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Beyond Prague: The Congress of the Slavs in 1848 and Its Echo within the Reach of the Habsburg Monarchy

Introduction

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The return of the anniversary of an event, especially if it is a round year, always seems to be a good occasion to take a fresh look at historical events and bring them to the attention of a wider public, whether at the local or regional level, or on a supraregional or even supranational scale, depending on how vivid the memory is. The texts presented below are selected contributions to a conference entitled *175 Years Congress of the Slavs (1848–2023). History – Ideas – Commemoration* that was organized at the site of the historic event in Prague. The Prague ‘Congress of the Slavs’ (from June 2 to 12, 1848) was one element in a chain of events that shook the order established by the European powers at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, beginning with the February Revolution in France and continuing to the suppression of the Hungarian independence movement in the summer of 1849.

Although the basic research on the specific course of the Prague Congress was finished long ago, the interpretive possibilities of this event in the context of the revolutions in Central Europe were clearly not exhausted, as evidenced in the conference. The revolutionary year of 1848 can be viewed as a clash of political programmes, as well as a confrontation of diverse socio-political ideas and concepts that attempted to conceptualize and sustain the disappearing world of late feudalism, or to theorize and stimulate the process of the emergence of the new world of industrial capitalism. However, the clash of ideas did not solely mean the confrontation of different conceptions of society, economy, politics, or culture; it also meant the confrontation of different ideas concerning national identity, emancipation, freedom, economic (in)equality, and social justice. It was here where the germs of

political ideas and visions were born that still strongly influence our thinking about society and individuality, various rights, social and economic justice, identity politics, social change, and revolutions, etc.

Although 175 years later conceived as a common and unifying element in the history of the continent, the events are anchored in public memory in different dimensions and forms. In Germany, for example, the focus was on the 'history of democracy' and on the question of the future design of the Frankfurt Paulskirche as the venue for the first German National Assembly and as the starting point for the development of the parliamentary idea in Germany.

However, the assemblies in Frankfurt—the Pre-Parliament and the National Assembly—were not only a matter for the 'Germans,' but also provided an opportunity for discussions with non-German neighbours, in particular with the Poles, whose parallel struggle for national self-determination proved so incompatible with the wishes of the Germans in the Prussian province of Posen that the enthusiasm for the Polish Cause that had prevailed since 1830/31 quickly turned into anti-Polish resentment. A clarification of national relations can also be observed in relation to the Czech 'Bohemians,' whose representative František Palacký, in his famous letter to Frankfurt, declined the invitation to participate in the parliament of 'German patriots' and instead assumed the chairmanship of the Congress of the Slavs in Prague. This meeting, unlike any other in Europe, was based on an idea that transcended national boundaries: the political implementation of the idea of Slavic mutuality or even of a permanent unity of all Slavs.

The impetus for organizing a conference 175 years later came rather unintentionally and unexpectedly from a specialized historical discipline that at first glance seems far removed from nineteenth-century history—namely, archaeology, specifically Slavic archaeology. Since 1965 (in Warsaw), an *International Congress for Slavic Archaeology* (*Congrès International d' Archéologie Slave*) had been organized every five years, in all the countries of the former Warsaw Pact. The political implications became apparent with the changes of 1989, as the sixth congress planned for 1990 could not take place until 1996 in Veliky Novgorod in Russia. Due to the fact that doubts about the usefulness of an ethnically connotated archaeology took hold, this was the last in the series of those congresses. However, in 2020, a new initiative was launched to hold a conference on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Novgorod congress on Slavic archaeology, dedicated to the theme *Slavs and their Neighbours in the 1st Millennium AD*, which took place in Novi Sad in Serbia in October 2021 with the relatively broad representation of archaeologists from Russia. Thus, while revealing a completely different constellation than at the meeting in Prague in 1848, which involved only one Russian, Mikhail Bakunin, this was, of course, not the only distinguishing factor. Nevertheless, in this context, the idea

arose to revisit the emergence of a scientific basis for the concept of long-lasting Slavic unity (in this case, revealing itself in archaeological finds) in connection with the approaching anniversary of the Prague Congress of the Slavs.

Eventually, this idea flowed together with further considerations regarding the commemoration of the events in Prague in 1848 and their long-term impact until the present day, all the more so as the situation of today's 'Slavic world' gives rise to reflections on the question of the historical significance of the so-called Slavic mutuality which has been demonstrated in history by various means: congresses (starting with the Prague one in 1848 and ending with the Moscow ones during World War II) and ideological currents (as shown, for example, in Czech history, starting with Havlíček's reflection on the relations of the Czechs to Slavism¹ through Kramář's Slavic Constitution² and the crimes of Václav Černý's Pan-Slavism³). The results of so-called Slavic mutuality were and are quite ambivalent, and its implementation very often led to disillusionment. Nevertheless, various reminiscences of similar programs resurface, which phenomenon is especially topical and dangerous at critical moments, such as during the current war in Ukraine. Analytical views concerning the illusion of Slavic mutuality are therefore very relevant both regarding dialogue with the public and the European intellectual environment. The conference led to reflection on the historical role of Slavophilia, or rather, asked whether the latter was not just a purposeful ideology for the national and state-law goals of the Slavs. During the several-day session, the history of the Slavic Congress in Prague itself, the involvement of Slavs in the European revolutions of 1848, the history of ideas and political movements associated with so-called Slavic reciprocity, Slavic archaeology, and the 'second lives' of the Slavic Congress were discussed.

The international scientific conference on the 175th anniversary of the Slavic Congress in Prague took place with the participation of the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (Leipzig), Collegium Carolinum (Munich), and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe (Marburg). From the departments of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic were represented the Institute of Philosophy, the Institute of Archaeology, the Institute of Contemporary History, the Masaryk Institute, the Institute of History, and the Slavic Institute. Of the number of contributions to the conference,⁴ four are presented here,

1 Borovský, *Slovan a Čech*, 83–90.

2 The text of the project for a Slavic State in: Galander, *Vznik československé republiky*, 243–50.

3 Černý, *Vývoj a zločiny panskavismu*.

4 More information, including the programme, is to be found at <https://www.hiu.cas.cz/udalosti/175-years-congress-of-the-slavs-1848-2023-history-ideas-commemoration-1>. The conference was fully documented in video format by Historický ústav AV ČR and is available on YouTube.

dealing with Metternich's attitude toward the Slavs and the reactions in three ethno-political entities (Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia). It is under consideration whether to publish further contributions from the conference in the coming volumes of the journal *Historical Studies of Central Europe*.

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Metternich, the Slavs and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1842–1849

On the Relationship between Nation and State

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Abstract. The prevailing scholarly consensus regarding Prince Metternich's policy within the framework of the Vienna System of 1815 is that it was hostile and repressive towards the nationalities within the Habsburg Monarchy. However, a re-evaluation of this judgement is provided by the history and circumstances of the Prague Slav Congress of June 1848, as it was here that discussions on the problem of the relationship between national emancipation and state organisation reached a peak. The article examines the knowledge Metternich had of the national diversity of the Slavs even before 1848, and the extent he judged the so-called 'Pan-Slavism' not as a problem of nationalities, but as an ideological pretext for Russian expansion. The article also deals with Metternich's criticism of the repressive Hungarian Slav policy, showing him to be a defender of multinational statehood in Central Europe. In the context of the Frankfurt National Assembly of 1848/49, which sought to delineate the national territory of a unified Germany by the Central European borders of the German Confederation, Metternich recognised the belligerent potential of modern nationalism. His concerns stemmed from his perception of the modern movement to align nationality and state boundaries with language-defined national identities as a perpetual catalyst for state-building conflicts. However, the Emperor's resistance and the internal bureaucracy's opposition (the Kolowrat system) hindered the implementation of the model of a multinational federal state he drafted in 1816. This concept bore a resemblance to the notion of 'Austroslavism', a concept developed by the Czech historian and politician František Palacký.

Keywords: Metternich, Slav Congress 1848, Revolution 1848, German Confederation, nation-building, Austroslavism, Habsburg Monarchy

The initial situation: the upheaval of the Central European order in the Spring of Nations

The March Revolution of 1848 had an impact on the European continent like no other revolution before; it shattered the international order that had been laid down in international law at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Central Europe suffered

the most, with traditional state frontiers cutting through ethnic settlements like nowhere else on the continent. This was possible because the government structure did not consider the distribution of nationality. We are talking about the Habsburg Monarchy, which was constitutionally interwoven with the German Confederation in an elaborate construction. The borders of the two territories overlapped. Both states had a multinational character. The political opposition saw the Habsburg Monarchy as the ‘prison of peoples’, the German Confederation as the ‘un-German’ outgrowth of the Congress of Vienna, and the supposedly omnipotent Austrian Chancellor Metternich as the political embodiment of both.

In the spring of 1848, the message of the revolution was condensed into the slogan of liberating peoples from the chains of the Viennese system, ideally united in the grand vision of a ‘springtime of nations.’ A participant in the Slavic Congress, Karl Malisz, a member of the Polish Committee in Lviv, gave a telling subtitle to his writing about the Congress: “A contribution to the understanding between the peoples and to eternal peace.”¹

The French graphic artist Frédéric Sorrieu (1807–1887) created a lithograph on the subject. Its powerful imagery made it iconic and famous throughout the world. He gave it the title *République universelle démocratique et sociale* and the subtitle *Le Pacte*.² The lithograph shows the long procession of peoples through an open landscape, some of whom are identified by their national flags as American, French, German, Austrian, Sicilian, Lombard, Roman, and English. They are moving towards the monument of a female allegory—the personified Republic—holding the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” in her right hand and the torch of enlightenment in her left, on their way to the new treaty, obviously with divine blessing.

This image of the ‘springtime of nations’ was based on a narrative, or more precisely a historical myth, shared by all its pre-March adherents: An all-powerful prince had suppressed all national aspirations with his police-state despotism—the so-called ‘Metternich system’—through the Vienna Order of 1815. Now, however, the peoples managed to throw off their chains and live together in peace, united by a common treaty, to achieve universal equality and their own free national constitutions. The great Czech historian and national pioneer František Palacký echoed this myth when, in rejecting elections to a constituent national assembly in Frankfurt, he claimed that Metternich was “the most implacable enemy of all Slavic nationalities in Austria.”³

1 Malisz, *Der Slaven-Kongreß*.

2 Displayed at Gall, ed., 1848. *Aufbruch zur Freiheit*, 112.

3 Palacký, “Eine Stimme über Österreichs Anschluß,” 84.

Metternich's knowledge of the national diversity of the Slavs, 1843

Was this really true? The files of the Vienna State Chancellery, which Palacký could not yet see, contradict the prejudice of his “coldness towards national will,” which was still widespread according to his former biographer, Heinrich von Srbik.⁴ One must therefore ask: How well did the State Chancellor know the nationalities in the Monarchy as a whole, and the Slavs in particular?

As an aristocratic landlord in Königswart (Kynžvart) and the owner of an industrial ironworks in Plaß (Plasy), Metternich was often personally involved with his Slavic tenants, agricultural and industrial workers, as well as members of the local Jewish communities. Where necessary, proceedings were conducted and recorded in Czech before the Patrimonial Court of his estates. This was not the way of a “most implacable enemy of all Slavic nationalities,” but of a politician who recognised and respected the rights of other nationalities.⁵

One particular event may shed light on Metternich's attitude towards the various nationalities in the Habsburg Empire even before the revolution. In early 1843, German press reports conjured national conflicts and, in particular, the spectre of ‘Pan-Slavism,’ i.e., “the tendency of Austrian Slavs to unite into a compact whole and to throw their sixteen million into the balance of the Austrian Monarchy as a decisive weight.”⁶

This public propaganda led Metternich to draw up an inventory of the nationality situation in the Monarchy. His basic ideas, which he summarised in a so-called ‘lecture’ (*Vortrag*) to the Emperor on 9 March 1843, are outlined here. Due to its historical context, the document has the character of a manifesto.⁷ Metternich recognises in the “nationality of the tribes” (*Stämme*) a natural individuality that must be respected at all costs. He defined this in the spirit of Johann Gottfried Herder (and his *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, published between 1784 and 1791). It was based on the most important social conditions: common descent, history, languages, customs, but also political characteristics, such as forms of state and government. By this, he meant the specific legal guarantees of individual territories, such as the Bohemian Land Code (*Landesordnung*).

In his *Vortrag*, Metternich devoted a separate section to ‘Slavism,’ which he recognised as having existed in Europe since the earliest times. He identified Russians,

4 Srbik, *Metternich*, vol. 1, 197; Siemann, *Metternich*, 13.

5 Siemann, *Metternich*, 640–44; bilingual protocol 15 May 1834 in German and Czech of a hearing at the central administration of Plaß, 643.

6 ÖStA HHStA StK Vorträge 1844, Krt. 291, Fol. 104. “Aus Oesterreich, 2. März” *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 68, 9 March 1843.

7 ÖStA HHStA StK Vorträge 1844, Krt. 291, Fol. 80–91. Metternich, “Vortrag über das Slaventhum” to Emperor Ferdinand, Vienna, 8 March 1843 [Cover: 9 March].

Poles, Czechs, Croats, Slovaks, Illyrians, Dalmatians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Austrians, and Mecklenburg Wends. He did not assume rigid national characters, but described them as dependent on their material conditions, conditions of production, and levels of education and civilisational development. In his judgement, this represented a west-to-east divide on the European continent.

In a special section, the State Chancellor praised the advanced socio-economic development of the Czechs, which for him also meant “progress in the field of civilisation.” This advantage was due to the ‘Czechs’ (he does not explicitly say ‘Bohemians’), who differed in their level of development from the Slavic population in the southern provinces of the Monarchy.

The warning against Pan-Slavism as an ideological pretext for the expansion of Russia, 1843

Metternich strongly warned against taking ‘[Pan-]Slavism’ as a generalised given. His rejection of the generalised term shows that he had a precise idea of the differences and peculiarities of the various Slavic populations within the Monarchy. It is instructive to quote his own words:

“The mere designation of a whole tribe [i.e., ‘Pan-Slavism’ or ‘Slavism’] throws little light on the peculiarities of the situation. Slavism is, of course, based on a spirit, but it is substantially modified in its directions by a variety of conditions; for example, the Polish and Russian tribal members are now sharply opposed to each other; there is less sympathy between the Poles and the Czechs than between the former and the Hungarian Slavs and even the Magyars. The Bohemians [Czechs] are closer to Western liberalism than the Croats and the Illyrians.”⁸

His analysis exposes publicly propagated Pan-Slavism as an ideological pretext for Russian expansion. He asks whether and to what extent the nationalities had become politicised since the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars, whether they had subversive aims and, above all, whether they would unite in a great movement of ‘Pan-Slavism.’ His memorandum completely disproved these concerns to the Emperor and, therefore, did not justify a policy of repression, but advocated an individual and targeted observation of political conditions. He accurately describes the internal conflicts and divisions between the Slavic nationalities, and this alone refutes his assumption of a great Slavic unification movement. He did not see the danger of a national state forming within the monarchy. For him, the Poles outside the Monarchy were an exception.

8 Metternich, “Vortrag über das Slaventhum,” Fol. 91, cp. Note 7.

Metternich's criticism of Russia is striking, a concern that Palacký would later articulate in his letter of rejection to the Frankfurt Committee of Fifty. The State Chancellor observed how the "Eastern autocracy"—as he called the Tsarist regime—was trying to instrumentalise Slavs in order to gain influence in the Habsburg lands. The lever was religion. Based in Russia, he recognised a confessional political Slavism that appealed to the "community of Slavic nationality." More recently, Russia also spread to Hungary, which belonged to the Habsburg lands.

Since Orthodox services included readings from Russian liturgical books containing intercessions for the monarch as protector of Orthodox Christianity, these prayers were logically addressed to the Tsar and his family, not to the Habsburg head of state. In this way, the loyalty of the Orthodox Slavs and Hungarians to the Habsburg Monarchy was cunningly and subtly undermined. Even the affected Slavs recognized this as an unlawful external intervention, which, for example, made the Poles feel once again oppressed by the Tsar.

Where the Slavs followed the Orthodox rite, the Tsar treated them as objects to be protected by Russia, without having been called upon to do so. Metternich interprets this as "the political encroachment of Russian power since its emergence in the last third of the seventeenth and the first third of the eighteenth century." He was referring to what we would now call the "imperialist expansion of the Russian Empire towards the West (Poland) and South-east (Moldavia)," which, as we now know, also took place in the same period towards the Crimea and Afghanistan.

Criticism of the Hungarian policy towards the Slavs, 1843/1844

In his survey of the areas of conflict in Slavism, Metternich identified a particular factor of unrest on the part of the Hungarians; from the Imperial Diet of 1825, the 'Hungarian nationality' carried out particularly ruthless attacks on the Slavic part of the population, although the latter was far superior in numbers, and not inferior in property to the Hungarians.

In Hungary, the arising paradoxical situation was that the Hungarians complained about the "uprising of the Slavic nationality," which they themselves had caused, while the Slavs, especially the Slovaks, complained about the unbearable pressure of 'Magyarism.' The issue was the imposition of Hungarian as the sole official language. Needless to say, the Kingdom of Hungary was also a multinational state. This conflict between nationalities put the Habsburg Emperor in a precarious situation, as he was also head of state as King of Hungary but felt obliged to protect the nationality of the Slovaks.

Metternich's disapproval was in line with his own governing maxim, which was characteristic of Habsburg rule in their multi-ethnic state: The head of state was

not allowed to be a party. In an 1844 memorandum on the situation in Hungary, Metternich was even more explicit in his criticism of ‘Magyarization,’ the policy of forced linguistic and cultural assimilation. He compared this cultural rape of a nationality to the analogous practice of the French and praised the Habsburg practice of not wanting to ‘Germanise.’ He repeatedly makes pejorative remarks about Joseph II, who tried to do the same.⁹

Where nationalism defined its ‘identity’—as Metternich put it—in cultural terms, the State Chancellor tolerated it and even encouraged it with regard to academies and university professorships. In reality, however, there was a great deal of discrimination against the Slavs compared with the Germans on the part of the lower authorities. Metternich attached an anonymous memorandum to his “lecture” to the Emperor on 8 March 1843, in which he claimed the rights of the Bohemians, i.e., the Czechs, which had been denied to them. It begins with the remarkable words:

“Slavism is often called the awakening of the Bohemian national feeling. The fact that Bohemians feel that they are Bohemians and do not want to deny their ancestors and their language cannot be held against them as a sin.”¹⁰

For Metternich, nationality, defined by language and ethnic affinity, was a value to be respected, as in the specific case of this memorandum. It was part of the “educational offensive of enlightened absolutism.”¹¹ Similarly, in terms of constitutional law, the author argues in favour of the “Revised Constitution [*Verneuerte Landordnung*] of the Kingdom of Bohemia” of 1627, which guaranteed equal rights to the “Bohemian,” i.e., Czech, language. He complained bitterly that some administrative officials spoke only German rather than both languages, as required by law.

But when the suspicion arose that foreigners, and not only educated people—as Metternich pointed out—but also members of the “lower classes,” were meeting at the Brno bishop’s theological seminary to give political speeches “about Slavism,” he felt that a line had been crossed.¹² Where there was a danger of nationalism becoming political, Metternich literally demanded action, even in the case of the Czechs, who were considered advanced: “This country therefore requires keen

9 Metternich (handwritten autograph), “Ueber die Ungarischen Zustände.” StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 8, Krt.9a; printed (partly inaccurate) Metternich, Richard von, ed. *Aus Metternich’s*, vol. 7, 51–63; analysis: Siemann, *Metternich*, 656–57.

10 ÖStA HHStA StK Vorträge 1844, Krt. 291, Fol. 94–101, anonymous submission on the improper treatment of the Slavs, “Slavismus,” attached to the lecture of 8 March 1843.

11 Moritsch, “Revolution 1848,” 7.

12 ÖStA HHStA StK Vorträge 1844, Krt. 291, Metternich, “Slavische Umrüste im Brünner Alumnat betr.,” lecture of 7 April 1843 to Emperor Ferdinand [without Fol.].

attention.” President of the Police and Censorship Court Joseph von Sedlnitzky preferred the word “observation,” but the State Chancellor himself crossed it out in the handwritten draft of the Chancellery Secretary.

Metternich as defender of multinational statehood in Central Europe

If this article focuses on Metternich, who was frowned upon by his patriotic contemporaries, it is not primarily because of his personality, but because of a fundamental historical problem that was difficult for his contemporaries to see and is still difficult to recognise today. This made him an outsider to the *Zeitgeist* of the time, which invoked linguistic-national unity in a territorially defined, homogeneous nation-state as the only binding goal. In the text of the German national anthem composed in 1841, the demand was “Unity, Justice and Freedom for the German Fatherland,” and it was to apply to all the surrounding, as yet unredeemed *Fatherlands* of other nationalities in Central Europe, without any thought given to the border problems this would provoke.

A close examination of many hitherto unpublished archival sources shows that Metternich was one of the few contemporaries who understood early the social and political explosive power of the slogan “One nation—one nation state” in the conditions of Central Europe, its socially destructive means: the struggle of nationalities against each other, and its politically destructive means: the deconstruction of the existing state order.¹³ From a distance, we can say that the spectrum of potential conflicts ranged from “oppositional or secessionist nationalism” in the sense of Helmut Rumpler¹⁴—which was the tendency of the Hungarians—to ‘Austro-Slavism’ integrated into the Habsburg Monarchy in the sense of Palacký—which was the concern of the majority of Slavs in the Monarchy.¹⁵

13 In a conversation with Georg Klindworth, the diplomat and (secret) agent of various European princely houses, the content of which Klindworth conveyed to the French politician François Guizot (Georg Klindworth to François Guizot, Vienna, 12 April 1847. Archives nationales, François Guizot [42AP], box 68), Metternich spoke about nationalism and his relationship to the state: “La nationalité est maintenant un Palladium qui sert à couvrir tous les crimes et toutes les tentatives les plus violentes contre les bases de l’ordre politique et social. C’est la une theorie tout a fait fausse et perverse; ce nationalisme payen (?) est en contradiction flagrante avec l’organisation de nos sociétés et de la morale de notre tems. Nationalisme et Etat sont deux choses bien differentes. [...] Toutes ces hallucinations politiques ne sont que d’absurdes anachronismes, contraires à la marche de la civilisation et par consequent sans aucun chance de se réaliser jamais.”

14 Rumpler, *Eine Chance*, 155.

15 Kořalka, “*Idea státu rakouského* [Österreichs Staatsidee] als föderalistisches Programm,” In: Kořalka, *Palacký*, 448–59.

At the outset, reference was made to the complicated, interwoven construction of the German Confederation and the Habsburg Monarchy. Why did the Congress architects decide against nation states, even though some Congress observers and patriots wanted this as early as 1815?

When in the 1820s, a second wave of constitutionalizing swept Europe after the French Revolution, Metternich received well-meaning advice to introduce a progressive constitution for the Habsburg Monarchy, similar to that of Greece or Naples. He commented sarcastically:

“Yes, but what to do! Good God! Grant Germany a good American constitution within three weeks and thus set an example for Austria and force our neighbours to follow suit? [...] And this with eight or ten different nations, all of which have their own particular language, and hate each other.”¹⁶

Was Metternich passing anti-national and anti-democratic judgement, or was he, as a political pragmatist, simply describing a fact that contradicted the myth of the “springtime of nations”?

There is a geographical map of the statistical population data of the entire Monarchy, showing how and where the various linguistic-national majorities were distributed throughout the territory.¹⁷ The “ethnic structures” presented here show the historical basis of each of the nationalities involved in the Spring of Nations. The nationalities are distinguished in different colours; the gradations of colour help quantify more precisely their regional share in the population. The blue framed area outlines the part of Austria that was also part of the German Confederation: On the Austrian side, the German Confederation included the Czechs in the north, the Slovenes in the south, and the Italians in the south-west as major non-German national groups.¹⁸

We should bear in mind the seemingly anachronistic nature of the German Confederation and the Habsburg Monarchy. Both state structures embodied a so-called ‘composite state,’ also known as an ‘empire,’ in contrast to the nation-state. The head of state was dynastic and monarchical, and therefore indifferent to nationality. Emperor Franz and Metternich believed that Austria was not in principle a monarchy but a conglomerate of historically inherited territories, each with its own laws, always populated by Germans, but mostly by Slavs.¹⁹

16 StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 6, Krt. C19.5, Fol. 26, Letter 20 January 1820 from Metternich to Countess Lieven; for more on Metternich’s opinion on the American Constitution, see: Šedivý, *Victory of Realism*, 226–27.

17 Rumpler and Urbanitsch, eds, *Soziale Strukturen*, 60–69, overview map 61.

18 The regions dominated by Czechs appear in blue, those of the Slovenes in green, and those of the Italians in yellow.

19 Siemann, *Metternich*, 433–34.

In the logic of this historical view, the Habsburg monarch acted as individual head of state for each dominion: He was King of Bohemia, Margrave of Moravia, Duke of Lower Silesia, of Carniola, and of Tyrol. Each dominion relied on its own historically inherited constitutional law.²⁰ This archaic form had the modern side-effect that no nationality was superior to another, and that Czechs, Moravians, Germans, Poles, and Slovenes could live in common legal circles. This fact led Palacký, in 1848, to the reasonable conclusion that the Slavic nationalities could coexist on an equal level in a federal empire with a Habsburg at its head; it also prompted him to make the famous proclamation: “Truly, if the Austrian imperial state had not existed a long time ago, one would have had to hasten to create it in the interests of Europe, in the interests of humanity itself.”²¹

In the interests of humanity? Here Palacký’s views undoubtedly overlapped with those of Metternich. Metternich saw the nationalities in their multilingualism as “hating each other” and wanted to protect them from each other. Consequently, both saw the overarching roof of the Habsburg Monarchy as a protective space for individual nationalities.

Metternich had the same intention at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when he founded the German Confederation. He constructed it in analogy to the Habsburg Monarchy as a ‘composite state’ in the centre of Europe: too weak to attack others, too strong to be attacked. The Confederation also included the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Denmark, and (until 1837) the United Kingdom of Great Britain, each through its own provinces within the territory of the Confederation. Other non-German nationalities living in the Confederation included Danes, Sorbs, Poles, Italians, and Luxembourgers. As a loose association of thirty-four princes and four city republics, the Confederation neutralised multi-nationalism. The ratio of this complicated construction in the middle of Europe was not a mechanism for suppressing nationalities, but was certainly a mechanism for neutralising them. For Metternich, this was a political means of securing internal and international peace.

German unity in 1848/49 as a national explosive: the National Assembly elections as a threat to the neighbours

After the honeymoon of the ‘Spring of Nations’ in the March days of 1848, fears and conflicts between nationalities began to grow. There seemed to be something wrong with the narrative of the ‘Metternich system.’ It turned out that “there was

20 The aforementioned memorandum refers to this legal fact. Note 10.

21 Palacký, “Eine Stimme über Österreichs Anschluß,” 83.

no ‘Metternich system,’ but rather a plurality of power centres.”²² Instead of the fraternisation of peoples, the result was international discord,²³ the “entanglement of nationalism with civil strife.”²⁴

Even if the “awakened” peoples did not demand their own state from the outset, the discussions inevitably led to the question of how a single nationality should relate to the existing and possibly doomed multinational states. Between March and June 1848, serious political observers believed that the Habsburg Monarchy might collapse. The aforementioned Malisz wrote: “If no geographical borders were necessary for the unity of the state, the matter would be quite simple. The peoples of the same language would then belong to one state unit.”²⁵ In reality, however, the patriots did not want to follow this logic. They wanted to impose clear territorial borders for the national language regions.

The problem is illustrated by the lands of the Bohemian Crown, comprising the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, and the Duchy of Silesia. In the rush of patriotic feeling, most contemporaries were unaware of what it meant to establish German unity in the form of a nation state. Even in today’s German jubilee events and speeches, which rightly praise the struggle for freedom and a constitution, one important aspect is missing: Hardly anyone took or takes note of what the first paragraph of the Imperial Constitution, finally adopted on 28 March 1849, meant for non-German nationalities in the new Empire. The article read: “The German Reich consists of the territory of the former German Confederation.”

When the Moravian-born ‘Bohemian’ František Palacký, who was working in Prague, was invited to take part in the elections to the Frankfurt National Assembly, he wrote his famous letter of refusal on 11 April 1848, in which he made his most important confession:

“I am a Bohemian of Slavic origin and have [...] devoted myself entirely and forever to the service of my people. Although this people is small, it has always been peculiar and independent [...]. But to demand that the Bohemian people unite with the German people beyond the previous princely union is [...] an imposition.”²⁶

The Slovenes in Carniola, the Italians in South Tyrol, and the Poles in Poznań voiced similar objections. The Slav Congress was a direct response to the so-called Frankfurt Pre-Parliament, which met from 31 March to 4 April 1848 and initiated

22 Clark, *Revolutionary Spring*, 303.

23 Siemann, “Einheit der Nation,” 24–34.

24 Clark, *Revolutionary Spring*, 750.

25 Malisz, *Der Slaven-Kongreß*, 19.

26 Palacký, “Eine Stimme über Österreichs Anschluß,” 80.

elections to a constituent German National Assembly. In Prague, this was seen as a frightening prospect. After all, people were discussing what would happen to the Slavs in the Kingdom of Bohemia if the Austrian Monarchy fell as a result of German unification.²⁷

Palacký was therefore right to turn to the Committee of Fifty in Frankfurt, which had been appointed by the Pre-Parliament to determine the electoral districts for the entire territory of the German Confederation, including the “lands of Bohemian constitutional law.” Realising the gravity of the situation, the Committee of Fifty sent a delegation to Prague to change the minds of the members of the National Committee meeting there and to participate in the elections; personal negotiations were held with Palacký, but naturally with no success.²⁸

Palacký’s famous refusal revealed a paradoxical situation. The pioneers of the German nation-state were actually defining the borders of their hoped-for German Empire conservatively, because they were guided by the status quo: The previous borders of the German Confederation were to be the borders of the future German Empire. They did not realise that the establishment of a central nation state would qualitatively change the status of its members, who would all become ‘German’ citizens.

What had been possible since 1815 was no longer possible in 1848/49 with the establishment of the Reich. Because nationality initially did not play a decisive role, the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Moravia, and the Duchy of Silesia could belong to the German Confederation based in Frankfurt as Habsburg crown lands of the federal member Austria. In the unified German nation-state, however, the Slavic nationalities became a minority, because the reference point was no longer imperial-Habsburg but imperial-German. Habsburg meant dynasty; German meant nationality. Article XIII, § 188 on the rights of national minorities in the Bill of Rights (*Grundrechten*), as laudable as it was, was no use, for the “non-German-speaking tribes” listed there did not want to be downgraded to a minority. The European revolutionary spring of 1848 promised equal rights and self-determination for all as a message and hope, but not classification as a minority.

Two factors were decisive in the emerging conflict. The first was the definition of nationality through language. Only in the course of the communication revolution of 1848 in the German Confederation and the Habsburg Monarchy did some contemporaries become aware of this. Suddenly it mattered whether one’s national language had to be spoken, might be spoken, or could be spoken at school, in public offices, and in professional life.

27 Cvirn, “Die Slovenen und der Prager Slavenkongress,” 127–35; Moritsch, “Revolution 1848,” 9–15.

28 Kořalka, *František Palacký*, 269–90.

The second factor was territory. This problem revealed the entire inherent conflict. The most prominent member of the Committee of Fifty, the bookseller and publicist Robert Blum, explained the importance of language in defining nationality. At the meeting on 26 April 1848, when Palacký's rejection in Frankfurt was already on the table, he made a proclamation that was bound to frighten the non-German neighbours:

“Did we ask whether the people of Schleswig spoke Danish when we demanded that they be cleansed of the Danes? Above all, did we not ask for our soil to remain inviolate? Did we ask how many Tyrolians spoke Italian when we demanded our soil? And did we consider how many people in Bohemia spoke Bohemian [i.e., Czech] when we sent our delegation there yesterday? No, we only demanded the land to which we were entitled, and only when we had it did we want to start negotiations.”²⁹

In German historical memory, Robert Blum appears as a much-praised freedom fighter, an exemplary democrat, and a revolutionary martyr who was executed in Vienna on 9 October 1848. However, his personality appears in an ambivalent light when one considers the way in which he understood the interests of the German nationality as a struggle for the political space of other nationalities, for he demanded territorial possessions—space—to be conquered without regard for the national linguistic minorities living there.

To put it more generally: German unity meant the willingness to go to war against one's neighbours, as the deputies in the Kieler Landtag and, later, in the Frankfurt National Assembly demonstrated when they advocated using the old federal army to go to war against federal member Denmark in order to expand the territory of the German Confederation and incorporate Schleswig. For the deputies, German unity also meant the annexation of the Prussian provinces of East and West Prussia, which were not part of the German Confederation, and finally, on 31 March 1848, in the Pre-parliament, the German patriots “almost unanimously” declared that the partition of Poland was “a flagrant injustice” and swore that their sacred duty was to restore Poland.³⁰ This was no longer the case on 27 July 1848, when the deputies in the Frankfurt National Assembly revoked the almost identical resolution by a majority of almost three quarters. They also divided Posen according to its German and Polish population and annexed the larger part to the Confederation.³¹

²⁹ *Verhandlungen des Deutschen [Vor]Parlaments*, vol. 2, 391. “Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Fünfziger-Ausschusses am 26. April.”

³⁰ *Verhandlungen des Deutschen [Vor]Parlaments*, vol. 1, 37.

³¹ Wigard, Franz, ed., *Stenographischer Bericht*, 2, 1240–47.

Metternich's comments from exile in London in 1848/49 on the relationship between nationality and the state

In the context of the general theme of “Metternich, the Slavs and the Habsburg Monarchy,” the obvious question is: How did Metternich deal with the problem of nationalities during the revolution of 1848 in parallel in his London exile, or in Richmond or Brighton, when he learned from the press what was being negotiated in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt with Austria, the German Confederation, and German unity? Was the question of nationalities important to him at all? And how much did he actually know about the proportions of German and Slavic nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy?

His papers in the National Archives in Prague provide fascinating information. One has to imagine Metternich sitting at his desk every day, spreading out newspapers from all corners of the continent, reading them, cutting out articles, and putting them aside or pasting them onto sheets of paper. He carefully underlined what he thought was important and often added comments in the margins. Later, on his return, he took his entire collection of newspaper clippings from London to Plaß, where he kept his family archive in the prelature of the monastery.³² Some of them contained articles that he had inspired or even written. He boasted that he had supplied opinion-forming information to the leading press organs, namely *The Times*, *The Morning Chronicle* and the *Quarterly Review*, and relied in particular on two English publicists, Edward Cheney and Travers Twiss, who had approached him for clarification and advice.³³

The two gentlemen would ask questions in the manner of an interview, which Metternich willingly answered—sometimes in the form of extensive memoranda. They then passed the material on to the press. They preferred to have the peculiarities of the Habsburg Monarchy explained to them. There was a whole series of articles on the subject, which Metternich directed. These articles can also be found neatly bound together in his estate.

For example, Travers Twiss's questions to Metternich on the possibilities for the unification of Germany were as follows:

“I should be obliged to you further to consider the objections to a federal state.

1. including the German states of Austria as members of the federal state
2. excluding them—but united with them as the Swiss Confederation with the [?]

Germany to be a Federal State—(*Bundesstaat*). Austria to remain as (*Staatenbund*) at present—Germany to be united with Austria in respect

³² StA Prague RAM AC sect. 9, Krt. 6–9 with the collection of newspaper clippings from 1848/49.

³³ Andics, “Ansichten und Tätigkeit des gestürzten Metternich,” 68; Siemann, *Metternich*, 731–32.

of her German provinces on the principle of confederation.”³⁴

“1. What is the correct legal view of this assembly? Is it a tradition from the old Diet or not?

2. I should now be obliged to you for a little skeleton of facts connected with the Viennese insurrection and the Hungarian Rising. I mean only a skeleton. I will set the bones together, if any of them should be detached.

3. Is there any certainty as to the Poles and the Hungarian Jews being the leaders of the émeute?

4. Have the Poles a separate organisation, or are they merely a band of the tribe of Red Republicans?”³⁵

A multi-part series on “The Austrian Empire” then instructs the English audience. The question of the Empire’s multinational character is given its own weight and shows once again that Metternich had a differentiated view and took this problem seriously as a fundamental structural feature of the Monarchy. More specifically, he saw the Slavs as the most important group in terms of numbers. For this reason, he drew up a tabular list and commented on it, which in turn left its mark on the press (see Table).³⁶

For example, one of Metternich’s newspaper clippings on Austria’s nationalities, preserved in his estate, reads: *Das österreichische Reich. [Part] V. Nationalism and races. Panslavism and Magyarism.*³⁷

It was in this context of his reflections on the relationship between nationality and the state that he formulated his most ingenious sentence. He recorded it as an aphorism, and in a way, it is the quintessence of his political philosophy, a sentence that is probably timeless. It reads:

“Two elements have appeared in society which are suitable to shatter its calm [Ruhe] to the core. I call these elements the extension of the fundamental concept of nationality to the realm of politically and legally defined territories and their signification through language.”³⁸

34 StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 10, Krt. 12, Fasz-774, Fol. 4. Letter from Travers Twiss to Metternich, 23 Nov. 1848, with questions about various forms of German national unity with regard to Austria.

35 StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 10, Krt. 12, Fasz-774, Fol. 41–42. Letter from Travers Twiss 2 December 1848 to Metternich.

36 StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 10, Krt. 12, Fasz-774, Fol. 99–100. Survey of nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy, hand-drawn by Metternich for Travers Twiss (undated).

37 NA Prague RAM AC, sect. 9, Krt. 6, Fasz-155. *Morning Chronicle*.

38 NA Prague RAM AC, sect. 8, Krt. 1,8, No. 7 “Über Nationalität,” Aphorism by Metternich in his own hand 1849; Siemann, *Metternich*, 556.

<p>Les nationalités dans l'Empire d'Autriche se trouvent, d'après les relevés plus récents, Répartis de la manière suivante :</p> <table> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Allemands</td><td>7.285.000</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Ils forment la majorité prépondérante de la population dans l'Archiduché (basse & haute Autriche) dans la partie supérieure de la Styrie (à peu près la moitié de ce Duché) dans une partie plus restreinte de la Carniole [Krain] & dans celle nommée Allemande du Comté du Tyrol. Dans ces pays au nombre de peu près 4.500.000.</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Le reste de la population Allemande composant entre 1.500.000 & 2.000.000 soit répartie entre les cercles au nord & à l'ouest, de la Bohême, de la Moravie et de la Silésie, ou elle se trouve entremêlée avec la population Czèche [tchèque].</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">En Hongrie vivent 1.200.000 Allemands y compris la Colonie dite Saxonne en Transylvanie, forte entre 3 et 400.00./</td></tr> <tr> <td>2. Slaves</td><td>17.033.000</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Repartis en Czèches, Moraves & Slovaques</td></tr> <tr> <td>a. Polonais</td><td>2.375.000</td></tr> <tr> <td>b. Ruthènes (Russiens)</td><td>2.822.000</td></tr> <tr> <td>c. Illyrs-Serbes (Croates, Slovènes & Serbes)</td><td>4.605.000</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">a & b. habitant la majeure partie de la Bohême, de la Moravie, de la Galicie & la partie Septentrionale [am Nordrand] de la Hongrie. Ils forment ainsi une ligne compacte dans la partie nord de l'Empire depuis les frontières de la Bavière jusqu'au Pruth et la Transylvanie.</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">c. comprend la partie méridionale de l'Empire depuis la frontière du Tyrol, jusqu'à celle de la Transylvanie y compris la Dalmatie.</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	1. Allemands	7.285.000	Ils forment la majorité prépondérante de la population dans l'Archiduché (basse & haute Autriche) dans la partie supérieure de la Styrie (à peu près la moitié de ce Duché) dans une partie plus restreinte de la Carniole [Krain] & dans celle nommée Allemande du Comté du Tyrol. Dans ces pays au nombre de peu près 4.500.000.		Le reste de la population Allemande composant entre 1.500.000 & 2.000.000 soit répartie entre les cercles au nord & à l'ouest, de la Bohême, de la Moravie et de la Silésie, ou elle se trouve entremêlée avec la population Czèche [tchèque].		En Hongrie vivent 1.200.000 Allemands y compris la Colonie dite Saxonne en Transylvanie, forte entre 3 et 400.00./		2. Slaves	17.033.000	Repartis en Czèches, Moraves & Slovaques		a. Polonais	2.375.000	b. Ruthènes (Russiens)	2.822.000	c. Illyrs-Serbes (Croates, Slovènes & Serbes)	4.605.000	a & b. habitant la majeure partie de la Bohême, de la Moravie, de la Galicie & la partie Septentrionale [am Nordrand] de la Hongrie. Ils forment ainsi une ligne compacte dans la partie nord de l'Empire depuis les frontières de la Bavière jusqu'au Pruth et la Transylvanie.		c. comprend la partie méridionale de l'Empire depuis la frontière du Tyrol, jusqu'à celle de la Transylvanie y compris la Dalmatie.		<p>3. Italiens 5.183.000 Ils habitent le royaume Lombardo-Vénitien, la partie méridionale du Tyrol et les parties riveraines de l'Adriatique.</p> <p>4. Valaques 2.156.000 Ils forment la majeure partie de la population de la Transylvanie et de la frontière orientale de la Hongrie.</p> <p>5. Magyars 4.800.000 Ils sont répartis dans la plaine au centre de la Hongrie, ou ils sont à peu près partout mêlés avec les populations slaves et allemandes. Ils forment sous les dénominations de Magyars & de Szekler une partie de la population de la Transylvanie.</p> <p>6. Juifs 475.000</p> <p>7. Bohémiens (Gypsiers) 128.000 En Géorgie il y en a beaucoup de sédentaires.</p> <p>La population allemande forme à peu près 1/5. [20 %] Celle Slavé au-delà des 3/7. [43 %] Celle Magyare entre 1/8 et 1/9. [13 % / 11 %] de la population totale de l'Empire</p> <p>(Survey of nationalities in the Habsburg monarchy, hand-drawn by Metternich for Travers Twiss StA Prague RAM AC, sect. 10, Krt. 12, Fasz-774, Fol 99-100.)</p>
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In other words, the reconciliation of linguistic nationality and state territory in order to build a unified nation-state is a never-ending source of political and military struggle. The failed German Empire was no longer in a position to prove this in 1849.

In Central Europe, every state that wanted to define itself as linguistically homogeneous created a minority problem on its territory. When these incorporated minorities in turn demanded their own nation-state, this inevitably meant war.

This argument is also the key to why Metternich rejected a central parliament for the entire Monarchy—not because he was an absolutist, but because it would have meant prioritising one nationality over all others. For him, this was the equivalent of ‘Germanisation’.

In judging Metternich, one must distinguish between will and ability. The emperor, the opposition of the archdukes and especially his great antagonist Franz Anton von Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky set him limits. As early as 1816, Metternich wanted to both unify and decentralise, one might even say federalise, the entire Monarchy according to rough national classifications: He divided the Empire into German, Czech, Polish, and South Slavic-Illyrian regions; Hungary would have been the fifth region.³⁹

He also favoured the continuation of the land estates (*Landtage*) within the Monarchy and rejected the neo-absolutism of the 1850s—the so-called “Bach system,” named after the neo-absolutist Minister of the Interior Alexander Bach. Fundamentally, his political goals for the Habsburg Empire were not so far removed from Palacký’s Austro-Slavism. In contrast to many German Austrians, he never spoke of the danger that a Slavic majority in the Monarchy might outnumber Germans, because he understood the integrating head—the emperor—to be dynastic rather than national. This meant that the supreme head was acceptable to all nationalities. In this respect, Metternich was not unlike today’s supporters of the British Monarchy, who still feel part of an empire—an empire that is not a nation-state and has no written constitution.

Dieter Langewiesche has recently summed up what Metternich, as a politically far-sighted observer of the times, feared:

“The European ideal of ‘one nation – one nation-state’ had a devastating effect in nationally and ethnically mixed areas. But it promised protection to everyone who was recognised as belonging to this state. Through nationalisation, the nation state destroyed the traditional living spaces of millions of people. At the same time, however, it bundled together the hopes of a secure life for those who belonged to it.”⁴⁰

39 Siemann, *Metternich*, 532–45.

40 Langewiesche, “Internationale Politik,” 37.

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The Echo of the Prague Congress in Hungary in the Contemporary Press and Political Thought

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Abstract. At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Hungarian state faced a significant dilemma: It had to assert its independence within the Habsburg Empire while navigating the challenges of modern ethnic and linguistic national movements in Hungary. Many members of the reform-era Hungarian aristocracy believed that modernization, urbanization, and the extension of rights would lead to the assimilation or, at least, to loyalty of non-Hungarian groups. They envisioned a multi-ethnic state where Hungarian would be the official language for political and administrative purposes, while acknowledging the existence of other languages within the realm. This concept of a 'Hungarian political nation' was later formalized in the 1867 Compromise. However, others warned that the rise of Hungarian nationalism could alienate non-Hungarian groups, particularly the Slavs, and competing nation-building processes might be a threat to the integrity of the multi-ethnic Hungarian state.

Intended to foster Slavic cooperation within the Habsburg Empire, the Prague Congress in June 1848 further intensified concerns. While initially seen as a potential ally against Austrian dominance, the Congress's pronouncements on Slavic rights and autonomy were perceived as a threat to Hungarian statehood. Kossuth, in particular, reacted strongly to the Congress's accusations of Hungarian oppression and its calls for Slavic independence.

The Prague Congress had a profound impact on Hungarian political thought. It solidified the perception of Slavic nationalism as a threat to the integrity of the Hungarian Kingdom. Rather than fostering cooperation, the Congress turned out to be a symbol of conflict and a point of contention in Hungarian-Slavic relations.

Keywords: national movements in Central Europe, political nation, nationalities, languages of Central Europe

The Hungarian dilemma

At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Hungarian state faced a critical dilemma: how to reconcile its strengthening historical autonomy against Vienna within the Habsburg Empire with the rise of ethnic and linguistic nationalism among the non-Hungarian nationalities in Hungary. The linguistic and ethnic

diversity of the Hungarian state further complicated the situation. In the state rebuilt after the Ottoman occupation, Hungarians (Magyars) were only a relative majority, often in areas with populations that were mixed due to internal migration and resettlement. The majority of non-Hungarian nationalities were Slavs (Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Ruthenians, and Slovenes).

Already at the end of the eighteenth century, the 1790–1791 Diet raised the question of the official use of the Hungarian language. However, this did not primarily stem from an ethno-nationalist agenda. Instead, supporters sought to replace the country's official language, Latin, with Hungarian, primarily to counterbalance the growing influence of German in the Habsburg Empire.¹ This reflected the belief that Hungary, with its own historical constitution and traditions rooted in the coronation of St Stephen, should have a separate administrative language. The idea was also formulated in the Diet's declaration: "Hungary cannot be governed in the same way as the rest of the Empire."²

The aristocratic elite of the Reform Era (roughly from the 1820s to the revolution of 1848) recognized that promoting the Hungarian language would probably stimulate the development of a Hungarian national consciousness and thereby encourage the development of national movements among other non-Hungarian nationalities within the Kingdom of Hungary. However, most reform-minded aristocrats were confident that some balance and harmony between liberalism and the national idea could be achieved. They thought that the 'Hungarus' consciousness, patriotism that prevailed up to the end of the eighteenth century, could be transformed into civic patriotism. However, based on the liberal development of law, the nationalities launched their own linguistic, cultural, and later their political movements,³ and gradually gravitated out of the Hungarian state.⁴

Optimism and anxiety

Despite this background, the elite of the Reform Era held an optimistic, almost Mazzinian, view. They believed that the successes of the reform process, including

1 Kamusella, *The Politics of Language*, 434–38.

2 Németh and Soós, "A magyarországi hungarus-tudat."

3 It was in this period that the Slovak, Serbian, and Croatian literary language movements were initiated. Anton Bernolák founded the Slovak Learned Society in 1792 in Trnava (Nagyszombat), and in 1826 the Matica srpska was established in Pest. By 1848, the first political programs had also been formulated. The Slovaks' demands were met with an uprising against the Hungarian government in 1848, while Jelačić articulated the demands of the Croatian nation before leading his army across the Drava River to confront the Hungarian government.

4 Molnár, "Etnikumok."

the building of a modern civic Hungarian state, the extension of rights, the inclusion of everyone behind the ramparts of law, and the growth of urbanization would naturally lead to the non-Hungarian nationalities' loyalty and to their partial and voluntary assimilation or Magyarization. They envisioned these groups becoming Hungarian out of gratitude for the benefits they would receive.

Members of the elite believed that, protected by Hungarian laws and benefiting from the guidance of the Hungarian political elite, non-Hungarian nationalities would be gradually assimilated into Hungarian society and culture. They did not expect full linguistic assimilation, but rather that the inhabitants of the multilingual Hungarian or rather 'Hungarus' state would consider the state with the Hungarian official language as their own homeland. Count István Széchenyi exemplified this optimistic view.⁵

Hungarian would have served as the official language of the state, while acknowledging the multilingual reality of the Kingdom. The concept of a 'Hungarian political nation' was envisioned, similar to the one that emerged after the 1867 Compromise. This concept emphasized the unity and indivisibility of the Hungarian state, while acknowledging the existence of various nationalities within its borders, including Hungarians themselves, primarily as linguistic groups.⁶ This recognition was reflected in the 1848 revolutionary currency, the Kossuth forint, which bore inscriptions in five languages, reflecting the impracticality of imposing a single language.

Critics of the assimilationist potential of extending rights pointed to the inherent diversity of the Hungarian Kingdom. They argued that the formation of a unilingual political nation, the French model (its partial implementation) of a nation-state was not applicable due to the Hungarian Kingdom's multi-ethnic character. There was a fear that the success of the Hungarian national movement, driven by a relative majority, would alienate rather than attract members of the non-Hungarian nationalities. These groups, fearing assimilation or subjugation by the dominant Hungarian movement, might initiate their own national movements, formulating their own political goals and leading to the disintegration of the Hungarian state.

In his 1843 Speech on the Issue of Slavic Nationality in Hungary, Miklós Wesselényi warned that growing nationalism among Slavic populations within the Kingdom of Hungary could lead to their alienation from the Hungarian state and their potential turn towards Russia. Given the sensitivity of this topic and its potential to fuel separatist sentiments, Wesselényi's book could only be published abroad,

5 Fried, "Széchenyi István."

6 Demeter, "Politikai nemzet."

in Leipzig, suggesting a desire to avoid direct confrontation within Hungary.⁷ Thereafter, the distrust towards non-Hungarian national movements in Hungary was almost constantly present in Hungarian political thought. This was the case even though the movements were not entirely homogeneous; in fact, particularly within the Croatian and Slovak movements, some factions were ready to accept the framework of the Hungarian state and the existence of a Hungarian political nation.

The 1848 Revolution and its aftermath in light of the Prague Slav Congress in June 1848

As the Hungarian revolutionary government's ambassador to Paris, László Teleki, despite his initial enthusiasm for the 1848 Revolution, viewed Kossuth's declaration of independence in Debrecen as a tragic turn. He wrote to Kossuth on 14 March 1849, voicing his belief that extending rights to the nationalities within the Kingdom was crucial for success. He argued that the declaration of independence would not only end Austrian rule but also dismantle the historical Hungarian state integrity, as an independent Hungarian nation-state could not exist within its traditional borders. This conviction remained with Teleki until his death by suicide in 1861, even though the Compromise of 1867 was drawing close.⁸

Despite its failure, the 1848 Prague Congress, which was built on ethnic nationalism and promoted a common Slavic policy, held significant importance for the Hungarian political elite, especially given their own claims to historical rights in opposition to the assertion of ethnic rights. Many believed that the Czechs, drawing inspiration from the Hungarian example, would assert similar claims to their own historical rights and autonomy. While the April Laws of 1848 modernized the Hungarian state based on historical constitutional law, and many in the Hungarian national movement assumed that the Czechs would follow suit, there was a current in the Czech national movement that opted for a modern linguistic and ethnic solution. This was natural, as in the spring of 1848, they had essentially two options: Frankfurt and modern pan-German ideas, or cooperation with other Slavs within the Empire.⁹ From the moment it was organized, the Hungarian press viewed the Prague Slav Congress with mistrust, seeing Pan-Slavism as the greatest threat.¹⁰

However, when the Prague Congress issued demands for linguistic and ethnic autonomy and characterized Hungarian reform efforts as acts of tyranny against

7 Wesselényi, *Szózat*.

8 Demeter, "Politikai nemzet."

9 Schelle, *Státoprávní aspekty*, 5–59.

10 See e.g., *Jelenkor*, 23 May 1848 ("A miniszterelnök a külügyminiszternek").

the nationalities within the Kingdom, it provoked outrage in Hungary. In July 1848, Lajos Kossuth published an article in his newspaper *Hírlap* that vehemently denounced these accusations of Hungarian tyranny.¹¹

The idea of a Slavic cooperation of the Prague Congress first appeared in Hungarian public discourse in the context of Hungarian–Croatian relations. Kossuth emphasized that there were strong historical connections between Hungarians and Croats, whom he considered brother nations. He argued that these ties were unbreakable and highlighted that when Napoleon's conquests had disrupted this historical unity and these territories had fallen under Austrian rule, Croats longed to return to the Hungarian Crown. Kossuth explicitly emphasized that the use of the Croatian language was permitted within the Kingdom of Hungary.

Kossuth presented a historical legal argument, pointing to the 1830 Hungarian Diet, where Croatian representatives supported the introduction of Hungarian as the official language.¹² He stressed that this was not perceived as an act of conquest or forced assimilation, but rather as a symbol of Hungary's independence from Vienna.¹³ However, as evident in the resolutions of the Prague Congress, the emphasis shifted towards Croatian language education as the foundation for political organization. Despite the Hungarian desire to share the fruits of their revolutionary gains with all nationalities within the Kingdom, these efforts were met with rejection.¹⁴

This highlights the fundamental conflict between the Hungarian emphasis on historical rights and the emerging ideology of linguistic and ethnic self-determination. However, in Hungary, this approach was perceived as a threat of a conquering Pan-Slavism. This interpretation persisted until the end of the Dual Monarchy. As Lajos Csernyátonyi wrote in the newspaper *Marczius Tizenötödike* in June 1848:

“Do not be afraid that Paskievich will come with 109,000 men to help the Illyrian rebels and Prague intriguers. This is a bogeyman who used to frighten children, but keep your eyes open to the invisible army of emissaries among you who may surprise you with their plots. The Muscovite can only come as a constitutional prince, he sees that absolutism has no future in Europe, and if he were assured that the planned constitutional South Slavic empire would also choose him as its head, it is quite likely that he would grant a constitution to his present peoples.”¹⁵

11 Kossuth, “A szlávok első gyűlésének proclamatiója.”

12 In reality, the Hungarian Diet adopted this despite protests from some of the Croatian representatives.

13 Kamusella, *The Politics of Language*, 439–52.

14 Gergely, “Kossuth.”

15 Csernyátonyi, “Pest jun. 16.”

The Hungarian revolutionary government sought to extend the rights and freedoms gained through the revolution to all nationalities within the Kingdom of Hungary. However, instead of gratitude, they encountered hostility. Kossuth lamented:

“It was from there that mother-murdering hands rose against us, from where we had the right to expect the clearest signs of recognition.”¹⁶

The Prague Congress advocated for the ethnic and linguistic rights of the Slavic peoples. This concept, which represented the idea of an ethnic federation within the Habsburg Monarchy, directly challenged the historical rights and territorial integrity of the Hungarian state. It also raised concerns in the Hungarian press about some Slavic national movements’ increasing political reliance on Tsarist Russia. Furthermore, the Congress not only rejected claims based on Hungarian historical rights and emphasized linguistic and ethnic self-determination, but its proclamation also called for the ‘defeat of tyrants’ (referring to Hungarian politics). The Hungarian press interpreted this as incitement for Slavic-majority territories to secede from the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁷

Kossuth believed that a peaceful resolution between the Hungarian pursuit of independence based on historical rights (which, he acknowledged, had an inherently ethno-nationalist dimension) and the emerging demands for linguistic and ethnic autonomy was unlikely. He increasingly saw armed conflict as the inevitable outcome, foreshadowing the impending military struggle.

Zsigmond Kemény, a prominent supporter of Count István Széchenyi and a leader of the centralist faction, echoed these concerns in the 17 June 1848 edition of the *Pesti Hírlap*. He condemned the Prague Congress, accusing it of being dominated by Slavic propaganda. Kemény argued that by rejecting historical legal foundations, the Congress had declared an open war against Hungarian interests.¹⁸

The legacy of the Prague Congress in Hungary

By the end of the nineteenth century, a negative stereotype of the Prague Congress had taken hold within Hungarian political thought. Initially, there had been expectations of finding an ally in the Czech nation in the struggle for independence from Vienna, given their shared historical statehood. However, the Congress instead presented a new set of demands based on national and ethnic principles, directly contradicting Hungary’s

16 Gyetvai, “A nemzetiségi kérdés.”

17 Kossuth, “A szlávok első gyűlésének proklamációja.”

18 Kemény, “Pest, jún. 16-án.”

emphasis on historical rights and legal claims. Moreover, the Congress accused Hungary of forcibly oppressing the Slavs living in Hungary. Coupled with fears of Slavic unity and the potential disintegration of the Hungarian state, this led to deep-rooted antagonism towards the Czech national movement and the idea of Slavic unity. The Prague Congress was seen as a threat rather than a parallel to the Hungarian Revolution. Figures like Štúr and Hurbán, who, according to Hungarian interpretations, advocated at the Congress for an aggressive, even violent path towards Slavic unity, became symbols of this perceived threat. The failure of the Slavic revolutionary movements in 1848–1849 further reinforced the Hungarian belief in the historical and legal legitimacy of their own claims within the Habsburg Empire.¹⁹

The proclamations issued by the Slav Congress, outlining their goals and aspirations, were met with suspicion by many Hungarians. Some Hungarian observers, with a degree of exaggeration and prejudice, satirically, but with apprehension suggested that the Slav Congress had plans to ‘consume’ neighbouring states: Hungary for ‘breakfast,’ Austria for ‘lunch,’ and Germany for ‘dinner.’²⁰

After the 1867 Compromise, this fear increasingly shifted to the interpretation of Czech–Slovak relations: In the Prague Congress, the beginning of Czech political interference in the political life of Slovaks in Hungary was seen, specifically in Palacký’s federalist plan. This view became particularly prevalent in the last decades of the nineteenth century, mainly after 1895, when the idea of modern Czechoslovakism—which was still politically marginal and primarily cultural at the time—began to be articulated more intensely and with the engagement in Hungarian political life of the, Hlasits, former Slovak students from Hungary studying at the University of Prague and belonging to Masaryk’s circle.²¹

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19 Demmel and Ábrahám, “Gyökerek és választások.”

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Political Paths of the Croatian Participants at the Prague Congress of the Slavs in 1848

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Abstract. The starting point of this study is the reception of Austroslavism in mid-nineteenth-century Croatian politics, especially during the 1848–1849 revolutionary years. Austroslavism as a political concept aspiring to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy and remodel it into a federation based on the ethnic-linguistic principle, became a major component of the 1848–1849 Croatian political movement. In the second part of the study, the participation of Croatian representatives at the 1848 Congress of the Slavs in Prague is discussed. The ten Croatian delegates in Prague were politicians, intellectuals, and artists. Three of them were elected by the Zagreb People's Assembly to be the Croatian representatives at the Congress in Prague, and the others were students in Vienna or in Prague at the time. They were trying to uphold the Austro-Slavic spirit of the Congress and enforce the Congress's main constitutional goals in their political, publicist or artistic work in the following years. However, although some of them played a significant role in Croatian political life in the 1848–1849 as publicists and even as members of the Ban's Council, the first Croatian Government operating from May 1848 to June 1850, they were unable to achieve the Congress's political and constitutional goals. Even the idea of resuming the Congress of the Slavs in Zagreb, as well as the 1851-year proposition of the Croatian cultural organisation *Matica ilirska* to organize the conference of Slavic philologists in a Slavic capital, were dropped due to the political circumstances. The study then traces the development of the ideological and political life paths of individuals: Dragojlo Kušlan, Josip Praus, Mato Topalović, Andrija Torkvat Brlić, Maksimilijan Prica, Stanko Vraz, Vatroslav Lisinski, Dr. Miroslav Dražić, Jakob Franjo Tkalec, and Petar Frančeskini. Except for the latter two, they were well-known and active in the political and (or) cultural life of nineteenth-century Croatia. Their political thoughts in the 1848–1849 revolutionary years and in subsequent decades are analysed. Overall, a panorama of the political ideas, together with the careers of these people, is presented. Although disappointed with neo-absolutism, some played a significant role in Croatia's political life in the years following the reestablishment of the constitutional system in the Habsburg Monarchy.

Keywords: Austroslavism, Congress of the Slavs in Prague in 1848, Croatian participants and their political paths, nineteenth-century political ideas

Austroslavism in mid-nineteenth-century Croatian politics

The Austroslavic idea predates the so-called ‘Springtime of the peoples’ in 1848.¹ Soon after the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder described the Slavs as noble and good-natured people with a bright future ahead in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Riga–Leipzig, 1784–1791, four volumes), the Czech philologist and historian Josef Dobrovský sent an address to Emperor Leopold II describing the Slavs as a group of peoples connected by the tradition of their Apostles, Cyril and Methodius. The first custodian of the Court Library in Vienna, Jernej (Bartholomäus) Kopitar, attributed Austrian patriotic orientation to the Austroslavic idea.² In his paper entitled “Über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der böhmischen Literatur und ihre Bedeutung” (1842), Count Leo von Thun und Hohenstein argued that the peoples of the Habsburg Monarchy were joined together by the need to be protected from mighty neighbours and that the Monarchy’s existence should be based on the “principle of mutual respect for the individuality of peoples.” In subsequent years, similar ideas were proposed by other Czech authors, among them the historian and politician František Palacký in the spring of 1848.³

The integration process of the Croatian nation was marked by the intertwine-
ment of the Slavic, South-Slavic, and the Croatian components. This is evident in the
works of Croatian authors from the seventeenth century onwards (Juraj Križanić,
Vinko Pribojević, Pavao Ritter Vitezović, and others), and full momentum was
achieved in the works of several members of the Croatian National Revival in the
nineteenth century.⁴ The idea of Slavic mutuality was strongly incorporated into
the Croatian National Revival.⁵ At the height of the 1848 revolutionary turmoil,
Austroslavism as a political concept aspiring to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy
and remodelling it into a federation based on the ethnic-linguistic principle were a
major component of the Croatian political movement.⁶ Reasons for its acceptance

1 This research was carried out as part of the project 380-01-02-23-41 (Croatia and Europe: Institutions and Individuals in the Development of Modern Society and State), funded by the European Union NextGenerationEU programme.

2 Moritsch, “Der Austroslavismus,” 13.

3 Šidak, “Austroslavizam,” 96–101, cit. p. 97; Moritsch, “Der Austroslavismus,” 18–23.

4 Iveljić, “Stiefkinder Österreichs,” 125.

5 There is an extensive body of literature on the influence of Ján Kollár’s, Pavel Josef Šafařík’s, and Josef Dobrovský’s ideas and those of other Slavists on members of the Croatian National Revival (Illyrianists/Illyrians, Croat. *ilirci*). Among them are the following: Stančić, “Ideja o »slavenskoj uzajamnosti« Jána Kollára”; Stančić, “Hrvatski narodni preporod”; Stančić, “Die kroatische Variante”; Stančić, Gajeva “Još Horvatska ni propala”; Šidak et al., *Hrvatski narodni preporod*; Kessler, *Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft*.

