

Eötvös Loránd University
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Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Theses

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**Count Albert Apponyi's Career of Internal Affairs
During the Age of Hungarian Dualism**

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I. Topic Choice

Nowadays there is still a lack of political biographies concerning the age of dualism when it comes down to political science. The audience can find the biographies of the fundamental prime ministers, secretaries and opposition party leaders like Gyula Andrássy Jr., József Eötvös, Kálmán Ghyczy, Dániel Irányi, Menyhért Lónyay, István Tisza, Kálmán Tisza, Vilmos Vázsonyi, and Sándor Wekerle. However, there are several contemporary politicians whose biographies were not published yet—on the other side, doctoral dissertations on prime minister Dezső Bánffy, party leader of '48 Gyula Justh, and agrarian leader Sándor Károly had been composed before. When concerning the drifting political landscape and changes of the political system of the age of dualism that led to the fractures of the system, it is important to examine every possible aspect of this era.

Count Albert Apponyi (1846-1933) was a vivid and diverse politician of the Monarch during the Hungarian Kingdom and the Horthy-era—recognition of his political and private life brings us closer to the understanding of the characteristics of these two separate periods. In the 1870-1890s he was an '67 opposition party leader then became a member of the governing party and the leader of House of Representatives at the turn of the century; after that, breaking with the '67 school and becoming a member of the '48 tendency he became a secretary of religion and public education in a heterogeneous government. Throughout the years of leading the ministry he went into opposition again in order to lead the Hungarian delegation during the peace treaty of Paris after the first world war; from the 1920s until his death in 1933, he was expelled to the verge of politics—yet, he finished his career as a patriot.

II. Sources used during the research process

Several significant figures of the age of Hungarian political dualism have left behind unified written inheritance in numerous archives. For example, in the *Hungarian National Archive* researchers can find documents by Ignác Darányi, Dezső Szilágyi, Gyula Wlassics, or in the case of the *Hungarian Calvinist Church's Ecclesiastic Archive*, the very own documents by prime minister István Tisza. However, concerning Albert Apponyi there has not remained any collection of documents or sources—after his death, the family that previously preserved most of his papers and documents lost all that heritage due to the hardships of the second world war and its political turmoil.

These circumstances were revealed by Apponyi's grandson named István Pálffy, whom I could finally meet in his home after a period of exchanging letters in order to obtain more information of the protagonist of my dissertation. Unfortunately, István Pálffy was born after his grandfather's death in 1933 and it was his mother at his age of twelve who could provide subtle information on the famous grandfather when the family was about to be torn apart—as a result of the escape from the detrimental effects of communism in Hungary their lives separated soon; István Pálffy could only provide my research with tiny contribution. During the interview I had to realize that his knowledge of his grandfather was mostly based on the memorandum left behind by Apponyi himself.

Since there is not a single unified archival collection of sources, I had to carry out a grave research process in several archives of Budapest and the provincial. As a result, I managed to discover Albert Apponyi-related manuscripts and researches in the *Archive of State Security Services*, the *Archive of Corvinus University*, the *Ráday Collection Archive of the Calvinist Church of Danube basin*, the *Archive of ELTE University*, the *Archive of the Primate of Esztergom*, the *Archive of the Museum of Military History*, the *Hungarian National Archive* and its sub-archive of Tolna county, the *Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, the *Archive of the Hungarian Calvinist Church's Council*, the *Archive of the National Széchenyi Library*, and finally, the *Archive of the Petőfi Literary Museum*.

In Slovakia, I paid a visit to the *State Archive of Nyitra* where I reviewed the documents concerning Apponyi and his family—since the 18th century the family lived and farmed in Nyitra country on holdings like Kisappony and Nagyappony.

In addition, I did several field trips that unfortunately did not bring success to my research. For example, I went to the *Archive of the Head Diocese of Eger* in order to obtain more information of József Samassa, who was archbishop for 39 years (1873-1912) and was an opposition-comrade of Apponyi in '67—the count's constituency of Jászberény also belonged to the supreme authority of the church. The acquaintance between the prelate and the politician is very well-known; however, there cannot be found any correspondence between the two when it is known that they actually had communication via letters. Although Apponyi was a parliamentary representative for the county for more than fifty years (1881-1933), there cannot be found any Apponyi-related old document in the *Archive of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County*.

Beyond the documents collected from several archives, this dissertation also relies on handwritten and published memorandums (even by the politician himself), speeches, and pamphlet of Albert Apponyi.

It is important to highlight that during my research I had to realize that Apponyi assembled his two-volume-long collection of speeches in the middle of the 1890s selectively, and he also did the same during writing his memoirs between 1920 and 1930. Although we now know from several alternative sources, he did not write about several crucial aspects and moments of his political life. When under the reconstruction of a politician's life and work it is common that the specific person's memorandums are the backbone of the research—in case of Apponyi, it took a long time to verify his memorandum's pertinence.

