a mistake, however, to blur the lines between nineteenth-

century national liberalism and the globalist, homogenizing school of thought and political trends of today, including their approach to history. They have little in common. In Poland, national liberalism was not associated with the concept of aulicism because of the denominational cleft between Catholic population and the state power. There, national liberals were seen as anti-state revolutionaries representing foreign interests in the 19th century and devout Catholics in the 20th. Their national Messianism was based on their Catholic world view. The interweaving of Catholicism and the state power with its view of history is not straightforward in the case of Hungary either as evidenced by some of the great Catholic yet anti-aulic historians – Sándor Takáts or Mihály Horváth – of the time.

Catholic historian Gyula Szekfű also found aulicism – in the form of the imperial approach – to be a common ground with the civic radicals who could not stomach the thought of a reduced nation. (In the debate surrounding the exiled Ferenc Rákóczi II, Szekfű even received gestures from the progressive circle of the *Huszádik század* periodical.) Other paths lead from the Protestant democratic camp towards the civic radicals specifically on the basis of a positive assessment of the enlightenment model and secularization. Again, they failed to fully reconcile. Historians of the Kosáry school that subscribed to the Catholic Austro-Hungarian approach associated with Szekfű advocated for an alliance with the successors of the old left-wing civic radical movements: those who, in the 1980s, pressed for a Central Europe overarching the nation states that were products of the Monarchy. At the time of the regime change, they were the ones who replaced István Bibó, who had attempted to create an equilibrium among intellectual currents. But the fact that he considered nation and social mobility as his starting points were already unacceptable to them. By the millennium, a new historical concept was required for European integration. In this historiography, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which made the Hungarian people and the Eastern Central European region presentable, was seen as a preview model for Europeanism.

### Hesitant essay in lieu of a summary Our compromises

For us Hungarians, compromise is a historical notion. It does not mean an agreement based on mutual interests for any purpose, either with an external geopolitical superpower that determines the hegemony of the region, or the

suspension of conflict between internal intellectual or power groups due to challenges faced by the whole nation as one. The term means self-surrender in every sense of the word, whether we are talking about external or internal opponents, which makes us retroactively forget the hard, often bloody sacrifices made in the past to assert the petty prospect of the present and put the burden of disaster on the shoulder of future generations. A generation closes their eyes and falls asleep at the wheel to get a good rest and consciously shut out the outside world.

### Why the Turkish era?

The question arises as to why the Turkish era, which was barely an overture to the modern age, takes such a central role in the Hungarian historical studies of the last hundred and fifty years. An overture, but also a caesura, which instils cognitive changes into the lives of subsequent generations. The notion of a rich Hungary (referenced as *Fertilitas Hungariae* in Western lexicons), entailing the sense of glory of a strong medieval kingdom, a mid-sized European power, a small empire, a robust bastion of Christianity, was replaced by a small nation's identity, that of a country brought to the brink of extinction, torn apart by its enemies (known as *Querela Hungariae*), and the guilt-ridden mentality of a people scattered into diasporas, inviting parallels with the Old Testament Jewish exile.

In Europe, Hungary has always been a border country. It is located not only at an intersection of Slavic, Turkish, and Germanic languages, but also the religious and denominational boundary between Islam and Christianity as well as Eastern and Western Christianity. For about a thousand years it has been necessary to adapt to the challenges of the region, rearranged by empires based on various religious concepts and ideologies, and by ever-changing power structures. The legal system of the country's nobility adapted to this with its bicameral parliament, characteristic of the peripheral countries of Europe (countries that, because of the external threat, did not have time for prolonged debate and decision-making, which in every case lead to material destruction and demographic disaster). The system was intended to fend off the attacks with its most substantial assembly of nobles in Europe after Spain and Poland, and with its large, ever-present, constantly repopulating mass of peasant militias.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the best defense against Turkish raids was the creation of buffer states, which protected the country like a shield. The



Christian state in the background did not pursue the complete “liberation” of the buffer state so that it could keep the hostilities “over there” and prevent them from spilling into its own country. These countries were only semi-independent and bore the full weight of the horrors of war. The role of the buffer state entailed complete destruction. (In the middle of the 16th century, Hungary had a similar fate in the foreground of the Holy Roman Empire.) On the other hand, a strong defense system had to be installed next to the existing national border, which was the next stage of defense: the castle zone. This was a “total” war against the population of the area, which led to a demographic disaster in every tier of the society. The invaders drove the population into slavery, killed or resettled them to enforce permanent terror. These tactics had been typical in Christian–Pagan areas of contact, where the other party was considered the people of evil. It had always characterized the cultural and religious dividing lines, the periphery of Europe, the Muslim–Christian buffer zone. These buffer areas existed not only in the Balkans but also on the Iberian Peninsula, in North Africa, and on the battlefronts of East-Central Asia.

The short-term success in this ever-blazing war was the perpetuation of flashpoints in enemy territory. And the defense against this type of warfare was terror. The establishment and maintenance of the castle frontier represented a shift in the lives of the surrounding population. Constant combat readiness led to the militarization of the countryside. It was not uncommon to create an independent administrative and tax zone. The border society had its own code of ethics. (For example, the exchange and torture of prisoners overruled not only the Christian, but also the Muslim moral code). The border meant connection but also separation. The war was perpetuated in the buffer zone. What gave the inhabitants existential meaning was constant attack and defense. The system was self-generated and self-sustained. The frontier was actually an interval, an area that could be divided and extended indefinitely. Even the border, which stretched for a thousand kilometers, often hundreds of kilometers deep, in the middle of Hungary, had its own frontier. Far within and far behind the border there lived a connected service society, which maintained the buffer zone and was supplied by the population living there. The system rippled outwards from the center, its impact fading with distance. The further away from the imaginary line of demarcation, the less powerful its effect became, and the less it bloodied the established legal order, culture, and economy of the population there. After the Mohacs disaster, it took about a generation’s worth of time for the population to rearrange themselves to the level of a completely militarized society. After the wars that drove out the

Turks, it also took half a century until – by good intentions and coercion – the border mentality was restored to a normal European way of life. Rákóczi's War of Independence was a pushback against this ambition.

The succession of compromises began in the 16th century triggered by the Turkish threat after Mohacs. Sacrificing the country's partial independence and merging into a supranational empire was, according to some historians, the price of remaining in Europe. Political consensus was never alien from Hungarian domestic politics. The Hungarian legal system was also based on constant compromise. In his *diploma inaugurale*, the king indicates his acceptance of the laws of the country, leaving a system to early modernity constantly in flux, grounded in the status quo between the political elite and the monarch. This fine balance drives both the king and the ruling class to seek confrontation as well as consensus. However, this series of compromises beginning in the Turkish era appeared to be something else.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, at the outbreak of the fight for freedom in the Netherlands and on the threshold of the formation of a new nation-state structure, the compromise itself, with the partial abandonment of identity in the interest of *Idea Christiana*, a unified model that was becoming increasingly theoretical and taken less and less seriously by Europe was rather more comparable to the euphoric promises of the globalization propaganda that resonates today. This view saw Hungarian history, or rather the key to the successful survival of the Hungarian nation, in a self-compromising, concession-seeking policy. The last reconciliation to be considered somewhat successful was the 1711 Treaty of Szatmár with the Habsburgs, where, while the insurrection failed, the Empire tried to remedy almost all the demands that had motivated the uprising. The Balkan Turkish border moved south again from Buda to Belgrade. What was lost, however, was the large population of peasant soldiers, even though the country was the most important source of recruitment in the Habsburg Empire (a third of the imperial military was supplied by the Kingdom of Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century). The military settlements of the former border castles continued their struggle for the restoration of their legal-economic status until 1848. It was presumably the persistent Turkish threat and the active memories of a country in the frontline that motivated the 18<sup>th</sup> century charters between the Hungarian elite and the Habsburg sovereign when Maria Theresa and Leopold II ascended to the throne. They ensured that this once Turkish border status may one day be restored with its Balkanic brutality.

### “False realism” and “almost-country”

A different system arose with the compromise of 1867 following the fall of the 1848–49 War of Independence. Over the past one and a half hundred years, the moral losses and economic benefits of the compromise have been widely debated. In recent times, there has been an emphasis on overall achievements, highlighting liberal values such as tolerance towards nationalities and religious equality. The peace following the First World War, which proved the spectacular fall of the monarchy, and the geopolitical rearrangement that is still in effect today, were examined, along with their criticism of the compromise, by the intellectuals of a shattered country immediately after the disaster and subsequently following the end of the Second World War. From Gyula Szekfű through László Németh to István Bibó, they all concluded that in an era requiring quick decisions, partial equality of rights had been a better option than the chaos where the demagoguery of proclaimed freedoms would have plunged the country already torn apart in the name of ethnic tolerance.

The defining experience of the Trianon generation was collapse. This brought about criticism of the 1867 compromise. That is because the centralized imperial model could not (and cannot) prepare the country to survive the disaster that periodically strikes in our region. The suppression of glamor, self-awareness, and critical ability through ideology generally created eras lasting one and a half generations, such as the period of dualism, the Horthy era, or the Kádár era. In 1918, the country had neither intellectuals nor a leadership ready to respond. They saw that the much-mocked Balkan mini-states had armies, diplomatic branches, and banking systems when they collapsed. In a beggarly and make-believe fashion, but some of it was a result of sovereignty. Meanwhile, Hungarians were holding on to a skeleton whose bones had already been shattered. A federation of states known as “Austria”; it was a conglomerate named after the province that was the first to withdraw from the monarchy.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only a small part of the country, the “population of the territory retained in the Treaty of Trianon”, was once again given independence and sovereignty in all branches of power, which the diminished country sought to preserve at all costs against the threats that seemed to be mounting on both sides. In order to protect this sovereignty, the aim was to influence all layers of the post-Trianon country through mainly pedagogical and cultural means, to elevate them and to raise a new intellectual elite

by casting a wide net and mobilizing the population so as to stop the demographic, moral, and economic processes that led to the deterioration and curb negative selection. After World War II, the country sank another level deeper. The next generation had even less room to maneuver.

After losing the war in 1945, István Bibó, Minister of State during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, perceived the key to be responsiveness – that of entire communities. “The integrity of the national disposition does not entail the preservation of specific qualities, but first of all, maintaining responsiveness”, he remarked. He synthesized the pre-war debate between historian Gyula Szekfű and writer László Németh on Hungarian national character and assimilation around this idea. Responsiveness is the main characteristic of a collective disposition, and this cannot be changed by the globalizing effect of a cosmopolitan world. For Bibó, the derailment was represented by the coercive half-truths crystallizing into lies, keeping the country on an unalterable path, which were symbolized by the most blatantly anti-democratic governments, the reign of the Holy Alliance between the Russian Tsar and the Habsburg Emperor, emerging from the quashed revolutions of 1848–49. For the development of false realism, he blamed the Habsburg Empire's exercise of power. He believed it was at this point where the states of the region lost the opportunity to form democratic nation-states. The consequence was negative selection maintained for generations in the Hungarian governing elite. Decision-making positions, intellectual roles were occupied by an imperial type of man, groomed to be utterly incompetent. Monarchy and imperial delusions have bred the character of the servile career official and that of the hollow political mouthpiece (the “media man”), who twists and diminishes big ideas that would navigate the nation out of the crisis, when in fact disaster is imminent.

After 1956, “false realism” was succeeded by the concept of an “almost-country” (a term by poet György Petri). While foreigners from the West did not see much difference between Budapest and Bucharest, the proclamation of cultural and economic superiority was very popular within the country and carried on an old ideology. It provided a unifying force.

“Our capital, Budapest, is the only globally recognized almost-metropolis in the region. Even though this city has not had a well-thought-out transport network since World War I, and it is just crumbling and collecting dirt, it is still better than bullet-ridden Berlin in the GDR, caravanserai-like Bucharest, or the block city of Warsaw. Our country has the only acceptable economy

in the region; even though it is indebted and operates in a socialist manner, at least it is almost-productive. All this is done by our government, which, although illegitimate, is still the most acceptable government of the socialist region from the perspective of the legitimate world.” Even in these times, our cultural superiority was based on “almost”.

The director of political communication, György Aczél, also appealed to the national cultural superiority, although he did not refer to cultural supremacy, to the image of the nation as a “bastion of the West”, but to the economic legitimacy of the country. The social-theoretical debates, conducted by intellectuals in each field of science to introduce the consolidation of the Kádár regime, characterized the entire era. One of the symbolic focal points of these debates comprised the Turkish wars and the national liberation movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. The series of debates associated with Erik Molnár considered this era to be precisely the period of the formation of a national sentiment connecting the classes. He called it “false consciousness” and claimed that it caused cognitive confusion and managed to deceive the masses, who chose the appealing siren songs over their class warrior’s interests. The concept of “false consciousness”, adopted from Ervin Szabó, was declared responsible for all the nation’s woes, and had to be persecuted.

On the other hand, György Aczél’s cultural policy did make partial concessions in this matter, so that the unifying attempts made under a “people’s front” umbrella could highlight some points of remembrance to which the nation could relate. A suitable opening day was required to complete the celebration of the Three Spring Days of 21 March 1919 (formation of the Hungarian Republic of Councils) and the “Liberation Day” of 4 April 1945 to which tradition and popular sentiment were connected in the national cultural memory. The Revolution and Freedom Fight of 1848–49 was the perfect candidate with its starting date of 15 March (although up until the 1980s, schools, universities, and public institutions were closed on that day). To an extent, the War of Independence of Ferenc Rákóczi II was also such an “authorized” freedom struggle where the national vocabulary (under close scrutiny) “might be legitimately referenced”. All these “points of commemoration” were suitable for testing and possibly releasing the gathering tensions of the intellectual elite and other social classes (see, for example, the 15 March celebrations of 1972, 1986, or 1988).

By the turn of the millennium, it was clear that Moscow had become a super-modern metropolis in no time, Warsaw and Berlin had made pinnacle achievements in modern architecture, the historic cities of Krakow and Prague

were attracting mass tourism, and Belgrade and Bucharest emerged as dynamically expanding capitals. Budapest's cultural superiority became questionable. By this time, Hungary was no longer an "almost-country", as the change of regime, which was tantamount to our defeat in the World War, once again made the country the most vulnerable and least sovereign place in the region. Hungary has become the biggest loser, its people the most indebted, the most depressed, the most pessimistic. "Rich Hungary" could still have been the most suitable place in Central Europe to escape from an environmental disaster. It has ample water and high-quality land. Instead, we saw neglected land with ragweed, inhabited by farmers who had given up animal husbandry and bought their food from international food chain stores. We saw ruined villages waiting to be resettled, a devastated landscape. While France was re-nationalizing, we were selling our lands to foreign countries. A media-driven campaign was launched, which the government was unable to oppose, even on public television. The middle-aged egoist generation of the time was led to believe that there would be another loan to pay for the pensions of the childless old people who were not supported by their family. They were led to believe that there would be someone to protect them if they were to be driven out of their houses at night by people living once again under the Balkan border laws (meanwhile, Hungary was downsizing its army just a few years after the Balkan wars).

Already during the Monarchy, a choice of fate was under way, when the peasant society of entire regions expected to retain the opportunity for advancement, urbanization, and prosperity, by having only one child or none at all, thus violating religious and communal moral foundations by drastic birth control, rewriting the future by reinterpreting marriage and the parent-child relationship. After the 1956 revolution, collectivization was successfully carried out in the countryside. It coincided with modernization and a change in lifestyle. In exchange for this, the churches were successfully ghettoized. And by putting women to work, the family structure was reshaped, which curbed the post-war surge in childbearing (helped also by the 1956 abortion law). Twenty years later, the aging of the country was irreversible. The youth, who could have started a revolution, were no longer the majority.

The processes started by the Kádár regime were carried forward by the situation after the regime change. There was a disintegration of communal morality. People abandoned their rituals and their religious moral guidelines. Instead, international media took control of their taste and thinking. After the regime change, the ideologically controlled process was sold out to the inter-

national opportunist capital, and even the country's rulers were in league with it, because they were used to serving whichever great power was at the wheel. And the media was hammering the country's population with the idea that everyone had been part of the sinking so far. There was complicity with power, of course. After 1849 and 1956, there was a spiritual surrender, which is why the generation that unleashed 1956 refused to think differently about János Kádár, who crushed the revolution, even after the regime change. Still, they reconciled with him, which is exactly why they voted in large numbers for the post-communist parties. The compromise was quickly reached again. The officers of the communist secret services then positioned themselves behind the various parties, staying connected in the background and serving the international comprador bourgeoisie (thus continuing the collaboration, or better said, conciliation policy.) And the people decide, destroying the environment, pulling the land of their ancestors out from under their own feet. Not giving the next generation the opportunity to carry on.

After 1867, both the nobleman and the peasant, whose inviolable private estates and land holdings helped them through the most critical situations, including foreign oppression, were ruined. After 1956, the land was expropriated, and the landed peasantry was forced into cooperatives. Rural land ownership disappeared, and traditional environmental protection was lost along with it. Modernization became the buzzword. It gave a green light to plundering the land by chemicals and polluting the rivers. However, much of the rural population could remain in their ancestral homes, largely maintaining their original way of life (at the time of the regime change, more than half of Hungary's population lived in villages). In the meantime, the path was cleared for the communist appropriation of property. After the opportunist capital seized power with the support of an uncontrolled media, the country was sold out to foreigners. Post-1989, the former landowner and autonomous minded "defender of the country" is to be driven out of his house and residence. At the same time, the mobilization of labor required for modernization was being parroted by the media. The Hungarian elite and intelligentsia bore a great responsibility for all this.

The Polish and Czech states, with their histories most comparable to that of Hungary, behaved differently. In both cases we see a long-term consensual policy. If we look only at the Poles, without any need for deep analysis, we see that they have not made compromises since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (though in truth, they had fewer opportunities to do so). Similarly to the Hungarian medieval



and early modern pattern, the fate of the frontier country, the buffer state existence, unleashed a demographic catastrophe on each Polish generation that permeated all layers of society. This, however, developed an old-new ethic, a way of life and a survival instinct, a cautious suspicion towards the ideologies of great powers and any new system of ideas, which was complemented with religion, an image of God, a sense of national belonging, where no element of independence could be sacrificed for prosperity. Not only could they regain their lost population every time after a disaster, but they were also able to respond to new challenges because of non-existent negative selection. They did not make compromises, but they had an internal social consensus, even if their differences were stretched to the limit (both the Polish and the Czech elite in emigration, despite coming from different ideological backgrounds, had a willingness to reconcile throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

So, we lost the war not only in 1918 and 1945, as Bibó noted, but also in 1989. The Horthy era raised party soldiers and the Order of Vitéz. John Lukacs believed that Horthy failed, betrayed by his own disciples in 1944 when he tried to escape. After 1989, only party militancy was needed instead of 19th-century intellectuals, which generated further negative selection. The region's victorious powers of the First World War, such as the Czech Republic or Poland, but also the Croats, Slovenians, or even the Romanians – even if they suffered the same mid-20th-century Soviet-Russian occupation that we Hungarians did – were still able to recover from the collapse of the bloc with much better chances and much more strength, because they were able to assert their own national interests more dynamically than the increasingly negatively selected Hungarian elite. This was not only because of their self-confidence that resulted from being on the winning side, and not only because of their peculiar nationalist socialist left-wing elite that survived the period of communism, but also because they did not have to collectively, “smartly” submit their national desire for freedom to their economic welfare, or voluntarily abandon the principles that they suffered for during their struggle or struggles for freedom.

Meanwhile, the buffer zone of war that has been moving around for the past centuries may return, as it has countless times, and there is no psychological, material, or physical strength left in us Hungarians to survive such a situation. Adjusting to our imperial standing, the feeding of illusions, the perpetual retreat, the abandoning of border laws, the false consciousness of the possibility of permanent compromise instead of using internal reserves of



strength; this is what characterized us after the change of regime: doing nothing but aligning, while claiming that we made decisions dictated by reality. This is the true false consciousness. This is the view of the negatively selected elite, which provides the ideology for the next major power constellation, essentially using the same model from the past for everything, whether it was designed by Gyula Szekfű or Ervin Szabó.

## Notes

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3. ŐZE, SÁNDOR: A Molnár Erik-vita és a „Mohács szindróma” [The Erik Molnár debate and the ‘Mohács-syndrome’]. In: *Variációk. Tanulmányok M. Kiss Sándor tiszteletére* [Variations. Studies in Honour of M. Kiss, Sándor]. (Ed. Ötvös István.) Piliscsaba, 2004. 165–232.
4. BLAZOVICH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szeged rövid története* [A Short History of Szeged]. Szeged 2005. The monograph’s description is followed through this section, 105–123.
5. SZÖRÉNYI, LÁSZLÓ: A piaristák irodalmi tevékenysége [Piarist Literary Activity]. In: *Szeged története*, II. 1686–1849 [The History of Szeged II. 1686–1849]. (Ed. Farkas, József.) Szeged, 1985. 618–620. BLAZOVICH: op. cit. 108.
6. BLAZOVICH: op. cit. 111.
7. Op. cit. 109.
8. Op. cit. 110.
9. Quoted and published by PÁL, LAJOS: *Horváth Mihály, polgárosodás, liberalizmus. Függetlenségi harc* [Mihály Horváth, the Rise of the Bourgeoisie, liberalism. Fight for Independence]. Budapest, 1986. 22–30.
10. BLAZOVICH, L.: op. cit. 108.
11. Suleiman’s offer, as revitalised by Géza Perjés, became a central theme of the Mohács Debates. See more below.
12. HORVÁTH, MIHÁLY: *A magyarok története* [This History of Hungarians]. Pápa, 1842–1846.
13. Quoted by: PÁL LAJOS: op. cit.
14. BÁLINT, SÁNDOR: *A szegedi nép* [The People of Szeged]. Budapest, 1968.
15. SZALAY, LÁSZLÓ: *Magyarország története* [The History of Hungary]. Lipcse–Pest, 1851–1855.