6 For Austroslavism in Croatia cp. Iveljić, “Stiefkinder Österreichs”; Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*,

should be sought in the fear that the foundation of a great German state would comprise the Habsburg Monarchy, and also in the intensification of Croatian–Hungarian relations. The 1848 Hungarian April Laws restricted Croatia's autonomy to merely three Croatian counties (Zagreb, Križevci, and Varaždin), while three Slavonian counties (Virovitica, Požega, and Syrmium) were supposed to send their deputies to the Hungarian Parliament directly. Moreover, the Military Frontier, Dalmatia, and Istria were distinct administrative units, separated from civil Croatia and Slavonia. The acceptance of this Hungarian policy would mean leaving the Croatian state at the mercy of the Hungarians, who pursued an extremely non-liberal policy with regard to Croatia's autonomy. The Croatian reaction was harsh: The Croatian Ban Josip Jelačić enacted a decision on 25 April 1848 to sever Croatian administrative bodies' official ties with the Hungarian Government.⁷ The decision was confirmed by the Croatian Parliament sitting in June and July 1848. This was the first representative, i.e., elected parliament in Croatian history. Croatian politicians were aware that Croatia's territorial integrity, the preservation and expansion of its autonomy, the constitution of an autonomous Croatian government, and convening the Croatian Parliament were prerequisites for Croatia's further progress and development, as well as for the implementation of modernisation reforms in a liberal spirit. These reforms provided for the introduction of civil and political freedoms, the abolition of serfdom, the establishment of the basic national institutions (university, national bank), and general economic and cultural development. These goals were articulated in the 'Demands of the Nation,' adopted on 25 March 1848 by the Grand National Assembly in Zagreb.⁸ This was the most important programmatic document of the 1848–1849 Croatian political movement. In the following months, the Croatian political programme was supplemented by political brochures, newspaper articles, and documents issued by individuals and Croatian state bodies.

Originally published in the *Oesterreichische Zeitung* newspaper and translated into Croatian, the anonymous article "Die Völker Oesterreichs" [The Peoples of Austria] stresses the need to restructure the Habsburg Monarchy into a federal state where each people would have a certain administrative and financial autonomy. All the people would share their military and foreign affairs, and their elected representatives would be assembled in a joint congress. The author envisaged the foundation

271–421; Šidak, "Novi prilozi"; Šidak, "Austroslavizam"; Korunić, *Jugoslavizam i federalizam*; Korunić, "Program konfederalizma"; Leščilovskaja, "Austroslavizam"; Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret*, 127–36; Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*, 229–53.

7 The Ban's proclamation in German in: Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret 1848.–1849. g. Izabrani dokumenti*, 66–69.

8 "Forderungen der Nation," see in: Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret 1848.–1849. g. Izabrani dokumenti*, 59–62.

of a German, a Czech, a Polish, a Hungarian, an Italian, and a South-Slavic political unit.⁹ This was the first signal of the future Austroslavic policy in the Croatian press. An article by the politician, writer, and historian Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski “Kakva trčba da bude u obće politika naša” [What Should Our Policy Generally Be] attracted much attention both in Croatia and abroad. Sakcinski’s view was that the Slavs should follow the German example and gather at a general congress to discuss mutual assistance and cooperation without violating the existing borders.¹⁰ At approximately the same time, Czech politicians, aware of the threat to their homeland from Frankfurt am Main, began the preparations for an assembly of the representatives of Slavic peoples at a congress in Prague.¹¹ The Congress of the Slavs (2–12 June 1848) was developed and held in the spirit of Austroslavism. Its task was to debate the preservation and remodelling of the Habsburg Monarchy into a federation of equal peoples.

After Austroslavism was elaborated as a political concept at the Congress of the Slavs in Prague,¹² its most consistent advocates in the Croatian political public were Croatian liberal newspapers, primarily *Novine dalmatinsko-hèrvatsko-slavonske* [The Dalmatian–Croatian–Slavonian Newspaper], *Slavenski Jug* [The Slavic South], and the *Südslawische Zeitung*, as well as the society *Slavenska lipa na slavenskom jugu* [The Slavic Linden in the Slavic South]. Dragojlo Kušlan, Josip Praus, Maksimilijan Prica, and Andrija Torkvat Brlić, Croatian representatives at the Prague Congress, authored most of the articles in these papers about the implementation of Austroslavism and the federal restructuring of the Habsburg Monarchy. Bogoslav Šulek was the author of most of the articles on the topic in the newspaper *Novine dalmatinsko-hèrvatsko-slavonske*. Ognjeslav Utješenović Ostrožinski, an officer in the Military Frontier, deputy in the 1848 Croatian Parliament, and later grand Prefect of Varaždin County (1875–1883), published a programme for restructuring the Habsburg Monarchy into a confederation of equal peoples. The programme came out in instalments in the *Slavenski Jug* newspaper (from 27 October to 5 November 1848) and was accepted by the *Slavenska lipa* society and by liberals assembled around the Ljubljana-based newspaper *Slovenija*.¹³ *Slavenski*

9 *Novine dalmatinsko-hèrvatsko-slavonske* no. 34, 13 April 1848.

10 *Novine dalmatinsko-hèrvatsko-slavonske* no. 37, 20 April 1848.

11 A copy of the programme of the Congress of the Slavs, belonging to Andrija Torkvat Brlić, one of the attending Croatian representatives, with his notes on the margins is kept in the Archives of the Brlić family in Slavonski Brod. AOB box 6, bundle 9.

12 The book *Der Prager Slavenkongress*, edited by Moritsch, analyses the participation of different Slavic peoples in the Congress.

13 “Programm zur Konstituirung des österreichischen Kaiserstaates nach dem Prinzip der konstitutionellen Freiheit, der nationalen Gleichberechtigung und Konföderation,” see: Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret 1848.–1849. g. Izabrani dokumenti*, 236–50.

Jug and the *Südslawische Zeitung* advocated Austroslavism even after the adoption of the Imposed March Constitution of 4 March 1849, when the federalisation of the Monarchy definitely became unfeasible.¹⁴

The prevailing view in Croatian historiography is that the concept of Austroslavism was expounded in some official documents as well, such as in Article XI of the Croatian Parliament and in the Manifesto of the Croatian-Slavonic People that the Parliament addressed to the European public, explaining the major objectives of Croatian politics.¹⁵ Both documents name Croatia's autonomous affairs and the common affairs shared by the entire Monarchy, which were defined in a similar manner as in the documents of the Congress of the Slavs.

During neo-absolutism, all forms of public life were under very strict scrutiny, and it was impossible for the opposition to publish newspaper articles. Upon the restoration of constitutionality in the early 1860s, Croatian politics advocated again the federalisation of the Monarchy, but this time under new circumstances. However, the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Settlement and its outcome—the dual structure of the Monarchy—and the failure to reach an agreement with the Czechs four years later shattered the dreams of federalising the Monarchy for good. Subsequently, part of the Croatian political public gradually accepted the idea of cooperating with other South Slavic peoples in order to unite into a federal community outside the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.¹⁶

Croatian representatives at the Congress of the Slavs in Prague in 1848

Ten Croatian representatives took part in the Congress of the Slavs in Prague:

14 Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret*, 127–36; Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*, 229–53; Iveljić, “Stiefkinder Österreichs,” 129–32.

15 For the conclusions of the 1848 Croatian Parliament and for the aforementioned Manifesto in German see: Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret 1848.–1849. g. Izabrani dokumenti*, 88–141, 188–96. In his monograph (*Hrvatski politički pokret*), the author finds that the thesis about the Croatian Parliament advocating the idea of remodelling the Habsburg Monarchy into a federation of equal peoples in its conclusion XI is without foundation. He believes that the Croatian Parliament did not even debate it, at least judging by newspaper coverage, since the newspapers did not publish a single speech delivered by a deputy advocating Austroslavism. He also adds that the Croatian newspapers supporting this concept would not have missed the opportunity to introduce a speech of this kind. Markus, *Hrvatski politički pokret*, 134–36. The Conclusions are the only official documents preserved from the sittings of the 1848 Croatian Parliament. For this reason, the newspapers that followed the sittings in great detail are an important source for studying its work and results.

16 Iveljić, “Stiefkinder Österreichs,” writes on this tersely providing a good overview, 132–37. For Croatia in the period from 1848 to 1880 cp. Gross, *Die Anfänge des modernen Kroatien*.

Dragojlo Kušlan, Josip Praus, Mato Topalović, Andrija Torkvat Brlić, Maksimilijan Prica, Stanko Vraz, Vatroslav Lisinski, Dr. Miroslav Dražić, Jakob Franjo Tkalec, and Petar Frančeskini, who were members of the South-Slavic section.

According to newspaper reports, Dragojlo Kušlan, Josip Praus, and Đuro Kontić were elected at a national assembly held in Zagreb on 11 May 1848 to be the Croatian representatives at the Congress of the Slavs in Prague. Maksimilijan Prica went to Prague instead of Kontić.¹⁷ The latter three Croatian representatives in Prague and the renowned poet of the Croatian Revival period Stanko Vraz were elected by the Croatian Parliament to take part in the deliberations of the Czech Parliament that was supposed to be in session in Prague,¹⁸ but this did not happen due to insurgency and a military intervention. It seems that the remaining Croatian representatives came to the Congress at the invitation of a member of the organising committee, perhaps on their own initiative.

Dragojlo (Dragutin) Kušlan (1817–1867) was a politician, lawyer, non-fiction writer and one of the editors of *Slavenski Jug*. From 1848 to his death, he was repeatedly elected member of the Croatian Parliament and in 1861 was appointed grand prefect of Zagreb County. Josip Praus (1819–1874) was born in Czechia and came to Zagreb after completing his university studies. He was the editor of the *Agramer Zeitung* (1846–1848), and subsequently of the *Südslawische Zeitung* (1849–1852). Furthermore, he was a Secretary of the *Matica ilirska* cultural organisation and the editor of its magazine *Neven* from 1853 to 1857. Maksimilijan Prica (1823–1873) was a politician, lawyer, and journalist who wrote articles for *Slavenski Jug* and the *Südslawische Zeitung*. From 1862, he was a judge of the Table of Seven, the highest court of law in Croatia, and from 1871, Head of the Justice Department of the Croatian Royal Land Government. All three were members of the *Slavenska lipa na slavenskom jugu* society, ardent Illyrianists, and from 1848 strong supporters of Austroslavism.¹⁹

Stanko Vraz (true name Jakob Frass, 1810–1851) was a Croatian poet born in Styria, a fervent Illyrianist, and the first professional writer in Croatia. He produced love poetry in the Romantic spirit, and published several collections of poems. He also translated from Greek, Latin, the Slavic languages, German, English, Italian, French, and Spanish. Most often, he translated Romantic poetry. He is considered

17 *Novine dalmatinsko-hrvatsko-slavonske* no. 47, 13 May 1848.

18 Perić, *Hrvatski državni sabor*, 176–77. At the invitation of Ban Jelačić, the Czechs sent two representatives to the Croatian Parliament. Iveljić, “Stieflkinder Österreichs,” 179, says that Stanko Vraz, who was of Slovenian origin, but lived in Zagreb for years and was a prominent Illyrianist and a Croatian poet, was a representative of the Slovenes from Styria to the Congress of the Slavs.

19 For their public activities cp. Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*.

one of the most eminent poets of the Croatian Romanticism. He corresponded with distinguished Slavic philologists, especially Kollár and Šafařík, with whom he cherished a long-standing friendship. It was probably due to their encouragement that he attended the Congress of the Slavs.²⁰

Andrija Torkvat Brlić (1826–1868) was a politician, non-fiction writer, philologist, and historian. In the spring of 1848, he studied in Vienna preparing his PhD in theology. His diary and many preserved letters suggest that during his studies in Vienna and also thereafter, he maintained frequent contacts with numerous Slavic intellectuals, especially Czechs and Slovaks. He became a fervent Illyrianist while attending secondary school in Zagreb. From the beginning of the 1848 revolutionary unrest in the Habsburg Monarchy, his political activities intensified significantly. He may have gone to Prague at the invitation of some of his friends.²¹

Mato Topalović (1812–1862) was a Catholic priest, politician, and writer, one of the most prominent members of the Croatian National Revival in Slavonia. In the revolutionary year of 1848, he was a teacher in the seminary in Đakovo. He studied theology in Zagreb and Pest, and completed his studies in Vienna, where he obtained his PhD degree in philosophy and theology. In Vienna, he moved among Slavic students. He was a bosom friend of the future bishop of Đakovo, politician and patron of the arts, Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who may have prompted him to go to Prague, where he travelled in the company of Stanko Vraz. During absolutism, he completely withdrew from political life.²²

Vatroslav Lisinski (true name Ignatius Fuchs, 1819–1854) was a Croatian composer of Slovenian-Croatian origin. Like Stanko Vraz, he embraced the ideas of the Illyrian movement and Croatianised his first name and surname. A lawyer by profession, from 1842 to 1847, he was a notary of the Tabula Banalis in Zagreb, the highest court of law in Croatia at the time. He received his musical education through private lessons. In 1846, there was a very successful world premiere of the first Croatian opera *Ljubav i zloba* [Love and Malice] that Lisinski composed with the assistance of his former teacher Georg Karl Wisner von Morgenstern who wrote the instrumentation. In the autumn of 1847, Lisinski went to Prague to further his musical studies with the financial support of many patriots. However, due to his age, he was not admitted to the Conservatory as a regular student but managed to enrol

20 Other Croatian representatives at the Congress of the Slavs, especially Brlić, Kušlan and Topalović often talked to and corresponded with the aforementioned two philologists and with subsequent codifiers of the Slovak language L'udovit Štúr and Martin Hattala. Švoger, "On Connections," 26–31. More extensively on S. Vraz see: Drechsler, *Stanko Vraz*.

21 For his public activities cp. Švoger, *Ideali, strast i politika*; Župan, ed., *Zbornik o A. T. Brliću*.

22 Topalović's varied political, literary and cultural work has not been sufficiently researched. For more see: Pavić, "Ilirizam u Đakovu."

in the Organ School. He received private lessons in composition and instrumentation from the director of the Conservatory Jan Bedřich Kittl. He returned to Zagreb in the autumn of 1850.²³ Since he was living in Prague during the Congress of the Slavs, he was involved in its activity.

The literature names some other Croatian participants of the Congress, of whom very little information is available. Moreover, it is evident that some of the information is inaccurate. For example, Franjo Tkalc, a merchant from Karlovac, is mentioned as a participant. We could not find any information about him before we established that this is most likely Jakob Franjo Tkalec (1822–1865), who, at the time of the Congress, was studying medicine and sciences in Vienna. Subsequently, he was a teacher at the Zagreb classics-programme secondary school.²⁴ We have no information as to his actual participation in the Congress;²⁵ in his later years, he was devoted to his profession and did not take part in political life.

Petar Frančeskini is yet another person about whose participation in the Congress we have no information. Historiography has not established his identity either. In view of the above, it may be that Frančeskini is the wrong form of the surname and that the person in question is actually Petar Franceschi (1822–1849), a Dalmatian intellectual, writer, and translator from Omiš, who is most famous for his contributions on the history of the Republic of Poljica (*Poljička republika, Poljička knežija, Poljica*), an autonomous administrative region in Dalmatia. Franceschi died of cholera in Zadar on 6 September 1849.²⁶

Finally, the Congress was also attended by the physician Dr. Miroslav Dražić (1815–1879). We have more information about him, and his example speaks volumes about the enthusiasm that the Congress of the Slavs aroused in a section of the Croatian people. Dražić was born in Požega, Slavonia and obtained a doctor's degree in medicine in 1839 in Vienna, where he found himself again in the spring of 1848. Already in March, he joined the revolutionary movements with a rifle in his hand. Thrilled with the idea of the Slavic connection and also led by intense indignation towards the Hungarian revolutionary movement, Dražić joined a larger group of Slavs from Vienna who made their way to the Congress on their own initiative. He was actively engaged in its work and asked his native town (Požega) and county (County of Požega) to confirm him as their official representative to the Congress.²⁷

23 Katalinić, "Vatroslav Lisinski," 25–40.

24 Barić, "Jakob Franjo Tkalec."

25 While the Congress was in session, he published an article entitled "An die Slawen" in the Prague newspaper *Slawische Centralblätter*, 6 June 1848. Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 421.

26 Matijević, "Uvod."

27 Kempf, "Dva pisma uglednog Požežanina iz 1848."

Some of the Croatian representatives played a major role in the deliberations of the Congress of the Slavs. Mato Topalović and Maksimilijan Prica delivered speeches at a preparatory event on 30 May 1848. Topalović discussed the situation in South Slavic countries, with special reference to the territorial fragmentation of Croatian lands and the fact that some of the South Slavs were under Turkish oppression. He hoped that the Croatian interests would be enforced within a Slavic framework.²⁸

Members of the Congress were divided into three sections: Czech–Slovak, Polish–Ruthenian, and South–Slavic, the latter comprising all Croatian representatives. Topalović, Brlić, and Praus were elected to the Great Committee comprising sixteen members. Stanko Vraz was elected Congress vice-president. Prica was elected one of the clerks of the Congress, Kušlan was elected his deputy, and Brlić deputy clerk of the South–Slavic section. According to his own testimony, Miroslav Dražić was elected clerk of the South–Slavic section. The work of the Congress focused on the sections. Therefore, each section elected two of its representatives who were entitled to participate in the debates of the other sections. Praus was elected representative of the Czech–Slovak section. Kušlan and Prica were elected representatives of the Polish–Ruthenian section, and Brlić deputy representative. Topalović was elected speaker of the South–Slavic section at the Congress's first plenary session. The views he presented in his speech were similar to those given at the preparatory event. According to the Congress's Rules of Procedure, the plenary was supposed to accept conclusions that would be adopted by all three sections following debate. Slight differences in standpoints were conciliated by the Great Committee, and the so-called Diplomatic Committee was elected to edit the minutes of the Congress and to draft the Manifesto to the Peoples of Europe. Praus and Kušlan were among its members. Two additional committees were elected to draft a petition addressed to the emperor and define the funds necessary for meeting the Slavic objectives. Their members were Prica and Brlić.²⁹ Three sections could not agree on all issues, and views diverged within individual sections as well. There were difficulties in mutual understanding, as all representatives spoke their own language and sometimes interpreters were required. Official sources of the Congress and some of its participants denied allegations in German newspapers that Congress participants used German because otherwise they could not understand one another.³⁰

28 Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 418; Iveljić, "Stiefkinder Österreichs," 179.

29 Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 419–35, 455; Kempf, "Dva pisma uglednog Požežanina iz 1848," 3.

30 Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 435–66. Maksimilian Prica who participated at the Congress under the pseudonym Pl.....ki [Pleševički] refuted allegations about German being the language of discussions in his article "Der Slavenkongres [!]," *Südslawische Zeitung* no. 19, 14 February 1849. The editor of the aforementioned newspaper Josip Praus, another Congress participant, corroborated his allegations in a note next to the article.

Of the three Congress documents envisaged, only the Manifesto to the Peoples of Europe was fully completed and adopted at the plenary session. Starting from the principle of freedom, brotherhood, and equality, the Manifesto expressed a demand for the Habsburg Monarchy to be restructured into an alliance of equal peoples, which was considered a condition for the salvation of the Slavic peoples, while at the same time preserving “freedom, education, and humanity at large.” Finally, there was a proposal to convene “a general European congress of peoples” to discuss international issues.³¹

The Address to the Emperor contains the demands of all the Slavic peoples in the Monarchy. Croats and Serbs demanded that all former and future conclusions and decisions should be adopted by the Croatian Parliament, the Ban, and the provisional governing committee of the Vojvodina Srpska should be confirmed. Slovenes demanded that the territories where they lived be unified into a kingdom of Slovenia with a separate government. Czechs, Moravians, and Slovenes, supported by other Slavic peoples of the Monarchy, distanced themselves from their annexation to Germany.³²

A compromise was not reached on the third document that was supposed to define a federal alliance among the Austrian Slavs. A draft written by the Polish prince Jerzy Lubomirski and the Czech knight Johann Norbert von Neuberg provided for this act to be confirmed by the parliaments of all the Slavic lands in Austria. The foundation of a cultural body was envisaged to promote cultural cooperation: Slavic newspapers, a library, and an academy of science.³³

In his diary, A. T. Brlić made an interesting note on his participation in the Congress of the Slavs. He described his contribution to individual committees of the Congress, intense communication with many Slavic intellectuals, the parties he attended, and the atmosphere in Prague:

“I spoke at the Congress in Prague several times. The arrival in Prague was remarkable. I, Fingerhut, Belanji, and a Pole were among the first. [...] There I made the acquaintance of Šafařík, Palacki, and other Czechs, and stayed at Fingerhut’s place. A good and honest, patriotic and cordial house. I dined at Besjeda³⁴ [...]. A dispute between Ruthenians and Poles

31 Moritsch, “Revolution 1848,” 16–17; Šidak, “Austroslavizam,” 106; Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 456–68.

32 Moritsch, “Revolution 1848,” 16–17; Šidak, “Austroslavizam,” 105–6; Prelog, *Slavenska renesansa*, 468–71.

33 Moritsch, “Revolution 1848,” 17.

34 Czech civil society Měšťanská beseda established in Prague in 1845 as a counterweight to societies that assembled mostly Czech Germans. Pokorný, “Vereine, Verbände und Parteien,” 612–13.

in Prague was the reason why our affairs proceeded slowly; many parties took up a lot of our time. [...] I was a member of the commission drafting the Manifesto to Europe and the Address to the Emperor, and of the one where options were discussed on the type of alliance among the Slavs. All attendants of the Congress visited Thun. [...] The Poles have a lot of understanding for the Hungarians. Frequent demonstrations of soldiers. Cannons were brought to Vyšehrad.”³⁵

The uprising that broke out on 12 June 1848 in Prague and the ensuing military intervention interrupted the Congress. Later, ideas emerged about the resumption of the Congress of the Slavs with Zagreb as its venue. Zagreb became a temporary centre of Austroslavism, since some Congress participants, in order to avoid prosecution, found refuge there. In October 1848, the Administrative Board of Zagreb County proposed that a Congress of the Slavs should be held in the city. However, the Ban’s Council, the first Croatian Government (1848–1850) established by Ban Jelačić and operating from May 1848 to June 1850, rejected the proposal because of the war against the Hungarians and a lack of financial means.³⁶ In mid-1851, *Matica ilirska* invited Slavic cultural societies to elect their representatives to the Congress that could be held in Warsaw or Belgrade, with the objective of the linguistic convergence of Slavic peoples. However, following Vienna’s intervention, the idea of convening the Congress was dropped.³⁷

Subsequent political activities of Croatian representatives at the 1848 Congress of the Slavs in Prague

Stanko Vraz and Vatroslav Lisinski never entered politics but still belonged to the circle of the most distinguished Illyrianists. Through their artistic work, they

35 AOB, box 10, bundle 1, Andrija Torkvat Brlić’s Diary from 1 January 1848 to 17 September 1848, entry under 26 May 1848: “U Pragu sam na saboru više put govorio. Einzug u Prag bje zlamenit. Med prvima sam i ja išao, Fingerhut i Belanji i jedan Poljak. [...] Tamo sa Šafařikom, Palackim i ostalim Česima se spoznah, stanovah kod Fingerhuta. Dobra i poštena, domorodna i srdačna kuća. U Besjedi sam večeravao [...] U Pragu razprava med Russinima i Poljacima učini, da smo poslove sve sporobavljalji; mloge zabave nas takodjer zaokupiše. [...] Bio sam u komisiji za Manifest na Europu i Adressu na cara, te za onaj u kom se način saveza slavjanskog opredjeljivaše. Visita kod Thuna od cijelog Sabora. [...] Poljaci mnogo sympatiye za Magjare imaju. Česte demonstracije vojničke. Nošenje topova na Višegrad.” Obviously, Brlić supplemented his original entry under this date, since his next entry is under 12 June 1848. In this next entry, he describes taking part in fights at the barricades and the liberation of Bohemian governor Count Leo Thun, who was taken captive by insurgents.

36 Iveljić, “Die Kroaten,” 180.

37 Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*, 400 f.

significantly contributed to the development of Croatian culture, one of the main goals of the Croatian National Revival, which is also known as the Illyrian movement. After his return from Prague, Stanko Vraz continued writing poetry and translating, and died three years later. Lisinski returned to Zagreb in the autumn of 1850, bringing with him a number of compositions, some of which were inspired by the revolutionary events, and the first arias of the new opera *Porin*. He composed solo songs, piano compositions and dance music. In 1851, he completed *Porin*, the second Croatian opera, based on a libretto by Dimitrije Demeter and inspired by medieval Croatian history. For this reason, *Porin*, whose world premiere was not held until 1897 in Zagreb, is considered the first national opera.³⁸

Upon his return from Prague, Baron Dragojlo Kušlan held even stronger liberal views. In early August 1848, jointly with Nikola Krestić, he launched the liberal *Slavenski Jug* newspaper, which was in opposition to the Austrian Government. From March to August 1849, Kušlan was its sole editor. In his articles, he analysed in a liberal spirit the current political developments in Croatia and the Monarchy and consistently advocated Austroslavism. During neo-absolutism, he practiced law and resumed his political activity after the renewal of constitutionality. He criticised Austrian centralism and the restriction of the powers of Croatian counties. In 1861, he was elected member of the Croatian Parliament and its deputy speaker. While in Parliament, he contributed to resolving constitutional and judicial issues, advocated Croatia's territorial integrity, the return of the Hungarian–Croatian Constitution, the enforcement of civic and political rights and freedoms, and the federalisation of the Monarchy. From 1865 to 1867, he was a member of the Croatian Parliament representing the National Liberal Party and argued for the preservation of Croatia's autonomy and territorial integrity as a prerequisite for the renewal of an alliance between Hungary and Croatia, which should be based on full equality.³⁹

Josip Praus became involved in the *Slavenska lipa na slavenskom jugu* society in late 1848. Together with the writer Dimitrije Demeter, in January 1849, he launched the *Südslawische Zeitung*, a newspaper of liberal and opposition orientation, which he edited until the spring of 1852. He promoted liberal postulates: the constitutional monarchy, civic and political rights and freedoms, religious and ethnic equality, Austroslavism, and the implementation of modernisation reforms in all spheres of public life in Croatia and the Monarchy. Due to the opposition

38 Katalinić, "Vatroslav Lisinski," 35, 39–40; Palić-Jelavić, "Porin i Nikola Šubić Zrinjski," 133; the historical model, a Croatian prince Porin (*Porinos archontos*) is mentioned in the manual of the tenth century Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus *De administrando imperii* in Chapter 30 for the period of the Christianization of the Croats. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 144 (Greek), 145 (English).

39 "Kušlan, Dragojlo"; Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*.

views of the newspapers, he was under pressure from the Croatian and Austrian official bodies. In the spring of 1852, he was sentenced to a one-month imprisonment term and a fine of 100 forints for publishing an article by Andrija Torkvat Brlić in which Brlić harshly and argumentatively criticised the state structure and the manner in which the Habsburg Monarchy was ruled.⁴⁰ From 1853 to 1857, Praus was Secretary-General of *Matica ilirska* and editor of its magazine *Neven*. In 1860, in his capacity of Secretary to Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, he accompanied the bishop to the sessions of the Imperial Council in Vienna. There, he composed a brochure entitled *Die Idee der Gleichberechtigung* (Agram, 1861) in which he championed Croatia's and Hungary's equality. He was active in journalism to the end of his life.⁴¹

As an elected MP, Maksimilijan Prica participated in the deliberations of the Croatian Parliament in 1848 and subsequently acted a Ban Jelačić's secretary. After the revolution was crushed in 1849, he practiced law. He returned to political life in 1861 as a member of the Croatian Parliament. There, he advocated the renewal of a constitutional alliance with Hungary provided that the autonomy and the actual territorial scope of the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia was recognised.⁴² As of the following year, he was a judge of the Table of Seven, Croatia's supreme court. In 1863, he joined the newly established Independent National Party that recognised the common affairs with Austria and worked for the agreement between Croatia and Austria on condition that Croatia's autonomy was acknowledged. Several years after the Croatian–Hungarian Settlement (1868) had renewed constitutional ties between Croatia and Hungary, recognised Croatia's autonomy in public administration, the judiciary, and education with other affairs being shared with Hungary, Prica adopted a unionist policy. In 1871, he became head of the Justice Department of the Land Government, holding the office until his death.⁴³

Andrija Torkvat Brlić was the most versatile personality among the Croatian representatives at the Congress of the Slavs and had the most exciting life. At the request of the apostolic nuncio to Vienna, he wrote two Latin memoranda to the pope on the state of the Catholic Church in Croatia and Hungary. In September 1848, he took part in the Slovak uprising against the Hungarians, then joined Ban Jelačić as his temporary secretary (replacing the sick Maksimilijan Prica). From

40 A. B. [Andrija Torkvat Brlić], "Von der Berawa in Slawonien. Mitte Juni." *Südslawische Zeitung* no. 144–46, 26–28 June 1851.

41 Švoger, *Zagrebačko liberalno novinstvo*.

42 The name was frequently used in the nineteenth century. The abridged form, the Triune Kingdom, was used as well and the name Croatia was used from the second half of the nineteenth century on.

43 "Prica, Maksimilijan."

December 1848 to February 1849, he was Ban Jelačić's envoy to Paris tasked with suppressing Hungarian anti-Croatian propaganda. In Paris, he came in contact with leading personalities from the highest political and religious circles and the main representatives of the Polish emigrant community. As the first foreign correspondent in the history of Croatian journalism, he sent reports to Ban Jelačić in letters and to the Croatian public in newspaper articles about the current political developments in France and French policy towards other European countries. During the spring and summer of 1850, he travelled to Paris again, and then stayed in Belgium, Great Britain, Switzerland, and northern Italy. Again, he sent articles to Croatian newspapers and letters to Ban Jelačić. This time, however, the focus of his reporting was on the political, administrative, and judicial systems of these countries, their culture and economy. In the following years, he lived in Zagreb where he was Secretary-General of *Matica ilirska* and of the *Društvo za jugoslavensku povjesnicu i starine* [South-Slavic History and Antiquities Society]. In 1853, he left for Vienna to study law. There, he wrote and published a Croatian grammar in German, as well as two books of sources on South-Slavic history. On completing his studies, he returned to his native town of Brod na Savi (present-day Slavonski Brod), where in 1857 he opened a law office and lived for the rest of his life. He published many newspaper and magazine articles on political and social issues, literary works, translations, and travelogues. In his newspaper articles and brochures, he expounded liberal views, advocated the constitutional order, civic and political freedoms, Austroslavism, and concord among the Slavic peoples. As an elected member, he took part in the work of the Croatian Parliament in 1861, where he was the informal leader of MPs from the Military Frontier. In Parliament, he supported the recognition of the conclusions of the 1848 Croatian Parliament (the session was adjourned due to the preparations for the 1848–1849 Croatian–Hungarian War), the establishment of a federation in Hungary based on Croatia's territorial integrity, autonomy, and equality with Hungarians.⁴⁴ In the mid-1860s, Brlić began to advocate a solution of Croatia's constitutional position (that was outstanding since April 1848 when Ban Jelačić severed constitutional ties with Hungary) in the form of a real union with Hungary, provided that Hungary recognised Croatia's territorial integrity and autonomy. Together with his younger brother Ignat Brlić, he set the stage for the Croatian–Hungarian Settlement through contacts with Hungarian politicians.⁴⁵

After 1848, physician Miroslav Dražić was devoted to his profession, he lived and worked in Karlovac, one of the most significant urban centres in the Croatian national movement. He lived thirty more years (died in 1879) and was not active in politics but always distinguished himself as a Croatian patriot. He was a member of *Matica*

44 Švoger, *Ideali, strast i politika*, 29–60, 79–216, 217–36.

45 Švoger, "Behind the Political Scenes."

hrvatska and many other Croatian cultural and educational societies and was friends with many other prominent Croatian and Serbian patriots and political workers.⁴⁶

Most of the Croatian participants at the Congress of the Slavs were known to the Croatian public as early as 1848. Subsequently, they played an important role in Croatia's political and/or cultural life.

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46 Dugački, "Dražić, Miroslav," 602.

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The Slavic Congress in Slovak Historical Memory

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Abstract. The Slavic Congress of May 1848 was one of the significant milestones in the revolutionary year of 1848. In Slovak historical and journalistic writing, there is a surprising contrast between the evaluation of the congress as the first occasion for the presentation of Slovak demands in an international forum on the one hand, and the modest treatment of the issue in the form of source editions and in-depth analyses on the other. This was due to the fact that great expectations were replaced by disappointment, and the quality of the returns associated with the event and its place in historical memory corresponded to this. The Slavic Congress was the subject of extensive ideological instrumentalization and remained subject to considerable manipulation, obfuscation, and distorted interpretations by contemporaries and later publicists, politicians, and historians (after 1948 in the service of communist politics). This is what this article is about. Numerous inter-Slavic conflicts after the fall of communism leave virtually no room for the revival of Slavic ideas.

Keywords: the Slavic Congress, Slovak historical Memory, ideological instrumentalization, distorted interpretations

If we gloss over references to so-called Baroque Slavism and the isolated and simplified references to Slavic identity, the emergence and rediscovery of the Slavic idea has been dated to the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is identified with the century of modern nationalism and the birth of young modern nations. Russia's victory over Napoleon played a major role in the discovery of Slavic identity, as well as in the growth of the pride and national self-confidence of the individual Slavic peoples. It is not at all accidental that Ján Kollár, a Slovak with a Czechoslovak and Slavic identity, became the 'father' of Slavic reciprocity and at the same time the representative of the integrative concept of the four Slavic tribes (Russians, Poles, Czechoslovaks and Illyrians, i.e., South Slavs) and the four Slavic 'dialects' (Russian, Polish, Czechoslovak and Illyrian). According to the latter, the Slovaks were part of the Czech tribe, and the Slovak language was a subdialect of Czech. The German stimuli in the formulation of his Slavic theory were not accidental: the frustrating

fate of the Polabian (Lusatian) Slavs, the all-German festivities at Wartburg Castle calling for the unification of Germany, and Johann Gottfried Herder's philosophical concept of the Slavs as the bearers of the future of humanity and the guarantors of its regeneration. Kollár's Panslavism rightly became a Czech (Czechoslovak) product made of German material.

In 1825, the Slavist Pavol Jozef Šafárik published his work *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur*, in which he even then identified the Slovaks as a separate nation and distinguished the Slovak language from the Czech (later, he changed his views on an independent Slovak language). A year later, linguist Ján Herkel' published the basics of the universal Slavic Language, in which, in addition to the rules of 'Slavic Esperanto,' he also developed the concept of the literary unity of the Slavs. Apparently, the concept of Slavic solidarity and interdependence was very productive at this time. It had a national consciousness dimension and gradually acquired national political significance. Kollár's concept was developed by another Slovak, writer and politician Ľudovít Štúr, and it should be noted that this occurred in constant conflict with Kollár. Štúr justified the mutual independence of Czechs and Slovaks and gave expression to this in the codification of the Slovak written language. This formed the basis for a new perception of Slavicity, Slavic reciprocity, and, within a dialectical framework, a closer Czech–Slovak connection. This has since become a permanent portfolio of Slovak political thought—the thinking of a small nation struggling for its survival.

Štúr and his followers began to consciously link Slavic belonging with the political context, with social reforms, and the state-law reconstruction of the monarchy. He considered the concept of Slavicity as a supranational unity as a guarantee of the further multilateral development of independent and sovereign Slavic peoples, and that only in such a form could it have a future. As early as the early 1840s, Štúr posed a number of questions about the relationship between the Slavic and non-Slavic worlds and attempted to seek answers to them in his voluminous but unfinished and little-known work *Azya a Evropa: čili určení Ruska v ohľedu na Azyi* [Asia and Europe: Or the Determination of Russia in Relation to Asia].

The Slavic Congress, like a number of other historical events, was the subject of extensive ideological instrumentalization. While the revolution of 1848/49 remained embedded in Slovak historical consciousness as a key historical event, with changes only to the perspective and angle of view (and thus, secondarily, the ideological relevance), the Slavic Congress remained subject to considerably more manipulation, obfuscation, and distorted interpretations. Mostly, it remained only an unsuccessful meeting, which took on 'reactionary' connotations and led further developments to a dead end.

The causes of this state of affairs lay in the failure of political negotiations and pan-Slavic unification, which led more to the escalation of mutual conflicts than to unity. The congress did become a great Slavic manifestation, but as a counterbalance to PanGermanism, it was not enough. All future intra-Slavic conflicts emerged clearly even during the Prague Congress and foreshadowed individual political and interest contradictions. Moreover, practically all the questions raised at the congress remained unanswered.

The participation of the Slovak delegates (almost forty participants) was closely linked to the hopes for a solution to the situation of Slovaks in the monarchy. The Slovak elites believed that a document with the relevant political demands of the Slavs would be drawn up in Prague, and that it could force the Austrian government to make concessions and accept Slavic-, and within this framework, Slovak political demands as well. This did not happen: there was a lack of political power, a lack of full authority—i.e., a mandate—and a lack of willingness to compromise. The congress could have at most achieved a resolution, but it was not even able to do that. As Štúr said in 1848:

“In our division is the strength of our enemy and our grave; in our union is [the enemy’s] destruction and our salvation.”¹

Subsequent revolutionary events, therefore, naturally overshadowed the convention’s negotiating days and relegated them to the periphery of attention in relation to the revolution.

Historian Daniela Kodajová, in the introduction to her seminal study of the issue of the convention in Slovak historiography, already very explicitly stated,

“In Slovak historical and journalistic writing on the Prague convention, there is a surprising disproportion between the evaluation of the convention as the first occasion for the presentation of Slovak demands in an international forum and as a prelude to the Slovak uprising, on the one hand, and the modest treatment of the issue in the form of source editions and in-depth analyses, on the other.”²

Great expectations were replaced by disappointment, and the quality of the returns to something the event and its place in historical memory corresponded to this.

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, three important memoirs were written by three Slovak participants in the revolutionary events (J. M. Hurban, M. Dohnány, and S. Štefanovič). However, only Jozef Miloslav Hurban, in his biography of Ludovít Štúr, dealt in detail with the actual Slavic Congress, since Štúr not only took part in the Prague events, but was even one of their main protagonists.³

1 Štúr, *Pogled*, pt. 3 from 11 August 1848 (quoted from Bokes, ed., *Dokumenty*, 36).

2 Kodajová, “Prager Slavenkongress,” 81.

3 Hurban, “Ludovít Štúr.”

In Štúr's understanding, Slavicity was a qualitatively higher-level conception of Slavic reciprocity and unity as a supranational entity of distinct and sovereign Slavic peoples. During the revolution of 1848/49, however, the idea of Slavicity was becoming a political article and an effective weapon of political struggle. According to Ľudovít Štúr,

“our people wanted to show their ideas also to Europe and to sympathize with their Slavic brothers, they wanted to further make their demands to the Austrian government, and finally they wanted to conclude a federation of the Slavic branches.”⁴

According to Štúr, the result of the congress was not great and remained only on the moral plane:

“When the Slavic spirit spreads even more widely in Russia, when the progress of liberty becomes apparent there too, this country will accomplish great and important works for Slavicity, serious and decisive for the world.”⁵

Neither for Hurban's loyal supporter Mikuláš Dohnány nor for the polemically anti-Hurban Samuel Štefanovič did the Slavic Congress represent anything extraordinary. They did not participate in it, and as witnesses, they concentrated on events that they had experienced themselves and on their own skin, so they perceived them completely differently. According to Štefanovič, Slavic reciprocity had not yet proved itself in any substantial way, nor did it have sufficient material support. He therefore considered the reliance on it by Štúr to be a political mistake. In hindsight, Štúr perceived Czech Austro-Slavism as a means of achieving hegemony over the other Slavic nations of the monarchy.⁶

During the revolution of 1848/49, the idea of Slavicity became a political article and an effective weapon in the political struggle. The Slavic Congress, Austro-Slavism, the cooperation of Slavic radicals, military traditions, Slavic symbols, and the Russian invasion of Central Europe in 1849 have been preserved in historical memory as images of glory and pride. On the non-Slavic side, however, the revolution was associated with traumatic experiences that fed the panic and fear associated with Pan-Slavism and Russophilia for decades afterwards. Gradually, however, the first complications, such as the chronic Russian–Polish dispute, Polish legions and Polish generals in the ranks of the Hungarian revolutionary army, as well as Serbo–Croatian, Ukrainian–Russian, and even Czech–Slovak conflicts, were already emerging.

4 Štúr, *Pogled*, pt 4 from 12 August 1848 (quoted from Bokes, ed., *Dokumenty*, 37).

5 Štúr, *Pogled*, pt 4 from 12 August 1848 (quoted from Bokes, ed., *Dokumenty*, 39).

6 Štúr, *Slovanstvo*, 138.

All of this led Ludovít Štúr, in his work *Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti* [Slavicity and the World of the Future],⁷ to the realization that any Slavic federation was an illusion. Also, the experience of the revolution as well as immediate post-revolutionary developments led him (in contrast to Czech politician and historian František Palacký) to reject Austro-Slavism as a concept of a reformed Habsburg monarchy with the sense of a kind of optimal protective ‘hat’ for the Central European Slavs. Under the influence of several disappointments and disillusionments, and even under the influence of his own depression, Štúr came to the conclusion that Slavicity, as an equal member of the European family of nations, had to rely on the only independent Slavic power—Russia. Only Russia was in a position to protect the Slavs and to paralyze all their conflicts. Under the protection of the tsar and the Orthodox faith, rapprochement with Russia was to be preferred. In this, it was forgotten that Russia had to democratize its political system and Russian society had to adapt to the ‘new times,’ according to Štúr. The conditions thus specified made his conception, in fact, a completely ‘non-conceptual’ one.

The Second Slavic Congress⁸ was held in completely different conditions, in Moscow in 1867, and only reinforced Austro-German and Hungarian fears of Pan-Slavism. For Russia, this was only one possible political alternative, and far from decisive. The three Slovak representatives in Moscow and their quite servile behaviour did not allow the congress to become more firmly rooted in historical memory. Neither did the purposeful publication of Štúr’s *Slavicity and the World of the Future* in its Russian translation. Such a congress, held under the protective hand of tsarist policy, was associated with even less reason for any commemoration.

Nevertheless, before World War I, the Czech (and Hungarian) professional historians’ return to the Slavic Congress was perceived and commented upon in the Slovak press. In terms of the decisive impulse, the reaction from Slovakia was that it was not German integration efforts but the national situation in Hungary and the authority of Štúr that should have been the initiating stimuli for the Slavic Congress.⁹ An interesting fact was that even the national congress of 1895 (and this was not Slavic in character, given the presence of Romanians) claimed the traditions

7 The book was first written in German in 1852, then translated into Russian and published in Moscow in 1867 on the occasion of the second Slavic Congress.

8 The term ‘congress’ (Russian *sjezd*) for the presence of Slavic delegates in Moscow in connection with an ethnographic exhibition in Moscow is used in Russian literature. See e.g. Dostal, “Slavjanskiĭ sjezd 1867 g.”; Gerasimenco et al., eds, *Rossija i slavjanski mir*; Platonov, ed., “Vserossijskaja etnograficheskaja vystavka”; Churkina, “Etnograficheskaja vystavka.” On the other hand, the character of a congress is questioned, for example, by Milan Hlavačka, who speaks of a kind of pilgrimage. See Hlavačka, “Ještě jednou pouť Slovanů”; Hlavačka, “Eshche raz o poezdke.”

9 Škultéty, “Recenzia na knihu Zdeňka Tobolku,” 456–58.

of similar meetings and perceived the Slavic Congress, at least in relation to the nature of its implementation, as its model.

The Russian invasion of the Balkans in the 1870s, as well as the Russian crossing of the Carpathian Mountains in the winter of 1914/1915, raised high Slavic and Slovak hopes. They indicated a pattern of how things could move powerfully, even if they did not move politically. However, events eventually took a completely different course, and Russia remained on the periphery of Central European development.

The year 1918 and the creation of Czechoslovakia significantly shuffled the cards in the historical pantheon and in the perception of individual historical events. While the Revolution remained in pride of place in the commemoration and shaping of historical memory, the significance shifted in favour of armed struggle, the formation of a democratic political program, and Czech–Slovak cooperation. However, the Slavic Congress was marginalized, and the fighting on the Prague barricades also pushed it into the background in terms of significance.

After 1918, there was an obvious effort to locate the 1848/49 revolution (and only marginally the Slavic Congress within it) both as a subject of research for the newly emerging professional Slovak historiography and as part of official historical memory. The first task was successfully undertaken by Daniel Rapant in his monumental thirteen-volume work *Slovenské povstanie 1848/9* [Slovak Uprising 1848/9] (1937–1972), planned for decades, which remains an insurmountable challenge for historians. Štúr's assessment of the Slavic Congress as a missed opportunity for the Slavs is summed up by Rapant in the following sentence:

“At the Slavic Congress, Štúr was clearly in favour of a new orientation of Slavic cooperation; Hurban vacillated between the old Pan-Slavism, Czechoslavism, and Austro-Slavism; Hodža [Michal Miloslav Hodža was the third and last man in the triad of Slovak political leaders at the time.—R. H.] faithfully adhered to the latter.”¹⁰

As far as historical memory was concerned, there were several reasons for linking the 1848/49 revolution with the 1918 celebrations. First, there was the interest in anchoring the revolution firmly in historical memory, or more precisely, in finding an appropriate place for it, since traditions and memories of the revolution functioned only minimally or not at all in Slovak society. The second reason was to combine the two eight-year anniversaries into a single commemoration, thus pointing to the historical connections between them, to a certain developmental continuity and to the so-called historical logic, which was also to legitimize 1918 in Slovak historical memory, since the Slovak share in the younger historical event was significantly smaller.

10 Rapant, “Štúrovci,” 33 (quoted from Kodajová, “Slováci,” 89).

The third reason was to show the aspirations of the circle of Štúr's collaborators for national emancipation and to perceive it in relation to the background of intensive Czech–Slovak cooperation (the revolution had, after all, involved intensive Czech–Slovak cooperation) and to consider 1918 as the fulfilment of this cooperation. There were attempts to show continuity at least in the Anton Bernolák (the oldest creator of literary Slovak)–Ľudovít Štúr–Milan Rastislav Štefánik (one of the founders of the Czechoslovak state) line, while other names could have been inserted into this scheme (such as those of many of Štúr's followers).

A problematic fact was the fact that both revolutions (1848 and 1918), though seventy years apart, took place against the Hungarians as the age-old enemy No.1. In the first case in particular, however, the Hungarians were the driving force of the revolution, and Štúr's followers fought for 'their' revolution under imperial banners, i.e., in the service of conservative Habsburg Vienna. This circumstance had to be either glossed over or explained with the help of often tortuous interpretations. Especially in journalism, the anti-Hungarian and anti-German stance began to be emphasized in line with the definition of the monarchy.

Thus, the liberation of the peasants from serfdom, i.e., from 'labor' was emphasized, which liberated the people socially, while 1918 brought them national and political liberation. This interpretive model at least gave a successful outcome to the 1848 revolution, which could then lead the people to their national liberation.

An example of the linking of the two key milestones is the monument to Adolf Ivanovič Dobriansky in Michalovce, which was unveiled in 1928, on the tenth anniversary of the Republic and the eightieth anniversary of the Revolution and the Slavic Congress, in which Dobriansky was an active participant as a leader of the Ruthenians and an organizer of their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic rapprochement with the Russians. Dobriansky's statue commemorates Ruthenian–Czech–Slovak cooperation, which is specific and, at the same time, characteristic of the conditions of eastern Slovakia. But it also recalls the union of the Czechoslovak state with Subcarpathia. The statue was dedicated to Dobriansky as a "great Slav [...] on the tenth anniversary of the independence of the Czechoslovak Republic, in a sign of brotherly love and the unity of the three branches of one Slavic tribe."

In June 1928, on the initiative of the Czechoslovak National Council, the Slavic Congresses of 1848 and 1908 (congresses mainly for students and journalists) were commemorated with a festive event in Prague. A lecture from the Slovak side was given by writer and editor Jozef Škultéty and was devoted to the older of the congresses. He repeated several ideas from his extensive review of Czech historian Zdeněk Tobolka's book from 1901 (the first collection of Congress's documents), while mainly reinforcing the anti-German and anti-Hungarian rhetoric (this was also the case in identical or similar texts by Slovak historian Julius Botto

and politician Milan Hodža from the period before and after 1918). Škultéty saw the importance of the congress mainly in its broad and timeless Slavic character.¹¹

In 1936 (i.e., in anticipation of the 90th anniversary), a commemorative plaque to Štúr with text by the Czech author Josef Pospíšil was installed on the main building on Žofín Island (or Slavic Island) in Prague. The red marble plaque with a bronze relief likeness of Ľudovít Štúr and an extensive Slovak text tells of his speech at the local Slavic Congress. His words are particularly quoted as follows:

“Our aim should be to preserve the Austrian Empire? Our aim is to preserve ourselves, us. First, we must serve ourselves, then others. So far, Austria has stood, and we have perished. What would the world say to us if we stood for nothing but the preservation of Austria? The fall of Austria is not the fall of us.”¹²

The telling value of these words increased especially after 1918. No wonder, therefore, that they are followed on the memorial plaque by the remark, “Štúr was already preparing what was not accomplished until the world war.” Here, too, then, the relationship between 1848 and 1918 was evident; it was here that a positive moment could also be identified at the Slavic Congress.¹³ The commemorative plaque was installed by the associations of Slovak students in Prague (Detvan, Považan, and the Janoška circle), as well as by the associations Československá jednota [Czechoslovakian Unity] and the jubilee committee from Bánovce nad Bebravou.

It was characteristic that Štúr’s words could be used, although they were not dominant at the congresses. Rather, the Austro-Slavist concept prevailed there, which was best formulated in 1865 by Czech politician and historian František Palacký in his well-known statements:

“Truly, if the Austrian empire did not already exist long ago, one would have to hasten to create it in the interest of Europe, in the interest of humanity itself” and “[...] if I have always wished for the existence of an Austrian state, I have always had in mind an Austria that would be fair to all its peoples, and a government would prove to be a mother to all and a stepmother to none of them.”¹⁴

11 Škultéty, “Slovanský sjazd.”

12 Rapant, *Slovenské povstanie*, 21.

13 There are some other well-known statements by Štúr from the post-revolutionary 1850s: “What has outlived itself, what has lost all sense and meaning, and the situation in Austria is like this, must perish.” or “Shall we and can we join with those who have worked most strenuously for our complete destruction?” The memorial plaque is shown on the website <https://www.turistika.cz/mista/praha-1-slovansky-ostrov-zofin-pametni-deska-ludovit-stur/foto?id=1970823>, and a detailed description can be found on the website: <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/pametni-deska-ludovita-stura-3221504>.

14 Palacký, *Idea*, 36, 38. For more details, see: Moritsch, ed., *Der Austroslavismus*.

The first of Palacky's quoted statements can also be found in his famous letter to the President of the Committee of Fifty of the Frankfurt Pre-Parliament in April 1848, Alexander von Soiron.

The foresight of Štúr in comparison with that of Palacký was a frequent motif in Slovak texts about the Slavic Congress after 1918.

Apart from Štúr's prescient words, before 1945, and especially during World War II, the Prague Slavic Congress was perceived in Slovak historical memory as a reactionary event, which mainly involved defining oneself in opposition to the Germans and Hungarians. The anti-German tendency could have been perceived as problematic during World War II, especially if the negatively evaluated Czech-Slovak cooperation was added to it. Austro-Slavism, as the dominant Czech concept, was also evaluated rather negatively.

Slavicity and the Slavic idea were still subject to a few attempts at reincarnation in the twentieth century. These involved fantastic and politically naive visions, e.g., from the work of Czech politician Karel Kramář or the politically expedient Slavic character of Milan Hodža's agrarian democracy. In this, he drew on the agrarian politicians of the Bulgarian Alexander Stambolijski and the Croat Stjepan Radić, as well as on the Czech writer Josef Holeček and his "philosophy of Czech peasantry." In his monumental work, the latter brought the Slavic world and the village together into a single whole, into a synthesis of each other.

Czech politicians Tomáš G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, on the other hand, linked the fate of Slavicity with the fate of democracy and humanity:

"I refuse to build Slavicity on reactionary nationalism and I seek its basis in »democracy and humanity«, that is, every Slavic policy and Slavicity must be in full harmony with these two great ideas."¹⁵

Such a conception had its justification for some time under authoritarian regimes in Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, not to mention the communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union. However, the historical development along these lines also indicated that Slavicity no longer had prospects for development and that existence on the basis of reactionary nationalism was unproductive, and on the basis of democracy and humanity, idealistic and illusory.

The year 1945 was also a significant turning point in Slavic politics. After this, the Slavic idea underwent a very complicated development. Edvard Beneš pointed out even at the end of the war that the prerequisites for a new stage of Slavic cooperation were the settlement of territorial disputes, the sacrifice of any potential minorities in favour of merging with the dominant Slavic nation, the mutually

15 Beneš, *Úvahy*, 308.

independent national settlement of all national internal political problems, a common stand against any forms of Pan-Germanism, and the exclusion of the religious element. The New Slavicity meant burying the old Slavophilism, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Russianism, Messianism, and Neo-Slavism, which had failed and remained more on the plane of illusion than reality. Beneš considered the formulation of common interests to be essential in the interests of post-war Slavism.¹⁶ In doing so, he presciently stated that “I consider it simply impossible to form an exclusive Slavic ideology of monarchist, socialist, communist, Orthodox, etc.,” having already rejected the concept of Slavic agrarianism.¹⁷ This was precisely the problem of Slavicity after the communist takeover, when there was a merging precisely on ideological positions and no place for ethnic demarcation (at least outwardly) anymore.

Developments went in a completely different direction from what Beneš had indicated or imagined.¹⁸ Less than two months after the fascist attack on the Soviet Union, the so-called Panslav (Slavic) Committee, made up of communist intellectuals, was mobilized in Moscow. In April 1942, also in Moscow and with the support of the Soviet government, a representative meeting of Slavs was organized, already ‘exporting’ the Panslav propaganda to all parts of the Western Allied world, exploiting the enthusiasm for the Russian ally. The defeat of fascism and the occupation of half of Europe by the Red Army enabled the instrumentalization of Slavicity exactly in the spirit rejected by Beneš: state-based, class-based, and ideologically driven.

The Slavic Congress in Belgrade in December 1946 was a pompous spectacle that referred to Moscow’s domination of (not only) the Slavic world. A congress with many empty speeches, ideological cotton wool, a lack of ideas, and an unrepeatable unity of words and deeds. But accompanied by crowds of tens of thousands, in bizarre colours and with participants many of whom would soon end up in disgrace or in Stalinist prisons.

The opening speech was given by Marshal Josip Broz-Tito, a man whose name no one wanted to remember only one and a half years later. One of the main speakers was the future dissident Milovan Djilas. On the rostrum, alongside the portraits of Stalin, Dimitrov, Bierut, and Tito, there was a huge portrait of Edvard Beneš. The speeches stressed the importance of the individual Slavic nations to world culture. Czechoslovak Minister of Education Zdeněk Nejedlý, in the spirit of his lifelong admiration, even mentioned the merits of T. G. Masaryk! This was a remarkable circumstance, resulting from the peculiar personality of the speaker, who held Masaryk in high esteem throughout his life. It was Nejedlý and Gustáv Husák, the

16 Beneš, *Úvahy*, 198–223.

17 Beneš, *Úvahy*, 213.

18 In more detail, Neander, *Panslawismus*, 53–55.

Slovak chairman of the Assembly of Commissioners, who were the only ones to draw attention to the traditions of the Prague Slavic Congress. According to Husák, “as early as the 1848 Congress, it was stated that the common enemy of the Slavic peoples was the Germans, who prevented them from cooperating. This was shown most clearly by the just-ended war.”¹⁹

According to Nejedlý, the proof that the cradle of the Slavic movement was the Czech nation was the holding of the Prague Congress in 1848 as “the first political manifestation of the Slavic nations.”²⁰

At the congress, it was agreed that the next one would be held in 1947 in Moscow. The latter, however, fell victim to the Yugoslav rift with the Soviet Union, which had devastating consequences for the entire Slavic Renaissance. In this spirit, the long-prepared Moscow Slavic Congress, or scientific congress, was associated with a characteristic fate. It was organized throughout 1947, emphasizing its great scientific importance. As a Slavic congress in Moscow, it was first postponed several times, and only in September 1948 came the news that the congress—a hundred years after the first Slavic congress—would no longer take place.

In Czechoslovakia, the renaissance of Slavicity lasted a few years longer. First came a very strong revival of Slavic ideas after 1945, as witnessed in the pompous Slavic Day in July 1945 at the ancient, symbolic and memorable Devín Castle, which became part of Czechoslovakia again after years of war. The large gathering claimed to uphold the traditions of Cyril and Methodius, referred to the Slavic Congress of 1848, welcomed delegations from Slavic countries, and among the speakers we can find several remarkable personalities (for example, the peculiar Catholic priest Ferdiš Juriga).

As part of the popular Slavic celebrations, so-called Pan-Slavic or Slavic Days were held in Bratislava’s Devín from 1945 until 1951. They were about several things. Their content ranged from the original demonstration of difference and demarcation from the Germans and Hungarians, who had to be expelled from the republic in as large numbers as possible, to the celebration of the Soviet Union, to Czech–Slovak reciprocity. Among the speakers were representatives of Slavic states, communist and civic leaders, and gradually, the direction was monopolized by leading state and communist functionaries in one person. The originally central message of Cyril and Methodius was also increasingly sidelined.²¹ The Slavic dimension, which remained only in the title, was not mentioned at all in the spirit of the Slavic Congress of 1848, which was interpreted at the time as an event with several reactionary features.

19 Burian, Frinta, and Havránek, eds, *Slovanský sjezd*, 40.

20 Burian, Frinta, and Havránek, eds, *Slovanský sjezd*, 87.

21 Kiliánová, *Identita a pamäť*, 87 f.

The year 1948 was completely distorted in terms of celebrations (in addition to the centenary of the revolution, it also involved dealing with the thirtieth anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic), but especially in terms of the communist takeover. Although the republic was restored after the war, it found itself with in the Soviet sphere of influence, and after the coup in February 1948, the communists came to power. Their interpretation of history was diametrically opposed. Therefore, although, for example, the preparatory committee for the Slovak celebrations of the founding of Czechoslovakia had already been set up at the end of 1947, in the end everything took place in a completely different atmosphere. The large exhibition planned for Bratislava under the title *100 Years of Struggle – 30 Years of Building* was—like many other projects—ultimately not realized.

Within the framework of the class interpretation of national history, completely new motifs were instrumentalized. In April 1948, for the first time, national celebrations were held in Nitra to mark the centenary of the abolition of serfdom. Communist speakers linked this event to the promotion of the Communist Party's agricultural policy. This was already a novelty in the way of returning to the revolution of 1848/49. The celebrations in Nitra prompted the Commissioner for Agriculture and Land Reform, Michal Fal'fan, to draw up a peasant program for the Slovak National Council (the so-called Nitra Program), which took into account the national economic and social specifics of Slovakia. Historian and museologist Eva Kurincová characterized the spirit of the Nitra celebrations as “from the whipping board to property decrees for Slovak peasants” or “a presentation of the social policy of the communist regime.”²²

As the centenary of the Slovak uprising approached, a number of events were being prepared. The most important part of the celebrations was the preparation of a monumental memorial on Polana Hill near Brestovec, which was at that time part of Veľká Myjava. However, the celebrations were harmed by the change of political conditions after February 1948, which, for unknown reasons, did not favour the aforementioned monument, and its construction was not continued.²³

Bratislava's May Day celebrations in 1948 also commemorated the founding of Czechoslovakia for the last time, and not at all in a typical way. An allegorical chariot with not yet caricatured figures of Masaryk, Beneš and Štefánik as founders of the Czechoslovak Republic and a reference to the legionary battlefields from World War I at Zborov and Bachmač reminded the people in the May Day town that they were in the thirtieth year of the establishment of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks. However, the closer October approached, the more distorted the planned

22 Kurincová, “1948,” 194.

23 Gálik, *Myjava*, 52–56.

celebrations appeared. In the end, it was not 1918 that came to the fore, but the much more neutral centenary of the 1848/49 revolution. And new connotations with the post-February state were sought.

In 1948, therefore, revolutionary, social, and national principles were intertwined, which the Czechoslovak Jubilee (1918) fulfilled only with reservations or not at all. In Slovakia, during the centenary celebrations as part of the communist reinterpretation of the revolutionary events of 1848/49, in addition to the petitions and political demands of Slovaks, whether in Brezová pod Bradlom or in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš, there was also a place for commemorating the abolition of serfdom. With this explicitly important social moment was completed the new interpretation of the revolutionary events, in which dominated *Žiadosti slovenského národa v stolici Nitrianskej* [Requests of the Slovak Nation in the County of Nitra], adopted in Brezová pod Bradlom, as well as the most radical Slovak (and not only Slovak) political program *Žiadosti slovenského národa* [Requests of the Slovak Nation], adopted in May 1848 in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš. At the first celebrations, i.e., in Brezová, the Minister of National Defense and General Ludvík Svoboda gave a speech and connected the local native Milan Rastislav Štefánik with the revolution. According to Svoboda's interpretation, the "Slovak solution" had passed through the "Slavic" to the "Czechoslovak solution." In his speech, on the other hand, Commissioner for Education and Enlightenment Ladislav Novomeský linked the national and social dimensions.

About a month later, nationwide celebrations were held in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš. Slovak commissioner Ladislav Novomeský unveiled a commemorative plaque to the revolutionary poet Janko Kráľ, and Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vladimír Clementis gave a speech, while another Czechoslovak minister from Slovakia, Vavro Šrobár, also took part in the rally. His presence was associated with the assembly in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš on 1 May 1918, where he was a central figure and thus once again linked the celebrations of the Revolution with the events of 1918 that led to the creation of Czechoslovakia. The keynote speech was delivered by the President of the Slovak National Council, Karol Šmidke. What was remarkable about this celebration was the national emblems of the friendly Slavic states. This corresponded to the popular and widespread post-war pan-Slavic concept, within the framework of which the aforementioned so-called Slavic Days were held at Devín Castle from 1945 to 1951.

The new 'class' interpretation of history did not bypass the Slavic Congress of 1848 and placed it outside the main focus of scholars. It was gradually pushed out of historical memory and presented as a reactionary enterprise with the dominant narrative that Austro-Slavism aimed at and supported the preservation of the monarchy and aided the reactionary forces of the European counter-revolution led by the Tsarist regime.

It was therefore characteristic that the new formation of historical memory, while returning to the legacy of the 1848/49 revolution, embedded it in memory in a very neutral and selective way. Above all, the social-revolutionary aspect was highlighted, while the still vivid jubilee of the Czechoslovak state, which had been restored only a short time before, ended up part of a very ideologically one-sided, clichéd representation. The revolution soon ended there too, discredited above all by the collaboration of the elites following Štúr with reactionary Vienna, and made problematic by Karl Marx's remarks about the counter-revolutionary Slavic peoples.²⁴

Among the Slovak historiographical works of this (already Marxist) period, one should highlight the extensive multilingual proceedings of the international scientific conference held in Smolenice in June 1966, which (also thanks to the controversial character of the event and the publications) brought about a confrontation of different approaches and perspectives concerning the Slavic problem, with the personality of Ľudovít Štúr and his concept of Slavic reciprocity standing at its centre.²⁵ Tatiana Ivantyšynová's monograph on the ideology of Russian Slavophiles has been unjustly forgotten.²⁶

In this period, a number of source editions already appeared, thus making up for the shortcomings of Slovak professional historiography. Apart from the aforementioned Daniel Rapant and the utilized František Bokes, Karol Goláň and his work *Štúrovské pokolenie* [The Štúr's Generation] were also principal.²⁷

In the historiography after 1989, the topic of the 1848/49 revolution (and within it, the Slavic Congress) appeared, although only sporadically, but in a quite fundamental way in terms of instrumentalization. There was one collection of papers from a scientific event in 1998 dedicated to the anniversary of the revolution,²⁸ another devoted to the revolution and historical memory,²⁹ and a number of texts centred around the personality of Ľudovít Štúr, where, without much scientific ambition, contributions focused on Slavicity and the Slavic Congress appeared sporadically.³⁰ The most beneficial and specifically devoted to the Slavic Congress were two studies written by Daniela Kodajová in 1999 and 2000, both of which are mentioned above.

Despite all the deficits, much has been done after 1989 to de-legenderize the events surrounding the 1848/49 revolution. The greatest stir was caused by the

24 In more detail, Holec, »Bije zvon slobody.«

25 Holotík, ed., *Ľudovít Štúr*.

26 Ivantyšynová, *Česi a Slováci*.

27 Goláň, *Štúrovské pokolenie*.

28 Sedlák, ed., *Slováci v revolúcii*.

29 Macho, *Revolúcia 1848/49*.

30 First of all, Macho, Kodajová et al., *Ľudovít Štúr*.

publication (originally samizdat) of the publicist Ladislav Szalay, hidden behind a pseudonym, which caused quite a controversy.³¹ There was talk about the confessional determination of Štúr's followers, Slovak members of the Hungarian Revolutionary Guards, the mistakes and deficits of the previously 'infallible' historical personalities, etc. In this spirit, texts about Štúr and the Štúr-followers then appeared, showing this personality as a man of flesh and bones. The topic of the Slav Congress itself tends to appear more in recent Czech works of history, such as in modern biographies of František Palacký.