The printed sources published of Apponyi have a specific segment that must be mentioned: the literature of the Apponyi-cult during the Horthy-era. These albums and booklets were written in the name of cult-building and they all represent a positive bias toward their topic. Concerning content, they relate back to Apponyi's activity during the monarchy and after the world war—these authors though gladly applied exaggeration and false statements to their works.

In order to create an objective image of Apponyi, it must be emphasized that I had to treat every archival document and source—including diaries of the House and press releases (approximately 30-35 contemporary newspapers) and others' memorandums—in comparison one another.

III. Appendix of the Dissertation

This thesis is fulfilled in a second volume, the Appendix that consists of 153 letters. Even the contemporary writers of Apponyi's technical literature are likely to reconstruct a specific period of his career by only focusing on printed sources. One can obtain a more subtle picture of Apponyi if the archival sources are taken into account. As a result, I attached 153 letters to my dissertation's appendix—these were either written by Apponyi to his relatives, friends, fellow politicians, and public figures, or by his contemporaries to him.

These archival sources were never printed and are in connection with Albert Apponyi. For historians most of these are unknown; no one has ever referred to these before, not even processed them. The only exceptions are the letters written by Apponyi to Sándor Károlyi and Count Aurél Dessewffy—these were previously used by Tibor Hajdu's *Biography of Mihály Károlyi* and in one specific chapter of András Vári's book *Lords and Agri-Culturals*.

The first 125 letters in the appendix are the ones that were written by Apponyi to approximately sixty different people; the other 28 letters were addressed to him by twenty different people. Addresses and authors are presented in first alphabetical then chronological order, with contemporary orthography indicated. The space of illegible words are marked with dots in brackets.

The appendix was established by serial numbers, not by page numbers.

IV. Content and results

My doctoral thesis consists of several thematic parts. When comparing these with regard of their extent and content, the difference is based on the aspect and sources of the topic. For example, Apponyi's ecclesiastic and educational politics require a more detailed investigation since he practiced these as an oppositional politician of Ecclesiastic and Public Education secretary for decades—as a result of his work, he enriched the Hungarian corpus juris with several ecclesiastic and educational orders which thus formed a significant part of Hungarian educational and ecclesiastic history. However, we cannot define Apponyi's relationship toward his bills whether they were carried out or not—concerning these circumstances, there was a need for more antecedents and a more subtle representation of context.

The first big thematic unit/chapter falls into three parts. The first outlines the impressions and motivations that defined Apponyi's internal affairs and career in the dualism

era and which also determined my topic choice. This sub-chapter also represents a selection for all the topics that I would later use in my dissertation (e.g. topics like thought-narrative, etc). The second—historiographer—unit presents the works and theses of historians and other experts of specific fields that dealt with Apponyi's career and its specific stages from the 1940s with one goal, so that other people can recognize his works and shape a picture of his personality.

However, the historical picture does not constitute a whole—it is very diverse and provides a wide perspective of Apponyi. It is because most authors did not study his career as a whole, but only stages and periods of his life. Gyula Szekfű scrutinized his weaknesses and issues with the development of political conservatism, and he also criticized his role in deepening the line of fracture in constitutional law—twenty years later in a different social and political system István Dolmányos creates an Apponyi-image from the perspective of the laws of elementary schools. Tibor Hajdu from the 1970s represents him as an inconsistent, idealistic, self-liar politician; from the 1980s it is philosopher Endre Kiss who—by examining his written peaces and speeches—establishes Apponyi as a person who hides the fundamental characteristics of his ideas; a person who does not want to reveal the crucial points of his theses. Tibor Glant on the other hand goes the other way around: he depicts Apponyi as a politician who pursued a serious propaganda regarding the Austro-Hungarian Monarch in the United States of America during the first world war, a propaganda that—concerning its magnitude of success—not even the main characters of the central powers were able to establish.

During and after the years of millennia Apponyi was a central figure of historians (Ablonczy, Gulyás, Romsics) that dealt with the Trianon-issue. Historians agree upon the fact that Apponyi's speech that was given on January 16th influenced the British and Italian leaders of the Entente Cordiale—his argumentation was that several million Hungarian people should not be under the domination of foreign countries dictated by terms of the winner countries. During the upcoming months of the peace treaty British and Italian politicians took into consideration Apponyi's speech, unfortunately without any success—French diplomatic leaders turned a deaf ear to Hungary's conception of boundary changes. That Apponyi's chairmanship in the peace treaty (from Hungary's side) was not successful was not considered his responsibility since the peace treaty between the Entente Cordiale and Austria & Germany had already been signed—Hungary was simply not represented in these negotiations properly.

