

Eötvös Lorand University
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DOCTORAL THESIS

Theses

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THE HISTORY OF THE HUNGARIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
1918 – 1950

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I The topic of the research, the objectives of the thesis and processing resources

As a consequence of the Peace Treaty of Trianon, the new borders affected the boundaries of the dioceses. Marking of the borders of Czechoslovakia happened earlier than the alterations of diocesan boundaries. The Trnava Apostolic Administration founded in 1922, was set up to diocese in 1977.

As a result of World War I peace treaty, a part of Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, which was integrated into Czechoslovakia, became a minority from one day to another. The Catholic congregation got into minority position not on their own decision or own choice, but due to the new borders. Its history from the point of Hungarian Catholics from the beginning of the 20th can be divided into five periods: I The History of the North-Hungarian Roman Catholic church administration till 1918, II Under Czechoslovak supremacy: 28 October 1918- 1 November 1938, III Coming back: 2 November 1938 – 29 August 1944, IV Being deprived of rights: 29 August 1944- 25 October 1948, V Under Czechoslovak supremacy again: 25 October 1948- 14 June 1950.

The church history forms a part of the history of the Czechoslovak Hungarians, so therefore I consider it very important to deal with in details if we want to learn the relations of this part of history and interpret it objectively and impartially. In my dissertation I undertook mainly this task. A great help in my work was that I could do some research into this subject in the Vatican archive .

The aim of my dissertation is to give a short internal history of the Czechoslovak Hungarian Catholic Church from 1918 to 1950. In this area some research and excellent work has been done.

Some books may be known for the older generation, but a comprehensive work dealing with the history of church, which was my aim in this thesis, has not been done so far. That is why I consider an overall work from the periods of the first and second Czechoslovakia to be written.

In the first chapter I deal with the 20th century history of administration of the northern dioceses of the Hungarian Catholic Church. They were part of the Esztergom Archdiocese, then as a result of the political borders the dioceses became independent

and they created a new ecclesiastical province.

In consequence of the first and the second Vienna Award, the political borders changed once again, which had an effect on the life of the dioceses.

In the second chapter I would like to draw the attention on the issue of legal , sometimes of life insecurity, that the Slovak Hungarian Catholics had to be faced within the new borders. Their mission was the economic, religious and cultural self-organisation and creation of those conditions in which they were able to form their community. To these aims the church also contributed with its experience and faith in the supernatural.

They had no idea that coming back would last only for five years. It can be said proudly: these five years were the heroic epic of and faith and strength of the Hungarian common people, which is dealt in the third part. All social strata joined forces to create suitable organisational frames and fit in the universal Hungarians life. It was clear for our public, that it is necessary for them to form their own solidarity and self-defensive organs. The universal Hungarian organisational arch is divided into sections of political, economic, cultural, social and ecclesiastical life.

They all have their own history.

The fourth chapter discusses one of reappearing motifs in Czechoslovak political life, that is the problem of the Slovak episcopacy`s loyalty to the state. In 1947, when on the one side the social and economic conflicts intensify, on the other side the traditional Slovak – Czech discord caused problems for the chambers of the parliament and the coalition`s top body, the National Front, the Slovak Catholic leaders` analysis had a great impact. In the history of the Slovak political movements the issue of Catholic-stinged autonomy has always been placed into centre. This perception regarded mainly for the conditions of the independent Slovak Republic. It is unquestionable that in the formation and maintenance of the Slovak statehood, the leaders of the Slovak Catholic Church had their great share. The role of the Slovak prelaty in this issue attracted the sympathy of the Slovak people, while the followers of the Czechoslovak unity considered it as a treason. The question of political affiliation of the Slovak hierarchy in the worsening of the constitutional disputes got particular significance . In 1947 Josef Berán, archbishop of Prague met with Slovak journalists on an audience , and with his typical indiscretion he reveals the Slovak prelaty`s political

unreliability. After that the Slovak clergy held a limited meeting in Trnava where they discussed the situation after Beran's statements, and consulted some preventive measures in case Beran would replace the Slovak episcopacy.

The struggle with leaders of the Catholic church forms a separate part of the fight against the class enemy, which is dealt with in the fifth chapter. It seemed in 1948, that there would not be any problem to come to an agreement with the Catholic church. But the leaders of the Czechoslovak state underestimated this when the negotiations started between the state and the church. During the negotiations they almost came to an agreement, the state promised to fulfil the church's requests on condition that Josef Beran archbishop of Prague and the bishops declare the recognition of people's democracy.

In the meantime, Josef Karol Matocha, archbishop of Olomouc, arrived home from Rome with very strict directions: there must not be an agreement with the Czechoslovak state power. Right after that on the order of the Vatican the higher clergy started attack and launched a campaign of slander both at home and abroad against the Czechoslovak people's democracy with the slogan that there is not freedom of religion and the church is being pursued in Czechoslovakia.