16. ŐZE, SÁNDOR – SPANNENBERGER, NORBERT: „Hungaria vulgo appellatur propugnaculum Cristianitatis”. Zur politischen Instrumentalisierung eines Topos in Ungarn. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Und Kultur Südosteuropas*. München, 2003. 1–2. On the propaganda of the propugnaculum topos after the War of Independence see: TERBE, LAJOS: Egy európai szállóige életrajza [The Biography of a European Idiom]. *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny*, 1936. 297–351. On page 328, a speech made by Kossuth in the USA on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1851 is quoted. (Select speeches of Kossuth. London, 1853. 87.) “But Hungary by the providence of God, is destined to become once more the vanguard of civilisation, and of religious liberty for the whole of the European Continent against the encroachments Roussian despotism, as it has already been the barrier of Christianity against Islamism.”
17. SZEKFÜ, GYULA: *A száműzött Rákóczi* [Rákóczi in Exile]. Budapest 1993.
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21. “The Ottomans took the life and lands of the last Rákóczi prince, George when he ventured north to beat the Polish. Now his grandson dreams of his ancestor’s princely life stuck on Turkish soil.” SZEKFÜ, GYULA: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 62. “During his time in France, the model state of absolute monarchy, his thinking was distanced even further from that of his peers, the barons he left behind at home. No matter how absolute their power within their principality-sized estates, the Pálffys, Károlyis and Bercsényis, bowed with the respect of subjects to their natural ruler, the King, whenever their eyes wandered toward Vienna. Bercsényi only showed a fraction of this humility toward his Prince. The Rákóczi uprising carried him towards the ideals of a kingless constitution as seen in Poland, just as a Polish influence is apparent in the constitution of the whole federation. Despite the rare exception, Hungarian aristocrats remained loyal servants of the crown. Even the conspirators and rebels among them irked from thinking of themselves as rulers. If Péter Zrínyi did dream sometimes of the Hungarian throne, he would never have considered himself a sovereign ruler, and would not have been able to free himself from the humility he showed to the King. Even the great Stephen Báthory acted as a loyal vassal of King Maximilian and only thought of himself as sovereign from the heights of the Polish throne, from where everyone seemed to be below him. A Rákóczi quietly stepped down from leading the Principality and returned to serving the King as loyally as before he was elected. Not even the throne of Transylvania gave those in it the pride to believe themselves sover-

eign rulers by the grace of God. Rákóczi was the first such man to grow from the Hungarian aristocracy. The diet held in Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureş) already named him Pater Patriae and styled him as His Majesty. This was the foundation further influenced by the French Court, where sovereignty was held in extremely high regard. There is little chance that Bossuet's authoritarian historical thinking did not influence him. The solitude of his exile in Grobois gave him enduring strength in this belief, similar to how strongly he held onto the throne of Transylvania. Rákóczi examined the nature of a ruler's power at length in the confessions he began writing while with the Camaldolese and continued when in Turkish occupied lands. He spoke of those that have been raised to rule by Divine Grace. Many of them misunderstand their position and use their power to obtain and enjoy worldly pleasures. Truly, the work of rulers is so august that every day spent with it is filled with holy fear and dread. All other classes are built on servitude and obedience. Rulers stand above these in the highest possible position. Rulers are an image of God on Earth; they have been given the divine sword of justice and the heavenly right of mercy. As the Son of the Lord, the Saviour, governs the Church through well-documented succession, so is a ruler tasked with leading secular life, organising "life in the flesh." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 64.

22. "These would have been rallying words on the lips of a truly ruling Prince. With such a philosophy, one can be sure that the failures of Rákóczi's reign were a result of its difficult circumstances and not the Prince's goodwill and stringent adherence to his duties. Rákóczi worked to the best of his abilities with his eyes affixed on God in the offices he was raised to by the rebels. However, in his current situation, he was forced to find content to these words. Rákóczi had lost both his titles of principedom, the great catastrophe of his life led him to a crossroads: should he withdraw to life under the rule of the Hungarian King, or go into exile with princely pretences? His statements here are the most unquestionable explanation for why he did not choose the former path. After the Treaty of Szatmár, Hungary was too small for two rulers. If Hungary had experienced feudalism the same way Western nations had, or if Hungary were the loose federation of states led by a ruler only in name, such as the Holy Roman Empire, there would have been room for Rákóczi to realise his lofty ideals of Princely rule. The room to manoeuvre disappeared with the loss of Transylvanian independence. Rákóczi was a sovereign Prince in his own eyes, and thus, could not bow to anyone. For him, the right to rule was the highest office God could grant to his subjects on Earth. It would be despicable ungratefulness for him to stand down from this office, once God had considered him worthy of it. Rákóczi's solitude in Grosbois gave his attachment to being a ruler religious ground. He would condemn himself to eternal damnation if he did not seek to rule and fulfil God's most precious gift,

of which he was deprived because of unfavourable circumstances. The knowledge that he, as a Prince is an instrument of God for the betterment of people's lives shone through the dark clouds of his future. Rákóczi did not feel and see the sorrows and humiliations of exile when his eyes were fixed on this idea. He had one duty in life: to return and retake his principedom. Thus was the vanity, the vana gloria, of the Prince of Transylvania transformed by melancholic repentance and newly found piety in the solitude of Grosbios. And thus, a man in honest repentance regained the object of his human vanity in the form of a religious mission. Following his time in Grobois, Rákóczi's path was clearly illuminated; he needed not the approval of the casuists to return to the sinful world from the silent solitude of the monastery directly to the pagan Ottomans! He was forced to go where any small hope of restoring the Principality of Transylvania was visible, and at that moment for Rákóczi, the path led through wars with the Ottomans, the looting or Tartar hordes, and the smoke of burnt Hungarian villages." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 66.

23. GLATZ, FERENC: *Nemzeti történetíró a forradalmak után. Nemzeti kultúra-kulturált nemzet (1867–1987)* [A Nationalist Historian after the Revolutions. National Culture – Cultured Nation (1867–1978)]. 1988. 275–303. On Szekefű, see also the chapter entitled *A polgári elitképzés műhelye. (Történetképzés az Eötvös Kollégiumban)* [The Workshop for Training the Bourgeois Elite (Teaching Historians in Eötvös College)]. 66–81. Id. *Történetíró és politika* [Historian and Politics]. Budapest, 1980.
24. "At the time the world offered a more colourful background for those who enjoyed life than it does today. In the end days of the uprising, the routed kurutz soldiers had nowhere to sleep. Peasants were looted by both kurutz forces and the Imperial army. Meanwhile Rákóczi and Bercsényi spent their days merrily sleighing along the Polish border in the company of pretty Polish women. People were less sensitive to such things at the time. It was the 19<sup>th</sup>-century sentimentalism and romanticism of the Germans and French that grew the common knowledge that dance and amusement are sacrilegious at times of tragedy." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 30.
25. "He abandoned his kurutz troops, in ever tighter encirclement, and headed for Lviv, because – as he said – he hoped to find the Tsar there, and 'the future happiness of the nation depends on him, after God.' However, the Tsar had greater troubles than leading poor Hungary to the path of happiness, he was in the process of building the Russian colossus with blood and steel. Thus, the Tsar caused Rákóczi's first major disappointment in exile. The kurutz soldiers accepted the offer of peace from General Pálffy, a Hungarian, and returned to loyally serving the Habsburg Dynasty. Disbanding to the fires of home, they returned to the hard work of building the nation with their perspiration." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 16.

26. HÓMAN, BÁLINT – SZEKFŰ, GYULA: *Magyar Történet* [Hungarian History]. Volumes IV and V.
27. SZEKFŰ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 264.
28. “Life in Transylvania was similar to an undisturbed pond, just slightly moved by innocent breezes, meanwhile in Hungary, the forces of the Prince led a bloody campaign: the barbershops of Pozsony [Bratislava] were filled with the dead and wounded, and the flourishing lands of North and West Hungary were destroyed by fighting, again and again, leading to years of famine.” SZEKFŰ: *Bethlen Gábor*. 190.
29. SZEKFŰ, GYULA: *Der Staat Ungarn. Eine Geschichtstudie*. Stuttgart–Berlin, 1918. *A magyar állam életrajza. Történelmi tanulmány* [A Biography of the Hungarian State. A Historical Study]. Budapest, 1918. Most recently: 1988.
30. HÓMAN–SZEKFŰ: *Magyar történet* [Hungarian History]. Budapest. 1935. Second, expanded edition, IV–V.
31. DOMANOVSKY, SÁNDOR: Hóman Bálint – Szekfű Gyula: Magyar történet. [Bálint Hóman – Gyula Szekfű Hungarian History]. *Századok*, 1929–1930, 883–884.
32. HÓMAN–SZEKFŰ: *Magyar történet* [Hungarian History]. III. 36. Domanovszky had a different view: The main crime of which he accused Bocskay’s politics was dividing and distracting Hungarians from the war against the Ottomans: “... the Turks continue to loot and raise the country and the defensive forts still had to be protected, but a faction of Hungarians no longer honoured this sacred mission of centuries past but constituted an independent state under an independent Prince. The all in all two million Hungarians were (after 1606!) concentrated in two separate states, opening the door to the conflicting dynastic interests of two rulers.” (V. 396. I.) DOMANOVSKY: op. cit. 891.
33. However, in his book on Bethlen Szekfű wrote: “This is how they pit their religious freedom, which excludes that of others, against religious freedom, or their political freedom, which also excludes others, against true political freedom. Here one can see to the deepest depths of the chasms that divided the two concepts and made it impossible to recognise the proponents of national unity or the interests of the Hungarian nation as a whole in either policy. It is as if national unity had been irrevocably lost. A synthesis between the two opposing movements became impossible for a long period for the first time. In the past, before Bethlen’s rule, efforts had been made by the Western half to unify the nation. Bocskay’s short independence could be considered an episode from which the nation could be reunified. But now that Bethlen had proven the vivacity of his Transylvania and annexed so much land from the Western Kingdom through the peace treaty, the Western Hungarians had to abandon their thoughts of unity. Esterházy and Pázmány, no matter how expeditious their thinking, did not try to reannex the Principality. They accepted

the sovereignty of the protestant Transylvania, and that it could be drawn under the Holy Crown, against which it had formed, only externally. However, Transylvania lacked the strength to unify forces and create synthesis from the East. This is aptly documented by how both Bethlen and his successor George I Rákóczi, only attempted to annex more land from royal Hungary. The whole country was too much for them. Only Bethlen's fantasy, lacking true strength, attempted to connect the whole of Hungary to the independent protestant Transylvania in some form, as will be seen below." SZEKFŰ: *Bethlen Gábor*. 160.

34. DOMANOVSKY: op. cit. 892. Furthermore: "Szekfű devalued the importance of Transylvania due to the fact that its strength was rooted in the Trans-Tisza counties, and that of George Martinuzzi in the diocese of Várad. (IV. 305. I.) In fact, this proves the unquestionable strength of geographic forces. Following the Ottoman invasion of the Great Plain, everything to the East was forced to join Transylvania or choose Ottoman rule. While the Partium could be considered to exist administratively, in reality, Transylvania was not limited to the lands of the Voivode, and if the majority of its forces were not drawn from its historical centre, its development, so eloquently praised by Szekfű, was fuelled by foreign affluence, and placed the lands of Royal Hungary under its rule in the service of foreign goals, which cannot be said of the core territories of Transylvania itself."
35. "This is why he considered Tamás Nádasdy's efforts to install 'the united power of the Nádasdy-Majláth families in Transylvania to replace the rule of King John and George Martinuzzi,' with the support of Majláth so important, as this would have 'ensured Ferdinand's rule and the unity of the country' (IV. 190. I.) – with the support of the rather inconsistent Majláth, whom he himself stated elsewhere, was one of the first to support an independent Voivodship of Transylvania 'recognised by both Vienna and Constantinople.' (IV., 300. I.). This plan pre-dated the Ottoman occupation of Buda. Nevertheless, the mentality proves that the strategies devised to solve the situation of the Eastern part of the country during the renewed military activity of the Ottomans were those that Transylvanian statesmen would later be forced to follow by new Ottoman occupations. Thus, Szekfű's following statement is exaggerated: 'Nádasdy was the final statesmen to consider the fate of the *entire* Hungarian nation, from an elevated viewpoint without particularism, until Szechenyi. While the majority of his generation, and even more so the next, were tied to single regions of the country. This was followed by the final independence of Transylvania, which rendered the development of a universal Hungarian character impossible.' (IV. 189. I.)" DOMANOVSKY: op. cit. 897.
36. DOMANOVSKY: op. cit. 897.
37. HÓMAN–SZEKFŰ: *Magyar történet*. III. 14–147.
38. HÓMAN–SZEKFŰ: *Magyar történet*. III. 14–147.



39. DOMANOVSKY: op. cit. 886. Szekfű gave a more characteristic description of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvania in his earlier Bethlen monograph: “Transylvania, as a form of Hungarian life, was Bethlen’s masterpiece. Despite the fact that at the time, it was primarily protestant, and only followers of the Helvetic Confessions were truly happy there. A future was visible when the state created by Bethlen would nurture a Hungarian spirit that transcended the Reformed denomination and embraced the whole of the Hungarian nation. Bethlen was not the father of this Transylvanian spirit, but the spirit was born in his Transylvania, which he tore from the bosom of the Hungarian Kingdom, following the call of obscure historical forces.” SZEKFŰ: *Bethlen Gábor*. 227.
40. ERŐS, VILMOS: *A Szekfű – Mályusz vita* [The Szekfű – Mályusz Debate]. Debrecen, 2000.
41. LENDVAI, L. FERENC: *Közép-Európa koncepciók* [Concepts of Eastern Europe]. Budapest, 1997.
42. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szekfű Gyula* [Gyula Szekfű]. Budapest. 1940.
43. Sándor Domanovszky provides a detailed critique of the concept in his review of Szekfű’s Bocskay profile: DOMANOVSKY, SÁNDOR: Hóman Bálint és Szekfű Gyula: Magyar történet. IV–V. kötet. 16–17. század [Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű: Hungarian History Vol IV–V. 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries]. *Századok* 63–64. (1929–1930) 881–903.
44. See, most recently, in DÁVID, GÉZA: “Pasák és bégek uralma alatt” [Ruled by Pashas and Beys]. Budapest 2005.
45. SZEKFŰ: 90.
46. JÁSZI, OSZKÁR: *Az Osztrák–Magyar Monarchia* [The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy].
47. DÁVID, ZOLTÁN: *Az 1715–20 évi összeírás. A történeti statisztika forrásai*. [The 1715–20 census. Sources of historical statistics.] (Szerk. Kovacsics József.) Budapest, 1957. 145–149.
48. GERGELY, ANDRÁS: Németh László vitája Szekfű Gyulával [László Németh’s Debate with Gyula Szekfű]. *Valóság*, 1983. 1. 48.
49. “Serious work began to make up for lost time where German, Walloon, kurutz and Rascian forces had left a population capable of work. It may sound strange, but this was when those living along the banks of the Tisza and Szamos learnt brickmaking, daubing and the building of towers. The new buildings were not erected for one or two years but the lives of generations. The security of peace provided a firm foundation for their aspirations.” SZEKFŰ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 78.
50. “A handful of Esterházy’s riders were offered the grace – so sought after by the Bercsényis – to call the name of the prince, which had rallied the kurutz forces in the darkest misfortunes of the uprising, throughout the villages in the populous valleys of the Szamos. They were the only ones to listen in suspense for

a reply to the old battle cry from the houses in the valleys. The answer was silence. Hungarians did not rise up at the name Rákóczi. Official Hungary continued down the path paved by peace, and the poor people, Ruthenian and Romanian peasants, Hungarian serfs took up their pitchforks to defend themselves from the Tartars, the allies of the kurutz forces, who offered freedom in Rákóczi's name. It became apparent, after Esterházy's failure, that the emigrants could achieve nothing in Hungary with Turkish assistance." SZEKFŰ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*.

51. "Fifty years of exile opened Mikes Kelemen's resigned lips to say, he had lived his life in pointless hiding. 'I should not have said pointless' he corrects himself 'because nothing is pointless in Gods plans, as he orders everything to his glory.' However, the life of those exiled is always useless to the public. The point of exile lies in the fact that the new order has no use for the members of the old order and eases its situation through their removal. Rákóczi's efforts were futile, as there was no longer space for an independent Transylvania in the new future of the nation. The flow of the nation's history never returned to the increasingly drying channel. The state of the Rákóczis and Bethlens was buried in the past, and later centuries could not even use his aspirations in Rodosto – as has been seen – as an example. Everything that had given new energy to the life of the nation was foreign to Rákóczi's thinking. In dire situations, when the future of the nation was at stake, no one returned to Rákóczi's anachronistic ideas. The great restoration and reinforcement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the flash in the pan toward the end of the rule of Josef II, and not much later the Renaissance of the Hungarian spirit and nation, the great catastrophe and the formation of the new Hungarian state all came to pass without the executors, the leaders or the masses calling Rákóczi's name. The exile of Rodosto was the child of a past age, a tragic time, which saw Hungarian fighting Hungarian for over a century. Once the nation had been reunified and old wounds tended to, the nation proudly continued towards its new tasks, which were unimaginable to those born in centuries past. The suffering of Rákóczi's exile remained without consequence and did not form any traditional or political force. History and destiny have left him to lose his historical value and role. He was pushed from public life, which he led during the uprising, into meaningless private life, and his energies, which were tailored to historical acts, were lost in his efforts to regain a lost role. His career is that of a wave, which brakes and collapses, while its companions hurry along in the endless channel." SZEKFŰ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 292.
52. When asked where and against whom they were headed the Tartars responded with Eastern indifference: to where the Hungarian lords command. The emigrants of Chotin had thus prepared well, and only the Battle of Petrovaradin and the bad weather prevented them from attacking Hungary with their Tatar

troops. (...) The commander of the other flanking army was the Pasha of Chotin, Mustafa, who was supported by Kipchac and Nogai Tatars alongside his existing Crimeans. This force planned to attack Hungary through the Northern passes of the Carpathians, the Verecke Pass among them. The battle plan was the same as that used by Batu Khan during the Mongol Invasion centuries ago. However, history never repeats itself. The image of this force was given striking colour by the voices of the Hungarians fighting alongside the Turkish and Tatars." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 73–74. "By the time the fate of the campaign had already been decided on the Serbian battlefield. Simultaneously with the attack of the Chotinian Tatars, at dawn, the Hungarian Hussars of Pálffy within Jenő Savoyai's army that was besieging Belgrade attacked the camp of the Grand Vizier en route to liberate the fort. They were followed by infantry regiments, and Jenő Szavoyai himself joined the battle. By the time the first rays of sunlight penetrated the morning fog, the Ottoman army was routed and running south. Two days later, Belgrade surrendered to the prince. Savoyai offered free passage to the émigrés in the fort, saying the "canaille" can go where they please. With this conquest, Jenő Savoyai completed the work in which János Hunyadi and John of Capistrano had heroically sacrificed themselves for Hungary and Christianity." SZEKFÜ: *A száműzött Rákóczi*. 83.

53. Nor commoners, nor trained men of diplomacy could follow Bethlen further down the road that seemed to turn its back on Christianity and lead to the centuries-old pagan enemy. SZEKFÜ: *Bethlen Gábor*. 145.
54. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szekfü Gyula*. Budapest. 1940.
55. SZÜCS, JENŐ: Az MTA Történettudományi Intézete 1966. április 15-i vitaülésén („Szellemtörténet és nacionalizmus”) elhangzott előadás némileg bővített szövege [The expanded text of the lecture (“Geistesgeschichte and Nationalism”) given at the debate session of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of History on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1966]. *Történelmi Szemle* 9(1966), 45–266 1.
56. SZÜCS, JENŐ: *Nemzet és Történelem* [Nation and History]. Budapest. 1972, 1974. 557–601.
57. SZÜCS, JENŐ: *Nemzet és történelem. A magyar szellemi történet nemzet-konceptiójának tipológiájához* [On the Typology of the Nation-Concept of Hungarian Geistesgeschichte]. 309.
58. “While the ‘Hungarian problem’ was tied by several elements to the gold standard of the turn of the century (at least to the problem of smallholders and the agrarian proletariat as raised simultaneously by the National-Traditionalist writers, and at times to the concept of interdependence in the Danube river valley), ideological uncertainty often rendered it difficult to draw a firm border between the ideology that was at times twisted into racial arguments and what it stood against: that is the difference between the question ‘what is Hungarian’, and Fascism was muddled.” 297. “However, the ghosts of the *völkisch*-

*volkhaft* categories of newer German Geistesgeschichte and the traditional *Volksgeist* continuously haunted the whole question (...)” 299. From a methodological perspective it is best to follow Szekfű, who offered not only his name, authority and definitive Preface to the volume, but a historian’s contribution to a question primarily studied through literature, the arts, and language. This study from Szekfű reused a great deal of his *oeuvre*, one could almost call it caricatural, but it also contains a concentrate of the possible and typical answers of Hungarian Geistesgeschichte. Szekfű’s significance as a historian is paradoxically emphasised by the fact that he remained an influential historian despite the false answers he gave to and premises he formed on the great questions of Hungarian history. Even his fallacies were suggestive. (...) The middle ages, as the unspoilt, undivided, and organically healthy period of the ‘nation’s’ existence: This approach also unquestionably refers to a historiographic phenomenon touched on above, although in a more modern form, because national character is given a socio-historical augmentation. The well-known axiom of historical thinking in the 1930s that in these centuries “the ruling class still held a spiritual unity with the masses of the nation” is a central element of Szekfű’s concept. Peasants still hold something of the ancient nomadic-equestrian culture, in the spirit of Leo VI the Wise. They have not lost their valiance. (It should be noted that when detailing this question Szekfű referred not to the warring peasants of the Transylvanian revolts, the defenders of Belgrade, or Dózsa’s crusaders, but to the peasant forces deployed in the minor private skirmishes of nobles.) They held a love for freedom. The problem is, the triad is incomplete: there are few signs that peasants played at ‘politics,’ subtly or otherwise, in the Hungarian Middle Ages. Thus, ‘ancient noble humanity’ is indicted as its third leg, as serfs were more than happy to feast their lords free of charge up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century (...) This idyll was catastrophically shattered by Verbőczy in 1514. This is what distanced noblemen from commoners, this was when – and only when – ‘the Hungarian nobility barred the majority of the nation from its active community.’ (This was the main train of thought in the book ‘Nobleman and peasant in the unity of Hungarian Life’ (Úr és paraszt a magyar élet egységében) which was published two years later.) The 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries were a time of decadence and division in the Hungarian character. While Szechenyi’s generation did attempt to revitalise and utilise the ‘ancient Hungarian character’ that had been conserved among the peasantry during the ‘spiritual schism of the ruling class,’ the ‘heroic medicine’ failed, which resulted in ‘dilution’ of a scale never seen before. This was followed simply by a summary of the *Three Generations* concept. The rootless borrowing of foreign ideas, liberalism, mass assimilation, an ailing middle class etc. etc. until the warning note on World War II; Vörösmarty’s vision of the death of the nation, a sombre image of a vates poet, from which

rises as a call ‘Man, stive on, strive on, have faith; and trust’ the only solution: the vestiges of the latent ancient Hungarian character must be drawn from the Hungarian peasants. It may not be necessary to highlight the aspects of this concept that cast a ‘positive’ light on Szekfű in the political climate of two or three years later. There is also little doubt that the ‘feelings of anxiety’ he mentioned in his Preface were sincere, as was the belief that the country must be protected ‘from delusions, illusions and sinking into a swamp’ in the ‘charging chaos of ideologies and propaganda.’ That is protected from Fascism and socialism both. But was it – from either of them?” SZÜCS: op. cit. 302.

