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Theses of the PhD dissertation

**Mass movements in Budapest during the first  
decades of Austro-Hungary**

**1873-1903**

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## **I. Aim of the research**

The latter half of the 19th century is primarily well-known for the big parliamentary reforms and the radical changes that occurred during the evolution of most of the nations. However, not only traditional political history of both global and local political events, but the investigation of minor events and the use of different perspectives can as well contribute to our perception and knowledge of history as a whole. To do so, several disciplines had been developed within history, such as social, economical or cultural history. These disciplines study different components of history, helping us in reconstructing the past, the people and their mentality.

We ourselves in our dissertation have tried to approach history from one particular perspective, so to come to know the political culture, the political preferences and even the everyday lives of the people of Austro-Hungarian Budapest.

We were focusing on the first decades of Austro-Hungary: we tried to present the development in political activity and the political centralisation that took place in the capital, Budapest, by investigating the political behaviour of metropolitan social groups coming to significance in the meantime. We used the tools of other disciplines, like mental history, political sciences, legal history and even sociology as well. Our dissertation is different from traditional political history in the way that beside reconstructing the event, it makes an effort to take a look behind, and analyze the process that was taking place in society.

After 1867, people develop a demand to show themselves as active participants in political life by taking on the streets, public celebrations and even open protests or objections.

Our dissertation is dealing with the phenomena of 'collective violence': the first mass movements in Budapest, along with the reasons that had brought the people to the streets.

Our investigation is reduced to the time limits of 1873 and 1903. Budapest had been becoming undisputably the central city since

1873, the union of Buda and Pest. By 1903 the Hungarian parliamentary system had been facing a profound series of crises, the governing Szabadelvű Party was about to fail, and the movements of workers had started to escalate to a point, when political movements in general became more popular and usual. Consequently, the presentation of these movements would have exceeded the physical limits of the dissertation.

## **II. Research methodology and sources**

To investigate, we used the tools and methods of the sub-discipline 'political cultural research'. This means a new perspective, the synthesis and the analysis of the reciprocal effects of social and political history. According to András Cieger, political cultural researches are famous for penetrating into the larger institutional structures, and for examining the behaviour of different social groups and individuals, still considering the features and characteristics of the given political system and its institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The past decades in Hungary witnessed some political cultural studies, but mainly from the perspective of political theory, and analyzing the political culture of the elites, disregarding the mentality of the majority of people. Our dissertation is making an effort to make up this hole, and to show that ordinary people had as well the demand to shape politics.

Obviously, we could not present and reconstruct all the mass movements that took place during that time, but rather to give an overview by examples of movements of different social groups, and to make an attempt to analyze and interpret these very examples in several aspects. We chose our examples arbitrarily, still with the effort to present a representative one from all the different types. Our hands could not be tied, as – except for the short overview and study

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<sup>1</sup> About the western literature of political cultural research see: CIEGER, András: Magyarország politikai kultúrája a dualizmus időszakában. In.: *Múltunk*. XLV. évfolyam, 2000/3. p. 3.

published by Gábor Gyáni<sup>2</sup> – we know only three movements in Budapest of that time, which had already been analyzed by professional historians. Vilmos Heiszler dealt with the demonstrations relating to the Jansky-case in 1886,<sup>3</sup> on which we also did some research so to continue and try to add our own complements and results to his. We only mentioned the demonstrations of 1889 on the defence law as Dániel Szabó presented an excellent study covering these movements lately.<sup>4</sup> Though exceeding our time limit, we also have to cite Gábor Gyáni's study on the 'Bloody Thursday' of 1912 in his book on the social use of public spaces, published in 1999.<sup>5</sup>

The structure of our dissertation is mainly thematical. After the introduction in the second chapter we present the phenomenon of mass movements and clarify the notions that we use onwards. Following this and the sketch of an international comparison, we reviewed the legal history of the right of assembly in Austro-Hungary. The difficulty was that for this matter, we could only use two contemporary works,<sup>6</sup> together with János Páskándy's book published in 1932,<sup>7</sup> and a partial study from 1977 by Mihály T. Révész.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> GYÁNI, Gábor: Fővárosi zavargások a dualizmus évtizedeiben. In: *Rendi társadalom – polgári társadalom 3. Társadalmi konfliktusok. Salgótarján, 1989. június 15-18.* Ed.: Á. VARGA László. Salgótarján, Nógrád Megyei Levéltár, 1991. pp. 345-354. (GYÁNI 1991.)

