

Eötvös Loránd University
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Ph.D thesis (abstract of the thesis)

Paár Ádám Ferenc

Social historical background of Parliament elections in Győr-Moson
counties and Győr city between 1922 and 1947

Doctoral School of History

Dr. Erdődy Gábor DSc, az MTA doktora, tanszékvezető, egyetemi tanár

Social and Economic History Doctoral Program

Dr. Kövér György CSc, az MTA doktora, egyetemi tanár

A bizottság tagjai és tudományos fokozatuk

A bizottság elnöke: Dr. Izsák Lajos DSc, professor emeritus
Felkért bírálók: Dr. Sipos Balázs PhD, egyetemi adjunktus
Dr. Bódy Zsombor PhD, egyetemi docens
Titkár: Dr. Varga Zsuzsanna Csc, habil. egy. docens
Tagok: Dr. habil. Hubai László Csc, főiskolai tanár
Dr. Vida István (póttag),
Dr. Szakál Gyula (póttag)

Dr. Gyáni Gábor CMHAS, egyetemi tanár

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1. The topic of my thesis

Recently there has been renewed interest in the party and election history of the Horthy era and the period between 1945 and 1948. I believe that the elections of this time presents opportunity for the research of the character of political system, the relations and embedding in society of parties. On the occasion of the election – at least in democratic systems – the result of parties and their candidates indicate the measures of their embedding in society, financial and constitutional capacities, as well as, the popularity of their programs.

However, the output of election might be misrepresented by obstacles to safety, as this happened in the greatest part of Hungarian parliamentarism, so in the Horthy-period and between 1945 and 1948. Furthermore, not only election system, but party system also misrepresent: In the Horthy-era the party structure was „closed to left” (by expelling the Communist Party that stood to left from social democracy), between 1945 and 1947 (by expelling the earlier government party, which was dissolved, as well as the christian socialism, besides the extreme right parties), while the attitudes of significant part of individuals remained stable under on changing system-level.

As László Hubai drafted, every electional process must comply with the two fundamental requirements. The elections must meet with principle of foundation of stable government (that is to say that the election results in the governing majority in every circumstances) and principle of proportionality (namely the result must reflect the ideological-political structure). Since the beginning of dualism (1867) the last principle has been subordinated to previous principle by government in power, namely it has been given to preference to first principle – in order to the government had avoided the public law conflicts and had maintained the social status quo. All this reacted on party system. Until 1944 a prevailing „mammoth party” had a power, and small parties were filled with the opposition end of the party system (at least on the state level).

The result of national assembly election could represent authentically the party preferences, after all, this election was put on under 1945/VIII. law, that had declared the universal suffrage and secret ballot, abolished every former quota (so-called „census”) – although, had announced the national census, which causes underprivileged situation for the German minority population –, and the rate of voters was high without precedent in Hungarian election history (92% of voters). The laws in force were commensurable with

Western European election laws, with the exception of quota of national minority. Although the party system closed for right-wing parties, the representation of political preferences and attitudes were misrepresented. The earlier national conservative, christian socialist and extreme right-wing party families had collapsed, had come to the end, that's part of the changing of party structure: the Civil Democratic Party (Polgári Demokrata Párt) and the Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (Független Kisgazda-, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt) became the „right-wing that functioning by legal means”. The profile of Smallholders Party had been changed by flowing in of anti-Communist or anti-Leftist masses, the party became the collection party from a social point of view. The new election law, which was written for the election in 1947, increase the severity of conditions of active election law, in the interest of parties of coalition, especially Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt) and allies, so this election law was equivalent to standing back compared to election law in 1945.

Besides quotas, the different political systems resorted to other manners for the assuring of governing stability, so the assuring of that oppositon will remain in fragmentedated situtation. These manners were open eelction in personal constituencies in the most elections in Horthy-regime, system of nomination forms, the gerrymandering, restriction of propaganda of opposition parties, and the last, the „harder” manners, as the crossing or dispersal of meetings of opposition parties by force. The government in power depended on the machinery of local government, the elite of local society, as well as, the official local (communal, city) press that may represent its program. Although the quotas were lost in 1945, there were the abuse of authority in the election in 1947: in addition to the mentioned restrictions of election law, this was the omission of half million voter citizen from the register, or the fraud by extracts of register („kékcédula”).