However, in public space and in simplified school (textbook) interpretation, legends still have their place. This is best expressed by the monumental equestrian statue of Jozef Miloslav Hurban, erected in 2006 and referring to the victorious battles of Slovak volunteers at Budatín, north of Žilina, at the turn of 1848 and 1849.

To conclude this historical overview, the renaissance of nationalism and the numerous inter-Slavic conflicts after the fall of communism leave virtually no room for the revival of Slavic ideas. Even the new geopolitical order of Europe has not provided any conditions for this, no matter whether we move within the framework of European cosmopolitanism, nation-state patriotism, or simple nationalism. All Slavic messianisms that have sought any form of Slavic cultural or political unity have simply failed. There is room for reflection on the extent to which it is realistic to contemplate a Slavic spirit, identity, cultural affinity, or mentality, at least to the extent that the spirit and fluidity of the Habsburg Commonwealth, which has been defunct for over a hundred years, no longer lives on. Even if we were to admit to some common elements among the very differently embedded Slavic states—mental, political, or cultural—this would not be enough to revive the ideas and politically instrumentalize the phenomena that played a significant role in the history of Central Europe at one time. They have disappeared along with the image of the common enemy. This inevitably forces us to reflect on whether this is not precisely the cause of the emergence of the Slavic myth and Slavic unity. And what about today, when the one who—according to expectations and historical tradition—was supposed to save us has become the enemy? The roles and stereotypes are changing, and our historical experiences with Russia differ in many ways. The role of the Slavic Congress of 1848 in the historical memory of Slovaks from the 1850s to the present day is changing too. Today, its importance is practically marginalized. The role of historians is to understand and explain all the changes in thinking and interpretations.

31 Viktor, *Legenda*.

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Miniatures of Europe

Comparing Historical Master Narratives from Nineteenth-Century Belgium and Habsburg Central Europe

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Abstract. The study offers an unusual comparison: it sets out to compare historical master narratives from Belgium and Habsburg Central Europe. The first part justifies this approach by pointing out that Belgian and Austrian historians found themselves in a similar situation in the nineteenth century: their rivals considered their respective communities artificial constructs, as they lacked a national basis. Thus, Belgian and Austrian historians had the task of historically legitimizing their respective communities. These attempts are presented and evaluated, showing how the Belgian attempt was much more successful than its Austrian counterpart. The second part of the study examines nineteenth century Belgian and Hungarian representations of the reign of Joseph II, who not only ruled both territories but represented the same dilemma for historians in the nineteenth century in both countries: his modernizing measures greatly corresponded to nineteenth-century notions of progress; on the other hand, they also threatened cherished national institutions. The study shows the dividing lines between the various interpretations of Belgian and Hungarian historians treating this issue.

Keywords: Belgium, Habsburg Monarchy, Hungary, Nationalism, History of Historiography, Intellectual History

This study is dedicated to my teacher, Gábor Czoch on his 60th birthday

This study is a comparative analysis of nineteenth-century historical master narratives from Belgium and Habsburg Central Europe. Although these regions have very different social, economic, and political development, the hypothesis behind this uncommon comparison is that the historical master narratives of these regions show structural similarities that are worth exploring.¹ The article will first compare

1 For a comparative approach to Belgian and Hungarian nineteenth-century history, see: Erdődy, “A modern polgári nemzetté válás útjai.”

Austro-German imperial narratives with Belgian works. The two states faced similar dilemmas: their respective histories were the sum of regional histories, and those regions had been independent from one another in the past. They were also made up of different ethnic-linguistic groups. Their rivals interpreted these circumstances in the very same way, claiming that both states were mere artificial creations compared to their own nations, which they considered 'organic.' The way Belgian and imperial Austro-German historiography is treated today is a perfect demonstration of how historical interpretation is determined by a community's contemporary self-image: Belgian master narratives in the nineteenth century are compared to national historiographies (Dutch, French, and even Czech),² whereas imperial narratives are either completely forgotten or treated as something as outdated already in their time as the Habsburg imperial idea itself.³ While it is undoubtedly important for a historian to concentrate on those tendencies of the past that prevailed, it is also crucial that they put on a sort of 'veil of ignorance' in order to grasp the experiences and expectations of contemporaries, rather than the outcome of their actions, which only posterity will know.⁴ The study of Austrian imperial narratives may yield further benefits: in his excellent study, Jo Tollebeek saw the merits of presenting Belgian national master narratives in examining the general problems of national histories.⁵ In the first part of the present study, we hope to be able to approach this issue by comparing the failed Austrian tentative to the successful Belgian example. Nevertheless, I have to stress that due to my linguistic limits, in the case of Belgian narratives, I am only relying on French language sources and will not be dealing with Flemish and Dutch works. Although the picture will not be complete, I am convinced that crucial points can still be raised and, most importantly, the validity of the comparison can be demonstrated.

The second main part of the study will compare Belgian and Hungarian historical master narratives. The two countries were situated in completely different regions of Europe and underwent different social, economic, and cultural development. Yet it is often forgotten that in a sense, during the Austrian domination of the eighteenth century, they had what can be called a 'common history.' The nineteenth-century representation of this common past will be examined through the case of Joseph II's reign. The reforms introduced by Joseph's enlightened absolutism posed the very same dilemma for both communities: the promise of modernizing measures at the expense of losing cherished national institutions.

2 For a Dutch–Belgian comparison: Beyen and Majerus, "Weak and Strong Nation in the Low Countries."

3 Pohl, "National Origin Narratives in the Austrian–Hungarian Monarchy."

4 I borrowed the term 'veil of ignorance' from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.

5 Tollebeek, "Historical Representation and the Nation-State," 331.

Community master narratives

This analysis is asymmetric in two aspects—in fact, it is my experience that perfectly symmetric historical comparisons usually remain the dream of first-draft research proposals. On the one hand, as mentioned above, in the case of Belgium, I will be relying exclusively on sources written in French. On the other hand, the majority of the examined French-language Belgian historical master narratives (by which I mean works providing a complete synthesis of the history of the given community) were published in the first half of the nineteenth century, whereas the majority of their Hungarian and Austro-German counterparts were produced during the second half of the century. This is only a seeming discrepancy: in Belgium, it was during the first half of the century that the most influential major narratives were written. Even later, during the sixties and seventies, these are the works that are referred to; also, in his own *Histoire de Belgique* published in the early 1900s, Henri Pirenne lists these historians, namely Juste, Moke, and Namèche among others, as predecessors of his own work. One could argue that the mistake would be to cling to the dates rather than to consider the influence of the narratives.

It is also problematic that while some of the works examined were produced in a period when professional historiography did not exist and accounts were written by enthusiastic autodidacts (such as Juste), others were produced by professionally trained members of academic institutions (such as Pirenne, Huber, and Marczali). This problem can be overcome if we concentrate on the genre of the master narrative instead of the factors listed. These works aim at directly forming collective memory; they are driven by the desire to discover the past, as well as by a certain ‘fantasy’ which helps conceptualize the series of events as constituting one great history that has a certain course of development.⁶ Historical events and figures must be judged according to the extent to which they helped or hindered advancement on this trajectory. This fantasy also accords a certain mission to the community concerned and territorial-historical cohesion to its history.

The literature usually ties this form of history writing to the ‘nation’ and defines it as ‘national history.’ However, it should not be overlooked that not only nations are in need of this type of historical narratives. As we will see in more detail later, intellectuals of post-revolutionary imperial Austria also laid claim to such histories. It is probably wiser to talk about ‘community histories’ or ‘community master narratives,’⁷ given that communities larger or smaller than the nation may also

6 Beyen, “Who is the Nation,” 68.

7 I have already used the concept of community histories in an article: Tarafás, *Oesterreich ist eben Oesterreich*.

need such narratives: their members need a narrative of the past which forms their imagination in a way that they perceive themselves as a community.⁸

Communities in the “century of history” (Gabriel Monod) were in great need of coherent, well-elaborated community histories. During the nineteenth century, history was a constant reference point for people who sought orientation in the present. Historical thinking was far from being mere nostalgia; it was part of a world view of a specific age.⁹ History was a kind of language through which intellectuals expressed their opinions and preferences about contemporary issues. The case of Etienne Constantin de Gerlache (1785–1871, the first prime minister of the independent Belgium) is exemplary in this regard: his work published in 1839, originally discussing events of the last decades of Belgium’s life, became a comprehensive history of Belgium, as the author constantly felt obliged to examine his community’s entire history in order to explain and express his opinion on the recent past.¹⁰ To point out another example from Habsburg Central Europe, we find a similar way of thinking in the historical work of fin-de-siècle Hungarian politician, Ákos Beöthy.¹¹

The question of representativity is also more complicated than it might appear at first sight. It is not enough to consider the copies sold or the editions published: while they are important indicators, they are not the only ones. The essence of a master narrative is that it serves as a model for historical narratives in terms of structuring the past and defining its meaning.¹² Middle-school textbooks and political pamphlets regularly cite them, especially when the prestige of history as a discipline is growing during the century. Thus, they deserve the attention they are given.

Artificial creations or providential necessities?

During the heyday of community master narratives between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the World War I, in the German city of Gotha, the publisher Friedrich Andreas Perthes issued a series titled *Geschichte der europäischen Staaten*.¹³ The series featured typical examples of national history writing by the most prominent historians of the time. Writing a few years apart, the two authors, Henri Pirenne and Alfons Huber, however, admitted that they were rather uncertain

8 Here, I am referring, of course, to the category of imagined community developed by Benedict Anderson: Anderson, *Imagined communities*.

9 Varga, *Árpád a város fölött*, 25–26.

10 Gerlach, *Histoire du royaume des Pays-Bas*.

11 Beöthy, *A magyar államiság fejlődése, küzdelmei*.

12 Thijs, “The Metaphor of the Master,” 69.

13 For the history of these editions, see: Tollbeek, “Exegi Monumentum.”

about whether they could do what the editors requested. Both authors included a preface to their work in which they explain the difficulty of their task.

In his work on Belgian history “from the origins to the early fourteenth century,” Henri Pirenne (1862–1935) complained about the grave difficulties of his task which arose from the fact that Belgium had forged a different path of development than other ‘normal’ states.

“The peculiar conditions which the Southern Netherlands was subjected to, at least up to the beginning of the fifteenth century, certainly do not allow its history to be treated in exactly the same way as that of the great nation-states surrounding it, namely Germany, England, and France.”

At first glance, this history seems “to consist only of a series of disjoined monographs placed arbitrarily under a common title.”¹⁴ In the French edition, Pirenne depicted the abnormality of Belgian history even more explicitly:

“All the motives by which one usually explains the formation of States are also lacking. One would look in vain whether it be for geographical unity, unity of race, or political unity.”¹⁵

The Austro-German Alfons Huber (1834–1898) reported similar difficulties in the preface to his *Geschichte Österreichs*. He stated that “a history of Austria is undoubtedly harder to write than the history of any other state.” This is because unlike the formation of other significant states, that is, on a national basis, Austria is “an artificial construct [...] not a tree that has grown ever more powerful branches and leaves from a foundation, but a complex of three originally separate constructions.”¹⁶

These two historians faced a difficult situation that did not originate solely in the perceived abnormality of their communities, but also in another issue which they do not address in their prefaces. As leading historians, it was their task to defend their communities from the harsh attacks they had to endure. In the Belgian as well as in the Austrian case, the attacks came from significant rivals who questioned the legitimacy of these communities, claiming that they were nothing more than artificial creations without a ‘proper’ past; accordingly, their members were not united by honest loyalty but by the opportunist obedience of a bureaucrat.

In the case of Belgium, Dutch historians belonging to the Great-Netherlands Movement criticized the Belgian state for being nothing more than the artificial construct of a few diplomats.¹⁷ Such criticisms were formulated in France as well.

14 Pirenne, *Geschichte Belgiens*, viii.

15 Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vii.

16 Huber, *Geschichte Österreichs*, v–vi.

17 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation and the Nation-State,” 332.

According to the *Encyclopédie nouvelle* in the 1830s, “Belgium has no history, [...] [she] has no centre, no nationality of its own: she has no name.”¹⁸ The phenomenon is a perfect example of how the categorisation of a community tells much more about the motivations of the categorisers than about the actual categorised.¹⁹ The motivation is clear: members of the Great Netherlands Movement as well as several French political voices intended to have (part of) Belgium integrated into their respective countries.²⁰

Austria had to endure similar attacks mostly from her greatest rival in the process of German unification. The Prussian school of historians, which was among the most ardent propagators of the *kleindeutsche* solution, maintained its harsh attitude against Austria even after the establishment of the Prussia-dominated Reich. In his *Deutsche Geschichte in Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, Heinrich von Treitschke wrote about Austria (Vienna):

“Here in the center of the immense family estate called Austria, in this tangle of countries and peoples brought together by marriages [*zusammengeheiratet*] of rulers, one had never suspected any of the moral forces that hold a national state together.”²¹

Nevertheless, already since the eighteenth century, important attempts aimed at reinforcing the vision of an independent Austrian and Belgian community are noticeable. In Austria, it was the reign of Maria Theresa that made it necessary to conceptualize the monarch’s different lands as an empire in its own right, which is completely independent from the German Reich.²² The absolutist, centralizing ruling style of Maria Theresa and her son made such a concept necessary, as loyalties binding people to regional authorities (the competences of which these monarchs intended to diminish) had to be turned to the central power in Vienna.²³ The most famous outcome of this patriotism was Joseph von Sonnenfels’s *Über die Liebe des Vaterlandes*, which defined the *Vaterland* as the Habsburg state and placed it above all other possible objects of political loyalty.²⁴ In the Southern Low Countries, an important attempt was made for synthesising a Belgian national history, which emphasised the specificity of the Austrian Netherlands.²⁵

18 Leroux and Reyanud, eds, *Encyclopédie nouvelle*, 554–55. Cp. Tollebeek, “Historical Representation,” 338.

19 Cp. Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity*, 64.

20 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation,” 332.

21 Treitschke, *Detusche Geschichte in Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 598–99.

22 Szabó, *Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism*, 4.

23 Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 49, 62.

24 Horwath, “The Altar of the Fatherland,” 49–50.

25 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation,” 330.

Austria and Belgium in the nineteenth-century are quite different: the former is an old Central European empire, while the latter is a small, young country situated between the great powers of Western Europe. Nevertheless, they have similar problems when it comes to defining their history because their respective communities' pasts seem to lack the features that this kind of narrative requires: territorial coherence, the community as agency, and a clearly definable mission to legitimate the community's place in the world.

Concerning territorial unity, Belgian historians followed the strategy of concentrating on one concrete region and compressed Belgian history into the history of that territory. For Louis Dewez (1760–1834), it was Brabant which fulfilled this task, while later historians mostly chose the Duchy of Brabant and the country of Flanders.²⁶ Henri Guillome Moke (1803–1862) reflected on the question explicitly in the 1843 edition of his *Histoire de la Belgique*. According to him, taking each province into separate consideration would have dire consequences.

“First of all, there is no more Belgium: for detached limbs do not make a body; then social history becomes impossible: for only by comparison and approximation does one understand the progress and the effect of institutions.”²⁷

Moke also considered that such a historical account would simply be boring for the reader, because for each province certain issues would need to be repeated.

Political disunity in Belgian history was also a major issue. Dewez considered that before the fourteenth century “Belgium had, so to speak, no fixed existence in the political order, and it is for this reason that it does not have a complete and followed history.” For Dewez, this seemed to pose unresolvable problems: if a historian chooses a large-scale historical perspective, Belgian history becomes unrecognizably lost in French and German history, whereas if the historian decides to concentrate on the small-scale history of the various provinces, Belgian history is equally lost—this time in the particular histories of small provinces. This absurd situation ends with the reign of the Burgundian dukes; however, after this “brilliant era” when the history of Belgium “was able to form a body of national history” everything returns to the previous conditions; that is, Belgian history is confused with those of the great powers that determine her fate.²⁸

To overcome this problem, so vividly described by Dewez, Belgian historians defined something that literature compares to a certain *Volksgeist*.²⁹ Théodore

26 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation,” 339; Verschaffel, “L’ennemie préférée,” 76.

27 Moke, *Histoire de la Belgique*, ii.

28 Dewez, *Histoire générale de la Belgique*, Introduction.

29 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation,” 340.

Juste (1818–1888), the author of one of the most famous Belgian master narratives, considered that despite the series of foreign dominations, the special character of Belgium was never lost.³⁰ In the 1860 work of Louis Hymans (1829–1884), it is the “spirit of liberty” and the tradition of constitutionality that are the constant factors for Belgium during the many vicissitudes of her history; they unify this history.³¹ Besides constitutional continuity, Etienne de Gerlache defines national characteristics (“a calm, positive, religious nation, attached to her old habits”³²) and the mission of being the representative of Catholicism among the powers that represent protestants and philosophers.³³ These constant features are maintained in the midst of “foreign domination,” the most remarkable factor in Belgian narratives.³⁴

In an excellent study, Marnix Beyen compares Dutch and Belgian master narratives. By analysing the usage of such notions as ‘Belgium’ and ‘Belgian,’ Beyen comes to the conclusion that ‘Belgium’ and the ‘Belgians’ (as a collective) are rather passive actors in the Belgian national history, compared to Dutch narratives.³⁵ However, at times, this passivity can be seen as an integral part of the special mission of the Belgian nation. For Gerlache, Belgium’s great mission is guarding the superiority of law over power, which is one of the primary tasks for civilization. Belgium is most suited for this role because she has so often been the victim of wars and treaties between great powers, established without her consent.³⁶ For Juste, also, Belgium has its place in the world primarily as a mediator between great powers, which is essential for peace. According to Juste, it was Cardinal Richelieu who conceptualized this role of the Belgian provinces.³⁷

According to Beyen, instead of ‘Belgians’ as actors, the emphasis is on individuals who are presented as the actors forming history. Beyen considers that this is related to the liberal convictions of Moke and Juste, which made them suspicious of the state and inspired their preference for the individual.³⁸ Perhaps, this phe-

30 Juste, *Histoire de la Belgique*, vol. II, 410.

31 Hymans, *Histoire poulaire de Belgique*, 8.

32 Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, v.

33 At one point, the engaged Catholic Gerlach has an argument with Louis Dewez over the personality of Philipp II, whom Dewez saw as a hypocritical tyrant, which Gerlache rejects as baseless accusations (Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, 29). This is an early example of the contrast between the liberal and clerical historical perspectives, which will clash more radically during the second half of the nineteenth century.

34 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation and the Nation-State”; Verschaffel “L’ennemi préféré,” 76.

35 Beyen, “Who is the Nation.”

36 Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, xvi.

37 Juste, *Histoire de la Belgique*, vol II, 402.

38 Beyen, “Who is the Nation,” 83.

nomenon is related to the great nineteenth-century cult of the Belgian pantheon. From the 1840s to the late 1870s, the state enthusiastically supported the creation of pantheons with the greatest figures of Belgian history, from statues and paintings to voluminous encyclopaedias.³⁹

The pantheon was also the genre that first conceptualized patriotic Austrian historiography. The pioneering figure in establishing it was Joseph von Hormayr (1781–1848), a controversial figure. The peak of Hormayr's intellectual activity coincided with the middle of the Koselleckian *Sattelzeit*. This may explain how he developed concepts that later turned out to be inherently contradictory. The Tyrolian historian, who was head of the Archives in Vienna, elaborated a vision of history in which the linguistically defined nation became the history-forming protagonist.⁴⁰ In the meantime, Hormayr and his collaborators pledged loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty and devoted their literary activity to the legitimization of the Monarchy. Using the highly useful categories developed by Pál S. Varga, these intellectuals served both the 'state-based' and the 'tradition-based' community idea.⁴¹

Hormayr was of the opinion that Austrians had to put an end to the practice that the history of the Habsburgs was written by their political and religious enemies. Instead, he argued, the history of Austria had to be a real 'Austrian history' compiled not only for scholars but for the larger population as well, so that it could contribute to the sense of belonging to the same empire.⁴² In short, Hormayr argued for an Austrian community history. His major work was the twenty-volume *Oesterreichische Plutarch* published between 1807 and 1820, which begins with the biography of Rudolf Habsburg and is centred around the dynasty. Besides Rudolf, its greatest hero is Maria Theresa, but in general, all Habsburgs are bestowed with the most positive human qualities; Hormayr goes as far as to attempt to blanch over such controversial figures as Ferdinand II.⁴³

A major work which intended to show that the Habsburg Empire was not the outcome of mere chance and clever marriages was the six-volume *Geschichte*

39 Tollebeek and Verschaffel, "Group Portraits with National Heroes," 92–94.

40 Fillafer, *Afklärung Habsburgisch*, 40–41.

41 S. Varga, *A nemzeti költészet csarnokai*. S. Varga shows how these ideas were inherently contradictory and that the imperial (state-based community) project of Hormayr's circle was constantly undermined by their views on the nation (tradition-based community), some authors claiming for example every nation's the right to its own constitution, which was certainly flying in face of the Habsburg project. Perhaps it speaks to the chaotic nature of the *Sattelzeit* that it was not only Hormayr and his circle that failed to discover these contradictions but so did the ever-vigilant censorship of the *Vormärz* as well.

42 Robert, *L'idée nationale Autrichienne et les guerres de Napoléon*, 292.

43 Robert, *L'idée nationale Autrichienne et les guerres de Napoléon*, 279.

*Oesterreichs*⁴⁴ by Hermann Meynert (1808–1895) published between 1843 and 1847.⁴⁵ Meynert aimed at showing the origins of the Empire even in the “darkness of prehistoric times [Vorzeit]” and demonstrating that Austria was a ‘natural unity’ and not an ‘artificial tendency:’ the peoples of Austria came under the *österreichische Gesammtheit* not by violence but by necessity. One of the greatest challenges of these histories of Austria is which territories to present, to what extent, and how. The structure of Meynert’s work takes the path of dedicating the first two volumes to the history of the Austrian core-lands up to 1526. The following two volumes deal with the histories of the Bohemian Lands and Hungary, respectively, starting from the origins to their “union [Vereinigung]” with Austria in 1526. The last three volumes discuss the history of all three parts of the Empire up to Meynert’s own time.

Meynert’s undertaking can be considered a significant step, because we witness a historical definition of Austria that is independent from the Habsburg dynasty. Nevertheless, it came under the harsh criticism of perhaps the greatest theoretician of the Austrian community history, Joseph Alexander von Helfert (1820–1910). In a book published in 1853, as the secretary of state under Minister of Religious Affairs and Education Leo von Thun, Helfert expressed his views on how Austrian history should be written. As Hormayr was driven in his patriotic mission by the defeat Austria suffered from Napoleon, for Helfert, it was the crisis of 1848–1849 that made him critically rethink the ways in which Austria dealt with her history. His criticism of Meynert consisted in pointing out that although the historian presented the history of the Empire’s peoples, he did not shed sufficient light on the factors that predestined their unification.⁴⁶ Meynert’s structural solutions were also dismissed by Helfert: according to him, one should introduce the history of Bohemia and Hungary not only at the point of their unification in 1526; instead, the histories of the lands should be presented synchronically.⁴⁷ What needs to be shown through this history is that the existence of Austria is a providential necessity; it is in the highest interest not only for Europe’s balance of power but foremost for her own peoples. Helfert uses the notion of “national history [*Nationalgeschichte*]” He aims at applying a political concept of the nation in order to decisively break from ethnic-linguistic interpretation that prevailed during “the days of agitation, the memory of which is so distressing,” that is, of course, during the revolutions of 1848–1849.⁴⁸

44 Meynert, *Geschichte Oesterreichs seiner Völker und Länder*.

45 Robert, *L'idée nationale Autrichienne et les guerres de Napoléon*, 27–28.

46 Helfert, *Über Nationalgeschichte*, 56–57; Cp. Robert, *L'idée nationale Autrichienne et les guerres de Napoléon*, 28.

47 Helfert, *Über Nationalgeschichte*, 59.

48 Helfert, *Über Nationalgeschichte*, 1–2.

The authors of the most important master narratives on Austrian history followed Helfert's instructions on the synchronic method and discussed in parallel the history of the Austrian core lands, Hungary, and Bohemia. The Ausgleich of 1867 did not shatter them in this practice contrary to what some authors of the *Reichsgeschichte*, a university textbook for imperial history, taught at the faculties of humanities and law. Hans von Voltelini (1862–1938) argued that after the Ausgleich, Hungary (Transleithania) should not be included in the history of Austria, as it was already a separate state. Helfert was quick to react and dismissed Voltelini's suggestions, staying true to what he had proposed some fifty years earlier.⁴⁹

Unlike Voltelini, the master narratives followed the synchronic method, meaning that the representation of the territory is practically uniform. However, there are still important differences among their authors, which is most apparent when studying the usage of the notion of *Gesamtstaat*. In his five-volume work on Austrian history, Franz Krones (1835–1902) presented the *Gesamtstaat* as the central idea in Austrian history unfolding progressively from the tenth century. For him, *Gesamtstaat* is not only the centralized administration, but a higher idea of Empire.⁵⁰ One cannot find this view in Franz Martin Mayer's (1844–1914) popular two-volume work.⁵¹ In his presentation, *Gesamtstaat* is solely the centralized administration and has no other idealized value. In the case of Mayer, a certain indifference is discernible towards Austria, which is, in his description, no providential necessity but rather the outcome of eventualities of history and of the Habsburg marriages. Mayer's true protagonist is rather the German communities of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary.

Richard von Kralik (1852–1934), who was a literary man but also wrote historiographical works reviewed by professional historians, produced the most enthusiastically patriotic master narrative of Austrian history. He followed Helfert's instructions the most fully, pointing out the origins of Austria, going back as far as antiquity. For Kralik as well, Austria is a providential necessity, and he even argues that the dynasty was far from being a central factor in its creation, as this is a result of much higher historical forces. "It is not because the House of Habsburg, at that time and elsewhere, acquired prospects and rights to Hungary and Bohemia that Austria [*Gesamtösterreich*] exists, but the Habsburgs had to acquire these rights because the idea of Austria [*Gesamtösterreich*] urged it to do so with world-historical necessity."⁵²

49 Stourzh, "Der Umfang der österreichischen Geschichte," 19–21. Nevertheless, Voltelini himself admitted that the history of Hungary must be included to a certain extent, as otherwise several phenomena in Austrian history would be incomprehensible.

50 Krones, *Handbuch der Geschichte Oesterreichs von der ältesten bis zur neuesten Zeit*.

51 Mayer, *Geschichte Österreichs mit besonderer Rücksicht auf das Kulturleben*.

52 Kralik, *Österreichische Geschichte*, 80.

Evidently, for Kralik, the *Gesamtstaat* is not a mere technique of government but an ideal closely related to the above quoted *Gesamtösterreich*.

It might seem that Krones and Kralik share similar views. However, at closer inspection, this impression proves false, as the two authors represent radically different ideas on the mission of Austria. For Krones, this mission is to reconcile the nations of the Empire, respecting their individual cultures. Accordingly, he dismisses the Germanising tendencies in Austrian history. Kralik, on the other hand, does not reject the Germanising measures, as he does not see Germanification as a government's arbitrary arrangements, but as the natural progress of culture. Using the categories of Moritz Csáky, we can label Kralik's view as a classical example of the concept of *Mitteleuropa*, which implies German cultural superiority, whereas Krones's views can be related to the concept of *Zentraleuropa*, which regards the pluralistic culture of Central Europe as the region's major characteristic which must never be forcibly modified in favour of one or another nation.⁵³

In his study, already quoted above, Marnix Beyen concludes that the 'Belgian people,' the 'Belgians' or 'Belgium' are much less the central actors of Belgian master narratives than the Dutch people in their Dutch counterparts.⁵⁴ If we consider the same question from the Belgian–Austrian perspective, it will be the Belgian narratives that come out in a much more favourable light. 'Austria' and the 'Austrians' as a collective are rarely the defining actors of history; in fact, it is only Kralik who regularly uses these notions. It is also Kralik alone who uses the term *Vaterland* consistently and regularly, which was a central notion for expressing political loyalty to Austria at least since Sonnenfels's above quoted work.⁵⁵

At the end of our survey, we should return to the starting thought of our presentation: Henri Pirenne and Alfons Huber writing the history of their respective communities for the same publisher in Gotha. As we have seen, Pirenne diagnoses the difficulties facing every student of Belgian medieval history. However, he concludes that a Belgian history is unthinkable only for those who can conceptualize history only as the history of the political sphere. Instead, Pirenne proposes to concentrate on civilization which enables him to see Belgium as a microcosmos of Western Europe: Belgium is the meeting point of Germanic and Romanic civilizations. The reception and harmonization of these two great civilizations is where the originality of Belgium lies. The events seen from this perspective cease to give the impression of chaos, and the existence of a proper, organic Belgian history becomes clear. For this, one must concentrate on civilization (in the German edition *Kultur*), rather than on politics.⁵⁶

53 Csáky, *Das Gedächtnis Zentraleuropas*.

54 Beyen, "Who is the Nation," 82.

55 For more on this subject: Tarafás, "Oesterreich ist eben Oesterreich."

56 Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vii–x.

We witness something completely different in Huber's work. As we have seen before, the historian diagnoses the difficulties just like Pirenne. However, he does not provide an alternative perspective in the way his Belgian colleague does. For him, the fact that Austria's development cannot be integrated into the habitual, nation-obsessed perspective of history writing leads to the assumption that Austria is an artificial construct.⁵⁷ In the rest of the preface, the historian enumerates the possibilities of discussing this artificial construct's history, but he does not provide a new theoretical/methodological framework within which Austrian history would gain a new perspective.

One should certainly not ignore the fact that Pirenne was one of the greatest, most innovative historians of his generation, respected by such emblematic figures as Marc Bloch who even quotes him in his famous methodological work.⁵⁸ Although Huber was also a major figure of his generation, this remarkable craftsman of medieval and early modern history had nothing to say about History. Huber was an engaged Austrian patriot⁵⁹ but he was too intellectually honest to recite ideological slogans, and too much of a traditional positivist to elaborate such concepts of history as Pirenne did. Perhaps Huber's attitude can also be partially explained by the so-called anti-idealism of the Austrian mentality as well as the self-image of the positivist scholar that united scientists and scholars even after the disciplinary fragmentation.⁶⁰ Another Austrian peculiarity may also be remembered: therapeutic nihilism, the central notion of William M. Johnston's book on the Austrian mind.⁶¹ The notion originally referred to Austrian medicine and meant that doctors were more interested in the diagnosis of a disease than its treatment. Johnston argues that the notion applies not only to medicine but to other fields as well—in fact, we can see that Huber acted according to this notion: he diagnosed a problem but did not feel the need to elaborate a solution the way Pirenne did.

Nevertheless, the concept of “miniature of Europe” that we find in Pirenne's work was also present in Habsburg Central Europe. In the 1830s, János Csaplovics saw Hungary as a miniature of Europe because of the country's multi-ethnic makeup. Needless to say, this concept was absorbed by the nationalist ideology of the century which aimed at presenting Hungary as a nation state, or at least as a multi-ethnic state where the Magyars were rightfully superior. Austria, as a whole, was also seen

57 Huber, *Geschichte Österreichs*, v–vi.

58 Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier de l'historien*, 63–64.

59 He was among those who urged the introduction of *Reichsgeschichte* at the faculties of law and humanities so that the future intelligentsia would get a sense of what is Austria (Fellner, “Alfons Huber”).

60 Fillafer and Feichtinger, “Habsburg Positivism,” 193.

61 Johnston, *The Austrian Mind*.

as a miniature of Europe, or even the world, as in the poem by Friedrich Hebbel: “Oesterreich ist eine kleine Welt, in der die Grosse ihre Probe hält.” However, in my view it was not until Moritz Csáky’s major works published since the 1990s that this idea has matured into a fully elaborated historical concept. Csáky refused to see the cultures of the region as homogenous entities and understood them as ‘spaces of communication’ which are constantly connected and mutually influence each other. In his view, the culturally pluralistic region of Habsburg Central Europe presents several phenomena and problems that are structurally similar to those that we experience in Europe.⁶²

Naturally, in historical research one is to be suspicious when arriving at an explanation that relies heavily on personal talents (or lack thereof) of certain individuals without pointing to a greater, structural element. In our case, besides what has already been described, the state’s attitude towards the cause of its respective community’s historical culture should be pointed out. In Belgium, the state played an eminent role in fostering the historical culture. As already mentioned, the Belgian state made important investments in the pantheonization of Belgium’s historical heroes. A royal decree from as early as 1835 ordained erecting statues to freedom fighters, great rulers, famous scientists, and artists from Belgium’s past. Besides statues, they also financed paintings and lavish book editions on historical heroes.⁶³ Even in top-level government circles, politicians were aware of the importance of history: Interior Minister Charles Rogier told the king that the knowledge of Belgium’s history was more important than ever before. The political elite after 1830 was in great need of historical legitimacy: given their liberal values, they aimed at interpreting the events of 1830 more as a rebirth than a revolution. For this, history served them well.⁶⁴ In this spirit, already in the mid-1830s, a *Commission Royale d’Histoire* was established. In 1845, an award was founded for works on national history. In an article reporting on the award ceremony, the author explained that national history had to trickle down to the masses from the intelligentsia and inspire love for their homeland, which in turn will inspire loyalty to their state.⁶⁵

This quasi-political role of the intelligentsia was precisely what the Austrian state most feared and wanted to avoid at all costs in the *Vormärz* period. The success of Joseph von Hormayr at the beginning of the nineteenth century was ephemeral. The historian took part in the 1809 Tyrol uprising against Napoleon and was part of an association called the *Alpenbund*, disapproved by the government. However,

62 Csáky presents this view in several articles and interviews. The latest: Csáky, *Das Gedächtnis Zentraleuropas*.

63 Tollebeek and Verschaffel, “Group Portraits with National Heroes,” 93–94.

64 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation and the Nation-State,” 334.

65 Tollebeek, “Historical Representation and the Nation-State,” 337.

there was another reason for his downfall: as soon as he urged cooperation between the government and the intelligentsia, Hormayr fell out of favour⁶⁶ because the French revolution taught the Austrian political elite that any involvement of the intelligentsia in politics posed a deadly danger to the status quo, even in the case of those who seemed to have supportive motivations.⁶⁷

This notion of fearing free thought left its mark on Austrian universities, which were despised in other German countries. Austrian universities were not workshops of free-spirited research but training schools of lawyers, doctors, and other functionaries.⁶⁸ The emphasis was on functionality, and not on scientific freedom and fantasy: universities were not considered to be a safe haven of the *artes liberales*, but places of education and discipline, where teaching was conducted through textbooks approved by the ministry.⁶⁹ Moreover, there was a neurotic fear of foreign ideas. This made its impact on history as well; however, auxiliary sciences underwent considerable development, as they were considered to give useful qualifications to future functionaries.⁷⁰

A major paradigm-shift took place with the revolutions of 1848, which radically changed the perception of the intellectual's political potential. In historiography, it was Joseph Alexander von Helfert who defined the new role of the historian in supporting Austrian unity by working on the Austrian *Nationalgeschichte*. An institution was also founded, the *Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* which had two major tasks: giving a thorough education in the auxiliary sciences, and training historians with a vision of an Austrian *Nationalgeschichte*. In the first task, the *Institut* was undoubtably successful, becoming a world-renowned workshop of auxiliary sciences. Concerning the second task, however, it fell short of Helfert's expectations. After the short-lived directorate of Albert Jäger, the *Institut* was taken over by the Prussian Theodor von Sickel, who was superior to Jäger in craftsmanship but was completely indifferent to Austrian patriotic ideals.⁷¹ Ultimately, post-1848 Austrian historiography proceeded in developing expertise in auxiliary sciences, a field which already had

66 It is worth noting that after his fall from grace, Hormayr eventually moved to Munich, Bavaria. His hatred of Metternich's rule turned towards the Habsburg dynasty as a whole. At the end of the day, Hormayr who elaborated the 'state-based' as well as the 'tradition-based' community narrative, ended up being a *Habsburghasser* creating the basis of yet another narrative. This would have an impressive career among Austria's enemies: the image of Austria being nothing more than a "Zusammenheiratet Länderkonglomerat" (Heer, *Der Kampf*, 183).

67 Robert, *L'idée nationale Autrichienne et les guerres de Napoléon*, 478–88.

68 Lhotsky, "Geschichtsforschung und Geschichtsschreibung in Österreich," 412.

69 Surman, *Universities in Imperial Austria*, 31–33.

70 Lhotsky, *Geschichte des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 15.

71 On this process, see: Beld, "Le Comte Leo Thun et l'Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung," as well as Lhotsky's above quoted major work.

strong foundations, but failed to complete its new task designed by Helfert. Although there were further attempts at transmitting a unified image of Austria (such as the above-mentioned *Reichsgeschichte*) they all fell short of expectations.

Joseph II's controversial heritage

Over the more than one century between the death of Joseph II and the outbreak of the World War I, he was one of, if not the most controversial figure in Habsburg history. In his remarkable book, *Aufklärung Habsburgisch*, Franz L. Fillafer called Josephinism the *große Erzählung der österreichischen Geschichte*. In the late *Vormärz* period in Cisleithania, for German liberals, the Josephinist period embodied everything they associated with Enlightenment, primarily the subordination of the Church to the state, religious freedom, and German dominance in the Monarchy; whereas they associated the Church and everything they perceived as anti-German and counter-Enlightenment with the Baroque period. Major elements of this narrative survived well into the twentieth century and resulted in a distorted image of the Enlightenment not recognizing either the conservative and clerical versions of the Enlightenment or its roots in the Baroque.⁷²

During the second half of the nineteenth century, various political groups showed their relationship to Joseph II's person in different ways: while some regarded him as their predecessor and, hence, a source of their historical legitimacy, others strove to reconcile their hostility towards Josephinism with their otherwise unconditional loyalty to the House of Habsburg.⁷³ Franz Joseph himself famously took the eighteenth-century monarch's name in order to emphasise his openness to reforms. German nationalists saw Joseph as one of their heroes, interpreting the monarch's favouritism for the German language as a nationalist act, although there was no nationalist agenda in it.⁷⁴ Liberals saw Joseph with his centralizing, modernizing, and Germanizing measures as their forerunner, while the Catholic Church regarded Joseph II's reign as the most sombre period in the empire's history, due to the monarch's attacks against the Church's authority.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, conservative clericals did not uniformly condemn Joseph: the above quoted Richard von Kralik emphasised Joseph's legacy in strengthening the *Gesamtstaat*, which in the historian's eyes outweighed his anti-clerical measures by far.⁷⁶

72 Fillafer, *Aufklärung Habsburgisch*, 67–68; also see the book's introduction.

73 Wingfield, "Emperor Joseph II in the Austrian Imagination," 67–69.

74 Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 79.

75 Wingfield, "Emperor Joseph II in the Austrian Imagination," 70.

76 Kralik, *Österreichische Geschichte*, 253.

These controversies erupted most harshly in 1880, the anniversary of Joseph's rise to power in the Hereditary Lands: German liberal and nationalist associations organised impressive celebrations, but official circles remained rather prudent or passive. The archbishop of Vienna went as far as prohibiting Viennese schools from dedicating the morning mass to the monarch's memory. In view of all this, it should not be surprising that when the Hungarian historian Henrik Marczali went to Vienna to examine the available archival sources for his book on Joseph's period, he was warned that he had better refrain from mentioning the late monarch's name in the *Hofburg*.⁷⁷

As for Belgian and Hungarian intellectuals, there was a common difficulty when trying to situate the reign of Joseph II in the history of their respective communities. The frontlines seemed to be even more turbid in the case of the Hungarians than in that of the Austro-Germans and Bohemian Germans. As the majority of Hungarian and most Belgian historians shared the very essentials of liberal values, such measures as advancing religious tolerance and abandoning feudal privileges, as well as eliminating censorship were all in line with their most cherished ideals and their experiences of modernity. In the meantime, some of Joseph's measures also attacked their 'national' institutions or, what is even more problematic, the very essence of these reforms was to dismantle the institutions perceived as essentially 'national.' In this section, I will study the ways in which Belgian and Hungarian historians dealt with this complex phenomenon, and how in these two countries as well, Josephinism can be regarded as a *große Erzählung*.

In the Belgian narratives examined, the period of Maria Theresa and that of her son Joseph are in sharp contrast. The reign of Maria Theresa (which is associated with the regent Charles de Lorraine) is depicted as a period of general bliss, while Joseph's epoch is seen as an era of great turmoil culminating in the Brabant Revolution. The two rules represent two extremities in Belgian history. For Gerlache, the two monarchs have significance that transcends their person: they represent the ideal and the condemnable way of practicing power.

"But they [the Belgians] would have loved William, and they would have served him loyally if he had taken for models Maria Theresa and the good duke of Lorraine, instead of imitating Joseph II."⁷⁸

It is also Gerlache who puts Maria Theresa and Joseph in the harshest contrast, speaking of the "piety" of Maria Theresa and the "intolerant fanaticism" of Joseph. Authors less hostile to Joseph establish a similar opposition:

77 Marczali, *Emlékeim*, 137.

78 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, xv.

“The calm which the people had enjoyed under the happy reign of Maria Theresa was disturbed by that of Joseph II.”⁷⁹

Most authors consider the institutions and privileges, foremost the *Joyeuse entrée* (the 1356 charter of liberties considered by many as the Magna Carta for the Low Countries), attacked by Joseph to have been outdated. Moke affirms that the ancient privileges no longer fulfilled current needs, their diversity was inconvenient, and their deficiencies were serious.⁸⁰ Juste claims that the *Joyeuse entrée* was not “at the level of the progress of civilization.”⁸¹ The harshest criticism comes from Hymans who affirms that Belgian civilization as a whole was a half a century behind the rest of Europe.

Accordingly, liberal authors see Joseph’s reforms, which aim at improving this situation, as forward-looking measures. Juste celebrates the reforms concerning religious tolerance, which is also what Hymans appreciates most in the monarch’s legacy, and harshly condemns the clerical opponents of these reforms. For Hymans, Joseph’s reforms are so significant that he discusses them already at the beginning of his book, where he makes general remarks on Belgium’s history. Hymans considers that with his reforms in Belgium, Joseph preceded the French revolution, establishing essential enlightened measures. For the author, this accomplishment distinguishes Belgium just as much as such phenomena as the birth of tolerance in the sixteenth century or the system of constitutional monarchy.⁸²

Nevertheless, Joseph’s procedure, and especially the autocratic character of his rule, are condemned as completely mistaken by all authors. According to Juste, with the aggressive implementation of his reforms, Joseph contradicted the teachings of the encyclopaedists whom he sought to follow. In Juste’s account, this created a paradoxical situation in which anachronistic attachment to the outdated *Joyeuse entrée* gained a noble character, as it became a revolt against injustice. For Moke, Joseph’s measures caused such turbulence as only seen during the most brutal revolutions, which justifies the Brabant Revolution, even though it sought a past to which there was no possible return. Here we witness the coexistence of the two concepts of revolution: the disruption of the ancient world order (the French Revolution’s *tabula rasa*) and the more ancient meaning, the return to the lawful, ideal past.⁸³ Hymans also condemns the monarch’s method, whose flaws he blames on the fact that Joseph was a theoretical mind without the ability to consider the practical outcomes of his

79 Dewez, *Histoire Générale de la Belgique*, 184.

80 Moke, *Histoire de la Belgique*, 443.

81 Juste, *Historie de la Belgique*, vol. II, 325.

82 Hymans, *Histoire Populaire de Belgique*, 47.

83 Cp. Koselleck, “Historische Kriterien des neuzeitlichen Revolutionsbegriffs.”

ideals. Nevertheless, the historian criticizes the Brabant Revolution equally sharply, as he believes that it was filled with “the hatred of all novelty, the pride of small, blinded minds” which eventually caused its failure. Joseph’s greatest fault was that he did not recognise the necessity of gradual development. In order to truly reach the accomplishments of the French Revolution, Belgium would have had to undergo a true intellectual and moral development.

The Catholic Étienne de Gerlache offers a completely different view. The statesman does not consider Joseph’s reforms to be necessary or timely measures. The historian is hostile even to Joseph’s person, which he considers to be filled with jealousy and futile hunger for recognition. Although he does acknowledge the monarch’s will to serve the betterment of humanity, in his view, this is decisively outweighed by his intolerant fanaticism.⁸⁴

Gerlache places Joseph into a rather consistent, general vision of Belgian history into which the author uncompromisingly integrates every single Belgian historical phenomenon. For him, Belgium’s most important characteristic is her Catholic spirit, which is the reason he gives for why this territory stayed under the reign of Philip II, and why Belgian people did not fuse with the French during the conquest of the revolutionary wars.⁸⁵ In this way, Gerlache manages to legitimate the existence of Belgium through her Catholic spirit against her two most significant critics: France and the Netherlands. Joseph II fits into this vision perfectly. The monarch represents a special type of despotism that outplaced the Calvinist despotism of earlier centuries: that of philosophy. Joseph is the son of the eighteenth century philosophy which attacks the very basics of religious, social, and political order.⁸⁶ The monarch’s conflict with Belgium is not the conflict of tradition versus fast-paced progress, but of despotic philosophy versus the Belgian Catholic spirit.⁸⁷ For Gerlache, Joseph does not embody the future, but is the perfect child of his own time’s philosophical school. Accordingly, his failure is not due to his excessively fast introduction of progressive ideas, but quite simply, to his clumsiness. Naturally, in this light, Gerlache does not consider the Brabant Revolution “just but untimely;” instead, he sees it as a clash of the ancient Catholic Belgian civilization with the forces that try to subvert it. This vision of Joseph II and the Brabant Revolution remained dominant for Belgian Catholic thinkers, as one can see for example in Charles Pollet’s 1867 book, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère depuis Joseph II jusqu’en 1830*.⁸⁸

84 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, 117, 121.

85 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, xiv.

86 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, 108–109.

87 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, 111–112.

88 On Pollet’s book, see the joint study of Tom Verschaffel and László Csorba.

There is another distinguishing aspect of Gerlache's account: the author's treatment of Austria and the Austrians. While the other historians examined identify Austria quite simply with the dynasty, labelling the Spanish side 'Austrian' as well, Gerlach speaks of Austria in the same manner as he speaks of such states as France.

"They [the Belgians] endured these different regimes; but they became neither Spanish nor Austrian, neither French nor Dutch."

While the other Belgian authors examined treat the non-national other by simplifying it to its dynastic component, Gerlach implicitly nationalizes Austria and speaks of the Austrians in the same manner that he speaks of the 'Spanish' or the 'French'.⁸⁹

Contrary to what one experiences examining Belgian historical master narratives, in which the reign of Maria Theresa and that of Joseph II represent the summit and the low point of Belgian history, in Hungarian historical master narratives, the reigns of the two monarchs do not constitute each other's counterparts. Maria Theresa's person and reign belonged to the handful of historical phenomena that seemed to be judged equally positively both in Trans- and in Cisleithania. Consequently, for intellectuals who strove to reinforce the imperial Austro-Hungarian identity, Maria Theresa represented the ideal object of study and of historical cult, as one can witness in the major work of historian Alfred Arneth as well as the operatic masterpiece *Der Rosenkavalier*, the libretto of which was written by the emblematic Austrian patriot, Hugo von Hofmannsthal.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, we can hardly find traces of this enthusiasm in Hungarian master narratives. There is a certain continuity between the regimes of Maria Theresa and her son. It is already in Maria Theresa's age that historians speak of thrusting Hungary into the state of a mere colony. This is true not only for the independentist oriented scholars but of most Habsburg loyalists as well: "[From that point on] our homeland's relations to the Austrian provinces were that of a colony."⁹¹

Similarly to what we have seen in the case of some of our Belgian sources, for Hungarian historians as well, Joseph II's reign had historical significance that went beyond the decade during which he ruled the country. This phenomenon is related to the complex problem of how Hungarian historians interpreted and used the concept of the 'nation.' The second half of the nineteenth century saw the gradual and implicit identification of the estate notion of 'nation' with the modern meaning of the concept in Hungarian historical works. This led to the protagonist of Hungarian national history becoming the lower nobility. The case of the Golden Bull, a medieval law issued in 1222, assuring the nobility's rights and privileges, is an illustrative

89 Gerlach, *Histoire du Rayoume des Pays-Bas*, xv.

90 Wandruszka, "Die Historiographie der theresianisch-josefinischen Reformzeit," 21–24.

91 Frankl, *A magyar nemzet története*, 333.

demonstration. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, history textbooks mostly referred to the Golden Bull as a law stipulating the nobility's privileges, whereas in later works, the Golden Bull was presented as the guardian of the nation's rights and privileges.⁹² This way of thinking was heavily criticized by Austro-German authors who claimed that the Hungarian 'national freedom' was only the freedom of the privileged classes which oppressed the masses in the country.⁹³ It is worth noting that even Gerlache mentions that the so-called "Hungarian constitutional freedom" (with which he otherwise sympathised) only included the nobility, a small portion of the country's population.⁹⁴

Identifying the lower nobility with the entire nation becomes problematic for Hungarian authors when arriving at the reign of Joseph II. It is indisputable for these Hungarian historians that, in this period, the privileges of the nobility hindered the development of Hungarian society. Meanwhile, they maintain that the same privileges, the 'ancient constitution of Hungary', are what guaranteed the 'freedom of the nation' and the 'independence of the country'.

There is a clearly discernible difference between Mihály Horváth (1809–1878), famous historian of the Reform Era,⁹⁵ and the other authors examined who created their works after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (*Ausgleich*). This difference is due to a general change in Hungarian nationalism, which meant the fading of the romantic idea of progress, giving way to a more autotelic nationalism. Up to his later years, Horváth maintained many aspects of the former. During the founding of the Hungarian Historical Association in 1867, he claimed that "nationality cannot be our goal in itself, it is only a tool for reaching higher goals that one can define as progress, betterment, and humanity."⁹⁶ Horváth's portrayal of Joseph is the most favourable towards the monarch. In his eight-volume synthesis, which he started in the 1840s as a school textbook, then gradually developed until its final publication in the early 1870s, Joseph is depicted as a noble spirit, only comparable

92 Lajtai, *Magyar nemzet vagyok*, 491.

93 On this issue, see: Tarafás, "Oesterreich ist eben Oesterreich."

94 Gerlach, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, 130.

95 Horváth was regarded as the most prominent Hungarian historian also in Austria. Austro-German authors in fact used to selectively quote him in order to support their claims about Hungarian history, using the authority of the most important Hungarian historian.

Another quintessential historian was László Szalay, a contemporary of Horváth; however, he is not cited in this article, as his work on Hungarian history did not treat the reign of Joseph II. At the beginning of the century, a few *grand récits* were published on Hungarian history in German and Latin; however, these never reached a large audience, nor did they treat the cardinal questions of Hungary's history. Cp. R. Várkonyi, *A pozitivista történetszemlélet*, 12.

96 Horváth, "Horváth Mihály beszéde," 4.

to King Matthias Corvinus.⁹⁷ The historian mostly puts the blame for Joseph's 'despotic traits' on the Viennese court which failed to give the monarch an adequate education.⁹⁸ In explaining how Joseph's originally noble intentions turned into disaster, Horváth differentiates between two types of freedom: one which means that one class of society is not oppressed by another, and the second which protects every class from the despotism of the state. While Joseph cared much about the former, he completely eliminated the latter, which led to his downfall, as this behaviour denied him the sympathy of ordinary people that could have supported him against the "nobility, the privileges of which were restricted."⁹⁹ Joseph's main mistake was to pursue otherwise "noble and humanitarian and great goals" by disregarding the legislature of a "constitutional nation."

Other historical *grand récits* written during the last quarter of the nineteenth century tend to emphasise the harms done to 'national freedom.' Although the authors are more hostile towards Joseph than Horváth, one could not find a harsher condemnation of the monarch than in Gerlache's account. József Szalay (1857–1885) and Lajos Baróti (1856–1933) acknowledge some positive outcomes of Joseph's measures. However, these were unintentional, in fact counter-intentional: Joseph's decree which intended to make German the official language of the administration in Hungary provoked support and interest in the Hungarian language even among those who had been indifferent towards it. Concerning most of the monarch's other measures, the authors claim they are not worthy of mention, as they "perished as soon as they were born. They are only a hurtful memory in our nation's history."¹⁰⁰ The conservative and clerical author Vilmos Fraknói (1843–1924) also condemns Joseph's practice of neglecting the country's constitution; nevertheless, he acknowledges that if the reforms had been introduced in a constitutional manner, they would have been a blessing for the country.¹⁰¹

Ignác Acsády (1845–1906) gave a distinctive account of the phenomenon. Acsády was one of the most original Hungarian historians of his time, producing pioneering work on social and economic history. The historian always had great sympathy for the oppressed masses. Accordingly, he did not follow fully the above-mentioned trend with regards to the concept of nation: instead of implicitly making the lower nobility the protagonist of national history, as many of his peers did, Acsády spoke of "two nations," the oppressed and the oppressor, the latter benefitting from

97 Horváth, *Magyarország története*, 470.

98 Horváth, *Magyarország története*, 468–70.

99 Horváth, *Magyarország története*, 510–11.

100 Szalay and Baróti, *A magyar nemzet története*, 260–74.

101 Frankl, *A magyar nemzet története*, 352.

every freedom, while the former deprived of basic human rights.¹⁰² In the meantime, speaking of Joseph, even though he acknowledges the humanitarian nature of the monarch's reforms, the national aspect becomes dominant, as nationalism was the other important element in Acsády's profile. In the meantime, the historian emphasises that it was the peasantry who resisted Joseph's Germanising measures the least uncompromisingly, rather than the corrupt nobility, which had long forgotten its mother tongue anyways.¹⁰³

The most complex account of Joseph's reign is given by Henrik Marczali (1856–1940). This is no surprise, since Marczali produced his main study of Joseph's period based on a decade of conscientious research, giving a nuanced image of the monarch's legacy. In an exhaustive chapter of the ten-volume historical synthesis published in honour of the 'Hungarian Millennium' during second half of the 1890's, Marczali proved to be more balanced than any of his peers discussed above. He refused to take the side of either the 'national' or the 'progressive' aspects; instead, he revealed the complex contradictions of the period. He shows that the ancient constitution only guaranteed the rights of a privileged few, while large masses of the nation could not find their place in it, which was a "slur on the face of Hungary."¹⁰⁴ At the same time, this "slur," the ancient constitution and the few privileged clinging to it, is the sole guarantee of the "independence" of the country: the "freedom" of the nation lies on the "virgin shoulders" of the nobility.¹⁰⁵ This is a dilemma, according to Marczali, staying unresolved even after the passing of Joseph (whom he depicts as a good-willed despot), and would only be resolved by the generation of the Reform Era.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

In this study, I have taken the task of giving a comparison of historical master narratives from Belgium and Habsburg Central Europe. In this endeavour, my primary aim is to follow the initiatives of significant historians who have pointed out the need to compare Habsburg Central Europe with western countries, which in the common imagination are thought to have little to share for a comparative approach.¹⁰⁷

The major structural similarities promised in the introduction could be detected in certain areas which make such a seemingly unusual comparison not

102 Acsády, *Magyarország három részre oszlásának története*, 186.

103 Acsády, *A Magyar Birodalom története*, 534.

104 Marczali, *Magyarország története III. Károlytól a Bécsi Congressusig*, 422–24.

105 Marczali, *Magyarország története III. Károlytól a Bécsi Congressusig*, 427–28.

106 Marczali, *Magyarország története III. Károlytól a Bécsi Congressusig*, 599.

107 E.g., Judson, "Where our commonality is necessary..."

only possible but potentially fruitful. In the first part of the paper, I have shown how Belgium and Austria were depicted in the same manner by their respective rivals: as being abnormal communities who have no histories and who only survive with the help of their soulless bureaucrats. In the 'century of history,' historical legitimacy was particularly important for Europe's communities, hence their historians carried the heavy task of legitimizing their respective communities. By examining solutions offered by Belgian and Austro-German historians, the article has formulated some hypotheses which could be examined further. The state's attitude to this intellectual endeavour and the extent to which historians accepted the nation-obsessed world-view of their contemporaries stand out as major factors.

The second section of the paper shifts attention from Austro-German scholars to their Hungarian peers. The interpretation of Belgian and Hungarian 'common history,' the reign of Joseph II, also demonstrates important structural similarities. For both communities, the main dilemma was the clash between Joseph's reforms, which most authors considered forward-looking, modernizing measures, and national institutions. Furthermore, Joseph seems to bear an importance that goes beyond his person and short reign for both communities. Most of the Belgian as well as the Hungarian authors present a similar explanation: Joseph was full of noble, humanitarian ideas, but he wanted to implement these ideals too rapidly and in a despotic fashion, while honest cooperation with national institutions could have led to success. Nevertheless, the frontlines between historical interpretations were drawn differently. In Belgium, it is the liberal-Catholic antagonism, the impact of which one can witness in the opposing narratives of Gerlache and Hymans. In Hungary, the main difference, although not as harsh as in the Belgian case, is between Horváth, representing the Reform Era's idea of nationalism, and other authors active mainly in the *fin-de-siècle* era.

The comparison of community histories that seem to be largely different in their contexts may further improve our knowledge of how European communities deal with their past. It also draws attention to common structural elements instead of the definitive differences that dominate the discourse on Western and Central Europe.

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A Story of Victimhood and Sacrifice?

Self-Interpretation of the Fate of the Nation in Hungary and Belgium

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Abstract. Both in nineteenth-century Hungary and in Belgium, historians legitimizing the nation implied the people's lack of freedom and suffering as a main theme in their narratives. The 'myth of foreign occupations' is crucial in their national narrative, as it was developed starting from the late eighteenth century, and with greater strength after the establishment of Belgium as an independent state in 1830. This implies that since the submission by the Romans in the first century BC, the Belgians had always been dominated by 'foreign' dynasties until they finally obtained freedom with the Belgian Revolution and independence. This is a romantic reinterpretation of the past and a myth, as in their own time the dynasties were considered legitimate, and not seen as 'foreign.' The national story of the "eighteen centuries of suffering and struggling" (as the popular Flemish novelist Henri Conscience phrased it) emphasizes the love of freedom and the courageous resistance to suppression by Belgians and their heroes. At the same time though the idea of the people's victimhood and martyrdom, sometimes with a religious connotation, was an important motive in the national historical culture. The religious element is even stronger in the work of nineteenth-century Hungarian romantic thinkers. In fact, they reformulated an older way of thinking: When in 1526 the medieval Hungarian Kingdom collapsed and was divided into three parts, contemporaries tried to understand and explain this tragedy in biblical terms. The Bible teaches that people's sins cause historical failures, but there is always hope because the sin and its punishment are proportional: Once we have suffered enough, the Almighty will help and support us if we deserve it. A pertinent example of the nineteenth-century rephrasing of this idea is the poem *Himnusz* [Hymn] by Ferenc Kölcsey, the official anthem of Hungary today. The motive faded in the second half of the century, due to the successes of modernization, but in the twentieth century, after the defeat of the dualistic monarchy in World War I, and under the weight of the severe pressure of the Trianon Peace Treaty, the mythology of victimhood was reborn. In Belgian historiography, it the idea of the

'suppressed nation' was taken over by the Flemish sub-nation, the Belgian state now presented by radical Flemish nationalists as a new (Francophone) oppressor.

Keywords: Hungary, Belgium, nationalism, nineteenth century, historical myths, historiography

Hungary and Belgium are both countries with a long history, and most of the time they did not exist as independent states but were part of larger empires. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when they did achieve independence and in the context of nation-building, self-determination became crucial for their national self-understanding, and the continual lack of autonomy was vital for their national self-understanding. It turned into a central and ordering principle of the national narrative. Control and oppression by external forces and foreign powers were seen as determining the nature of the nation and the course of its history. The Hungarians and the Belgians saw themselves as victims of history. Since historical culture served contemporary goals, especially the development of national consciousness and the creation of patriotism, victimhood had to be given meaning and value. Although these developments happened in a similar way in the two countries, there are differences between the ways in which the history of unfreedom and oppression was instrumentalized in Hungary and Belgium. This is explained by the radically liberal path taken by Belgium in 1830, with a revolution and one of the most liberal constitutions in the world at the time, together with the fact that also the Catholics largely associated themselves with the liberal freedoms.

Modern Hungarian national thinking and ideas were, of course, significantly influenced by the fate of Hungary within the Habsburg Empire. The medieval Hungarian Kingdom was shattered by the Ottoman Turkish attack in 1526. Thus, the Hungarian orders (noble landowners, high priests, and the wealthy, privileged city bourgeoisie) chose the king from the Habsburg House because the prestigious and wealthy European dynasty was able to finance the border fortress system, which successfully repelled further Ottoman attacks. This situation changed about 150 years later. The Holy League was formed in 1684—Pope Innocent XI entered into an alliance with Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary, joined by the Republic of Venice and Russia—, so that not only was the castle of Buda recaptured (1686), but by the end of the century, the weakening Crescent had been forced to retreat and surrender most of Hungary.

With the reoccupation of the Hungarian Kingdom, the Central European estate complex of the Habsburg family suddenly gained very large areas. The dynasty had already tried to centralize royal power before, that is, seeking to oust the orders from the governing rule of the country. However, the orders resisted, and were now joined by other social groups also suffering severe grievances. In the areas recaptured from

the Ottomans, Hungarian nobles were ignored, while foreign military entrepreneurs received property donations. Imperial mercenaries robbed and plundered throughout the country, counter-reformation policies launched an open attack on the hitherto free religious practice of the Protestant churches, and the tax burden rose to an all-time high. In 1703, the largest latifundium owning aristocrat of Hungary at the time, the Catholic Ferenc Rákóczi II, later the Prince of Transylvania, declared an uprising to put an end to the oppression and regain domestic political power in the hands of the Hungarian orders. The eight-year struggle was called the War of Independence because they felt they were fighting Vienna for the benefit of all the people of the country. Leopold's successor, King Joseph I, recognized that in order to end the Rákóczi War of Independence as soon as possible and to win the Hungarian nobility, the conditions of agreement should not be very strict. The Peace of Szatmár was concluded in 1711, according to which Hungary retained its political institutions, and its privileged could continue to have a say in politics, but at the same time, the country remained part of the Habsburg Empire and supported the dynasty's essentially Western-oriented power aspirations. When the modern Hungarian national movement unfolded in the second half of the eighteenth century and the power-political battles with the Viennese government intensified, the Hungarian side believed and felt the fiction that essentially it was still fighting, over and over again, the same 'War of Independence' that their grandfathers had fought during the brave old times of Prince Rákóczi.¹

Victimhood and sacrifice

The national ideologies that emerged in the nineteenth century used both the heritage of the nation's predecessor groups (e.g., the nobility) and the traditions of Christian culture. The so-called 'Hun story'—the idea that Hungarians are united by a community of origin going back to the Huns—appears as early as the thirteenth-century chronicles; however, it dates back to an even older oral tradition.² When the medieval Hungarian Kingdom collapsed in 1526 and was dismembered into three parts, and the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires fought for 150 years in Central and Eastern Europe, all the contemporaries tried to understand and explain this tragedy with the help of the Christian tradition, using biblical stories as patterns. The Protestant preachers' sermons and lamenting prayers represented the early modern Hungarian nation as an elected but sinful community. The authors of these texts interpreted epidemics, wars, starvation, and Hungary's 'Babylonian Captivity'

1 Benda, *A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben*, 70.

2 Szűcs, *Nation und Gechiche*, 413–555.

as signs that urged the people of 'Hungarian Israel' to repent their sins. Preachers used Ancient Israel and its relationship with God in the Old Testament as a model that helped the Hungarian Calvinists (and parallelly, several other Protestant communities in Europe) to construct a sense of collective identity and to make sense of their history and current circumstances.³

An adequate realisation of this conception is the famous *Querela Hungariae*, a book by the Calvinist preacher Péter Alvinczy.⁴ (Figure 1) Alvinczy adopted the biblical-prophetic pattern to the Hungarian case that sufferings are punishments for sins (for the permanent violation of divine law). But the use of the model was complicated by the fact that Hungary, as a bastion of Christian Europe, guarded the western part of the continent (with the blood of the Hungarian people) against the Ottoman troops. How can a poor believer calculate the time when the suffering will end, when the sin and its punishment will be equalized?

The point of the dilemma is that if there is more suffering than fair punishment, then the people are no longer guilty but they are victims.



Figure 1 Alvinczy, *Querela Hungariae*, 1.