59. “He later accepted Erik Molnár’s statement: ‘that emotional attachment to the ordinary way of life ‘can not be a political factor in itself; and thus, only be the root of collective action, – he added – ‘supported by other factors.’ ‘Now what are these «other factors?»’ Unique national characteristics rooted in tradition and the past, the ‘national character’ rooted in the national psyche and spiritual temperament – (‘possibly character’ – he adds while contemplating terminology at the beginning of the article). And what factors form national characteristics (or character)? To this, he offers a quote from Ferenc Jankovich as a solution: its source is the ‘soul of the people’...! In summary, he provides a complete mathematical formula: national patriotism = love of homeland + national spirit. The secretive ultima ratio is exposed: Volksseele and Volksgeist. Thus, through the idea of ‘national spirit’ borrowed from Geistesgeschichte, he has managed to retreat to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for an explanation. To avoid misinterpretation, I should add that I do not believe that national patriotism is rooted in Geistesgeschichte or Romanticism. However, this subject does fall here somewhat. One can argue with something by turning the glove inside out and throwing it back. The glove remains a glove. Even the class struggle can be mythologised in history, if the class struggle is mentioned in the context of a country – or to go further region, Eastern-Central Europe – that has not yet freed itself of the characteristic attitude of nationalism. What in Hungary is (super, or sub-Historical) patriotism, not yet connected to the “national consciousness”, next door, – in the spirit of Marxism – is a form of national unity consciously planned in the mediaeval movements of feudal peasants. (...) Historiography fulfils its role, is Marxist (moreover, to use the phrase used in so many meanings over the past centuries, is in the national interest), when the critical analysis of concepts and old ideological mechanism frees history of all mythological elements. This is also how it can be freed of the latent shadows of nationalism and Geistesgeschichte. SZÜCS: op. cit. 332. Az MTA Történettudományi Intézete 1966. április 15-i vitáján („Szellem-történet és nacionalizmus”) elhangzott előadás némileg bővített szövege. Published in *Történelmi Szemle* 9(1966) 245–266 1.

60. “In reality, there was no meaningful difference in the national character of Catholic and Protestant Hungarians, just as there was no, and could be no, difference in the character of George Rákóczi I and Péter Pázmány, Miklós Zrínyi the poet and George Rákóczi II, or Thököly and Francis Rákóczi. The Catholic and Protestant Hungarians caught on opposing sides of the conflict during the 17<sup>th</sup>-century attacks of Transylvania were as similar as siblings in their speech, traditions, manner of warfare, and uniquely distinct from their respective allies: Turks, Swedish, Austrian-Germans. That is not to say that the long-standing opposition between the two denominations did not change the ancient national character. The nature of this change was not the emergence of two kinds of Hungarians, for example, Catholic and Protestant, or labantz and kurutz. This was not a simple fission; both kurutz and labantz became different Hungarians to the unified nature of the mediaeval nation. The new Hungarian nation remained similar in its shades, but the colour itself was not what it used to be.” SZEKFŰ GYULA: A magyar jellem történetünkben. In: *Mi a magyar?* 532.
61. “However, as the faults of Hungarians were created by the derogatory conditions in which they were forced to live, any attempt at reform failed, until these conditions improved. However, living conditions improved to no end after the Ottomans were ousted from the country. Hungarians never returned to the mediaeval glory and independence they had known. As a result, the dark side of its character continued to change, to darker tones and back again, but never disappeared completely. First, our character formed our history, and only later our history our character.” And page 553. “Throughout this decline, its connections to national culture also waned. By the turn of the century, it not only had no connection to the new literature and national arts, to Ady, to Babits, to Móricz, Bartók and to Kodály, it positioned itself to oppose them (which is perhaps the most glaring – and in Hungary unique – proof of a malfunctioning ruling, intellectual class). The old noble class was finally completely impoverished, when the country began to embrace international capitalism, and when magnates and nobles handed the greatest prospects of economic life over to the predominantly foreign capitalist Jews.” SZEKFŰ: *ibid.* 539.
62. GLATZ, FERENC: *Nemzeti Kultúra, kulturált nemzet.* GERGELY, ANDRÁS: Németh László vitája Szekfű Gyulával. *Valóság* 83/1. 46–62. Id. In: *A mindentudás igazsága. Tanulmányok Németh Lászlóról.* (Ed. Szegedy-Maszák, Mihály.) Ak füzetek 17. 71–101.; DÉNES, IVÁN ZOLTÁN: *Az önrendelkezés érvényessége* [The validity of self-determination]. Budapest 1988, and *Szekfű Gyula és a magyar konzervatív hagyomány* [Gyula Szekfű and the Hungarian Conservative Tradition]. 196–213. *A „realitás” illúziója. A historikus Szekfű Gyula pályafordulója* [The illusion of “Reality.” Change in Gyula Szekfű’s career]. Budapest, 1976.



63. KOSÁRY, DOMOKOS: Bevezető [Introduction]. In: *Szakály emlékönyv* [Szakály Memorial Album]. (Ed. Fodor, Pál – Pálffy, Géza.) Budapest, 2004.
64. Personal communication from Kálmán Benda.
65. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szekfü Gyula*. Budapest, 1940. 66.
66. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szekfü Gyula*. 32.
67. My sincere thanks to Györgyi Tóth for this material.
68. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *Szekfü Gyula*. 74.
69. Quoted by GERGELY, ANDRÁS: *Valóság*, 1983/1.
70. BIBÓ, ISTVÁN: Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem [Disfigured Hungarian Character, The Dead-End History of Hungary]. In: *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Studies]. (Collected: Huszár, Tibor.) Vol. II. 614.
71. Idem.
72. Idem.
73. BIBÓ: *Disfigured...* 606.
74. In: *Válogatott tanulmányok*. (Collected: Huszár, Tibor.) Vol. II. 215.
75. Idem.
76. *The Misery of Minor States in Eastern Europe*. 193.
77. Idem.
78. *The Misery of Minor States in Eastern Europe*. 193.
79. BIBÓ: *Disfigured...* 604.
80. Ibid. 605.
81. Idem.
82. Idem.
83. BIBÓ: *Disfigured...* 616.
84. Ibid. 616.
85. KÓSA, LÁSZLÓ: A mindentudás igézete [The Spell of Omniscience]. In: *Tanulmányok Németh Lászlóról* [Studies on László Németh]. Ak füzetek 17. (Ed. Szegedy-Maszák Mihály.) Budapest 1985. 119–142. On his concept of history BUZINKAY, GÉZA: *Feladat és múlt. Az esszéíró Németh László történet-szemlélete* [Task and Past. On the Historical Concept of the Essayist László Németh]. Ibid. 54–70.
86. E.g. Ady's poem: Judge us, Werbőczy.
87. BIBÓ: *Disfigured...* 575.
88. KÓSA: op. cit. 122.
89. NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ: *A vallási türelemlről megmentett gondolatok* [Thought on Religious Tolerance]. Cited by Kósa: op. cit. 134.
90. BIBÓ: *Disfigured...* 608.
91. *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága*. [The Misery of Small Eastern European States.] 216.
92. *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága*. [The Misery of Small Eastern European States.] 216.



93. 'Awakening' the National Consciousness "This could be done for the sake of success, because indecisive masses stood behind these nations, which had to be won for the national idea, or as is often said, had to be awakened to the national consciousness. Why would this have mattered in, for example, France or England? Ninety per cent of people are not consciously English or French just as they are not consciously fathers of husbands, not consciously bourgeois, proletarian, and not consciously human. It is only in critical moments that a person is conscious of where they belong and what their role is in the world. For the English or French, it would make little sense to constantly uphold the national consciousness, it would serve no purpose, as the national consciousness would simply awaken when needed. If it awakens, there can be no debate that a French or English consciousness will awaken; what else could? Opposite to this, everything was debatable in Central and Eastern Europe: first, the battles were fought within a dynastic framework, then the nations fought each other for every single human soul. The magnates, the administration, priests, educators, judges and local entrepreneurs all joined the debate with their own ideas and views, and everyone said something different. As a result, Hungarian or Slovak peasants were treated to grandiose riddles on communal life almost daily, similar to which a French peasant would perhaps have to answer once a century."
94. *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága*. [The Misery of Small Eastern European States.] 216.
95. GERÖ, ANDRÁS: *Képzelt történelem* [Imagined History]. Budapest, 2004. 201.
96. *Idem*.
97. *Ibid*.
98. Previous publications on the subject: SÁNDOR, ÖZE – NORBERT, SPANNENBERGER: Zur Reinterpretation der mittelalterlichen Staatsgründung in der ungarischen Geschichtsschreibung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. 61–77. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas*. 2(2000) München, 2001. SÁNDOR, ÖZE – NORBERT, SPANNENBERGER: Hungaria vulgo appellatur propugnaculum Christianitatis". Zur politischen Instrumentalisierung einer Selbstlegitimierung. In: *Ibid*. 23 l. In print *Ibid*. For a functional analysis of historical remembrance see: BURRICHTER, CLEMENS – SCHÖDL, GÜNTHER: „Ohne Erinnerung keine Zukunft." *Zur Aufarbeitung von Vergangenheit in einigen europäischen Gesellschaften unserer Tage*. Köln, 1991.
99. NORA, PIERRE: *Geschichte im Wissenschaft und Unterricht*. 1996. 21–31.
100. HEUSS, ALFRED: Geschichtliche Gegenwart, ihr Erwerb und ihr Verlust. *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, Nr. 7/1987, S. 389–401. ASSMANN, JAN: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. München, 1997. SPETH, RUDOLF – EDGAR, WOLFRUM: Einleitung. In: *Politische Mythen – Geschichtspolitik*.

- Berlin, 1996. NORA, PIERRE: *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*. Berlin, 1990.
101. ASSMANN, ALEIDA: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München, 1999. FREI, NORBERT: *Vergangenheitspolitik*, 1996. HOBBSBAUM, ERIC J.: *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, myt, realty*. Cambridge, 1990. See a detailed bibliography of international scholarly literature of the subject in *Magyarok kelet és nyugat közt. A nemzettudat változó jelképei* [Between East and West. The Changing Symbols of National Consciousness]. Budapest, 1996. (Ed. Hofer, Tamás.) ANDERDON, BENEDICT: *Die Erfindung der Nation*. HOSKING, GEOFFREY – SCHÖPFLIN, GEORGE: *Myths and Nationhood*. London, 1997.
102. Cited by ÁCS PÁL: „Az idő ósága” [Time’s Age]. 2001. 155.
103. FABINYI, TIBOR: *Keresztény hermeneutika* [Christian Hermeneutics]. Budapest, 2002.
104. ÁCS: *ibid.* 156.
105. GALAVICS, GÉZA: *Kössünk kardot a pogány ellen* [Buckle Your Swords Against the Pagans]. Budapest, 1986. 18–22.
106. SUNDHAUSSEN, HOLM: *Kriegserinnerung als Gesamtkunstwerk und Tattmotiv: Sechshundertzehn Jahre Kosovo-krieg (1389–1999)*. In: *Der Krieg in religiösen und nationalan Deutungen der Neuzeit*. (Ed. Dietrich Beyrau.) Tübingen, 2001. 11–40. WOLFGANG, PETRITSCH – KARL, KASER – ROBERT, PICHLER: *Kosovo-Kosova. Mythen–Daten–Fakten*. Klagenfurt, 1999.
107. In papers co-authored with Spannenberger, this group of secondary literature was referred to as Meisterwerks. In German-speaking regions, the impact assessment of these studies with regards to memory space yielded significant results.
108. FLAKE, MONIKA: *Mythos der Nation*. Berlin, 1999. Exhibition Booklet. I would like to thank Beatrix Basics for allowing me to read her copy of the catalogue. The booklet for the exhibition entitled „Történelem-kép, szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatából Magyarországon” [View of History, Excerpts from the Connection of the Past and Arts in Hungary] organised between 17<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>th</sup> September 2000 provided outstanding insight into the changing depiction of Hungarian memory spaces: ed. Mikó, Árpád – Sinkó, Katalin, the following studies, in: MAROSI, ERNŐ: *A magyar történelem képei, a történetiség szemléltetése* [Images of Hungarian History, Depicting the Story of History]. 11–33. ÁCS, PÁL: *Apocalypsis cum figuris. A régi magyar irodalom történelemképe* [Apocalypsis cum figuris. Views of History in Old Hungarian Literature]. 48–63. GYÁNI GÁBOR: *Történetírás: a nemzeti emlékezet tudománya?* [Historiography: The Science of National Remembrance?]. 92–103.

109. KISFALUDY, KÁROLY: Mohács. In: *Hét évszázad magyar versei* [Hungarian Poems from Seven Centuries]. Budapest, 1978. Vol. I. 895. Budapest, 1978. Loose English translation: KÁROLY, KISFALUDY: Mohács Field. In: *Magyar Poems*. Sel and Tran. De Vályi, Nora – M. Stuart Dorothy. London, 1911. Accessible online: <http://mek.niif.hu/06800/06822/06822.htm> [Date retrieved: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020].
110. NEMESKÜRTY, ISTVÁN: *Ez történt Mohács után* [What Happened After Mohács]. Budapest, 1966. Summarising volume of Collected works: *Önfiá vágta sebét* [It's Son Struck the Fatal Blow]. 183.
111. HORVÁTH, MIHÁLY: *Magyarország történelme* [The History of Hungary]. Vol. IV. 4. 1871. 73. In the following for historiographic and biographic data until 1945, cf. VÁRKONYI, ÁGNES: *Pozitivisták történetképe a magyar történetírásban. A pozitivisták történetképe Európában és hazai értékelése* [The Positivist Approach to History in Hungarian Historiography. An Evaluation of the Positivist Approach in Europe and Hungary]. Budapest, 1977. GUNST, PÉTER: *A magyar történetírás története* [A History of Hungarian Historiography]. 1995.
112. “Amely országokat, s fegyveres hadakat, // isten megszokott verni // Gonosz életekért, vagy atyjok bűneiért, // Ostorral akar érni, // Eszét legelsőbbben, veszi el mindenben, // S így szokta megbüntetni,(...) // Mohács mezeizől, egy mérföldre ettől, // Volt a rettenetesség, // Nagy villámlás miatt, mint mennydörgés miatt, // Tetszett, hogy ez világ ég, // Csak nem, mint ítélet, s más világra kelet, // Látszott hogy már leszen vég. //” LISZTHY, LÁSZLÓ (1628–1663): Magyar Mária [Hungarian Mars]. In: *Hét évszázad magyar versei*. Budapest, 1979. I. 421. No artistic English translation available, rough translation: “Which countries, and armed forces // God wishes to punish // For evil lives, and fathers’ sins // He wishes to whip, // First their minds he takes of all things // This is how he punishes them, (...) // Mohács field, but a mile from here // Is where the horror unfolded, // As great thunder, from great lightning, // All the World seemed to burn, // but not as Judgement, or waking to the afterlife, // It seemed like the End of Times. //”  
 “Hajh Iszonyú térség gyászos temetője hazámnak! // Jártam hantjaidon, látam sírhalmait én is // Öseinknek, kik hajdan az ellenségre kikelvén // Honynyukért, s ott halva vérekké adózzván, // Intenek íme! S világ füle hallatára kiáltják: // „Nézz e térre, s tanulj már egységére magyar nép”! // Gyász jelhangja, Mohács szomorú neve! Rettenetes név! //” (BATSÁNYI, JÁNOS: Levél Szentjóni Szabó Lászlóhoz (1792) [Letter to László Szentjóni Szabó (1792)] In: *Hét évszázad magyar versei*. I. 663.)  
 No artistic English translation available, rough translation: “// Oh, terrible field, cemetery for mourning my Homeland! // I have walked your hills, seen their graves myself // Of our Forefathers, who took to the enemy // And sac-

rificed their blood for their Homeland, // Now they teach us, shout for the world to hear: // ‘Look at this field and learn unity people of Hungary!’ // the sad name Mohács, voice of mourning, such a terrible name! // Mohács, Mohács! [...] tarka lepke, gondtalanság // Röpködött előttünk, // Azt üztük, pedig már a török oroszán // Elbődült mögöttünk. //” (PETŐFI, SÁNDOR: Fekete-piros dal, 1848. május [A Song of Black and Red, May 1848]. In: *Hét évszázad magyar versei*. No artistic translation available, rough translation: “Mohács, Mohács!! [...] colourful butterfly, carelessness // flew before us, // and we chased it, while the Turk Lion // Roared behind us.”  
 “Ha van Isten, meg ne könyörüljön rajta: // Veréshez szokott fajta, // Cigány-népek langy szívű sihederje, // Verje csak verje, verje. //” (ADY ENDRE: Nekünk Mohács kell! [We need Mohács!]. 1908. In: *Hét évszázad magyar versei*. II. 609.) “If there is a God, have no mercy: // This kind has grown used to beatings // Faint-hearted Gypsy offspring, // beat him, just beat him, beat him.”

113. PALACKY, JAN: *Geschichte von Böhmen Osnabrück 1844–1867*.
114. SZALAY, LÁSZLÓ: *Magyarország története* [The History of Hungary]. Lipcse–Pest, 1851–1855.
115. ÖZE, SÁNDOR – SPANNENBERGER, NORBERT: „Hungaria vulgo apellatur propugnaculum Cristianitatis”. Zur politischen Instrumentalisierung eines Topos in Ungarn. In-print: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Und Kultur Südosteuropas*. München, 2003. 1–22. On the propaganda of the propugnaculum topos see: TERBE, LAJOS: Egy európai szállóige életrajza [The Biography of a European Adage]. In: *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlöny*, 1936. 297–351. He cites a speech made by Kossuth in the US on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1851 on page 328: Select speeches of Kossuth. London, 1853. 87. “But Hungary by the providence of God, is destined to become once more the vanguard of civilisation, and of religious liberty for the whole of the European Continent Against the encroachments Roussian despotism, as it has already been the barrier of Christianity against Islamism.”
116. BENDA, KÁLMÁN: *A magyar hivatástudat története* [A History of the Hungarian Commitment to Destiny]. Budapest, 1937. WACZULIK, MARGIT: *A török korszakkezdetének nyugati történetirodalma a 16. században* [Western Historical Literature on the Beginning of the Ottoman Era in the 16<sup>th</sup> century]. Budapest, 1937.
117. VÁRKONYI, ÁGNES: *A pozitívista történetiszemlélet a magyar történetírásban. A pozitívista történetiszemlélet Európában és hazai értékelése*. Budapest, 1977, provides a good summary of historians from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A general historiography can be found in: GUNST, PÉTER: *A történetírás Magyarországon* [Historiography in Hungary]. Debrecen, 1995.

118. The works of Gergely Czuczor are an early example of this idea emerging in the literature.
119. On Szekfű see: DÉNES, IVÁN ZOLTÁN: *A realitás illúziója. A historikus Szekfű Gyula* [The Illusion of Reality. The Historicist Gyula Szekfű]. Budapest, 1980.
120. SZEKFÜ, GYULA: *A magyar állam története*. Budapest.
121. HÓMAN, BÁLINT – SZEKFÜ, GYULA: Budapest, 1936. II. *Preface*.
122. HÓMANN–SZEKFÜ: op. cit., II. 222.
123. MÓD, ALADÁR: *400 év küzdelem az önálló Magyarországért* [400 years of Struggle for an Independent Hungary]. 1943.
124. MÓD, A.: op. cit. Foreword from 1943.
125. *Ibid.* Foreword from 1945.
126. *Ibid.* 16.
127. *Ibid.* 17.
128. *Ibid.* 19.
129. *Ibid.* 22.
130. HÓMAN–SZEKFÜ: *Magyar történet*. 18<sup>th</sup> century, p. 48. *Ibid.* 37.
131. N. PÁL, JÓZSEF: *Pillantás a Molnár Erik vitára* [A look at the Erik Molnár Debate]. 107–111. ÖZE, SÁNDOR: *A Molnár Erik vita és XVII–XVIII. századi szabadságküzdelmeink* [The Erik Molnár debate and Independence Movements in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries]. 100–107. Both in: *Bercsényi Miklós és kora* [Miklós Bercsényi and his Era]. (Ed. Földesi, Ferenc – Czeglédi, Sándor.) Hódmezővásárhely, 1998.
132. I must thank Tibor Zinner for this information. Illegal Socialism. The Report of the Inquiry Committee. 318–319. The chapter entitled: Erik Molnár: The Executive. “Molnár became Minister for Justice in 1950, replacing István Ries, in a time when the Ministry showed the way through direct and firm methods, not the Supreme Court. In 1953 he became President of the Supreme Court to ensure the continuity of firm justice in ‘the new phase.’” He was a personal guarantee that the retrials would not pose a threat to the existing party leadership. “In Erik Molnár a person who, similarly to the leadership of the State Protection Agency (not just Gábor Péter but his successors), carried out the orders of the higher political leadership without question was in the most important Judicial positions between 1950 and 1956. His responsibility in shaping the theory and practice of the distorted criminal proceedings of the time was much greater, his crime was graver, than that of the prosecutors, judges and council leaders, who took part in the ‘plays of litigation,’ wrote indictments and announced the rulings that had been brought elsewhere.”
133. ÖZE–SPANNENBERGER: op. cit. Zur Reinterpretacio. 76.