In parallel with Trianon, Apponyi was regarded by educational researchers (e.g. Felkai, Mann) as a secretary of religion and public education during the age of dualism. In his descriptive papers they depicted how specific secretaries' laws built on one another and maintained a relation to nationalities. During millennia, historians (Csapó, Kardos, Tőkéczi, Zeidler) dealt with Apponyi's career on a schematic level in several studies, short articles, and books on political biographies. In these opuses he is regarded as a talented, multilingual speaker who—in order to prevail on a political level—crosses political communities, introduces the educational laws of 1907 and represents Hungary at the post-war peace treaties. Among these studies, Zeidler's paper is outstanding in a way that it reveals the count's activity in people's alliance; Kardos' *Legitimism* is also important because it explores Apponyi's life during the Horthy-era by exceeding the title's suggested boundaries.

In the second big thematic unit called *Origin and personal life* I present the rise of the nagyapponyi Apponyi family into aristocracy and their aulich-habsburgian commitment. It becomes clear that the protagonist of my dissertation was the only member of the family that broke with the traditions of the court during the 19th century. When establishing a complex portrait of a politician it is important to draw attention to private sphere—personal socialization influences the person's own political culture and attitude—thus the reader will become acquainted with Apponyi's hobbies (e.g. music, journeys, multilingual skills), love and married life, moreover, his continuous state of his lands' fortune. In the name of political predominance the count did not hesitate to sacrifice great parts of his lands. It shows the sacrifices of the opposition side when it came down to political prosperity and party organization in a strict suffrage-based system during the age of dualism.

With two short interruptions, Apponyi spent sixty years in the Hungarian House of Representative's Diet. Although he started off as a conservative Catholic but becoming a member of a union with the liberal '67 governing party, he accepted the compromise with the Habsburgs in the beginning. After becoming an opposition politician and thus being not able to establish a hegemony with liberalism, he committed himself to the criticism of the Compromise of 1867—as a result, he started to support the anti-system '48 movement. It is important to mention that his cannot be understood as a solid political stand. His long journey was paved by the limitations of the contemporary party system that consumed his fortune; the lack of alternatives; the temporary compromises and the flaws of the system established by Kálmán Tisza. After Trianon, the state of internal affairs did not change for him remarkably. Following the first world war he practiced politics as a legitimate oppositionist expelled to the

verge of political life as a result of prime minister István Bethlen's cunning tactics—he did so by becoming a cultic figure (regarded as the "lawyer of the nation").

Apponyi's relationship to social policy is unwrapped in three chapters. Although he joined the agrarian movement at the beginning of the 1880s, by the end of the decade he moved away from it. He realized that agrarian issues are not part of the political sphere where he might achieve success in the field of established political party system (or perhaps organizing an agrarian party); it was not enough to talk about the issues on a daily basis in order to win elections. Thus, while abandoning Sándor Károlyi agrarian leader's organizing activity but maintaining his friendship with him at the same time (Apponyi was dependent on Károlyi materially), he moderately supported his campaign from the 1890s. From the 1880s he spoke several times regarding questions on social politics. He supported the idea of free labor day on Sundays, the protection of mother and child, the establishment of social insurance, and the nursing of disabled soldiers. Although he described himself as one who affiliates the achievements of the Bismarckian Germany's welfare politics, it is not true. His contemporaries and even the government tried to copy and paste several aspects of the German model—Apponyi tried to embark on a mission to help these things come true till a certain degree, he did not have an own personal welfare politics concept. It was the Catholic Church's influence that made him do charity work. He contributed to the establishment and guidance of several associations that aimed at healthcare, the provision of poor, and the suppress of child-deaths (he was a member of the presidency of *St. Vince of Paula Club*, the *Polyclinic Club of Budapest*, the leader of the *National Stefánia Union*, and member of the *Hungarian Red Cross*).

In several chapters I present the profound relationship that came to be in decades between Apponyi and the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church and society. The count shouldered a leading role in the Catholic society (St. István Company); as a young man he encouraged the need of the current government's act to transmit fund money to the church; as a secretary of religion and public education he undertook the support of organizing Catholic congress in order to strengthen his church, paraphrase its independence legally, support the state of lower priesthood with laws. In conclusion, he also managed to demolish ecclesiastic feudal taxes like pair-rent. During the Károlyi-era and the Soviet Republic he struggled to protect his church's interests.