3 Fazakas, *Siralmás imádság és nemzeti önszemlélet*, 28–29. In European perspective: Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 1–34.

4 Alvinczy, *Querela Hungariae*.

At this point, let us make a little detour introducing the changes in the interpretation of the concepts of ‘sacrifice’ and ‘victim’ in post-war historiography. We cannot deal with the origin and archaic interpretations of these concepts in the history of religions: Our focus is on the analysis of their modern forms and on the internal shift of meaning within them.⁵

Perhaps Reinhart Koselleck’s famous 1998 lecture given in Heidelberg, later published under the title “Die Diskontinuität der Erinnerung” sheds some light on the issue.⁶ Koselleck warns that victim narratives appeared and prevailed in the struggle for collective memory and in the interpretation of history. They are obviously not based on the experience of individual suffering, but on collective interpretations and emotions. The neuralgic point is how the perception of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ victims has changed since 1945. The real meaning of ‘the sacrifice for the homeland’ in modern German history before 1945 was always some active sacrifice made for something, e.g., we read on tombstones or on every war memorial: “The soldier sacrificed his life for Greater Germany.” This concept of sacrifice developed during funeral ceremonies between 1939 and 1945. However, in the 1950s, we see a slow change in meaning. The development of sacrificial narratives is based on the change of values starting from the seventies and eighties, when glory is replaced by confrontation with sin, and the hero is replaced by the victim. This development had a strong civilizing effect, which almost necessarily led to the broadening and spreading of the concept of the victim. At first, only the dead were considered victims, but later the concept extended to all forms of loss. As a result, the victim became an independent moral category, which, of course, was not necessarily the result of any specific action. Thus, the ‘victim’ began to mean passive suffering, and suddenly the same people who had previously sacrificed their lives for Germany fell “victim to Nazism.” This change was spontaneous rather than “intentionally executed” by someone; the current formula is “a victim of war and violence.”⁷

Following Koselleck’s argument, two basic forms of the concept of the victim seem to appear:

1. the sacrifice (as an object): the active nature of the victim—an action in which we give up something, whether we hope for some direct or indirect effect as a result or not;
2. the victim (as a subject): a suffering character as a helpless and innocent victim of unjust violence.

⁵ One of the most impressive dialogues dedicated to the changes of the victim-narratives: *Opfernarrative*.

⁶ Koselleck, “Die Diskontinuität der Erinnerung.”

⁷ Koselleck, “Die Diskontinuität der Erinnerung,” 214.

Clearly, this duality does not represent two sides of the same phenomenon, but a conceptual identification of two different phenomena.⁸ The change leads from the victim of violence to the voluntary atoning sacrifice: the martyr, well known from religious culture, is the one who takes on the role of victim for a higher purpose.

Biblical patterns in the Hungarian narrative

Going back to the nineteenth century, the hypothesis of the nation as an “imagined community”⁹ provides help in understanding how the concepts of the culprit, the victim, and self-sacrifice have evolved in Hungarian public thinking. In the Hungarian language literature, following the example of biblical prophets, the speech position of poets, which can be called a ‘Paraclete’ tradition, became immensely popular in the early modern and modern ages. The ‘Paraclete’ is a mediator¹⁰ who, in the name and on behalf of the community, turns to the higher, divine power for his intervention and reconciliation. In this role, poets and writers have been the pioneers at the forefront of creating a real “imagined community” using the raw materials of historical and religious tradition in the process of nation-building. One of the most significant poems of Hungarian national culture was written by Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838) in 1823 and is entitled *Himnusz* [Hymn], which is the official anthem of the Hungarian state today (Figure 2). Kölcsey—in accordance with the biblical pattern—acknowledges that there is abundant failure and suffering in the history of the Hungarian nation because the people have committed sins, therefore deserve punishment.

“But, alas! For our misdeed,
 Anger rose within Thy breast,
 And Thy lightnings Thou did’st speed
 From Thy thundering sky with zest.
 Now the Mongol arrow flew
 Over our devoted heads;
 Or the Turkish yoke we knew,
 Which a free-born nation dreads.”¹¹

8 For the two concepts, there are different words in English and French, but in Hungarian and German they are not separated.

9 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

10 The word ‘Paraclete’ (Greek: παράκλητος, Latin: *paracletus*) means advocate or helper, mediator; in Christianity this term most commonly refers to the Holy Spirit. Rahner and Vorgrimler, *Teológiai kisszótár*, 555–56.; cp. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holy-Spirit>

11 Kölcsey, *Himnusz*.

Kölcsey is a true artist, who not only uses the role of ‘Paraclete’ but also reinterprets the biblical pattern. How can we imagine the quasi-real amount of suffering of a nation? The basic idea is clear: the morally justified principle of punishment proportionate to sin, which was chosen by the Old Testament of the chosen people and their patron. (This, as we have noted, is the basic scheme of the history of all the peoples of the world: Everyone knows the rules if they follow them, they get rewards if they break them—thus we can understand the events of world history.) An essential element of the ‘treaty’ between the people and their patron is that the people have to keep the Ten Commandments; however, this includes a moral limitation voluntarily made to the Almighty: He cannot transcend these principles either—that is, if he punishes a sinful people, the punishment cannot be disproportionately severe, but only fair (that is, proportionate to the sin). It follows that punishment may require a great deal of blood and suffering: the amount that is still proportionate to the sin committed.

Naturally, the sinner does not have exact knowledge of how much their sin weighs, therefore how much punishment is due. But everyone can guess the proportions from their own history—and here comes the problem raised in the *Himnusz*. Kölcsey sees Hungarians suffering so much that he thinks this measure is already unfair. He believes that punishment is so large that the nation has already atoned even for the sins it might commit in the future!¹² There are the words of the ‘Paraclete’ for asking God to give forgiveness to the Hungarian people:

“Oh my God, the Magyar bless
 With Thy plenty and good cheer!
 With Thine aid his just cause press,
 Where his foes to fight appear.
 Fate, who for so long did’st frown,
 Bring him happy times and ways;
 Atoning sorrow hath weighed down
 Sins of past and *future days*.”¹³

If we think through the logic of the biblical narrative, it is clear that if one suffers more than is proportional to one’s sins, one is no longer a sinner but a victim.

Kölcsey’s thinking was not exceptional. It expressed the general conviction of the national public. In support of this statement, it is worth citing a poem that was as popular as Kölcsey’s and which many still consider the second Hungarian anthem: it is the *Szózat* [Appeal], composed in 1836 by another poet-prince of the national culture, Mihály Vörösmarty (1800–1855). (Figure 3) Certainly, it was no coincidence

12 For the complete analysis of the topic, see Dávidházi, “»Szánd meg, Isten, a magyart«.”

13 Kölcsey, *Himnusz*. (Highlighted by L. CS.).

that Vörösmarty also used the biblical narrative model to explain the possible cause of the horrors and bloodshed that the Hungarian nation had to suffer during its turbulent history.¹⁴

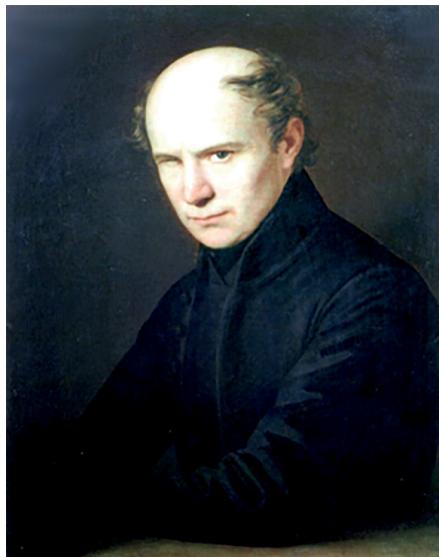


Figure 2 Ferenc Kölcsey
(Anton Einsle, 1835)



Figure 3 Mihály Vörösmarty
(Miklós Barabás, 1836)

How does the poet see the meaning of the nation's suffering?

“It cannot be that all in vain
so many hearts have bled,
that haggard from heroic breasts
so many souls have fled!
. . .

It cannot be that mind and strength
and consecrated will
are wasted in a hopeless cause
beneath a curse of ill!”¹⁵

“It cannot be that...”—this is the key phrase that shows the biblical ‘logic’ of Vörösmarty’s argumentation. Why “cannot”? Because, as we have said, in the biblical logical-moral structure, it cannot happen that the Eternal should be unjust; he himself prescribed this command in the ‘pact’ with the chosen people. The poet, on the

14 For the holistic and detailed analysis of the poem, see Dávidházi, “»Az nem lehet, hogy annyi szív«.”

15 Vörösmarty, *Szózat*.

other hand, is already afraid that there is too much suffering: probably more than the nation's sins. If the divine power is fair, he cannot allow a former sinner to fall victim to unjust punishment.

“La malheureuse Belgique”

In the Austrian Netherlands (present-day Belgium) the creation of a national history started in the second half of the eighteenth century. The country consisted of ten separate provinces (duchies, counties, and other principalities) that originated from the Middle Ages. In the late Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, they were brought together under one rule: first under the Burgundian dukes, followed by the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs.¹⁶ Under these princes, there was a certain centralization, in which Brussels became the capital not only of the duchy of Brabant but also that of the entire Habsburg Netherlands. Formally, however, the provinces retained their autonomy to the end of the eighteenth century. Empress Maria Theresa, for example, was duchess of Brabant and countess of Flanders. Although we can assume that initially this national awareness, growing in the last decades of the eighteenth century, was largely confined to pro-government intellectuals. Historiography witnesses this: Initially, it largely consisted of the separate histories of the provinces, but from the 1770s, this provincial historiography was gradually supplemented and replaced by a national historiography project. In particular, in the circles around the Academy of Brussels, launched in 1772 under the auspices of Maria Theresa, initiatives were taken focusing on the history of the entirety of the Southern (Austrian) Netherlands.¹⁷

In 1779, François Gabriel Joseph du Chasteler proposed “Réflexions sommaires sur le plan à former pour une histoire générale des Pays-Bas autrichiens.”¹⁸ In 1790, led by Cornelis Franciscus Nelis, priest and librarian of Leuven University and one of the initiators of the Academy, a plan was developed for a large-scale national source collection (*Belgicarum rerum prodromus*), presented in a “dissertation qui sert de prospectus et de préface générale à la collection nouvelle des historiens des Pays-Bas” [dissertation which serves as a prospectus and general preface to the new collection of historians of the Netherlands].¹⁹ Only a few of these source

16 That is with the exception of Liege, now part of Belgium, that remained a fully independent prince-bishopric until the end of the eighteenth century and therefore was not part of the Austrian Netherlands.

17 Verschaffel, *De hoed en de hond. Geschiedschrifving in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden*.

18 Du Chasteler, “Réflexions sommaires sur le plan à former pour une histoire générale des Pays-Bas autrichiens;” see also Mantels, “»Un écrivain patriot«”.

19 Nelis, *Belgicarum rerum prodromus*.

editions were in fact published, but Nelis's plan can be seen as an antecedent to the collections that would be set up by the Royal Commission for History (1835) after Belgian independence.²⁰ And Jan des Roches, school teacher and secretary of the Academy, was responsible for the first concrete realizations in the form of a school handbook, *Epitomes historiae belgicae libri septem* (1782–1783) and the first part of a *Histoire générale des Pays-Bas autrichiens* (1787), which however remained unfinished due to his untimely death.²¹ A first full-fledged national Belgian history, Louis Dieudonné Joseph Dewez's *Histoire générale de la Belgique depuis la conquête de César* was published in 1805–1807, i.e., under Napoleonic rule.²²

These initiatives were grounded in the research carried out by members of the Academy and in the historical competitions it organized which, in turn, resulted in a corpus of 'mémoires,' partly published in the Academy's series.²³ They addressed specific issues related to national history, but even in their sometimes narrow scope were characterized by the national framework and the conception of the collective history of the inhabitants of the Southern Netherlands as a coherent narrative, and of these inhabitants, in French already referred to as 'Belges' (in Dutch the term 'Belgen' was not yet used),²⁴ as a (single) 'people.' Des Roches, the first to set up a coherent historical narrative in this context, was therefore already thinking of the (national) identity of Belgians and the specificity of their (national) history. He saw these in the combination of loyalty and love of freedom: the idea that Belgians were loyal to their princes as long as that the princes respected their ancient rights and liberties.

This idea was widely disseminated and would later also form the basis for the historical self-understanding and also for the political actions of Belgians.²⁵ Monarchs had often violated the rights and freedoms of their Dutch inhabitants; Joseph II was perhaps the most obvious example. His policy had led to and justified the Brabant Revolution of 1789, an uprising aimed at defending liberties and

20 *La Commission royale d'histoire 1834–1934.*

21 Des Roches, *Epitomes historiae belgicae libri septem in usum scholarum Belgicae*; Des Roches, *Prospectus d'une Histoire générale des Pays-Bas autrichiens*; Des Roches, *Histoire ancienne des Pays-Bas autrichiens contentant des recherches sur la Belgique avant l'invasion des Romains*. See among others: Meirlaen, "With Language and Knowledge."

22 Vanbrabant, *L.D.J. Dewez (1760–1834)*; Tollebeek, "De vele geschiedenissen van Louis Dieudonné Joseph Dewez."

23 *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale et Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Bruxelles* (1777–1788) and *Mémoires sur les questions proposées par l'Académie Impériale et Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* (1777–1784).

24 Dubois, *L'invention de la Belgique: genèse d'un Etat-Nation 1648–1830*.

25 Polasky, *Revolution in Brussels 1787–1793*; Van den Bossche, *Enlightened Innovation and the Ancient Constitution; Judge, The United States of Belgium*.

leading to the first independence of the country as the '*États Belges Unis*', or the 'United Belgian States.' The name not only points very clearly to the example of the American Revolution, but with the use of the plural noun *états*, it also indicates that in the minds of Belgians, the country's political form was a federation of 'states.' The unexpected success of this revolution can be attributed to the convergence of ideologically opposed parties: on the one hand, democrats who opposed the emperor's authoritarian rule, and on the other, conservatives who opposed the emperor's 'revolutionary' reforms and demanded the restoration of the structures of the *ancien régime*, including the autonomy of the old provinces. The success and independence of the United Belgian States was short-lived, however, as the death of Joseph II and the withdrawal of some of his reforms by his brother and successor, combined with military action, led to the restoration of Austrian rule in 1791. That restoration was also rather short-lived, however, because the Southern Netherlands, after a first French victory in November 1792 and a second in June 1794, were annexed to revolutionary (and later Napoleonic) France.

At the time when Belgium received its first national histories, it was not yet an independent state. It only gained independence after the revolution of 1830. The historical narrative that had to be developed, therefore, had a 'happy end' and a glorious apotheosis but still, for the most part, consisted of a history in which the Belgians lacked freedom and autonomy. This would mean that, also in order to strengthen the contrast with the freedom they had finally won, and to highlight the glorious character of the revolution and the liberal Belgian state since 1830, this lack of freedom was highly accentuated and constituted the backbone of the national story. Belgium's master narrative was built around what has been termed as 'the myth of foreign dominations': the idea that the Belgians lost to the Romans the freedom they had in antiquity, and continued to be deprived of it for about eighteen centuries, under a long succession of 'foreign' rulers. Since Jean Stengers established this thesis in his ground-laying article in 1981,²⁶ many have argued against it and demonstrated that this is, indeed, a myth. It assumes an anachronistic conception of 'nationality' and neglects the fact that, following the dynastic logic, in their own time the monarchs were considered legitimate monarchs rather than representatives of 'foreign peoples.' The anachronistic application of national terms to previous periods has also led to somewhat bizarre appreciations, such as the contrast between Charles V, who was born in Ghent and in the nineteenth century was often regarded as belonging to the nation and an element of national pride—the most powerful monarch in world history was considered a 'Belgian' and a crucial figure in the national pantheon—, while his son Philip II was considered a despicable 'Spanish' king and 'foreign' oppressor.

26 Stengers, "La mythe des dominations étrangères dans l'historiographie belge."

This myth of foreign dominations, as the crucial part of the national narrative, led to the image of Belgium as an ‘unhappy’ country, “ce malheureux pays,”²⁷ “la malheureuse Belgique” [unfortunate Belgium].²⁸ This did not stand in the way though of a glorious national history, which was meant to legitimize the existence of the independent Belgian nation-state and to fill the Belgians with national consciousness, patriotism, and pride.²⁹ Belgian history was, of course, also—and above all—a story with “tant de grandes choses et de grands hommes” [so many great things and great men].³⁰ This idea of a glorious past was not incompatible with the story of enduring oppression, as there were several ways to reconcile the two aspects.

The first explanation may be that the Belgian national history was seen as an alternation of periods in which the Belgians had indeed suffered heavily under the ‘yoke’ of foreign rulers, with periods of relative tranquillity and cultural flourishing, which could be attributed to some of the monarchs who had ruled over the country: princes from foreign dynasties but associated with the country, because they were born there and considered ‘national’ (like Emperor Charles V), or because they were good and wise, ‘understood’ the Belgians, and respected their rights and liberties (like Empress Maria Theresa). Moreover, the myth of foreign dominations was also linked to the myth of the courageous and unceasing struggle for freedom. The Belgians may have lacked freedom, but they have fought relentlessly for it. As Des Roches had pointed out half a century before the Belgian revolution and independence, the love of freedom was the Belgians’ most fundamental characteristic.³¹ That image, of course, fitted perfectly with the contemporary context after 1830, that of Belgium as an eminently liberal country with the most liberal constitution in Europe at the time.

According to national historians, that national narrative and the public manifestations of the historical culture widely disseminated in national festivals, national processions, history painting, and in other sites provided sufficient material to be proud of. National pantheons were filled with heroes, freedom fighters, as well as great monarchs, artists, and scientists who have made significant contributions to

27 Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, 112.

28 Juste, *Histoire de Belgique*, 421.

29 Emphasizing the suffering of the people has a clear function: It makes the present more glorious, the achievements of 1830 stronger, and increases the value of what the Belgians—“après des siècles d’esclavage,” as it reads in the first line of the national anthem. Suffering has also contributed to the unity of the common destiny. Dufau indicates that the conquest by Julius Caesar led to “il n’y a plus ni Éburons, ni Atuatiques, ni Nerviens; la Belgium tout entière subit le joug du vainqueur.” Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, 20.

30 Juste, *Histoire de Belgique*, iii.

31 Verschaffel, “History and Tradition.”

world civilization. But undeniably, it was also a history of much suffering and misery. This is also emphasized by Théodore Juste, a liberal historian and author of a substantial body of work in the first decades of independence, and in that period regarded as the “historien national de la Belgique.”³² In many ways and in various terms, he depicted Belgum’s “unfortunate” character in the past, “le théâtre de tant de catastrophes” [the scene of so many disasters].³³ Accordingly, the fact that ‘foreign’ governments succeeded each other already makes it clear that the country had been a battlefield where many wars had been fought. One of the commonplaces in this historiography is that of the Southern Netherlands as “the battlefield of Europe,” “ce coin de l’Europe surnommé le rendezvous des guerres” [this corner of Europe nicknamed the meeting place of wars].³⁴ And it was not only a battlefield, but also a victory region: successive foreign peoples and rulers oppressed and exploited the Belgians, each in their own way: “Spain exploited us with fanaticism and cruelty, Austria with indifference and self-serving gentleness, the French Empire with disdain, Holland with stinginess and stupidity.”³⁵

Oppression and suffering do occupy a large place in the national narrative, but they are not considered or cherished as positive values. In these dark periods, what characterizes Belgians is not martyrdom and resignation, but precisely the idea that they courageously and relentlessly resisted oppression. In the national pantheon, insurgents and resistance heroes occupy a privileged place.³⁶ Moreover, historians insist that the constant oppression failed to break the courage and resistance of Belgians; on the contrary, it strengthened the cult of freedom. In the words of Théodore Juste:

“Certainly, if the country had been consulted, it would not have consented to suffer the plundering of Holland, for noble ideas were still fermenting among our people. Belgium, despite the misfortunes that overwhelmed it, retained a religious respect for this heritage of freedoms, which had been handed down to it from the Middle Ages and which it considered its safeguard. Assailed by the armies of France and Holland, sacrificed by Spain, the Belgians had to bow to the storm; but they stiffened against any attempt at oppression.”³⁷

32 Tollebeek, “Enthousiasme en evidentie,” 61.

33 Juste, *Histoire du Congrès National de Belgique*, dl.2, 315.

34 Juste, *Histoire de Belgique*, iii.

35 “L’Espagne nous a exploités avec fanaticisme et cruauté, l’Autriche avec indifférence et une douceur intéressée, l’Empire français avec dédain, la Hollande avec ladrerie et stupidité.” *Le Mémorial belge*, 1832, quoted in Tollebeek, “Enthousiasme en evidentie,” 65–66.

36 Tollebeek and Verschaffel, “Group portraits with national heroes.”

37 Juste, *Histoire de Belgique*, 472: “Certes, si le pays avait été consulté, il n’eût point consenti à subir

According to Juste, under foreign rule, Belgians always managed to preserve their own nature and identity, and even their democratic institutions:

“However, we must give credit to the Belgians for the fact that even when they were bent under the yoke of conquest, they managed to keep their old institutions intact. Despite the turmoil they found themselves in and the changes in dynasty, they never lost their distinctive character, or, to put it better, their sense of nationality.”³⁸

The Catholic interpretation of ‘foreign occupations’ in Belgium

The national-liberal view of the national history was generally accepted also by Catholics. In 1830, they supported the revolution and the liberal constitution, which may seem surprising from an international perspective, but can be explained by the history that preceded the birth of the Belgian state. All the regimes prior to 1830, including that of the enlightened and tolerant Emperor Joseph II, of revolutionary France and then Napoleon, and of the Protestant King William I, had posed a threat to the position of the Catholic faith and the Church. They had pushed the Belgian Catholics into opposition. This meant that they had to rely on the liberal freedoms to defend their rights, their institutions, and autonomy against the interference of the authorities. The Belgian state, with one of the most liberal constitutions in the world at the time, resulted from an alliance of liberals and Catholics. They were ideological opponents—their cooperation has been described as a “monster alliance”—but with similar interests. In the first decades of independence, there was a political context of ‘unionism,’ a political system in which Catholics and liberals worked together, including the formation of governments with ministers from both sides.³⁹

Although the period of foreign domination spans almost all of Belgian history, with the exception of the beginning and the end, several authors emphasize the more recent period, and more specifically, the French period around 1800, as the

les spoliations de la Hollande, car de nobles idées fermentaient encore dans nos populations. La Belgique, malgré les malheurs qui l'accablaient, conservait un respect religieux pour cet héritage de libertés, que lui avait transmis le moyen âge, et qu'elle considérait comme sa sauvegarde. Assaillis par les armées de la France et de la Hollande, sacrifiées par l'Espagne, les Belges devaient plier sous la tempête; mais ils se roidissaient contre toute tentative d'oppression.”

38 Juste, *Histoire de Belgique*, 496; “Cependant il faut rendre cette justice aux Belges, que lors même qu'ils furent courbés sous le joug de la conquête, ils surent conserver intactes leurs vieilles institutions; malgré les tourmentes dans lesquelles ils se trouvèrent jetés, malgré les changements de dynastie, ils ne perdirent jamais leur caractère distinctif, ou, pour mieux dire, le sentiment de leur nationalité.”

39 See Witte et al., *Nieuwe geschiedenis van België*, vol. I. 1830–1905.

highlight of foreign rule. Although a whole plethora of foreign ‘peoples’ have been ‘oppressors,’ the French have stood out in the national narrative as the ‘eternal’ and ‘natural’ enemy. This has to do with the geographical as well as mental proximity of France in the nineteenth century. Therefore, it was mainly this influential neighbour that the Belgians had to resist in order to assert their individuality and legitimize their right to exist as an independent nation-state.⁴⁰

For a nineteenth-century Catholic author like Charles Pollet, it is important that this period is not about the oppression by Catholic monarchs (although Joseph II was certainly a Catholic), but about the oppression of the Catholic faith and of the Belgians as Catholics. Pollet wrote *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère depuis Joseph II jusqu'en 1830*, in 1867, using “domination étrangère” [foreign domination] in the singular, although in fact there was a succession of the Austrian regime (“le joug des Autrichiens” [the yoke of the Austrians]), the French regime (“le joug d’un gouvernement tyrannique et persécuteur, imbu de toutes les passions antireligieuses de ceux qui l’avaient précédé” [the yoke of a tyrannical and persecuting government, imbued with all the anti-religious passions of those who had preceded it]), and finally the reign of the Dutch King William I characterized by a clear continuity.⁴¹ They all focused on the struggle against the Catholic faith, each in their own way:

“The sacristan government of Joseph II sought to enslave religion; the Directory government sought to replace the worship of God with that of Reason; Napoleon’s despotic government sought to replace the Pope; William’s Protestant government sought to turn us into heretics.”⁴²

The lesson Pollet draws from this, however, is a positive and uplifting one: History shows that these enemies of the faith are defeated. “May God always protect Belgium! The enemies of religion may well indulge their hatred for a while, like those who preceded them; but they will be overthrown like them.”⁴³ With his history of “les persécutions que leurs pères ont eu à endurer sous les despotes étrangers” [the persecutions their fathers had to endure under foreign despots], Pollet wants to encourage the Belgians to “poursuivre à leur exemple la sainte lutte en faveur de la religion et de la liberté” [to continue, following their example, the holy struggle in

40 Verschaffel, “L’ennemi préféré.”

41 Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, 71, 139.

42 Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, vi–vii: “Le gouvernement sacrifiait de Joseph II a voulu asservir la religion; le gouvernement du directoire a voulu remplacer le culte de Dieu par celui de la Raison; le gouvernement despote de Napoléon a voulu se substituer à la place du pape; le gouvernement protestant de Guillaume a voulu nous faire devenir hérétiques.”

43 “Dieu protégé toujours la Belgique! Les ennemis de la religion pourront bien pendant quelque temps donner satisfaction à leur haine, comme ceux qui les ont précédés; mais ils seront renversés comme eux.” Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, vii.

favour of religion and freedom].⁴⁴ The ‘holy’ struggle of Belgians in the nineteenth century concerns not only the defence of their faith, but of their faith and freedom.

The fact that liberals and Catholics in the middle of the nineteenth century largely subscribed to the same national-liberal narrative does not by any means imply that there were no differences between them. Liberal authors did not deny the Catholic character of the country in the national-liberal narrative, but it is obvious that Catholic authors placed more emphasis on the Catholic faith as an essential feature of the Belgian identity; “the most religious people, not only of ancient Gaul (Gallia) but also of modern Europe are the Belgians.”⁴⁵

Still, the national narrative and the suffering contained therein are not interpreted in religious or biblical terms, not even by Catholics: again, no cult of martyrdom or victimhood as such, or the presentation of Belgian history as essentially a story of suffering. Biblical terms or images were therefore not used very often when describing this national suffering, although such references are present at certain moments. A specific persecution in the beginning of the nineteenth century that received a lot of attention is the fate of the Ghent bishop de Broglie. He embodies the suffering under successive regimes, as he resisted both Napoleon and William I, and was persecuted under both. In particular, the episode in which he was sentenced to exile in 1817, and in which his name was placed between those of two common-law criminals at the time of the announcement, caused much historical indignation. The liberal author Théodore Juste also reported this event with resentment, noting that it was disgusting to Catholic Belgians and contributed to the national revolt against King William’s regime. For a Catholic author such as Charles Pollet, in his description of the scene, the association with the crucified Christ was evoked: “The condemned prelate was compared to the Saviour crucified between two thieves.”⁴⁶

Catholic authors considered the oppression of the Belgian people largely as directed precisely against the Catholic faith and the character of Belgians. The Church had to overcome many obstacles. Thus, the establishment of the faith was difficult, and “in the forests of Belgium, the blood of martyrs was no less abundant than in the amphitheatres of Rome.”⁴⁷ Dufau wrote a history of *La Belgique chrétienne* (1847) and estimated periods from this perspective. Thus, he considered the period from Clovis to Charlemagne as “la plus féconde et la plus brillante de notre

44 Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, vii–viii.

45 “... les peuples les plus religieux, non-seulement de l’ancienne Gaule, mais encore de l’Europe moderne, sont les Belges.” Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, v.

46 “On comparait le prélat condamné au Sauveur mis en croix entre deux larrons.” Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, 290 (with a reference to de Gerlache).

47 “...dans les forêts de la Belgique, le sang des martyrs n’a pas été moins abondant que dans les amphithéâtres de Rome.” Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, vi.

histoire" [the most fruitful and brilliant of our history], because: "en même temps que des princes d'origine belge se succèdent sur le trône de France, une foule de saints per sonnages achèvent la conversion du pays" [at the same time as princes of Belgian origin succeeded one another on the throne of France, a host of holy figures completed the conversion of the country].⁴⁸ For Catholic authors, despite all the suppression, holding on to individuality also meant the steadfast maintenance of the Catholic faith. "No nation has shown more constancy in its habits, nor more attachment to the faith of its fathers."⁴⁹ Yet the emphasis of these Catholic authors on the Catholic character of the country was not in conflict with attachment to the national consensus. Catholics also regarded the Catholic faith as a basic characteristic and a pre-eminently unifying factor of all Belgians—and thus also the preservation of that belief in present-day Belgium as a guarantee for the future. As Dufau put it: "Let us not forget, therefore, because the past is the most accurate measure of the future, that religion alone, the Catholic religion, will preserve the country's dignity and independence."⁵⁰ The Catholic politician and historian Etienne de Gerlache, among others, did this.⁵¹

Gradually, however, the differences between the liberal and Catholic narratives—which were already clearly present in the 1830s when Pollet published his work—diverged into conflicting discourses. This is very much related to the strengthening political and ideological contradictions. When the state was well-established, it was inevitable that the ideological tensions would gain importance, threatening and eventually destroying the initial national enthusiasm. From the 1840s on, cracks started to appear, initially mainly due to the political emancipation and party formation of the liberals, later also of the Catholics. A animosity was growing, especially with education as a battleground, and a number of 'school wars' as a result. In the 1870s in particular, the contradictions reached a peak, and a full force clerico-liberal struggle erupted. The past was also turned into an ideological battleground. The initial (rather strong) consensus on the liberal-national narrative, including a purely 'national' interpretation of foreign dominations, gave way to interpretation wars and separate and conflicting narratives. The fiercest historical debate was over the Dutch Revolt of the sixteenth century, the rebellion of the Netherlands against the Spanish King Philip II. Initially, it was regarded as a purely national struggle, an uprising

48 Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, vii.

49 "Aucune nation, en effet, n'a montré plus de constance dans ses habitudes, ni plus d'attachement à la foi de ses pères." Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, v.

50 "Ne l'oublions donc pas, car le passé est la plus juste mesure de l'avenir, la religion seule, la religion catholique conservera au pays sa dignité et son indépendance." Dufau, *La Belgique chrétienne*, viii.

51 Tollebeek, "Enthousiasme en evidentie," 65.

of the deprived Dutchmen (including the inhabitants of the southern part of the Netherlands, i.e., the Belgians) against the tyrannical king and Spanish oppressor. Gradually, however, Philip II was increasingly seen by the liberals as a ‘Catholic’ monarch, who was opposed in the name of tolerance.

In the eyes of Catholic historians, it was the liberals who had undermined the national consensus and, in their struggle against Catholicism in the nineteenth century, had aligned themselves with the likes of Joseph II and William I. The Belgian Revolution and independence had put an end to the persecution of the true faith, according to Pollet, and in the first decades of independence, the Belgians therefore had a happy time, “une ère de prospérité extraordinaire” [an era of extraordinary prosperity], in which “tous les citoyens sans distinctions d’opinions y jouissaient and paix des bienfaits de la liberté sous l’égide de la constitution la plus liberale du monde” [all citizens without distinction of opinion enjoyed the peace and blessings of liberty under the aegis of the most liberal constitution in the world]. But after thirty years, this came to an end at the hands of the liberals, “un certain parti qui a sans cesse à la bouche le mot de tolérance et en réalité se montre constamment d’une intolérance inouïe” [a certain party which constantly has the word tolerance on its lips and in reality constantly shows itself as incredibly intolerant]. They presented themselves as the domestic heirs of foreign oppressors, especially the Jacobins: “En effet, c’était aussi au nom de liberté que les démocrates de 93 trainaient les gens à la guillotine” [Indeed, it was also in the name of freedom that the democrats of (17)93 dragged people to the guillotine].⁵²

Images of suffering in visual representations of the past

In the field of historical painting, a new interpretation of the concept of ‘victim/sacrifice’ was emerging and gained great popularity in Europe in the nineteenth century. According to the art historians, the religious stories, originally classified as historical painting, began to be used in a canonical form to depict certain scenes of national history, so the viewers were encouraged to interpret them in the language of Christian tradition. The first such painting in Hungarian visual culture was produced by Soma Orlai Petrich (1822–1880) when he visited the Munich Academy of Fine Arts as a pupil of the famous master, Wilhelm von Kaulbach.⁵³ The *Discovery of the Body of King Louis II* (1851) presents a scene after the battle of Mohács (1526), when the medieval Hungarian Kingdom was destroyed by the Ottoman troops. (Figure 4) Of the historical background, we know that during the retreat, the twenty-year-old

52 Pollet, *La Belgique sous la domination étrangère*, v–vi.

53 Keserü, *Orlai Petrich Soma (1822–1880)*, 24–25.

king died when he fell off his horse backwards while trying to ride up a steep ravine of the Csele stream. He fell into the stream, and, due to the weight of his armour, he could not stand up and was drowned. Following the chronicle tradition, the structure of Orlai's picture is similar to the classic visual scene of the *Pietà*: the lifting up of the dead body of Jesus Christ after the Crucifixion.⁵⁴



Figure 4 *Discovery of the Body of King Louis II* (Soma Orlai Petrich, 1851)

Moreover, it is perhaps not inordinate to claim that there is a strong resemblance between the composition of Orlai's picture and Michelangelo's famous *Bandini Pietà* in Florence. In both art creations, a bearded old figure rising above the dead body plays a prominent role. On the one hand, in Florence, he is the Pharisee in the Gospels, Nicodemus (well-known self-portrait of Michelangelo himself), and on the other, in the image of Orlai, he is Sebastian Ulrich von Czettritz die Burg Neuhaus, the king's chamberlain of Czech origin, who led the search for finding the royal cadaver.⁵⁵ In a letter in the early 1850s, Orlai informs that the atmosphere of his picture was inspired by seventeenth-century Protestant prayers and psalms.⁵⁶

But why did Orlai choose the *Pietà* tradition to depict a Hungarian historical scene? Because with the help of the religious symbolic language he wanted to speak about contemporary Hungary's fate. The period of 1820–1840 saw the beginning

54 The analysis of the picture: Sinkó, "Historizmus – Antihistorizmus"; Sinkó, "A Mohácsnál elesett II. Lajos testének feltalálása Orlai Petrich Soma, 1851."

55 For the latest reconstruction of the special details of the death of Louis II, see: B. Szabó, *A mohácsi vélez*, 28–42.

56 Sinkó, "A Mohácsnál elesett II. Lajos testének feltalálása Orlai Petrich Soma, 1851," 601.

of anti-feudal, social-economic reforms and national modernization in Hungarian history. Liberal reformers worked out the way to create a market economy, a civil society, and a parliamentary state system in the Hungarian Kingdom, which was still part of the Habsburg Empire. The reform program was implemented in the spring of 1848, along with the European revolutionary wave, but in the autumn of the same year, the Viennese court rejected the Hungarian constitutional demands, and the War of Independence broke out. Following a year and a half of bloody struggle—which became the founding myth of the Hungarian nation in the following decades—the independent Hungary was defeated by the double superiority of the Austrian and Russian armies, and the nation was shocked by the absolutistic pressure and exploitation.⁵⁷

In this situation, desperate for Orlai and others, it seemed a natural choice to find real hope and consolation in the religious approach. The king's body is the body of Jesus Christ, and in this context his pose and features clearly refer to the nation. The national group appears in the secularized form of the mystical body of Christ; thus, the community of ecclesia becomes the community of the nation. With the help of the Christian mystery adapted to the circumstances, the picture is opening a reinterpretation of the victim role, and the murder of an innocent being becomes a voluntary atoning sacrifice. The national failure, the historical defeat, is gaining a new meaning with the help of the parallelism with Christ's body. We can see a national kind of modification of the religious pattern: The nation of all time will be the chosen people of all time, and its sacrifice will be the sacrifice of the world's saviour.⁵⁸

Orlai created a successful symbol. The discovery of the body of Louis II, if not in his composition, which did not become particularly well-known, but in a painting by Bertalan Székely on a similar subject and in a similar conception (Figure 5), is one of the best-known Hungarian historical scenes, the symbolic layers of which everyone understands. For, in the Christian tradition, death is evidently followed by resurrection.

It is easy to see that the two understandings of the 'victim/sacrifice' concept play a central role in the spiritual process of reinterpreting the national tragedy. Hungary, as the Christ of the peoples, has a kind of mission, a messianic role, which saves the world through its sacrifice. The meaning of the nation's history is thus given by transforming the story of the defeated into the story of winners. But the new salvation-historical dimension of the national history has a price: a special kind of vulgarization of Jesus Christ's suffering in his original theological sense. Cultural

57 *The Corvina History of Hungary: from Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 85–111.

58 This issue is analysed in all its aspects by Balogh, "A magyar nemzeti áldozatnarratíva változásai."



Figure 5 *Discovery of the Body of King Louis II* (Bertalan Székely, 1860)

nationalism is a holistic culture that is able to fuse religious identity, so religion no longer controls nationalism from the outside but serves within; defeat and death assume positive connotations, as they allow the nation to be reborn at all times. Thus, the religious framework gives a new character to the 'victimity' of the 'chosen' nation: the victorious (voluntary atoning) sacrifice. The sacrifice is replaced by the martyr, who does not suffer an injustice but consciously undergoes suffering for a higher purpose.

Experts of the history of nationalism are well-acquainted with the phenomenon of how effectively national thinking uses and incorporates community-organizing ideas of a religious origin. The Hungarian historian Gábor Gyáni, in his analysis of John Hutchinson's argumentation,⁵⁹ emphasizes that

"cultural nationalism [...] originates from the »organic« concept of nation, inspired by romanticism. Cultural nationalists, who contribute to the building and strengthening of the spiritual community as intellectuals, work on constructing a holistic culture with the purpose of achieving this goal. They step up in the role of moral renewers, acting as ones who are destined to create the new matrix of collective identity. They operate mainly via education and information in order to lessen or preferably

59 Hutchinson, "In Nationalismus Statist?"

eliminate the differences and tensions between individuals and groups that unite in national communities—and in order to enable the nations to stand their ground in the world.”⁶⁰

In Belgium too, history painting also flourished.⁶¹ A broad historical culture was developed on a large scale, which was meant to legitimize and convince foreigners as well as the Belgians themselves of the country’s right to exist as an independent state. National histories and historical novels (in the style of Walter Scott) were produced to popularize stories from the past, national dramas were written and performed on stage, historical pageants went through the streets as part of public festivities, and historical paintings were also created on a large scale. Literally, major events of the national history were visualized on canvases of huge sizes, paintings that often received a great deal of attention, and sometimes went on tour, even abroad; especially in Germany, some of these large canvases were well-received. The most talked-about of these “grandes machines” [big machines], as they were called, represented the glorious past, sometimes explicitly—such as *La Belgique couronnant ses enfants illustres* (1839) by Henri Decaisne, a group portrait of the renowned characters of the national story—or depicted the great moments of national history. The start of this wave of monumental historical paintings, which is also considered the starting point of Romanticism in Belgian painting, was a canvas by Gustave Wappers, who became the head of the file of Romantic history painting in the country: *Épisode des Journées de Septembre 1830 sur la place de l’Hôtel de Ville de Bruxelles* (1835). Five years after the fact, it honoured the Belgian Revolution, not with a fairly realistic representation of a specific event, but with a monumental and theatrical evocation of the struggle for freedom episode, clearly inspired by Eugène Delacroix’ *La Liberté guidant le people* (1830). Other painters took other ‘great moments’ from the national past as their subject, such as *L’abdication de Charles Quint* (1841) by Louis Gallait, *Le Compromis des nobles en 1566* (1849) by Edouard de Bieffe, and *La bataille des Eperons d’or* (1302) (1836) (Figure 6) and *La bataille de Woeringen* (1839) by Nicaise de Keyser.

These examples show that the struggle for freedom and against foreign ‘oppressors’ was clearly present in Belgian historical painting. But as indicated with regard to historiography, here too the emphasis was not on suffering and victimisation, but on courageous resistance and heroism.

In addition to these large, monumental paintings, which received a great deal of attention but were, on the whole, not numerous, the past took shape visually and artistically in other ways as well. In the second half of the nineteenth century

60 Gyáni, “Kulturális nacionalizmus és a tudományok,” 78.

61 Holthof, *Historische schilderkunst in de 19de eeuw*; Koll, “Belgien. Geschichtskultur und nationale Identität;” Verschaffel, “Schilderen voor het vaderland.”



Figure 6 *The Battle of the Golden Spurs* (Nicaise de Keyser, 1836, small version)
(The large version was destroyed in World War II.)

(and also at the beginning of the twentieth), fresco cycles were installed in many schools, town halls, and other public buildings, often linking local and national history, also with the aim of instilling patriotic pride in the public and especially in young people.⁶² On a large scale, smaller paintings were also dedicated to episodes, which allowed a greater variety of historical subjects to be represented.⁶³ This also applies to the illustrations (engravings) illustrating the national histories (not only school manuals). (Figure 7) Since in some works they were numerous and dealt with a large number of successive episodes, there are sometimes scenes there that put more emphasis on suffering and victimization. Certain mechanisms were used in these scenes, aimed at the identification of the spectators with their 'ancestors'⁶⁴ also in their suffering.

For example, the raids of the Normans that ravaged the area are depicted through the robbed victims the departing looters left behind —leaving 'us' with the victims. The Christian tone is not predominant in the visual depiction of this suffering either, but iconographic reminiscences still crop up, such as the image of the *Pietà* in a scene of finding the corpse of Charles the Bold in the battlefield after the Battle of Nancy (1477). (Figure 8)

62 Ogonovszky-Steffens, *La peinture monumentale d'histoire dans les édifices civils en Belgique (1830–1914)*.

63 Colla, *De salons en het verleden: de historieschilderkunst op de Belgische driejaarlijkse salons, 1832–1867*.

64 Verschaffel, "»Par les yeux parler à l'intelligence«."



Figure 7 *Ravages des Normands*, (Alfred Ronner) engraving in Henri Moke, *Abrégé de l'histoire de la Belgique*, 15th edition, 1887.

Burdens of the Great War

Hungarian national thinking considered the last third of the nineteenth century a relatively prosperous period, so the idea of 'victim/sacrifice' as self-interpretation was pushed into the background. But the situation changed significantly in the wake of perhaps one of the most significant events of the twentieth century, World War I. Initially, the sacrifice element was the leading form for all social groups: the democratization of this narrative took place in the context of the nationalist admiration for the war. The deaths of those killed in the battlefields had to be interpreted, and that was often the religious sacrifice: an analogy of the crucifixion of Christ as the *Redemptor* of the (nationally imagined, divided, and characterised) mankind. This intertwining of religious liturgy and political culture made it possible for an expression of the nation's immortality through the fallen victim. Fighting and dying for the homeland meant a new hope perspective, not only for the survivors and the fallen, but for the entire nation. The soldiers are not the gears of a destructive machine, but executors of a divine plan that included the dimensions of salvation.⁶⁵

Where millions on both sides of the front were falling victim to world power aspirations, it became untenable to attribute the responsibility for war solely to one side of world conflicts, for example, the Central Powers, above all Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest, the Germans, and Central Europeans. In the historical assessment of World War I, the Great Powers' common responsibility is the basis for possible

65 Balogh, "A magyar nemzeti áldozatnarratíva változásai," 42–44.



Figure 8 Engraving (Dupeyron, Dargent) in *Histoire de la Belgique en images*, 1894.

common approaches. As the Hungarian historian László Szarka said: “There is no longer a single person responsible for the war, neither Vienna nor Berlin can be called the sole initiator of the war, since Paris, St. Petersburg and London decided in favour of the war just as much as the government of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the German Empire.”⁶⁶

After the Great War, the hitherto unknown and unimaginable numbers of masses of casualties were gradually made public, so millions were confronted with the absurd amounts of immorality and obvious futility of suffering. The idea of national self-sacrifice lost its explanatory power and came to the fore—let us remember Koselleck’s ideas on the largely similar situation after World War II—the role motif of the passive victim of violence. However, this change, which is strongly reflected in the literature and the fine arts, is not highly visible in the war monuments, because political decision-makers and their interpretive *élites* limited the social and physical space of remembrance. Only ‘private’ (personal, family) mourning work was allowed, the values and purposes of which were in synchronicity with the ruling narrative about the meaning of the nation’s martyrdom.⁶⁷ This approach appears almost completely uniform in the monuments, regardless of whether they were erected by the winners or the losers. Thus, albeit with different emphases, it was present in Nazi Germany as well as in the Soviet Union—in fact, it is still extant in Russia today.⁶⁸

66 Szarka, “Minden Egész eltörött...,” 85.

67 Gyáni, “Az első világháború emlékezete,” 316–17.

68 Balogh, “A magyar nemzeti áldozatnarratíva változásai,” 46.

The rebirth of the victim narrative was facilitated in particular by the fact that, for Hungary, the Great War did not only bring about the well-known crisis phenomena—mobilized mass society and greater destruction controlled by the war economy and technological progress. The impact of all this was traumatically aggravated by the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and within it the dismemberment of the historical Hungarian Kingdom. Hungarian nationalism regarded the country as a natural geographical unit, the Hungarian nation as the natural political leader of the Carpathian Basin for a thousand years; this was taught in schools and was echoed in public discourse and public writing. After the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, in the unending wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nearly four million Hungarians died in the Carpathian Basin, and in their place, immigrants arrived, Croatians, Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians, and Ruthenians, who had no intention of assimilating ethnically with the Hungarian population. However, the new national historical conception arising in the nineteenth century refused to realise this, maintaining the existence of continuing unity in the country and among the 'Magyar' people. Thus, the entire Hungarian society, from nationalists to liberals and social democrats, considered it a deep injustice that the 'ungrateful' nationalities—with the active support of the Entente powers—broke up the old 'Magyar state' at the end of World War I, and, in addition, persecuted the Hungarian minority in the successor states. Deep emotional impressions of a real trauma—reinforced by the (ultimately) unsuccessful revision episodes before and during World War II—laid the foundations of a strong experience of the passive victim that spans the entire twentieth century, and is perhaps one of the most characteristic spiritual-emotional settings of Hungarian society to this day.⁶⁹

The discourse on the memory of the Great War in Hungary is divided into two parts. On the one hand, there is the exchange of ideas among the élites of the ruling levels of society. Their positions are rooted in historical science, conditioning the ideological context of specific studies. The interpretive point of view of the élites is determined first of all by the question of political responsibility, which goes together with the issues of the right to the government of Hungary after 1920. In total contrast to the memory of such an élite, there is another collective memory that was forming within the poorest classes of society, featuring a certain way of interpreting the past. This will be the other side of the discourse on the memory of the Great War.

An enormous number of peasants were enrolled for military service between

69 Romsics, "Az első világháborús magyar emlékezetkultúra." As the peace treaty with Hungary, one of the successors of the losing Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was signed in the Great Trianon Palace at Versailles in 1920, in Hungarian culture the name of the building symbolically signifies the entire historical event and its related social psychological phenomena (e.g., Trianon trauma, Trianon syndrome, etc.).

1914 and 1918, where they had to face the massacre of modern warfare. Under the shock they suffered, many started to write, providing details of their war experiences. The re-evocation and re-thinking of events greatly contributed to the formation of their political conscience. They were country people who had always cultivated the land: for them, as for the poor country teachers, the outbreak of the war meant that politics was radically and aggressively interfering with their lives. They instinctively felt, and often even understood, that under the cover of international politics, a world had taken over their destiny, and they had no alternative but to accept it. As a consequence, they turned soldiers more through a sort of renunciation than through real conviction and joy. Certainly, this experience can be considered an important source of victim self-interpretation. Although there are texts by memorialist authors and scholars in which the memories recalled reflect the influence of war propaganda, in fact the negative *topos* relative to the enemy (including also the way of considering the Romanian, Serb, and Russian soldiers as inferiors) became more widespread in the memory of the élite (tending to the right) than in that of the ordinary populace.

The front-experiences led to fairly clear fundamental questions: If a soldier goes to the front to risk his own life for his sovereign or his country, to what extent is it right to consider him inferior to others? Why was it not possible for the soldier returning from the front to claim—quite rightly, of course—greater respect than had been accorded to him previously? Although the authors of the memoirs, for the most part originally peasants, did not express themselves in abstract concepts, their writing conveys to us that for them the war was the experience of a fundamental turning point, after which it was no longer possible to go back to the rigid old system of social relations. We can see in the case of Hungarian veterans as well the famous “experience of the soldier at the front,” described on the basis of research into the mentality of German and French soldiers.⁷⁰

The second fundamental type of popular memory feeds on the alienating sensation of the dehumanising effects of a war that used the most modern technological resources. The “shower of shrapnel,” the sight of the massacre caused by machine-gun fire, the bayonet battles, the march through scorched earth, the assault in the coldest midwinter, and the building of trenches in the sea of mud and sub-zero temperatures left a haunting impression on the human psyche. As in the case of the criticism of social conditions, this time too we note that many writers limited themselves to the mere recollection of facts without explicitly interpreting them, although their words and the entire economy of the text lead us to conclude (or at times understand) that so much violence and suffering can never be justified by the

70 Csorba, “Problemi e questioni da affrontare nella storiografia ungherese sulla Grande Guerra,” 114–17.

purposes, true or false as the case may be, of any general or any sovereign. There are many allusions to the disparity between the fighting soldier and certain privileged groups behind the front who had no desire to get embroiled in the torments of war. Contrary to official propaganda, the soldiers frequently knew well that on the other side of the no-man's land there were people just like themselves. If we scrutinize this form of plebeian memory, it also becomes clear why Communist agitation found particularly fertile ground among prisoners of war and veterans, and why even those who had not sided with the supporters of emancipating ideologies developed much more sensitivity to inequality and to the conditions of social relations.⁷¹

Alongside this egalitarian-emancipation line of collective memory, many veterans fostered a particular feeling of Hungarian-ness that was, in part, incompatible with their other experiences. Such incompatibility, however, is perceived only by us, readers today, while it was not felt by the authors of the memoirs. The soldiers who had been on the Serb or the Romanian front often remembered how the foreign troops irrupting into the country treated the Hungarian community as enemies, not refraining even from acts of cruelty on the civilian population. Others had to take into account the aversion or, more commonly, the explicit hatred from their Slav brothers, even though they all wore the same uniform of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Not infrequently, their hostility turned against the whole state, not just certain individuals. This gave them a strong feeling of belonging to one nation, experienced much more consciously, bringing them close to the élite, reaching conclusions very similar to that élite's "concern for the homeland."⁷² It seems this may also have been an important experience for the spread of victim self-interpretation in Hungarian national thinking.

Belgium's national history was, as we have seen, constructed as that of an oppressed and unhappy nation, but without a strong sense of victimhood and martyrdom. That was brought into the national narrative throughout the nation's fate in World War I, a crucial episode for the country's self-image as well as for its international reputation. In 1914, Belgium's neutrality was brutally violated by the German army which had overrun the country according to the von Schlieffen Plan as a way to attack France from the north from the rear. That failed because Germany did not succeed in taking the whole country. A small area in the westernmost part of the territory, a small corner behind the River Yser, held out, and as in northern France, the front there came to a standstill and would hardly move throughout the war. The partial failure of the German plan is also attributed to the courage of the Belgians, who not only held out there but also offered more resistance during the advance

71 Two volumes of such recollections: Szenti, *Vér és pezsgő*; Hoppál, Küllős, Manga ed., *Emlékül hagyom az unokáknak*.

72 Gyáni, "Az első világháború és a paraszti emlékezet."

through the country than the Germans (and everyone else) had expected, thereby delaying the advance and giving the French more time to organize the defence. This received considerable international attention, met with admiration and solidarity. This was impersonated by the figure of King Albert I, who stayed with his troops as a 'king-soldier' (while the government had fled to France) and led the resistance. He became a symbolic and well-known mythical figure not only at home but also abroad.⁷³ His wife, Queen Astrid, contributed to this exceptionally positive evaluation. She was popular in her own right, presenting the iconic image of the queen nurse who looked after wounded soldiers.

This mythical image was coloured not only by solidarity and admiration, but also by pity. The German advance in 1914 was accompanied by much violence, destruction, and innumerable casualties. The best-known example getting the most resonance was the destruction of Leuven on 24–25 August 1914. As a reprisal for the alleged attacks by snipers, much of the city centre was burnt down. The destruction of the university's library—one of the oldest and most famous in Europe—where nearly a quarter of a million books, incunabula, and manuscripts were lost, assumed immense symbolic value and greatly contributed to the participation of intellectuals and artists in the war. Leuven revealed the Germans' barbarity and the "furor teutonicus" [Teutonic fury] and became "the Sarajevo of intellectuals."⁷⁴ But destruction and massacres were carried out in other places as well, both in Flanders and in Wallonia, giving seven cities 'martyr city' status. In addition to Leuven, these were Visé, Aarschot, Andenne, Dendermonde, Tamines, and Dinant. More generally, Belgium was associated with martyrdom.⁷⁵

Twentieth-century struggles

In Belgium's history, World War I also meant an important step in the radicalization of the Flemish movement. Part of that was striving for independence for Flanders, in other words, the Dutch-speaking northern part of the country, and thus for the division of the Belgian state. However, the historical material with which this new Flanders had to legitimize itself was what Belgium had previously used to shape its national narrative. The image of history as continuous oppression was transferred from the Belgian to the Flemish (nationalist) narrative. The 'myth of foreign dominations' was (and is) valid, but at this point it was not the 'Belgians' who were the oppressed, but the Dutch-speaking Flemings. In their minds, the Belgian state

73 van Ypersele, *Le Roi Albert. Histoire d'un mythe*.

74 Derez, "Furore teutonico."

75 Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*.

switched camps. For the self-confident and nationalistic Flemings, the Belgian state was only the successor to foreign oppressors in the past, and more precisely, just another emanation of the 'eternal' French enemy. The choice and preservation of French as the main official language of the country, the language of (secondary and higher) education, administration, and the courts not only contradicted the fact that Dutch was the vernacular of a large number of citizens (even most citizens) in the country. The Francophone Belgian state now deprived the Flemings of their freedom and autonomy. This is also an anachronistic historical mythology. First of all, the division of the country between Flemings and Walloons is relatively recent and a projection; it is not the case that when the country came into being, the two peoples were forced to live together against their will and against logic. The Flemings as a cohesive unit, as a 'people,' did not yet exist at that time; they emerged only at a later stage as a subnation within the Belgian whole (and as a consequence thereof). Until the end of the eighteenth century, 'Flanders' was the name of one of the old regions, which only partly overlaps with the area now called 'Flanders' (which is the northern part of the country, where the Dutch-speakers live). Only roughly were the two westernmost provinces, West and East Flanders, located in the 'old' Flanders. Moreover, within the Belgian state, at the hands of the Flemish Democrats, who in the nineteenth century were predominantly (or almost completely) patriotic, no independence of Flanders or a split of the Belgian state had yet emerged, and thus no 'Flemish nationalists.' There was then a gradual evolution in which the north of the country first became officially bilingual and later monolingual Dutch-speaking, and in the twentieth century it evolved further through successive 'state reforms' into the federated state, with its own government, parliament, and far-reaching powers, as is the case now. The historical narrative persists though that this is ultimately only the end point of a long history of oppression not only by foreign peoples, but also by the Belgian state and the French-speaking Belgians—for the Flemings, ultimately also 'foreigners.'

In Hungary, the adversities of the twentieth century have unfortunately further the national self-image of the vulnerable victim. There is a strong perception in the national collective national memory that Western countries have not only thwarted a fair revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty (at least the establishment of ethnic borders) but have also idly left Central Europe—and in it the Hungarian nation—as a victim of the aggressive expansion of Nazi Germany first, and the Soviet Union next. The trust or belief, and later the disappointment in the imagined Western help, which in fact lacked any basis, grew especially strong during the 1956 revolution. Thus, it was no coincidence that the motif of the sacrifice's Christian vision reappeared in the most influential poem about the Hungarian uprising in Sándor Márai's poem *Angel from Heaven* (1956):

“It’s watched by the folk of continents,
 Some grasp it; for some, it makes no sense.
 Far too much for some to hold at bay.
 They’re shaking their heads, they shudder, pray,
 For those aren’t sweets that hang on the tree:
 ‘Tis Christ of the people: Hungary.

./.

And many pass by and some advance:
 The soldier, who pierced him with a lance,
 The Pharisee, who sold him for a price,
 Then one, who when asked, denied him thrice,
 One, whose hand had shared the bowl with Him,
 Who for silver coins had offered Him,
 And whilst abusing, wielded the lash,
 Had drank his blood and he ate his flesh –
 The crowd is standing around, they stare,
 But to address Him there’s none to dare.

./.

Silent victim, no accusal tried,
 Just watches like Christ did crucified.”⁷⁶

We have now arrived in present-day Hungary. Not only was the victim-mythology as self-interpretation reborn in the twentieth century, but it still appears to be with us in the twenty-first century.

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76 Márai, *Mennyből az angyal*.

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Diversity within Socialist Agriculture

Introduction

Zsuzsanna Varga 

Section editor

In East-Central Europe, socialist agriculture was created as an integral part of the process of Sovietization. From the late 1940s onwards, in parallel with the aggravation of the Cold War conflict, the Sovietization of this region accelerated, resulting in the large-scale implementation of the Soviet social, political, and economic model based on Stalin's conceptions. There were certain differences in the timing and methods of Sovietization applied by the different countries, but the supremacy of this model remained indisputable until Stalin's death.¹

Stalin treated agriculture as an 'inner colony,' i.e., he subordinated its human and material resources to the interests of forced industrialization. This required a farm organization that ensured not only the concentrated extraction of peasants' income but also the control and discriminatory treatment of the agricultural population.² As a consequence, peasants were treated as second-class citizens.³

Stalinist agriculture was based on three pillars. The first of these was the Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), which served as a channel for ensuring the state's supply of crops and maintaining political control over the countryside. The second pillar was the state-owned farm (sovkhоз). The third element was the artel-type collective farm (widely known as a kolkhoz).

According to the Model Charter of 17 February 1935, the kolkhoz was a community of people who were joint users of the nationalized land of a given settlement, and who shared their farming equipment and animals. From the communal land fund, a certain amount (ranging from a quarter to one-half of a hectare per kolkhoz family)

- 1 The following works provide insight into the changes in the definition of Sovietization and its use in research: Apor et al., eds, *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe*; Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe," 175–97. On Sovietization of the Hungarian agriculture, see: Ö. Kovács et al., eds, *The Sovietization of Rural Hungary*; Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*
- 2 Merl, "The Role of Agriculture in Soviet Industrialization," 3–22; Viola, "Collectivization in the Soviet Union," 49–77.
- 3 Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 48–79.

was allocated for personal use; this was called a household plot or a household farm. The members of the collective farm carried out the actual agricultural work jointly—within the framework of brigades and work teams—in return for which they received payment for this communal work. The kolkhoz was considered inferior to the sovkhoz because it was not the property of the entire society but of a smaller community or group. For this reason, the official ideological perspective was to view the kolkhoz as a temporary solution that would evolve into a sovkhoz over time.⁴

The Model Charter of 1935 remained untouched until 1969. This explains why, at the end of the 1940s, it was Stalin's original kolkhoz model charter that was exported to East-Central European countries together with the other elements of the Stalinist agricultural system. In the Spring of 1949, collectivization began in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and subsequently in Hungary. The Polish party leadership also started the process, but this underwent a more gradual transition. The only exception was the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Because of Germany's uncertain future, the Party leadership was advised by Stalin to delay collectivization.⁵

In all bloc countries, huge conflicts emerged between the communists, who were carrying out the collectivization, and peasant society. The reaction of the communist parties to peasant resistance was to make use of a growing and increasingly diverse toolbox of state violence. The consequences were disastrous: a mass exodus of labor, the loss of the security of production, a dramatic decline in output, persistent food shortages, and so on.

Stalin's death opened up new ways of dealing with the problems and correcting agricultural policy. All countries stopped their forced collectivization campaigns. But the period of de-collectivization lasted only a few years, and in 1955, collectivization was relaunched in East-Central Europe, except for Yugoslavia.⁶

This second wave of collectivization was interrupted in 1956 by the Polish workers' uprising and the Hungarian revolution. The experience of the 1956 Polish and Hungarian crises had a significant impact on Soviet policymakers, as they understood that the poor performance of the agricultural sector, fragmented by collectivization and persistent food shortages in both countries, had contributed to the build-up and eruption of social tensions.

When the Soviet leadership initiated the completion of collectivization in the late 1950s, it tolerated neither Yugoslavia nor Poland completing this task. Thus,

4 On the characteristics of the operations of the kolkhoz, see: Davies, *The Soviet Collective Farm*, 75–97; Wädekin, “The Soviet Kolkhoz,” 95–116.

5 Swain, “Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns,” 497–534.

6 Swain, “Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns,” 497–534.

their agriculture continued to be dominated by small-scale farms. In contrast, those countries that resumed collectivization were allowed to modify certain elements of the Soviet model, such as dismantling Machine-Tractor Stations, abolishing compulsory deliveries (quotas), liberalizing kulak policy, and allowing for different types of cooperation.⁷ Khrushchev also hoped that providing more room for maneuver to the satellite countries would help them meet their own food needs, rather than them constantly demanding grain from the Soviet Union. Khrushchev devoted exceptional attention to stimulating agricultural production due to economic competition with the USA, as captured in his slogan of 'catching up and surpassing' economic performance within twenty years (1960–1980), a policy that applied not only to industrial but also to agricultural production.⁸

Acting on the impetus from the Kremlin, the socialist bloc countries—except for Poland and Yugoslavia—resolved to complete the transformation of small-scale peasant farms into large-scale state and collective farms in 1958.

A rich literature has accumulated on the history of socialist agriculture, and after the change of regime, important new results were produced thanks to the liberation of archival research. Two volumes of studies in English bear witness to this.⁹ At the same time, researchers have focused mainly on the origins of this phenomenon in the 1950s; much less attention has been paid to the subsequent decades.

The present thematic section responds to this deficiency. The authors look behind the 'socialist façade,' analysing the responses of different groups of farmers, their interactions with the authorities, and their changing lifestyles, among other aspects.

Many questions remain about the agricultural development of the two countries that were excluded from the final collectivization drive. In both Yugoslavia and Poland, small farms dominated, but agriculture remained part of the planned economy, which meant that pricing policy and investment policy favoured the development of industry. Similarly, although the majority of peasant farmers were allowed to continue individual farming, state farms coexisted alongside them, which the authorities considered models of large-scale agricultural production and favoured in every possible way, including through investment and social security policies.

Two papers deal with the agricultural development of the Slovenian areas of the former Yugoslavia. Marta Rendla gives an overview of the changing attitude of the communist authorities towards farmers and private agriculture. Her paper covers

⁷ Swain, "Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns," 497–534.

⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, 325–60.

⁹ Iordachi and Bauerkämper, eds, *The Collectivization of Agriculture*; Radu and Bundeanca, eds, *Countryside and Communism*.

the period from 1945 to the 1970s. Within this context, the other Slovenian author, Janja Sedlaček, presents an interesting case study. Her paper presents an example of a successful bottom-up peasants' initiative that started as a bold move, inconsistent with the ideological framework of the time, but supported by the authorities and legalized a few years later. Her analysis gives us a close-up of the individual, Simon Toplak, who played a key role in the initiative.

In Poland, too, small farms dominated, but alongside them were state farms, considered the most advanced players in agriculture. Researchers have barely dealt with them. Ewelina Szpak's paper seeks to fill this gap. Her paper outlines the history of State Agricultural Farms, but the focus is on the community of agricultural workers employed in them. For her analysis, she has used not only archival sources but also diaries, memoirs, and interviews.

In Hungarian agriculture, after 1956, a gradual, and at first hidden, departure from the Stalinist model began. This process did not stop with the completion of collectivization (1959–1961) but became more and more widespread in the years after 1961. One of the most important elements of this became household farming. While large-scale farms achieved good results in the highly mechanized branches of extensive crop production, household plots excelled in labour-intensive vegetable, fruit, and grape production, as well as in poultry rearing, egg production, pig farming, and calf rearing, etc.