134. See ÁBTL O- 11182, O-11182/1. The new staff placed here was expected to observe and report on the old guard. A janitor caught Péter Hanák searching through doors during the night. His files can be researched following the scandal.
135. After this Kálmán Benda supported himself through dealing antiques. In 1956 he was made the President of the Institute's Revolutionary Committee and Deputy Head of the Institute.
136. RÓNAI, ANDRÁS: *Térképezett történelem*. [History Mapped.] Budapest, 1989.
137. "Molnár later repeatedly mentioned not only in connection with Hungarian pre-history but with broader historiography, the role 'historical materialism had played in emphasising connections and supplementing facts.' From his studies, two works provided some novelties. The first was Hungarian Pre-History, the second the two small volumes Society in the Árpád Era, published in 1943. Most unique was his strong economic and socio-historical approach, and his description of the disintegration of tribal society, noting the matriarchal forms of society which may have existed among Hungarians at some time, and stressing how St Stephen's foundation of the Hungarian state accelerated the establishment of the Feudal system". LACKÓ, MIKLÓS: op. cit. SZENTMIKLÓS, LAJOS [Molnár, Erik]: *Az Árpádkori társadalom* [Society in the Árpád Era]. Vol. I–II. Budapest, n. p., 1943; MOLNÁR, ERIK: *Szent István* [St. Stephen]. Budapest, Szikra, 1945.
138. RÁNKI, GYÖRGY: *Molnár Erik. Válogatott tanulmányok* [The Selected Studies of Erik Molnár]. Budapest, 1969. Foreword and mainly idem, Molnár Erik. Budapest. 1971. 103–108.
139. LACKÓ, MIKLÓS: Molnár Erik és a 60-as évek történész-vitája [Erik Molnár and the Historians' Debate of the 1960s]. *Századok*, 2008. Vol. 142(6), 1483–1536. The study itself is an interesting blend of analysis and memoir. The occasional lack of critical thinking is due to the schizophrenic situation a historian is placed in as an actor of history. The study does not mention any of my previously published studies on the Erik Molnár debate. Nevertheless, the study follows their logical arc and attempts to attach a – what the study calls – realistic image of Molnár to them. This was a typical debasing technique of communism. Rewriting, disregarding, or simply completely ignoring earlier works, studies and articles, all the while adding drops of inaccessible information to imply that "listen old chap, you can lay your mosaics as much as you want, but we are still the one who decide how the story will be told."
140. His archive held in the Archives of the Academy contain a diary with his brother René's last known address from the mid-1930s.
141. Personal communication from Erik Molnár.



142. Rákosi also mentioned the fact that he was unaware Erik Molnár was a member of the party in his memoir. See RÁKOSI, MÁTYÁS: *Visszaemlékezések* [Memories] 1940–1956. Vols. I–II. (Ed. Feitl, István – Gellériné Lázár, Márta – Sipos, Levente.) Budapest, Napvilág, 1997. Vol. I. 138. cited by LACKÓ: *ibid.* 1486.
143. The conflict between Gábor Péter and András Tömpe illustrates the situation well. Tömpe entered the headquarters of the State Protection Agency, 60 Andrassy street, as the agency's leader. However, once inside, he was faced with the fact that Gábor Péter, who had been recruited at a Trade Union meeting in the Soviet Union and had until then been considered insignificant, was taking over his post. (Obviously, Péter held a higher rank in the Soviet security services.) Tömpe later became a resident agent of the Soviets in South America; thus his rank was non-negligible itself.
144. Lackó wrote the following on this: *ibid.* 1491. “His unchangeable thinking in the question of nationalism may have been one of the reasons he increasingly turned away from his political-ideological journalism, and towards historiography. It was sometime after he published his study on the birth of the Hungarian agrarian proletariat that he first formulated a plan to write a Marxist history of Hungarian economic and social history from pre-history to the Early Modern Era or further.” SZENTMIKLÓS, LAJOS [Molnár, Erik]: *A magyarság ősi társadalma* [The ancient Society of Hungarians]. *Korunk*, 1939/12. 1023–1031.; *Idem*: *A magyarok az ősi hazában* [Hungarians in the Ancient Homeland]. *Korunk*, 1940/1. 17–25.; *Idem*: *A magyarság a pásztor korban* [Hungarians in the Pastoral Era]. *Korunk*, 1940/5. 407–414.; *Idem*: *Család és vagyon a magyar pásztor korban* [Family and Wealth in the Hungarian Pastoral Age]. *Korunk*, 1940/5. 496–504.; *Idem*: *A magyar pásztor társadalom* [Hungarian Society in the Pastoral Age]. *Korunk*, 1940/7–8. 630–640.
145. LACKÓ, MIKLÓS: *ibid.* 1489.: “Erik Molnár’s deeply critical view of the national-traditionalist – and even more of the social-democrats – obviously determined his relationship with the Popular Front and National Front. Surprisingly, Molnár, who never irked from discussing sensitive issues – as proven by his articles written on the question of Jews in the 1930 and after 1945, in which he accepted that there was, in fact, a question around the Jewish people but rejected Zionism, and held true to class theory and total assimilation – did not publish a single article on the questions of the Popular or National Fronts.”
146. Erik Molnár’s spoken information about his friendships. Confirmed for the author by Sándor Haraszti.
147. LACKÓ: *op. cit.* 1489.
148. Information from László Rajk.



149. Personal information from Olga Baxant.
150. Cited by LACKÓ: op. cit. 1497.
151. LACKÓ: op cit. 1497.
152. LACKÓ: ibid.
153. LACKÓ: ibid. “He refuted a great deal of the criticisms he received in 1949, and in some questions went further than what he had said earlier. For example, he defended his position on the positive role of the nobility in the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century, while simultaneously suggesting the role of the nobility changed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was already a precursor to the debate of 1960. He wrote that it would be difficult to find a clear path in the inconsistent history of the 17<sup>th</sup> century because at the time ‘the independence movement and the centralization movement were represented by two opposing forces, the feudal freedom fighters and Habsburg absolutism.’ He continued that the kurutz–labantz opposition must be overcome, but this was no easy task, because in Hungary ‘the independence movement was represented by a feudal layer that was not similar to the English «new nobility» but rather to the Polish Szlachta,’ and thus, endangered the embourgeoisement of the country. Meanwhile, Habsburg absolutism propagated centralisation, [...] while it relied on the forces of the reactionary counter-reformation, [...] and still organised forces against the greatest, Ottoman threat.”
154. BENDA, KÁLMÁN: *A Bocskai-szabadságharc* [The Bocskai War of Independence]. Budapest, 1955. The events that led to the crushing of the book are detailed in BENDA, KÁLMÁN: *Bocskai István*. Budapest. 1993. The afterword to the republished edition of the biography published in 1942. The ominous sentence was connected to an episode after the siege of Nové Zámky when the Ottomans demanded prisoners after victory. Bocskai’s general replied with a partial offer: he would hand over the Germans but not the Hungarians. The source is unclear on who is to be handed over, who the Germans and Hungarians are. However, Benda alluded to the idea that a form of national cohesion could have been at work between the aristocrats and commoners. Thus, Erzsébet Andics and her followers destroyed the book for referencing the national independence concept through its sources.
155. Personal communication
156. V. T.: Vita a Táncsics Kör Társadalomtudományi Szakosztályában az október események előzményeiről és jellegéről [Debate in the Social Sciences Section of the Táncsics Circle on the Background and Nature of the October Events]. *Magyarország*, 1957. március 13. 9. Molnár sent Party Headquarters a detailed notation of the distortions in the written account of the debate, emphasising that considering the Rákosi system as a central factor was not a terminological issue. MTAK, Ms. 4364/31. (Attached was a corrected version of his lecture. Ibid. 4364/27/1.)

157. Ádám Wirth reported on the debate to the Agitation and Propaganda Division of the Central Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1957. According to this report, the more prominent speakers, such as Aladár Mód, Béla Fogarasi, Tibor Szamuely, supported Molnár's opinion. MOL, 288 f., 33/1957/1.
158. The minutes of the debate organised on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1957 as noted by Molnár: 1. MTAK Ms. 4356/222.
159. "Kádár János said at a meeting of the Steering Committee [this was later called the Political Committee – L. Ti.] of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party that he would not have given Erik Molnár's views any publicity. The effects of these words reverberated through the party." Cited by Standeisky Éva.
160. LACKÓ: op cit. 1503.
161. RÁNKI: op. cit.
162. Ibid.
163. RÁNKI: op. cit. 183–184.
164. *Szabó Ervin történeti írásai* [The Historical Works of Ervin Szabó]. (Collected, edited and analysed: György Litván.) Budapest, 1979.
165. Bevezetés Engels: A magyar forradalom c. művéhez [Introduction to Engels: The Hungarian Revolution]. In: *Marx és Engels Válogatott Művei* [The Selected Works of Marx and Engels]. Vol. I. Budapest, 1905. 159–163. In: Ibid. 129.
166. Ibid. Introduction. 15–17.
167. Az 1514-es forradalom [The Revolution of 1514]. In: *Népszava naptár*, 1903. 92–102. In: Ibid. 76–88. "Another legend which dubbed King Matthias the protector of the poor, 'Matthias the Just' should be disproved here. While his rule did bring more wealth to the peasants, the laws he enacted barely offered more than those passed by Andrew II almost two centuries earlier. They guaranteed personal freedom."
168. *A 48-as magyar forradalom osztály jellege* [The Class Nature of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution]. Gondolat 1936. 31–41. In: Ibid. 628–642.
169. RÉVAI, JÓZSEF: *Társadalmi és pártharcok a 48-as 49-es magyar forradalomban* [Battles In Society And Political Parties During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–49]. Ibid. 600–605.; *A 48-as legenda* [The Legend of 48]. Sociale und Parteikampfe in der 48/49-er ungarischen Revolution. Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz, 1924. Normalaugaba: iss. 12. 109–110. In: Ibid. 606–621. Szabó Ervin és a 48-as magyar forradalom [Ervin Szabó and the Hungarian Revolution of 48]. *Sarló és kalapács*, 1936. 6–7. iss. 13–14. Ibid. in: 622–627.
170. HORVÁTH, ZOLTÁN: *Szabó Ervin történelem szemlélete* [Ervin Szabó's Approach to History]. Foreword to the first Hungarian edition 1946.

171. On the debates of the consolidation period see: N. PÁL, JÓZSEF: The Ruling of National-Traditionalist Writers and its Historical-ideological Background. Budapest, 171–200. In: idem. “*Tisztának a tisztát őrizzük meg*”. *Tanulmányok kritikák a 20. századi magyar irodalomról és történelemről* [“Keep the clean, clean!” Studies and Reviews on 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian Literature and History]. His words regarding the 1959 ruling are true for all forms of political gauging that were woven into academic debates: “they were political-ideological confrontations, despite attempting to adhere to the rules of academic discourse. And while the majority of the theses have been battered by time, the political ruling has been washed away by new views. One of the axioms formed as a result of this research may not need to be proven, as the intentions of the ruling are apparent from its first sentence. Beating armed resistance had proven easier than resolving the lasting issues of trust. Nevertheless, the Soviet invasion, as defined by international politics, was a closed question to both the new government and the opposition, which considered itself the guardian of the events of October. Thus, the analysis of the events of the two-week revolution, and how the government responded to its demands, were central questions in the series of compromises that began between the two factions. The government stated that ‘the idea, which had the ideological power to form a group, had been dangerous.’ As a result, Marxism re-evaluated in light of 1958 became the deciding element. In truth, this was an act of ideological historicism.” See also: STANDIENSZKY, ÉVA: *Az írók és a hatalom. 1956–1963* [Writers and Authority. 1956–1963]. Budapest, 1996. 363–388. Miskolc, 2001. 355–389.
172. SZABÓ, MIKLÓS: *Politikai kultúra Magyarországon. 1896–1986* [Political Culture in Hungary. 1896–1986]. Budapest, 1989.
173. PÉTER, LÁSZLÓ: A nemzeti múlt legendái [Legends of the National Past]. In: *Belső tilalomfák* [Internal Border Posts]. (Ed. Karátsony, Endre – Neményi, N.) München, 1982. 147–206.
174. MOLNÁR, ERIK: *Történet szemléletünk nacionalista maradványairól* [Nationalist Remnants in our View of History]. TSz 1236–1237. „*Nemzet, haza, honvédelem a parasztság és a nem nemesi katonáskodó réteg gondolkodásában (XV–XVIII. sz.)* [Nation, Homeland, and National Defence in the Thinking of Peasants and Non-Noble Soldiers (15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century) 1963. The study published the contents of an academic debate held on the subject referenced by the title.
175. “The anti-Habsburg movements that continuously resurfaced from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from Bocskai to Rákóczi, must be firmly divided from the bourgeois revolution of 1848–49, and even more firmly from the 1919 socialist revolution, because of their feudal nature. The insurgencies of the period from Bocskai to Rákóczi can

only be considered wars of independence if the views of the feudal nobility are accepted, as they were by the kurutz-styled historiographers of the bourgeois period.” Ibid. 1239.

“When the leaders of the feudal independence movements turned to Hungarian peasants, they primarily cited a connection in blood. The shared homeland was most often used when they wanted to win over other nations living in the country, for example when Bocskai’s hajdú captains wrote to the German-Slovak mining towns they spoke of ‘our sweet homeland, Hungary.’ Similarly, Rákóczi referenced ‘our sweet Hungarian homeland’ when speaking to the Serbs. (...) Following the Rákóczi revolt, this ideology of patriotic class struggle and national idea survived for decades. Hungarian peasants would remember the battle fought for an independent homeland, evoked the sweet Hungarian nation and disparaged the Lords, who sold their own blood into foreign service. Nevertheless, the ideology disappeared from the peasantry’s consciousness almost without a trace by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.” Op. cit. 1242–1243.

176. Citing Miklós Lackó: “He refuted a great deal of the criticisms he received in 1949, and in some questions went further than what he had said earlier. For example, he defended his position on the positive role of the nobility in the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century, while simultaneously suggesting the role of the nobility changed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was already a precursor to the debate of 1960. He wrote that it would be difficult to find a clear path in the inconsistent history of the 17<sup>th</sup> century because at the time ‘the independence movement and the centralization movement were represented by two opposing forces, the feudal freedom fighters and Habsburg absolutism.’ He continued that the kurutz–labantz opposition must be overcome, but this was no easy task, because in Hungary ‘the independence movement was represented by a feudal layer that was not similar to the English «new nobility» but rather to the Polish Szlachta,’ and thus, endangered the embourgeoisement of the country. Meanwhile, Habsburg absolutism propagated centralisation, [...] while it relied on the forces of the reactionary counter-reformation, [...] and still organised forces against the greatest, Ottoman threat.”
177. Ibid. 1243. I.
178. “It was the policy of the nobility in the case of peasant revolts, to become the leaders of the uprising, and turn the peasants’ anger at the foreign dynasty and its mercenaries. This maneuver led straight to the anti-Habsburg feudal wars of independence, as once leading the anti-Habsburg revolts, the nobility attempted to achieve its own class goals through these movements. It developed and propagated the ideas of a ‘common homeland’ and ‘national unity’ amongst the peasants to support its feudal independence movements. Ibid. 1241.

179. Ibid. Introduction 2.
180. Ibid. 1240.
181. Ibid.
182. MOLNÁR, E.: *Történelmi Szemle*, 1960. 3.
183. MOLNÁR: *ibid.*
184. Aladár Mód pointed out critically that Molnár always claimed that the leading ideology of a period was handed down to the people by the ruling class. However, the pursuit of national independence has always been a requisite and organic element of freeing the socially oppressed classes. Molnár – he continued – believed that “the concept of the ‘sweet homeland’ entered the consciousness of the peasantry as an ideological element that was against its interests, by way of the nobility in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.” Molnár underestimated the Habsburg threat and saw no meaningful social novelty in Protestantism. He did not differentiate between grand nation and minor nation nationalism and thus claimed that the role of nationalism came to an end in Hungary after 1867; Mód claimed that minor nation nationalism did not become completely reactionary after 1867. Finally, he noted that Hungary not only had a reactionary past, but leading historical figures and that these should always be highlighted. The nation will never enter the heaven of communism while weighed down by the “original sin.” LACKÓ: *op. cit.*
185. Ibid.
186. Personal communication by Ágnes R. Várkonyi.
187. KLANICZAY, TIBOR: Ibid. *Történelmi Szemle*, 1963. 6. 80. Another literary historian, István Sötér, also joined this view. Sötér, who dealt exclusively with the 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasised that Molnár’s class theory, according to which the national idea served to deceive the working masses or even the bourgeoisie was “difficult to apply to literature clearly.” According to Sötér, the Hungarian national ideology was often interwoven with the effort to overcome social difficulties. This reason alone meant that one could not claim “The Hungarian national ideology excluded democracy.” Sötér continued: a whole line of Hungarian poets from the 19<sup>th</sup> century proved that “ever new attempts to rewrite the national ideology, but always within the national identity” were made. – cited by Miklós Lackó.
188. PERJÉS, GÉZA: *ibid.* 83–84.
189. Ibid. 86.
190. “He provided a detailed examination of 15<sup>th</sup>-century nobility in The Ideology of the Gentry chapter. He named two progressive forces in Hungarian society at the time: the nobility, and the gentry within it, and wealthy peasants. He criticised ‘bourgeois’ historiography because it traced the early manifestations of a national sentiment to xenophobia and anti-Germanism, rather than internal factors. According to ‘bourgeois’ historians – wrote

Molnár – this flared in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continued to grow into a rich and refined formative element of Hungarian history. Naturally, Molnár’s fundamental concept was that ‘bourgeois’ historiography forgot that the nobility was engaged in a class struggle against both serfs and magnates; this common noble interest was a cohesive element. Furthermore, Molnár accepted that it was the gentry that primarily served the interests of the nation and future bourgeois nation. As such, in the period, the gentry had served not only its class interests but also the national interest: ‘it did not think in terms of dynastic provinces such as kings – among who Matthias was no exception – and not in grand family estates, as the magnates, nor did it see the world from the tower of the village church, as peasants did, but viewed all events from the level of the country.’ Mályusz’s influence can be felt in Molnár’s response to the question of ethnicity as well: without naming Szekfű, he stresses in opposition that no conscious ethnic policy existed in the early centuries.”

191. Lackó admitted that: “of course, this did not mean that Mályusz, who was a “proud nationalist” in his own words, did not reject Molnár’s whole question internally.” Op. cit. 1520.
192. RÁNKI: op. cit. 184–188.
193. LACKÓ: op. cit. 1496: “It should be noted, that the book has yet another connection to the later debates: Molnár’s demystification of the formerly idealised figures of the Middle Ages: the Angevins ‘soldiers of fortune’, János Hunyadi ‘everyday mercenary career, mercenary commander’ etc. (For quotes see MOLNÁR, ERIK: *A magyar társadalom története az Árpádkortól Mohácsig* [The History of Hungarian Society from the Árpáds until Mohács]. 87.)
194. “He added meaningful new depth to his opinion in the study entitled *The Ideological Questions of Feudalism*. Allow me to highlight a few ideas regarding national or ethnic characteristics and the psychological factors that play a role in forming these. Above all, he demanded that class theory be enforced in this regard as well, stressing that class psychology also has unique variants that ‘directly define the unique forms of development apparent in the history – morality, politics, culture, arts etc. – of different peoples, despite the effects of general laws of development.’ He went on to detail the variants of Hungarian feudal ideology, and his views on the question of 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>-century anti-Habsburg revolts. He claimed that while the ruling religious ideology of the Middle Ages was competing with the concept of homeland, this was not equal to a bourgeois national idea. The concept of homeland in the age of Feudalism – and this should be emphasised as the greatest novelty – led to one of the most basic questions of ideological history, false consciousness. According to Molnár, as there were no shared class interest in Feudalism ‘the ideal of a common homeland could not serve to represent the objective shared interests of feudal society, and thus must be



considered a mirror image of the subjective false consciousness resulting from its inherent class conflicts.' False consciousness of this form first appeared in Hungary during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and spread nation-wide as a result of the patriotic ideology created by the nobility by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The noble movements of the period followed each other cloaked in this ideology, and for a time, the class struggle of the serfs also found an adequate framework in it, to provide an ideology for cooperation against a foreign enemy. Despite the fact that there were historical situations in which some form of common interest could arise between nobles and peasants despite the underlying class conflict, the emergence of this in the serfs' world view was a form of false consciousness. It was false consciousness, on the one hand, because 'the material drivers of their conflicts remain hidden from the actors of history,' but even more in that it reflected a false connection and 'appeared as an ideology, which distorted the possibilities and circumstances of the working classes.' Molnár criticised the views common in the Rákosi era, and even more so in the historiography of the time that were based on the common interests of social classes. These views accepted a false consciousness as reality, and thus were unable to truly define the place of Bocskay's, Bethlen's and Rákóczi's wars of independence in the history of Hungarian social development." RÁNKI: *op. cit.* 178–182.

195. "Following the French example, Molnár attempted to provide an overview of the formation of the Hungarian nation, and its differences to the path of French development. According to this in the 'noble nation' of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the majority of the nobility was of Hungarian ethnicity, while the peasantry was multi-ethnic. However, there is no information pointing to 'battles fought between the serfs of Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian or other ethnicities.' There were cases when the opposing classes fought against foreign invaders together (for example János Hunyadi at Belgrade). However, the shared ideology was not a national consciousness but Christianity. The situation became more complex following Mohács: Habsburg support was needed to fight the invading Ottoman armies, but the absolutist aspirations of the Habsburgs also had to be resisted. The anti-Habsburg movements were fundamentally feudal wars of independence, which also affected serfs, who began to adopt the ideals of noble nationalism hoping that the promises made by the nobility and certain magnates to free serfs in exchange for military service would be kept. However, it eventually became obvious that this path was only open to military groups (see for example the *hajdús*). Thus, the majority of serfs returned from the battlefield frustrated and turned against their lords when the chance arose. These serfs, who had seen military service, formed a uniquely discontent layer within the peasantry. Many of them found themselves in a situation between serfdom and military service, in-



creasingly awaiting liberation and freedom. This was especially true in the lasting effects of the Rákóczi war of independence, which was the first to be fought with nationalist undertones and could be seen in the fact that the disappointed serfs long-awaited Rákóczi's return. Molnár considered these factors to be precursors to the development of a bourgeois nation." Cited by LACKÓ: *op. cit.* 1512.