<sup>3</sup> HEISZLER, Vilmos: A Jansky-ügy. In: *Skandalum. Magyar közéleti botrányok 1843-1991.* Ed.: GERŐ András. Gyula, T-Twins, 1993. pp. 76-91.

<sup>4</sup> SZABÓ, Dániel: A véderőtüntetések résztvevői. In: *Korall 17.* V. évfolyam, 2004. szeptember. pp. 43-60.

<sup>5</sup> GYÁNI, Gábor: *Az utca és a szalon. A társadalmi térhasználat Budapesten (1870-1940).* Budapest, Új Mandátum Kiadó, 1999. pp. 96-106.

<sup>6</sup> RÉNYI, József Dr.: *A gyülekezeti jog. Tanulmány a rendőri közigazgatás köréből.* Budapest, Lampel Róbert (Wodianer F. és fiai) cs. és kir. udv. Könyvkereskedése, 1900.; and RÉDEY, Miklós: *A magyar gyülekezeti jog gyakorlati kézikönyve.* Budapest, Országos Központi Községi Nyomda Részvény-Társaság, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> DR. PÁSKÁNDY János: *Egyesületi (egyesülési) és gyülekezési jogszabályok kézikönyve. A gyülekezeti jog gyakorlati kézikönyve.* Budapest, Egyesülési és Gyülekezési Jogszabályok Kézikönyvének Kiadóhivatala, 1932.

<sup>8</sup> RÉVÉSZ, T. Mihály: Adalékok a gyülekezési jog magyarországi fejlődéséhez. *Levéltári Szemle.* XXVII. évf. 1977/I. pp. 185-193.

Thus, we collected the primary sources relating to the regulation of the right of assembly.<sup>9</sup> During our research, counted 17 legal documents indicated, of which we managed to find the original texts in 15 cases. Four of the 17 are paragraphs from laws, and 11 are decrees.<sup>10</sup> Besides, in Austro-Hungary there had been two further law schemes in regard of the right of assembly (one in 1868, and one in 1893),<sup>11</sup> both of which we also tried to interpret in our dissertation.

Afterwards, we sketched the framework in which the different movements were taking place. Briefly, we presented Budapest's social strata and their internal conflicts. We reviewed the micro-worlds in which the different social groups had been living their everyday both separately and interactively, and finally, we tried to present the law enforcement of that age, their physical frameworks, distinctive style and characteristics.

In chapter four we focused on the movements of the workers, whose significance was ever-growing. After reviewing the framework of their political activity and their typical forms of action we presented two case-studies: the turmoils in Újpest in 1874 and the first public celebration of the Labour Day on May 1, 1890. In the first case we can witness a violent, non-ideological event carried out mainly by unemployed workers, while in the second case, we see a fully planned and – in its aims – politically established, peaceful and representative celebration, with the participation of 60 thousand Social-Democrat worker from the capital.

Chapter five is focusing on young graduate students. After reviewing their status and role in the capital as a social group, along with their political activity in general, we presented three series of events: their movements regarding the Russian-Turk conflict in 1876-77, the 'Hentzi-Jansky case', and the university 'cross-movement' of 1901.

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<sup>9</sup> We quote the whole texts attached to the back of our dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the decree of the Secretary of Home Affairs Kálmán Tisza of 1878 had been perished, but we managed to reconstruct its content by reviewing its parliamentary debate.

<sup>11</sup> The law scheme of 1893 had been perished as well.

The first case was a solidarity movement to the Turk 'friends' in particular, while in the second case the students express their indignation on the behavior of a military officer of the common army (which was escalating into bloody events later on). The third case is an isolated religious and yet political action carried out within the boundaries of the university building.

In chapter six we were investigating several other, non-typical movements. First we dealt with the Verhovay-demonstrations of 1880, which had kept the capital in excitement for a couple of weeks. After this, we studied the demonstrations carried out in consequence of the acquitment brought in the criminal suit of Tiszaeszlár. The next unit is determined by the case of the church reforms, and thus we examined the events that were taking place in the streets, more precisely the political behavior of both the supporters and the opposition. Finally, we tried to analyze the 50th anniversary of the March revolution and we investigate the celebration held on March 15th, 1898 from beneath.