A rich sociological, economic, and historical literature is available on household farming. Judit Tóth's article builds on this and examines the similarities and differences between the often-confused household and auxiliary farms.

All four studies indicate that the agricultural policies of individual countries within the socialist bloc cannot be considered homogeneous, and there have been significant changes over time. They also prove that these policy changes can be seen as a response to agricultural producers and their interactions with the authorities. Over time, the room for maneuver changed a great deal and multiple times; without presenting these dynamics, it is not possible to give a close-up picture of the everyday life of 'socialist agriculture.'

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Development of Socialist Cooperativism in the Slovenian Part of Yugoslavia

Communist Authorities' Attitude towards Peasants and Private Agriculture (1945–1970s)

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Abstract. The article addresses the changing attitude of the communist authorities towards peasants and private agriculture in the Slovenian part of socialist Yugoslavia. The changing attitude towards peasants and private agriculture, through socialist cooperativism, was based on political, economic, and social discrimination against peasants. After years of intense political, economic, and psychological violence, a period of ideological pragmatism began following the abandonment of collectivization in 1953. The authorities sought to appease the peasants, allowing them to leave agricultural cooperatives without any consequences. Within the framework of socialist cooperation, peasants were permitted to pursue their economic interests, but they were obliged to further narrow production units to ten hectares of arable as a maximum land. In the 1960s, the authorities neglected peasants through the cooperative system, believing that large state¹ agricultural complexes would ensure food security. When these complexes failed to meet the growing needs for food security, the importance of private agriculture was recognized at the brink of the 1970s. At that time, the authorities changed the concept of agricultural policy, allowing peasants to modernize and invest in the upgrading of private agriculture. The productive potential of private agriculture was also incorporated into the state agricultural policy plans, giving more room for private initiative. Despite their pragmatism, the authorities did not fully shed their ideological prejudices against peasants and private agriculture until the dissolution of socialism and the state.

Keywords: agricultural policy, private agriculture, authorities' attitude towards peasants, socialist Slovenia

1 The use of the term 'state' was replaced by 'social' during the socialist period beginning in 1953, when the Yugoslav Federal Constitutional Law introduced self-management as the foundation of the social order and replaced state and cooperative ownership with social ownership—understood as ownership by everyone and by no one. Accordingly, both terms appear in this paper, depending on the context (Avsec, "Zadruge," 110).

Introduction

In this article, I examine the evolving relationship between the communist authorities and the peasantry, as well as the transformations of agricultural policy and its implementation, through the lens of socialist agriculture and the stages of socialist agricultural cooperativism in the Slovenian part of Yugoslavia, spanning the period from 1945 to the early 1970s.

Within the framework of this new model of socialist cooperativism—which, in its objectives, diverged significantly from classical cooperativism²—the principal architect of Yugoslav agricultural policy, the Slovene Edvard Kardelj, envisioned a solution to one of the core ideological concerns of the communist regime: the peasant question, particularly the perceived threat posed by the wealthier strata of the rural population. Socialist cooperativism was conceived not only as a vehicle for the structural transformation of agriculture but also as a political instrument for the “elimination of the remnants of capitalist exploitation.”³ The visions of classical Marxism, along with the theory and practice employed by the Soviet Union—the first socialist state—in addressing the peasant question, influenced significantly the Yugoslav model of agrarian policy.⁴ At its core, Yugoslav agrarian policy adhered to the tenets of classical Marxist theory, which held that, due to the development of agriculture under capitalism—namely the centralization and concentration of land ownership and the monopolization of production through large-scale mechanized capitalist enterprises—peasants would not survive in the long term as small producers. According to Marxist theory, peasant property was expected to vanish, leaving no place for the peasant under socialism. Because of the supposed natural alliance between workers and small peasants, Slovenian communists saw revolutionary potential in the peasantry and sought to incorporate them into their ranks soon after the party had been founded in 1920. After World War II, lacking their own agrarian program, the communists turned to the Soviet mode,⁵ using land redistribution and agrarian reform to strengthen the alliance between workers and peasants. This was intended to solidify their power and eventually reorganize peasants under socialist cooperativism.⁶

2 Classical cooperativism had been designed to promote the economic interests and development of the economic and social activities of its members—drawn from the small-scale economic sector, including traders, artisans, peasants, and workers—through the operation of a jointly managed enterprise (the cooperative) within a socio-economic environment dominated by the forces of capital (Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 150; Kovačič, “Kmetijstvo v razvoju podeželja,” 174).

3 See: Čepič, “Kmetje in zadružništvo.”

4 Partlič, “»Znanost,»” 430.

5 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 141.

6 Partlič, “»Znanost,»” 430; Lazarević, “Uvod,” 12.

As an integral part of socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenia—like other Eastern European communist states—pursued rapid industrialization modelled on the Soviet example. Agriculture was subordinated to industrial interests, and the rural population faced economic, political, and social discrimination. The reconstruction of agriculture, aligned with broader social transformation, was both an economic and a political measure, a common approach among former socialist states. Accordingly, both Yugoslavia and its Slovenian constituent followed a Marxist strategy in agricultural policy and in addressing the peasant question. This strategy sought to construct socialism as an economically efficient and socially just system by eliminating the peasantry as a distinct social class and transforming them into workers within a large-scale, industrialized, collective system of socialist agricultural production.⁷ Yugoslav ideologues, like those in other Eastern European socialist states, accepted Soviet collectivization as a model for overcoming rural underdevelopment and securing capital for industrialization.⁸ Despite drawing inspiration from the Soviet model, Yugoslavia deviated in both the implementation and tactics of agricultural policy. Yugoslav authorities were opposed to “hard collectivization” as implemented by Stalin. Although they temporarily pursued such policies between 1949 and 1953 to demonstrate adherence to the Stalinist line, they advocated for a more moderate path, which they referred to as the “specific path to rural collectivization”. This was to be achieved through socialist agricultural cooperativism, which Kardelj argued “could achieve more than the Russians accomplished” through collectivization. Private peasants were to be integrated into socialist agriculture through socialist cooperativism, initially by creating a relationship of dependency, and ultimately by incorporating them into the socialist agricultural sector, which, with the introduction of self-management, transitioned from state to social ownership.⁹ The agrarian reform (1945–1948), involving the redistribution of confiscated and expropriated land, laid the groundwork for agricultural reconstruction and the resolution of the peasant question through socialist cooperativism. By creating predominantly small farms—usually under five hectares—it further fragmented peasant holdings and produced units that were often too small to sustain families or generate surpluses. While reshaping land ownership, the reform also aimed to politically integrate peasants by fostering an alliance with the proletariat. It served as a precondition for a policy that combined state and cooperative farming with numerous small private farms, which, under economic pressure, were gradually compelled to integrate into the state agricultural sector through socialist cooperativism.¹⁰

7 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32.

8 Swain, “Collective Farms which Work,” 1.

9 Čepič, “Spor z informbirojem,” 327–28.

10 Čepič, “Kaj, kako, zakaj,” 580.

After the World War II, the Yugoslav communist leadership—with the Slovene leadership at the forefront—adopted a strategy of gradually suppressing private agriculture while cautiously and covertly strengthening the state sector, which was to become the main focus of agricultural production. Based on an analysis of internal and external conditions, as well as the Soviet experience, the federal and republican leaderships concluded that premature radical changes to existing property relations could hinder the political consolidation of power.¹¹

The Yugoslav ideologues of agricultural policy, led by the Slovene Edvard Kardelj, sought to fulfil the political and economic functions of agriculture—particularly the imperative of ensuring adequate food supplies—through the creation of a tripartite structure consisting of a state sector, a cooperative sector, and a smallholder-based private agricultural sector.¹² In this context, socialist agricultural cooperativism represented, for the authorities, an instrument for achieving the political and economic objectives underpinning their vision of agricultural policy. As an intermediary between the state and the private agricultural sectors, socialist cooperativism was intended, from a political standpoint, to serve as a mechanism for supervising, directing, and gradually integrating the dominant private agricultural sector¹³ into the state agricultural system (following 1953, this sector was known as the ‘social agricultural sector’).¹⁴ Through the new socialist cooperativism, the multitude of small farms was, as previously noted, economically compelled to integrate into the state agricultural sector.¹⁵ This approach was intended to meet both political and economic objectives. The socialist cooperative agricultural sector was seen as “supporting the state in the implementation of the national economic plan.” This meant that production in the social sector, to which the privately owned sector was linked out of existential necessity, would be consolidated, thereby contributing to the overall increase in agricultural production.¹⁶

“Yugoslav agricultural policy ideologues adhered to the Marxist tradition and the Soviet model, positing that private farming, irrespective of its scale, continually presented opportunities for the reinforcement of capitalist relations in rural areas.”¹⁷

11 Prinčič, “Podržavljanje,” 121.

12 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 100.

13 By the end of the socialist period, of the two fundamental types of agricultural holdings—private and social—private farms predominated both in number and in land area. Social agricultural enterprises managed only about 15 percent of the agricultural land held in social ownership (Kovačič, “Kmetijstvo v razvoju,” 166).

14 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 150, 153.

15 Čepič, “Kmetijska politika,” 891; Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 100.

16 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 150.

17 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32; Lazarević, “Uvod,” 12.

The wealthier private peasant—labelled a ‘kulak’—was regarded as a threat to socialism.¹⁸ Although Yugoslav agrarian policy opposed a frontal assault on the ‘kulak’ following the Soviet model and advocated a gradual suppression of the private sector, its alignment with the Soviet socialist strategy diverged only in tactics, not in its ultimate objectives.¹⁹ The effectiveness of the Yugoslav approach to gradually phasing out the private sector is evidenced by the record pace of de-agrarianization and the emergence of partial de-agrarianization in Yugoslavia, and even more markedly in Slovenia, although Yugoslavia was the only European socialist country to abandon the model of collective agriculture as early as 1953.²⁰ At the beginning of the 1970s, only a fifth of the rural population stayed in Slovenia, and by the early 1990s,²¹ this proportion had decreased to a mere 7.6 percent.²²

After the abandonment of collectivization, Yugoslav agricultural policy adopted a pragmatic approach by tolerating peasant producers, permitting private farms to continue their operation, and even enabling them to participate in the socialist development project.²³ At the same time, the state imposed restrictive measures on peasants—lowering in 1953 for the second time the postwar landholding ceiling to ten hectares and banning farm mechanization until 1967. Although private farming was formally allowed, it was tightly constrained and economically suppressed. With small farms averaging just 2.5 hectares of arable land,²⁴ many peasants turned to non-agricultural work to survive.

The approach to private farming during the first two decades after the World War II—aside from the period of harsh collectivization between 1949 and 1953—can be compared to Lenin’s perspective on small private producers. His position was that the peasantry should be eliminated, but not overnight and not through violent expropriation; instead, this goal was to be achieved gradually, through the careful and deliberate structuring of labour relations, which he envisioned in the form of a new type of cooperativism.²⁵ Yugoslav agrarian policy never fully renounced the Soviet, Stalinist strategy, which reflected a crude Marxist suspicion of the peasantry, perceived as unreliable class allies of the proletariat due to their fundamentally capitalist character.²⁶ Even in the early 1970s—when agrarian overpopulation was no longer

18 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32; Lazarević, “Uvod,” 12.

19 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32.

20 Merl, “Sovietization.”

21 Malačič, “Razvoj prebivalstva,” 412.

22 Kovačič, “Kmetijstvo v razvoju,” 163.

23 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32.

24 Makarovič, “Družine,” 155.

25 Partlič, “»Znanost«,” 430–32.

26 Swain and Varga, “Introduction,” 308.

a pressing issue and the ‘peasant question’ had lost much of its ideological charge—only gradually did the state begin to recognize the importance of private agricultural production for national food security. It was under these circumstances that peasants were permitted to modernize, and a greater degree of private initiative was tolerated within the constraints of the existing communist system.²⁷ The landholding ceiling, set at ten hectares of arable land, was maintained up to the late 1980s. Although it was raised to 30 hectares in 1989,²⁸ the ceiling was still not fully abolished.

Socialist agriculture: Transition from capitalist to socialist cooperativism, 1945–1948

In establishing socialist agriculture, Yugoslavia followed the Soviet model, yet it did not strictly adhere to Stalin’s directives or to his approach toward the private sector. It diverged both in the methods employed and in the timing of specific measures. The Yugoslav leadership adopted a strategy of gradually suppressing the private sector, opting instead for more cautiously and covertly strengthening the state sector. Following the example of the Soviet Union, the legal framework of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (1946) and the People’s Republic of Slovenia (1947) enshrined three forms of ownership: state, cooperative, and private. Among these, state ownership held the highest status. Both constitutions explicitly permitted the legislature to restrict or expropriate private property and to nationalize particular industries or enterprises, should such actions be deemed necessary in the interest of the ‘general good’.²⁹ The constitutions also stipulated that the state should direct economic development through national plans, relying primarily on the state and cooperative sectors, while exercising control over the private sector.³⁰ According to the legal profession, cooperative ownership was considered to be closer to state than to private ownership. The reconstruction of pre-war agriculture and the resolution of the peasant question were undertaken by the new communist authorities in a manner similar to that of other former socialist states under Soviet influence—through the redistribution of land, that is, through agrarian reform. This reform marked the first politico-economic intervention in land ownership relations and reflected a class-oriented political agenda with significant economic implications. Through agrarian reform, Yugoslav agricultural policy envisioned the creation of a state and cooperative agricultural sector, while maintaining a fragmented, small-scale private

27 *XV. Redni občni zbor*, 1.

28 *Uradni list SRS*, št. 32-2. X. 1989, 1766.

29 Avsec, “Razvoj,” 23.

30 Avsec, “Zadruge,” 109; *Ustava FLRJ* 1946.

farming sector.³¹ The agrarian reform pursued two principal aims: first, to expropriate land from those who did not cultivate it themselves and redistribute it to those who either owned no land or possessed only small plots; and second, to transfer land into state and cooperative ownership for the establishment of state and cooperative agricultural enterprises. Expropriation was to satisfy two ideological principles: first, that land should belong to those who work it; and second, that the roots of 'capitalist' relations in the countryside should be eradicated. The agrarian maximum was set at 35 hectares of arable land or 45 hectares of total land. Through this reform, the communist authorities aimed to create a class of so-called 'middle peasants.' This process was referred to as the 'centering of the village' (*osredinjenje vasi*), in order to promote a dominant rural group capable of generating marketable surpluses.³² By allocating expropriated land to smallholders, the authorities sought to achieve a political effect—namely, to secure the support of these peasants for the communist regime.

The land fund established through the agrarian reform—created via expropriations under the Agrarian Reform Act and confiscations carried out as part of the so-called 'patriotic nationalization' (February 1945–December 1946)—came to encompass one-fifth of all agricultural land recorded in the 1931 census.³³ Although the agrarian reform did not abolish private land ownership, it played a similar role to that of nationalizations in non-agricultural sectors of the economy.³⁴ The state acquired the majority—nearly three-quarters—of all agricultural and forested land through the agrarian reform's expropriation. A significant portion of this land was forested, and it was retained by the state.³⁵

Although the agrarian reform aimed to create state and cooperative agricultural estates, the focus of agricultural production continued to be on private farming. In this context, as the number of larger farming estates declined and that of small and medium-sized farms increased, the overall number of farm holdings grew by 27 percent compared to the pre-war period.³⁶

31 Čepič, "Kaj, kako, zakaj," 580.

32 Čepič, "Kaj, kako, zakaj," 583.

33 Čepič, "Kaj, kako, zakaj," 583.

34 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 100. During the same period, the communist authorities also carried out the nationalization of other economic sectors in three phases. Within the framework of the so-called patriotic nationalization (from February 1945 to December 1946), laws were enacted that provided for either permanent confiscation or temporary sequestration of property as punishment. The first phase of nationalization (from 5 December to 17 December 1946) and the subsequent supplementary nationalization (in April and May 1948) led to the creation of a dominant state economic sector, which encompassed 93 percent of all economic enterprises (Prinčič, "Podržavljanje," 123–27).

35 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 103.

36 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 100–3; Čepič, "Oris pojavnih oblik," 179–80.

The agrarian reform was complemented by the establishment of socialist cooperativism in the reconstruction of agriculture and the resolution of the peasant question. Socialist agriculture, incorporating the state, cooperative, and private agricultural sectors, was established between 1945 and 1948, concurrently with the dismantling of the pre-war agricultural framework. The pre-war cooperative institutional structure, including all types of cooperatives and cooperative unions, was dismantled by 1947. This meant that cooperative property was either nationalized or transferred to a fund for the reconstruction and support of cooperativism. The parallel establishment of socialist cooperativism continued until 1949, based on the first general cooperative law in 1946. As a general law, like pre-war cooperativism, it envisaged all types of cooperatives.³⁷ On its basis, by 1948, procurement-marketing cooperatives were established to supply the population together with reconstruction cooperatives and various specialized agricultural cooperatives. Cooperatives with similar activities and operational areas were grouped into business associations, including district cooperative unions, general agricultural cooperatives, and specialized agricultural cooperatives. Agricultural procurement-marketing cooperatives became dominant in 1947, and by 1948, they had developed into a significant force in rural areas.³⁸ In the autumn of 1947, agricultural procurement-marketing cooperativism was consolidated at the republic level into the Republic Business Association of Procurement-Marketing Cooperatives whose task was to supply agricultural procurement-marketing cooperatives and consumer cooperatives with consumer goods and items subject to planned distribution through district business associations. Additionally, it was to assist the state in the compulsory purchase of agricultural products and organize the procurement of surplus and other agricultural goods through district business associations or local cooperatives.³⁹

As a specific form of cooperatives, the first cooperative law of 1946 included for the first time peasant labour cooperatives (*kmečke delovne/obdelovalne zadruge*), which were the Yugoslav version of Soviet kolkhozes.⁴⁰ Peasant labour cooperatives were to engage in collective farming, that is, in the collective cultivation of land and joint production. While the first general cooperative law, like its pre-war predecessor, provided for all types of cooperatives, it was different in the objectives of cooperatives compared to the pre-war cooperative law. Pre-war, classical cooperativism aimed to promote and strengthen the economic and social position of its members through the cooperative as a collective enterprise. In contrast, the objective

³⁷ *Splošni zakon o zadružah 1946*.

³⁸ Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 2.

³⁹ Čeferin, "Organizacija kmetijstva," 3–4; Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 9–10; Čeferin, "Poslovne zveze," 1.

⁴⁰ "Pregled predpisov," 1, 4.

of cooperatives under the 1946 general cooperative law was to assist the state in improving people's welfare and to support the state in implementing its economic plans. The law defined cooperatives as "voluntary economic organizations of the working people, which, for the development of the national economy, link and promote agricultural production and craftsmanship through collective work, while fostering initiative among the broadest masses of people in the countryside and cities in organizing production, supply, and distribution of goods."⁴¹

During the period of establishing socialist cooperativism, the authorities mostly focused on the establishment of cooperative stores, known as procurement-marketing cooperatives (*naproz-e*), reconstruction cooperatives, and various specialized agricultural cooperatives. While establishing a commercial and supply network within the state and cooperative sectors, due to initial difficulties, the authorities tolerated individual private entrepreneurs in trade, crafts, hospitality, and agriculture up to the end of 1946. However, once they assessed that they had solidified their position and that the state economic sector had expanded sufficiently, in 1947 they transitioned to a centrally planned economy modelled on the Soviet Union. At this point, the government decided to nationalize the businesses of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.⁴² In the autumn of 1947, a decision was made to abolish private trade⁴³ and reorganize cooperative trade. In 1947, cooperative trade was split into consumer cooperatives for supplying urban and industrial centres and agricultural procurement-marketing cooperatives for supplying rural areas. Since the task of cooperative stores—agricultural procurement-marketing cooperatives for supplying rural areas—was to ensure supply, they continually intervened in their members' farm operations from sowing to harvest.⁴⁴

In 1948, the cooperative sector underwent a transformation, consolidating the various types of cooperatives into general agricultural cooperatives. These cooperatives took on the function of cooperative stores, and by June 1948, their number had grown to 1,151.⁴⁵ In April 1948, a decree was enacted to abolish private trade. As a result, trade was limited to the state and cooperative sectors, as with the implementation of the decree prohibiting private trade, those private businesses that had resisted the difficult operating conditions compared to the state and cooperative sectors, were also nationalized.⁴⁶ According to the assessment of the Yugoslav communist leadership, this marked the end of the struggle to eliminate capitalist elements.⁴⁷

41 "Pregled predpisov," 5.

42 Prinčič, "Podržavljanje," 127; Čepič, "Kmetijska politika," 895.

43 Čepič, "Kmetijska politika," 895.

44 Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 6–8.

45 "Pregled predpisov," 21; Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 15–16.

46 Prinčič, "Podržavljanje," 127; Čepič, "Kmetijska politika," 895.

47 Prinčič, "Podržavljanje," 127.

The agrarian reform led to even more agricultural fragmentation than before the war, while the newly established state and cooperative enterprises were still far from fulfilling their intended organizational and economic roles—resulting in supply disruptions for the population in 1948.⁴⁸ The disturbances in supply were further complicated in the summer of 1948 by the dispute with the Soviet Union. At the Comintern meeting in June 1948, the Soviet Union accused Yugoslavia of failing to follow Moscow's directives on how to build socialism according to the Soviet model. Stalin accused Yugoslav leader Tito—who had initiated collectivization as early as 1945 without awaiting a signal from Moscow—of underestimating kulak resistance and neglecting the role of class struggle in the process. In this context, efforts were launched to find ways to increase agricultural production. In pursuit of this goal, the approach toward peasants and the tactics for dealing with them also changed.

General agricultural cooperativism and compulsory collectivization

General agricultural cooperativism and compulsory collectivization refer to the period from March 1948 to July 1952, or more broadly until 1953. This phase is marked by the establishment of general agricultural cooperatives in 1948, followed by, and particularly characterized by, the creation of peasant labour cooperatives from 1949 onward. State policy—more specifically, the article by Edvard Kardelj, entitled “Agricultural Cooperativism in a Planned Economy,” published in the journal *Komunist* in 1947—provided the ideological foundation for this process. Kardelj argued that the agricultural cooperative represented the most suitable form for transforming agriculture, increasing agricultural production, ensuring food supply, and raising the cultural level of the peasantry. These conclusions initiated the rapid and centrally directed implementation of general agricultural cooperatives.⁴⁹

The centralization of state policy around agricultural cooperatives, up to March 1948, entailed the decentralization of existing agricultural purchasing and sales cooperatives. This process was implemented by establishing new general agricultural cooperatives in nearly every locality or by reorganizing the existing purchasing and sales cooperatives into agricultural cooperatives. The formation of general agricultural cooperatives involved the merger of existing specialized cooperatives—such as those focused on livestock production, timber processing, and post-war reconstruction (in areas where reconstruction had already been completed)—into unified agricultural cooperatives. The introduction of a new system of controlled

48 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 104–5.

49 “Pregled predpisov,” 21.

trade, which was taken over by the agricultural cooperatives, was also played a crucial role in this transformation.⁵⁰

General agricultural cooperatives, typically established to cover the area of a single village, were intended to engage in joint procurement and sales, their own agricultural production and processing, forestry, and small-scale industrial craft activities to meet the needs of their members.⁵¹ Among other services, they developed production cooperation and rural credit and savings schemes. They also took responsibility for technological modernization, as well as the professional and social education of peasants.⁵² They combined commercial, production, and service functions for their members. Until the early 1950s, due to the general postwar scarcity, the exchange of goods was conducted through these cooperatives according to the principles of planned distribution. They functioned as a type of rural retail outlet through which rationed supply was distributed up to the end of 1947, followed by guaranteed supply from the beginning of 1948 onward.⁵³

In 1948, Yugoslav agriculture found itself in an extremely critical position, brought on by the country's international economic isolation and the growing need to supply an expanding non-agrarian population. In response to supply disruptions, the authorities opted to increase agricultural production by exerting heightened pressure on the peasants and initiating a reorganization of the agricultural sector. At the beginning of 1948, the burden of provisioning the population, which had previously been done through a system of rationed supply, was transformed into a system of guaranteed supply. In both supply systems, peasants were required, under state-imposed conditions, to deliver a fixed or prescribed share of their agricultural output to the state. Officially, the guaranteed supply system operated through state purchase at so-called fixed (or 'bound') prices, but in practice, this frequently took the form of confiscation. Peasants were often unwilling to surrender their produce, and many were simply unable to meet the state's quotas. Consequently, they consistently resisted the procurement system through passive concealment and hoarding their yields. In such circumstances, state authorities forcibly confiscated produce, penalized peasants, and labelled them as enemies of the regime. Compulsory procurement or delivery quotas were imposed on every peasant household, though in practice, the procurement policy targeted primarily the wealthier peasants—the kulaks. The authorities regarded any peasant who failed to fulfil state obligations as a wealthy kulak, regardless of their actual means. Nevertheless, it was primarily larger

50 "Pregled predpisov," 21; Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 15–16.

51 Avsec, "Zadruge," 110.

52 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 21.

53 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 106; Čepič, "Kmetijska politika," 891; Čepič, *Preskrba prebivalstva*, 893.

landholders—who, in principle, had surplus produce—who were subjected to the strongest pressure. As peasants hid their yields and state agents enforced procurements through violence and even physical punishment, the relationship between the state and the peasantry came to resemble a form of war.⁵⁴

In the system of controlled trade, which in practice involved linking the supply of industrial consumer goods to peasants with their delivery of produce to cooperatives, the relationship between the state and the peasants led to a status-based differentiation of the peasantry. Smaller peasants received higher economic benefits for cooperating with the socialist sector, while larger and wealthier peasants were discriminated against both in terms of purchase prices and the provision of industrial goods.⁵⁵

The Cooperative Law, titled *The Fundamental Law on Agricultural Cooperatives*, which established and defined general agricultural cooperatives and peasant agricultural cooperatives, and exceptionally also other types of agricultural cooperatives, was adopted in 1949. It addressed agricultural cooperatives and peasant labour cooperatives separately, defining the activities of agricultural cooperatives and the four forms of peasant labour cooperatives.⁵⁶ Regarding membership, the law stipulated that all three types of agricultural cooperatives (general, agricultural, and other forms) were to include working peasants with the aim of “improving agricultural production, raising living standards, and building socialism in the countryside.” However, only in exceptional cases, were wealthy peasants allowed to become members, and only if they demonstrated appropriate loyalty to the state and provided a guarantee that they would adhere to cooperative rules and fulfil their obligations to the cooperative. Those sentenced to the loss of their civil rights could not become members, nor could they be elected to the cooperative’s governing bodies during their sentence.⁵⁷

The Cooperative Law (1949) defined general agricultural cooperatives as organizations “in which peasants unite to regulate and improve agricultural production and other types of economic activity on their own holdings in a coordinated manner; to organize joint production on cooperative farms; to collectively market their produce and procure industrial goods—with the aim of improving their economic and cultural conditions and eliminating capitalist and speculative elements from the countryside.”⁵⁸ In addition to uniting peasants and supporting them in improving production on their individual farms, general agricultural cooperatives were also

54 Čepič, “Kaj, kako, zakaj,” 585–86.

55 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 165–66.

56 “Pregled predpisov,” 13; *Uradni list FLRJ*, 49–411, 9. 6. 1949, 711.

57 “Pregled predpisov,” 14.

58 Čeferin, “Pregled zadružnega,” 5.

tasked with organizing cooperative estates—*zadružne ekonomije*—on which collective production was to be established. These cooperative estates were intended to serve as the embryonic form of future peasant labour cooperatives and the nucleus of the socialist economy in the countryside. In practice, most peasant labour cooperatives in Slovenia emerged from these cooperative estates.⁵⁹

General agricultural cooperatives, typically established at the level of a single village, were, as previously noted, organized into district unions of agricultural cooperatives. These district unions primarily fulfilled organizational, supervisory, and auditing functions. In addition to their role in trade, general agricultural cooperatives were expected to promote all branches of agriculture and forestry, as well as to purchase agricultural produce and products. They aimed to mobilize as broad a base of small and medium-sized peasants as possible, to support the modernization of agriculture, to organize the processing of agricultural goods and small-scale craft workshops, to collect savings deposits and issue loans, and to contribute to the cultural advancement of the rural population.⁶⁰

Although some advocates of rapid collectivization emerged immediately after the World War II, a more moderate approach ultimately prevailed. This moderate line viewed collectivization as a long-term goal to be achieved gradually and through softer methods. The ‘soft path’ was to be realized through socialist cooperativism. In the context of establishing and developing general cooperatives, socialist cooperativism in Yugoslavia had, by 1948, already conceptualized and initiated the formation of collective cooperatives—Yugoslav variants of the Soviet kolkhozes—referred to as agricultural labour cooperatives (*kmečke delovne zadruge*). From the outset, socialist agricultural policy in Yugoslavia encompassed not only cooperative agriculture but also state agriculture sector (later the term state was replaced by the term social) as integral components of its ideological and institutional framework.⁶¹ As the path toward the establishment of state agriculture was intended to be more gradual and less coercive than the Soviet model, priority was given to the development of general agricultural cooperatives. By 1948, a total of sixty-seven agricultural labour cooperatives had been established in Slovenia. Within the framework of agrarian reform and colonization, these peasant labour cooperatives were primarily viticultural in character. They emerged in the wine-growing regions of northern, northeastern, southeastern, and western Slovenia on land allocated to agrarian applicants and colonists—former vineyard workers (*viničarji*)—from the state land fund created from expropriated estates.⁶²

59 Čeferin, “Pregled zadružnega,” 5.

60 Čeferin, “Zadružništvo,” 15, 17; “Pregled predpisov,” 22.

61 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 25.

62 Čeferin, “Zadružništvo,” 19.

In the autumn of 1948, Edvard Kardelj reaffirmed that “the Communist Party of Yugoslavia does not intend, nor has it ever intended, to impose a new socialist form on the peasants and other small producers,” referring specifically to the Soviet kolkhoz model.⁶³ While Kardelj acknowledged that such forms of collective agriculture could represent an ideal, he was fully aware that few peasants were actually willing to enter such systems of production. Similarly, Boris Kidrič, one of the highest-ranking Slovene party leaders, stated clearly in mid-1948 that rapid collectivization—i.e., a frontal assault on the kulak—was not feasible, as it could lead to famine the following year, given that forty percent of the agricultural production remained in kulak hands. Moreover, there were neither cooperatives nor agricultural machinery available for farming at a higher level of mechanization. The political line, therefore, was not to be one of open confrontation but rather of gradual pressure: the undermining of kulak speculation and the promotion of working peasants. By “working peasants,” he referred to small and medium-sized peasants.⁶⁴ Although Yugoslav leaders initially rejected forced collectivization and the Soviet kolkhoz model, growing economic hardship, isolation, and internal party pressures led to a policy shift in 1949. The Communist Party decided to accelerate collectivization, eliminate the kulaks as a class, and establish peasant labour cooperatives.⁶⁵

Collective farming was expected to boost production, enable mechanization, and support the non-agrarian population,⁶⁶ while also serving as a means of political control and class struggle in the countryside.⁶⁷

By the spring of 1949, the collectivization process quickly advanced. They systematically envisaged four types of cooperatives. Common to all of them was that peasants contributed all their productive assets to the cooperatives, except for residential buildings, a so-called homestead (a small piece of land they could keep), small tools, and small livestock. The typology of cooperatives was based on ownership and compensation for the use of the land upon joining the cooperative. Collectivization in Slovenia meant that members of peasant labour cooperatives combined their land into the cooperative and jointly cultivated it under specific conditions and obligations. Peasants, who were members of peasant labour cooperatives, retained ownership of their land, except in one type of such cooperative, but it was managed by the cooperative. Peasants contributed their land to the peasant labour cooperative as a lease. Most commonly, peasants joined the cooperative with their land for a period of three years.⁶⁸

63 Čeferin, “Organizacija kmetijstva,” 3–4; Čeferin, “Zadružništvo,” 10.

64 Čepič, “Spor z informbirojem,” 327–29.

65 Čepič, “Spor z informbirojem,” 331–33.

66 Čepič, “Kaj, kako, zakaj,” 586; Čeferin, “Zadružništvo,” 20.

67 Čepič, “Kaj, kako, zakaj,” 589.

68 Čepič, “Kaj, kako, zakaj,” 589.

Collectivization meant expropriation in only one type of peasant labour cooperative. However, even land contributed as a lease, managed by the cooperative, had a similar effect. In reality, this was an economic nationalization without changing land ownership. Members were required to cultivate the land for modest compensation, and the efficiency of brigade-organized work was measured by norms.⁶⁹ Initially, there were no significant differences between the various types of peasant labour cooperatives, as general assemblies typically decided not to pay cooperative members either lease fees or interest. It was only after 1951 that cooperatives began to recognize land rent as a legitimate entitlement for members.⁷⁰

Peasants in Yugoslavia, including Slovenia, generally joined the four types of peasant labour cooperatives voluntarily, based on leasing conditions. However, due to violations of voluntariness and poor management, collectivization faced significant resistance. Yugoslav collectivization was among the most drastic in communist Europe, marked by economic, political, and psychological violence.⁷¹ Peasants resisted joining cooperatives mainly due to ownership and property concerns. Even when forced to join, resistance persisted, often as passive opposition. Peasants typically sold surplus crops or livestock before joining and entered with minimal assets. They focused more on their small plots than on cooperative land, sometimes using cooperative resources for personal cultivation. Through opportunistic actions, peasants undermined the effectiveness of collectivization.⁷²

Due to both economic and political failure, collectivization was effectively 'frozen' at its peak in 1951, when there were 386 peasant labour cooperatives in Slovenia. At this point, these cooperatives were also integrated into broader structures. Based on two Yugoslav government decrees issued in August 1950—one on the allocation of tractors, agricultural machinery, and tools to peasant production cooperatives, and the other on managing the Fund for Mechanization and Investment in Cooperative Agriculture—by the end of 1950 and throughout 1951, cooperative funds were established at the district level.⁷³ In April 1951, the Main Directorate for Cooperative Agriculture was established as an independent body within these funds and as an interest association of peasant labour cooperatives. Its role mirrored that of the Republic Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Ljubljana, which had been formed in May 1950 and succeeded the Republic Business Union of Procurement and Sales Cooperatives. The Main Directorate was tasked with strengthening peasant

69 Čepič, "Oris pojavnih oblik," 186; Veselinov, *Sumrak seljaštva*, 36.

70 Čeferin, "Organizacija kmetijstva," 9; Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 20.

71 Swain, "Eastern European Collectivisation," 497–534.

72 Allcock, *The collectivization*, 29–37.

73 Čeferin, "Organizacija kmetijstva," 10–11; Čeferin, "Zadružništvo," 24.

labour cooperatives and cooperative farms both economically and organizationally, while overseeing the advancement and accelerated development of agricultural production.⁷⁴ The coexistence of general agricultural cooperatives and peasant labour cooperatives, each with its own interest association, created a dual-track system within agricultural cooperativism.

At the peak of collectivization in Yugoslavia, a cooperative structure emerged, reflecting significant regional differences in economic development and political approaches. Collectivization was more extensive in less developed areas, such as Macedonia and Montenegro, where fragmented landholdings were common. By June 1951, peasant labour cooperatives controlled 91.5 percent of arable land in Macedonia and 76.8 percent in Montenegro.⁷⁵

In contrast, peasant labour cooperatives in Slovenia held only 3.9 percent of the country's total agricultural land and 5.9 percent of arable land. Land contributed by members accounted for just 2.6 percent of Slovenia's agricultural area. By 1953, only 5.3 percent of the peasant population—which made up 52.4 percent of the total population—had joined these cooperatives.⁷⁶ Membership was dominated by smallholders, a pattern seen throughout Yugoslavia and consistent with the ideological narrative of an alliance between the working class and small peasants.⁷⁷ Economically, peasant labour cooperatives remained weak and failed to meet expectations in terms of output and market supply. Despite collective cultivation, their productivity lagged significantly behind that of private peasants.⁷⁸

Socialist cooperation in the 1950s

Collectivization was officially abandoned in 1953 due to its economic inefficiency and political failure. However, this retreat did not undermine the long-term goals of agricultural policy; rather, it reflected a strategic shift in the state's approach to private farming. Leading Slovenian politicians made it clear that the ideological objective remained unchanged.

In a 1951 speech, Boris Kidrič warned that the return of capitalism in agriculture would not be tolerated—clearly referring to private farming. Tito reinforced this position in September 1951, stating that collectivization had never been intended as

74 Čeferin, "Organizacija kmetijstva," 25.

75 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 111.

76 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 172; Čeferin, "Organizacija kmetijstva," 9; Kmetijsko zadružništvo, 1–3; "Pregled predpisov," 26–27.

77 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 111–12.

78 Tochitch, "Collectivization in Yugoslavia," 26–42.

a short-term experiment.⁷⁹ The abandonment of collectivization was thus a tactical move aimed at calming the rural population after years of coercion and violence. New legislation allowed peasants to exit peasant labour cooperatives without facing sanctions.

The core objective of agricultural policy remained the “unification and socialization of land” through investment in modernization and the development of suitable cooperative structures. These were intended to boost agricultural production while aligning with the material interests of peasants—a politically more pragmatic approach. According to Edvard Kardelj, the forced collectivization measures of 1949–1953 had already “cut the roots of capitalism in our villages,” making it counterproductive to continue with the same methods, which would only lead to “severe economic defeats.”⁸⁰

In the broader context of abandoning central planning and introducing workers’ self-management and gradual liberalization, the early 1950s marked a shift toward ideological pragmatism in relation to private agriculture. While the ultimate goal of cooperatives remained the socialization of land, greater respect was shown for private ownership. This intention was formalized in the 1957 resolution of the Federal Assembly, which declared that future agricultural policy would proceed without violent intervention in individual land ownership.⁸¹ Acknowledging the economic interests of private peasants was a crucial step toward stabilizing the countryside after years of coercion and expropriation.

By the mid-1950s, Yugoslavia, including Slovenia, began pursuing a more balanced model of economic development. Heavy industry lost its privileged status, and new policies emphasized more equitable growth across all sectors, and greater attention to the living standards of the working population. This shift brought increased investment in both the processing industry and agriculture.⁸² Nevertheless, the core objectives of agricultural policy remained unchanged. Agricultural production was still expected to centre on the social (formerly state-owned) agricultural sector. The restructured cooperative sector was intended to complement it through the concept of socialist cooperation, functioning as a mechanism to integrate farmers into so-called “socialist production relations.” A key feature of this concept was a formal balance between the social and cooperative agricultural sectors, alongside protective measures to uphold socialist relations and prevent the resurgence of capitalist elements.

79 Allcock, *The collectivization*, 19–20.

80 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike*, 14–17.

81 Veselinov, *Sumrak seljaštva*, 50.

82 Prinčič, “Slovensko gospodarstvo,” 170.

Following the abolition of collectivization in 1953, landholding limits were revised. The previous ceiling of 35 hectares of arable land was reduced to 10 hectares per household, leading to further land nationalization and a continuation of agrarian reform. Land above the new limit was nationalized, with compensation based on estimated yields. The total maximum for agricultural land—including arable, non-arable land, and forests—remained at 45 hectares, as established by earlier agrarian reform, though it could be increased under certain conditions according to the 1948 Agrarian Reform and Colonization Act in Slovenia.⁸³

During the period of socialist cooperation, which in practice replaced mandatory procurement with contract-based arrangements, the 1950s witnessed a revival and expansion of general agricultural cooperatives.⁸⁴ By the mid-1950s, 62 percent of all purely agricultural households were cooperative members. On a voluntary basis, new forms of collaboration emerged between peasants and cooperative estates—such as the shared use of agricultural machinery, pastures, forests, and joint efforts to renew vineyards and orchards.⁸⁵ This revival was accompanied by significant institutional changes. The 1954 Regulation on Agricultural Cooperatives required cooperatives to focus exclusively on agricultural activities. At the same time, workers gained the right to participate in cooperative management, and cooperative property was redefined as social property. Non-agricultural activities were restructured into separate cooperative enterprises, crafts, or workshops. The shift to social ownership, understood as property belonging to everyone and no one, meant that these cooperative enterprises became legally and functionally independent from their founding cooperatives. As the system of workers' self-management expanded, agricultural cooperatives increasingly lost their distinct identity and gradually came to resemble social enterprises. This transformation also weakened the role of traditional cooperative bodies, reducing peasants' influence within them in favour of growing worker control.⁸⁶

1960s socialist cooperation and the economic and social integration of peasants into society

Although agricultural policy in the mid-1950s acknowledged the private agricultural sector alongside the social (formerly state) sector and recognized its economic

83 Čepič, “Oris pojavnih oblik,” 187.

84 Čeferin, “Organizacija kmetijstva,” 28.

85 Čeferin, “Organizacija kmetijstva,” 14; *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 25; “Kmetijsko zadružništvo v Sloveniji,” 4.

86 Avsec, “Zadruge,” 111.

potential, by the end of the decade, concern over agriculture's lag behind other economic sectors decisively shifted the focus back to the social sector. The aim was to integrate private farming into the social agricultural sector through various forms of cooperative collaboration, thereby narrowing the developmental gap. From the late 1950s onward, agricultural policy prioritized the formation of large-scale production units capable of organizing efficient production with the aid of modern technology and scientific methods. Cooperatives were expected to expand and evolve into agro-combines.⁸⁷

In the 1960s, the prevailing belief was that social agriculture would fully ensure food security. As a result, cooperatives were reorganized at the beginning of the decade, and investments were increasingly directed toward the social sector. Cooperatives were becoming similar to social (i.e., socially owned) enterprises, with peasants reduced to contractors in cooperative production, holding little real influence over operations. Worker self-management structures became more prominent within cooperatives, further marginalizing peasants. This led to a general decline of interest in agriculture, especially among rural youth, who increasingly sought employment outside the agricultural sector. Cooperatives gradually entered a phase of organizational decline.⁸⁸

In the 1960s, agricultural cooperatives increasingly neglected the needs of their members, aligning instead with the interests of internal work collectives. The dominant focus on developing agro-combines marginalized the potential of private agriculture. As a result, ties between peasants and cooperatives weakened, often reduced to minimal transactional cooperation. Peasants no longer perceived cooperatives as their own organizations, but rather as business partners—or even competitors—whose interests diverged from theirs.⁸⁹

Economic discrimination against peasants further undermined the profitability and productivity of private agriculture. In Slovenia, as elsewhere in Yugoslavia, private farms consistently underperformed relative to the social agricultural sector, largely due to state-imposed price policies and administrative restrictions on investment. From the 1960s onward, the productivity and profitability gap widened significantly, to the long-term detriment of private agriculture.⁹⁰ This period also saw a broader process of de-agrarianization, which gradually resolved the issue of agrarian overpopulation. Large-scale rural-to-urban migration, combined with growing employment in industry and services—and, increasingly from the 1960s,

⁸⁷ Čeferin and Avsec, *Zadružništvo pri nas*, 53–54.

⁸⁸ *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 22–27; Avsec, “Kmetijsko zadružništvo,” 4–5.

⁸⁹ “Andrej Petelin, *Predsednik*,” 9.

⁹⁰ Stipetić and Bojneč, “Proizvodna funkcija,” 79–90; Nishimizu and Page, “Total Factor,” 920–36; Hofler and Payne, “Efficiency,” 153–57.

labour migration to Western Europe—diminished the social and political weight of the peasant population. The ideological ‘class approach’ to rural policy receded, along with fears of a resurgent wealthy peasantry.⁹¹

Amid Yugoslavia’s political liberalization, global opening, and broader socio-economic development, the second half of the 1960s marked a turning point. The rigid ideological stance toward private agriculture was gradually abandoned, and its role in ensuring food security was increasingly acknowledged. At the turn of the 1970s, a new agricultural policy concept emerged, focused on modernizing and integrating private farms. In 1967, restrictions on the purchase of heavy machinery and other production equipment were lifted.⁹² A series of measures followed to support the modernization of private agriculture. In 1969, the legal framework for savings and credit services for agricultural and forestry working organizations was established. By the early 1970s, these services had been expanded to include state support for advisory services in agricultural cooperatives and enterprises, partial interest rate subsidies, and various incentives promoting production and business cooperation among peasants.⁹³

The private (economic) sector began to play a more prominent role in long-term development plans, and small private initiatives in crafts and agriculture gained legitimacy. Peasants were granted the right to participate in the market independently by selling their products directly to end consumers.⁹⁴

This shift brought renewed attention to the issue of land ownership limits. The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution introduced the possibility of leasing agricultural land, allowing individuals to exceed the maximum landholding size—provided the leased land would otherwise remain uncultivated.⁹⁵ Agriculture also benefited from a correction in relative price ratios, which improved the sector’s overall economic position. In tax policy, there was a move away from politically determined progressive tax rates toward a more structured system based on cadastral income, with deductions for material production costs. From 1971 onward, the vast majority of agricultural income tax was assessed according to cadastral income rather than actual earnings.⁹⁶

91 Lazarević, “Uvod,” 14.

92 Lazarević, “Uvod,” 14; Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 184–85, 196–97.

93 Avsec, “Zadruge,” 111.

94 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 196.

95 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 186.

96 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 186.

The Yugoslav (Slovenian) approach to private agriculture

In the initial period from 1945 to 1948, when the first phase of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe was not aimed at Sovietization, Yugoslavia and, with it, its Slovenian part, carried out 'self-Sovietization,' as Stephan Merl called the process. Merl writes synthetically about the dilemmas of Soviet agricultural policy planners and the ways of implementing this policy in socialist countries. In the first phase, the Soviet Union focused on ensuring political power in all Eastern European countries. To legitimize the rule of new governments that unreservedly supported the Soviet model, land redistribution in agriculture and nationalization of heavy industry were carried out. The confiscation of property, to strengthen the legitimacy of the new regime, was mostly directed against collaborators and war criminals. It is important to highlight that, compared to Yugoslavia, the Soviet transfer of reforms to Eastern European countries in the form of land redistribution did not include the 'nationalization' of land. Land redistribution was mainly aimed at increasing the popularity of Soviet authority rather than enforcing a break with tradition.⁹⁷

In Yugoslavia, however, the situation unfolded differently. In the agricultural sector, the new communist government implemented agrarian reform and colonization, which, like in other Soviet-aligned states, involved a form of land redistribution. Through this political strategy, the regime aimed to consolidate its power and secure the support of the peasantry, which constituted the majority of the population. Redistribution was primarily achieved through the confiscation and expropriation of land from large landowners—those deemed to possess excessive holdings. The land thus acquired was transferred into a land fund, from which it was reallocated to land-poor peasants, in line with the principle of providing land to those who tilled it. Simultaneously, portions of this land were transferred into state ownership for the establishment of state agricultural enterprises and into cooperative ownership for the development of the cooperative sector. Most of the confiscated land in Slovenia (63.5 percent) consisted of forests that were retained by the state. Only 6.7 percent of arable land was allocated to land-poor peasants, while 13.4 percent of all confiscated land was distributed to settlers and small peasants. Around 4.5 percent of farms—those exceeding 35 hectares—were affected by the reform, which established a land ceiling of 45 hectares (or 35 hectares of arable land). The reform reduced the number of large estates and increased the prevalence of smaller farms, contributing to further fragmentation of landholdings.⁹⁸

Through land redistribution, the communist authorities formally upheld private property while simultaneously nationalizing most confiscated land and promoting

97 Merl, "Sovietization."

98 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja*, 100.

collectivization as the highest form of collective agriculture. By early 1949, prior to the large-scale collectivization campaign, about 3 percent of peasants in Yugoslavia were already integrated into agricultural labour cooperatives.⁹⁹

Collectivization in Yugoslavia began in 1945–1946, alongside similar efforts in Bulgaria and Albania. Unlike in other Eastern European countries, where Stalin initially forbade direct Sovietization or even public discussion of collectivization, Yugoslavia pursued a more autonomous path. Tito's growing independence culminated in the 1948 break with Moscow. Through agrarian reform, the Yugoslav communist regime satisfied two key ideological goals: implementing the principle that land should belong to those who cultivated it and politically consolidating power by targeting collaborators and war criminals. At the same time, the regime aimed to eliminate 'capitalist' exploitation in the countryside.¹⁰⁰

Yugoslavia's tactic of nationalizing most of the economy, implementing a soft phase of collectivization, and developing a general type of socialist cooperativism with the predominance of general agricultural cooperatives differed from most European socialist countries at this stage. Yugoslavia was rushing to break away from capitalism and tradition by establishing socialism. Meanwhile, the new regimes of most European communist countries maintained existing economic systems, which were similar to centrally planned economies.¹⁰¹

The Sovietization of most Eastern European countries under Soviet influence began in 1948–1949 in response to the Western invitation to participate in the Marshall Plan. Thereafter, all Soviet-aligned countries adopted centrally planned economies and emulated the Soviet model of forced industrialization via five-year plans—despite lacking the economic foundations for such a system. Between 1948–1949 and Stalin's death in 1953, this phase was marked by a rigid and dogmatic transfer of the supposed Soviet model of development.¹⁰²

Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, and Hungary adopted a modified version of the Soviet kolkhoz model, combining state agricultural enterprises with cooperative structures.¹⁰³ Despite Stalin's death in 1953, all European communist states—with the exception of Yugoslavia—remained formally committed to collectivization. In Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, collective agriculture based on the Soviet model was fully implemented.¹⁰⁴ Private farming, however, con-

99 Veselinov, *Sumrak seljaštva*, 37.

100 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva*, 147.

101 Merl, "Sovietization."

102 Merl, "Sovietization."

103 Lazarević, "Uvod," 20.

104 Merl, "Sovietization."

tinued to dominate in Poland and Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁵ Although Poland did not officially abandon collectivization, it never completed the process, largely due to the opposition of leading political figure Władysław Gomułka, who rejected collectivization as a strategic goal.¹⁰⁶

Although the socialist countries listed did not abandon collectivization, they allowed peasants to have a small piece of land. Homesteads were important in all socialist countries. In the context of the Yugoslav and, with it, the Slovenian model of approaching private agriculture, the Hungarian version of agricultural policy also stood out with reforms from the late 1960s. Despite the constraint of cultivation on a small area of 0.7 hectare, it first enabled self-sufficiency for a large part of the population and, through the market, the sale of produce to the non-agricultural population and the cooperative or state sector. By alleviating the burden through small-scale private farming, the state and cooperative agricultural sectors could also export surplus production to foreign markets.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

Among the group of socialist countries, the Yugoslav and, with it, the Slovenian communist agricultural experience was different. Even though other socialist countries also allowed private farming in the form of small plots of land, known as homesteads, Yugoslavia was the only one that deviated from collectivization. In the second half of the 1960s, Yugoslavia and Slovenia, in the context of economic and social liberalization and recognizing the importance of private farming for food security, moved away from an agricultural policy that had gradually suffocated peasants and private agricultural production through economic, political, and social discrimination. They began to revive and invest in the development of private agriculture, allowing small private initiatives with the sale of surplus produce to end consumers.

However, the concept of a more peasant-friendly agricultural policy was only introduced when the rural population represented only a fifth of the total population. Despite its pragmatism, the Yugoslav model of agricultural policy remained captive to ideological prejudices. Only in the transitional period at the end of the 1980s did the agrarian maximum increase. Still, even then, with 30 hectares of arable land, except in mountainous and hilly areas where this limit was not imposed, it remained within the boundaries that prevented the expansion of capitalist relations.

105 Lazarević, "Uvod," 20.

106 Swain and Varga, "Introduction," 314.

107 Lazarević, "Uvod," 21.

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Private Peasants and Socialist Authorities

Successful Grassroots Initiative in Slovenia in the 1960s

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Abstract. This article presents the successful grassroots initiative of Slovenian peasants in Juršinci in socialist Slovenia in the 1960s and sheds light on the broader economic and political background. In Slovenia in the 1960s, the rise of a younger, more liberal faction within the Communist Party led to political and economic liberalization. The agricultural cooperatives, which were supposed to attract private peasants to voluntarily collaborate in the social sector by providing services such as mechanization, seed supply, chemical agents, and expertise, failed in this respect and increasingly alienated the peasants. This led to a decline in peasant membership in the cooperatives. Under these circumstances, peasants began to organize themselves, form their own communities, and make their demands to the authorities, which the liberal government finally met in the early 1970s.

Keywords: peasant grassroots initiatives, socialist agriculture, cooperatives, Slovenia, liberalism, 1960s

Introduction

Few studies in international scholarship have focused on successful bottom-up peasant initiatives in state-socialist European countries after World War II. However, cases in which peasants were successful in stretching the limits of the system and the system tolerated or even incorporated their ideas into its agricultural policies, did exist. Stephan Merl argues in his article “Sovietization in the Economy and Agriculture” that the only reason European socialist command economies survived for four decades was their correction mechanisms, namely the corrupt practices that enabled people to survive.¹ Peasants were also engaged in the efforts to circumvent or bypass the rigidity of the system. In certain cases, their practices, which were on the verge of legality or completely illegal (but not in the sense of corruption), were eventually legalized. Perhaps this was due to the fact that, as Merl points out, Soviet-style collective agriculture was not transferred to the countries of Eastern Europe in

1 Merl, “Sovietization in the Economy and Agriculture,” 1.

the way the command economy was. He stresses that the economic culture in those countries lacked the prerequisites for the adoption of this model. Peasants perceived land as private property, and those with small or medium-sized farms were expected to resist joining collective farms. The way kolkhozes functioned (unpaid forced labour) was therefore never transferred, and the form of collective agriculture was adapted to each country's economic and cultural conditions.² In their search for the right model, governments had to repeatedly correct agricultural policy, adapting it to the emerging shortcomings, and above all, had to skilfully navigate between ideological imperatives and the need for productivity and food security. In such conditions, decision-makers were sometimes willing to accept practices developed by peasants or cooperatives, even if they were semi-legal, illegal, or ideologically problematic, but proved productive.

Zsuzsanna Varga analyses the practices of Hungarian cooperatives, which differed from the officially prescribed model of a cooperative in the way peasants received their remuneration. She stresses that the authorities tolerated some local practices, even those that had previously been perceived as feudal relics, because they boosted the peasants' motivation and resulted in improved production. Many of those practices were finally legalized.³ In her study on the Árpád Cooperative in Szentes, she presents the case of a cooperative with an "outwardly socialist but inwardly (in terms of several of its elements) individual horticulture system," that was tolerated by the authorities.⁴ She shows that, in Hungary, such practices were supported by changes in agricultural policy in the mid-1960s. Similar phenomena were noticeable in socialist Slovenia. The political and economic liberalization in Slovenia during the 1960s led, in the early 1970s, to the legalization of several peasant ideas, demands, and established farming practices that had previously been politically unacceptable. This article will present an example of a successful bottom-up peasants' initiative. It started as a bold move, inconsistent with the ideological framework of the time, but was supported by the authorities and legalized a few years later. This story will be placed in a wider political-economic context that explains the success of the initiative.

The central argument of this article is that the relative openness and ideological flexibility of the Slovenian socialist authorities in the 1960s, combined with grassroots organizing by peasants in response to the systemic lack of support for the modernization of private agriculture, created conditions under which bottom-up initiatives could meaningfully influence agricultural policy. While access to mechanization was one of the key motivations, self-organization also drew on

2 Merl, "Sovietization in the Economy and Agriculture," 1–15.

3 Varga, "Agricultural Economics"; Varga, "Three waves of collectivization"; Varga, "The twentieth century rural development."

4 Varga, "Practices of Creative Disobedience," 450.

the long-standing tradition of cooperative practices and local solidarity in rural Slovenia. Paradoxically, although the socialist authorities emphasized values such as solidarity and collective benefit, it was precisely the cooperative structures that peasants perceived as obstructive rather than supportive in this regard. Their initiatives thus emerged not only from a practical need but also from a sense that real cooperation and progress could be achieved more effectively through autonomous community-based efforts. The peasant initiative presented here as a case study was one of the earliest and most significant examples of such bottom-up mobilization and, at the same time, part of a broader phenomenon that gradually reshaped the boundaries of socialist agricultural policy in Slovenia. The contribution is based on primary sources, including the archival collection of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia⁵ and the archives of the Cooperative Union of Slovenia; printed sources, such as Edvard Kardelj's book *The Problems of Socialist Policy in the Countryside*, which laid the foundations of Yugoslav agricultural policy following the abandonment of forced collectivization; the relevant literature; and a conversation with Simon Toplak, a peasant who played a key role in the successful bottom-up peasant initiative presented in the article.

Enterprising peasants in Juršinci

Juršinci is a municipality located in the hilly region of Slovenske Gorice in north-eastern Slovenia. It is still among the least developed areas in the country, with a predominantly agrarian population and high unemployment rates. Residents have been involved in viticulture, fruit growing, livestock farming, arable farming, and rootstock grafting. Given the area's topography, there are no large agricultural complexes; instead, smaller fragmented plots prevail. In 1905, the first rootstock grafting cooperative in Austria-Hungary, known as the Juršinci Grafting Cooperative, was established there. At that time, vineyards in Slovenia were plagued by phylloxera, and grafting local grape varieties onto American rootstocks resistant to this pest proved to be an effective solution. The cooperative connected the grafters in the area and operated continuously until 1941. During World War II, its activities ceased, but its members managed to maintain the production of grafted vines.⁶ Immediately after the war, they established a grafting section within the newly formed Fruit and

5 The Socialist Alliance of Working People (*Socialistična zveza delovnega ljudstva*) was the largest socio-political organization in socialist Yugoslavia, formally separate from the Communist Party and designed as a broad platform to facilitate the participation of various social groups. Each Yugoslav republic had its own republican-level branch of the Socialist Alliance responsible for addressing local and republic-specific issues.

6 Toplak and Toplak, "Sedanje vodenje zadrug," 146; Personal archive of Simon Toplak.

Grafting Cooperative in Juršinci, which had twenty-two members at the time. This section operated with considerable autonomy until 1960, when, as part of the merger of cooperatives and the establishment of large agro-combines, the Juršinci cooperative joined the Jože Lacko Agricultural Cooperative in Ptuj. At that time, the section was dissolved, and the cooperative abandoned this activity, uprooting about 10 hectares of mother vineyards in Juršinci. In the following years, some grafters retained their work to a limited extent as cooperators (contractual partners) with various agricultural cooperatives and combines in Ptuj, Radgona, Ljutomer, and Ormož.⁷

Although the planting material act stipulated that only the social sector⁸ of agriculture could produce seeds and seedlings, and not private peasants, grape growers considered how they could operate as a community under the given circumstances, rather than just as individual cooperators. Simon Toplak recalls how, in 1966, at the initiative of his father, Ivan Janez Toplak, who had been an important contributor to the pre-war grafting cooperative, former members of the grafting section gathered:

“We came together to reunite and work collaboratively—so that Juršinci would be recognized and we wouldn’t just be cooperators everywhere.”⁹

The peasants of Juršinci wanted to operate collectively, following the principles of pre-war cooperatives, rather than merely acting as isolated contractual contributors to large-scale cooperatives and combines, which had distanced themselves from the peasants. They rejected the atomization imposed by these institutions and, instead, sought to restore small-scale, community-driven cooperation, where peasants could actively participate in decision-making, rather than being reduced to individual contractors subjected to the centralized policies of the cooperatives and combines. In the interview, Simon Toplak emphasizes that there was a strong desire for solidarity, education, and progress. Although they were formally not allowed to establish a community or organize as private producers the production of grafted vines outside the social sector, the director of the Jože Lacko Agricultural Cooperative in Ptuj, Milan Koren, enabled them to organize as a grafting section within the aforementioned cooperative. Simon Toplak became the president of the section, which consisted of fourteen members. Formally, they placed themselves within the system, but due to the cooperative’s understanding, they had considerable autonomy. Most importantly, they did not perceive themselves as individual cooperators within the grape growers’ section, but more as a community that made independent decisions

7 Toplak and Toplak, “Sedanje vodenje zadrug,” 146; Personal archive of Simon Toplak.

8 The social sector in Yugoslavia referred to enterprises and cooperatives under ‘social ownership,’ a form of collective ownership in which the means of production were neither privately owned nor directly state-owned, but rather held collectively by society and managed by workers through a system of self-management.

9 Interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

about their shared work (within the boundaries of the system). In 1966, the section grafted 150,000 grape seedlings, and from that year on, both the number of members and the production of grafted vines increased year by year. In 1970, they grafted 250,000, the following year 350,000, and by 1972, the number had gone up to 600,000. They later received numerous awards for their work.¹⁰

But this was not all. In 1964, Simon Toplak, with seven other peasants from Juršinci, signed an agricultural cooperation agreement. Based on pre-war civil law, the contract skilfully used a loophole in the legislation. It was concluded between private individuals on common agricultural cooperation, although Slovenian legislation allowed the cooperation of private peasants only through cooperatives that were part of the social sector.¹¹ The basis of this contract, the General Civil Code, was adopted by an imperial patent on 1 June 1811. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia declared legal succession after World War I, retaining the previously applicable legislation. After World War II, Yugoslavia repealed all legal regulations issued before 6 April 1941. However, legal provisions from regulations issued prior to that date could still be applied to relationships not governed by current regulations, provided they did not conflict with the new constitutional framework.¹²

The peasants then notarized this agreement to give it more validity and sent it to some of the most prominent politicians and decision-makers. They made sure to use appropriate language, stating in the contract that they were pooling labour and resources, which was the terminology of the Yugoslav self-management system at the time. Simon Toplak remembers:

“Until 1964, a peasant was not allowed to get a tractor because it represented a threat to socialism. Therefore, any tractor from the agricultural cooperative or the socialist economy had to go to the scrapyard to be destroyed in front of the eyes of the commission so that the peasant could not get his hands on it. But we [...], eight peasants, signed a contract, saying that we were pooling our labour and resources. [...] We sent this agreement, signed and notarized, to the Central Committee in Ljubljana and for information to Popit, Kraigher, and Marinc¹³, and to Simonič, the Minister of Agriculture.”¹⁴

10 Personal archive of Simon Toplak, interview with Simon Toplak, 2 November 2022, interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

11 Personal archive of Simon Toplak, interview with Simon Toplak, 2 November 2022, interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

12 Obči državljanski zakonik.

13 France Popit, Boris Kraigher and Andrej Marinc were among the most prominent Slovenian politicians, who, during socialist Yugoslavia, held various important positions in both Slovenian and Yugoslav politics at various times.

14 Interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

The unexpected part came when:

“The savings and credit department of the cooperative [...] in Ptuj was instructed to grant a low-interest loan to this farming community for the purchase of a new tractor. So, we got a new Ferguson tractor, small, thirty-three horsepower, trailer, plough, harrows, scythe, sprayer. The whole kit. [...] I was the president of this farming community, and I was also the tractor driver. [...] We worked the entire parish with that tractor—mowing, ploughing, and so on. We worked day and night. One person worked from midnight to noon, the other from noon to midnight. I had one hour for a snack and for changing oil.”¹⁵

The next step was lobbying—they asked Dr. Emil Čeferin, who was preparing the new cooperative law in the early 1970s, to include the peasants’ community in the law as the lowest form of peasant cooperation.¹⁶ In June 1972, the new Slovenian Act on the Association of Peasants entered into force. It was the first agricultural law in Yugoslavia independently adopted by a republic after Yugoslavia had started decentralization and delegated more jurisdiction to the republics at the beginning of the 1970s. This act legalized the peasants’ community as their lowest form of association. Peasants’ communities, according to this law, were not legal entities. Peasants contributed their resources to the community based on a contract for the joint production, processing, or marketing of their products; for the acquisition of agricultural machinery or reproductive materials for their own needs; for the shared use of agricultural machinery or facilities; or for collaboration with other enterprises. Peasants were co-owners of these resources, and income was shared according to the contributions made or resources invested.¹⁷ The law also explicitly stated:

“A farming community is established on the basis of the rules of civil law by means of a contract by which two or more peasants permanently pool their labour or their resources for the common benefit.”¹⁸

The legislator legalized the form of peasants’ association as proposed/selected by the peasants themselves. On this legal basis, the vine grafting section within the cooperative was transformed into the Community of Grafters and Tree Nurserymen of Juršinci in 1973 (in 1992, it was re-established as the Grafters’ Cooperative of Juršinci).¹⁹ This was a clearly bottom-up idea transfer. But in order to understand why and how this happened, the wider background and context must be explained.

15 Interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

16 Interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

17 Archive of Cooperative Union of Slovenia, Kmečke skupnosti in posebne organizacije združenega dela po zakonu o združevanju kmetov, 1–2.