196. "Molnár published his first article on the subject in 1960, with the title 'The nation question.' His thoughts were founded on the idea that considering the concept of a nation as a constant category of history is characteristic of bourgeois historiography. He stated: 'A short overview of the historical forms of class societies shows that each of them is characterised by a unique form of community and community spirit, which fundamentally differ from the bourgeois nation and bourgeois national consciousness.' Following a summary of classical problems, he stressed how it is impossible to discuss nations, or national consciousnesses in the age of feudalism, through the French example, which 'illustrates the development of class conflict and political forms in classical simplicity.' The thought that 'France is the community of the French-speaking French people' only began to appear in the years of the absolute monarchy in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The concept of nation was only filled with bourgeois ideas through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and won its final form after the revolution. Contrary to French development, the formation of the Hungarian bourgeois state happened not only much later, but in starkly different circumstances. In mediaeval Hungary, the concept of nation also meant a lingual community or the feudal nation, that is the nobility. The shared battles against foreign invaders, during which serfs also subscribed to the idea of a shared homeland to reinforce their positions, did not change the fundamentally noble character of the Hungarian nation. Moreover, in Hungary even the Compromise led to the realisation of the noble concept of a bourgeois nation – which was also the concept seen in 1848 –, thus a distorted form of the bourgeois nation was created. Not because national independence was limited, nor because the country had a multi-ethnic population, but because the nation 'was not formed by the bourgeoisie through the revolutionary destruction of the feudal system, but by the feudal system itself.' (...) "The leading class of the Hungarian bourgeois state was, and remained throughout Dualism, the political representation of the rule of large capital and major estates, in other words, the feudal class that had adapted to capitalism in its own way, and which despite having been diluted with certain elements, demanded its role as the historical ruling class. In these circumstances, the bourgeois evocation of national spirit, which until 1848, and later 1867 – if the national question is excluded – had been the driving force of development, became an even more transparent element exposing the

semi-feudal class oppression, and the deceptive camouflage of class interest in the national idea, than in the life of completely formed bourgeois nations.” RÁNKI: op. cit. 171–176.

197. SZÜCS, JENŐ: Társadalom elmélet, politikai teória és történetiszemlélet Kézay Gesta Hungarorumában (a nacionalizmus középkori genezisének elméleti alapjai) [Social and Political Theory, view of history in Kézay’s Gesta Hungarorum (The Theoretical Foundations of Nationalism’s Mediaeval Genesis)]. In: *Nemzet és történelem* [Nation and View of History]. 413–557, furthermore: Nép és nemzet a középkor végén [People and Nation at the End of the Middle Ages]. In: *ibid.* 557–661.
198. “But an intellectual group of academics should be highlighted. They were participants of the debates, or intellectuals invested in them – from among the best the country had to offer (not all of them were historians) – whose activity in the debate was fuelled by a different, living concern. Allow me to mention four names, to give the reader a better understanding of this type: Jenő Szűcs, Miklós Jancsó, the younger Géza Komoróczy, who joined the debate later, and Iván Vitányi, who showed early signs of commitment to communism, but should be counted here in some form. Naturally, each of them led their own lives, what connected them was, in part, a similar social background (families of university professors, senior archivists, lawyers, judges and high-ranking military officers from Transylvania), the atmosphere and lifestyle of the Hungarian upper-middle-class, and the critical experiences drawn from these at a young and responsive age. And, in the other part, the high standard of academic and professional work retained by this group in the quickly deteriorating scientific environment of Hungary. This involved a deep understanding of European academic and scientific life, if at times, gained only through published discourse.” LACKÓ: op. cit. 1516–1517.
199. LACKÓ: *ibid.*
200. LACKÓ: *ibid.* “The impact of this would have come from two directions: through their intellectual-academic commitment – not to diverge from the subject at hand – they would have become familiar with the strong anti-fascist, anti-nationalist currents in the European social sciences after the war, and later – after the West had learnt from the Hungarian experiences of 1956 – the large-scale disillusionment with communism.”
201. “This youth was aware that Hungarian middle-class intellectuals had to change in many regards in the new post-war circumstances. Amongst others, it had to face its own past critically, in fact, the past of the whole nation, in which – alongside a democratic deficit – the prejudiced nationalist thinking of society was an important factor.” LACKÓ: *ibid.*

202. *Századok* 98. 1964. 5–6. Marxista történettudományunk fejlődésének problémái [The problems of the Marxist Development of Hungarian Historiography].
203. *Emlékkönyv Pach Zsigmond Pál 70. születésnapjára* [Memorial Album for Zsigmond Pál Pach's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday]. Budapest, 1984. Introduction by Iván Berend T.
204. ÁBLT M3808. 38 35-36, 261-262.
205. Ibid.
206. SZÜCS, JENŐ: *Vázlat: Európa három történelmi Régiója* [Summary: The Three Historical Regions of Europe]. Budapest, 1983.
207. A selected bibliography of the debate can be found on the following pages SZÜCS, JENŐ: *Nemzet és történelem* [Nation and History]. Budapest. 1984. 184–188.
208. RUFFI, PÉTER: Mohács a mérlegen [Mohács on the Scales]. *Magyar Nemzet*, 11<sup>th</sup> December. MAJOR, TAMÁS: Van Királydrámánk [We have a Shakespearean history]. *Népszabadság*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1966; LÁZÁR, ISTVÁN: *Több is veszett Mohácsnál* [More Was Lost at Mohács]. ROTTLER, FERENC: Ez történt Mohács után [What Happened After Mohács]. *Kritika*, 1967. 2. Köznevelés. 4<sup>th</sup> November. Géza Perjés summarised the contents of the debate in his book on Mohács as follows: “The debate was sparked by István Nemeskürty’s book entitled What Happened After Mohács (Budapest 1966), which caused a stir in both academic circles and the general public. I criticised the book from a professional standpoint and also as part of the ‘ideological debate:’ Disturbances in National Self-Consciousness. *Látóhatár*, 1967/7–8. Further criticism: SINKOVICH, I.: Kőszeg és az 1532-es török hadjárat [Kőszeg and the Ottoman Campaign of 1532]. *Vasi Szemle*, 1967/2. Two articles by SZAKÁLY, F. (*Századok*, 1968/1–2. and *Valóság*, 1969/5.) criticised not only Nemeskürty’s book, but my criticism. While writing about the political and ideological implications of Mohács, I raised the concept of Suleiman’s offer: Az országút szélére vetett ország [Country Left at the Side of the Road]. *Kortárs*, 1971/11–12. and 1972/1. An unchanged version of the study was published in the “Accelerating Time” series of the *Gondolat* publishing house (Budapest, 1975). SZÜCS, J.: Nép és nemzet a középkor végén [People and Nation at the End of the Middle Ages]. *Valóság*, 1972/6. reflected over the book, to which I responded in: *Ideológiatörténet és történelmi valóság* [History of Ideology and Historical Reality]. (Ibid. 1972/8.) Criticising both NEMESKÜRTY and myself SZAKÁLY, F. thought to close the debate with his book *A mohácsi csata* [The Battle of Mohács]. (Budapest, 1975). Nemeskürty was criticised again by BARTA, G.: Történelemről írni [Writing About History]. *Valóság*, 1975/12. Two articles by KATALIN BEKE supported Nemeskürty’s views (*Valóság*, 1976/6.).

The anniversary of Mohács revitalised the debate: KLANICZAY, T.: Mi és miért veszett el Mohácsnál? [What and Why Was Lost at Mohács?]. *Kortárs*, 1976/5. While the editors of *Jelenkor* published a series of debate articles: VEKERDI, L.: Nekünk Mohács kell? [Do We Need Mohács?] (1976/7–8.). PERJÉS, G.: Csendes, békés meditációk Mohácsról [Silent, Calm Meditations on Mohács] (1976/9.). BARTA, G.: Mohács ürügyén [About Mohács]. NEMESKÜRTY, I.: Magam mentsége Mohács után [My Excuse After Mohács]. KERESZTURY, D.: Csak néhány kérdés [Just a Few Questions]. FARAGÓ, V.: Egy vitacikk ürügyén – az illetékességről [On a Debate Article – Regarding Competence] (ibid. 1976/10). SZAKÁLY, F.: Ország – perspektívák nélkül [Country Without Perspective] (*Kritika*, 1976/8.) again strongly criticised the ‘Suleiman’s offer’ concept and introduced the theory of ‘stealthy conquest’ for the Ottoman expansion. Valuable talks were given at an academic memorial session, which were published in a new ‘Mohács Memorial Album.’

The article *Country Left at the Side of the Road* sparked international responses: MATUZ, J.: *Der Verzicht Süleymans des Prachtigen auf die Annexion Ungarns* (Ungarn-Jahr-buch. Bd. 6. 1974–1975) és SOYSAL I.: *Mohac Sonrasi Türk-Macar Siyasac iliskiteki uzerinde Macar tarihcsi Géza Perjés ‘in bir degerlendirmesi* (Belleten Cilt, XL., 1976.). – In his ‘debate article’ Matuz disagrees with Káldy-Nagy and myself: he rejects our claim, that Suleiman did not originally intend to invade Hungary. His arguments will be detailed in the following. – I was able to gain an understanding of Soysal’s lengthy and warm review through a quick translation written by my Turkologist friend, Géza, Dávid. From what I understand, Soysal writes highly about my work, but questions the concept of ‘Suleiman’s offer.’

209. ZÖLDI, LÁSZKÓ: op. cit. “The Mohács album was exciting because at the time it was published – just over a decade after 1956! – it was an attractive and repulsive read at the same time because the common themes of social discussions were apparent within it: how alternative is Hungarian history?” 85. Gyula Háy first read the Mohács dráma he had written in prison to his friends in 1960, after his release. 89.
210. NEMESKÜRTY, ISTVÁN: *Bornemissza Péter*. Budapest, 1961.
211. Kálmán Benda disclosed in a personal conversation that he had corrected Nemeskürty’s errors, e.g. regarding Jurisich’s knowledge of Hungarian: as his wife was from a Northern Hungarian noble family, they would not have been able to communicate if her husband had not spoken Hungarian. “When they found out who the reviewer had been, the accusations silenced, and the two ex-officers of Horthy’s military settled the dispute among themselves. I was deeply outraged when they wrote against him that those who are not professionals should not write about their own Hungarian history and that Tran-

- sylvania had such a secondary role in the formation of Hungarian culture.” The conversation took place in the Autumn of 1985, with an invited “intellectual witness” in the Progressive currents of the 20<sup>th</sup> century seminar held by Sándor M. Kiss. ZÖLDI, L.: 189–193. corroborated this information with a letter Perjés wrote to Nemeskürty in 1974. ZÖLDI, LÁSZLÓ: *A múlt prófétaja* [Prophet of the Past]. Budapest, 1989. 165–166. On the other side, DOMONKOS, KOSÁRY supported his students at the *Történelem és Tömegkommunikáció* [History and Mass Communication] conference in Eger.
212. On 15<sup>th</sup> April 1966, the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences organised a debate entitled *Szellemtörténet és nacionalizmus* [Geistesgeschichte and Natioanlism] to condemn Szekfű’s views.
213. SZAKÁLY: *Kortárs*, 1976. 8. 45.
214. SZAKÁLY: *Kortárs*, 1976. 8.
215. An outstanding summarizing bibliography of the debate can be found in: ZÖLDI, LÁSZLÓ: *A múlt prófétaja, a Nemeskürty-rejtély* [The Prophet of the Past, the Nemeskürty Mystery]. Budapest, 1989. BEKE, KATA: *Ki írjon a történelemről?* [Who Should Write About History?]. *Válóság*, 1976. 100–103.
216. *Ibid.* 283. He fully commits to it in the 1974 Introduction. 6–7.
217. Szűcs’s *Nemzetiség és nemzeti öntudat* [Ethnicity and National Consciousness] article contains a bibliography of the Erik Molnár debate from 1959). Both were published as books. Szűcs published his writings on the ‘nation debate’ in *Nemzet és történelem* [Nation and History] Budapest. 1972. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1974. It is one of his few books published in a foreign language, through the Böhlau publishers in Austria, 1981. Among Illyés’s many writings, it was *Szellem és erőszak* [Sprit and Aggression] (Budapest, 1978) which caused the largest stir and should be noted.
218. SZÚCS, JENŐ: *Nemzet és történelem*. 103.
219. “The struggle of the feudal estates of the land against the centralist rule was clearly retrograde, but only where absolutism laid a foundation for historical advancement and future national unity. As the Habsburg court did neither (in truth, it did not even create a united ‘Austrian nation’ from the *Österreichische Länder* conglomerate), and the feudal revolts against them channelled several legitimate social claims, these movements are in fact examples of a common historical occurrence, when certain phenomena are neither ‘progressive’ nor ‘retrograde’: they await detailed analysis, without being labelled ‘national’, which itself is a modifier already. I do not even like the word ‘demythologising.’ Nevertheless, it is time to break one of the most stubborn illusions of Hungarian history once and for all. Namely, the noble republic, or form of ‘national kingdom’ (which had no realistic base in either domestic or European affairs), which led the nobility in its fight, would have, or could, *have brought freedom to the serfs of Hungary, who accounted for nine-tenths of*

*the population.* (The question ‘What would have happened if’ is meaningless and pointless in history; however, the question ‘what could *not* have happened’ can usually be answered.) It was not the Habsburg state that was responsible for tying the serfs to the land, but the Hungarian nobility; the court is only responsible for the prolongation and distortion of feudalism in Hungary, in as much, it took no steps against serfdom and poverty until the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century! Bocskai or Ferenc II Rákóczi personally hoped for something different, or more than this; however, as they had neither a sufficient income, nor social support through a strong and wealthy bourgeoisie, nor a large and trained administrative organisation, their ideas proved to be idealistic. In their struggles against the Habsburgs could take up the colours of fights for ‘national independence’ then the Habsburgs were the cause. The Hungarian nobility had even less idea, or even more confused and unclear concepts of what a modern state looked like than the administrative aristocracy in Vienna. The main concept of the nobility was, in essence, utilising the frustrations of the peasantry to enforce its ‘ancient rights and freedoms’ against the kings, which in essence meant enforcing feudal checks and balances against royal power and ensuring the uninhibited power of nobles over their serfs.” SZŰCS: op. cit. 105.

220. SZŰCS, JENŐ: 1968(6), 47. *A nemzeti ideológia történeti historikuma* [The Historicism of the National Consciousness]. TRÓCSÁNYI, ZSOLT: *XVI–XVII századi vitás kérdéseinkhez* [On our controversial Issues from the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries]. (1969/5. 30–38.)
221. SZŰCS: op. cit. 1968(6) 47.
222. TRÓCSÁNYI: op. cit. 31.
223. *Ibid.* TRÓCSÁNYI: op. cit. 33.
224. *Ibid.* 34.
225. SZŰCS: op. cit. 39.
226. SZŰCS, JENŐ: *Nép és nemzet a középkor végén* [People and Nation at the End of the Middle Ages]. *Valóság* 15/6(1972) 14–31. Republished in: *Nemzet és Történelem*. 1872. 1974. 557–601. SZAKÁLY, FERENC: *Ország perspektívák nélkül* [A Country Without Perspective]. *Kortárs*, 1976. 8.
227. *Ibid.* 88.
228. *Ibid.* 96.
229. *Ibid.* 96.
230. “Three things should be stated regarding this early historicised ‘national’ consciousness of Hungarian history. First: this consciousness was not created through the continuous organic growth of the ancient group consciousness of the Hungarian, rather it was the consciousness of a ‘political society’ that considered itself the holder of law and freedom that was slowly mixed with general European theoretical elements and given a uniquely ‘national’ colour.



Many more of its elements were from Bologna, the writings of French legists, Western chronicles, and the assemblies of Rákos Field, than Etelköz in modern-day Southern-Russia. More elements were accepted from this Clerks and lawyers of the Chancellery and the chroniclers, than the ‘sweet peasant tales.’” The theory preceded emotion until humanism played its part and the practice of the Estates its own. Finally, in the orations given and charters dictated by János Vitéz the formula *tota natio et respublica regni Hungariae* was born in the 1450s, which dubbed the ‘noble nation’ as a single ‘political body’ that balanced the king as the ancient holder and granter of power. This was the ‘whole nation’ of which all nobles were a part – in the words of Mihály Szilágyi (1458) – ‘through the strength of blood.’ Within these circles, just as in the large clans, all nobles were ‘brothers’ in the language use of the 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Not even the citizens of cities were part of this ‘brotherhood of blood’ and fictive community. The nobility sometimes accepted them as part of the *country*, but not the *nation*. The peasantry – locked into ‘eternal serfdom’ in 1514 – was barred from both. Secondly: the Hungarian-speaking masses of the *perpetua rusticitas* also knew, naturally, that they were members of a broader ‘Hungarian people,’ which – compared to other peoples – shared ‘traditions and morals.’ However, this group consciousness was of a different *quality*, – this was the major argument against Gyula Szekfű’s serfs serving in the border forts- (insertion from S. Ö.) than the former, just as this topos carried different meaning in this context than the formula *mores et consuetudines nationis (gentis) Hungaricae*, which was reserved for decrees, legal and literary texts and only meant the nobility. This was Hungarian folklore, which was only similar to the former in that it was also international and feudal in origin. It was constantly growing through influences from the peasant traditions of the neighbouring Slav communities and other ethnicities and was only above these in its connections that it continuously absorbed noble elements as well. As a result, it conserved a uniquely Hungarian ethnic culture until the Modern Era. It also had little to do with Etelköz and the Don region already in the Middle Ages, much more with the Danube Valley. It also had little in common with ancient Hungarian ‘gentilism’ than with the newer ‘national’ consciousness, moreover for the same reason: the peasantry had been excluded from the ancient *community* and thus could not become a part of a new political *communitas*. It was the ever-growing yet extremely conservative ethnic group consciousness – in as much as ‘Hungarian’ as a ‘group’ was on its horizons beyond smaller, more closed regional ethnicity. It conserved Hungarian ethnicity, but below the level of politics, within the group consciousness, this did not mean some form an ideologically social group which demanded loyalty.” Ibid. 97–99.



231. István Király told the story in the Spring of 1986 at a session of Sándor M. Kiss's seminar entitled Progressive currents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
232. In 1973, István Király announced the rehabilitation of the tradition of Hungarian wars of independence, especially the independence movements of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, in a speech, which sparked a major debate. He spoke of 'kurutz traditions' that became an integral part of the 'conscience citoyenne' of Hungarian progressive thinking. Although, this tradition did not exist as he saw it. It was not conscious. Thus, it was in no way comparable to the Serbian Kosovo, or the Polish Kosciuszko cults, which mixed national and religious ideas and were thus, more layered. *Magyar Tudomány*.
233. "Influencing social (and within it, literary) consciousness was extremely important within the broader concept of the Kádár regime, and Aczél as a centre of power, especially until 1962–63. The most urged element of this was the eradication of so-called bourgeois approaches, mostly intellectual phenomena branded as revisionist or nationalist. The goal of the homogenizing endeavour was, naturally, to destroy the remembrance of the revolution by erasing the nation-centric independence tradition of which 1956 had been an open demonstration. The resolutions passed on the national-traditionalist writers and 'bourgeois nationalism' served this purpose in their unique eye-rolling manner, and the *ideological criticism* of these documents served as a model for the historical concept connected to Erik Molnár. The many-year debate of this latter concept was more a part of the manipulations of the years of 'relaxation,' even though the concept of Rákosi's ex-minister garnered no official support." PÁL, JÓZSEF: op. cit. 34–48. More on the debate: *ibid.* 390–408. KÓSA, LÁSZLÓ: *Európai utas* 11( 2000) 1. A magyar Nemzettudat változásai [Changes in the Hungarian National Consciousness].
234. "The re-evaluation of urban literature and the Nyugat [Occident] periodical could be carried out from a viewpoint that slowly distanced itself from the Marxist approach. Rich anthologies and studies were published in the Huszadik Század [Twentieth Century] periodical, the Sunday Circle and the Sunday Society from academics such as Tibor Erényi, Péter Hanák, György Litván, Erzsébet Vezér, whose Western-oriented, pro-modernisation and anti-nationalist views could never be drawn into doubt. The Hungarian turn of the century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were thus conducted from a firmly anti-nationalist consideration. Of the two revolutions, Károlyi's gained increasing emphasis, and the years of growth in the Dual Monarchy were almost gilded. Even if these views could not openly proclaim the pinnacle of this process: bourgeois radicalism, it grew into the most prominent intellectual-political tendencies of progressive thinking in the century, and its views 'found support' amongst leading intellectuals. The younger genera-

tion of historians also tended to follow these modernist concepts. Ornate albums and publications were released continuously and barely a year can pass without a TV channel singing praise for the era for weeks on end, with the obvious goal of exemplifying it.” According to József N. Pál’s analysis: “At the time only one meaningful concept was born in Hungary opposing this view. István Király stood against the Erik Molnár concept throughout his life (the studies published in *Patriotism and Revolutionism* detailed this), while he took a step forward in science and method, he took one back in ideological basics. While utilizing almost every method of academics and the sciences – which had picked up pace in the 1960s – he retreated to Révai József’s view of the revolution and its rigid approach to continuity in building socialism (and to the aesthetics of György Lukács, who detailed the human experience). Mobilising a huge amount of knowledge and source material he wrote a gigantic bildungsroman in which he connected Ady’s progressively forming revolutionary consciousness with the *independence tradition* that he named kurutz-independence movements, thus exactly with the approach increasingly coming under attack from the modern historical approaches. Because of Király’s professional and ideological authority at the time, debates with him were mostly limited to technicalities, despite the fact that intellectual public opinion rejected his views entirely, not because of their Marxism, but because of their plausible nationalism.” Ibid.

235. PÁL, JÓZSEF: *ibid.*

236. PÁSKÁNDINÉ, SEBŐK, ANNA: *Szabadságra Vágyó Ifjak Szövetsége 1956* [Youth Alliance for Freedom 1956]. Budapest. 2002. Hamvas Intézet. Idem. Kolozsvári Perek [The Cluj Napoca Cases].

237. SZÜCS: *op. cit.* 115–116.

238. *Ibid.*

239. *Ibid.* 106.

240. Both concepts emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup>, when, on the one hand, a ‘nation-state’ in a balance between royal rule and the estates of the realm was the greatest dream of the contemporaries, and on the other hand, when the true form of King Matthias was refined as a mythical figure through the reminiscences of present suffering.

The real Matthias had been working to create a multi-ethnic kingdom or complex of states, which was already forming in the shadow of the Ottoman conquest through the efforts of Louis I of Hungary, Sigismund, Albert, Władysław III (styled I. Ulászló in Hungarian) and Ladislaus V, as it was a historical necessity. The Habsburgs succeeded in 1526. Matthias had aimed to centralise the kingdoms and provinces *within* this complex, which led to significant results in the lands of the Hungarian crown and Silesia.

This great King was not only a great ruler, clever diplomat and talented military leader, but a humanist, who in his personally dictated diplomatic letters, and discussions with humanists mentioned that he was acting for the “salvation of the homeland” and the “glory of his nation” more than once. However, his true voice can be heard when he spoke of his ‘subjects.’ He was not truly fond of the ‘nation of nobles.” “He besmirched Hungarian customs at every opportunity” – wrote Bonfini – “he openly rejected ancient Hungarian peasant-like life and uncultured nature.” His greatest desire, continues Bonfini, was to “Cleanse Hungary of its uncultivated character, tame its Scythian morals, suppress unbridled arrogance and force the proud Hungarians into obedience!” Meanwhile, the nobles blamed the king (in person, and not the later myth) for “abandoning strict morals, destroying old traditions and replacing it with corrupt Italian morals.” ‘Italian’ in this context naturally meant the modern Renaissance norms.