In my work I examine the history of the church from inside as a participant.

In this regard, unfortunately, there is little technical literature. The Hungarian Catholic press history in Slovakia is not integrated in the syllabuses of universities, its search has yet to be done, and it is similar to the archive materials, too. My work is divided into five chapters. Each chapter starts with introduction, and there is summary at the end of each chapter. There is appendix at the end of the work.

In my dissertation I deal with Church Administration, emphasising those historically defining facts, which contributed to the preservation of self-identity conscience of the Hungarian Catholics.

I am searching the background, which in the past centuries functioned as preservation power, influencing caring behaviour of the clergy serving for welfare of the people. I draw the attention to those exceptionally difficult circumstances, in which seminaries were run, since the Council of Trent the diocesan bishop has been put in charge of the seminaries. When the Apostolic Governship of Trnava was formed, there was neither diocesan bishop, nor seminary, so the seminarists from Esztergom got into

an ambiguous situation. From this point of view the Seminary and Marianum in Komárom had a significant mission in training of clergy.

In the appendix those parishes have been listed which in consequence of the changes of borders were exposed to difficulties, but stood their ground. I keep evidence mainly the parishes which were initially Hungarian, and whose liturgical language of worship remained up to day, in spite of the fact that their parishes became abandoned, or their priest's mother tongue is not Hungarian. In this regard there were many excellent researchers and writers in the 20th century.

II. Summary of the results of research

To achieve my goal, besides technical literature, I could rely on press and archive materials. Considering that, after the Trianon Treaty, the North-Hungarian Dioceses totally or partly became of Slovak authority, works written about them were done in Slovak. The schematisms, after the World War II period, in 1948 show the language of worship, but later they do not do this.

The majority of literature was published in the Diocese of Košice. The reason of it was that the archbishop of the diocese, Fischer-Colbri Ágost stayed in his position until his death in 1925. The diocesan archives and the chapter archives remained together and were accessible for researchers. This can be said only about this diocese, the others not.

There can we find references to Vicary of Szatmár, which became a suffragan of the Diocese of Košice.

I devoted more time to the topic relating to press. Concerning the history of Catholic press I regret to say that I did not meet any results of pre-research, which means a great possibility for the new generation of researchers.

During my archives researches besides other diocesan archives, I relied on these sources: the registers of the Deanery of Senec, which keep records of the years 1903 – 1944. This unique material, which has been protected with great care for centuries supplied me with valuable background information for my work. In one case it was published as a chronicle on the basis of records of Szabó János és Boros Mihály. In

addition to this, some parish Historca Domus records were available for me. I could also use the Archives of Marianum in Komárno (College Komárno), keeping records of 1929 – 1944, which was saved in a wooden case by the headmaster Bálint István.

The records of Vatican Archives helped me in a great deal by the conclusion of Modus Vivendi in 1928. This temporary period contains some records concerning to: arguments about legal continuity of patronage, law-philosophical arguments about secularized property, church property, arguments about legal insecurity, feudal orders, clericals, decorations and deportations. The Czechoslovak state archives records refer to the years of exile and its sad consequences as well as the agrarian reforms came to the front.

There are surprising materials in the Hungarian state archives as well from the period of re-differentiation of society.

I have made an effort to synthesize the history of church administration and some facts of the Catholic Church of the historic Upper Hungary following a very complicated period with changes of the political issues and borders. This effort means a forward step compared to the previously published works, because there are no social and other changes meaning any obstacles for the divine mercy, Kingdom of God was built in the souls, but also on outside spectacularly with the experiences of the two thousand years old Church, the wishes of the Divine Master, which is set forth for both, the writer and reader of this dissertation.

From some of the youth associations of different denominations one must be mentioned and that is the Association of Young Catholics, which during the twenty years stood their ground, later with successful amateur performances they contributed in maintenance of patriotic disposition.

The Hungarian national unity was promoted by casinos, clubs of craftsmen, Catholic clubs, denominations choirs. There were a lot of charity and religious associations. All of them pursued patriotic mission as well.

The activity of these associations has never come to stop, for the past twenty years they have been able to preserve their galleries and collections against foreign greediness and eagerness.

One who is religious and pious, he is of strong character. The one who is of strong character, he is not able to betray his nation, race and former native country.

On the whole of the historic Upper Hungary one of the most prosperous city library was in Komárom, which was continually enriched by its director, dr. Baranyay József. During the state of minority, in Komárom there were many books published and numerous magazines and political newspapers were edited. The most notable of them were the Komáromi Lapok, Tábortűz, Szivárvány, Szűz Mária Virágos Kertje, Katolikus Értesítő, Kis Tükör, Magyar Vasárnap, Nemzeti Kultúra, Magyar Tanító, Barázda.