The tendency of foundation of parties on regional and local level turned away from the party system on countrywide level: such cleavages, which are not relevant on countrywide level, are relevant on local level. In other words, according to my thesis, there are opportunity for turning away from the countrywide party system in circumstances of disadvantageous party system. The example was Győr municipal town, where their government party in Horthy-era, was weak in itself, and the city party politics formed along the Social Democrat and Christian Democrat axle, from sociological and party organization causes from the economic function of the city, as well as the proportional, list and secret election.

Accordingly, the second constituency of Győr was the one of best constituency of Hungarian Social Democrat Party. The North-western region was the hinterland of Christian Socialism, where Christian Socialist candidate was elected in the first constituency of Győr city, and in constituencies of Öttevény and Halászi in the period of 1922-1931.

We may perceive that the election system didn't exist in itself: the structure of party system and election system reacted on each other. In my thesis I make an attempt to examine the election- and party history in Horthy-era and in 1945-1948 period on „mezo-level” between the individual and countrywide level. I have my goal that I present whether how an economic and social structure of a chosen, very mixed region, its cleavages influenced the party foundation of this region. Agreeing with Zsombor Bódy, I think that the pre-1945 society has requirement that is suitable for parliamentarism: the party foundation went along the cleavages of Hungarian society.

The character of topic of thesis is political social historical. The political social history take up position in the border of two disciplines, the social and political history. For a long time the home history, especially political history had been goal that put into practice method and research results of other disciplines. In thesis I try how the private ways of political history and political science. I think that the integration of two disciplines by election and party history. In theses I try to put into practice this goal.

2. Conceptual framework

Firstly, I must discuss the problem of space and time. The question why I examine the party foundation in this space and in this time. The choice of this space is explained that I can embed the election and party history in Horthy-era, and between 1945 and 1947 in social and economic circumstances of an exceptionally mixed region. Temporarily united on the view of public administration was name of those counties, which was carved up by Trianon Peace Treaty, and these counties were united for security reasons in accordance with the Law of 1923/XXXV. So Moson, Pozsony and Győr counties were united, which were previously autonomous.

Specifically I direct my attention to the counties of Győr and Moson, as although two local authorities have more common characteristics (intensive relations with Western markets, relative high density of population that was the motor of emigration, emission of population in counties, high rate of literacy that was higher than the average of Hungary), however these

counties were different from each other on other spaces. In Győr county only two villages (Gyórsövényháza, Győszentiván) have national minority population (in previous German, in latter Croatian ethnic residents), while the Moson county was „the most Germanest” county; the county was the only one where the German ethnic inhabitants were the absolute majority of the population in 19th century. Besides Győr, Moson and Pozsony counties situated near three industrial centres: city of Győr, as well as, towns of Moson and Magyaróvár were islands of industrialization in the middle of the „sea of agrarian society”. In consequence of the Treaty of Trianon, Győr was the second significant industrial centre (after Budapest) where numerous workers concentrated.

In my thesis in this space the Lipset-Rokkan-style cleavages went by characteristics of given local authorities. The cleavage theory of American Seymour Martin Lipset and Norwegian Stein Rokkan plays a significant role in political sociology. The political scientists traced the party foundation back to four cleavages, which had rooted in the duplicated (partly national, partly economic) revolutions in 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. The foundation of national state went with the presence of centre-periphery and church-state cleavages, while with the industrial revolution the conflict between industry and agriculture and between employers and employees became the striking.

I apply the Lipset-Rokkan cleavages to relations of a given region. First of all, there was a centre-periphery cleavage, which was coloured by national colour, and this was long-lasting enough, and in practice this finished in 1946. Basically, the national conflict was the Hungarian or Magyarized centres and the German countryside in Moson county. In Győr county where the national minority inhabitation was small, the national conflict troubled centre-periphery cleavage, as well as, the city-village conflict. A less virulent denominational cleavage was connected with the national conflict structure, because the settling, which begin in the second part of 1930-years, and continued after 1945 – in other circumstances – went with the breaking up of not only the German national minority, but of the Roman Catholic Church.