As for the particular analysis, we had two options. The first one is anthropological. Protests are collective activities, public actions, which can be proactive and reactive. It is proactive when it's making efforts to reach a social-political goal, while it is reactive when it's starting spontaneously, responding to a particular case (to simplify: it's goal is to gain or refuse something). Another component of collectivity is the determination of the social groups that act as subjects (parties, trade unions, churches, associations etc.). Of course, the number of subjects can vary at once. One should always consider the place, the time, the duration and the nature of the protest. These movements can be addressed to the public, the civil society or the state itself (or, as in several cases, one particular social group). Besides, it is important to analyze the form of action, whether it's legal or illegal, violent or peaceful, mass or group or individual action, organized or spontaneous, intermediary or attractive or pressurizer. Finally, we

have to analyze the effect, whether the protest was successful (or resulted a change) or proved to be futile?<sup>12</sup>

The second perspective can be social history. This is only applicable when we acquired enough data regarding the event e. g. a list of the wounded, a list of the prisoners/captives etc. Based on the nature of data we may be able to group the participants by age, religion, occupation, residence, marital status etc. We were able to use such classification at the Verhovay-demonstrations of 1880 and the anti-semitic movements of 1883

Our sources used in the dissertation can be divided into four major types. Firstly, we have to mention the literature already published. Unfortunately, we lack the literature concerning the case studies, still we could utilize some in the general narrative parts for their merits in description and analysis.

The second group of our sources are the archival ones. Beside the parliamentary diaries and the ministerial protocols we mainly used the files of the Ministry of Home Affairs along with the police investigations and announcements.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the amount of archival sources relating to our topic is quite deficient due to the devastations occurred throughout the 20th century.

The third type of sources we used is the press. This proved to be the most extensive basis of our dissertation, and thus we put the emphasis on it. During the description and interpretation of events we attempted to cover the broadest range of press material to be as detached as one can be. We used the press material of the government party, the opposition, the workers and the church in each case, as well the popular periodicals. We also included poems published through the press in some of the cases to diversify the picture.

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<sup>12</sup> For the aspects used in our research see: SZABÓ, Máté: *Társadalmi mozgalmak és politikai tiltakozás – történeti és összehasonlító perspektívában*. Budapest, Rejtjel Kiadó, 2001. pp. 93-97.

<sup>13</sup> We used the archival sources of the Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest Főváros Levéltára, Budapesti Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem Levéltára, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Levéltára, and the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Plakát-és Kisnyomtatványtára.

Finally, the fourth group of our sources were personal diaries and reminiscences. Though detailed, these sources are to be used with critical approach, as they contain personal impressions and thus they can be imprecise or untrue.

### **III. Results**

Our research certainly couldn't be comprehensive as for the whole. Still, we believe that the nine events presented entitles us to draw some conclusions.

The two most important social components of the capital's mass movements during the period were the graduate students and the industrial workers. They were usually accompanied by the 'mob', which had been developed shortly due to urbanization.

Graduates students had been touched by major political events since the 1870s, and through their movements they expressed this strong emotional attitude. During 1876 and 1877 they reasonably sympathized with the Turks, and positioned themselves against the Russians. They raised their voices against the behavior of a general of the common army in 1886, and during 1900 and 1901 they expressed their strong religious (catholic) affection. Their activism can be measured by the fact, that many of them were active participants in the events that we classified as other movements (e. g. during the Verhovay-demonstrations, where a law graduate had been murdered, or the anti-semitic movements of 1883), though it wasn't them who led the way at these protests this time.

Industrial workers took the students' place in inducing movements in a large number since the turn of the century. Though chronologically the movements in Újpest of March, 1874 ranks first, this had been mainly a movement of unemployed workers, without any kind of organization or fundamental goals. Workers' movements became organized in 1890 at the first official Labor Day celebration, and they peaked just before World War I, with the 'Bloody Thursday'. Though we stopped our investigations in 1903, *nota bene*, that

industrial workers became very active politically in the first decade of the 20th century.<sup>14</sup>

The reasons and motives that brought people to the streets were very diverse and various, though they were somehow related to daily politics in each case. These movements mainly confronted with the state authorities that represented the legislative and executive power. These movements were catalysed by independence-seeker emotions and general discomfort.

In some cases movements targeted particular social (or religious) groups instead of the state. E. g. during the church reforms the main antagonistic parties were the liberals and the catholic masses, and in 1883 people unanimously turned against the jews.

The difference in social components determines that these movements have different content, choreography and nature as well. Young graduate students' movements were mostly related to natinalist-separatist ideas, and thus they ocured around the Múzeum körút and the University buliding. Workers seeked political and social rights, representation, thus their movements took place in the vicinity of or at the seat of the competent authorities. Besides, they had their annual oppportunity to expose their demands at the Labor Day holidays on May 1st.