All in all we can say, that the spirit of the era was characterized by the spirit of Upper Hungary.

Besides the centrally supplied educational presentations, which supported the Hungarian consciousness and objective Hungarian aspect, the main stress was put on the independent activities of the local associations. The common people and the youth became active participants of social culture. The amateur performances widely spread around held up Hungarian language and mediated the Hungarian spirit: the Hungarian songs, national costumes and dances. Common people of the regions of Csallóköz, Mátyusföld, Gömör and Bodrogköz set forth to be the part of the tens of thousands fearful defence.

The best functioning organization in Upper Hungary was the Church. Its true that within the new borders made some administrative changes, but the lower administrations, deaneries and parishes stayed, where experienced spiritual leaders worked.

During the years of state of exile and deprivation of civil rights many of the Slovakian Hungarians considered opposition senseless. Many of them who refused the opportunity of emigration, being afraid of total defencelessness, accepted compliance and submission. The priests in these hard days supported their congregation, and about their self-sacrificing work we can read in the contemporary publications.

The Catholic Hungarian clergy during twenty years collected the pearls of the Catholic Hungarians' spirits. The Concordia Print, People's Missions, the Society of Saint Augustus, the Catholic Hungarian press, Marianum Seminary, and in the cooperative movements the Hungarian clergy did such a good deed, that without them, according to János Esterházy liberation could not be achieved. On a meeting held in Érsekújvár, minister Andor Jaros, praised highly the work of the Catholic Hungarian clergy- another record informs us.

III. Publications made from the topics of research:

- 1) SZTYAHULA László: As a National Minority in the new Slovak Ecclesiastical Province, In: Vasárnap, Bratislava (1993) May 16, 15
- 2) SZTYAHULA László: Picture-Chronicle of Kéménd, AZ Print Nové Zámky 2007, 144 ISBN 978-80-88729-16-7
- 3) SZTYAHULA László: In the Reflection of the Photographs of Kéménd, AZ Print Nové Zámky 2008, 144, ISBN 978-89-88729-20- 7
- 4) SZTYAHULA László: Two Essays About The History Of The Hugarian Catholic Church (Analysis Of The Works Of Palkovics Viktor).In: Chapters from yesterday`s world, ELTE BTK, Budapest 2009. I organized an exhibition from the photographs of the book (350 pieces) from 26 August – 26 September 2007
- 5) SZTYAHULA László: The History Of Administration Of North Hungary`s Latin Rite Catholic Church in the 20th century. In: “The land under you, the sky above you...” ELTE BTK Budapest 2010, 101-137,ISBN 978-963-284-181-6
- 6) SZTYAHULA László: Catholic Priest Training in The Ecclesiastical Province Of Trnava in 1929 – 1950. In: Regnum Marianum Kalendárium 2011, Pázmaneum 2010, 36-42, ISBN – 978-963-331-1
- 7) SZTYAHULA László: Catholic Movements Between The Two Wolrld Wars Reflected In The Press In Sloavkia, In: Regnum Marianum Kalendárium 2012, Pázmaneum 2011 34-44, ISBN – 978-963-363-338-0
- 8) SZTYAHULA László: The Situation Of The Hungarian Catholic Church in Slovakia In 1945-1950, In: Regnum Marianum Kalendárium 2013, Pázmaneum 2012, 60-74, ISBN - 978-963-345-8

Memorial-tablet inaugurations, press citations

- 1) SZTYAHULA László: Memorial-tablet Inauguration, Kéménd, in memory of Cséfalvay József, 2007
- 2) SZTYAHULA László: Exiled Hungarian Priests. In: Szabad Újság, Slovakian Hungarian weekly magazine, 9 January, 2009, XVI. volume, 2nd issue, 5
- 3) SZTYAHULA László: Cseri István, the Pastor of Nagymegyér. Memorial-tablet

Inaugurationin Nagymegyer, Goodwill Pastor Sunday. - 13 April 2008

- 4) SZTYAHULA László: Memorial-tablet saves the name of Palkovich Viktor.
Memorial-tablet inauguration in Gúta- 1 September 2008
- 5) SZTYAHULA László: Memorial-tablet saves teh name of Palkovich Viktor.
In: Dunatáj, XVIII. Volume, 42nd issue, 17 October 2008, 6
- 6) SZTYAHULA László: School History of Kéménd. In: Szabad Újság, Slovakian
Hungarian weekly magazine, 10 December 2008, 16th volume, 50th issue, 4
- 7) SZTYAHULA László: The History of the Catholic School in Kéménd. In:
Szabad Újság, Weekly magazine, XVIII volume, 1st issue 7 January 2010, 24