A part of cleavages remained in a different political systems. The social history of the beginning and the end of the Horthy era are not reflective of the political history of those same periods. The starting point (1922) is explained that this was the first election, which was taken in Hungary after the Treaty of Trianon, the final point (1947) is explained that the part of the historical specialized literature considered the turning-point of the election in 1947, and

following the winding up of the democratic trial, which was based on the coalition government, the multi-party system and parliamentarism became faster than before. Not only political historical, but social historical consideration also spoke in favour of borders of chosen era of 1922-1947. By 1947 the transformation of society between the two World Wars finished: in the consequence of agrarian reform the small hold became dominant (1945), there was nationalization in industry (1947), as well as, the deportation of the German national minority population (1945-47); the exchanging of inhabitants created a new situation in Moson, in not only national, but also in political relation, the agrarian reform, which also affected the Catholic Church, weaken the position of the Catholic Church that was dominant in Győr and Moson counties. All these national and social changes reconstructed the society after the war.

In thesis, springing from the topic, the approaches of different disciplines and sub-disciplines must be integrated: besides history, I relied upon on the concepts and points of view of political science, as well as, its sub-field, the political sociology and the electoral geography. The electoral geography meant practical manner in first phase, first with the „salamanders” of Elbridge Gerry. The governor of Massachusetts, later the vice-president of the USA tried to extend the prospects of victory of own party by the re-drawing of the constituencies. The gerrymandering phrase comes from his name and the salamander word, referring to the shape of the constituencies. The humorous phrase became the accepted concept of politology and election research.

At the end of 19. century André Siegfried French geographer and political writer used first the election geography expression, who created the conceptual system and methodology of electoral geography by using the knowledge of political history of Western France, sketching of its three subregion (Normandy, the Inside West, Lower Brittany), exploration of economic geographical, sociological actors, which is behind the choice of political values, and condensing of these concepts in the word of „tempéraments”, that is temperament (the concept of attitude give the meaning of this word). Siegfried distinguished the votes for „a person” from the votes for „a flag”: as well as, he disclosed that the locally popular personality has pulling force, independent from the supporting of his party.

Rudolf Heberle German sociologist contributed to the conceptual clearing up of election geography by the creation of political ecology and the working up of methodology. In Hungary the electoral geography appeared in the historical science, through the studies of

György Borsányi, Gyögy Ránki and Mihály Szécsényi, and due to Zoltán Hajdú, András Horváth J., Hubai László, Károly Ignác, Zoltán Paksy, Dániel Szabó és György Wiener.

In my opinion, temporary unification of the counties on the view of public administration and Győr city meant the level where my examination has significance. The micro-level, village-level examination is impossible because of the great number of settlements, scattering and partly scant electoral minutes. as well as, the risk that is in ecological fallacy. The electoral minutes were interesting because of the notes to the political culture, the civic awareness or their lack of, not because of numerical datas (for example, in minutes of refused people, why voter was refused by local authorities). Instead of voters as individuals I directed my attention to county-level examination of parties and cleavages.

I investigated in which form the Lipset-Rokkan-style cleavages appear in temporarily united counties on the view of public administration and city of Győr, however, I didn't examine the social differences, employer-employee and large estate-smallholding conflicts. I am inquisitive to those conflicts, which have local colour. I found six cleavages, where there are conflicts. These the Catholic-Protestant conflict, the conflict of denomination and the left-wing parties and their supporters, conflict of Jewish and Christian inhabitants (in city of Győr), national conflict – mainly in Hungarian-German relations –, conflicts of settlers and inhabitants in Moson county, which is linked with the national conflict, and finally, administrative conflict between Moson and Magyaróvár in the space of planned unification of towns. After I had examined these conflicts, and the interests and motivations behind these conflicts, I drew up the pattern of political region.

In thesis, firstly, I drew up the theoretical and scientific historical basis of election research. In this chapter I tried to clear up concepts and theories, which connected with electoral behaviour. The showing of profiles of parties and party families in the 1922-1947 period followed the first chapter, with respect to question: which sociological groups stood behind one or other parties and party families, and what kind of pattern of party politics might be shown in different parts of the country. Taking the diversity on the base of constitutional characteristics of parties in Hungary, there was a necessity for the drawing up of the evolution curve of the party types in the theoretical introduction. In political science the common practice is that parties are classified to so-called party families on the basis of ideological content or constitutional characteristics. The typology of Klaus Beyme can not be applied to Hungarian party systems, because the parties were founded and worked in other social and

public law environment than in Western Europe. There is the advantage of classification on the basis of party families that this makes the parties comparable to each other, independent from regions and political systems.