The scale of collective actions presented in our dissertation is extensive. In 1874 in Újpest there was a typical worker demonstration taking place, while the young graduate students' movement in October, 1876 was more like a procession with some features of a demonstration too. In Januray, 1880 the Verhovay-demonstrations escalated into a series of turmoils, likewise the anti-semitic movements of 1883 and the Jansky-case of 1886. On May 1st, 1890, workeres held a representative celebration on the streets of Budapest

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<sup>14</sup> E. g. in 1904 and 1905 there were strike movements, and in December, 1905 a crowd besieged the editorial building of the *Budapesti Hirlap*. The electoral reform and the franchise evoked bloody protests in 1908, while in 1909 there were 16 injured at a demonstration convoked by the Social-Democratic Party against the parliamentary decree that had banned assembling in front of the Parliament. GYANI 1991. pp. 348-349.

and in the Városliget, and one can tell the same about the movements in 1894 on the church reforms (the catholics assembled in and around the Vigadó, while 1.5 months later the government sympathizers were assembling in the city, and then in the Városliget). On March 15th, 1898 the celebrations occurred throughout the whole capital, while in 1901 the graduate students' protest was limited to within the university.

Not only can we classify these movements based on the participants' social position, but we can group the nine presented movements into three categories according to their methods and process. We can group two graduate students' movements, the Russian-Turk conflict and the cross-movements together. In these cases we find the Egyetemi Kör as the organizer in the background, and the students wanted to express their sympathy to the Turks, and the Catholic Church with its believers in general.

In the second group we find the political movements evoked by May 1st, 1890, the church reforms and March 15th, 1898. All these events were series of representative large assemblies, and all of them was peaceful,<sup>15</sup> with effects on the countryside as well. Their choreography was very similar, and they were discussing daily political issues.

We grouped the violent movements together: the turmoils in Újpest in 1874, the Verhovay-demonstrations, the anti-semitic movements of 1883 and the Jansky-case in 1886. Their common feature was that there were many violent actions included. All four events had the same choreography, which can be drawn into a particular arc. People were assembling spontaneously by reacting to a particular event, and at first their movements were supported by the press and/or some MPs. Afterwards, the events became gradually more radical (except for the movements in 1883, all included murder),

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<sup>15</sup> There were minor conflicts during each of the three peaceful events, still there weren't many. On May 1st, 1890 there were minor conflicts around the mills at Ferencváros, in 1894 the students returning from the liberal assembly to the university found themselves engaged in a conflict with people from the streets, while in 1898 socialists provoked fight with policemen.

and thus supporters were backing out, which led the movements to an end.

It is also worth noticing, that despite the early and continuous existence of marginal groups in Budapest, the protest potential of the population was minimal. There were only one or two cases throughout the period, when these events were exciting the population longer. This can be explained by the fact, that there was no 'tradition of the crowd', it yet had to develop onwards.

Historians are to study the past. Studies are not to conclude direct lessons though. There are lessons yet to be learned from the past, but conclusions demand multiple analysis, consideration, caution and deliberation. We tried to contribute to get to know the everyday of Austro-Hungarian Budapest better, through the study of several events that preoccupied people in that time, and went into oblivion since.

## **IV. Studies published and presentations held in the topic**

### **Studies:**

1. A gyülekezési jog szabályozása a polgári Magyarországon (1848-1914). In: Valóság. L. évfolyam. 2007. Issue 5. pp. 48-57.
2. Tüntetéssorozat Budapesten 1880 januárjában. In: Valóság. L. évfolyam. 2007. Issue 9. pp. 101-110.
3. „Zsidókravall” Budapesten – az 1883-as antiszemita jellegű zavargássorozat a sajtó tükrében. In: Magyar Könyvszemle. CXXIV. évfolyam. 2009. Issue 1. pp. 66-82.
4. 8 órai munkaidő! 8 órai szórakozás! 8 órai alvás! – az első május elsejei munkásünnep Budapesten. In: KÚT. 2009/1. pp. 118-129.
5. Politikai tiltakozásból zavargássorozat – a Hentzi-Jansky ügy. In: KÚT – Gergely Jenő emlékszáma. 2010/2. 222-237. o.

### **Presentations:**

1. „A zendülő város” – antiszemita zavargássorozat Budapesten, 1883. In: A politika társadalomtörténete. A Hajnal István Kör konferenciája, Túrkeve, 2008. augusztus 29-30.
2. Az első május 1-i munkásünnepség Budapesten. In: Közép-Európa művelődése a 19. és 20. században. A nemzeti, nemzetiségi és társadalmi identitás jellemzői, meghatározói és különbségei. Az ELTE Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola Művelődéstörténeti Doktori Programjának konferenciája, Budapest, 2009. május 15.