The Hungarian nationalist author of the *Chronica de gestis Hungarorum* brought István, the Voivode of Moldavia as an example, who was – opposite to Matthias – “a good protector of his homeland and nation,” and the arrogant magnate, István Báthory, who was – unlike Matthias – “a good protector of the people entrusted to him.” It is well-known that not only the nobles were seething. Peasants would run in their masses to hide from the tax collectors of the king.

Matthias’s attempt at centralisation in Hungary was to break with the traditional notion that the nobility, which equated itself with the ‘nation’, was the foundation of statehood through its “old and just rights” and “privileges and laws”, while the king was the “servant of the law.” In his pursuits, the king stood above the ‘law’ (feudal common law) *legibus solutus*, while his power was, at least in certain cases *absoluta potestas*. Matthias and the noble ‘nation’ were mismatched. The leading figures of the ‘independence’ of the nation were the revolting magnates, the Transylvanian rebels, and finally but not least John Vitéz, who tragically opposed the king, and the disgraced Janus Pannonius.” Ibid. 107.

241. Ibid. 107–108.

242. Ibid. 108.

243. Similarly to Erik Molnár’s quote regarding Miklós Esterházy, the event from the time of the Long Turkish War, when the inhabitants of a Trans-Danubian village fled from the Hungarian hajdús to the Crimean Tartars camped nearby became extremely popular in the period. Once it has been verified that the tartar forces were, in fact, the Red Cross of their age, the study goes on to detail how the worst obstructor of an economic-type of national legitimisation in the period was the man who ruined the region, Miklós Zrínyi, alongside Márk Horváth who defended Szigetvár in 1556, because of them the

route of the cattle drive turned north, as they chased away the depositaries of what would be the national consciousness, the Hungarian cattle. (The diversion of trade was apparently not caused by the Ottoman occupation of the fort.)

244. Ibid. 103. “When knighthood and nobility became outdated, the majority of battles in Europe were fought by mercenaries, who had to be paid, rather than engaged through emotional pathos. From the end of the Middle Ages, patriotic propaganda served two purposes. It engaged those members of the nobility that could still be mobilised with more modern arguments than the old Christianity-based or nobility-based ideals; and on the other hand to declare without pause that the nobility had always been, and still was the ‘protector of the homeland,’ that is it served to justify the existence of the nobility even through the power of rhetorical fiction. The more a social class collapses, the more it exists in fiction, illusions and the fog of self-deceit. Strangely enough, the nobles of the Jagellonian era truly believed they were the ‘defenders of the homeland’ and the ‘heroes of the homeland,’ while the majority of them had never seen a Turk. The radius of the propaganda was the nobility in both cases.”

245. SZŰCS: *ibid.* 97.

246. *Ibid.* 170.

247. The conditions of this were, however, given either in some form of *an exceptionally* sustained revolutionary situation or conversely, in historical situations when the social tension between the nobility and peasantry was *temporarily* secondary to a – believed or real – common goal or shared interest. Both were very rare in feudalism; both were temporarily situations. A good example of the former is Czech Hussitism between 1410–30, while the Hungarian 17<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the years between 1670–1711, is a good example of the latter. For different reasons in both cases, the walls between social classes cracked or were even demolished at times, both within the warring communities and in their ideological divisions. It is in these cases, when a characteristic, plebeian form of patriotism is born. However, it is not a pre-existing ‘folk patriotism’ that creates this situation, rather the situation gives birth to the patriotic feeling and ideological background because the peasants and urban poor fighting in the movement borrow and adapt the pre-existing ‘national’ and ‘patriotic’ elements of the consciousness of the nobility and urban patricians, just as peasants’ revolts had previously done so relying on Christian ideas. (...)

However, this was precisely when the Hungarian peasantry was first exposed to the concepts of ‘nation’ and patriotism. The historical conditions have been detailed above. If the belief of a shared interest could form between the Hungarian nobility and the multi-ethnic peasants, then the court in Vienna

only had itself to blame. It is not as if Vienna ‘subjugated’ the ‘Hungarian nation’ in the modern sense of the word – at least during the rule of Leopold, before 1670 –, there was little difference in the subjugation of the Austrian and Czech hereditary Lands and Hungary in the period. The case was rather that while in Western absolutism the ‘subjects’ received palpable benefits from the government alongside many burdens, the Hungarian peasantry experienced no such benefits through the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and by the last third of the Century, it had become clear: only bad things come from Vienna. This situation had been further exacerbated by the Protestant–Catholic opposition since the beginning of the century. This gave birth to the situation in which, while the mechanisms of 1456 and 1514 were less of a threat, if peasants rose up against their lords out of *necessity*, they saw more evil in Vienna. The situation was different in many other regards as well. The Ottoman occupation had, in certain aspects loosened the feudal hierarchy. A moving peasantry formed between the *laborator* and *bellator*. The rigid social walls of the Middle Ages were cracking. A new ‘military estate’ formed on the Turkish frontiers, the members of which were mostly not of noble descent. The role of this class in propagating the elements and ideological motifs of the military-noble consciousness has been discussed above. Military service gave the braver peasants a possibility of social freedom, and *libertas* paved a hope-fuelled path to the concept of a ‘free Hungarian nation.’ The condition was struggle against the ‘foreign nation.’ *Pro patria et libertate*: the characteristic joining of these two concepts created the possibility of new interpretations. It is no question that a folk form of patriotism existed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as several sources prove this. The question was rather, did the hope of ‘national independence’ also benefit them, and whether the popularisation of the nobility’s national patriotism could be carried out in a social class formed of peasants and semi-peasants which considered itself the ‘defender of the homeland’ because of its military service. The *Szegénylegény éneke* [Poor Man’s Song, around 1706]. Illustrates the connection: “Igen kedveltük a kurucságot (...) Nyerünk, gondoltuk, oly szabadságot: Oltalmazzuk s szabadéjtuk Szegény hazánkot.” [We enjoyed being kurutz (...) We thought we’ll win such freedom: Defend and Liberate our poor homeland.] (The song refers to the freedom of the hajdús.) The situation came to an end in 1711 with the Peace of Szatmár. With it, the hope that the Hungarian nobility would enforce its freedoms on the Court through the methods of the past century was lost. While the peasantry lost hope that it would be granted freedom by its lords. And as Maria Theresa and later Joseph II learnt the general European practice of reaching to the peasantry over the heads of the nobility, the memory of Prince Rákóczi faded through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Peasants increasingly expected to ‘win their freedom’ from Vienna and the concept

again lived separately from the idea of ‘our poor homeland.’ Thus, the increasingly embourgeoisied nobility was forced to win over the peasantry with a new concept of ‘homeland’ and ‘civil freedom’ in the following century. However, this is beyond the subject at hand, as this was influenced by the French revolution. Thus, the pre-history of the ‘nation’ came to an end, and the – similarly complex and controversial – problems of the modern nation came to the fore: ‘raising the people into the nation’, the policy of the Hungarian reform era. Regarding the ‘folk patriotism’ that existed in feudalism, the question is not whether it existed or not, but, on the one hand, whether it was an ‘organic’ *a priori* phenomenon; and, on the other hand, whether it can be used to *interpret* any defensive struggle of the peasantry against a foreign invader. The methodological trap of passing premature judgement on the values or lack thereof of patriotism must be avoided. Patriotism is a well-definable intellectual phenomenon or intellectually justified social attitude. As such, it is the subject of the history of ideas and not a category to replace critical historical thinking. Mixing *descriptive* and *critical analysis* in this regard leads to methodological impossibilities and an artificial, anachronistic interpretation of history. If ‘folk patriotism’ was the base of the false and flawed connections made in our historiography between ‘folk,’ ‘progressive’ and ‘national independence’ – as detailed above –, than this appeared next door as the class struggle of the people was for centuries the instinctive preparation for national existence. Neither serves to clarify the *real* national aspects of history. SZŰCS: *ibid.* (136–140.)

248. SZŰCS: *op. cit.* 154.
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250. Speech by Antall entitled *Mohács és vidéke* [Mohács and its Region]: 31<sup>st</sup> August 1991, 3–4.
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253. Történelem Kép, *op. cit.* in: SINKÓ, KATALIN: *A nemzeti szenvedéstörténet.*
254. GYÁNI, GÁBOR: *op. cit.*
255. MAROSI: *op. cit.*, *ibid.*
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## Biographies

*Short biographies of some personalities mentioned in this book*

ALBERT, I. (1397–1439): Hungarian king.

ACZÉL, GYÖRGY (1917–1991): Hungarian communist cultural politician.

ÁCS, PÁL (1954): Literary historian.

ACSÁDY, IGNÁC (Nagykároly, 1845 –Budapest, 1906): historian, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1888). After studying law, from 1869 he worked in journalism for several years (*Pesti Napló*, az aradi *Alföld*, a kolozsvári *Kelet*) and was engaged in fiction. His comedies and novels, published between 1880 and 1883, show him to be a supporter of the romantic trend. From 1877, his work as a historian developed, characterized (especially from the eighties) by a growing interest in economic and social history and a bourgeois, progressive sympathy for the peasantry. The m. was the first among historians to recognize the importance of the class struggle. He wrote the first summary history of serfdom.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Aranyországban* (vígjáték, Budapest, 1880); *Fridényi bankja* (Budapest, 1882); *Pénzházasság* (*Ország-Világ*, 1893); *Magyarország Budavár visszafoglalása korában* (Budapest, 1886); *Magyarország pénzügyei I. Ferdinánd uralkodása alatt* (Budapest, 1888); *A magyar jobbágynépesség száma a mohácsi vész után* (Ért. a tört. tud. köréből. XIV. 3. Budapest, 1889); *A magyar nemesség és birtokviszonyai a mohácsi vész után* (Értekezés a történettudomány köréből. XIV. 9. Budapest, 1890); *Magyarország népessége a pragmatica sanctio korában* (Budapest, 1896); *Magyarország három részre oszlásának története 1526–1608.* (A magyar nemzet története. V. Budapest, 1897); *Magyarország története I. Lipót és I. József korában* (A magyar nemzet története. VII. Budapest, 1898); *A magyar birodalom története* (I–II. Budapest, 1903–1904); *A magyar jobbágyosság története* (Budapest, 1906, 1944, 1948, 1950).

ANDICS, ERZSÉBET (Budapest, 1902. jún. 22. – Budapest, 1986. ápr. 2.): historian, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (l. 1949, r. 1950); Kossuth prize winner (1949). Berei Andor his wife. Member of the KMP from 1918. He participated in the youth movement during the proletarian dictatorship (1919). After the fall of the Soviet Republic, he emigrated to Vienna. From 1920 he studied at the University

of Vienna. In 1921, he was sent to Budapest for illegal party work, where he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison. In 1922, he was sent to the Soviet Union as part of the prisoner exchange agreement, where he completed postgraduate studies and then taught at various colleges and universities. In 1943–44, he headed the anti-fascist school in Krasnogorsk. He returned to Hungary in 1945. In 1949–53 he was the appointed director of the MDP Party College, in 1953–54 he was the first deputy of the Ministry of Education, and in 1954–56 he was the head of the Cultural Department of the MDP KV. He requested the protection of the National Guard in Nov. 1956. 2, and at the Budapest Police Headquarters, he proved with his passport that he was a Soviet citizen and that he was entitled to the same treatment as foreigners. The police accepted his argument and escorted him to the Soviet embassy, and he and Andor Berei left the country. In 1948–50, he was a teacher at the Budapest University of Economics. From 1950 to 1958, he was the president of the Hungarian Historical Society, and from 1950 to 1956, the president of the National Peace Council. From 1950 until his retirement (1974), he was the head of the Hungarian History Department of the Budapest University of Science and Technology. In 1946–48 he was an alternate member of the MKP KV, and in 1948–56 he was a member of the MDP KV. From 1949 to 1957, he was a member of the Presidential Council. Initially XX. m. he dealt with history, later mainly with questions of the history of 1848–49.

HER MAIN WORKS: *Munkásosztály és nemzet* (Budapest, 1945); *Igazságos és igazságtalan háborúk* (Budapest, 1945); *Fasizmus és reakció Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1945); *A Magyar Kommunista Párt nemzeti párt* (Budapest, 1946); *Nemzetiségi kérdés, nemzetiségi politika* (Budapest, 1946); *Ellenforradalom és bethleni konszolidáció* (Budapest, 1946); *Demokrácia és szocializmus 1918–19-ben* (Budapest, 1948); *Az egyházi reakció 1848–49-ben* (Budapest, 1949); *Kossuth harca a reakció ellen* (Budapest, 1952); *A nagybirtokos arisztokrácia ellenforradalmi szerepe 1848–1849-ben* (I–III, Budapest, 1952–81); *A magyarországi munkásmozgalom az 1848–1849-es forradalomtól és szabadságharctól az 1917-es Nagy Októberi Szocialista Forradalomig* (Budapest, 1954); *Kossuth harca az árulók és megalkuvók ellen a reformkorban és a forradalom idején* (Budapest, 1955); *A Habsburgok és Romanovok szövetsége* (Budapest, 1962; németül Budapest, 1963); *Metternich és Magyarország* (Budapest, 1975).

ANDRÁSSY, GYULA (1823–1890): Hungarian politician, joint foreign minister of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1871–1879).

ANTALL, JÓZSEF (1932–1993) Hungarian politician, librarian, medical historian, museologist, the first freely elected Prime Minister of Hungary after the regime change.

APPONYI, ALBERT (1846–1933): Hungarian politician.

BASTA, GIORGIO (1550–1607): Military commander of Transylvania.

BÁTHORI, ISTVÁN (1533–1586): Transylvanian prince, Polish king His reign (1575–1586).

BÁTHORY, ZSIGMOND (1572–1613): Transylvanian prince His reign (1601–1602).

BENCZÉDI, LÁSZLÓ (Rákospalota, 1929 – Budapest, 1986): historian, candidate of historical sciences (1975). He completed his studies as a member of the Eötvös College (1947–50) at the Department of History and Archives of the Budapest University of Science in 1947–52. In 1952–53 he was the archivist of the Institute of Military History, in 1953–56 he was a teacher at the Zrínyi Miklós Military Academy, and in 1956–57 he was an archivist at the Hungarian National Archives. In 1958, he was a teacher at the Móríc Zsigmond High School in Budapest. In 1958–60, he was a scientific associate of the Hungarian Historical Society. From 1960 he was a scientific associate of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from 1976 until his death he was a senior colleague, and in 1967–71 he was the secretary of the Joint Hungarian-German Historians' Committee. He primarily dealt with the Hungarian political and social history of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially the Kuruc movements. In his historical-publicistic writings, he analyzed the controversial issues of our view of history.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A hegyaljai kuruc felkelés 1697-ben* (Budapest, 1953); *A magyar történelem az őskortól a szatmári békéig* (Tankönyv a gimnáziumok II. osztálya számára, Budapest, 1967); *Szocialista hazafiság-szocialista történetiszemlélet* (Csatári Dániellel, Budapest, 1967); *A magyar rendi nemzetudat sajátosságai a XVI–XVII. században* (*Nemzetiség a feudalizmus korában*, Budapest, 1972); *Rendiség, abszolutizmus és centralizáció a XVII. század végi Magyarországon 1664–1685* (Budapest, 1980); *Magyarország története 1526–1683* (társszerző, Budapest, 1985).

BENDA, KÁLMÁN (Nagyvárad, 1913 – Budapest, 1994): historian, academician (correspondent 1990, regular 1991). He graduated from the Budapest University of Science, majoring in history and geography, and then studied at several foreign universities. He was a teacher at the Reformed High

School in Budapest, a lecturer at the Ministry of Religion and Public Education in 1941–1942, and then a research associate at the Teleki Pál Institute of Science. After the Second World War, he was the deputy director of the Institute of History until 1949, when he was dismissed for political reasons. In the beginning, he lived from odd jobs, then he worked as an archivist of the Reformed Church District on the Danube. From 1957, he was the deputy director of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and from 1958 to 1985 he was a staff member. He retired in 1987, but continued to work as a consultant. He participated in the work of the editorial board of the journal *História*. From 1980, he managed the Ráday collection of the Reformed Church District on the Danube. From 1990 Széchenyi Prize winner (1992) Szent-Györgyi Albert Prize winner (1992).

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar nemzeti hivatástudat története* (1937); *Bocskai István* (1942), *A magyar jakobinusok iratai I–III.* (1952–1957); *A magyar jakobinus mozgalom története* (1957); *Ráday Pál iratai I–II.* (1955–1961); *Habsburg abszolútizmus és magyar rendi ellenállás a XVI–XVII. században* (1984); *Emberbarát vagy hazafi. Tanulmányok a felvilágosodás korának magyar történetéből* (1978); *Moldvai csángó-magyar okmánytár I–II.* (1989); *Bocskai István levelei* (1992).

BETHLEN, GÁBOR (1580–1629): Transylvanian prince His reign (1613–1629).

BETHLEN, ISTVÁN (1874–1946): Hungarian politician, Prime Minister of Hungary.

BIBÓ, ISTVÁN, ifj. (Budapest, 1911 – Budapest, 1979): jurist, philosopher, sociologist, politician, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1946). His father – the philosopher István, was the director of the university library in Szeged, and his wife Boriska Ravasz was a teacher. He completed his university studies at the Law Faculty of the University of Szeged (1929–33). He obtained a doctorate in law in 1933 and a doctorate in political science in 1934. In 1939–40 he worked in the Ministry of Justice. At the University of Szeged, he obtained a private teaching qualification in the field of jurisprudence, and from 1940 he taught at the department of politics. July 1946 On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he was appointed university professor. Dec. 1950 Head of department until 31. He was a public writer belonging to the bourgeois democratic folk writers. In 1945, Minister of the Interior Ferenc Erdei entrusted him with the management of the administrative department of the (BM). He worked with

Ferenc Erdei on the public administration reform project. Between 1946 and 1949, he was ministerial commissioner, then deputy president and head of the East European Science Institute. He was pushed out of public life after 1948–49. Between 1951 and 1956, he worked at the Budapest University Library. Oct. 1956 On the 31<sup>st</sup>, he was elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Peasant Party, which was re-established as the Petőfi Party. Nov. 1956 2–4. Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government. Nov. 1956 On the 6<sup>th</sup>, he published a „draft compromise solution”, in which he took a stand in favor of the multi-party system, the Imre Nagy government and the restoration of the country’s neutrality. In 1957, he sent a memoir entitled *The Situation of Hungary and the World Situation to the West*. He was arrested in May 1957 and sentenced to life imprisonment in August 1958. He was released in 1963. He was the librarian of the Central Statistical Office until 1971 (until his retirement). He was the most significant political thinker in Hungary after 1945. The Bibó Prize was founded in Boston (1980).

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A számok szerepének és jelentésének kialakulása az emberiség történetében* (Szeged, 1935, Budapest, reprint, 1989); *Etika és büntetőjog* (Budapest, 1938); *A magyar demokrácia válsága* (Budapest, 1945); *A kelet-európai kisépek nyomorúsága* (Budapest, 1946); *Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után* (Budapest, 1948); *The paralysis of international institutions and the remedies* (London, 1976); *Válogatott írásai szemelvények* (szerk. Kende Péter, Párizs, 1979); *Összegyűjtött írásai I–IV.* (sajtó alá rend. Kemény István és Sárközi Mátyás, Bern, 1981–1984); *Válogatott tanulmányok 1–4. k.* (az 1–3. kötetet válogatta, utószóval Huszár Tibor, jegyzetekkel Vida István látta el, Budapest, 1986; a 4. kötetet válogatta ifj. Bibó István és Huszár Tibor, szerk. ifj. Bibó István, Budapest, 1990); *Különbség* (Budapest, 1990).

BOCSKAI, ISTVÁN (1557–1606): Transylvanian prince His reign (1605–1606).

BONFINI, ANTONIO (1427/1434–1502): humanist historian.

BORNEMISZA, PÉTER (1535–1584): evangelical minister, preacher.

DÁVID, GÉZA (1949): Hungarian historian, Turkologist (Ottomanist), university professor.

DÁVID, ZOLTÁN (Budapest, 1923 – Budapest, 1996): Hungarian statistician, historian.



DEÁK, FERENC (1803–1876): Hungarian lawyer, minister of justice in the Batthyány government.

DOBÓ, István (1502k.–1572): Captain of Eger in 1552.

DOMANOVSKY, SÁNDOR (Nagyszében, 1877 – Budapest, 1955): historian, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1915, regular 1926, until 1933, t. 1940–49). He completed his studies at the University of Budapest in 1899. He first taught at the Main School of Realism in Bratislava (1899) and then (1904) at the Commercial Academy in Budapest. He was a private teacher at the University of Budapest in 1909, and in 1914–18 the public teacher of cultural history. Around his department, a school of agrarian history was formed from young dissertation professionals, which mainly examined the issues of farming in Majorország in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. in Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Studies on the history of Hungarian agriculture* 1–15. 1932–1943). Between 1913 and 1943, he was the editor of *Századok*. The Polish and Austrian Academy of Sciences. corresponding member (1932 and 1941), member of the Comité International des Sciences Historiques (1928). In 1939, the University of Budapest sent him to the Upper House. From 1916 to 1946, he was the vice-president of the Hungarian Historical Society. He edited the collection work *Hungarian cultural history* (I–IV Budapest, é. n.).

HIS MAIN WORKS: *M. Dubnici Krónika* (1899); *A budai Krónika* (Budapest, 1902); *Kézai Simon mester krónikája* (Budapest, 1906); *A harmincadvám eredete* (Ért, a tört, tud. köréből, XXIV. 4., Budapest, 1916); *A szepesi városok árumegállító joga 1358–1570* (Budapest, 1922); *Die Geschichte Ungarns* (München–Leipzig, 1923; Helsinki, 1937); *József nádor élete és iratai* (I–IV. Budapest, 1925–1944); *La méthode historique de M. Nicolas Jorga* (Budapest, 1938).

ESTERHÁZY, MIKLÓS (1582–1645): Palatine.

ESTERHÁZY, PÁL (1635–1713): Palatine.

ESZE, TAMÁS (1666–1708): Brigadier Kuruc.

FERDINÁND, I. (1503–1564): German-Roman Emperor, King of Hungary.

FRIGYES, III. (1415–1493): German-Roman Emperor.

FÜLEP, LAJOS (1885–1970): Hungarian art historian, teacher at Eötvös College.