The third chapter is about the election systems, electoral laws and the obstacles to safety that was embedded in the electoral law. From the fourth chapter I did research on „mezo-level”, and I exclusively direct my attention to temporary united Győr-Moson-Pozsony Counties on the view of public administration and Győr city. I placed the region in the economic geographical, ethnic, denominational and political map. The fifth chapter analyses these cleavages that cut the society of the region, and consequently could create the parties. In the sixth chapter I showed the social, ethnic and denominational background behind candidates, and I made an attempt at determining, which personal character features helped or hindered the success of candidates. Finally, the seventh chapter showed the history of single elections by collection of information from previous chapter, on base of achives and press sources.

3. Research results

I concluded that the party system of the temporarily unified counties, after (since 1945) Győr-Moson county was not simply a reflection of a nationwide party system, but it possessed an autonomous profile, as the consequence of regional traditions and cleavages of regional society. This showed itself in that the hegemony of Christian Socialist and Social Democrat political camps characterized the political life of Győr city. This was due to several factors. (In one respect, in Győr – contrast with individual constituencies – there was the secret and list election, which favored party preferences than opened election that characterized the individual constituencies in most part of Horthy-era.)

On the other hand, the industrial character of Győr gave advantage for Christian Socialist and Social Democrat parties, which tend to represent the working class. The government party and the Christian Socialist party formed an alliance. In Győr the position of Liberal party was traditionally weak, and in elections the liberal votes were divided between the Right (the Alliance of the Christian Socialist and the government party) and the social democracy. Until 1939 Győr was characterized by political two-faced character: the first constituency (basically, the city centre) was characterized by the dominancy of the Christian Socialist party; the second constituency, which included the biggest part of the city, was the

best constituency of the social democracy: between 1922-1939 this constituency sent Social Democrat candidates to the parliament.

While the city of Győr was characterized by polarity along the Christian Socialist-Social Democrat axis, the area of Győr county and earlier Moson county was counted as the stable hinterland of the government party in power. Beside the open election and the interpenetration with the élite of the region, the economic and social historical factions played an important role. The Treaty of Trianon created an unmaintainable relationship between the North-Western region and Austria, which had peacefully co-existed for centuries. Moson lost the market of milk and hay. The inhabitants of the peripheral region had an interest in the success of the revision. In the frontier-liner constituencies, in Mosonszentjános, Rajka and Halászi in Szigetköz inhabitants were motivated to support the government party. In this problem there was not a difference between Hungarian and German inhabitants. Besides in Győr county and in Szigetköz Christian Socialism was also influential, which was surprising, given the educational and socializational role of the Catholic Church.

After all, Győr and the earlier Moson county were characterized by change, in contrast to the considerable stability of Győr city. While the social democracy and the liberal parties were weak and unorganized, in the 1920's and the beginning of 1930's the Christian Socialist party was the strongest rival for the government party. In Győr and earlier Moson counties in the 1930's the protest feelings articulated by the supporting of FKGP, since the mid-1930's the supporting of the United Hungarian National Socialist Party (Egyesült Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Párt) under the leadership of Count Fidél Pálffy. Both of the parties depended on popular personalities of the local societies. However, in Győr one of tendencies wasn't dominant, the FKGP and the EMNSZP were agrarian-based parties. So I concluded that voters of the earlier National Conservative, as well as, Christian Socialist party families stood behind the increase of FKGP in Győr in 1945 (while before 1945 the FKGP was insignificant, in 1945 the party won 35,86% that didn't referred to its real popularity).

The temporarily united Győr-Moson-Pozsony Counties and Győr city fit in a specifically political region; the character features of this region are the existence of National Conservative and Christian Socialist traditions across different periods and political systems, which has reflection in the results of the government party and the Christian Economic and Socialist Party (Keresztény Gazdasági és Szociális Párt) in Horthy-era, later in the result of

FKGP in the election of 1945, and in the result of Democratic People's Party (Demokrata Néppárt) in the election of 1947.