18 Zakon o združevanju kmetov, 659.

19 Personal archive of Simon Toplak, interview with Simon Toplak, 25 August 2023.

Peasant cooperation—the Yugoslav way

Coerced collectivization in Yugoslavia started in 1949 after the Tito–Stalin dispute in 1948, in which Yugoslavia was accused of not following the right path. The collectivization, which had been frozen in 1951 and finally abandoned in 1953, was a complete failure. In June 1951, there were only 381 so-called peasant working cooperatives (where peasants had to invest all their productive means except a small house plot, a small inventory, and some livestock) in Slovenia. Only 10.7 percent of arable land or 2.6 percent of all agricultural land, and just 5 percent of the peasant population in Slovenia were included. Economically, these cooperatives had very low productivity. The authorities soon realized that collectivization was not working and that it would be difficult to achieve higher productivity in this way. The only realistic alternative would have been to increase coercion, which would almost certainly trigger a revolt among the peasants. As a result, they decided to abandon collectivization. After its abandonment, peasants could leave the peasant working cooperatives with no repercussions and reclaim their land.²⁰

After this failed attempt, it was necessary to appease the peasants and gain their trust. As a solution, the authorities offered them so-called ‘cooperation’: peasants retained property rights over their land but participated in production through the cooperative. Cooperation had been introduced into agriculture since the abandonment of collectivization, but this new path was formally confirmed by the resolution of the Federal People’s Assembly in 1957, which stipulated that agricultural policy would henceforth be implemented without violent interference with individual land ownership. The peasants’ right to pursue their own economic interests was recognized, and so was the economic potential of private agriculture. The need for large-scale investment in agriculture was no longer questioned. In Slovenia, for example, the value of investments in agriculture increased nearly 8,000-fold in the decade between 1952 and 1962.²¹

The creator of this policy was the Slovenian politician Edvard Kardelj, who set the path for the further development of agricultural policy in Yugoslavia in a series of talks, lectures, and a book entitled *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi* (The Problems of Socialist Policy in the Countryside). The core idea was to gradually draw peasants into the social sector by considering their economic interests and using as little coercion as possible. Thereby, the authorities wanted to ensure improved production and higher labour productivity while maintaining political stability in the countryside. Kardelj argued that the peasants’ political support for socialism was closely related to their material and social position. As these goals

20 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva v Sloveniji*, 172–78.

21 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja, male študije kmečkega sveta*.

could only be achieved by raising agricultural productivity, they could expect the peasants' support and their own initiative only in those forms of socialist economic relations that would lead to greater productivity and material results. The peasants should be able to take their own decisions according to their individual interests, as long as they were consistent with the common social objectives. The socialist community would 'help them' in decision-making, but without forcefully changing property relations or creating or artificially maintaining economic relations that did not have enough economic power to sustain themselves.²²

The leading force for gradually drawing peasants into the social sector would then be their own interest. This was in accordance with the concept of the Soviet agrarian economist, Alexander Vasilyevich Chayanov, who assumed that 'working peasants' would voluntarily join cooperatives because they would understand that only in this way could they intensify production and increase their standard of living. With modernization, the efficiency of peasant production would increase, while through cooperatives the authorities would control agricultural accumulation.²³ But the final goal remained unchanged:

"The purpose of our socialist policy in the countryside is singular and unchanging: the reconstruction of agriculture through the establishment of large socialist production units capable of organizing the social labour process on the basis of modern technology and scientific knowledge, while gradually socializing the land."²⁴

The Slovenian economic and agrarian historian Žarko Lazarević captured the essence of the new approach when he argued that "these changes were more in the attitude towards the peasants than in the agricultural policy itself."²⁵

In contrast to the immediate socialization of the land, Kardelj emphasized the socialization of the labour process and other labour resources. All other working resources that were seen as important for highly productive modern agricultural production, such as mechanization, chemical fertilizers, high-quality seeds, and expertise, would be offered to private peasants through cooperatives. The social sector would also set an example to private peasants in modernization and raising productivity, thus motivating peasants to join. The main means of collaboration between peasants and the social sector was the so-called 'cooperation.' Cooperation was "any form of production cooperation of socialist economic organizations—agricultural estates, peasant working cooperatives, general agricultural cooperatives and their

22 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi*, 7–8.

23 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva v Sloveniji*.

24 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi*, 7.

25 Lazarević, *Delo in zemlja, male študije kmečkega sveta*.

economies, and in certain cases even industrial and trade organizations—with individual peasant farms.”²⁶ The social sector would provide the most important means of production (except land) and accumulate the means of extended reproduction. In this transitional period of socialism, private landownership would be tolerated, but the production process would be gradually more socialized. The basic method of income distribution should be division according to work invested (socialist principle) and not according to land ownership. A gradual shift should occur away from the notion that land is the main means of production towards the idea that land is only one condition for agricultural production.²⁷

In practice, cooperation could take many different forms, as it was the outcome of an individual agreement between a private peasant and a legal form of social agriculture (most often a cooperative). It could take the form of the most basic cooperation, in which a peasant committed to delivering a certain amount of crops, and in return, the cooperative offered certain services (seeds, fertilizers, professional help, etc., depending on the agreement) as credit for those crops. Even more basic was cooperation when the cooperative charged peasants for these services or paid for their crops. Cooperation could also take a so-called ‘higher form.’ In this case, the peasant and the cooperative agreed on joint production and income sharing (how and what again depended on each individual agreement). For example, the cooperative would help the peasant with its machinery and/or take care of mechanical fertilization or spraying against pests; in return, the peasant would contribute his own work and use his tools; and finally they would share the income. The land was incorporated in the calculations as rent. A special form of cooperation was possible in the field of animal husbandry. The cooperative would buy the animals and their feed and take care of insurance, while the peasant would breed the animals to a certain weight. They would then share the net income.²⁸ Peasants were free to dispose of the remaining produce for which there was no cooperation agreement, selling it outside the cooperative.

Cooperatives were also expected to abandon non-agricultural activities and focus all their energies on agricultural production. Their management and internal structure were expected to become more similar to that of a company. Kardelj envisaged a director or manager at the head of the cooperative with responsibilities and methods of appointment similar to those in companies. Management rights (voting rights in the cooperative’s bodies) of cooperative workers and peasants-members

26 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi*, 125.

27 AS 537, Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, Referati in razprave 8. plenarne seje GO o kmetijskem zadružništvu, 8.

28 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi*, 213–18.

of the cooperative were to be equalized.²⁹ At the same time, in order to prevent the “reproduction of capitalist relations,” the maximum ownership of arable land was reduced from 35 hectares to 10 hectares in 1953, when collectivization was abolished.³⁰ Initially, the new regime showed promising results. Agricultural cooperatives were revived and peasants were ready to join them. By the end of 1957, 94,000 individual private farmsteads were members of cooperatives, constituting the majority of private farms.³¹

Growing alienation between cooperatives and their members

In line with Kardelj’s vision, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, cooperatives increasingly began to resemble enterprises in terms of their internal organization. The influence of workers employed in cooperatives was growing, while peasants were gradually losing their say in management. There were several factors behind these changes. One of them was the agenda that, eventually, agriculture would become an industrial branch and peasants would become workers. Another factor was the desire for the political consolidation of cooperatives. As Franc Simonič noted in the debate on cooperatives in the Socialist Union of the Working People of Slovenia in 1958:

“It is crucial that we strengthen the staff in the cooperatives. [...] The search for personnel has shown that we will not get suitable personnel for the cooperatives, although we would need several hundred for the entire area of Slovenia. We have seen that the main solution is to find politically mature, honest people, who will then be trained at shorter or longer annual seminars, mainly in the winter.”³²

The quote shows that political affiliation and integrity were more important than expertise. Edvard Kardelj’s words from the same year testify to the fact that at the end of the 1950s the authorities still feared the peasant’s power. Kardelj emphasized that “the position of the peasant in the cooperative is very strong, so strong that the peasant gradually extorts.” He added that “the peasant is interested in cooperation because he knows that he will get more resources through it. At the same time, he is also interested in ensuring that he, rather than the society, gets the lion’s share in the

29 Kardelj, *Problemi socialistične politike na vasi*, 198.

30 Čepič, “Oris pojavnih oblik kmetijske politike v letih 1945–1960,” 32.

31 AS 537, Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, Referati in razprave 8. plenarne seje GO o kmetijskem zadružništvu, 3.

32 AS 537, Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, Referati in razprave 8. plenarne seje GO o kmetijskem zadružništvu.

cooperation. That is why it is necessary for the society to establish some obstacles, some administrative means that will strengthen the position of our cooperatives in contracts with individual peasants.”³³

The internal reorganization of cooperatives started with the 1954 regulation on agricultural cooperatives, which stipulated that any worker or employee permanently employed by a cooperative could become a cooperative member. Admission to the cooperative could not be denied.³⁴ This granted cooperative employees the right to participate in decision-making and hold positions within cooperative bodies —something that had been impossible before. By the early 1960s, the general assembly—once the main governing body of the cooperative—was left with only minimal authority. It could review the cooperative’s work and make recommendations to the cooperative council, but the council was not obliged to implement these recommendations.³⁵ In 1965, the Basic Law on Agricultural Cooperatives was passed, marking the peak of the cooperative’s alignment with socialist enterprises. Employees now held absolute dominance in decision-making bodies. The key entity was the ‘working community’ composed of both employees and cooperative members. By 1968, of the 1,449 total members of cooperative councils, only 432 were actual cooperative members, and of the 432 members of administrative boards, just 144 were cooperative members.³⁶

After 1959, cooperatives gradually merged and consolidated into larger complexes or ‘kombinat’ systems, shifting their focus toward collective production. This led to an even greater loss of contact with their membership. Processing units within the cooperatives became independent social enterprises, and the cooperatives were required to abandon their forestry operations. Cooperatives grew into large organizations, increasingly focused on their own production. Simple forms of cooperation predominated, and cooperatives were unable to provide machinery under conditions favourable to peasants. Although the private sector still provided a significant share of food production, the prevailing belief was that the social sector would soon meet all food needs. This resulted in the neglect of the private agricultural sector, which in turn widened the productivity gap between the private and social sectors. This situation contributed to a gradual decline in interest in agriculture in rural areas and accelerated the migration of young people away from the countryside. Due to the subordinate position of peasants and frequent breaches of cooperation

33 AS 537, Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, Referati in razprave 8. plenarne seje GO o kmetijskem zadružništvu, 13.

34 Archive of the Cooperative Union of Slovenia, Pregled predpisov in razvoja kmetijskega zadružništva v Sloveniji od 1945 do 1989, 37–38.

35 Čeferin and Avsec, *Zadružništvo pri nas in v nekaterih evropskih državah*, 53.

36 Avsec, *Zadružništvo pri nas in v nekaterih evropskih državah*, 56–57.

agreements, trust in the cooperatives diminished. The number of cooperatives and their membership sharply declined from 695, with 126,000 members and 70 percent of farm households involved in 1956 to only seventy-eight cooperatives with 48,000 members in 1965. By 1968, their number had further dropped to just sixty-two, with a significant decrease in membership as well.³⁷ While the decline in the number of cooperatives was primarily due to mergers and consolidation, the falling membership pointed to increasing alienation between peasants and cooperatives, and a growing loss of trust in the latter.

In 1962, teams from the Central Committee of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia visited selected agricultural cooperatives and prepared an extensive survey. They reported that the majority of cooperatives had only small cooperative estates, where modern production was not possible, and noted the poor progress in land acquisition.³⁸ They reported significant financial shortfalls in the machinery sector due to unprofitable practices in providing services to peasants in some cooperatives, due to poorly developed cooperation with private peasants, as well as instances of selling tractors to private peasants because they proved unprofitable within the cooperatives. The cooperatives practiced almost exclusively the simplest forms of cooperation with peasants (purchase, sale of reproductive material, and machinery services), and only in rare cases was there joint production with profit-sharing. There were slightly more advanced forms of cooperation in the breeding of calves and pigs. The increase in agricultural product prices did not favour cooperation either, as peasants who sold their products under contract with the cooperative received lower prices than those who sold them freely. As a result, peasants often sold their products directly to consumers, through private intermediaries, or to companies authorized to purchase products directly. The report highlights:

“In the agricultural cooperative in Lendava, it was calculated that intermediaries sold over 100 million dinars worth of livestock from their area at fairs in Čakovec, while more than 150 wagons of potatoes were sold to other buyers rather than through the Agricultural Cooperative in Trebnje, etc.”³⁹

37 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina zadružništva v Sloveniji*, 184.

38 Cooperatives were expected not only to collaborate with private peasants but also to develop and expand their own socially owned estates. These were intended to serve as models of modern, mechanized production and gradually absorb more land—either through voluntary sale or in accordance with the long-term expectation that private ownership would progressively lose its significance as over time, socially owned agriculture was to be perceived as a more rational and collectively beneficial mode of production.

39 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631.6, GO-SZDL: Informacija o nekaterih problemih KZ, Informacija o zadružništvu (Lj., november 1962).

In some cases, peasants simply did not adhere to their contracts and, despite the agreements, sold their surplus outside the cooperative.

“For instance, in Koper, 1,300 cooperative peasants sold their contracted surpluses on the market, leaving the cooperative powerless, as it was impossible to legally compel those 1,300 to fulfil their obligations.”⁴⁰

The report acknowledges that “cooperation typically does not yield satisfactory results.” It also observed that “the cooperative staff tend to view the issue of cooperation as merely a social obligation.”⁴¹ Regarding the development of self-management, it is reported that workers in many cooperatives still had insufficient influence and that, in some cooperative councils, a “private small-ownership mentality” was prevalent. However, it is noted that “almost all cooperatives now have independent basic organizations of the Communist League,” indicating some improvement in this regard. At the same time, it was also observed that the cooperative leadership did not sufficiently engage members in the active operation of the cooperative, that general assemblies had lost their significance, and that the cooperatives had grown so large that holding assemblies was practically impossible.⁴² At the end of 1961, due to mergers, there were only 146 cooperatives. Within the cooperatives’ activities, their own production accounted for 5.3 percent, higher forms of cooperation contributed a mere 4.2 percent, and machine services 4.5 percent. The largest share—nearly 64 percent—was accounted for by the purchase of agricultural products; a little over 22 percent constituted other activities. The cooperatives faced significant losses concerning their agricultural land and machinery. Thus, as is evident from this data, adjusting the prices paid to peasants for their produce was the most viable means available to cooperatives for addressing their losses. The challenges in mechanization arose from the poor quality of domestic machinery and unused tractor attachments, as peasants were mainly interested in ploughing and preferred to handle other tasks themselves. Furthermore, the cooperatives faced regular delays in obtaining spare parts for broken machines, which frequently remained idle while waiting for replacements. Additional difficulties included the necessity to charge too little for machine services to keep prices acceptable for peasants, along with the fragmentation of

40 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnsega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631.6, GO-SZDL: Informacija o nekaterih problemih KZ, Informacija o zadružništvu (Lj., november 1962).

41 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnsega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631.6, GO-SZDL: Informacija o nekaterih problemih KZ, Informacija o zadružništvu (Lj., november 1962).

42 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnsega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631.6, GO-SZDL: Informacija o nekaterih problemih KZ, Informacija o zadružništvu (Lj., november 1962).

small agricultural parcels, resulting in difficulties in tractor farming on these plots. Regarding cooperation, peasants entered contracts for very small areas, averaging between 0.45 and 1.86 hectares, according to a survey conducted in ten cooperatives.⁴³

Another study conducted in 1963 on agriculture in the municipalities of Domžale and Črnomelj also had some interesting findings. Domžale was industrially well-developed, while Črnomelj was among the least industrially developed municipalities. In both municipalities, there was a significant percentage of so-called mixed households—in 58 percent of the surveyed farming households, one or two members were employed outside agriculture, even in villages that were relatively far from municipal centres. The research indicated a decline in the number of individuals in households after 1948, particularly after 1955, with young people leaving the farms. The agricultural workforce decreased from an average of 2.1 in 1955 to merely 1.5 individuals.⁴⁴

Machinery was a special issue. Although agricultural mechanization was one of the pillars of agricultural policy aimed at linking private peasants to the social sector, and private ownership of machinery was explicitly prohibited, over time an increasing number of tractors and other equipment gradually found their way into private hands. Mostly the cooperatives sold their old, retired cooperative tractors to private peasants. This issue was addressed in 1962 in a general meeting of the Central Cooperative Union of Slovenia by the Slovenian Prime Minister Viktor Avbelj. He stated:

“Many comrades are not consistent in their actions, even though they understand the situation. In order to make farming more efficient and to earn some money, they are willing to sell machinery to private individuals.”⁴⁵

As an example, he mentioned the sale of tractors and chainsaws:

“Groups of peasants are gathering around such machinery and believe that the cooperative is no longer necessary for them. However, we should remember that a socialist society will not allow means of production to remain in private hands.”⁴⁶

⁴³ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnsega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631.6, GO-SZDL: Informacija o nekaterih problemih KZ, Informacija o zadružništvu (Lj., november 1962).

⁴⁴ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnsega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, Materialna gibanja v kmetijstvu v občini Domžale in Črnomelj.

⁴⁵ “Posestva in zadruge – za vse je dovolj dela pri preobrazbi vasi,” 2.

⁴⁶ “Posestva in zadruge – za vse je dovolj dela pri preobrazbi vasi,” 2.

The problem was even more severe near the border with Italy. Already in 1956, Tine Remškar reported at the Republic Conference of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia that in the Vipava district in the west of Slovenia, there was an “accumulation of funds among peasants, which we are unable to accumulate through various measures—with the services of our cooperatives, etc.—and we are unable to achieve this even through taxes, although this year’s tax levies reached the maximum imposed.” He reported that peasants were buying various agricultural machines from Italy, as well as copper sulphate, which was used as a herbicide, fungicide, and pesticide, and was cheaper in Italy.⁴⁷

Peasant communities

In such circumstances, during the second half of the 1960s, peasants began to self-organize in various ways. They started forming different communities, including production and machinery communities, and mutual insurance groups. These often took the form of societies to comply with legal regulations, although they did not align with the ideological framework. Additionally, agricultural and livestock societies for mutual assistance began to emerge.⁴⁸ In the sources reviewed, surprisingly little attention is given to this phenomenon. Only scattered fragments in written sources reflect that, indeed, this happened. For instance, a report titled Peasant Communities and Special Organizations of Collective Work According to the Act on the Association of Peasants, preserved in the archives of the Cooperative Union of Slovenia, states:

“Numerous machinery communities had already been established by peasants even before their formation and organization were legally regulated. The economic necessity for more rational utilization, due to the distinctly seasonal use of agricultural machinery, along with the possibility of acquiring larger farming equipment, has compelled peasants to unite.”⁴⁹

The extent of this (self-)organization among peasants is reflected in another expert opinion from 1972 or the first half of 1973, stored in the archives of the Cooperative Union. Its author writes:

“Interestingly, according to the Cooperative Union’s data, we already have over 230 machinery communities (with 130 more planned); production

⁴⁷ AS 537, Republiška konferenca Socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, Referati in razprave 8. plenarne seje GO o kmetijskem zadružništvu.

⁴⁸ Interview with Simon Toplak.

⁴⁹ Archives of Cooperative Union of Slovenia, Kmečke skupnosti in posebne organizacije združenega dela po zakonu o združevanju kmetov, 2.

communities are being formed for the renewal of vineyards, orchards, and hop fields; the establishment of a grazing community is underway; peasants are demanding and preparing for the establishment of a shared barn in the form of a special farm community; peasants have already established dairy communities for equipping milk collection centres and for other tasks related to dairy and livestock farming. In short, driven by economic necessity and with the support of society and agricultural organizations, peasants are spontaneously connecting in various forms of mutual cooperation and collaboration with working organizations.”

Since the document was created after the law had been passed legalizing these communities, it is unclear how many of the mentioned 230 machinery communities and other communities were established before the law. However, most probably the majority were, as the document was written shortly after its adoption. Additionally, a few lines later, the author notes that “these communities must also comply with the law by 8 June 1973” (which was the legally mandated deadline for the existing communities to adjust to the provisions of the law).⁵⁰

In response to this self-organization of peasants and the general situation in agriculture, Slovenian authorities began addressing issues in the private agricultural sector in the second half of the 1960s. In 1968, a serious in-depth discussion on the state of the private agricultural sector emerged within the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia. Private peasants participated in this discussion, sharing their ideas and voicing their demands. For the first time since World War II, the private peasant became a political actor, with a real possibility of influencing agricultural policy. The conclusions of the discussions were subsequently addressed at the highest levels of the Slovenian government and parliament. In 1972, many of the private peasants’ demands were formally recognized in the Slovenian Law on Peasant Associations. But before we address this, it is important to highlight some of the broader economic and political developments in Slovenia during the 1960s.

Self-management, liberalism of the 1960s, and the 1965 economic reform

In the early 1950s, Yugoslavia abandoned central planning and replaced it with the so-called self-management system, encapsulated in the slogan ‘Factories to the Workers.’ Workers were eventually given responsibility for the management of the

50 Arhives of Cooperative Union of Slovenia, Posebnosti pri izvajanju ustavnih amandmajev na področju kmetijstva, 29.

means of production and the results of their labour through workers' councils within enterprises. Instead of state ownership, the means of production were redefined as common public property, i.e., social ownership. At the same time, within the framework of the plan, self-management introduced the 'operation of the law of value.' In practice, however, the reform was only partially implemented. Thus, elements of the centrally planned system persisted alongside certain aspects of a market economy.⁵¹ In the following years, self-management extended to virtually all areas of social life, becoming the foundation of the new political system in Yugoslavia. At its core, there was the idea of shared decision-making regarding the allocation of the results produced in every sphere of society. This initiated a profound transformation of the political system, moving towards greater democratization and decentralization (within the limits of the system).⁵²

For understanding the processes presented in this article, it is crucial to grasp how people gradually internalized the idea of self-management. In the words of sociologist Gregor Tomc:

"Although, at a practical level, there was not much change after the normative adoption of self-management (real decision-making still remained in the hands of the state, and directors were responsible for production and operations within the framework of central planning), it would be overly simplistic to claim that self-management functioned merely as a new basis for the regime's ideological legitimacy. The slogans that swept across the country (workers' self-management, de-bureaucratization, decentralization, the dwindling of the state and the party, etc.) were indeed ideological constructs. Yet, despite this, they gradually became the assumptions upon which people thought and acted, taking them as part of reality, not just as something entirely fictional. Because this fiction, despite frequent elaborations, remained relatively stable at its core, acting based on these foundations gradually transformed actual relationships. Structures initially intended as purely formal came to life: autonomy of action emerged where a simple transmission of orders had been intended, and conflicts arose even though the system presupposed harmonious relations. This process was, of course, very gradual and continued to gain momentum until the end of the 1960s."⁵³

51 Prinčič, "Oblikovanje koncepta novega gospodarskega sistema in politika ključne kapitalne graditve v letu 1951;" 200–205; Prinčič, "Gospodarska reforma iz julija 1965: najresnejši in najbolje pripravljen poskus korenite preobrazbe jugoslovanskega gospodarstva," 217–19.

52 Čepič, "Jugoslovanske reforme v šestdesetih letih," 45–63.

53 Tomc, "Planiranje v Jugoslaviji," 21–22.

Additionally, in the 1960s, a younger faction of the communists took the lead in Slovenia, bringing a wave of liberalism and preparing a significant economic reform. After several years during which Yugoslavia's economic growth was among the highest in the world, the 1960s began with an economic slowdown, bottoming out in the summer of 1961. This downturn came as a shock and a warning to Yugoslav economists and politicians, highlighting that even the Yugoslav type of socialism was not immune to such economic fluctuations. In response, in 1961, the rejuvenated party leadership sought to regulate the domestic market, balance foreign trade, and grant enterprises more autonomy in managing their earnings. However, this effort also stalled halfway toward deeper liberalization.⁵⁴ In 1965, the third and more serious economic reform was introduced. This liberal wing of the Communist Party (in Slovenia and in some other republics) envisioned a more democratic political and economic structure for Yugoslavia. A Slovene, Boris Kraigher, a key figure in the reform efforts at the Yugoslav level, emphasized the importance of expanding the market as one of the most crucial regulators of economic dynamics, along with increasing production to facilitate integration into the global market. Over the following two years, the professional public began to explore issues such as a more liberal approach to foreign capital and the potential for private initiatives in the service sector. Stane Kavčič, the leading figure of Slovenian liberalism in the 1960s, believed that more freedom should be granted to enterprises, particularly in decisions about income distribution. He argued that future development planning should be guided by business performance and production costs.⁵⁵

Although from the end of 1967, federal politics had been gradually distancing itself from these goals, the liberal faction within the Slovenian Communist Party persisted in trying to bring these reforms to life. Several contentious issues emerged, such as the question of investing private capital into social property, which would allow private individuals to participate in the income generated. Other debates centred around private ownership and the privatization of business activities.⁵⁶ The government of Stane Kavčič (who served as Prime Minister of Slovenia for three consecutive terms from 1967 to 1972) also addressed the issues of increasing development disparities among various Slovenian regions, as the imbalance was becoming apparent. The previous regional policy concentrated industrial development in the so-called Slovenian development axis, which encompassed some of Slovenia's largest cities and industrial centres, most of which had been industrial hubs already before World War II.⁵⁷ The policy up to that point further strengthened these dispar-

54 Prinčič, "Gospodarska reforma iz julija 1965," 217–19.

55 Prinčič, "Vlada Staneta Kavčiča in njena gospodarska politika," 123.

56 Prinčič, "Vlada Staneta Kavčiča in njena gospodarska politika," 132–39.

57 Prinčič, "Vlada Staneta Kavčiča in njena gospodarska politika," 133–34.

ties through its investments, which in turn increased differences between predominantly agricultural regions and the surrounding areas of these economic centres. The Slovenske Gorice region, which includes the town of Juršinci, also exhibited a significant developmental lag. The economic reform slowed down by the end of the 1960s, and although some elements of the market-oriented system remained in place, in 1971, the broader ambition to introduce a market economy was abandoned.

The party 'liberalism' of the sixties in Slovenia also brought about greater political pluralism among and within the political organizations (the Socialist Alliance of the Working People, trade unions, and youth organizations) and a general liberalization of Slovenian society—standards of living were rising, Yugoslavia was opening up to the world, and it became possible to travel and work abroad. "Fashion shows, music festivals in the Western style (*Slovenska popevka*), international fairs, a boom in tourism, open borders with congested border crossings, and the influx of Western products became part of everyday life in Slovenia. By the end of the 1960s, during the peak of Kavčič's popularity, television had more than 255,000 subscribers (compared to 778 ten years earlier). It opened a window to the world for Slovenians, familiarizing them with fashion trends, Western music production, and offering them numerous series of television shows," historian Božo Repe described Slovenian society at the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s.⁵⁸

All this had a significant impact on the attitude toward private agriculture and the efforts of private peasants for modernization and increased competitiveness of the private agricultural sector, as well as for greater political equality, equal treatment with the rest of society concerning social security, and for participation in decision-making within their organizations, namely cooperatives (where they emphasized their right to participate in self-management).

The peasant becomes a political actor

In April 1968, President of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Sergej Kraigher, met with representatives of private peasants in a debate convened and coordinated by the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia. The peasants spoke openly about a wide range of problems they faced and proposed solutions. They firmly demanded equal self-management rights and emphasized that they wanted to be an equal part of society. Jože Pratengrazer stated, for example:

"Comrades, as a peasant, I have been most hurt by this: we have always asserted and still assert today that work and only work is the basic measure of a person's value. [...] However, when we talk about working people and

58 Repe, "Slovenski »liberalizem« šestdesetih in vloga Staneta Kavčiča," 112.

communities, I can safely say that peasants were not considered, because we were, so to speak, a kind of, I don't know, a special sect, an inferior class.”⁵⁹

Similarly, Jože Kodre expressed his feelings:

“I hope the day is not far when I will truly become an equal member in the full sense of the word, and I will not be ashamed to tell my friends that I am a private peasant. Until now, they have looked at me as a speculator, as a kulak [...] and who knows what else.”⁶⁰

The significant and important shift in the attitude of the authorities toward peasants during this time is also reflected in the words of Marjan Jelovšek:

“For the first time in twenty years, I can speak in public institutions as a peasant, without any additional labels, and I must emphasize this. So far, when I presented myself as a peasant, I did so as a kind of enemy of the existing regime, despite the fact that I must recognize that peasants actually bore the brunt of the national liberation war and suffered the worst material losses among all social classes. Today, we must sincerely thank the comrade president of the Assembly for accepting us as peasants.”⁶¹

During the extensive debate, the peasants outlined a number of specific issues and proposed potential solutions. One of the most pressing demands was for equal rights in the realm of social security, including health care, pensions, and disability benefits. They emphasized the importance of self-management and the right to participate in decision-making within cooperatives, as well as the possibility of establishing their own. A recurring concern was the absence of a dedicated organization to represent their interests—both in terms of marketing their produce and advocating for their rights. As Štefan Sambt aptly put it:

“The organization does not matter, the form does not matter; what matters is that the peasant has his place, and that this organization is his organization. All peasants agree with this.”⁶²

59 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

60 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

61 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

62 AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

Access to favourable loans was another key demand, enabling investments in agricultural progress. They also expressed a desire for greater influence in decisions related to forest management. The emergence of social stratification and signs of poverty among peasants were pointed out as troubling developments. Furthermore, the need for mechanization and modernization was underlined, with many noting that agricultural machinery remains significantly less accessible to private peasants, who are often forced to pay much higher prices than the social sector. On this topic, Sambt remarked:

“From experience, I can tell you that those who bought tractors in our area of Pomurje were those who worked in Austria or those who had family members employed in industry. The pure peasant, who only engages in agricultural production, has the hardest time.”⁶³

Lastly, the importance of agricultural extension services and education was emphasized as vital for future development.⁶⁴

The conversation was a consequence of, or a part of, the broader trend of liberalization and economic reform, as evidenced by the speech of Sergej Kraigher, who began with these words:

“I would first like to say that this conversation itself is an expression of the processes accelerated by economic and social reform, particularly in terms of strengthening self-management and addressing our social problems and the issues of our development on this basis. Therefore, I believe it is important to recognize that these meetings and similar gatherings that are now taking place are an integral part of our collective effort to solve the problems inherited and those that are re-emerging in our development based on these self-management principles.”⁶⁵

Kraigher supported peasants’ thoughts about their self-management rights within their agricultural organizations, in terms of participation in management, including equal decision-making regarding income distribution. He spoke about “introducing self-management in agriculture” through sections of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia, which should operate at the municipal level, and collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, so that peasants’ issues are heard more quickly in the assembly and government.

⁶³ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

⁶⁴ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

⁶⁵ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

Kraigher also agreed to consider the possibility of subsidizing interest rates for financing private production, while emphasizing the responsibility of municipalities in investing in development and creating local development programs. He acknowledged the need to expand peasants' insurance but also listed several dilemmas about how to regulate it. Among other things, in the context of protecting agriculture from the impacts of imports, which some peasants called for in the discussion, he emphasized that it does not matter whether the economy is private, cooperative, or socially owned agricultural economy if it is "aimed at increasing production, enhancing the productivity of its work, and rationally also its consumption."⁶⁶ He added:

"In my opinion, we would make a big mistake if someone here were to protect every type of production. We must protect the production that is established on such foundations that we can (compete-addition made by J. S.) in the foreign market."⁶⁷

In doing so, he also rejected the demands for guarantees that peasants would be able to sell their produce. He stressed the importance of labour-based distribution and added that peasants must contribute through work, not just through sales contracts. He also challenged the peasants' assessments of the number of cooperatives and combines that operate at a loss. Regarding the "injustices of the past" that peasants complained about, Kraigher admitted that mandatory purchases after the war and the peasants' working cooperatives had been "problematic."⁶⁸

Although the Slovenian Prime Minister Stane Kavčič, who embodied the more liberal faction in Slovenia, was forced to resign in 1972—marking the definitive end of the so-called liberalism of the 1960s in Slovenia—the policy toward private agriculture underwent significant changes during this period. The demands that private peasants were allowed to present for the first time within the Socialist Alliance of Working People were addressed by both the Slovenian government and parliament. Most of them were formalized in the 1972 Law on the Association of Peasants.

Conclusion

After initial successes, the system of cooperation between private peasants and the social sector of agriculture in the 1960s began to show increasing shortcomings. Cooperatives gradually started to resemble enterprises where employees gained a

⁶⁶ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

⁶⁷ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

⁶⁸ AS 537, Republiška konferenca socialistične zveze delovnega ljudstva Slovenije, TE 147, spis 631, Zapisnik Kraigher Sergej.

dominant influence, while peasants were losing their say in the management of cooperatives. The merger of cooperatives into larger agro-combinate complexes, creating vast areas, further alienated cooperatives from their members, making it difficult to maintain close contact with the peasants. Moreover, the cooperation simply did not function as intended. Basic forms of collaboration prevailed, and cooperatives were unable to offer machinery on terms favourable to peasants. Although the private sector still accounted for a significant portion of food production, there was a widespread belief that the social sector would soon meet all food needs. This led to the neglect of the private agricultural sector, widening the productivity gap between the private and social sectors. This situation contributed to a gradual decline in interest in agriculture in rural areas and accelerated the migration of young people from the countryside. Membership in cooperatives decreased dramatically.

The biggest problem was that cooperatives, due to various issues, were unable to provide peasants with support in using agricultural machinery. Peasants were unable to pay enough for tractor services to make them profitable for the cooperatives. Additional problems included a shortage of cooperative-owned tractors and a lack of spare parts for broken machinery. In such conditions, more and more tractors ended up in the hands of private peasants. Some were sold to them by cooperatives facing financial difficulties, while others were purchased abroad by the peasants themselves. As a result, peasants who could not find adequate support for their own modernization in cooperatives began to self-organize. In the second half of the 1960s, they formed several types of communities, particularly machinery-sharing communities, where they jointly managed agricultural equipment. These communities lacked a proper legal foundation, were semi-legal or illegal, and were sometimes registered as associations. In any case, they were ideologically controversial.

At the same time, under the influence of a younger, more liberal faction within the Communist Party in Slovenia, the 1960s saw significant changes in societal and economic views. Yugoslavia was opening up to the world, living standards improved, Western products appeared in stores, and working abroad was permitted. Over time, people internalized the slogans of self-management propagated by the government and began to perceive the functioning of society, as well as the rights they believed they were entitled to, based on these principles. Meanwhile, the economic reform, with its bolder introduction of market principles, exposed the problems and deficiencies in agriculture. It became clear that the state of the social sector (indebtedness) and, even more so, of the private sector—still crucial for food security—was poor. The productivity of the private sector lagged significantly behind that of the social sector. If the market-oriented reform was to be taken seriously, it was evident that the faster modernization of the private agricultural sector was also necessary.

The government's decision to listen to private peasants was also influenced by the growing disparities in development between different regions—an inequality undesirable in a socialist society—and the rapid departure of young people from rural areas and agriculture, which was already beyond the limits of acceptability. A key turning point in this process appears to have been 1968, when private peasants were able to voice their demands within the Socialist Alliance of Working People. Their demands (for a representative organization, for lower-interest loans to accelerate modernization, for an agricultural advisory service, for participation in decision-making in cooperatives, etc.) were heard and met. Most of them found a formal foundation in the 1972 Law on the Association of Peasants. Amid all these significant changes and historical developments, a small group of peasants in Juršinci demonstrated courage and initiative as early as the mid-1960s in their fight for their own grafting community, and even more so with their bold signing of a cooperation agreement. They did so under the pre-war civil code, as full private individuals, thus challenging the authorities. In the second half of the 1960s, the self-organization of private peasants—driven by economic necessity and a growing sense of protest—had developed into a broader movement that increasingly compelled the state to respond. So, while the peasants in Juršinci were not the only ones, they were certainly among the first heralds of this 'spring' in Slovenian private agriculture after World War II.

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Unfit, Unwanted, or Superfluous?

State Agricultural Farms and Their Workers as a New Social and Occupational Group in the Polish People's Republic

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Abstract. State agricultural farms (*Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne* or PGR in Polish) had a unique socio-economic status in post-war Poland. Modelled on the Soviet sovkhozes, they were intended to serve as a space for the creation of a new socialist socio-professional group, described in official propaganda as “the most advanced rural segment of the working class.” Although designed as a tool for agricultural modernization, state farms ultimately became spaces of permanent marginalization and lack of prospects, with far-reaching consequences for their communities up to the end of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). Located between the traditional rural and working-class communities, state-farm workers were seen by public perception both as beneficiaries of the communist transformation and a microcosm of all the social pathologies, leading to their social rejection and stigmatization.

This article examines the emergence of agricultural workers in the Polish People's Republic as a distinct social and occupational group, considering their low status, lack of integration with other occupational groups, and gradual marginalization. Drawing on archival material, journalistic sources, and oral testimonies, it examines how workers on state farms functioned in the Polish People's Republic, how their work and lifestyles were perceived, and how their systemic organization limited their agency and social mobility. The text also addresses the issue of the social isolation of agricultural workers, who after the collapse of communism were seen as an example of the failed attempt to create the communist ‘new man’.

Keywords: Poland, socialism, agriculture, modernization, state agricultural farms, workers

A resident of one state farm (*Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne*, PGR) located in north-western Poland noted in her diary in the 1960s: “I must point out that it was simply embarrassing to admit that one worked at a state farm because its employees were generally viewed rather negatively. However, with time you can get used to everything.”¹

1 *Młode Pokolenie Wsi Polski Ludowej*, Vol. 2, 290.

In turn, in accounts written down in the 1990s, another woman noted:

“People refer to the employees of the nearby Plant Breeding Station as »dworusy« [farmhands]. It is an insulting term, and there have been many fights over it.”²

Despite the temporal distance of over three decades separating these testimonies, what remains prominently foregrounded is the acutely articulated shame, the sense of inferiority, and people seeing employees in state agricultural enterprises as ignorant. The workforce of these institutions constituted a novel social and professional group that was created in the post-war Poland.

State farms were established in 1948 and represented a form of Stalinization initiated in rural areas that year. The second, considerably more oppressive manifestation took the form of production cooperatives—socialized agricultural entities created as components of the so-called collectivization policy. While in the Polish context, collectivization ultimately proved unsuccessful, forcing the communist authorities to withdraw from the project and recognize the permanence of private farming, the project of nationalizing agriculture—as embodied by state farms—continued until the dissolution of the communist regime.³

This article outlines the history and operational specifics of state farms while simultaneously exploring how the social group emerging within them remained for decades not only internally disintegrated but also alienated from other social and occupational groups. Despite propaganda efforts to present them as “the most advanced part of the working class in the countryside,” these communities were condemned to social isolation and marginalization to the end of the communist era, ultimately finding themselves among the major victims of the post-communist transformation. The workforce of state-owned farms established after the war represented a diverse and internally heterogeneous socio-professional group whose challenges in gaining acceptance and integrating into broader social structures proved unsuccessful throughout the entire period of the Polish People’s Republic.

The initial section of the article provides a historical overview of state-owned farms, with a focus on the origins and evolution of the entities, along with the

2 Majka, *Moje życie – nasza bieda*, 103; Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciał*, 120–21.

3 Pursuant to the Act of 19 October 1991 on the Agricultural Property of the State Treasury, state agricultural farms were liquidated and their assets taken over by the Agricultural Property Agency of the State Treasury (now the Agricultural Property Agency), and their employees—between 300,000 and 450,000 people joined the ranks of the unemployed (the number of all inhabitants of state-owned farms, including the families of employees, was estimated at around 2 million). Farms that were not sold or leased were placed under the management of the Agricultural Property Agency and were managed by administrators appointed by the Agency.

phenomena that accompanied the establishment of this community. Within this section, I introduce not only the stages of creating state enterprises and the accompanying public discourse (propaganda) but also present the people settling there, the way workplace hierarchies were formed, and the mechanisms governed them. In the second part of the study, by confronting state farms' daily reality with its external descriptions and media discourse, I show the relationship of the new socio-occupational group with the external environment—both other rural groups (including private farm owners) and city dwellers—workers and officials, and finally representatives of local and central authorities.

The analyses presented here rely on a comprehensive array of sources, encompassing archival materials about the operational dynamics of state-owned farms, predominantly sourced from local archives. In addition, the research builds on journal reports and propaganda materials from the period, along with sociological and economic studies. A notable contribution to the information base were diaries, memoirs and oral accounts, meticulously collected during a research program conducted between 2002 and 2006 at the Institute of History of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

The beginnings of state farms: From land reform to the Soviet model (1944–1949)

The establishment of state farms in Poland was underpinned by the concept of sovkhozes. This concept emerged in the USSR in 1918 due to the state expropriation of manors and land. Alongside the kolkhozy (collective farms), these enterprises were to function as specialized and mechanized models of production.⁴ The genesis of state-owned farms in Poland was anchored in the agricultural reform that fundamentally reshaped the pre-war rural social and property order. Adopted in 1944, the reform led to the dissolution of substantial landholdings and the redistribution of land among the peasant population. Encompassing an area of 3.5 million hectares, 10,000 estates had been taken over by 1948.⁵ The land not distributed among the peasants went into state ownership.

However, the Soviet sovkhoz concept was not immediately implemented in Poland. In the initial post-war period, the administration of state-owned estates was entrusted to a specially established institution, the Państwowe Nieruchomości Ziemskie (State Land Properties, SLP), founded in 1946 and led by Witold Maringe,

4 Doskocz-Winiarski, *Rolnictwo Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich*, 289–92.

5 Chwalba et al., *Dzieje Polski*, 718–19.

a Polish engineer, economist and farmer well-suited to the role.⁶ The management of the estates was typically undertaken by qualified specialists, many of whom were from a landowning background.

The initial focus of state-farm activities was on the so-called ‘Regained Territories,’ i.e., areas annexed to Poland at the expense of German territories following the Potsdam Conference. Within a few months, the organization’s activities were expanded to cover other voivodeships. By the end of the first year of their operation, approximately 1.4 million hectares was under the supervision of state farms, the vast majority of which located in northern and western Poland. The institutions employed nearly 120,000 workers. However, the next year, at the turn of 1947 and 1948, it was revealed that the state farm, which had initially been supported by the Polish Peasants Party (PSL), a traditional agrarian party, was not the primary target of the communists. With the consolidation of communist power, former landowners found that they were no longer welcome in their positions.

As late as 1948, many of the former landowners were accused of sabotage, negligence or wastefulness and were imprisoned. In the same year, the director of one of the north-western districts was put on trial and sentenced to death, and in 1949, the entire company management was arrested and accused of acting to the detriment of the state.⁷ These events were intended to legitimize the necessity of liquidating the SLP. This decision had in fact been made much earlier, at the turn of 1947–1948, and was related to the intensive Stalinization launched in 1948.⁸ The implementation of the idea of the sovkhozes and the creation of the first state farms coincided with the aggressive collectivization of Polish agriculture. This was a significant factor in the profound and often protracted tension between state farm workers and traditional farmers, who in many cases were neighbours.

The state farms started in 1949; however, as with all developments initiated in the post-war era, their growth and adaptation to the new agricultural policy objectives necessitated a considerable investment of time and substantial financial resources. This was in terms of the resources required to initiate agricultural production, such as livestock, horses, feed, fertilisers, equipment, machinery, and so forth, as well as the material, infrastructural, and social foundations.⁹

In the initial years of their operation, state-owned farms used the farm and manor buildings left over from the former landed estates, in addition to their own material and

⁶ Machałek, “No Chance of Success,” 250–65.

⁷ They were accused of being of ‘landed gentry origin,’ economic sabotage and spying for foreign powers. After a show trial lasting several days, they were sentenced to long prison terms ranging from ten years to life imprisonment. Szpak, *Między osiedlem i zagrodą*, 23.

⁸ *Przegląd Rolniczy*, 1948, 8; Kochanski, *Polska 1944–1990*, 265.

⁹ Panek, *Zboże rosło jak las*, 33.

infrastructural base. It was on these foundations that the first state farms were established, with other farms gradually emerging in their vicinity. Some were created from scratch in remote locations, while others were established in the immediate vicinity of villages and production cooperatives that were already in existence at the time.¹⁰

The available premises were converted into farm buildings, such as stables, barns and cowsheds, or temporary barracks were erected. Working and living conditions in the newly established state farms were dramatically poor. Although the photographs of state farms in the 1950s propaganda may have encouraged many people to go and work there, in the first post-war decade, the real situation was generally far from ideal.

Particularly in northern and western areas, the abandoned housing left behind by the former German owners was quickly occupied by the first settlers—and was subsequently plundered and vandalized by post-war 'looters.'

In the years 1945–1946, 'menacing looting intensified,' Eugeniusz Kłoczowski, a state farm manager wrote. Peasants from areas closer to the Regained Territories often arrived with evil intentions. Machines, tools, furniture, and even windows and stove tiles that the Germans had left behind in their houses were massively transported 'home' in the east. Only with great difficulty and only partially did the authorities manage to stop this wild looting.¹¹

Another diarist recorded about the year 1947:

"there were people who did not treat state farms as state property. They considered them remnants of the landowners and the noble lords, so they thought the estates should be looted as quickly as possible and the land should be parcelled among the peasants [...] people still had prejudices against estates."¹²

The new employees arriving at state-owned farms saw massive devastation on the former estates. They found apartments where almost everything was missing—windows, floors or doors, with roofs that were falling apart or leaking.¹³ It is no surprise that, in this situation, pioneers, seduced by propaganda and agitation, often abandoned the farms, fleeing to other workplaces that offered better social and living conditions. In 1956, a journalist reported this phenomenon in *Trybuna Ludu*:

"I spoke to the pioneers. Out of the eighteen who went there, only six stayed, the others fled [...]. The young people complained about the living

10 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 29–44.

11 Kłoczowski, *Moja praca*, 25.

12 *Nasze nowe życie*, 185; Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 35.

13 Łyś, PGR, czyli jak PRL zakonserwował feudalizm: <https://www.rp.pl/plus-minus/art11893201-pgr-czyli-jak-prl-zakonserwonal-feudalizm> (Accessed: 27 February 2025).

conditions, the canteen, everything that was positively evaluated in the report [...] the difficult conditions are still not improving and are giving rise to feelings of hopelessness and expectations.”¹⁴

From the very beginning, however, state farms were characterized by a specific type of physical space. Former manor quarters, surrounding manors or palaces were used to accommodate workers throughout the entire period of the Polish People’s Republic. From the 1960s, they were supplemented by two or three-story collective buildings (blocks of flats), more characteristic of urban and workers’ settlements in the landscape of Poland. Often emerging in the middle of open fields, these structures formed the distinctive landscape of state farm settlements.

The new order and systemic challenges: Work organization and hierarchies (1950s)

Similarly to sovkhozes, state-run agricultural farms also functioned according to centrally determined economic plans. Their establishment often defied technical or natural possibilities—disregarding the quality of the soil, the drainage of the meadows, access to machinery, and other factors. However, the top-down plan was not subject to bottom-up negotiations—this applied to both the State Land Properties and the state-run agricultural farms built on their basis.

“Here is a manager of a farm with heavy soil, who is not starting the spring sowing until the field properly dries out, the way the State Land Properties institution’s manual instructs him to do. The sowing campaign is in full swing in the district, the Security Office bursts in, accuses the manager of sabotage and puts him in prison just when sowing is at last possible [...] the Security Office’s activities could not be criticized.”¹⁵

In his diary, the manager of the Kurkławki state-owned farm entered at the beginning of the 1950s:

“I know very well that the land is being violated. But I’d rather harvest three quintals per hectare than sow it differently and go to jail. We argued professionally in the union that the plan should be different, but it didn’t help. Everything is imposed from above.”¹⁶

A significant number of farms were loss-making from the outset, as research indicates.¹⁷ While the concept of the state farm was commended in the propaganda,

14 *Trybuna Ludu* (1956): 3; “Nasze nowe życie...,” 180; *W poszukiwaniu drogi*, Vol. 2, 183.

15 Kłoczowski, *Moja praca*.

16 Czuła, *Z pamiętnika pioniera*, 152.

17 Machałek, *Likwidacja państwowych gospodarstw*, 269.

in practice, individuals at the central level saw the challenges and limitations of this agricultural model.¹⁸ Nevertheless, public discourse maintained the special position and unique role of state agriculture. Importantly, this was not its primary focus. An analysis of propaganda content in 1950–1956 shows that the press devoted three times more attention to collectivization and production cooperatives than to state farms.¹⁹ This reflected the position of the authorities and the extent of social resistance to collectivization.

In the public perception, state-owned farms were often associated with manors and wage labour on land that did not belong to the farmer. Moreover, even in the period of the People's Republic of Poland, the organizational structure and work system in nationalized estates drew upon manor traditions, but the status of their employees—foremen, farm labourers, farmhands or day labourers—was perceived by traditional rural communities as very low.²⁰

The communist state tried to disassociate itself from the burdensome 'land-owning' past. Consequently, adopting the model set by the USSR, the brigade work system and novel job designations (new nomenclature of positions) were introduced at the end of 1949. This transition was already governed by the Collective Labour Agreement of 1950–1951.²¹ Former estate managers, overseers, stewards, stablemen, farmhands, day labourers and casual workers were replaced by directors, managers, foremen, accountants, warehouse managers, etc. The system of brigades divided the farm staff into teams for crop production (so-called field work) and animal breeding. In practice, the latter consisted of a team for the barn, swine handling, poultry, etc. Depending on the specialization of the farm, the composition of the brigades could be more diverse. From the end of the 1950s, new brigades started to emerge: typically, the renovation and construction brigade (the previous lack of which says a lot about living conditions) and the mechanization brigade, which were started when farms were saturated with machines, tractors and other vehicles.

In this system, the employee structure was divided into three main categories, which also determined the individual employees' social status. The highest category was that of white-collar workers, who were in fact an elite and constituted the management of the plant. In addition to the director, who managed a team of several farms, this group of employees included the managers of individual farms, accountants, warehouse managers, and later also zootechnicians.

The second category consisted of manual workers, among whom brigade leaders, i.e., managers of individual brigades, played the most important role. Although

18 Panek, *Zboże rosło jak las*, 32–34.

19 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 27.

20 Solarz, *System organizacji pracy*, 35–46.

21 *Układ Zbiorowy Pracy* [Collective Labour Agreement] 1951, 11.

formally they were classified as physical workers, in practice they were part of the company elite, placed in between the world of physical and intellectual work.

The lowest level of the permanent occupational structure was constituted by the rank-and-file workers of the brigades, referred to as 'agricultural workers.' They were supplemented by seasonal or temporary workers, who were recruited from pioneer units, youth organizations (e.g., *Slużba Polsce*/Service of Poland),²² vocational and technical school apprentices, casual workers, random people seeking additional income or those who were formally obliged to do temporary work on farms.²³ What distinguished this group from the rest was the fact that they were usually completely unintegrated with the teams of permanent workers, lived in temporary and often substandard and overcrowded collective accommodations. Quite frequently, after completing their assignments, they moved on and spread a very negative image of the daily life of state-farm communities.

The group of temporary workers was partly made up of the young post-war intelligentsia. Due to mandatory internships, from the 1950s, university and secondary school students very often ended up on state farms for doing seasonal work. One of the diarists even used the word 'pegeerophobia' (derived from the Polish abbreviation 'PGR' meaning 'state farm') among students.²⁴ Other young people studying at universities also mentioned that they would mock their colleagues earning some extra money on state farms. One young woman who was forced to do an internship on a state farm reported with undisguised surprise:

"I expected to find stupid drunkards that are impossible to have a conversation with. Although they mostly talk about their wages, sometimes they are interested in other things as well, such as politics. They have a peculiar, somewhat naive view of the world. It is true that almost all of them drink heavily [...]." ²⁵

The distinct structure of the workforce made a strong impact on interpersonal relationships, both at work and outside it. The housing estates, slowly developing in the neighbourhood of farms, made it difficult to separate professional and formal relationships from social and private ones in people's everyday lives. As a rule, company hierarchies and the loyalties or tensions at work transferred to social and neighbourly relations.

22 Lesiakowski, *Powstanie Powszechnej Organizacji "Slużba Polsce."*

23 The work order in Poland was introduced by the Act of 7 March 1950 "on the prevention of the rapid turnover of employees in professions or specializations particularly important for the socialized economy."

24 Wojciechowska-Kołłataj, ed., *Blisko ziemi, blisko życia*, 99.

25 Wójcik, ed., *Dzień dobry za dwa złote*, 252.

Initially, as sources indicate, the different categories of employees were accommodated in separate spaces. The company elite, comprising directors, managers and accountants, were provided with more spacious three or four-room flats, usually located in the premises of a former landed gentry manor or palace, or flats provided as part of newly built housing.²⁶ The former farm buildings, which were usually quite cramped and dilapidated, were allocated to manual workers. In 1951, a new policy was introduced, whereby work leaders and rationalizers were given priority for more spacious accommodation.²⁷ Following the political thaw in the late 1950s, this privilege was shifted to employees with the longest period of service, and it was only then that the size of apartments began to depend on the number of family members.²⁸

However, it should be noted, nonetheless, that this policy shift did not translate into meaningful social integration between employees of different ranks—for example, the housing estate manager might have lived next to a low-ranking labourer, yet their social roles remained clearly separated. In practice, this kind of integration proved to be ineffective, and conflicts, tensions and corporate dependencies spilled over into everyday life, often resulting in mutual distancing in non-work relations.

Due to the centralization of farm management, there was a significant reduction in employees' initiative and agency, even in the case of senior management. The managers of most farms—with the exception of the model farms, i.e., Manieczki or Kietrz, which had greater influence due to their high profitability—were not in a position to modify the production plans imposed on them according to their own efficiency and production capabilities. Despite the apparent irrationality of the centrally imposed measures, they were regularly implemented. A similar phenomenon was observed among manual labourers at a lower level. This is aptly described in the 1956 diary of Jan Czuła, a pioneer and later manager of the state-owned Kurkławki farm:

“Nothing makes people angrier than the feeling that they are doing unnecessary work, even though they are being paid for it. The mere realization that they are making a pointless effort has a demoralising effect.”²⁹

The limitations of employees' agency and innovation were also observed in the workers' housing estates. Despite the terrible housing conditions, agricultural workers were not permitted to renovate their apartments independently. Even in cases where apartments were riddled with structural deficiencies, such as holes in

26 *Układ Zbiorowy Pracy*, 1948, 22.

27 *Układ Zbiorowy Pracy* 1950/1951, 18–19.

28 *Układ Zbiorowy Pracy*, 1958, 18–19.

29 Czuła, *Z pamiętnika pioniera*, 97.

walls, leaking roofs, or uneven floors, permission for even minor renovations had to be obtained from the manager or director of the respective state-owned farm. It was not until the late 1950s, with the establishment of the renovation and construction brigades within individual companies, that such redevelopments were made possible. The work was done exclusively by specialized professionals; however, due to persistent staff shortages, repairs dragged on for years or were postponed until the relevant teams were completed.³⁰ Consequently, the condition of pre-war state farm apartments and their surroundings remained substandard for a long time.

The employees' dependence on the management's decisions was further entrenched by several other factors, with the remuneration system playing a pivotal role. Although as Włodzimierz Dzun notes, before the mid-1950s, wages were minimal,³¹ it was wage-payment that distinguished state farms from collective or private farms. However, the system of food supplies and social benefits in kind was also instrumental in enabling the employees to subsist. The system encompassed the provision of essential commodities, such as milk, potatoes and coal, as well as in-house facilities, including a staff canteen, a backyard plot allocated to permanent employees, and a barnyard for breeding poultry or pigs for personal consumption. Despite stringent restrictions pertaining to the pig population, in the late 1950s the provision of land for growing potatoes, beets, beans, and fundamental vegetables, in addition to breeding chickens (for eggs) or pigs, enabled employees to attain a minimal subsistence level for their families.

The other important elements of company benefits, which were much more appreciated by the state-farm communities in the last two decades of the Polish People's Republic, were free access to healthcare guaranteed by the company (health centres were located in larger state farms), the offer of kindergarten care for employees' children and the employee holiday fund.³² Research has highlighted the importance of these facilities, particularly for young married couples and families with children.

A new man? Social isolation and the identity crisis of a new class (1960s–1970s)

The low social status of agricultural workers and the terrible social and living conditions of the 1950s and 1960s did not make state-owned farms the most desirable workplaces. While propaganda and recruitment drives in the 1950s attracted to state

30 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 152–57.

31 Dzun W., *Państwowe gospodarstwa rolne*.

32 Pilch, *Problemy społeczne załóg PGR*, 34.

farms many young people rather at random, few stayed for long. The workforce showed great fluidity and instability, which translated into the low internal integration of the communities.

The oldest settlers were the most stable group, usually those who ended up on former estates immediately after the land reform or when the previously mentioned state farms took over their management. This group of workers was most often made up of so-called 'redundant people,' usually the rural poor who could not afford to buy the land offered as part of the parcelling-out project. They usually belonged to the interwar farmhands or came from other professional groups employed on interwar landed estates. According to the testimony of rural dwellers, the initial employees of state farms lacked the skills to work independently, which is why even after the war they chose farms where they were not involved in management.³³

In the first years after the war, a significant proportion of state-farm pioneers hailed from the migrant population that relocated from south-eastern Poland to the Regained Territories. Some individuals embarked on the journey voluntarily, driven by a desire for adventure, a sense of anonymity, or the prospect of a new beginning in a post-war world. However, others, such as the population displaced from the so-called Eastern Borderlands,³⁴ were forcibly resettled in response to territorial shifts to northern and western Poland, where state-owned farms were predominant.³⁵ The initial years of the state-farm communities were characterized by profound ethnic and cultural diversity, a consequence of their origins. The communities were comprised of Greek Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and minority groups, such as Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Belarusians, who had previously resided in the easternmost regions of the country. These communities subsequently encountered the indigenous population and the German population that stayed in the Regained Territories. The presence of these diverse groups led to cultural friction and conflicts arising from their different customs and traditions, as well as traumatic war experiences, particularly in relation to German-speaking locals and Ukrainians. The presence of different ethnic and cultural groups, although sometimes inspiring and arousing mutual curiosity, generally hindered faster integration. The anthropologist Anna Zadrożyńska wrote interestingly about this phenomenon in the 1970s:

"A sense of belonging on the estate was primarily linked to a shared place of origin. This, in turn, generated the negative notion of »foreignness« towards people from different regions of Poland. Outsiders were often

33 Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciał*, 121; Wylegała, *Był dwór, nie ma dworu*, 179.

34 The Eastern Borderlands (Polish Kresy Wschodnie) was a historical region in the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic.

35 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 50.

accused of acting against »our people«—whether in farm management, local government, or institutions. They were seen as forming cliques, pursuing only their own interests. Yet, defining the exact group of »outsiders« proved elusive; their identity shifted, depending on the situation and the nature of conflicts. Alliances were often justified retrospectively, based on shared regional origins, workplace bonds, or even drinking companionships. Consequently, groups of »insiders« were fluid and largely invisible in day-to-day interactions.”³⁶

As time passed, ethnic and cultural differences became less pronounced, eventually disappearing in the succeeding generation. However, the community’s persistent openness, coupled with its unfavourable reputation and public perception, resulted in a pervasive atmosphere of vigilance, control, distrust, and prejudice towards strangers and newcomers. Integration and the sense of common interest were, as Zadrożyńska acknowledged, characterized by instability and fragility. During the 1960s, the ageing of the workforce became an increasingly prominent phenomenon. Consequently, measures were implemented from the 1960s onwards to motivate younger generations to find employment and establish themselves on state-owned farms. To encourage young couples from rural areas, a program of non-repayable loans was introduced to help them settle on state-owned properties. The initial allocation and furnishing of their apartments was financed by a company loan, which was then redeemed after at least two years of employment on the state farm.

It is noteworthy that despite significant tension between the peasant population and state-farm employees in the 1950s, young individuals entering state farms over the subsequent decades predominantly originated from peasant families. In the 1950s, state-owned farms represented the antithesis of production independence for rural communities and were widely perceived as a symbol of Stalinism, eliciting strong feelings of disdain and opposition. They often triggered anger, primarily due to their role in the promotion through propaganda of state-owned farms and production cooperatives and because they received state subsidies and supplies of fodder and machinery. This was in stark contrast to the resistance exhibited by small and medium-sized farmers against aggressive collectivization policies. Furthermore, the oldest generation of peasants perceived the estates established on the basis of the landed estates as synonymous with the space inhabited by the rural poor.³⁷

The older generation maintained a sense of resentment towards state farms to the very end. However, their children, who often had different ideas about the nature of farming, independence and social advancement, often consciously opted

36 Zadrożyńska, *Homo faber*, 286–87.

37 Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciało*, 119.

for state farms, which offered them greater opportunities to sooner become independent, while simultaneously providing a pleasant alternative to working-class and urban life with monthly wages, company apartments, leisure time and holidays, an employee holiday fund, and summer camps for children.

In addition to the guaranteed benefits, what always attracted many young people to state-owned farms was the similarity of the (agricultural) work and the vocational or technical agricultural training they had completed.³⁸ However, even those with no agricultural work experience or education could generally count on being hired, due to constant staff shortages. The scarcity of labour during periods of heightened seasonal work was supplemented by the deployment of seasonal workers and university and vocational school students doing their compulsory internships on state-owned farms, and occasionally, by convicts serving sentences in nearby prisons.

The motivations for pursuing employment in state farms were diverse. For some, prior experience in agricultural work was a key factor, while for others, it was a matter of necessity to obtain paid employment. For some, state farms represented a chance to embark on a new adventure. Additionally, sources frequently highlight single women, often mothers with children, who sought employment on state farms due to the anonymity and extensive social benefits they offered.³⁹

A combination of the workers' limited qualifications, experience in agricultural work, restricted agency and initiative, together with the associated frustration, gave considerable scope for abuse within the fluid and poorly integrated community. A state-farm employee complained as follows:

“People were hired without background checks. All kinds of hooligans and crooks found a haven here - some to continue stealing, others to get fired after a few months of work and to be able to continue loafing around. These people tarnished the reputation of state-owned farms and undermined the authority of the staff.”⁴⁰

During the 1950s, the prevailing source of abuse was identified as ‘cliques’, meaning social groups in which employees engaged in fraudulent activities, including the theft of equipment and animal feed. In the Stalinist period, these phenomena were repeatedly exposed and condemned in the press, with each article emphasizing the hostile and pathological attitudes of the individuals involved, rather than pointing out systemic limitations or flaws. The state-farm management system itself was not exposed to public criticism either in the 1950s or later.

38 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 60–61.

39 Cp. Czuła, *Z pamiętnika pioniera*.

40 Gołebiowski, ed., *Pamiętniki Polaków 1918–1978*, 151–52.

However, the October Thaw focused more attention on workers' living and material conditions, leading to the decision to increase funding for housing construction and to set up renovation and construction brigades. In 1957, the wage system underwent modification, and a year later, a bonus fund and a 'thirteenth salary' were introduced. The bonus fund was streamlined and enhanced a few years later, enabling employees to accrue up to 60 percent additional income on an annual basis.⁴¹

Despite these changes, work pathologies resulting from a lack of responsibility for the land used and the state inventory were still frequently reported. This was primarily due to the overly abstract concept of 'state ownership,' as evidenced by diaries and accounts. In the minds of many rural workers, the concept of common (state) ownership and the lack of a specific owner—as the manager of the plant was not one—was very difficult to understand. There was even a common expression equating state ownership with no one's ownership.⁴²

The misappropriation of company property, the utilization of company equipment for personal use, or engagement in paid work in neighbouring fields were frequently attributed to an erroneous comprehension or misinterpretation of the notion of collective ownership. In the portrayals of state-owned agricultural farms featured in opinion-forming newspapers and socio-cultural periodicals, the prevailing themes encompassed fatal housing and living conditions, destitution and neglect, often intertwined with labour pathologies. These issues were typically attributed to the perceived cultural lag and socio-economic disadvantage of the agricultural workforce, as well as various familial pathologies.⁴³ In press reports, the realm of state-owned farms was often depicted as a gloomy world of poverty with its inhabitants portrayed as primitive people indifferent to the aesthetic quality of their environment. While the technique of emphasizing the 'otherness' of the reality described is a characteristic feature of journalism, an observation that is too superficial had the potential to distort the picture. An example is provided by a report from the 1950s by the manager of the Kurkławki state-owned farm:

"Zaleski's reportage amazed me. [...] instead of showing life as it is, he outlined an imaginary picture of gloomy vegetation and insisted that he did not see any joy in us [...] clearly, if one sees the joy of life only in a cup of black coffee and coffee-house chatter, then suddenly landing in our state farm must have filled Zalewski with fear. He could not therefore perceive our joys of a completely different kind than his. Well, and the whole reportage turned out like this, with »ominously cawing crows«, »a

41 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 26.