As a secretary of religion and public education he was immensely active in the field of public education, although he did not prepare to lead this ministry. There were important laws

like XXVI. and XXVII. of 1907: establishing the salaries of national elementary school teachers and the supervision local state schools, or the legal relationship of non-state schools and the salaries of communal and ecclesiastic schoolteachers; the XLVI. law of 1908: making elementary state education free; the language enactment of 1908 for the Hungarian language's spreading in order to assimilate nationalities faster. In the background the coalition's compromise mattered: they secretly renounced the implementation of real programs in front of József Ferenc, thus they tried to achieve something on a national front. However, as a result of the failure of the elementary school law of 1879 and the revelation of the necessity of participation in education also mattered. They wanted to diminish illiteracy and the lack of schools/classrooms/teachers by establishing a unified educational system that would be free for everyone. Positive features were the settlement of teacher salaries, free education, and the modernization of technical conditions; however, they made it impossible to acquire an advanced knowledge of Hungarian by punishing those who failed to come about. The disciplinary affairs that were the result of such endeavors and the closing of schools just worsened the conflict of nationalities.

In two smaller chapters I examine the background and political-social reasons of the relationship between Apponyi and the constituency of Jászberény that lasted for fifty years (1881-1933). I will look at the process, how it changed throughout the years, why could it happen that Apponyi had literally had no challenger, and finally, I will examine his personal affection and cult. Following the events of Trianon, Apponyi had established his personal national cult in relation with revisionism—this context of a trauma that lead to the detachment of territories made ground for the rise of a heroic figure, whose revisionist ideas were followed by many.

V. Summary

Count Alber Apponyi's political career during the age of dualism might be the most interesting of all. His families' aulich political traditions and studies prompted him to be a social figure. Unfortunately, his name did not bring him too much recognition in politics and he also had to face challenges when he pursued conservative ideas. As an oppositionist of Kálmány Tisza's '67 liberalism, he could not establish a real alternative political concept. Instead, by the end of the 1880s he decided to consider the criticism of the Compromise of 1867 as a crucial part of his politics. He could not win the support of the monarch that kept to

the basics of 1867; as a result, his predominance was quite limited. At the turn of the century, his party merged with the Liberal party knowing that the program of public law meant a ticking bomb in the governing party—this led to Apponyi abandoning first the presidential chair of the House of Representatives then later his departure from the Liberal Party as well.

Soon he found himself in a paradox situation again: between 1906 and 1910 he—as a secretary of religion and public education in a governing coalition mostly led by '48 people—intended to not execute the original '48 program. In this case it was his ministry's job to modernize the elementary school system and strengthen the assimilation of nationalities; unfortunately, instead of positive results it all led to the broadening of already existing conflicts between Hungarians and nationalities. Apponyi's first '67 then '48 ideas and the tension amplified by Lex Apponyi all weakened the Austro-Hungarian Monarch and the cohesive forces converging the historical Hungary in it. After the disintegration of the Hungarian State of St. Stephen the Monarch encouraged such ideas that were not real objects in the contemporary European and internal Hungarian affairs. As a result of the peace treaties of Paris, Apponyi could continue his political career as a national heroic figure as an outcome of a national cult.

By revealing his sixty-one year long parliamentary career that was not known before us earlier; we can get a closer look at the cogitation of the age of dualism and the Horthy-era; the party system; the agrarian, social, educational, and ecclesiastic background of the era; and finally, we can establish a more subtle picture of these two historical periods.

VI. Acknowledgments

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I am grateful for ELTE's program called *Doctoral School of New and Contemporary Hungarian Doctoral History*, that accommodated me and provided a background for the backbone of my research. The last months of my dissertation I spent at VERITAS' *Historical Investigation Institute of the Age of Dualism*, where I typed the last part of my paper among colleagues of friendly tone and atmosphere. Beyond András Gergely, people like Kálmán Kovács, Dávid Ligeti, Ádám Schwarczwölder, and the leader of the *Research group of the Horthy-era* Gábor Ujváry also helped me finish my thesis. With Róbert Szabó—historian researcher of the *Hungarian Academy of Sciences*—we visited count István Pálffy (Apponyi's grandchild) in his home in June 12, 2012. I am forever grateful for their friendly conversation.

I would like to thank for all the fellow-workers of the archives and libraries that actively contributed to the exposure of my sources. I am highlighting the colleagues of the archives of the *Hungarian National Archive*, the *Library and Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, and the *National Széchenyi Library*. I would like to praise Zsolt Dubniczky—colleague of the *Gyula Szekfű Historian Library* at ELTE BTK—who willingly granted me his collection of Albert Apponyi's memorandums and the volumes of his speeches.

During the research process I managed to go to Éberhard and Jászberény, two settlements whose history is strongly tied to Apponyi's memento. I send my gratitude to the deputy mayor of Slovakian town Éberhard László Brenner, the municipal representative Edit Valacsay and her family, and to the leader of the Christian Intelligentsia League of Jászberény, Györgyné Suba; these people granted me their most humble welcome and aid.

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