GLATZ, FERENC (1941): historian, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, minister of culture in the Miklós Németh government.

GYÖRFFY, ISTVÁN (Karcag, 1884 – Budapest, 1939): ethnographer, university professor, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1932). He completed his university studies in Cluj and Budapest. Trainee of MNM from 1909. In 1910, he became a doctor of humanities at the University of Cluj. From 1912, assistant museum guard. In 1917 he worked among the Moldavian Csángos, in 1918 he participated in Lénárt's aborted Asia Minor expedition. From 1926, the university's Faculty of Economics taught the ethnography of Eastern Europe. Private teacher from 1929. From 1930 he was a lecturer at the University of Budapest, from 1934 he was the first public professor of ethnography. From 1938, he was the head of the Center for Landscape and Folk Research. He began to deal with material culture, and then with an increasingly broad settlement history. He dealt with the ethnographic problems of Kunság, the circumstances of the formation of different ethnographic groups (Hajdúk, Matyók). His research into folk costumes and folk art resulted in an outstanding, exemplary monograph. He investigated the modern Hungarian scattered settlements. With his work as a scientific organizer and educator, m. to raise ethnographic research to the European level. With its fictional description of folk life, it was to a certain extent the forerunner of the village research literature of folk writers. The Györffy college for left-wing peasant youth was later named after him (1940).

HÓMAN BÁLINT (Budapest, 1885 – Vác, 1951): historian, university professor, cultural politician, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1918, regular 1929, director 1933–45). He obtained a doctorate in humanities at the University of Budapest. In 1915, he became the director of the University Library, in 1922 of the OSZK, and in 1923 of the MNM. From 1925 to 1931, he was a professor of medieval Hungarian history at the University of Budapest. In his works, he initially followed the approach and method of positivism, then spiritual history. Oct. 1932 from 2 May 1938. until 13 in the Gömbös and Darányi governments, then Feb. 1939 from 16 July 1942 until 3, Minister of Religion and Public Education in the Teleki, Bárdossy and Kállay governments. In 1946, the People's Court sentenced him to life imprisonment as a war criminal. He was a significant researcher of medieval Hungarian history.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar városok az Árpádok korában* (Budapest, 1908); *Magyar pénztörténet 1000–1325* (Budapest, 1916); *A magyar királyság pénzügyei és gazdaságpolitikája Károly Róbert korában* (Budapest, 1921); *A Szent László-kori Gesta Ungarorum és a XII–XIII. századi leszármazói* (Budapest, 1925); *A magyar hun hagyomány és hun monda* (Budapest, 1925); *A forráskutatás és forráskritika története* (Budapest, 1925); *Magyar történet (1458-ig, a továbbiakat Szekfű Gyula írta. [Budapest, é. n. ])*; *Egyetemes történet* (I–IV. Szerk. H. B., Szekfű Gyula, Kerényi Károly Budapest, 1935–1937).

HORVÁTH, JÁNOS (1876–1961): Literary historian.

HORVÁTH, MIHÁLY (Szentes, 1809 – Karlsbad, 1878): historian, bishop, cultural politician, minister, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1839, regular 1841, director 1871). He continued his studies in Szeged as a Catholic priest and then in Vácott. In 1828, he was ordained a doctor of humanities at the University of Pest, from 1832 he was a Catholic priest in the countryside, in the meantime he was a teacher, and from 1844 he was a Hungarian teacher at the Theresianum in Vienna. In 1848 he was bishop of Csanád and also a member of the religious order, from May 12, 1849 to Aug. Minister of Public Education of the Szemere government until 11. After the fall of the War of Independence, he fled abroad and lived as an emigrant in Belgium, France, Italy, and Switzerland, and continued his work as a historian, which he had begun during the Reformation. Returning home in 1867, he became the first vice-president of the Hungarian Historical Society, and in 1877 its president. Member of the Kiskalud Society from 1868. His history writing was of pioneering importance: by raising new topics, he represented the cause of bourgeois progress and the reform opposition in the period of bourgeois transformation with great narrative and summarizing skills.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *The history of industry and trade in Hungary during the last three centuries* (Buda, 1840, for this work he received the MTA's grand prize in 1840); *History of Hungarians* (Pope, 1842–1846); *History of Hungary* (I–VI., Pest, 1860–1863; I–VIII. Pest, 1871–1873, for this work he also received the MTA's grand prize); *Twenty-five years of the history of Hungary, 1823–1848* (I–III., Geneva, 1865; Pest, 1868); *The history of Hungary's struggle for independence in 1848 and 1849* (I–III Geneva, 1865; Pest, 1871); *His minor historical works* (I–IV. Pest, 1868).

HUNYADI, JÁNOS (1407–1456): Governor of Hungary, General.

ILLÉSHÁZY, ISTVÁN (1541–1609): Palatine.

ISTVÁN, I., SZENT (975–1038): Hungarian king.

JÁNOS, ZSIGMOND (1540–1571): Elected Hungarian king.

JÁSZI, OSZKÁR (1875–1957): social scientist, editor, politician, the minister without portfolio in charge of nationality affairs of the Károlyi government.

KÁLDY-NAGY, GYULA (1927–2011): Turkologist, historian.

KARDOS, PÁL, PÁNDI PÁL (Debrecen, 1926 - Budapest, 1987): literary historian, critic, editor, József Attila Prize winner (1954, 1962), Kossuth Prize winner (1970), university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1973, regular 1985). In 1944, the Germans dragged him to the Laxenburg concentration camp. In 1945, as a member of the Eötvös College, he became a student at the Faculty of Humanities of the Budapest University of Science, from 1946 he published reviews in the columns of *Újhold*, *Magyarok*, *Válasz*, and later mainly in the columns of *Csillag* and *Szabad Nép*. He began his teaching career in 1949 at the Faculty of Humanities of Eötvös Loránd University, from 1967 he was the head of the department; In 1983, he resigned as head of the department. He began his editorial activities in 1955 as the head of the cultural section of *Szabad Nép*. Between 1961 and 1963, he was the intellectual director of the magazine *Új Írás* (officially a member of the editorial board), and from 1967 to 1971, he was the cultural columnist of *Népszabadság*. In 1972, he became the founding responsible editor of the reformed *Kritika*. He left the paper in 1983, and worked as a member of the editorial board responsible for the cultural and scientific sections of *Népszabadság* until his resignation in the summer of 1985. In the 1960s and 1970s, he was one of the leading cultural politicians of the MSZMP.

AMONG THE PUBLICATIONS HE EDITED, the most famous are: *Csokonai Vitéz Mihály Válogatott versei* (1953); *Petőfi Sándor Összes művei* (1955); *Petőfi Sándor összes prózai művei és levelezése* (1960); *A magyar irodalom története. 3. A magyar irodalom története 1772-től 1849-ig* (Budapest, 1965); *Elvek és utak* (tanulmánygyűjtemény, Budapest, 1965); *Petőfi állomásai. Versek és elemzések* (Budapest, 1976); *Szöveggyűjtemény a forradalom és szabadságharc korának irodalmából* (Budapest, 1980); *Szöveggyűjtemény a felvilágosodás korának irodalmából* (Budapest, 1982).

HIS MAIN WORKS: „*Hazug álmok papjai szűnnek*” (Budapest, 1952); *Viták és kritikák* (Budapest, 1954); *Petőfi* (Budapest, 1961); *Elsüllyedt irodalom?* (Budapest, 1963); „*Kísértetjárás*” *Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1972); *Kritikus ponton* (Budapest, 1972); *Petőfi és a nacionalizmus* (Budapest, 1974); *Első aranykorunk* (Budapest, 1976); *Bánk bán-kommentárok* (Budapest, 1980); *A realizmus igényével* (Budapest, 1980); *Úton Bolyai Farkas drámáihoz* (Budapest, 1989).

KÁROLYI, MIHÁLY (1875–1955): politician, prime minister, the first president of the Hungarian Republic.

KÁROLYI, SÁNDOR (1669–1743): first kuruc, then imperial-royal field marshal.

KERESZTURY, DEZSŐ (1904–1996): writer, minister, director of Eötvös College.

KIRÁLY, ISTVÁN (Ragály, 1921 – Budapest, 1989): literary historian, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1970, regular 1979), Kossuth prize winner (1953), state prize winner (1973). He is the son of a reformed priest from Tiszántúl. He continued his university studies as an Eötvös fellow at the Pázmány Péter University Faculty of Arts, majoring in Hungarian and German, while also studying at the University of Berlin with a state scholarship. He received his teaching diploma in the spring of 1944. In 1944–45, he was a teacher in Debrecen, then in Budapest until 1947, he was the secretary of the National Council of Public Education. Librarian at OSZK (1947–48). In 1948, he taught at the Eötvös College. From 1949, the Eötvös Loránd University of Science. (ELTE) is an associate professor at the Department of Literary History. His monograph on Kálmán Mikszáth was published in 1952, in which he tried to prove the presence of the writer’s realism. In 1957–59 he was a university professor in Szeged. From 1959 until his death, the XX. university professor and head of department at the department of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian literary history until 1988.

HE EDITED the magazines *Csillag* (1953–56), *Kortárs* (1962–69), and *Soviet Literature* (1970–89). Editor-in-chief of *Endre Ady’s All Works* from 1955, edits the critical edition of *Kálmán Mikszáth’s All Works* from 1956 (with Gyula Bisztray, then István Rejtő). From 1970 until his death, he was the editor-in-chief of the *World Literature Lexicon*, and from 1967, specialist editor of the *Hungarian Biography Lexicon*. He edited the selected works of László Németh with notes (1981). From 1971, he was a Member of Parliament. He was the leading cultural politician of the MSZMP.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar irodalom története a XIX. század végétől 1919-ig* (egyetemi jegyzet, Budapest, 1950); *Mikszáth Kálmán* (Budapest, 1952, 1960); *Ady Endre 1–2.* (Budapest, 1970); *Hazafiaság és forradalmiság* (tanulmányok, Budapest, 1974); *Irodalom és társadalom* (tanulmányok, cikkek, interjúk, kritikák, 1946–1975, Budapest, 1976); *Intés az örökhöz. Ady Endre költészete a világháború éveiben, 1914–1918* (1–2., Budapest, 1982); *Kosztolányi. Vita és vallomás* (tanulmányok, Budapest, 1986); *Kultúra és politika* (tanulmányok, Budapest, 1987); *Útkeresések* (tanulmányok, cikkek, interjúk, kritikák, Budapest, 1989).

KLANICZAY, TIBOR (1923–1992): In 1941, he graduated from Werbőczy High School. In 1945, Eötvös obtained a Hungarian-Italian degree as a college student at the Pázmány Péter University Faculty of Arts, then became a doctor of humanities in 1947 as a student of János Horváth. He taught the Hungarian language and old Hungarian literature in Budapest and abroad (at the Sorbonne in Paris and La Sapienza in Rome). Between 1950 and 1955, he participated as one of the main organizers (and as the secretary of Department I of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) in the creation of the Institute of Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, of which he was initially (from January 1, 1956) its deputy director, then its director from 1984 until his death. He was a university professor or honorary member of many foreign universities and academies. He also initiated the establishment of the International Hungarian Philological Society and the national scientific research fund entitled Registering, Excavating and Publishing Our Cultural and Historical Memories. For decades, he managed domestic medieval, renaissance and baroque research, with his colleagues they started several publication series: Renaissance Pamphlets, Humanism and Reformation, *Studia Humanitatis*, *Biblioteca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum*), his former institute, the Institute of Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, founded the literary historian award named after him in 2002.

HIS MOST IMPORTANT WORKS: *Reneszánsz Füzetek*, *Humanizmus és Reformáció*, *Studia Humanitatis*, *Biblioteca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum*. (Egykori intézete, az MTA Irodalomtudományi Intézet 2002-ben megalapította a róla elnevezett irodalomtörténész-díjat.)

*Zrínyi Miklós* (1954); *Reneszánsz és barokk* (1961); *Kis magyar irodalomtörténet* (1961); *Mit kell tudni a magyar irodalomtörténetből?* (1965); *A magyar irodalom története I–II.* kötet szerkesztése (1964); *A múlt nagy korszakai* (1973); *La crisi del Rinascimento e il manierismo* (1973); *A manierizmus*



(1973); *Hagyományok ébresztése* (1976); *Renaissance und Manierismus. Zum Verhältnis von Gesellschaftstruktur; Poetik und stil* (1977); *Von besten der Alten ungarischen Literatur* (1978); *Pallas magyar ivadékai* (1985); *Reneszánsz és barokk* (posztumusz második kiadás) (1997); *Stilus, nemzet és civilizáció* (posztumusz) (2001).

KOSÁRY, DOMOKOS (1913–2007): historian, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. When he was still a child, he settled in Budapest with his parents (his mother, Lola Kosáriné Réz, a famous writer of the period) from Selmecbány, which came to Czechoslovakia as a result of the Trianon. Here he completed his studies at Pázmány Péter University, majoring in history and Latin. He is a member of the Eötvös College and a student of the renowned historian of the period, Gyula Szekfű. Unlike his contemporaries, he went to England and France instead of Germany on a scholarship, where he got to know the Western, high-quality historical school marked by the *Annales*. As a member of the Eötvös College, he came into close contact with its curator, Pál Teleki, who sent him on a longer study trip to the USA, where, in addition to his studies, he had to learn about the Western perception of Hungary. He soon became the deputy director of the Institute of History at the Teleki Pál Science Institute, and after the war he was able to teach at the university, but the attacks of the increasingly powerful Marxist historians brought him down and exiled him from the university. In 1956, he was the president of the Revolutionary Council of the Institute of History, for which he was later in prison for two years, then a staff member of the Pest County Archives, and was later allowed to work at the Institute of History again. Corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences since 1982, regular member since 1985, president between 1990–1996.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Bevezetés Magyarország történetének forrásaiba és irodalmába* (Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2000); *A történelem veszedelmei* (Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1987); *Magyarország története képekben* (társszerző, Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest, 1977); *A magyar és európai politika történetéből* (Osiris Kiadó, 2001); *Magyarország Európában* (Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 2003); *Famous Hungarians* (angolul, Rubicon-könyvek, Budapest, 2002); *A magyar külpolitika Mohács előtt* (Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1978); *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1996); *Újjáépítés és polgárosodás, 1711–1867* (Háttér Kiadó, Budapest, 1990); *Napóleon és Magyarország* (Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1977); *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban* (Osiris Kiadó, 2002); *Magyarország és a nem-*



*zetközi politika 1848–49-ben* (História Könyvtár); Monográfiák: *A Görgey-kérdés története I–II.* (Osiris–Századvég, Budapest, 1994); *Széchenyi Döblingben* (Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1981); *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia másfél évszázada 1825–1975* (társszerző, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975); *Hat év a tudománypolitika szolgálatában* (MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1996).

KOSSUTH, LAJOS (Monok, 1802 – Torino, 1894): Governor of Hungary.

MAGYARY, ZOLTÁN (Tata, 1888 – Héreg, 1945): lawyer, university professor.

After obtaining a doctorate in law and political science, the religious and public education min. entered service. From 1917, he was the head of the science policy department in the rank of ministerial advisor. He dealt with issues of the budget and the decimal system, then with issues of science policy. From 1930, he was a university professor in Budapest and for a short time a government commissioner for rationalization. He developed his public administration ideas at the Hungarian Institute of Public Administration, which was organized next to his department. Between 1932 and 1935, partly as the VI. The keynote speaker of the International Congress on Public Administration studied the development of modern public administration abroad, including at SZU. After 1938, in order to implement his ideals in practice, he organized a folkloric school in the Tata district and collected local historical material.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar közigazgatás racionalizálása* (Budapest, 1930); *Az amerikai államélet* (Budapest, 1934); *Közigazgatási vezérkar* (Budapest, 1938); *A közigazgatás és az emberek* (Kiss Istvánnal, Budapest, 1939); *Dolgozatok a közigazgatási reform köréből* (szerk. Kiss István Budapest, 1940); *Magyar közigazgatás* (Budapest, 1942).

MÁLYUSZ, ELEMÉR (1898–1989): Hungarian historian, MTA member, one of the most significant figures in Hungarian medieval research.

MARCZALI, HENRIK (Marcali, 1856 – Budapest, 1940): historian, university professor, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1893). He also continued his studies abroad (Vienna, Paris, Berlin). From 1878 he was a teacher at the Budapest Vocational High School and from 1895 at the University of Budapest. After the fall of the Soviet Republic, he was given a leave of absence for a while, then in 1924 he was dismissed with severance pay. He edited the series *Nagy Képes Világtörténet* from 1898 and wrote the modern part of it.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A földrajzi viszonyok befolyása Magyarország történetére* (Budapest, 1874); *A magyar történet kútfeői az Árpádok korában* (Budapest, 1880); *Magyarország története II. József korában* (I–III., Budapest, 1881–1888); *Mária Terézia* (Magy. Tört. életrajzok 18., Budapest, 1891); *Magyarország a királyság megalapításáig* (Magyar nemzet története, szerk. Szilágyi Sándor I., Budapest, 1895); *Magyarország története az Árpádok korában* (Magyar nemzet története, szerk. Szilágyi Sándor II., Budapest, 1896); *Magyarország története III. Károlytól a Bécsi congressusig 1711–1815* (A magyar nemzet története, szerk. Szilágyi Sándor VII., Budapest, 1898); *A magyar történet kútfeőinek kézikönyve* (Angyal Dávid és Mika Sándor társaságában szerk., Budapest, 1901); *Az 1790–91. országgyűlés* (I–II., Budapest, 1907); *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1910); *Ungarisches Verfassungsrecht* (Tübingen, 1911).

MÁRKI, SÁNDOR (Kétegyháza, 1853 – Gödöllő, 1925): historian, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1892, regular 1912). After completing his university studies, first in Arad, then in Budapest, high school teacher. From 1892, he was a professor of universal history at the University of Cluj. In his progressive works, he especially dealt with the history of major domestic peasant movements and freedom struggles, as well as the past of the counties of Bihar and Arad and geographical topics. Many of his studies, articles, and promotional writings have been published.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Sarkad története* (Budapest, 1877); *Dósa György és forradalma* (Budapest, 1883); *Arad vármegye és Arad sz. kir. város története* (I–II., Arad, 1892–95); *Pérori lázadása* (Budapest, 1893); *A magyar térképfűás múltja és jelene* (Földrajzi Közl. 1896); *II. Rákóczi Ferenc* (I–III., Magy. Tört. Életr. 51., 53., 54. sz. Budapest, 1907–1910); *Az 1848–49-évi szabadságharc története* (Budapest, 1898); *Az ó- és középkor története* (I–II., Budapest, 1910); *Nagy Péter cár és II. Rákóczi F. szövetsége* (Ért. a tört. tud. köréből, XXIII. 6., Budapest, 1913); *Dósa György* (Magy. Tört. Életr. 59. sz., Budapest, 1913); *Magyar középkor* (Budapest, 1914); *Római itineráriumok Magyarországról* (Földrajzi Közlemények, 1926).

MÁTYÁS, I. (Hunyadi) (1443–1490): Hungarian king.

MÓD, ALADÁR (ÓSZKÓ) (Karakó, 1908 – Budapest 1973): politician, historian, university professor, writer, doctor of historical sciences (1955). He obtained a teaching certificate in the Hungarian-Latin department at the Faculty of Humanities of the Budapest University of Science. He has been a member of the KMP since 1932. Between the two world wars, he carried

out significant theoretical and practical party activities, published articles, studies, and discussion papers in the left-wing press (*Gondolat*, *Népszava*, *Szabad Szó*, etc.). Under the name Aladár Oszkó, he edits the magazine *Szabadon* (1931–32). In 1932, he was arrested together with several fellow students for distributing left-wing pamphlets, and was held in custody for 4 months. His first book (*Materialist Theory of Being*) was completed in 1934. He took part in the fight against fascism. In 1941, he was imprisoned for his participation in the independence movement; March 1942 He had to flee after a demonstration on the 15<sup>th</sup>. He was arrested and brought to court because of his book (*400 Years. Struggle for Independent Hungary*) published in 1943. In this work, m. he focused on national independence struggles, and in the spirit of the Popular Front idea, he advocated the unity of progressive forces against the German and reactionary threat. After his liberation in December 1944, he worked as a liaison for the partisan group in Újpest in the resistance movement. After 1945, he was the secretary of the Economic Committee of the MKP, a staff member of *Szabad Nép*, and from 1946 he was responsible editor of the *Társadalmi Szemle*. From 1947, he was department head of the agitation propaganda department of the MKP Central Leadership, from 1949, deputy head of the public education department, general secretary of the Tudományos Ismeretterjlesztő Társulat (TIT) (1954–61). From 1954 until his death, he was the head of the scientific socialism department at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). He was a member of the board of the Patriotic People's Front.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Pártharcok és a kormány politikája 1848–49-ben* (Budapest 1949); *1849 és politikai öröksége* (Budapest 1949); *Marxizmus és hazafiság* (Budapest 1956); *Korunk vitája* (Budapest 1965); *Sors és felelősség* (tanulmányok, Budapest 1967); *Válaszutak 1918–1919* (Budapest 1970); *Korunk jellegéhez* (Budapest 1971); *Nemzet és szocialista nemzet* (tanulmányok, Budapest 1974).

MOLNÁR, ERIK (Újvidék, 1894 – Budapest, 1966): historian, economist and philosopher, politician, winner of the Kossuth Prize (1948, 1963), full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1949). He came from an intellectual family; as a university student he was drafted into the army in 1914; he was taken prisoner of war on the Russian front. After 1917, he came into contact with internationalists in one of the Far Eastern prisoner of war camps. After the fall of the Soviet Republic, he settled in Kecskemét and completed his legal studies. He was initially a member of the SZDP, then in 1928 he joined the illegal work of the KMP together with his

younger brother René. In the twenties and thirties, he was a permanent employee of various legal and illegal newspapers (*100%*, *Társadalmi Szemle*, *Gondolat*, *Korunk*), where he wrote his studies under the pseudonyms Erik Jeszenszky, István Pálfai, and Lajos Szentmiklósy. In these, he deals in depth with the problems of Hungarian social development, above all with the agrarian question, and applies the teachings of Marxism-Leninism to Hungarian conditions. During the Second World War, his larger studies on Árpád-era society were published. From december 25, 1944 to September 4, 1947, Minister of People's Welfare of the Provisional Government of Debrecen, from September 24, 1947 to March 5, 1948, Minister of Information, until August 5, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador of Hungary to Moscow in 1948–49, Minister of Justice from July 17, 1950 to november 14, 1952. From november 14, 1952 to July 2, 1953, he was again Minister of Foreign Affairs. From 1953 to 1954, he was the President of the Supreme Court, from October 30, 1954 to november 3, 1956, again Minister of Justice. He was a member of the Central Committee of the MKP and the MDP. He was a member of parliament from 1944 until his death, and a university professor at ELTE from 1949. From 1963, he was the president of the Hungarian branch of the Interparliamentary Union. Since its establishment (1949), he was the director of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from 1958 the president of the Hungarian Historical Society, the editor-in-chief of *Acta Historica*, and from 1957 to 1962 the president of the editorial board of *Századok*. He was the chief editor of the work entitled History of Hungary (I–II., Budapest 1964).