42 Karpińska, "Od awangardy komunizmu do sierocińców transformacji," 523.

43 Tischner, "Widnokrąg pracy ojczystej"; Wróblewski, "Najpiękniejsza z PGR," 3; Wesołowska, "Kawior na prostej drodze," 2–5; Rolicki, "Kartki z PGR-u," 3.

mysterious chapel«, »the sadness of the field«. Shadows, shadows. [...] I was shuddering with cold when I was reading this. He would not be convinced that it was untrue.”⁴⁴

The bleak world of the state farms, characterized by pathologies and the poor behaviour of workers, has become deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness, serving as a hallmark of these communities.⁴⁵

The negative image of working conditions, like a vicious circle, fuelled personnel problems. This, in turn, forced managers and directors responsible for timely production to be more flexible in dealing with work discipline, regulations and their attitude to subordinates who exceeded acceptable boundaries. Forced to implement a top-down plan, managers could not afford to fire or let go too many employees, even if some did not follow the work regulations.

This situation created an unhealthy system of dependency, ‘turning a blind eye’ and tolerating mediocrity, mistakes and sometimes even abuse. Although the Collective Labour Agreement formally included a provision on the possibility of the disciplinary dismissal of an employee as early as 1948, in practice this procedure was rarely used. “Mr. M. was given a notice of termination. Despite numerous job adverts, no one has applied for this position so far. Therefore, the director was forced to suspend the dismissal until a new warehouse worker was hired,”⁴⁶ one of the employees reported. Sociologists described yet another situation:

“Residents of Owczary (a state-owned farm) can confirm that silence about not always legal behaviour was a kind of currency that could be used to ‘pay for something’. The director often turned a blind eye to the private use of machinery, fertilisers and tools, thus earning the gratitude of his subordinates and their willingness to reciprocate. Conscious silence binds the patron to the client. The state farm was no exception in this matter.”⁴⁷

An employee of another state farm stated:

“The director has two faces—one for the board, where he pretends to be an idealist, caring for the social good, and another on the farm, where he has »his own«.”⁴⁸

44 Czuła, *Z pamiętnika pioniera*, 167.

45 Rychlik, *Problemy rozwoju PGR*, 190; Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciał*, 124.

46 Szpak, *Między osiedlem a zagrodą*, 86.

47 Tarkowska, ed., *Lata tłuste, lata chude*, 114–15.

48 Chałasiński, ed., *Młode pokolenie wsi Polski Ludowej Awans pokolenia*, Vol. 1, 92–93.

Despite the introduction of reforms in the 1960s, intended to improve the poor reputation of state-owned farms and the living and working conditions of their employees, changes were extremely slow. It was not until the 1970s, which were characterized by Edward Gierek's policy of gigantomania—a trend that was prevalent in most collectivized agricultural systems worldwide—that some changes were made. On an organizational level, this resulted in a program to merge farms into large enterprises, and on an infrastructural level, it manifested itself in the idea of transforming former state farms into agricultural towns. This policy quickly began to improve the living standards of employees and their families on state farms. Investments were mainly made in the social sphere, in accordance with a declaration published in 1965 in the newspaper *Życie Partyjne* (Party Life) magazine:

“Our farms will be the best propaganda. The most effective agitators must be the employees of state farms themselves, with whom a sense of emotional connection to the farms should be fostered.”⁴⁹

As Jolanta Pilch's research demonstrates, during the 1970s, such bonding and the resulting employee loyalty did indeed increase. This phenomenon was evidenced by the proliferation of company kindergartens, the organization of bussing children to nearby schools, as well as a notable rise in the feminization of administrative staff and the professional work of both spouses.⁵⁰

Despite their higher standards of living, the status of agricultural workers and employees of state-owned farms was still among the lowest in society.⁵¹ Moreover, employment satisfaction studies carried out on state farms at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s also brought ambivalent results.

Confrontations and external perceptions (1950s–1980s)

From the outset, those engaged in agricultural pursuits within state-owned farms were aware of the distinctiveness and cultural foreignness of their milieu. Situated at the intersection of the rural and urban landscapes, agricultural workers, often regarded as the most rural segment of the working class,⁵² cultivated a distinct socio-professional identity both in relation to the individual farmer and the conventional peasant farm, and in relation to urban workers.

49 *Zycie Partii*, 1965, No. 2, 16.

50 Pilch, *Spoleczne problemy załóg PGR*, 39–42.

51 Domański, *Prestiż zawodów w obliczu zmian społecznych*, 86; Machałek, *Likwidacja państwowych gospodarstw*, 270.

52 *Robotnik Rolny*, 1951, No. 1, 5.

However, an analysis of memoirs and diaries reveals that the self-image of agricultural workers was characterized by significant instability and heterogeneity. Some individuals who were closely connected to state-owned farms perceived them as offering considerably better prospects for a more comfortable life. One diarist noted, “I know the village well and I know the state farm where I have been working for eleven years, and I dare say that a state farm worker lives better than the average peasant.”⁵³ In contrast, another representative of this occupational group, cited at the beginning of the article, emphasized that it was simply shameful to admit to working in a state-owned farm, as the prevailing opinion about the employees was unflattering. In a similar and ambivalent tone, another employee wrote:

“I was happy because I felt I belonged here. I was not ashamed of being a state-owned farm worker, who was often treated like some kind of low-level commune member—and not only by people from the countryside and towns, but even by individuals in positions of authority in state offices.”⁵⁴ Yet another wrote, “We don’t feel good there [in the state-owned farm], but we are materially well off.”⁵⁵

Even from an economic perspective, there was no unanimity, as evidenced by Jolanta Pilch’s research. At the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, 60.3 percent of the surveyed employees of state-owned farms assessed their income as inadequate for supporting their families.⁵⁶ The sociologist’s analysis also shows that as many as 37.7 percent of the employees surveyed believed that there were no good sides to working for state farms.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, more than 67 percent expressed general satisfaction with their work. This ambivalence, stemming from the social opinions of the subjects, led to a significant proportion of employees contemplating changing jobs, with the highest rate observed in the youngest age group, where it was as high as 80 percent. Notably, almost half the respondents expressed a desire to relocate to urban areas, while a third did not intend to change their occupation but simply to move to another state farm (only 10 percent aspired to acquire a farm and become independent). These analyses are consistent with other studies by Hanka Zaniewska that demonstrate that the the isolation and specific stigmatization of agricultural workers resulted in a phenomenon within this community that is termed as the “state-farm ghetto.”⁵⁸

53 *Droga przez wieś*, 66.

54 *Młode Pokolenie Wsi Polski Ludowej*, t. 2, 290.

55 *Młode Pokolenie Wsi Polski Ludowej*, t. 5, 482.

56 *Pamiętniki z ziem zachodnich i północnych*, 291.

57 Pilch, *Spoleczne problemy załóg PGR*, 34.

58 Zaniewska et al., *Zagospodarowanie przestrzenne i zabudowa wsi*, 30.

Employee mobility observed throughout the period of the Polish People's Republic was in fact spatially limited. A significant proportion of those who decided to change jobs did so by moving to other state farms, thus minimising exposure to external influences that might potentially react negatively to their employment within the state farms framework.⁵⁹

State-farm workers' isolation was reinforced by top-down measures. An example was the celebration of public holidays, such as 1 May or 22 July, which in socialist countries were public events celebrated on a grand scale. As in other contexts, they were preceded by preparations, including the appointment of special committees and the presentation of awards during the ceremonies. However, all these activities took place in a state of occupational isolation.⁶⁰ Moreover, the isolation was maintained by the workforce in other situations. A prime example was employee holidays, which, although formally available to permanent employees from 1949, were not popular in the Polish People's Republic. This phenomenon was documented on the pages of the flagship magazine of the Polish United Workers' Party, *Trybuna Ludu*, that in 1961 stated:

"Resting in the bosom of nature is not popular with state agricultural farm workers [...]. Agricultural workers are exposed to exceptionally bad and humiliating treatment from the »better« [...] holiday guests."⁶¹

This phenomenon was also confirmed by Jolanta Pilch's research in the 1970s.⁶²

Conclusion: The legacy of marginalization and poverty?

The workforce of the state-owned farms established after the war was a very diverse and internally heterogeneous socio-professional group, which in the official propaganda and ideology was supposed to constitute the new, "most advanced section of the working class in the countryside."⁶³ Despite the propaganda's efforts and intentions, this group remained isolated and marginalized in terms of social interaction with other socio-professional groups until the end of the 1980s.

The social and professional isolation of agricultural workers was due to several factors. The two key ones are: firstly, the perception of agricultural workers as a backward and at the same time ideologically privileged social class and, secondly,

59 *Młode Pokolenie Wsi Polski Ludowej*. t. 2, 291.

60 Szpak, *Miedzy osiedlem a zagrodą*, 137.

61 *Trybuna Ludu*, 1961, no. 78.

62 Pilch, *Spoleczne problemy załóg PGR*, 40.

63 *Robotnik Rolny*, 1951, no. 1, 5.

the contempt resulting from their low social status and rural tensions in the Stalinist period. At the same time, due to the fluidity of the workforce, the staff of state-owned farms was always internally unstable and unintegrated.

The challenges faced over decades, including the arduous process of integration into broader social structures (e.g., through the employee holiday fund, theoretically available to all public sector employees and having an integrating effect) and gaining acceptance as a distinct but valued social group, proved unsuccessful. This was particularly evident during the period of systemic (economic) transformation in the 1990s. The desire of the new political elites to quickly deal with the communist legacy, which had hampered economic development, led to the liquidation of state farms and the reprivatization of state property. It appears that liberal reformers did not treat the marginalized and despised social group of state-farm workers with due care. State-farm workers, still identified with communist backwardness and pathologies, were forced to adapt to the top-down changes. Internally divided for decades, the community found itself unable to unite and protest against the brutal and socially insensitive elimination of their workplaces, which deprived them of everything.

In the absence of protective programs during the period of liquidation and political transformation, the vast majority of state-farm residents, estimated at 2 million in the early 1990s,⁶⁴ were condemned to unemployment and, in the long term, to poverty and destitution, ending up as some of the main victims of the post-communist transformation.

In the western and northern regions of Poland, historically dominated by state-owned farms, the unemployment rate rose to 27 percent after these entities were dissolved.⁶⁵ An emblematic symbol of the public legitimization of the significant reductions and minimal protective measures granted to the state-farm communities was the controversial and quasi-documentary film 'Arizona' directed by Ewa Borzęcka, broadcast in 1997 at prime time on public television.⁶⁶ The film portrayed the community of one of the north-eastern state-owned farms as broken, depressed, helpless and affected by alcoholism. The reportage was criticized by the film industry, and the director and the staff were accused of unethical behaviour (for example, recording residents under the influence of alcohol).⁶⁷ However, the film had a significant impact on Polish society, deepening the existing stigmatization of state-farm workers.

64 Panek, *Zboże rosło jak las*.

65 Machałek, *Unemployment as a Consequence*, 192.

66 Borzęcka, "Arizona," TVP 1998.

67 Karpińska, *Od awangardy komunizmu do sierocińców transformacji*, 527.

As anthropologist Katarzyna Maniak emphasizes, in the 1990s, alternative portrayals of state-owned farms also contributed to the propagation of an unfavourable image of female and male workers in public discourse, who were presented as members of a 'subclass' or representatives of the '*homo sovieticus*' category.⁶⁸ The term '*homo sovieticus*', popularized by sociologist Piotr Sztompka, described a set of personality traits, including 'civilizational incompetence,' dependence on state paternalism, learned helplessness and passivity, which for years were attributed to the workers and inhabitants of the former state farms.⁶⁹

In a study published in 2024, Bartosz Panek argues that the social and mental costs of political and economic transformation in post-state-farm societies were enormous. The stigmatization and marginalization experienced by former employees resulted in long-term social trauma, which is still evident among the next generation of residents of former state-owned agricultural estates.⁷⁰

While the privatization of state property and the dissolution of state farms were criticized by experts as early as the 1990s,⁷¹ it was not until at least a decade later that the public media began to report that the process could have been carried out differently, taking social issues into account. In 2001, the former minister for privatization admitted in an interview that the state farms, modelled on the Soviet *sovchoz* were dissolved in an excessive hurry:

"It was a mistake in the perception of the dynamics of change. Too little attention was paid to the social catastrophe, the human dimension [...] it was a failure of imagination," he said.⁷²

In 2015, Bożena Kulicz, co-founder of the PGR (State-farm) Museum in Bolegorzyno, made a different comment on the liquidation and privatization process:

"State-farm employees were never able to unite and fight for themselves [...] everyone turned their backs on them: directors and managers, politicians, individual farmers, city dwellers."⁷³

The inferiority complex that persisted throughout the entire period of the Polish People's Republic and the isolation of state-owned farm workers and their residents from other social and professional groups in the 1990s caused indifference on the

⁶⁸ Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciało*, 217.

⁶⁹ Maniak, *Wysiłek, efekt i ocenianie ciało*, 217.

⁷⁰ Panek, *Zboże rosło jak las*, 50–279.

⁷¹ Machałek, *Likwidacja państwowych gospodarstw rolnych*, 277–78, 288.

⁷² Cyt. za Panek.

⁷³ PGR, czyli jak PRL zakonserwował feudalizm, Rzecznik Praw Człowieka, <https://www.rp.pl/plus-minus/art11893201-pgr-czyli-jak-prl-zakonserwował-feudalizm> (Accessed: 27 July 2025).

part of decision-makers towards their post-communist fate. This led to decades of a sense of injustice and resentment felt by generations of not only former state-farm employees but also their families.

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Beyond the Socialist Sector

The Role of Small-Scale Production in Hungarian Agriculture during the Kádár Era

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Abstract. In accordance with Soviet expectations, collectivization took place in Hungary by 1961, as a result of which large-scale production became dominant. The state party did not support for ideological reasons, but also tolerated small-scale production due to economic necessity. However, the literature primarily presents the agricultural history of the Kádár period, focusing on collectivization and established cooperatives, and there is relatively little mention of small-scale production. However, its importance cannot be neglected at all since it played a decisive role in ensuring that the total reorganization of agriculture did not result in a radical decrease in production. After collectivization, household plots belonging to cooperative members could remain, and the types of farms created in this way accounted for about half of the small producers. Much less is known, however, about the other important group of small-scale producers, the auxiliary farms. What were the characteristics of the two farm types? Why did the authorities treat them differently? From the beginning of the 1970s, despite the restrictions, small-scale production increased, which process was interrupted by the effect of the 1973 oil crisis. After that, the attitude of the authorities towards small farmers also changed. How? What measures signaled this change?

My study, therefore, basically has a dual purpose. On the one hand, I would like to give a comprehensive picture of small-scale production in Hungary and the relationship between the authorities and small producers. On the other hand, I would like to present the two main types of farms belonging to small producers: household and auxiliary farms.

Keywords: Socialism, small-scale production, Kádár era, Hungarian agriculture

Introduction

After Hungary became part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence after World War II, the adoption and forced introduction of Soviet models began in all areas of life. The state party (Hungarian Workers' Party), established in 1948 after the nationalization of industry, considered it particularly important to eliminate the autonomous segments of the countryside, and the process included the collectivization of land still in private hands.

After the land reform was implemented in 1945, large estates ceased to exist, but the land remained predominantly in private hands. Peasant society, which was strongly divided according to the size of estates, was nevertheless very united in its attachment to the land and maintaining an independent peasant existence. In the era marked by Mátyás Rákosi, considered Stalin's best Hungarian disciple (1948–1956), the authority set out to eliminate private property in two waves (1948–1953 and 1955–1956), but despite campaigns that also involved violence, the expected results were not achieved. Collectivization satisfying the demands of the Soviet Union was only achieved under the leadership of János Kádár in 1961.¹

Hungarian literature presents the agricultural history of the Kádár era (1956–1989), primarily focusing on collectivization and the cooperatives that were established. Although in connection with the latter, household plots, which are organically linked to cooperatives, are usually referred to,² we know much less about the auxiliary farms that are often mentioned together with them.

The aim of this study is, therefore, to present this form of farming in comparison with household farming. How did it differ from household farming, and what were its main features? Who had auxiliary farms? Under what conditions and what did they produce? Why did the government try to mix these two types of farming? The study seeks to answer these questions, among others.

From small farms to small-scale production

The form of property and farming known as household farming had already become common in the Rákosi era. Members who joined the cooperative groups were provided with a small plot (0.14–0.28 ha; from 1953 on, max. 0.58 ha), which they could cultivate independently within the family framework. Although household farming was associated with many disputes—mainly regarding the size of the plots and the relationship with cooperative groups—its products, which primarily ensured the daily livelihood of families, played a crucial role due to the constant public supply problems characteristic of the era. Household farming, although actually belonging to the cooperative sector, still left the illusion of private property, the role of which was not negligible.

Even after collectivization was implemented (by 1961), plots allocated to cooperative members could remain as household plots, which played a crucial role in

1 Varga, "Three waves of collectivization"; Ö. Kovács, Horváth, and Csikós, eds, *The Sovietization*; Horváth and Ö. Kovács, eds, *Állami erőszak*; Galambos and Horváth, eds, *Magyar dúlás*.

2 Mihály Ivicz, for example, analyzes household farming in detail in his book, although auxiliary farms are only mentioned and he does not discuss them as an independent category. Ivicz, *Kisbirtok versus nagybirtok*.

ensuring that the total reorganization of agriculture did not result in a significant decrease in production.³ Household farms were also one of the main components of the form of farming known as 'small farms' that continued to exist alongside the dominant large-scale production. However, when mentioned as a separate category, there is usually little mention of the 'auxiliary farms' that also fall under the conceptual scope of small farms and which, like the household plots, contributed significant added value to the country's agricultural production as a whole.

Regarding small farms, a kind of conceptual uncertainty and inconsistent use of terms can still be observed in the literature to this day. This can perhaps best be eliminated by taking as a basis the statistical censuses of the time and the terms in the literature based on their processing.

One of the conceptual anomalies is that small farms and small-scale production are often synonymous. After the collectivization of agriculture, the term 'small farm' was clearly used to refer to cultivation associated with an individual-level, non-large-scale farm framework, which encompassed four farming methods. Of these, the first and most important was, of course, household farming by the members of the farmers' cooperative. Although not numerous, specialist farming cooperatives—typically those producing grapes or fruit—were also formed in addition to collective farms. Their members, in addition to engaging in certain common activities, mainly cultivated the land as individual household plots, forming the second group of small farms. Third, we must include the approximately 100,000 individual farmers who remained after collectivization and did not join the cooperative system.⁴ Last but not least, the statistics of the time listed the auxiliary farms of the non-agricultural strata of the population as the fourth category. This category primarily included the lands retained by workers and pensioners who had left agriculture and the endowed lands of workers of state farms and other organizations, but more

3 Initially, the authorities considered small-scale production within the framework of household and auxiliary farming as a temporary concession, mainly to offset the losses resulting from the production of large-scale production that had not yet become consolidated. However, from the beginning of the 1960s, the party leadership was not unified in its assessment of small-scale production, as the agrarian lobbyists wanted to make it a permanent element of socialist agriculture. The main stages of this process are described in Varga, "Mezőgazdasági reformmunkálatok."

4 An important and interesting research topic is the fate of farmers who were left out of the process of collectivization. Many were left out because they owned land that, for some reason, could not be integrated into the development of large-scale field farming. However, a crucial question is what happened to them after this: did they remain in agriculture, and if so, how did they manage to survive? The Rural History Research Group, jointly established by HUN-REN [the Hungarian Research Network] Research Centre for the Humanities and the Committee of National Remembrance, considers research into this issue, among other things, to be one of its tasks.

broadly, it included all those who, regardless of their occupation, engaged in any form of agricultural production, even if they only had a hobby garden.⁵

Using a kind of simplification, the statistics of the time also classified members of specialized cooperatives and farms run by individuals who had been left out of the collectivization process as auxiliary farms. They also provided an explanation for this, the reason stemming from the power/ideological consideration that “the most important layer, the data on the cooperative members of household farms of agricultural production, should be clearly available.”⁶ All this clearly shows that although household farms and auxiliary farms appeared side by side in many statements, the two categories never fell under, and could not fall under, the same assessment since there was a crucial difference in their relationship to property and the socialist sector. Since household farming included the production of cooperative members on land provided by the cooperatives, as well as the keeping of animals around the house, this activity was considered an integral part of cooperative production.⁷ The Act on Agricultural Cooperatives made it the duty of the managers of cooperatives to develop household farms as well. The fundamental difference is that, compared to household farms, families working on auxiliary farms did not have cooperative members. Therefore, farming was carried out on personally owned or rented land and equipment, in addition to another main occupation, possibly a pension, or less often by an individual farmer.⁸

The existence and maintenance of small farms were associated with a multitude of contradictions that affected their operating framework and limited their possibilities. At the same time, the party leadership, which proclaimed the primacy of common property, could not renounce what they produced despite objections arising from ideological considerations. One piece of contemporary literature self-critically stated that “the successes of large-scale production for a long-time distracted attention from the fact that many small farms collectively produce a significant amount of product.” The author also added that small-scale production was mainly relegated to the periphery of interest due to its nature, which was considered temporary.⁹

The underlying reasons, however, paint a more complex picture. The roots of the issue can, of course, be traced back to ideological anomalies since the basic

5 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1217.

6 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1217.

7 For more information on the specific symbiosis of large-scale farming and household farms, the products produced by the household farms, and their role in agricultural production, see: Schlett, *Stratégiai ágazat*, 73–76.

8 Household and auxiliary farms in the Hungarian agriculture (1984). <https://videa.hu/videok/nagyvilag/haztaji-es-kisegito-gazdasagok-...-gazdasag-magyar-mezogazdasag-0q4LtmrF5va-jIplE> (Accessed: 15 June 2024).

9 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1216.

problem was—as Deputy Minister Imre Kovács¹⁰ put it—“whether small-scale production is at all compatible [with socialist principles and practice].” The Kádár regime, however, actually viewed increasing agricultural production, including the products of small farms, as a guarantee of “good political public sentiment.”¹¹ One of the components of this was that the activities of small farms provided families with additional income, which was also overlooked by the authorities since the system considered raising the standard of living to be one of the most important political aspirations in terms of its own legitimacy. Since the party-state considered the working class to be its main ally, it was also a constant concern that these additional sources of income should not exceed those of industrial workers. The restrictive measures affecting small farms partly stemmed from this.

However, the authorities initially considered the most important aspect regarding both household and auxiliary farms to be that these farms and the families operating them were almost completely self-sufficient in many products, including vegetables, fruit, meat, and eggs, thereby relieving the pressure on the central supply system.¹² In fact, small farms accounted for more than a third of agricultural production by 1976. However, when examining animal husbandry alone, the proportion was even higher, as they were responsible for a 60 percent share of pig farming and over 90 percent of small animal farming.¹³

From the 1970s, however, alongside self-sufficiency, commodity production became increasingly prominent, which was reflected in the terminology: the term ‘small producers’ appeared at that time. According to a contemporary statistical approach, however, the reason for the new name was that from then on, these farms were considered a ‘long-term category’.¹⁴ Examining the history of small farms in the Kádár era, the name change undoubtedly marks a boundary line, not only in an economic but also in a political sense, as a shift in approach occurred in the assessment of these farm types in the background. However, it must also be emphasized that the attitude of the authorities was fundamentally guided by economic necessity. At the same time, the new situation that emerged created a somewhat more favorable, freer, and more permissive atmosphere for small farms compared to the previous ones.

10 Imre Kovács was Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food between October 1975 and January 1984. History Database. Directory. Imre Kovács. https://www.tortenelmitar.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4797&catid=74%3Ak&Itemid=67 (Accessed: 14 March 2024).

11 Kovács, “A háztáji,” 38.

12 For more details, see: Juhász, “Agrárpiac.”

13 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ő. e. 10 February 1976.

14 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1217.

Small farms, which had been tolerated by the system for years, were initially subjected to restrictive measures, mainly to meet the labor needs of cooperatives and later to reduce incomes.¹⁵ Despite this, the production of household and auxiliary farms developed dynamically in the first four years of the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1971–1975) compared to the previous periods. The favorable process stopped by the end of the plan period, and a decline occurred in 1975. This was particularly noticeable in the field of animal husbandry, as at the beginning of 1976, the number of pigs was more than 1 million (1.1 million) less, and the number of cattle was 70 thousand less than a year earlier.¹⁶ The negative trend was due to the 1973 oil crisis and its ripple effect. The resulting increasing internal supply problems, as well as exports to both the West and the East, made increasing production a strategic factor.¹⁷

The shift in arguments for and against small farms, the change in perspective of power, and, more importantly, adaptation to the established economic situation were reflected in measures aimed at supporting small-scale production. This changed approach was already reflected in the law on the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1976–1980), issued at the end of 1975, which stated as follows:

“Household and auxiliary farms, as well as agricultural specialist groups, must be assisted with appropriate interest, with the machinery and tools necessary for production, and by maintaining sales security, so that they can make the best use of their production opportunities.”¹⁸

Due to the severity of the economic situation, at the beginning of the following year, on February 10, the Political Committee (PC) of the state party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), also discussed the main issues related to household and auxiliary farms. The Fifth Five-Year Plan, despite limited budgetary and investment opportunities in agriculture, counted on an annual growth rate of 3.2–3.4 percent. Under the given circumstances, the importance of small farms, which had been tolerated until then mainly due to their role in self-sufficiency and export, increased. An important aspect of this was the fact that one-quarter of agricultural fixed assets were owned by these types of farms.¹⁹ A census conducted in 1972 already showed that 40 percent of the farm buildings on small farms, the stables representing the greatest value, were unused.²⁰ This trend worsened further, as

15 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1216.

16 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ő. e. 10 February 1976.

17 Romány, “Az Agrárpolitikai Tézisektől,” 409–10.

18 1975. évi IV. tv. (XII. 24.).

19 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ő. e. 10 February 1976.

20 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1227.

the report submitted to the PC about four years later, which summarized the data for several areas—such as stables and wine cellars—reported a utilization capacity of only 60–70 percent. While there was plenty of potential in the fixed assets owned by small farms, replacing them completely with large-scale production equipment would have required approximately 150 billion forints. The time for ideological deliberations was over; the party leadership had no choice but to view and open up to small farms as internal resources. Thus, despite the fact that it was stated in a resolution at the PC meeting in question that they still considered it important that “the socialist features of agriculture as a whole should be strengthened” in order to increase the efficiency of farming “in addition to the further expansion of large-scale enterprises, we must exploit all the possibilities of household farming to the fullest extent.” They also emphasized that “Due to the changing social and economic circumstances, we must expect the gradual modernization of small-scale production. This is partly a condition for household production not to decline and for its attractiveness to increase among younger generations. In addition to providing varieties and materials with higher productivity, it is important to create the conditions for technical development.”²¹

Based on the instructions of the PC, in line with what was said at the meeting, the Council of Ministers also had to put the issue of small-scale production on the agenda, which, in its resolution issued in March, stated that “in addition to the primary development of large-scale agricultural enterprises and the strengthening of socialist features in their activities, agricultural production on household and auxiliary farms must also be supported—as a socially useful activity.” The significance of the resolution, therefore, primarily lay in the fact that household and auxiliary farms could move from the tolerated status that had existed for many years to the supported category. Taking into account the differences in principle outlined above in relation to the two types of farms, it is also important that the provision also mentioned that household and auxiliary farms must be treated uniformly in the future.²²

How the provisions of the PC or the Council of Ministers were implemented and the conditions under which household and auxiliary farms could operate prior to these always depended largely on the county, district, or local party committees, as well as the councils, but also on the leadership of the cooperatives. That is why it is also worth mentioning that in the report submitted to the PC, it was acknowledged that small farms were affected by excesses, and at the same time, it was stated that they expected the new regulations to reduce these. One area of such excess was taxation, so the PC decision also required the modification of the tax system, emphasizing at the same time that all this must be implemented in a way that “prevents

21 MNL OL M-KS 288, f. 5. cs. 684. ö. e. 10 February 1976.

22 1006/1976. MT hat. (III. 16.); Varga, “Questioning.”

the generation of unjustified incomes.”²³ The background to this was the previously mentioned political viewpoint that the growth of industrial wages should not exceed that of agricultural incomes. The measures thus adopted involved the duality of the brakes that were applied arising from ideological objections and various concessions arising from economic necessity.

The political leadership considered it very important that the content of the resolution be given adequate publicity, or more precisely, that these newly adopted principles be the benchmarks in shaping public opinion. The basis for this was the article written by Deputy Minister Imre Kovács and published in the *Social Review* in March 1976, which provided a concise summary of the resolution of the PC and the Council of Ministers. In establishing the unity of perspective desired by the party, it was treated as a defining principle that socialist development “was not disturbed in any way by the fact that a part of agricultural products has come from small farmers since the socialist reorganization, up to the present day. However, if we had suppressed their production for any reason, the resulting shortage of goods would have caused disruptions in our supply and exports, ultimately in our economic development, and even in the political mood.”²⁴ The deputy minister’s words represent a kind of ideological resolution and retrospective self-justification of the policy pursued against small farms until then.

The appreciation of the situation of small farms is also indicated by the fact that the general agricultural census of 1972 also covered these farms, and thanks to this, for the first time, the party and other interested official bodies were able to obtain a comprehensive picture of agricultural production outside large-scale farms. The date of the statistical survey is also important, as it provides an authentic picture of the period before the oil price explosion. Although data were regularly collected on animal husbandry, a comprehensive census was not conducted until 1981, nearly ten years after 1972.²⁵

Although the 1981 survey was not as extensive as the one nine years earlier, it is essential to highlight that it provided a precise description of which households were considered small producers. Thus, based on area, those properties reaching 1,500 square meters (800 in the case of a garden, vineyard, or orchard), and, based on livestock, those having one large animal (cattle, pig, horse, sheep, goat, mule, buffalo, donkey) or at least fifty adult poultry, twenty female rabbits, or twenty bee colonies were classified as small producers.²⁶

23 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ō. e. 10 February 1976.

24 Kovács, “A háztáji,” 38.

25 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1218.

26 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1219.

The two surveys, therefore, provide important data on small-scale production, and they also allow us to track the socioeconomic processes that indicate the most significant changes that took place in small-scale production. Based on these, it can be seen that between 1972 and 1981, the number of small producers decreased by 11 percent, while different trends were observed in the two main types of farms, as the number of household farms of production cooperative members decreased by 14 percent, while the number of auxiliary farms practically changed little. Translated into numbers, this meant that while in 1972, a total of 1,681,000 small-scale producers were registered, in 1981, there were only about 1,500,000. The number of people with a household plot decreased from 782,000 in 1972 to 674,000 in 1981, while the number of auxiliary farms decreased by only 11,000, from 752,000 to 741,000. In a breakdown that excludes branches of cultivation, the decrease in the land area held by small producers exceeded 20 percent during the nine-year interval under examination. The decrease was more pronounced in the case of auxiliary farms, as their cultivated area decreased from more than half a thousand (522) hectares to 296 thousand. It can be considered a huge result that, at the same time, this did not lead to a decrease in the value of goods they produced.²⁷

According to the report submitted to the Secretariat of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on June 16, 1980, on the experiences of implementing the 1976 resolution of the PC, in 1979, the combined gross production value of household and auxiliary farms exceeded the 1976 level by 11 percent, i.e., neither the number of people participating in production nor the decrease in the land area had reduced the level of commodity production on small farms. The secretariat resolution prepared on the basis of the report declared overall that "the resolution of the Political Committee of February 10, 1976, strengthened the uniform assessment of the household and auxiliary farms, and its guidelines helped the implementation of the tasks." The resolution also added that "the consolidation of the financial interests of the producers and the improvement of the material and technical supply played an important role in achieving the results." As a general statement, it was stated that overall, the desire for production had increased in relation to household and auxiliary farms, but "the number of people setting up for commodity production has increased, especially among young people." Despite the supportive atmosphere, however, the authorities were unable to overcome its own limitations stemming from the ideological brakes. Since they believed that the production of goods on household and auxiliary farms was already occurring in order to increase incomes, they also formulated the following warning: "We must therefore ensure that the income level remains stimulating." In addition to the results, the report

27 Oros, "A mezőgazdasági kistermelés", based on the tables on pages 1219–1225.

also addressed problems, among which the further decline in the cow population and, in close connection with this, disruptions in feed supply were highlighted.²⁸

The party state's main measures affecting small-scale production

Although the 1980 Secretariat Report cited above still reported on the decline in the cow population and feed supply disruptions, several laws and decrees addressed the problem of declining cattle breeding after the PC Resolution of February 10, 1976.

As already mentioned, from the mid-1970s, the desire for pig breeding and fattening also declined sharply; however, the liquidation of the cow population on small farms was even more severe. The process accelerated in 1974–1975, mainly due to problems with feed supply, taxation, and sales.²⁹ It should also be added that the foot-and-mouth disease epidemic of 1972–1973 also caused serious damage to the cattle population; the resulting loss was estimated at around 2.5 billion forints.³⁰ All this was important because a significant percentage of the export base came from small-scale production. It is no coincidence that the Fifth Five-Year Plan, issued in December 1975, also specified a vigorous increase in the number of cattle as an important goal and also stated that “cow keeping on household and auxiliary farms must be supported more intensively”³¹ To this end, serious steps were taken in 1976, and at the end of the year, a joint decree of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture and Food was published, which stipulated the financial support for cow keeping on household and auxiliary farms.³² It should be noted that the subsidy established in the regulation, i.e., 2,500 forints for the first cow and 5,000 forints per cow for the second and subsequent cows, was a significant amount, given that the gross average wage in 1977 was 3,413 forints.³³

28 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 609. ö. e. 16 June 1980.

29 Romány, “Az Agrárpolitikai Tézisektől,” 408–9.

30 Mészáros and Soós, “A ragadós száj- és körömfájás,” 705. We have not escaped the European epidemics of 1952–1954, 1964–1965, 1968–1969 and 1972–1973. However, foot-and-mouth disease has not occurred in Hungary since 1973. Since then, more than fifty years later, just as the study was being prepared, the highly contagious disease reappeared in Hungary in the spring of 2025. Mészáros and Soós, “A ragadós száj- és körömfájás”, 698.

31 1975. évi IV. tv. (XII. 24.)

32 “For applications submitted by household and auxiliary farms after January 1, 1977, a subsidy of forints 2,500 shall be paid for the first cow, and forints 5,000 for the second and each subsequent cow.” 53/1976. (XII. 29.) PM–MÉM sz. együttes r.

33 Central Statistical Office. Summary tables (STADAT). 2.1.1. Economically active, gross average earnings, real earnings (1960–). https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_hosszu/h_qli001.html (Accessed: 18 September 2024).

One of the main obstacles to the growth of livestock farming was the problem of feeding. For example, the 1980 report prepared by the Economic Policy Department of the Heves County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party directly stated that "a continuous supply of feed is not ensured."³⁴ The situation, therefore, painted a very serious picture, not only in this county but also nationwide, which is why it was important to take stock of existing resources and make the most of the opportunities. Thus, the 1976 Council of Ministers resolution stipulated that "the executive committees of the councils should ensure that the grass crops of ditch banks, flood protection embankments, and other unused grasslands are utilized, or that cattle farmers can receive this crop free of charge."³⁵

The Council of Ministers' resolution did expand the possibilities of purchasing feed, but sufficient feed to supply the growing number of animals could only be provided by hand with enormous work and investments of energy. Small-scale farms could, therefore, only become more efficient if they also invested in mechanization. However, despite the intention and even the sufficient money in the pockets of each farmer, in the late 1970s, it was simply almost impossible for individuals to individually obtain a machine.

The Fifth Five-Year Plan Act already mentioned that household and auxiliary farms should be assisted with the machinery necessary for production so that they could make the most of their production potential.³⁶ After this, the 1976 PC decision also stated that "the gradual modernization of small-scale production must be taken into account due to changing social and economic circumstances." It was also added that "this is partly a condition for household-type production not to decline, and even for its attractiveness to increase among younger generations. In addition to providing varieties and materials with higher productivity, it is important to create the conditions for technical development." They believed that during the Fifth Five-Year Plan period, it would be necessary to provide various small machines worth about 1.5 billion forints.³⁷ The Council of Ministers decree issued following the party decision also stated that "in order to promote agricultural production in household and auxiliary farms, measures must be taken to meet the needs for small machines arising in the Fifth Five-Year Plan period."³⁸ The ministerial decrees, based on political will and theoretical guidelines, primarily provided support for the purchase of

34 MNL HVL XXXV. 22-c. Végrehajtó bizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. 1980. november 11. [Minutes of Executive Committee, 11 November 1980.]

35 1006/1976. MT hat. (III. 16.)

36 1975. évi IV. tv. (XII. 24.)

37 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ö. e. 10 February 1976.

38 1006/1976. MT hat. (III. 16.)

garden tractors and various small machines for household and auxiliary farms.³⁹ These measures, therefore, did not yet extend to the purchase of higher-power machines and two-axle tractors, although the demand for them from small producers was already there at that time.

If we browse the classified ads of the most important rural press organ, the weekly newspaper *Szabad Föld*, we can see that, for example, 'wanted' type ads for the MTZ 50 tractor appeared in the paper as early as 1977. The following year, in 1978 and then in 1979, the number of both 'wanted' and 'offered' type ads increased dynamically, which extended to other large machines in addition to tractors: advertisements appeared for the sale of plows, lawnmowers, and farm trailers, which are also essential for transportation.⁴⁰ It is, therefore, clear that the state party's permissive policy towards household and auxiliary farms fell short of meeting the demands of small producers. The purchase of tractors and associated machinery by private individuals was not yet permitted in the late 1970s; however, such transactions—although outside the legal framework—took place in negligible numbers, as the above-mentioned classified ads also confirm. The real economic processes, therefore, were ahead of the legislators; a legal gap was created, which was only resolved at the beginning of 1980. The importance of the issue is clearly indicated by the fact that measures were taken about the use of vehicles by private individuals—including the purchase of tractors by small farmers—within the framework of a Council of Ministers decree.⁴¹ Pál Romány,⁴² then Minister of Agriculture and Food also noted in a later article that although the possibility had already been available since 1980, "the acquisition was more difficult than the licensing."⁴³

In the resolution of the Secretariat of June 16, 1980, while the turnover of small machinery in the past period, which exceeded 1 billion forints, was satisfactorily acknowledged, the difficulties with purchasing individual tools and the fact that the growing demand for small gardening machinery with internal combustion engines could not be met from domestic production and that there were few small-capacity

39 53/1976. (XII. 29.) PM–MÉM sz. együttes r.

40 Classified ads. *Szabad Föld*, 1977–1979.

41 3/1980. MT r. (II. 6.).

42 Romány Pál, dr. (Szajol, 17 November 1929 – Budapest, 16. December 2019). Pál Romány was the head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food between 4 July 1975, and 27 June 1980. For a detailed biography, see: National Directory. Pál Romány. <https://magyarnemzetinevter.hu/person/650882/> (Accessed: 14 April 2024).

43 Romány, "Az Agrárpolitikai Tézisektől", 401. The difficulties in procurement were essentially due to the fact that the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), established in 1949, required member countries to specialize in the production of certain products. Under the division of labor thus established, Hungary stopped producing agricultural machinery, among other things.

transport vehicles, was highlighted. The document even referred to the significant volume of imports from capitalist countries, but upon reading between the lines of the resolution, it is clear that there was not enough stock available to meet the demand for various tools, and even more so for machinery. Despite the shortage of machinery, the creators of the resolution also perceived the increasingly pronounced demand:

“There is a strong desire, especially among the younger generations involved in production and the urban population, to make work easier and to modernize small-scale agricultural production.”⁴⁴

The key to the effectiveness and success of a livestock auxiliary farm also lay in how it could solve the mechanization problem. In the midst of procurement difficulties, the role of informal ties and personal relationships came into play with great importance since even the machinery discarded by the cooperatives and state farms was not always easy to obtain. The individual expertise of the farmers proved to be indispensable for operating the machines, which were often purchased as wrecks. It was almost impossible to obtain a completely new machine, as the owner of an auxiliary farm at the time stated, confirming the words of the Minister of Agriculture just quoted: “It was an exception and required a lot of investigation.”⁴⁵ In the case of a small producer, the purchase of a new machine, therefore, represented an absolute novelty since both domestically produced and exported machines were primarily used to satisfy the needs of state farms and cooperatives.

The different characteristics of household and auxiliary farms

Based on the processes outlined so far, we can compare household and auxiliary farms according to three aspects: in addition to the mechanization of the farms, it is worth examining the method of feed procurement and the extent of commodity production as the output of these two methods.

The proportion of mechanical equipment and tractors was already greater on auxiliary farms in 1972.⁴⁶ The reason for this was that the mechanical needs of household farms were largely met with the machines of the cooperatives, while the auxiliary farms remained much more dependent on themselves in this respect. If they wanted to prosper or even grow, they were forced to handle the tasks that required machines themselves.

The level of mechanization of small producer farms developed only very slowly

44 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 609. ō. e. 16 June 1980.

45 The memoirs of István, a farmer from Heves County.

46 Elek et al., *Családi kisgazdaságok*, 83.

despite the increasingly permissive political climate. A 1987 survey based on the family budget and production statistics of agricultural small producers included 8,642 small producer households whose members owned some land. The survey also covered the equipment of the farms and found that “out of 100 non-hobby small farms, one had a two-axle tractor in 1986, two had a garden tractor, seven had a motor hoe, two had a universal garden machine, and two had a milking machine.” Understandably, this led to the conclusion that the farms were poorly equipped.⁴⁷

Promoting the mechanization of small producer farmers was also essential for an efficient feed supply. According to established practice, “the basis of small-holder livestock farming was feed produced by large-scale farms,” but the amount of self-produced feed continuously declined, in 1983 being about half that of the previous ten years.⁴⁸

Those with household plots received or could receive an annual crop allowance for the maintenance of their animals after their land was included in the cooperative, which meant both a form of security and dependence. There were no cooperative members among the families operating the auxiliary farms, so this option was not available when it came to purchasing feed. Thus, similarly to mechanical work, the auxiliary farms were more self-reliant in this area. This created a more challenging situation, but solving this with ingenuity and creativity set these farmers on the path to strengthening their independence and encouraged them to find solutions.

A 1977 county party committee report already pointed out that in terms of animal feed, “the available by-products represent a favorable condition for the development of cattle and sheep breeding.”⁴⁹ Later, a resolution issued by the HSWP Secretariat also stated that “attention should be drawn to the use of by-products, locally found so-called waste materials, that can be well utilized in household farming.”⁵⁰

For example, the owner of an auxiliary farm in Heves County used his personal connections to obtain the chaff that would otherwise have been thrown away from the local mill, from which the sifted grains could be used to feed the animals. Another important source of feed was another industrial by-product, sugar beet slices, which could be obtained from the nearby sugar factory. When ensiled, these slices provided food for the cows for a longer period of time.

In many cases, economic necessity led auxiliary farms to seek innovative solutions, which may have played a decisive role in enabling them to become

47 Burgerné et al., “A mezőgazdasági kistermelők,” 4.

48 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1226.

49 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 534. ō. e. 10 October 1977.

50 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 609. ō. e. 16 June 1980.

more effectively involved in commodity production. According to a 1975 Central Statistical Office report, while the gross turnover of household farm goods exceeded that of 1970 by 35.5 percent, that of auxiliary farms showed much more dynamic growth of 129.4 percent.⁵¹ Comprehensive research on small-scale agricultural production conducted between 1976 and 1977 also pointed out that “among household and auxiliary farms, the former is the stagnant-regressive form of farming, and the latter is the dynamically growing form of farming.”⁵²

In this regard, three important facts concerning the auxiliary farms of the period should be emphasized. As has been mentioned several times, the commodity-producing activity of small farms was noticeable from the first half of the 1970s, but within this, the tendency and desire for commodity production, as well as the number of people setting up to do this, increased, especially among young people.⁵³

On the other hand, specialized commodity production was more typical of families that had a family member in an industrial occupation, as opposed to traditional peasant households.⁵⁴ It was also observed that specialized commodity production economies developed among auxiliary farms, especially in the field of animal husbandry.⁵⁵

The most dynamic development was therefore expected when a young farmer working full-time in an industrial plant started producing goods. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the Council of Ministers’ resolution, mentioned here several times, issued in March 1976, also emphasized that “the involvement of wage earners (including the younger generation) in agricultural production activities must be promoted.”⁵⁶ Based on the data from the 1972 census, it can be seen that small-scale production was typically carried out by the older generation, specifically those aged sixty and above, i.e., pensioners. Only 7.2 percent of those under thirty were engaged in small-scale farming in 1972, and only 5.5 percent in 1981. It should be added that during the nine-year period, the number of small-scale farmers decreased among those aged over thirty and forty, while only those over fifty increased in proportion—by more than 7 percent. It is also important to note that in the indicated period, the number of those engaged in small-scale farming in addition to active gainful employment increased by 3.2 percent among those whose main occupation was not agriculture.⁵⁷ Overall, therefore, by the beginning of the 1980s, the majority

51 Elek et al., *Családi kisgazdaságok*, 83.

52 Varga, “Tudományos életünk,” 69.

53 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 684. ō. e. 10 February 1976; MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 609. ō. e. 16 June 1980.

54 Elek et al., *Családi kisgazdaságok*, 83.

55 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1217.

56 1006/1976. MT hat. (III. 16).

57 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1222–23. Figures based on Tables 4 and 5 on the indicated

of small-scale farmers were no longer members of the farmers' cooperative but were instead industrial workers and employees.⁵⁸

Only one of the dual objectives of the Council of Ministers' resolution was thus achieved since, even if to a small extent, progress was made in involving wage earners in agricultural production activities, but this effort apparently proved less effective with the younger generation. The root of the problem is also clearly indicated by the already mentioned 1983 statistical work, which stated:

“The younger generation generally does not undertake production using traditional peasant methods, and they can only count on the further development of small-scale production if they have the opportunity to replace manual physical work with machine work.”⁵⁹

As discussed in detail, there was a huge lag in the supply of machines, which could only be offset by humans over time.

One of the most interesting questions among researchers studying small-scale production in the Kádár era is how much time and overtime were required for small-scale producers to operate their farms. According to the working time balance for the entire economic year 1972/1973, the average working time of households dedicated to household and auxiliary farms was four and a half hours per day. However, the survey also indicated that 55 percent of the working time was spent by women and 61 percent by pensioners and dependents.⁶⁰ On a livestock auxiliary farm, this was typically distributed in such a way that the structural operation of the farm and the mechanical work were the responsibility of the head of the family, but the additional activities of female and retired workers played an indispensable role in daily tasks. Being a small-scale producer typically required overtime, after the eight-hour working day, for the head of the family. Therefore, it was not an easy fate for those who undertook small-scale production, particularly regarding maintaining a commodity-producing auxiliary farm. This could mainly only be achieved by those farmers who had a strong love of the land, respect for traditional peasant life, and an attraction to it.

Primarily citing the interests of increasing food production, both implicitly and in order to maintain the legitimacy of the system, the party leadership was therefore forced to commit itself to the development of small-scale production from the second half of the 1970s onward. Proceeding on this principle, they also envisaged further improvements in the material and technical conditions of production

pages.

58 Varga, “Mezőgazdasági reformelképzések,” 228.

59 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1236.

60 Oros, “A mezőgazdasági kistermelés,” 1221.

during the period of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981–1985).⁶¹

However, the development of commodity-producing auxiliary farms was not only hindered by the factors listed above. They could only move forward if they had access to their own or rented land, but given the “legally limited individual land use,”⁶² this solution encountered serious difficulties. It was only with the Land Act issued in 1987 that somewhat greater freedom of maneuver concerning the land issue was achieved.⁶³

Conclusion

The issue of small-scale production in the Kádár era has so far been mostly addressed by sociologists—István Márkus, Pál Juhász, Iván Szelényi and Imre Kovách—who typically approached the topic from the perspective of social mobility in their writing.⁶⁴ However, less work has been done to explore the characteristics of the two main economic types associated with the concept of small-scale production and how household and auxiliary farming differed. Although politics made the difference between the two categories very noticeable in practice, the constant mention of the concepts together in many respects seemed intended to conceal their different developmental characteristics. As part of the propaganda of the time, political actors tried to insinuate that domestic small-scale production “differs qualitatively and in content from small-scale commodity-producing economies operating under capitalist production conditions.”⁶⁵

Comparing household with auxiliary farms, however, it is clear that the latter farming method was more similar to Western small farms in many respects. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the authorities tried to lump the two types of economy together, often mixing them up.

The three areas that are examined (mechanization, feeding, and commodity production) clearly support the claim that during the socialist period, “despite all the differences, there was a type of farm, the family small farm, which in many elements and characteristics [was] similar to the part-time small farms of developed market economies.”⁶⁶ This type of economic operation was the auxiliary farm. Although the discussion of this issue clearly requires further research, it can be stated as an important

61 MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 7. cs. 609. ō. e. 16 June 1980.

62 Burgerné et al., “A mezőgazdasági kistermelők,” 4.

63 1987. évi I. tv. (IV. 3).

64 For an excellent summary of this, see: Kovách, “Polgárosodás.”

65 Kovács, “A háztáji,” 41.

66 Elek et al., *Családi kisgazdaságok*, 83.

conclusion that, in relation to the small-scale agricultural production of the Kádár era, the two forms of farming with distinct characteristics—household farming and auxiliary farming—can be clearly distinguished. Although the findings in the study point to the roots of the differences, it would be worthwhile expanding the research in the future—even through case studies—and looking on a broader basis at the extent to which, and in what aspects, there were similarities between the small farms operating under a capitalist framework and the auxiliary farms in Hungary.

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Knowledge Technology

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Abstract. Language – writing – printing – media communication—regulated flow of information: Academic knowledge is about technology. Knowledge is shaped by the regulation of information flows. The discourse of authors is a fundamental part of these regulations, but only a part. Knowledge is not the result of discourse but of organisation. The essay uses the university system, the journal system, the Turing-machine and Lichtenberg's physics to prove this. It shows how quality, coherence, progressive diversity, sustainable permanence, and mechanisms for testing, reproducing, transmitting, and supplementing what has been achieved emerge from organised quantity. The thesis of the essay is that academic knowledge is a technology that continues to produce technology.

Keywords: technology, knowledge, science, universities, journals, Lichtenberg, discourse, discourse organization, Turing-machines

My thesis is: knowledge is technology. What kind of thesis is that? What is knowledge? What is technology? The best definition of technology seems to be that technology is everything that increases the potentiality of the individuals of a species beyond the potentiality inherent in a single individual. Simple examples of this are a hammer or honeycombs. Technology is not limited to humans.

What is knowledge? Plato said it is justified belief. Since then, philosophical epistemology has debated when and whether justified belief can ever be achieved. Michael Polanyi further complicated the matter at the end of the 1950s by referring to implicit, unspeakable knowledge. "We know more than we are able to say," he said.¹ A famous example of this is that you can't say why you can keep your balance on a bike. The knowledge I would like to discuss is academic knowledge—that is, scholarly knowledge and, since the eighteenth century, the knowledge embodied in the sciences and humanities. In many respects, this knowledge also includes

1 Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, 4.

non-justified belief and implicit knowledge—for example, the experience of observing processes properly. The knowledge I analyse is based on communication and interaction.

In its weakest sense, the thesis means that knowledge uses technology, but that knowledge and technology are created by innovative minds. In its strongest version, the thesis means that knowledge is based entirely on technology; that knowledge is also technology in its substance, and that technological knowledge thus continues to produce technology. To summarize: Knowledge is technology and continues to essentially produce technology.

If this thesis is to make sense, two conditions must be met. The first condition is that technology is part of evolution. I could make it easy on myself and point out that everything, without exception, including culture and intelligence—as far as we now know—is part of evolution. However, I will make it a little more difficult and show that knowledge technology is based on selection, which enables further selection, and that its development is therefore not a straightforward, let alone teleological process. It is rather—if you will allow me the comparison—the technological weather at a certain time in a certain place in the context of the technological climate. The second prerequisite is that if the assertion ‘knowledge is technology’ makes sense, it must be possible to produce knowledge—potentially at least—with- out the participation of authors. That sounds theoretical. But as a historian, I am an empiricist. I do not peddle theoretical reflection, but rather empirical examples.

This essay consists of four parts. In the first part, I will talk about the elements and characteristics of knowledge technology. In the second part, I will use the example of the ‘university’ to demonstrate how the elements and characteristics interact. In the third part, I will show the production of authorless, evolutionary knowledge using the example of academic journals. Finally, in the fourth part, Lichtenberg will be the witness for my thesis.

Elements and characteristics of knowledge technology

It is obvious that knowledge is technology. Knowledge was based on language, then also on writing; as academic knowledge since the fifteenth century, on printed mate- rial, and now—whether we like it or not—on digital data. Phonetics, the alphabet, printed text and digital data are the milestones in the development of knowledge up to now. From antiquity, knowledge has been composed of *scientia* and *techne*, i.e., of art and technology and thus of knowledge production on the one hand, and of its result, the “totality of human knowledge, insights and experiences of an epoch, which is systematically expanded, collected, preserved, taught and passed

on,” according to the German *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia* (hereafter, ‘*Brockhaus*’).² The *Brockhaus* already refers—consciously or unconsciously—to technology in relation to its expansion, collection, preservation, teaching, and passing on as characteristics of *scientia*. The French *Encyclopédie* divided the human mind into memory, reason, and imagination, which are also based on technologies: the technologies of memory and logic, as well as the skills of thinking, communicating, and formulating.³

If we combine the sign technologies of speaking, writing, printing, and digitizing with the data processing presented by the *Brockhaus* and the *Encyclopédie* as human knowledge, two basic elements and characteristics of knowledge technology emerge: universality on the one hand and the ability to communicate on the other.

Universality and communicability have developed more and more in the course of the development of knowledge technology. Language gives names to all things; writing materializes language on a carrier medium and thus removes the boundaries of time and place from what is said: what is said can be repeated in completely different places and in later years, even by simply reading it, without it having to be performed. Spoken words can be reproduced. Writing reinforces this. At the same time, writing adds a number of other techniques to the original technique of speaking. The carrier medium must be produced and negotiated. The documents must be written and can be administered. On the one hand, correspondence leads to a division of labour; on the other, it leads to writers and readers—to writing technicians, who—if you will allow me the anachronistic expression—stand as experts in opposition to those who have not mastered the technology and have no access to it. Third, correspondence gives rise to institutions: Administrations, whose procedures are based on writing, and authorities such as monasteries, which selectively collect and reproduce what is written. Fourthly and finally, it becomes possible to control knowledge as written material in a new form. Coherence is no longer tied to oral test procedures, such as disputation. The coherence of any statement and the details of statements can now be scrutinized individually, independent of time and place. The technology bundle ‘writing’ puts knowledge in a new epistemological position. In short, further knowledge technology has emerged from the knowledge technology ‘language’ that supports the development and differentiation of society, but at the same time also enables the continued evolution of knowledge technology. With printing, the knowledge technologies of managed signs reach a new level. A lot of clever things have been written about this—you will certainly be familiar with the work of Eisenstein, Goody, McLuhan, Giesecke, and many others.⁴ As with the step

2 *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 19. ed., vol. 24, Lemma Wissenschaft, cited by Wikipedia “Wissenschaft.”

3 Cp. le Rond d’Alembert, “Explication détaillée,” xlviij–lj.

4 Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution*; McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*; Goody, *Literacy in*

from spoken to written language, the transition from writing to printing adds new technologies to the old, and with them new apparatuses, networks, and institutions. Writing takes the words out of the speaker's mouth and puts them on paper. Printing takes the words out of the author's writing hand and hands them over to an apparatus. The apparatus is more than just movable type and a printing press. It includes printers, publishers, workers who build and operate the types and presses, paper-makers, etc. Above all, the apparatus includes the emergence of the literary market. With the printing press, knowledge technology not only inscribes itself into society. With the networks and economies generated by the production of type and presses, printing and publishing, distribution, circulation, administration, and, of course, first and foremost, the reception of texts, knowledge technology is transformed into the central organ of social organization. Knowledge technology becomes society. If written material is addressed to recipients, printed material is addressed to the market and the public. Once again, the new knowledge technology is associated with new epistemological possibilities. Once again, quantity turns into quality.

The printed text allows the differentiation of text genres, and it can be multiplied in an inflationary manner. This allows for identical collections of texts in all places where they are needed, and as far as the knowledge unit 'book' is concerned, with specific library profiles in each case. The moment knowledge becomes a question of supply and demand, criticism of knowledge can be differentiated and grouped. The respective knowledge is given its place on the knowledge map and can be advertised there.

We have taken the next evolutionary step towards digital data. 'Knowledge technology becomes society' is the label applied to book printing. This is now being inverted: Society is becoming knowledge technology through the universal accessibility and publishability of knowledge in real time. We are all part of this sender-receiver system that achieves the ultimate universality and communicativeness.

University: the elements and characteristics of knowledge technology in operation

If *scientia* is about expanding, collecting, storing, teaching, and passing on knowledge, then it is an apparatus. It was a good idea to realize "the whole epitome of scholarship in a factory-like way, by distributing the work," namely, through universities,

Traditional Societies; Giesecke, *Der Buchdruck in der frühen Neuzeit*. Behind the question of knowledge and technology lies a broad field of research, ranging from science and technology studies and the 'science in context' approach to laboratory studies and actor-network theory, media, collection and archive research, paper technologies, alphabetization research and the expansion of information technology to social technology and the anthropology of technology.

as Kant wrote at the beginning of the *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. There are depositors of knowledge for all subjects—people who administer the knowledge and use it to train the apprentices, i.e., students, to become “businessmen or workmen of scholarship” and thus “tools of government,” i.e., clergymen, judicial officers, and doctors.⁵ Kant’s point is that because the knowledge of the upper faculties is factory knowledge, philosophy is needed to control knowledge. The fact that philosophy also has a technical function can be disregarded here for now. More interesting is the idea of knowledge as a technical process. What is given is the network of universities with the individual universities as nodes and the diverse connections between the universities as network edges. Within the individual universities, subject areas are represented by and assigned to faculties, i.e., coordinated alongside each other. This constellation of knowledge, subdivided and networked as specialist knowledge, specifically modeled in line with the knowledge profiles of the individual universities and at the same time assigned to the university network, provides the technical framework for the processuality of the knowledge production of *scientia* in the expansion, collection, storage, teaching, and transmission of knowledge. In the networks and constellations of universities, we are dealing with a structured mechanism that allows that all these features be carried out in relation to one another, i.e., synchronized.⁶ Knowledge production follows the rhythms of the university and the media with which knowledge is communicated (Figure 1).

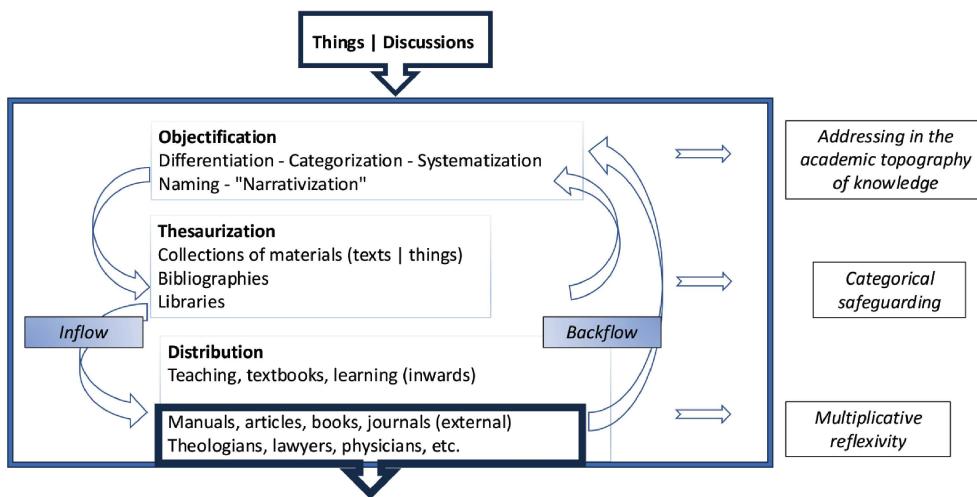


Figure 1 Processing knowledge in universities

5 Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, 3.

6 Cp. Gierl, “Synchronisation.”

Things and their discussions are brought into the university. There they are objectified in the body of knowledge, thesaurized, and then communicated both internally and externally.

What takes place in all fields of knowledge is an objectification of the subject of knowledge, which is associated with the dissection of the subject into categories and the parts assigned to the categories. The Bible has an Old and a New Testament; the flower has a base, sepals, petals, stamens, and pistils. All parts are named and thus lead the way to specific technical languages, which, in their unambiguousness, enable technical discourse and, at the same time, specific functional discussions about things. The technical operations of categorizing and describing knowledge lead, on the one hand, to the possibility of thesaurizing knowledge in an orderly fashion and, on the other hand, to the possibility of processing the objects of knowledge in a subject-specific manner. With the classification and discussions of new things within the subject system and its categories, they are 'narrated,' i.e., the description of knowledge is supplemented and modified. Mathematics is described mathematically, history historiographically.⁷ A bone can be discussed anatomically, evolutionarily, pathologically, physiologically, surgically, ethnologically, and archaeologically. Behaviour, to give another example, becomes a cultural, sociological, historical, philosophical, theological, or legal thing in the processing.

The objects of the input are thus addressed in the academic topography of knowledge.

Processing knowledge is a medial and at the same time tangible material event. Things are transformed into text. They are turned into books and thesaurized as books in collections. As with texts in libraries, they are made accessible with the help of catalogs and bibliographies. Knowledge is categorically secured in the process. The body of knowledge is communicated internally via teaching, textbooks, and learning. It is processed into texts in various media and brought to the outside world. At the same time, the supplemented body of knowledge feeds back into the grid, which controls the further absorption of things and discussions.

Authorless, evolutionary knowledge production—journals

The fact that the transformation of things into academic knowledge is a multiplicative process is important in two ways. Since technically multiplied knowledge is created, which flows back into the knowledge precipitation process with further multiplied knowledge—i.e., since knowledge expands in continuous selection spirals—

⁷ To process an object of knowledge professionally means to process it according to both the characteristics of the object and the social purposes of the subject area.

it can be assumed that knowledge technology in action is an evolutionary process. The second point is that with the differentiation and simultaneous multiplication of knowledge, quantity turns into quality. Form becomes content.

Knowledge does not only result from discourses, and discourses are not only based on the communication of authors. The separation between knowledge and something understood as context is historically not real. In real terms, the networks of context, such as the media, institutions, infrastructures, tools, procedures of communication, etc.,—ultimately everything that has constituted flow—are active components of knowledge production. Knowledge is not a result of discourse as such, but more generally of the organization of information.

The scope and composition of authorship are examples of this. Distinctions interact. They lead to differentiation within differentiations. In the 1760s, one assumes 2,500 authors were present in the German lands, in the 1790s, 7,000, and in 1810, about 12,500 authors. This means that what was known about state, religion, world and man developed not only because there existed Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant and some others, but because in 1810 there were twenty times as many authors as in 1650, writing in specialized media about newly developed subfields associated with general subjects.

Journals are another example of the organization of information. Journals define the knowledge belonging to a field and control its publicity, periodicity, and topicality. Publicity, periodicity, and topicality are powerful but complex parameters. It can be said, however, that publicity, periodicity, and topicality are meant empirically as the status quo of all reading and writing processes in a field. Reading and writing processes are subject to differentiation.

To get an overview of journal production in the German lands, I used Joachim Kirchner's standard bibliography of German periodicals.⁸ The bibliography lists 6,700 productions, of which Kirchner has classified 4,700 by content. Using Kirchner is not without problems.⁹ However, Kirchner's bibliography at least maps some central developmental steps (Figure 2).

From the beginning to 1750, about 500 journals were founded. This is the line of transparent cubes in the diagram. Dominant are general periodicals indicated in blue with 167 productions, followed by theological and locally focused journals—in the diagram, brown. One could call them lifeworld journals. The third relevant group in orange includes politics, literature, jurisprudence, medicine, and medically oriented natural history journals. I call this group social-organizational journals. In sum, until 1750, we are dealing strongly with the basic differentiation of the periodical market.

8 Kirchner, *Bibliographie der Zeitschriften des deutschen Sprachgebiets*, vol. 1: 1670–1830.

9 Published 1969, the classification scheme is historically problematic. Kirchner's categories reflect the library system of the twentieth century.