Similarly, a striking feature is the weakness of liberal parties in this region. In general, it was characteristic that the centre and the Left of this period – the liberal and social democrat parties – were successful in Győr city, however, their positions were weak in the rural hinterland, while the government party might win in the rural areas, on the whole, Christian Socialism was balanced between the city and the countryside. 1944-45 brought drastic change in the party politics of this region. The earlier National Conservative, Christian Socialist party families collapsed, however, this did not mean the party attitudes changed. In 1945 the FKGP and in 1947 the DNP attracted the previous voter masses of national conservative and christian socialist party families. In 1947 DNP took the FKGP's places, because the FKGP had collapsed. Political attitudes did not disappear, but converted to a new party system that was not founded after 1945.

I examined which factors helped the situation of the candidates. I explored the professions, national and denominational positions of candidates, and I took deep-drilled, in order to prove that the factor of personality, embedding of local societies and network of personal relations were important points of view in the selection of candidates: those candidates who had real chances of being voted out had such character features, which reflected the structure of the society of the region. I tried to support – based on an idea of Siegfried – the „for-flags” and „for-person” votes did not coincide with each other, that is to say that victory of a given person was not equivalent to the high degree of support of the given political line: the embedding of given personality and network of personal relations increased the chance of political success, not only in personal constituencies, but also in list constituencies of Győr city.

I draw a few conclusions from the elite research, how the local colour influenced the achievement of candidates. Conspicuous, however, not surprising is the high rate of Roman Catholic priests among candidates in the Horthy-era. From those, who gained seats, three from the government party, two priest-member of parliament were christian socialist, one priest was a non-party member candidate.

This is explained, because the Roman Catholic Church traditionally had the influence since the Counter-Reformation, and the Roman Catholic priests played a great part in the public life of the north-western region. It happened that two priests stood for Parliament

election against each other: in 1922 in constituency of Halászi Vince Németh, Magyaróvár's parson represented the government party, János Fórika, Mosondarnó's parson was non-party member. After 1945 priests came out from the group of candidates, although the representations of peasants and workers increased: the former formed 24% of the elected candidates, the others formed 33% of candidates. The division of candidates behind peasant background changed: in the Horthy-era three candidates behind peasant background were elected, and from them two persons represented the wealthy peasantry. After 1945 the elected candidates behind peasant background all without exception represented the small and middle peasant class from the sociological points of view. In the Horthy-era workers stood for the Parliament election only in Győr city, and they were nominated exclusively by MSZDP in Horthy-era.

The candidates of German background all without exception stood for Parliament election in the areas of Moson in temporarily united Győr-Moson-Pozsony Counties. In the Horthy-era, the candidates of German ethnic minority background of the government party were at least 7 candidates, of FKGP there were 3 candidates, from both sides, the 50% of candidates (the party relations were less significant than the popularity: for example, Lénárd Lang stood for Parliament election as non-party man, and later he joined to FKGP). Ethnic Germans were the quarter (21%) of elected candidates.

However, the EMNSZP under the leading of Pálffy entered only such candidates of German ethnicity, which refutes the myth that national socialists tend to win the support of the German ethnic minority. On 2th of July 1936 the Secretariat of MSZDP sent a questionnaire, in which the Secretariat asked the social democrat party organizations to survey the forces and support of the National Socialist, Arrow-cross parties. The results indicated that the Social Democrat reports refute the supposition that the German ethnic residents formed the voter mass of Pálffy's party, and they called the attention to the social program and personal personality of Pálffy.

From the report and election results it turned out that the extreme right-wing party deepened its support in not only the areas of Moson, in which inhabitants were German ethnic, but in Magyaróvár and in rural population of Hungarian ethnic-dominated Győr county. The Social Democrat resources emphasized that Pálffy's party was stronger especially in villages, but weaker in Győr city (their statement is not surprising, because in the second

industrial centre the Social Democrat-Christian Socialist political structure „covered the market”, and this was not favourable to the creation of new mass movement.

That is to say that there was not a correlation between the power of National Socialist line and the rates of national minority ethnic residents. It turned out from the characteristics of the candidates that this reflected the structure of the given political local society, and this is a key factor in successes and failures. In the selection of candidates played the part, whether the characters of personalities squared with values of voters and ethnic and denominational pattern in regional and local societies.

4. Publication about topic of the thesis

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