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Dialektika* (Jeszenszky Erik néven, Budapest, 1941); *Magyar őstörténet* (Szentmiklósy Lajos néven, Budapest, 1942); *A feudálisizmus kialakulása Magyarországon* (Szentmiklósy Lajos néven, Budapest 1942); *Az Árpád-kori társadalom 1. A gazdasági alap* (Szentmiklósy Lajos néven, Budapest 1943); *Az Árpád-kori társadalom. 2. A felépítmény* (Szentmiklósy Lajos néven, 1943); *Dialektika* (Budapest 1945); *A magyar társadalom története az őskortól az Árpád-korig* (Budapest 1945); *A magyar társadalom története az Árpád-kortól Mohácsig* (Budapest 1949); *A történelmi materializmus ideológiai előzményei* (Budapest 1952); *A magyar nép őstörténete* (Budapest 1953); *A történelmi materializmus filozófiai alapproblémái* (Budapest 1955.); *A jelenkori kapitalizmus néhány gazdasági problémája* (Budapest 1959); *Dialektikus materializmus és társadalomtudomány* (Budapest 1962); *A marxizmus szövetségi politikája* (Budapest 1967).

NEMESKÜRTY, ISTVÁN (1925–2015): writer, literary and film historian, university professor.

NÉMETH, LÁSZLÓ (1901–1975): writer, essayist, playwright, translator, In 1957 he received the Kossuth Prize.

PACH, ZSIGMOND PÁL (Budapest, 1919 – Budapest, 2001): historian, university professor. In 1949, he won the Kossuth Prize. From 1952 to 1992, he was a professor at the Department of Economic History at the Marx Károly University of Economics. From 1963 to 1967, he was the rector of the university. In 1952, he obtained the candidate of historical sciences degree, and in 1958, the scientific degree of doctor of historical sciences. Academician (from 1962 l. from 1970 r.), later he held the position of vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Deputy director of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, then director from 1967 to 1985. Since 1978, he has been the president of the International Economic History Association. His main research area is the 16–17 century economic history.

PERJÉS, GÉZA, *Pelzl* (Trencsén, 1917 – Budapest, 2003): military historian. A soldier who graduated from Ludovika. He then studied sociology at the University of Budapest. He fought on the Eastern Front in World War II. After the war, Ganz languished as a factory and hospital assistant. From the second half of the 1950s, it was allowed back into the field of historical studies. He cooperated with the KSH historian's group (1964–86), then he was able to work secondarily as a staff member of the Institute of Military History.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Zrínyi Miklós hadtudományi művei* (1976); *Mohács* (Budapest, 1979); *Seregszemle* (posztumusz tanulmánykötet, Budapest, 1999).

RÁKÓCZI, FERENC, II. (Borsi, 1676 – Rodostó, 1735): Hungarian nobleman, leader of the Rákóczi freedom struggle, prince of Transylvania, imperial prince.

RÁKÓCZI, GYÖRGY, I. (1593–1648): Transylvanian prince.

RÁKÓCZI, György, II. (1621–1660): Transylvanian prince.

RÁKOSI, MÁTYÁS, *Rosenfeld, Mátyás* (Ada, 1892 – Gorkij, 1971): Hungarian politician. Between 1945–56 he was the general and then first secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Hungarian Workers' Party, in 1952–53 he was the president of the Council of Ministers of the Hun-

garian People's Republic, and between 1949–1956 he was the all-powerful leader of Hungary.

RÁNKI, GYÖRGY (Budapest, 1930 – Budapest, 1988): historian, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1976, regular 1982), winner of the Kossuth Prize (1961). When he was in high school, the Germans dragged him to a concentration camp. He graduated in 1949. In 1949–51, he continued his studies at the University of Economics in Budapest, and in 1951–53 at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). From 1953, he was a scientific associate of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, from 1960, scientific secretary and head of the modern Hungarian department, from 1962, deputy director, and from 1986, director. In 1964, he was appointed as a professor at Lajos Kossuth University in Debrecen. From 1981, while maintaining his work at the institute, he became the head of the Hungarian department at the University of Bloomington (USA). From 1967 until his death, he was a member of the International Historical Science Committee, and from 1985, his first vice-president. Member of the scientific council of the Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Magyarország gyáripára az imperializmus első világháború előtti időszakában 1900–1914* (Berend T. Ivánnal, Budapest, 1955); *Magyarország gyáripára a második világháború előtt és a háború időszakában 1933–1944* (Budapest, 1958); *A monopolkapitalizmus kialakulása és uralma Magyarországon 1900–1944* (Budapest, 1958); *Magyarország gazdasága az első 3 éves terv időszakában 1947–1949* (Budapest, 1963); *Emlékiratok és valóság Magyarország második világháborús szerepéről. Horthysta politika a második világháborúban* (Budapest, 1964); *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944* (szerk. Budapest, 1968); Molnár Erik (Budapest, 1971); *A magyar gazdaság száz éve* (Budapest, 1972); *A második világháború története* (Budapest, 1973); *East Central Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Budapest, 1977); *Közgazdaság és történelem – a gazdaságtörténet válaszcímjei* (Budapest, 1977); *Underdevelopment and Economic Growth. Studies in Hungarian Social and Economic History* (Budapest, 1979); *Handbuch der Europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. 5. Bd. Ost- und Südosteuropa 1850–1914* (Stuttgart, 1980); *A nagyhatalmak harca a délkelet-európai gazdasági hegemóniáért 1919–1939* (Budapest, 1981); *The European Periphery and Industrialization 1780–1914* (Budapest, 1982); *Economy and Foreign Policy. The Struggle of the Great Powers for Hegemony in the Danube Valley 1919–*



1939 (Boulder-New York, 1983); *Unternehmen Margarethe. Die deutsche Besetzung Ungarns* (Budapest, 1984); *Állam és társadalom a két világháború közötti Közép-Kelet-Európában* (Budapest 1988).

SZABÓ, ERVIN (Szlanica, 1877 – Budapest, 1918): sociologist, library director. He began his university studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Budapest, then continued at the University of Vienna. He received his doctorate in 1899. He then joined the Metropolitan Library, where he became its director from 1911. From 1900, he was an active member of the MSZDP and a permanent employee of Népszava. From 1906, he was vice-president of the Society of Social Sciences. He wrote articles for *Neue Zeit*. German and the *Mouvement Socialiste* c. also in a French magazine. He edited and prefaced two volumes of the selected writings of Marx and Engels (1905; 1909), which represented the foundation of Marxist literature in the Hungarian language.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar jakobinusok* (Budapest, 1902); *Társadalmi és pártharcok a 48–49-es magyar forradalomban* (Bécs, 1921, Budapest, 1946); *Szabó Ervin Válogatott írásai* (műveinek teljes bibliográfiájával, Budapest, 1958); *Szabó Ervin magyar nyelven megjelent könyvtártudományi, művelődéspolitikai tanulmányainak és kritikáinak gyűjteménye 1900–1918* (Kóhalmi Béla tanulmányával, Budapest, 1959). *Szabó Ervin történeti írásai* (vál., bev. Litván György, Budapest, 1979).

SZAKÁLY, FERENC (Zalaegerszeg, 1942 – Budapest, 1999): historian. In 1967, he graduated from the Faculty of Humanities of ELTE, majoring in history and archives. Between 1967–72, he worked at the Pest County Archives, and between 1972–77 at the MNM. From 1977 to 1999, he was an employee of MTATTI, and from 1985 he was head of department. 1995 The MTA I. member. His main field of research is the economy and military history of the Turkish era.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Mezőváros és reformáció. Tanulmányok a korai magyar polgárosodás kérdéséhez* (Budapest, 1994); *A török–magyar küzdelem szakaszai a mohácsi csata előtt*. In: *Mohács-tanulmányok*. (Ruzsás Lajos és Szakály Ferenc, Budapest, 1986); *Magyar adóztatás a török hódoltságban* (Budapest, 1981).

SZALAY, LÁSZLÓ (Buda, 1813 – Salzburg, 1864): historian, reform politician, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1836, regular 1838) and general secretary (1861). He graduated from the Faculty of Law and Humanities at the University of Pest, was a student of István



Horvát, and belonged to the circle of friends of József Eötvös. After his studies, he was a legal trainee with Ferenc Kölcsey. In 1833, he obtained a lawyer's diploma, but he did not practice law, but engaged in scientific work on the theory of the state. In 1836–39, he was on a study trip abroad (Austria, Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, England), and during this he studied foreign civil law institutions. In the meantime, he was the archivist of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and in 1837 he founded the first monthly periodical legal publication (*Themis*), most of which he also wrote. In 1840, he was the secretary of the national committee sent to draft the penal code. In 1840, he edited the Budapest Review with József Eötvös and Móric Lukács. Korpona's ambassador in the 1843–44 parliament. Eötvössel is a member of the centralist group of the reform opposition. In 1844–45, he took over the editing of Pesti Hírlap instead of Kossuth. In 1848, he became head of the codification department in Ferenc Deák's ministry. In the summer of 1848, he represented the Hungarian government at the Imperial Assembly in Frankfurt, then in London and Paris. After the War of Independence, he lived in Switzerland until 1855. In 1861, he was a representative of the city of Pest. Member of the Kisfaludy Society (1837). He published all the works of Antal Verancsics (I–XII., Pest, 1857–75, the end by Gusztáv Wenzel), Miklós Bethlen's Autobiography (Magy. tört. emlékek, II–III., 1858–60), János Kemény's (1865) and Károlyi's Sándorét (I–II., 1865). His letters were published by Gábor Szalay (Budapest, 1913).

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A büntető eljárásról* (Pest, 1841); *Státusférffak és szónokok könyve* (Pest, 1846, 1850); *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Beleuchtung der ungarischen Gesandtschaft in Deutschland* (Zürich, 1849); *Magyarország története* (I–IV., Lipcse; 1852–1854. V–VI., Pest, 1857–1859, az MTA nagyjuttalmát kapta 1861-ben); *Adalékok a magyar nemzet történetéhez a XVI. században* (Pest, 1859); *I. Erdély és a porta, 1567–1578* (Pest, 1860); *A horvát kérdéshez* (Pest, 1861); *Fiume a magyar országgyűlésen* (Pest, 1861); *II. Rákóczi Ferenc bujdosása* (Pest, 1864); *Galántai gr. Esterházy Miklós, Magyarország nádora, 1582–1626* (I–III., Pest, 1863–1870, névtelenül).

SZAPOLYAI, JÁNOS, I. (Szepesváralja, 1480/1487 – Szászsebes, 1540): Hungarian king, his reign (1526–1540).

SZEKFŰ, GYULA (Székesfehérvár, 1883 – Budapest, 1955): historian, publicist, university professor, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1925, regular 1941). After graduating from the University

of Budapest in 1904, he worked at the Hungarian National Museum, and between 1909 and 1913 at the National Archives and the State Archives in Vienna. He held a press debate with Aladár Ballagi on the Rákóczi issue. In 1916, he was a private teacher at the University of Budapest, in 1925, r. became a teacher at the modern Hungarian history department. From 1927 to 1938, he edited *Magyar Szemle*, supporting the politics of István Bethlen. After the Second World War, he was Hungary's first envoy to Moscow, then its ambassador, a member of parliament from 1953, and a member of the Presidential Council from 1954. His works from his youth are characterized by a Habsburg-friendly approach. His work *Three Generations* is the ideological foundation of the Horthy era. In 1942, he participated in the work of the Hungarian Historical Memorial Committee. In 1943–44, he continued to publish in *Magyar Nemzet* as a warning his study „We lost our way somewhere”, recalling the progressive bourgeois democratic ideals of the reform era.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Szamosközy István történeti munkáinak kritikájához* (Budapest, 1904); *Serviensek és familiarisok* (Budapest, 1912); *A száműzött Rákóczi* (Budapest, 1913); *Mit vétettem én?* (Budapest, 1915); *A magyar állam életrajza* (Berlin, 1917; magyarul, 1918); *Három nemzedék* (Budapest, 1920); *Széchenyi igéi* (Budapest, 1921); *Iratok a magyar államnnyelv kérdésének történetéhez* (Budapest, 1926); *Bethlen Gábor* (Budapest, 1929); *Magyar történet* (Hóman Bálinttal, IV–VII., Budapest, 1929–33, a későbbi kiadásoknál III–V.); *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Budapest, 1934); *Állam és nemzet* (Budapest, 1942); *Forradalom után* (Budapest, 1947); *Az öreg Kossuth* (Kossuth Emlékkönyv, 1952).

SZILÁGYI, SÁNDOR (Kolozsvár, 1827 – Budapest, 1899): historian, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1857, regular 1873). He completed his law and humanities studies in Cluj. During the revolution, he went to Pest and became an employee of *Pesti Hírlap* and *Életképek*. After the War of Independence, he experimented with publishing literary magazines. *Magyar Emléklap* published 10 booklets, *Magyar Írók Füzetei* 4, and *Pesti Röpirat* only 10 booklets, as the police banned all of them due to the publication of poems evoking memories of the war of independence, as well as several other independent works. From 1852, he was a mathematics teacher at the reformed college in Kecskemét, and from 1853 he taught at Nagykőrös, among others his fellow teacher was János Arany. In 1867, József Eötvös appointed him secretary to the Ministry of Religion and Public Education. From 1878, he was the director of the Bu-

dapest University Library. On the threshold of the 1850s, he published writings about the freedom struggle, later mainly Transylvania 16–17. he processed and published a lot of data and documents about his history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: in 1875, he took over the editing of *Századok*, then started the source-publishing journal *Történeti Tár* (1878) and the series of *Hungarian Historical Biographies* (1885). He carried out extensive scientific organizational work. He published the *Transylvanian Parliament Memorials* (1540–1699) series and edited the ten-volume history of the Hungarian nation published on the occasion of the millennium.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Erdélyország története* (I–II., Pest, 1866); *Báthory Gábor fejedelem* (Pest, 1867); *A Rákócziak kora Erdélyben* (Pest, 1868); *Történeti rajzok* (Budapest, 1880); *Bethlen Gábor és a svéd diplomácia* (Budapest, 1882); *II. Rákóczi György* (Budapest, 1891); *I. Rákóczi György* (Budapest, 1893).

SZONDI, GYÖRGY: (1504 – Drégely, 1552): He was a soldier, the heroic captain of Drégely Castle.

SZÜCS, JENŐ (Debrecen, 1928 – Leányfalu, 1988): historian, university professor, doctor of history (1987), state prize winner (1985). He completed his studies at the Budapest University of Science as a member of the Eötvös College. In 1953, he graduated with a degree in history and archives. From 1952 to 1960, he was an employee of the Hungarian National Archives. Since 1960, he has been a scientific associate at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From 1976, he was the head of the medieval department. In 1972, he became a candidate of history with his dissertation entitled „Gentilism” (The Question of the Barbaric National Consciousness). In the early years of his research career, he dealt with medieval Hungarian urban history. His interest turned to the history of ideas in the Middle Ages, including the prehistory of political thought and national consciousness. In the last phase of his life, he dealt with the history of the late Árpád period.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Városok és kézművesség a XV. századi Magyarországon* (Budapest 1955); *A középkori építészet munkaszervezetének kérdéséhez* (Budapest régiségei, 1958); *A nemzet historikuma és a történetiszemlélet nemzeti látószöve* (Hozzászólás egy vitához, Budapest, 1970); *A ferences obszervancia és az 1514. évi parasztháború* (Levéltári Közlemények, 1972); *Társadalomelmélet, politikai teória és történetiszemlélet Kézai Simon Gesta Hungarorumában* (1–2. rész, Századok, 1973. 3–4.); *Nemzet és történelem* (Tanulmányok, Budapest 1974, németül: Budapest 1981); *Die Ideologie*

*des Bauernkriege* (Az Osteuropäisches Bauernbewegungen c. kötetben Budapest 1977); *A kereszténység belső politikuma a XIII. század derekán. IV. Béla király és az egyház* (Történelmi Szemle, 1981, 3.); *Megosztott parasztság – egységesülő jobbágyság. A paraszti társadalom átalakulása a 13. században* (1–2. rész, Századok, 1981. 1–2.); *Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról* (Történelmi Szemle, 1981. 3. Önálló kötetben: Budapest 1983. *Les trois Europe*, Fernand Braudel előszavával, Párizs, 1985.); *Szlavóniai báni dénárook Erdélyben. Kereskedelemtörténet a pénztörténet tükrében (1318–1336)* (Századok, 1986. 3.); *Az utolsó Árpádok* (Budapest, 1993).

TAKÁTS, SÁNDOR (Komárom, 1860 – Budapest, 1932): historian, publicist teacher, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. (correspondent 1906, regular 1925). He obtained a teaching certificate at the University of Budapest, majoring in history and Latin; In 1881, he entered the Piarist order. He first taught at the order's high school in Nitra and then in Budapest. Between 1898 and 1903, he worked in the archives of the court chamber in Vienna. From 1903 until his death, he was the archivist of the House of Representatives. Member of the Kisfaludy Society from 1917. Primarily the 16–17. dealt with the history of the century.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *A magyar gyalogság megalakulása* (Budapest, 1908); *Régi magyar asszonyok* (Budapest, 1914); *A budai basák magyar nyelvű levelezése* (Eckhart Ferencsel és Szekfű Gyulával, Budapest, 1915); *Rajzok a török világból* (I–III., Budapest, 1915–17); *A régi Magyarország jökedve* (Budapest, 1921); *Régi idők, régi emberek* (Budapest, 1922); *Régi magyar kapitányok és generálisok* (Budapest, 1922); *Magyar nagyasszonyok* (I–II., Budapest, 1926); *A magyar múlt tarlójáról* (Budapest, 1926); *Szegény magyarok* (Budapest, 1927); *A török hódoltság korából* (I–II., Budapest, 1928); *Emlékezzünk eleinkről* (I–II., Budapest, 1929); *Hangok a múltból* (Budapest, 1930); *Kémvilág Magyarországon* (I–II., Budapest, 1932); *Bajvívó magyarok* (szerk. Réz Pál, Budapest, 1956); *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok* (szerk. Benda Kálmán, Budapest, 1961).

THALY, KÁLMÁN (Csép, 1839 – Zablát, 1909): politician, historian, poet, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (correspondent 1864, regular 1880, t. 1907). He graduated in law and humanities at the University of Pest. From 1860, he was a staff member of the *Pesti Napló*, between 1864 and 1868 he was a teacher at the reformed grammar school in Pest, and in 1869 he became a class counselor at the Ministry of National Defense. From 1875 he lived in Bratislava for his historical studies. From 1878

Ferencváros (Pest) and from 1881 Debrecen parliamentarian, vice-president of the Independence Party. One of the founders of the Hungarian Historical Society, its first secretary (until 1875), vice-president from 1889, first editor of *Századok* (1867–1875). From 1904, he was the chairman of the Department of Humanities, Social and Historical Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Some of the kuruc poems he published were written by him, but he presented them as contemporary works. Frigyes Riedl and Vilmos Tolnai independently showed that these were fakes. The result of his persistent work and agitation II. Bringing home the ashes of Ferenc Rákóczi and his fellow fugitives. Behind slogans of independence, his political career was more than once characterized by actual opportunism. He published Thököly's diaries and letter books, Rákóczi's memoirs (translation by Károly Ráth: Pest, 1861 and many other editions), Ádám Baththyány gr. his correspondence (Tört. Tár, 1887); the Archivum Rákóczianum c. ten-volume collection of documents (Budapest, 1873–1889); Antal Esterházy's camp book (1901); De Saussure Cézár's Turkish letters (1909), etc.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Ne bántsá a magyart* (versek, Pest, 1857); *Zengő liget* (poems, Pest, 1859); *Carpathian horn* (poems, Pest, 1860); *Székely horn* (poems, Pest, 1861); *Dawn of Freedom* (poems, Pest, 1861; this volume was banned); *Historical sheaves 1603–1711* (Pest, 1862); *Old Hungarian heroic songs* (I–II., Pest, 1864); *János Bottyán* (Pest, 1865); *Addenda to the literary history of the Thököly and Rákóczi periods* (I–II., Pest, 1872); *László Ocskay* (Budapest, 1880, received the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' grand prize in 1908); *II. Ferenc Rákóczi's youth* (Pozsony, 1881); *Kálmán Thaly's speeches 1878–81* (Budapest, 1881); *The gr. of Székes Bercsényi family* (I–III., Budapest, 1885–1892); *Rodostó and the graves of the bujdosós* (Budapest, 1889); *Rákóczi memories in Turkey* (Budapest, 1893); *De Saussure Cézár töröko.-i leveleit* (1909) stb.

TRÓCSÁNYI, ZSOLT (Pápa, 1926 – Budapest, 1987): historian, archivist, doctor of history (1968) He completed his studies as a member of the Eötvös College in Budapest in 1944–49, at the history-Latin and archives department of the university. In 1947–48, he was a scholarship holder at the University of Bucharest. From 1949, he was an employee of the National Archives until his retirement (1986). In 1956, he became a candidate of history. His main research area is Transylvania 16–19. century history.

HIS MAIN WORKS: *Az erdélyi parasztság története 1790–1849* (Budapest, 1956); *A nagyenyedi kollégium történetéhez, 1831–1841* (Budapest, 1957); *Wesselényi Miklós* (Budapest, 1965); *Az északi Partium 1820-ban* (Budapest, 1966); *Teleki Mihály. Erdély és a kurucmozgalom 1690-ig* (Budapest, 1972); *Az erdélyi kormányhatósági levéltárak* (Budapest, 1973); *Az erdélyi fejedelemség korának országgyűlései 1540–1690* (Budapest, 1976); *Erdély központi kormányzata 1540–1690* (Budapest, 1980); *A pápai kollégium története* (társszerző, Budapest, 1981); *Erdély története* (társszerző, II., Budapest, 1986); *Wesselényi Miklós hűtlenségi pere* (Budapest, 1986).

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