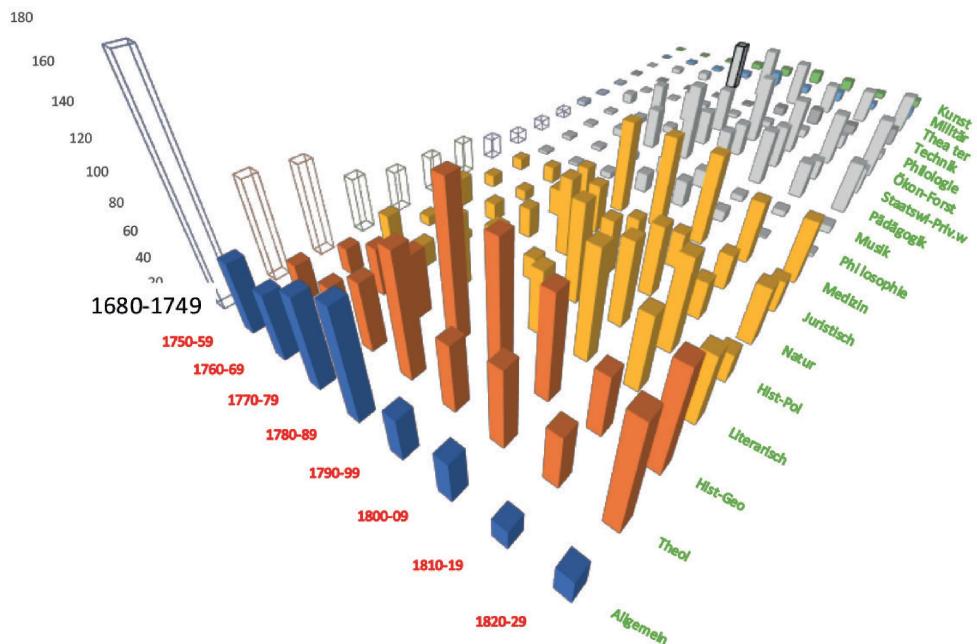


Figure 2 Foundation of journals, Germany, 1680–1830

	General content	Church	Local	Literature	History and Politics	Nature	Legal	Medicine	Philosophy	Music	Pedagogy	Economist	Agroforestry	Philology	Technology	Theater	Military	Art	
-1794	167	80	74	45	34	31	29	18	10	9	7	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	511
1750–1759	55	30	21	28	8	24	10	10	2	3	2	2	9	1	1	4	2	0	212
1760–1769	51	31	38	19	6	15	9	14	2	3	7	6	27	1	0	7	2	1	239
1770–1779	70	54	51	57	4	25	23	26	5	6	36	6	28	4	1	46	5	5	452
1780–1789	85	94	117	64	19	63	40	76	16	14	67	31	40	3	1	47	13	7	797
1790–1799	32	52	97	51	78	45	26	75	22	15	36	29	60	5	7	41	6	11	688
1800–1809	31	60	81	85	67	56	29	73	9	5	47	37	48	7	14	27	9	10	695
1810–1819	15	41	47	59	73	30	28	50	1	5	30	17	45	12	8	30	6	5	502
1820–1829	19	84	80	54	22	45	25	50	2	6	42	22	50	6	15	34	9	6	571
	525	526	606	462	311	334	219	392	69	66	274	154	308	40	48	236	52	45	4467

Table 1 Foundation of journals, Germany, 1680–1830: ten-year intervals

From 1760 to 1790, specialized journals emerged that not only served general areas of social regulation, such as law and medicine, but also created special organizational fields, such as history, economics, technology, philology, music, theatre, and the military. These specialized journals were the medial background for the development of disciplinary journals.

The period as a whole is characterized by an exponential increase in the number of journals founded in the German lands. While 500 journals were founded in the seventy years leading up to 1750, 800 were founded in the 1780s alone. All specialized journal rubrics of Kirchner show exponential growth in this phase. I have highlighted the massive jumps in green in the table. The increases point to a phenomenon central to information organization. They point to transitions from journal genealogies to journal clusters (Table 1).

Journals initially legitimized themselves by being successors to other defunct journals, before appealing to the need to treat a subject context that had not yet, or locally not yet, been observed. The trend was from the differentiation of the overall market to expansion and interaction within individual fields. If there is only one journal per field, these journals will communicate across field boundaries. However, if there are several journals per field (i.e., journal clusters), the journals interact primarily within the cluster. Communication within the field becomes self-sufficient. Again, differentiation and quantity transform into quality. We find that there is not only steady growth, but there are also exponential declines. I have highlighted them in yellow. In the background are political and social upheavals—the French Revolution first, then the Napoleonic wars, the breakdown of the Old Empire, and after 1815, the Restoration.¹⁰

It is relatively simple and, above all, coherent in terms of content to show how thoughts developed from Hobbes to Kant and so on. Thus, the classical history of knowledge can exclude the influence of information organization and knowledge technology and mostly does so implicitly and explicitly. It says: you only need Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, and no information organized from outside to get from Hobbes to Kant. Proponents of evolutionary information and, ultimately, knowledge technology seem to have a harder time of it. They have to show that knowledge of Hobbes and Kant is also possible without Hobbes and Kant, solely a result of the technological selection of information. The model for this, however, can be formed surprisingly simply. As the journals show, it is not just a theoretical model, but an empirically based one. The model does not grasp or map the

¹⁰ The differentiation, the leaps, and above all the declines indicate that the transformation of information into knowledge is not based on a vague relation between society and discourse, which would be just a truism, but on the organized technological transmission of information among representatives of society and representatives of discourse.

horrendous complexity of historical organization, but it does outline its potential. My empirical model of journals and information organization in general connects Borges's Babylonian Library with the Turing Machine.¹¹

Imagine books two hundred pages thick and a core character set consisting of a basic alphabet, a comma, a period, and a space—that is, twenty-five characters. Let one page of each book have forty lines, each line eighty characters. That is, there are twenty-five times twenty-five times twenty-five and so on possibilities per line. In total, twenty-five to the power of eighty possibilities. Each page has forty lines—that is, twenty-five to the power of 3,200 possibilities to combine characters—and the 200 pages have twenty-five to the power of 640,000 possibilities. That is, the library has twenty-five to the power of 640,000 books. They contain everything that can be written on 200 pages. It is an incomprehensible number of books, albeit a finite one (Figure 3).

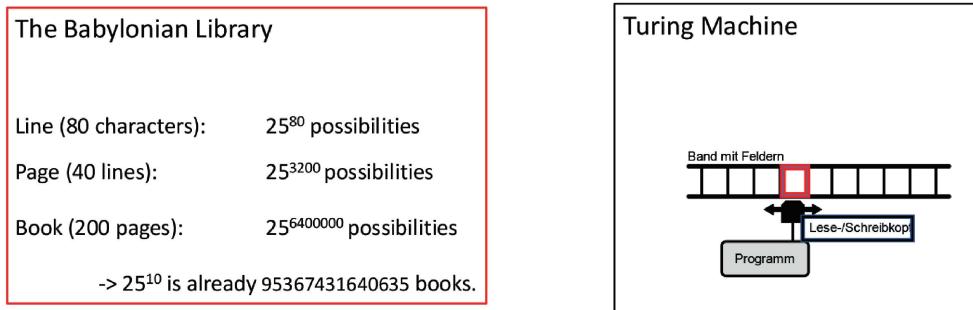


Figure 3 The Babylonian Library and the Turing Machine

But this has a problem: Everything that is contained in the Library in terms of sense is swimming connectionless in a gigantic ocean of nonsense. One needs a selection mechanism; that is, an organizational mechanism that brings the bits of sense in the ocean of nonsense together. Such an organizational mechanism exists, and it has existed since the beginning of civilization. It has been formed culturally and technically through the development of language, writing, alphabet, and printing, specifying the sender-receiver units and with them topicality, publicity, and periodicity. It now unmistakably defines history and our lives. It is the Turing machine.¹² The Turing machine consists of three parts: A tape of fields, a read-write unit, and a program. The program understands characters and vocabulary and assigns action grammar to them. The machine reads a field, rewrites it, then, depending on what it has read, goes to the right or left field or stays where it is, and it then repeats. The machine generates

11 Borges' La Biblioteca de Babel is part of Jorge Luis Borges, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.

12 Turing, *On Computable Numbers*; Ogihara, *An Introduction to Theory of Computation*. Cp. also Bremer, *Ist alles berechenbar?*

topicality and periodicity. It selects and thus organizes information. The machine is not actually of immense importance as a rudimentary computer model, but because Turing used it to prove mathematically that algorithms, i.e., rules of action, can be mathematized. It is one of the foundations of theoretical computer science. Go to the right field, go to the left field, or stay: The Turing machine, as a decision model, is at once a general model of organization and a general model of history. Reading and rewriting a field is what happens when people, put in a situation, interpret and react to the situation. The Turing model is a model of what historic events are. History would thus be a thing that is more and more able to define fields—that is, markets, networks, groups, events, etc.—and to organize sender-receiver chains in them—that is, to react on organized constellations.

If I were younger and smarter, I would have started a project on how the mathematics of the Turing machine can be applied to history and vice versa. It would be a project about the possibilities and limits of making history science. And it would provide answers to the question of what events are.

Journals are only one element, and the media are involved in the huge process of assembling and formatting knowledge. However, the journal network is organized as a simple reading and writing apparatus that drives knowledge production. The basic pattern is that a field is defined and read out; what is read out is organized and brought back to the field via a journal. From this derives a far-reaching hypothesis: Knowledge is designed through the regulation of information flow. The discourse of authors is a fundamental part of these regulations, but it is still a part. Knowledge is not the result of discourse, but of organization.

Journals are quite illustrative of the technical processing of knowledge, I think.

Lichtenberg and physical research as coordinated technology of knowledge

Contemporarily, Lichtenberg was not known for his sayings, but for his physics lectures. He became a full professor in 1775 and a full member of the Göttingen Academy a year later. His duties at the Academy included proposing physics-related prize questions and, after the Academy had posed them, assessing the answers it received. In the university, he gave the main physics lecture, in which he presented several hundred experiments based on his collection of instruments.¹³ The fame of this lecture and of Lichtenberg's physics was built on the gadgets and Lichtenberg's ability to present them. The content of the lectures was based on the textbook by his predecessor, Erxleben, which he revised several times. Lichtenberg only referred to ninety physical

13 Cp. Lichtenberg, *Vorlesung zur Naturlehre*.

compendia and texts for his lecture; on the other hand, to twenty-one journals and forty-one academy periodicals from thirty-eight European academies of science.

As a physicist, Lichtenberg was particularly interested in heat. It was the “soul of all organic and inorganic physics.”¹⁴ Lichtenberg’s preoccupation with heat is a vivid example of the interplay of instruments of knowledge as knowledge technology.

In 1786, Lichtenberg submitted eight questions to the Society as possible prize questions: two questions on thermodynamics, i.e., the absorption of heat; question three on the improvement and mathematical explanation of a water-lifting machine, questions four and five on the function of barometers; question six on the significance of time measurement in physics; seventh, a question about the gravity of the earth, which had been suggested by the late Göttingen astronomer and academy member Tobias Mayer, and eighth, concerning the intensity of the earth’s magnetism. At the time, Lichtenberg would have liked to have posed question six on the measurement of time. Blumenbach voted for a better understanding of the barometer. Lichtenberg’s classmates Meister and Kästner, however, preferred question three. The rest of the society agreed. So, question three was used.

In 1790, the Dutch Academy asked about the cause of heat. The *Göttingische Gelehrten Anzeigen* published the question. Lichtenberg thought about answering the prize question. At the same time, he made notes in his physics notebook: What is the thing called fire? Is it different from light? What is known about heat? He added references to contemporary theories. When he was invited to give a speech at the Göttingen Academy in 1792, he wanted to make the theory of heat his topic.¹⁵ In 1798, it was again up to Lichtenberg to propose prize questions. The senior of the mathematical class, Abraham Gotthelf Kästner, chose two of them. The “circulation” of the questions among the academy members was meanwhile “only a ceremony,” Kästner wrote to Lichtenberg.¹⁶ Now, the question on heat conduction in water vapor was adopted.

The interwoven and interrelated use of knowledge instruments—the professorship, the academy membership, the lecture, the physical apparatuses, the textbook, the compendia, the periodicals, the academy speech, the academic prize contests, the procedure for choosing questions—in other words, the technology of knowledge in action—led Lichtenberg to the category of “heat” and brought the question of the difference between fire and heat flow to the table.¹⁷

14 Gamauf, „»Erinnerungen aus Lichtenbergs Vorlesungen.“

15 Cp. Lichtenberg, “Zur Leitung und Reflexion der Wärme gehörige Versuche.”

16 Cp. Lichtenberg, “Briefwechsel.”

17 Cp. Lichtenberg, “Zur Leitung und Reflexion der Wärme gehörige Versuche.”

My summary is: If one recognizes that knowledge production means technology, the view turns. Instead of searching for content and culture in supposedly autonomous subjects, ideas, and theories, we begin to analyse the constellations and networks in which knowledge is formed. We follow how knowledge evolutionarily emerges from information and technical interaction. We historize knowledge.

And we scientify the field. Is not it remarkable that historiography, which has classically and consensually defined itself as a “narrative of memorable events,” instead of reflecting on what historical events are, made the narrative stronger during the fervour of individualism at the very time when physics, chemistry, biology and geology became sciences because they succeeded in defining physical, chemical, biological and geological events? If historiography wants to have something to say and not just to represent opinions, it is a matter of saying something about how history operates, functions, and develops as a sequence and network of events in constellations. We need to know how historical constellations and their internal coherence emerge, and we need to know what historical events are, how quantity changes into quality, and form becomes content.

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Varsói Magyar Oklevéltár [Hungarian Cartulary of Warsaw].
Edited by Ádám Novák.

Debrecen: HUN-REN–DE Magyarország a középkori Európában
Kutatócsoport, 2024. 286 pp.

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This work represents the latest contribution to the *Fontes Memoriae Hungariae* series. The source publications in this series can be considered supplementary resources for contactological, imagological, and diplomatic history research, beginning in 2014. As a result of the Hungarica research, the volumes include transcriptions of several Hungarian-related charters found in various foreign archives. The book's concept stems from a visit to the Central Archive of Historical Sources (*Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie – AGAD*) in Warsaw in the mid-2010s. This was when the Hungary in Medieval Europe Research Group, led by a prominent medievalist, Attila Bárány, raised its flag within the framework of the Lendület Programme. The project's stated objective was to publish the complete texts of medieval documents concerning the relations between Poland and Hungary, which are preserved in these archives.

The work has been going on for several years, with the documents being published in various booklets, each adapted to a specific historical period. Nevertheless, the authors had the ultimate intention of publishing these documents in the form of a final volume for a scholarly audience. The current edition is, in fact, an edited version in book form of the four booklets published between 2017 and 2022. The work corrects the shortcomings of the previous volumes, adding new sources to the collection.

The charters in this volume encompass various topics, including political, social, economic, and military aspects. The collection includes royal charters, records of allegiance, trade privileges, and alliance agreements. A notable aspect of this publication is its compilation of Hungarian-related sources that were not previously accessible in a single repository. It incorporates several charters that have not been included in previous collections, such as the Photographic Collection of Medieval

Charters (*Diplomatikai Fényképgyűjtemény – DF*) preserved in the National Archives of Hungary and made available online.¹

The volume contains ninety charters with ninety-eight full-text transcriptions and Hungarian summaries. The texts are predominantly in Latin, although there is also a German-language charter of Sigismund of Luxembourg as imperial vicar from 1410. Other exceptions include four documents originally written in Old Church Slavonic in Cyrillic script, two of which were published in Latin following the edition of Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki (nos 25 and 33). The full text of the document of Bogdan, Voivode of Moldavia, written in Cyrillic on 22 January 1510 (no. 92) is not published. Instead, a very detailed summary of the contents in Hungarian is included. Neither was another charter of the same Bogdan, dated 7 February 1510 (no. 93), which was edited in Cyrillic but summarized only, as it only contained slightly different details from no. 92. Fifteen of these ninety charters were not included in the DF photographic collection of the Hungarian National Archives and thus remained largely unknown to scholarship.

The editor Ádám Novák considered it important to publish the charters presented here in a verbatim form, thereby preserving the uniqueness and style of each document. However, as a result, readers may often encounter varying spellings and transcriptions of certain names and expressions. Particular attention should be paid to the letters *ae-e*, *c-t*, *i-j*, and *ii-y*, as these, of course, were not uniformly used by the scribes.

Similar reasons account for the fact that in the dating of the charters, one can observe the use of various forms reflecting the solutions adopted by medieval scribes: Roman and Arabic numerals, as well as abbreviated and full forms, often appear intermixed and are used together to denote both the year and the specific day (*millesimo, Mmo, MCCCCLXXXo, Januarii, ianuary; or millesimo quadragesimo duodecimo, XVIII die mensis Maii*). In the summaries, care should be taken with certain expressions, as in some instances the Latin term appears (e.g., *salvus conductus*), while in others the translated Hungarian form (*menlevél*). Researchers should bear these issues in mind when searching for certain terms and names in the electronic version of the book. While the verbatim publication is certainly commendable and has many positive aspects, it might have been beneficial to provide a brief explanation of the publishing principles to assist the researcher, as the documents span a century and a half and involve various chancelleries and different types (and possibly languages) of charters.

However, the value of the volume far outweighs these minor shortcomings. At the beginning of the book, summaries of the charters can be found without the full

1 <https://archives.hungaricana.hu/hu/charters/> (Accessed: 11 August 2025)

texts of the documents, making the volume easy to navigate. Orientation within the documents is greatly facilitated by the index of geographic names that follow the documentary texts, as well as the personal name and seal index, where we can find both the names appearing in the charter texts and their normalized forms. The geographic name index makes it much easier to identify individual settlements. Perhaps the only incorrect identification is that of the town of *Creutzeburg* in charter number 2 (the correct name is Kluczbork, Poland). The editor has endeavoured to present personal names in the language and script of the state to which the individuals belonged. For instance, the given name 'Petrus' was rendered 'Piotr' in Polish and 'Péter' in Hungarian. Compared to the earlier booklets, there have been clarifications, mainly in the headnotes and the annotations, which have been standardized and corrected. Minor changes have also been made to the documentary texts, and some ambiguous readings have been resolved, partly thanks to the index of names. An important addition is the list of names on the seal ribbons confirming the Peace of Ófalu (Spišská Stará Ves, Slovakia) in 1474.

The topics covered in the volume are divided up as follows: thirty-six documents deal with political relations (alliances, conventions, and peace treaties), twenty-seven documents concern military and defence matters (military aid, conflict settlement, and defence), twenty-one documents address territorial and legal transfers (the transfer of land and cities, administration and change of legal status), and ten focus on economic and trade issues (duty-free privileges, trade agreements). The charters included in this volume are organized around four principal themes: 1) the reign of the Angevin dynasty and the establishment of the rule of King Louis I in Poland (1370 to 1382) and the succession of his daughter, Hedwig / Jadwiga of Poland; 2) the mediation of Sigismund of Luxembourg in the conflict between the Teutonic Knights and the Kingdom of Poland; 3) King Matthias Corvinus's Silesian war against Duke Casimir Jagiellon, who claimed the Hungarian throne at the invitation of conspirators led by János of Zredna (Vitéz); 4) diplomatic relations and agreements between the Hungarian and Polish branches of the Jagiellonian dynasty.

In conclusion, the volume represents a significant contribution to the field, offering readers a comprehensive and detailed collection of Hungarian documents preserved in Warsaw. Its value lies in its meticulous design and usability, providing scholars with a valuable resource for further research. It is noteworthy that the volume is accompanied by an electronic database in the form of the *Memoria Hungariae* database (<https://lendulet.memhung.unideb.hu>). In addition to the photographs of the diplomas, this database also continuously publishes the seal images. Consequently, as of 2023, the photographic material of all Hungarian-related diplomas included in the present volume will be accessible for download via the AGAD

online catalog,² given that a substantial proportion of them have been commissioned for digitization by the volume's editor. The database and the digitization of the charters and seals will facilitate further access to the available information for researchers, enhancing the ease of source utilization. The publication is also available in e-book format,³ thus offering readers the opportunity to access the volume in a convenient digital format that is particularly suited to the demands of modern research.

2 https://agad.gov.pl/inwentarze/perg_skan_II_23.xml (Accessed: 11 August 2025)

3 <https://hdl.handle.net/2437/381510> (Accessed: 11 August 2025)

Katalog pieczęci Jagiellonów [Catalog of the Seals of the Jagiellonians]. Edited by Marcin Hlebioneck, Martina Bolom-Kotari, Waldemar Chorażyczewski, Miroslav Glejtek, Marcin Hlebioneck, Vitaliy Perkun, and Piotr Pokora.

Folia Jagellonica Fontes 46. Toruń: Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne–Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2024. 490 pp.

Ádám Novák 

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Considering that a significant part of the Polish royal seal usage is dated to the Jagiellonian period, this volume could to a large extent build on works focusing on the seals of the kings of Poland. Three of these milestones are well worth mentioning. 1) Without a doubt, Marian Gumowski is one of the foremost authorities on Polish auxiliary sciences. Although he obtained his doctorate in numismatics, he also produced basic works on heraldry and sphragistics. He was the first to publish a catalogue presenting the seals of the kings of Poland.¹ 2) The present volume takes as a point of reference the works of Zenon Piech, in particular his analysis of the heraldic programme of the Jagiellonians.² 3) A catalogue published in 2015, based on the material of and published by AGAD, the institution with the largest archival holdings in Poland.³

The editor has been conducting research in the field of sphragistics for decades. Marcin Hlebioneck is a fellow at the Institute of History at the Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu (UMK). His current workplace is also his alma mater, where he graduated in 1998, obtained his PhD in 2002, habilitated in 2014 and has been a professor at the university since 2019. His main fields of expertise are historical auxiliary sciences, numismatics, heraldry and, of course, sphragistics has worked on

1 Gumowski, *Pieczęcie królów*. His heraldic handbook: Gumowski, *Handbuch*. His numismatic bibliography: Gumowski, *Bibliografia*.

2 Piech, *Monety*.

3 *Sigilla regum*.

important projects, such as the International Dictionary of Sphragistics,⁴ the documents of the Peace of Brest of 31 December 1435,⁵ and the volume presenting the seals of the kings and queens of Poland.⁶ These may be considered his preliminary research for this volume. An international team of authors has contributed to the compilation of this volume. Piotr Pokora (Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu) and Waldemar Chorążyczewski (UMK) from Poland, Martina Bolom-Kotari (University of Hradec Králové) and Miroslav Glejtek (Univerzity Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre), for compiling the Czech and Slovak parts, and regarding the processing of the Eastern material, Vitaliy Perkun from the Institute of History of Ukraine participated in the project.

The volume was published by the Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne in collaboration with the Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, both of which have a long history in the field and each of which added their own ISBN number to the volume, making this the 46th issue in the *Folia Jagellonica, Fontes* series. The volume was proof-read by the above-mentioned Zenon Piech, as well as by Sobiesław Szybkowski, lecturer at the Uniwersytet Gdańsk, who was also the author and editor of several source publications.⁷ The book is entirely in Polish. Given the significance of the Jagiellonians in Europe and their perception in the last decade (they were the rulers of the predecessors of many of today's countries and the dominant dynasty in Central Europe), it would be desirable to have at least the introductory chapter in English or German translation as well, and it would be equally useful to read in one of the languages of international scholarship a description of the seals of the rulers enthroned outside Poland. However, we should quickly add that thanks to the language modules of artificial intelligence, it has never been easier to overcome the language barriers.⁸ Nevertheless, these algorithms can often make mistakes in terminology, which can compromise the humble and precise work of publishers.

The first, 70-page introductory chapter of this hefty 490-page volume is written by the editor, Hlebionek. It is a thoroughly referenced treatise with more than 300 notes, giving a brief overview of the history of the research and explaining the structure and concept of the catalogue. We learn that a total of 190 seals from the years

4 Müller et al., eds, *Vocabularium*.

5 Szweda et al., eds, *Dokumenty*.

6 Bonczkowski et al., *Pieczęcie*.

7 Along with Marcin Hlebionek, Sobiesław Szybkowski contributed to the publication of the seals of the 1435 Peace of Brest, and his publication of the charter can also be mentioned as an example: Szybkowski, *Katalog*.

8 This solution is particularly helpful when using the volume digitally. The editor has been kind enough to enable the author of this article to work with it. However, the PDF of the volume is not yet available for purchase or online.

1379 to 1596 are described in the volume. Among them are the seals of the kings of Poland and the grand dukes of Lithuania (including the typarium of Jan Olbracht, no 73.), the seals of the Jagielllos on the Czech and Hungarian thrones, the queens of Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary, and the seals of the princes and princesses of Poland (including, among others, the seals of Silesian princes and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and the wives of foreign rulers), as well as the seals of the dynasty's descendants, such as that of Jan z Księży Litewskich, Bishop of Vilnius.

The second chapter of the introduction deals with the seals of the Polish-Lithuanian rulers of the dynasty. It covers the issues of seal usage, chancery, iconography, heraldry, and a separate subsection deals with forged seals. The third chapter deserves more attention, as it is devoted to the seals of the Jagiellonians who succeeded to the Bohemian and Hungarian thrones. Subsection 3.1.2. of this chapter begins with a summary of the seal usage of the rulers of Hungary, based mainly on the basic sphragistic work of Lajos Bernát Kumorovitz and Imre Takács's catalogue of the seals of the Árpádian kings. Regarding King Władysław I of Hungary (Władysław III of Poland), Hlebionek notes that two Hungarian secret royal seals can be linked to him. King Władysław I began using the first after his coronation in 1440, and the second was used in Buda from the summer of 1444. Hlebionek accepts the assumption of the author of these lines⁹ that, from that time, the two seals were in parallel use. Additionally, however, he refutes the assumption of Ferenc Dóry and Marian Gumowski that a third seal may have existed as well: according to the confirmation clause, in the absence of the royal seal, it was not another royal seal but that of Palatine Lőrinc Hédervári that was impressed under the text of the charter.¹⁰ Hlebionek points out that Władysław I could not have a Great Seal because he was not crowned with the Holy Crown, nor was it in his possession. The catalogue contains seven seals from King Władysław III/I under numbers 17–23, and his Hungarian royal seals are found under numbers 21 and 22.

In the case of King Władysław II, Hlebionek points out that, with the exception of the gold seal, the Jagiellonian monarch used the same seals as King Matthias, continuing the same system. In the catalogue, the Czech and Hungarian related seals of Władysław II can be found under numbers 42–54. It is noted that in the 1550s Queen Isabella, the king's niece, reinstated and reused the second ring seal (54) of the king. This is a rather unusual procedure, and therefore it is a pity that the catalogue does not include a picture of the copies identified in Vienna (1554) and in Chornik (1559).

Hlebionek stresses that Louis II did not have a Great Seal. The catalogue describes the Hungarian and Czech secret and judicial seals under numbers

9 Novák, "Additions to the itinerary," 49–50.

10 The charter in question: MNL OL DL 13 653.

127–133. In the case of Louis II, the research on seal impressions has not only led to the discovery of new ring seals (nos 134–140), but has also revealed a more complex picture of their use. The catalogue distinguishes between six different ring seals used during the reign of the king, which can be divided into three groups: multi-field rings with a coat of arms, single-field rings with a coat of arms depicting the dynastic eagle, and a gemma seal. Except for the latter, the King's ring seals with the coat of arms were designed in the same way: they depict the dynastic eagle, above which the letters 'L(udovicus) R(ex)' are placed. The differences between them are due to the different depictions of the shield and the coat of arms; they are typically found on documents addressed to Hungarian-speaking recipients. The gemma seal (no. 140) depicts a man's head with a radiant crown.

After the analysis of the seals of the two rulers of Hungary, Hlebionek examines the impressions of the queens of Hungary and Bohemia. This is perhaps the greatest benefit for us, as the editors have done extensive archival research and have identified impressions that previous catalogues could not include images of. Among the wives of King Władysław II, we find two seals (nos 58–59) of Barbara of Brandenburg (1464–1515), three (nos 60–62) of Beatrice of Aragon (1457–1508), and two (nos 63–64) of Anne of Foix-Candale (1484–1506) following each other. In the case of Louis II's wife, Maria Habsburg (1505–1558), the catalogue collects all the seal impressions, i.e., also those that she used as Princess of Castile and Archduchess of Austria (no. 144) before her marriage, as well as those she used as Governor of the Habsburg Netherlands (nos 149–153).

A fourth chapter is devoted to the analysis of the seals of Anna Jagellonica (1503–1547), sister of Louis II. As the wife of Ferdinand I, she became queen of the Germans, then Queen of Bohemia and Hungary. Previously only one of her seals was known, however, this research has discovered five more (nos 121–126).

In the fifth chapter of the introductory study, the author examines the physical characteristics of the seals: their shape, size, material, and the colour of the impression. Here, the seals of the sovereigns of Hungary and Bohemia appear on two more pages (pp. 78–80).

The catalogue itself is on pages 85 to 469. What complicates navigation is that, although the catalogue is presented in roughly chronological order, there is no index to direct the reader to the relevant pages by seal owners. Each catalogue item is identified by a Roman numeral. Enlarged colour photos are included of the fronts, and, if available, of the backs as well. The size, the circumscription (indicating its resolution), the language of the circumscription and the font are given in separate lines. This is followed by a plastic description of the seal and the identification of any coat of arms. The listing of literature relating to the seal provides a thorough historiographical overview and/or additional information. This is followed by an

extended analysis, focusing on the use of the seal in question and its chancellery observation. The archival identification numbers of all the originals found are listed along with the year or year range. This clearly demonstrates that the collection was extended beyond Poland and included archives in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Sweden, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Lithuania. The bibliography is at the end of the volume, from page 479 to page 490, presumably containing most of the relevant items.

In conclusion, the editing of the catalogue is very thorough, it summarises the works on seal material and adds new results. It seems to be a timeless handbook, which, by its very nature, has a place on the shelves of Central European historians studying heraldry, sphragistics, and numismatics. At the same time, it fits well into the series of efforts that in recent decades have aimed at a better understanding of the history of the Jagiellonian dynasty.

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Die Repräsentation der Habsburger (1493–1806).

By Friedrich Polleroß.

Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2022. 592 pp.

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This volume is the kind of book that completes or crowns a scholar's lifework. It covers the centuries-long history of the *par excellence* European ruling dynasty, the Habsburgs, from the perspective of artistic representation. Friedrich Polleroß aimed at completeness: he included every possible artistic product from buildings to coins and engravings. In line with this objective, the volume contains more than 600, high-quality color images. The visual material arranged in a carefully structure certainly offers much more than just mere illustration: the image and the text that interprets it constitute an inseparable whole. The reviewer is in a difficult position to overview a volume that works with such comprehensive visual material, since the pictures almost speak for themselves. Taking the history-shaping power of art seriously, the book recalls Paul Zanker's 1988 classic of ancient history, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*.

Friedrich Polleroß is an outstanding researcher of Austrian art and cultural history, who has been predestined to write this book practically since the start of his scholarly career. His PhD dissertation dealt with religiously inspired court portrait painting, which in 1988 he published as a book titled *Das sakrale Identifikationsporträt*. The approach and theme of the 1992 book co-authored with Andrea Sommer-Mathis and Christopher F. Laferl on the artistic representation of New World colonies also resonates in the present volume. His 2010 monograph connected to the current volume focuses on the intersection of art and the achieving of specific political goals of the imperial diplomat Leopold Joseph Graf von Lamberg (1653–1706) operating in the Papal State. In addition to his academic publications, Polleroß has had numerous institutional assignments. He was head of the Slide Collection at the University of Vienna from 1993 to 2011, is the vice-president of the Vienna-based early modern historical society, and is an expert on the history of the *Waldviertel* region of Lower Austria.

Perhaps the most obvious way to capture the essence of this impressive book is to present its structure. In a longer introduction, Polleroß presents the state of the art research and explains his main views and questions regarding the overall issue. Speaking about the research historical context surrounding the work, we can make two fundamental statements following the author (pp. 9–11). On the one hand, Polleroß speaks about the change in the cultural, interdisciplinary, and international perspective that the humanities have taken in recent decades, focusing on the courts, their networks, their spaces, and their ceremonies, as well as their 'symbolic capital.' The renewed interest in the broader topic is also illustrated by the fact that three quarters of the literature he cites dates from the twenty-first century. The second important factor, according to Polleroß, is that in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in its last quarter, there were momentous political events in both Spain and Austria that enhanced the value of their monarchical past. Starting from this period, several comprehensive initiatives aimed at researching early modern European courts and court culture have emerged in Western Europe. Polleroß himself participated in two relevant international projects. He was a member of the Iconography, Propaganda and Legitimation working group of the research project *The origins of the Modern State in Europe, Thirteenth–Eighteenth Century* (1989–1993), and took part in the project *Lieux de pouvoir. Des résidences aux capitales dans l'Europe monarchique, XVème–XVIIIèmes siècles* (1994–1996).

The introductory section shows that Polleroß views the unity between the two main parts of the family empire, Spain and Austria, as a fundamental aspect of their representation. In the light of recent results, this provides increasingly important recognition for Hungarian research. According to the author, the ideology linking the two dynasties is primarily rooted in the family's particular devotion to the Catholic religion, i.e., in the concept of *Pietas Austriaca*. In addition, he also tries to identify a specific common imperial style.

The thematic chapters highlight the 400 years of Habsburg representation based on the considerations introduced above. The first chapter focuses on the imperial myth inherited from Rome. Individual Habsburg rulers—from Maximilian I to Joseph II—are presented in accordance with this perspective in the light of artworks inspired by the style of antiquity, containing abundant mythological references. The largest part of this chapter is devoted to Leopold I and Charles VI, for whom the imperial heritage was of particular importance in the struggle with Louis XIV for supremacy over Europe, i.e., the Holy Roman Empire, and the Spanish legacy.

Perhaps the most significant part of the volume is the second and longest chapter, entitled *Pietas Austriaca*. From the cult of Three Kings through the veneration of the cross to rulers as intercessors with God, it reviews examples of religious self-identification and representation. We can say that at the center of the book,

both literally and figuratively (p. 276), there is the painting depicting Rudolph I. Created in 1620 by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Wildens, both Netherlandish painters, and exhibited in the Prado in Madrid, constitutes a specific focal point. It depicts a particularly significant family anecdote. The king, who established the family's multinational rule, encounters a priest carrying the Eucharist to a sick person. Out of respect for the sacrament, he dismounts from his horse, hands it to the priest, and accompanies the priest and the Eucharist on foot, leading the horse by the bridle.

The third chapter focuses on genealogical representation and on portrait series. It also includes equestrian portraits of monarchs, starting with Titian's famous 1548 painting of Charles V (p. 392). This chapter includes the representations of some of the smaller—in the context of the book—provinces and countries held by the Habsburg monarchs: Bohemia, Moravia, Tyrol, and Hungary. Although more recent research emphasizes Hungary's importance within the Habsburg dynastic conglomerate, the section introducing it is no more than two or three pages long (pp. 416–418). In any case, the findings of Hungarian historical and art historical research are well considered, as testified by the rich bibliography. Polleroß acknowledges by name Géza Galavics, Géza Pálffy, Bébára Gulyás, Béla Ugrics, and Szabolcs Serfőző (p. 7), researchers dealing with the topics at hand from a Hungarian perspective.

The fourth, concluding chapter can practically be seen as parallel to the first. The thought behind the artistic manifestations presented here is in contrast with the fairly abstract (yet powerful) idea of the legacy of the Roman Empire, rooted in the past and the world of myths. This modern imperial mission had a more concrete factual basis, rooted in geography and the manifest works of Providence. The Habsburg Empire was the first to truly span the entire world, on which the sun really never set, and this is what the artistic depictions are consistent with.

Apart from a few slips and insignificant typos, the reviewer can identify no shortcomings. Summing up, the book will make a huge contribution to European scholarship and will certainly be an indispensable reference work for any art historical research related to the Habsburg dynasty.

Cities and Economy in Europe Markets and Trade on the Margins from the Middle Ages to the Present. Edited By Katalin Szende, Erika Szívós, and Boglárka Weisz.

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The International Commission for the History of Towns (ICHT) was founded in 1955 to provide a platform for comparative urban historical research and to strengthen international collaboration among scholars in the field. To advance this mission, the Commission organizes regular conferences on key themes in urban history. Between 2016 and 2019, the ICHT dedicated a four-year cycle to exploring the essential functions of urban spaces, hosting four conferences on the topic. The series began in 2016 in Kiel, where discussions revolved around the social roles of urban spaces. The following year, Kraków shifted the focus to political dimensions, while Salzburg (2018) explored their role in religious life. The series culminated in 2019 with a conference in Budapest, co-organized by the ICHT and the “Lendület” Medieval Hungarian Economic History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where scholars examined their economic significance.

This volume was expressly conceived to help raise attention to regions traditionally regarded as fringes of Europe, which remain underrepresented in mainstream international historical research. In alignment with the objectives of the ICHT, the editors aim to offer a broader comparative framework for future analyses while contributing to subsequent syntheses in the field. In addition to the aforementioned margins, the volume’s other key themes are markets and trade—concepts that have constituted fundamental pillars of urban existence since the emergence of urban settlements. The thirteen studies comprising the book’s two parts each engage with one or more of these central themes. The introduction likewise focuses on the three themes highlighted in the book’s subtitle, demonstrating how different scholarly traditions have conceptualized them in diverse ways, thereby generating distinct research trajectories. Furthermore, the editors provide an overview of current research trends and major projects in these fields, while also highlighting the

novel contributions made by the volume's individual studies to these thematic areas. Markets and marketplaces constitute the most comprehensively examined theme in the book, with nearly half of the thirteen studies dedicated to this subject. The contributions examining this topic exhibit significant temporal and spatial diversity, ranging from tenth-century Italian examples to nineteenth-century cases from territories constituting modern Ukraine. Despite these temporal and geographical disparities, the studies focusing on medieval and early modern periods demonstrate remarkable thematic coherence, offering mutually reinforcing perspectives that collectively provide a holistic understanding of marketplace dynamics. For instance, Rosa Smurra's contribution to the volume demonstrates how Italian markets under ecclesiastical jurisdiction during the turn of the millennium gradually transitioned to civic authority. Furthermore, as markets became central hubs of urban trade, communal buildings emerged in marketplaces specifically to regulate trade and monitor revenue from collected duties. The town hall, the most significant of these structures, embodied the political, economic, and cultural aspirations of the urban community. Markets evolved in tandem with shifting commercial practices, resulting in corresponding architectural adaptations to marketplace spaces—a phenomenon explored in depth by Olga Kozubská's analysis. The author examines early modern cases from territories corresponding to modern Ukraine, where town halls in smaller, typically privately-owned towns lost their original administrative functions and adapted to serve commercial needs.

The morphology of marketplaces is examined in greater detail in Boglárka Weisz's study within the volume. The author highlights that in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, markets could be classified into three distinct forms—street, fusiform, and square—which she illustrates through various case studies. Similar to Italian examples, marketplaces in Central and Eastern Europe often functioned as the central squares of settlements, serving as key economic and social hubs. The overall prosperity of a settlement was frequently reflected in the condition of its market square and the presence of administrative or ecclesiastical buildings adjacent to or near the marketplace. In many cases, the specific form a marketplace took was the result of organic urban development, traceable back to the earliest phases of the market's establishment. The origins of marketplaces are explored in depth in two studies within this volume. Dan Dumitru Iacob, examining examples from the Romanian Principalities, demonstrates that markets either emerged spontaneously at major traffic hubs or were established at the initiative of an overlord. In cases where a market was already in operation, it required formal legitimization by the prince. When a new market was established (also a prerogative of the prince), several factors had to be considered, including its distance from existing markets and the selection of a feast day that did not overlap with those of neighbouring fairs. As highlighted in

the joint study by Anna Paulina Orłowska and Patrycja Szwedo-Kiełczewska, the success of newly established markets was fundamentally conditioned by their relationship to existing market networks. Through case studies from medieval Greater Poland, the authors illustrate situations where rapid urban commercial expansion outpaced settlement infrastructure, necessitating market relocations due to spatial constraints.

The complex functional dynamics of marketplace spaces are further explored in several additional contributions to the volume. Pavel Lukin, using the example of medieval Novgorod, demonstrates that the marketplace was not only a key site for commercial, religious, and cultural activities but also played a crucial role in the political life of the city. Beyond its economic functions, the marketplace served as a public space where the city's highest political authority convened, making it central to urban governance and decision-making. In addition, the marketplace was of significant religious and ceremonial importance, closely linked to the ecclesiastical buildings located within it. Furthermore, marketplaces played a vital role in the circulation of information, often serving as the site of public shaming rituals and executions (Weisz). However, as early modern sources indicate, marketplaces were not solely spaces of commerce and authority—they also catered to the social needs of visitors, offering opportunities to satisfy curiosity and seek entertainment (Jacob).

The second part of the volume examines trade and urban economy through six studies. Despite the geographical distance between late medieval/early modern Castile and early modern Norway, both regions exhibited remarkably similar developments in urban growth. In both cases, large-scale maritime trade profoundly influenced the port infrastructure, which not only facilitated exports but also drove urban expansion. In Castile, merino wool—derived from transhumant sheep herds—remained the dominant export commodity from the mid-fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, in pre-modern Norway, timber was the most important export material. As a direct consequence of the timber trade, nearly two dozen new ports emerged, many of which later developed into fully established towns. Maritime commerce enabled even seemingly peripheral regions to integrate into Europe's commercial networks during this period. This is precisely what Michael Potterton demonstrates in his study, using the example of medieval Ireland. Unlike most other contributions in this volume, which primarily rely on written sources, Potterton's analysis draws on archaeological material excavated in Ireland during the 1990s and 2000s. This rich archaeological material vividly illustrates how deeply Ireland was embedded in broad and dynamic international trade networks during the period.

While maritime commerce features prominently, the volume also addresses overland trade networks. Mária Pakucs' study focuses on merchants who played pivotal roles in the commercial life of South-Eastern Europe between 1500 and

1700 through the Transylvanian towns of Brașov and Sibiu. The author emphasizes that merchants frequently labelled as “Greek” in Transylvanian sources neither constituted a cohesive ethnic group nor shared uniform cultural characteristics. Furthermore, she underlines that the rise of the Ottoman Empire did not lead to the decline of these trade routes; on the contrary, commercial activity intensified even further under Ottoman rule. Even before the advent of printing, there was a significant demand for paper in Europe, particularly in royal courts and universities. In his article, Franz Irsigler identifies how paper production spread and locates its main centres in late medieval Central and Western Europe. The author accentuates that paper production did not necessarily develop in the immediate hinterlands of major consumption areas but rather emerged in peripheral regions. Departing from the volume’s prevailing focus on commodities, commercial spaces, and traders, Peter Eigner’s study approaches the topic from the perspective of consumers. His study specifically traces how Vienna’s transition to a consumer society during the twentieth century resulted in the decline of traditional groceries and pubs—stitutions that had long shaped the city’s local identity.

The volume does not include a separate section dedicated to its third key concept, as the studies engage with the question of marginality on multiple levels and in diverse ways. The regions discussed in the studies were situated at the fringes of the continent not only in a geographical sense; many of them lay within areas described in the scholarship as “inter-imperial”—that is, located among various configurations of the continent’s major powers: the Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Kievan Rus, the Golden Horde, and the Russian Empire. These complex geographical, political, and cultural conditions inevitably shaped urbanization patterns in the territories situated between empires. Articles that do not exclusively address marginality (such as those dealing with Vienna, Italy, or the Holy Roman Empire) have intentionally been incorporated to provide reference points and bases of comparison for the volume’s other studies, ensuring a broader analytical framework.

The book is rich in visual materials, featuring numerous illustrations and maps, including some that were created exclusively for this volume. The studies within are thorough and comprehensive, based on extensive research, and supported by exhaustive bibliographic references. This meticulous attention to detail makes it a valuable resource for anyone seeking in-depth knowledge on the subject.

In conclusion, the editors convincingly argue that urban history must, by definition, adopt a comparative approach to identify broader patterns beyond local case studies. They emphasize that themes such as markets, trade, and margins are of global significance and hope that their work will serve as a valuable foundation for further comparative research. The book not only meets this objective but also

emphasizes a crucial perception about methodology: urban development cannot be fully understood without examining its connections to marginal regions and their resources. For instance, the construction of medieval English churches was deeply intertwined with Irish oak exports, just as early modern secular architecture relied on the Norwegian timber trade. By illuminating these interdependencies, the book demonstrates how core urban developments were often shaped by distant, peripheral economies. This approach enriches our understanding of urbanization, proving that the margins were never truly marginal, but in many cases central.



**Fiume hosszú árnyéka. A városi modernizáció kritikája
a 19. század második felében [Fiume's Long Shadow:
Critique of Urban Modernization in the Second Half
of the Nineteenth Century]. By Veronika Eszik.**

Budapest: HUN-REN Bölcsészettudományi-Kutatóközpont
Történettudományi Intézet, 2024. 196 + XV pp.

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Lying far from the Hungarian Kingdom and constituting a distinct legal and administrative entity, Fiume (now Rijeka in Croatia) represented a special urban location in Hungary. From 1779, the City of Fiume enjoyed semi-autonomy within the Habsburg Monarchy and was directly subjected to the Hungarian Crown as a *corpus separatum*, a status which was re-strengthened following the 1867 Compromise. Accordingly, as part of the Hungarian Kingdom Fiume was managed by the governor assigned by the Hungarian prime minister and appointed by Franz Joseph. The governor's post was regularly filled by a Hungarian aristocrat, who usually held a seat in the House of Magnates in Budapest. True, however, there was also some room for the municipal self-government, practiced by the *Rappresentanza* consisting of fifty-six members and elected every six years.

Fiume found itself in an entirely new constellation when the central Hungarian government decided to transform it into a modern international port city, rivaling neighbouring Trieste, also a location engaged in sea transport, but managed by Vienna. That was the reason why, within a few decades, the small fishing town underwent a huge transformation and became the representative Hungarian littoral city along the Adriatic Sea. The enforced modernizing efforts financed and supervised by the Hungarian state resulted in a totally new urban space and, by the turn of the century, fundamentally changed the socio-economic makeup. As a result, the appropriation of the sea embankment for the exclusive purpose of the harbour fit for large sea-going steamships, together with modern metropolitan-type public buildings serving both the commercial and administrative management, doubled the city-space of Fiume. The traditional settlement was thus overshadowed by a new

physical environment, including the railway line and the goods-station, which cut the old town and its dwellers from the sea. Moreover, citizens lost their original sources of income (fishing and sailing) and were thus forced to be proletarianized.

Although Fiume's modernization from above brought about the creation of a genuine modern, metropolitan-type urban fabric and society with entrepreneurs and bourgeois middle classes, reactions from the local population and from neighbouring villages were negative. The swift disappearance of the well-accustomed provincial urban milieu, and the decline of many of the traditional occupations and sources of income generated the locals' hostility towards the outcome of the modernization efforts so much acclaimed by the Hungarian state authorities of the day; the latter, in contrast, considered the transformation of Fiume into a cosmopolitan port city as a clear sign of Hungary's basically successful westernization process.

Veronika Eszik's book discusses the story of how Fiume became a truly modern city due to the efforts of the state, focusing on the details of the many kinds of antimodern sentiments, doctrines, and actions, the entire repertoire of the protest manifestations as an obvious reaction to the modernizing project. Antimodernism may express the negation of a globalizing tendency of city life, which was so evident within Fiume to the detriment of the native population. The counter-narrative articulated against the modernization project tends to emphasize in that instance modernity's harmful effect in terms of values. According to this particular public discourse, Fiume was thus becoming a place of extremes, where the material inequalities and the deep differences in lifestyles experienced in the same urban milieu tended to disrupt the local community's former sense of integrity. Another often repeated accusation targeted at the construction of the new metropolitan Fiume was that the cityscape had lost its original colourful diversity, which was replaced by one-dimensional, monstrous grey blocks of buildings and industrial objects.

The modernization of the urban space also contributed to numerous conflicts manifesting themselves in the everyday use of the town: the sea was thus appropriated by steamships which displaced the traditional sail ships. And this meant that the traditional shipyard was also doomed to soon disappear. Furthermore, due to the fact that the sea embankment was fully occupied by the modern harbour infrastructure that constituted an industrial zone, it became impossible for town-dwellers to access and enjoy it in their leisure time. In addition, the same location was to give home to the new administrative centre of the city. Therefore, the two locations, the commercial-industrial and the representative cityscape, were intermingled with each other. And this abnormal development caused some functional absurdity, something contradicting the imperative of the definite distinctiveness of the two spheres: the location of (industrial) production and the space maintained for leisure time activities and urban representation per se.

Since the new commercial-industrial establishments demanded more manpower, the supply of which could only be provided from the outside, commuting emerged as a new phenomenon. It brought about the transitional physical presence of a workers' population arriving from the countryside. This demonstrated the growing metropolitan character of Fiume facing an intense coming-in and going-out move of considerable masses of people. The people involved in this continuous population turnover did not belong to the native populace, and only to the extent of their daily work did they share in the city space.

The tensions and the latent or explicit conflicts engendered by these circumstances were shaped, coloured, or even determined by the unambiguous ethnic diversity of the population living either in Fiume or in the city's close vicinity. The modernizer agent here was the Hungarian state which, however, was a quasi-colonizer in the eyes of the Italian and Croat population of the city, and the Croats of the neighbouring villages. The conflicts arising from the various uses of urban space usually to the detriment of the natives were strongly related to national sentiments and sensitivity. All the wrongs suffered by the natives could be easily interpreted and expressed in the language of nationalism. The enemy might be either the Hungarian national state or the local Italian elite, which cooperated with the former in supporting and enforcing the modernization efforts at transforming the urban space (and economy). According to Eszik, this seems to contradict the well-known thesis held even by the current mainstream history writing of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (including the work of Pieter Judson)¹¹ that loyalty towards the entire empire (the Habsburg House) had an unambiguous attraction among the various peoples of the Monarchy, or that the so-called 'national indifference' was rampant everywhere within the borders mainly of the Cisleithanian part of the empire. Since there was no disagreement with regard to how the rebuilding activity of Fiume should be accomplished, it could remain untouched by the rivalry of the various nation-building endeavours. This, however, does not seem to be a phenomenon characterizing Fiume only, as the author indirectly suggests. As Catherine Horel has recently pointed out, several small or medium-sized towns in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy included in her study also witnessed similar contradictory experiences at the time due especially, and not the least, to the mixed ethnic composition of the settlements concerned.

"The identification with Austria through the diffusion of dynastic Habsburg patriotism was successful but it coexisted with other forms of identity that grew increasingly complex and were a source of conflict."²²

1 Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*.

2 Horel, *Multicultural Cities*, 492.

What are the factors that may explain, at least according to the author, that the plainly social tensions engendered by modernizing the cityscape and the economy could so easily be ethnicized (or nationalized)? Eszik insists that it derived from the lack of an adequate intellectual toolkit for masking conscious and expressible class-like divergences and conflicts caused by the process of modernity amidst the special circumstances of Fiume and its environs. By reading and interpreting the narrative sources (also including fiction) that articulated contemporary public discourse on all these issues, we see that in the absence of a definite bourgeois (proletarian) class consciousness, the available national idiom was to provide both the language and the argumentative force for criticizing and even negating the modernizing capitalist transformation 'enforced' from above and outside. This also points to the awkward position even of the local modernizing (power) elite recruited mainly from Italians. Although the elite aligned itself with the modernization project, it found it difficult to wholly identify with the modernizing Hungarian state as against the non-Hungarian and non-Italian parts of the natives.

The kind of antimodernism appearing within the administrative borders of the city was further cherished by the highly critical attitude of the populace in the nearby villages closely attached to Fiume in their economic and social structures. The telling example is Zengg, whose economy had previously been centred on the prosperous fishing and sails industry and commerce, but was hit hard by the robust modernization of Fiume. The reaction to this challenge by the small Croatian town, populated exclusively by Croats, was to support a political party in the Croat Sabor in Zagreb. In addition, the Commercial and Industrial Chamber of Zengg also participated in the political and ideological struggle against the foreign (Hungarian) modernizing efforts in Fiume. The political party in the Croat Sabor and the Commercial and Industrial Chamber both engaged in strengthening and furthering the vital interests of small-scale industry and commerce that had been the basis of Zengg's economic force up to the late nineteenth century. They elaborated and represented publicly in the Croat political arena a local experience that could guarantee the perspective of another sort of socio-economic modernization available and preferable to the natives of Zengg and to the small neighbouring seaside settlements. Their efforts of this kind were well established and further supported by the fact that Zengg was far from being a sleepy and stagnating urban locality: as an episcopal see, it had an excellent grammar school (*gymnasium*), a prosperous associational and intellectual public life, and there was a great potential for its successful integration in the embourgeoisement of the day. The enhanced and forced modernization of neighbouring Fiume, however, blocked Zengg's way into joining the modernizing forces and caused its subsequent economic decline. Eszik reveals both the political agitation, and the public intellectual discourse pursued locally for the enforcement of an alternative modernization path.

The negative reception of Fiume's 'artificial' modernization urged and sustained by the Hungarian state was also present among the people living in the closely attached villages and belonging to the peasantry. The hostility towards the intrusion of the state into the life of tradition-bound Croat country-dwellers manifested itself through several collective peasant actions at the turn of the century. One of the most notable among them occurred in 1883 which appeared to express the national sentiments of the native peasants. Accordingly, national and often nationalistic Croat history writing tended to interpret them in this way. However, when studying them more closely, it turns out that the national(istic) message of the atrocities committed cannot be held to represent an unambiguous national movement. As Eszik assumes in her journal article she published in English:

"Stresses affecting the peasantry were partly caused by modernizing campaigns, and the struggle to cope with modernization was a social process with a significance comparable to the significance of processes of national awakening and the transition in rural communities to capitalist practice."³³

All these processes were thus 'deeply intertwined.' However, the plainly anti-modern (anticapitalist) movements and discourses frequently appeared in 'a national disguise' both in their vocabulary and symbolism. The contradictory mental characteristics of these movements were justified by the changing and unstable target they chose in their fight against the 'national enemy.' This could be either the Hungarian (Magyar) or the Croat, although the actors involved were always Croat peasants. They actually rebelled against the state that they saw as intruding in their well-accustomed life (through, for example, taxation), which, however, might be Hungarian as well as Croat. The lesson a historian may draw from studying these late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occurrences in close connection both with Fiume and its environs, Eszik concludes, is that there was a scale of alternative modernization programs, which on both sides were in close contact with the various and conflicting nation-building activities. The effort of modernizing Fiume constituted and constructed an official Hungarian nationalist image and symbolism on the one hand which, however, was received by those native social forces who suffered great losses as a result of making Fiume an internationally important metropolitan-type urban settlement. The latter, on the other hand, fashioned their ressentiment, in the form of the then easily available nationalistic rhetoric and idiom, although their final end was not always and simply nation-building *per se*.

In assessing the outcome of the kind of urban and regional history Eszik makes available in her recent monograph, she successfully meets the expectations set towards an inquiry carried out on a local setting. We demand that a historian

³ Eszik, "Rural Reactions."

should be able to answer the big burning questions of history even when applying the angle of a microlevel study. In her genuinely mental history narrative, the author tries to understand the mind and sentiments of the past actors involved and occupying different statuses and hierarchical positions in the process that Karl Polanyi identified as the 'great transformation' and which culminated, among other things, in modernizing Fiume. That was the author's analytical aim dictating the selection of the source material (including many contemporary narratives of the past public discourse) and the way she attempted to read them by revealing the hidden motives and drives articulated in them. Veronika Eszik's urban history book poses a real challenge to the quite frequently provincial national(istic) mainstream historical scholarship which is so dominant the field, especially in East and Central Europe.

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Grün in der Stadt. Vom Hortus conclusus zum Urban gardening. Edited by Andrea Pühringer and Holger Thomas Gräf.*

Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas 30. Vienna–Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2023. 408 pp.

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Exploring the frontiers of different disciplines is both an exciting and challenging endeavour. Facilitating meaningful dialogue between inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary requires careful thought and coordination. *Grün in der Stadt. Vom Hortus conclusus zum Urban gardening*, edited by Andrea Pühringer and Holger Thomas Gräf, provides an opportunity to reflect on best practices and identify areas for improvement in similar future projects. This review offers a brief overview of the volume.

In her introduction, Pühringer paraphrases garden historian Géza Hajós' (1942–2019) concept of the three dimensions of nature—1) nature as wilderness; 2) nature as cultivation; 3) nature as aesthetics—highlighting how environmental history has gained prominence in recent decades. The cultural turn in environmental history¹ introduced hybridity as a core concept in the study of nature and civilisation, such as the countryside serving as the hinterland of the city. Peter Burke was among the first to interpret knowledge forms in natural history, and today, historians² explore the history of natural sciences, particularly plants and botany. More recently, Matthew Hall³ and a growing circle of scholars (like anthropologist Cornelia Ertl, philosopher Michael Marder and literary scholars Min Wild and Kathryn Gray) have contributed to the emerging field of critical plant studies.

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1 For this, see a brief summary by Richard White: White, “From Wilderness to Hybrid Landscapes.”

2 For example, Marianne Klemun, Sophie Ruppel, Daniela Bleichmar, Karin Nickelsen, and Stephan Müller-Wille.

3 Hall, *Plants as Persons*.

Grün in der Stadt is strictly rooted in urban history. Pühringer traces the volume's origins to the South German urban historian circle, specifically citing Joachim B. Schultis. She also acknowledges the influence of interdisciplinary German garden history marked by Stefan Schweizer, Sascha Winter, Mark Häberlein, and Robert Zink. These scholars emphasise the professionalisation of gardening, urban planning and landscape architecture at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the growing importance of green spaces in modern urban life. While the introduction touches on broader historiographical traditions, a more detailed contextualisation of urban green research would have strengthened the discussion.

The book, the 30th volume in the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Städte Mitteleuropas* (Contributions to the History of the Cities of Central Europe) series published by Studien Verlag, aims to provide a longue durée overview of urban green spaces in Central Europe. The series itself was funded by Wilhelm Rausch (1927–2019), a key figure in urban historical research, making this volume a tribute to his legacy. Given this city-focused perspective, Pühringer and Gräf's edition deepens our understanding of the diverse roles and functions of cultivated plant green spaces in densely built urban environments, especially city centres.

The book is structured into three main chapters, each containing five studies. The first chapter follows a chronological framework, while the second and third are thematic. The title, combining German, Latin, and English terms (*Grün in der Stadt, Hortus conclusus, Urban Gardening*), is eye-catching but somewhat convoluted. In general, the main ideas are delivered successfully through a wide array of case studies and a convincingly rich corpus of sources dominated by city redevelopment plans and garden literature. The papers are organised coherently. The organisation facilitates a multidisciplinary dialogue among the eleven historians and six landscape architects and gardeners who contribute to the volume. The fifteen studies explore urban green spaces across different historical contexts, spanning the Renaissance to the postmodern era. The first part (*Grün in der Stadt – Entwicklungslinien vom Mittelalter bis in die Zukunft*) examines the evolving relationship between plants and city centres. The second (*Grün im urbanen Leben: Politik, Kommerz und Lifestyle*) investigates green spaces within the spheres of institutions, politics, commerce, and lifestyle. The final part (*Vom "Grün in der Stadt" zur "Stadt im Grünen"*) explores how green areas shaped—and were shaped by—Enlightenment, nationalism, and environmentalism, particularly in the context of city planning.

The volume largely focuses on German-speaking regions, with nearly all contributions working within these territories. Thus, the papers indicate a German take on Central-European garden and urban history. However, with a few exceptions, the entire volume is dedicated to German cities and sources. While Austria and, to some extent, Germany are commonly included in definitions of Central Europe,

a clearer articulation of the book's geographical scope would have helped manage reader expectations. Alina Payne's recent book⁴ provides a useful example of how explicitly defining a research area can enhance a study's coherence. Without a precise delineation, readers might anticipate coverage of Hungarian, Czech, Polish, and Slovak examples, which are largely absent. The omission of these perspectives leads to minor inaccuracies, such as the misspelling of the name of János Boráros, a former mayor of Budapest (p. 91). The broader European context—including French, English, Dutch, and Scandinavian green planning—is addressed in detail only in the contributions of Stefan Schweizer and Gisella Mettele. Stronger engagement with key European trends and more examples would have enriched the discussion of German developments.

Despite these limitations, *Grün in der Stadt* is a valuable contribution to landscape history, enhancing our understanding of urban green spaces. Rather than proposing a radically new interpretation, the volume gradually builds new perspectives on urban vegetation. Chapter one presents the familiar historical narrative, detailing the emergence of the public and the interplay between the bourgeoisie, municipal authorities, and the sovereign power. The essays explore a range of green spaces, from the perspective of political agency, the governance of subjects, and the philosophical-pedagogical backgrounds of these phenomena through the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Chapter two introduces familiar and new forms of urban green spaces: private gardens, parks, groves, allées, squares, community and indoor gardens, and even futuristic green roofs and green walls, linking them to special institutions developed during the late Enlightenment (ca. 1770–1840) such as sports fields, botanical gardens, glasshouses and artist's gardens. In this chapter, the authors shed light on these so-called 'plant-shelters' in the context of sports history, the history of botany, and architectural history. Through a wealth of illustrations and sources, the volume convincingly demonstrates the deep integration of plant life into urban environments, whether through recreation (sports activities on lawn areas, recreation under trees and shrubs in parks), education (in botanical gardens and national parks), or artistic inspiration (private and artists' gardens). The final chapter expands the scale of analysis, examining green cities, suburbs, and spa towns like Merano, offering insights from medical and social history. In this part, the history of medicine (especially *Terreinkuren* or open-air therapy) and social history (the discussion of the German version of English suburbs) are discussed through the lens of the present-day transition of Merano from an imperial spa town to a modern green city. Similarly to this case study, the volume's essays on local history reflect on how micro-landscapes can influence perspectives about the natural environment.

4 Payne, ed., *The Land between Two Seas*.

In sum, *Grün in der Stadt* successfully blends traditional and newer approaches to urban history. Despite some weaker elements, it serves as an excellent research contribution to German urban history with the well-crafted, comprehensive narrative and the variety of topics it includes. Its interdisciplinary approach will foster dialogue among a wide range of scholars interested in the dichotomy of human-nature relationship, such as experts in landscape, environmental, and natural history and historians of art, as well as urban and political historians. Continued research in this field can further illuminate Europe's natural and built heritage, offering insights that may guide future interactions between urban planning and the natural world.

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Podnik v osídlach štátu. Podnikateľské elity na príklade
Rimamuránsko-šalgotarjánskej železiarskej spoločnosti
[Enterprise in the Traps of the State. Business Elites through the
Example of the Rimamuránsko-Šalgotarjánská Iron Company].
By Štefan Gaučík.

Bratislava: Veda, vydavateľstvo SAV – Historický ústav SAV, 2020. 278 pp.

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not only market mechanisms that influenced the development of industrial companies in the former Austria-Hungary. Interests and their conflicts would arise at higher levels, depending on the size of the capital that was concentrated in a company. Since the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Iron Works Ltd. (henceforth: Rima) was one of the largest in the region, it has attracted the interest not only of the elites of the era, but also of historians. With his study published in Slovak, Štefan Gaučík¹ intends to open a new narrative alongside nation-oriented Slovak economic history writing: he places the Slovak history of entrepreneurial elites into a Central European context. Gaučík's chapters are logically structured to provide answers to his questions, with the overall aim of defining the concept of economic elites through the role of entrepreneurs in Rima, thereby opening a discourse on power relations in industry.

Chapters One “Impulses and Processes” and Two “»Tools« and Methodology” function as an introduction, in which the author situates himself in relation to the subject and adopts a more personal tone. At the same time, Gaučík articulates a methodological framework that exceeds the complexity typical of conventional general historical narratives. Chapter Three “Structure, Sources, and Research

1 Štefan Gaučík PhD (István Gaucsík) is a research associate at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. He has numerous publications in Slovak, Hungarian, and English on the social and economic history of the Hungarian Kingdom, Slovakia, and Hungarians in Czechoslovakia. A detailed list of his publications is available on the SAV website.

Goals” provides a framework by raising the questions that are to be answered in the research. Chapters Four “Theoretical Background” and Five “Historiographical Interpretations of the Rima” are descriptive and summarizing, determining the research trajectory and placing the subject in its historical context. Chapter Six “Business Management and Administrative Personnel” focuses on the exercise of power over the company, the issue of the hegemony of managers and banks, presenting the apparatus of corporate control and the hierarchies affecting its operation. Chapter Seven analyses corporate control and its possible business strategies in the light of the changes of power following World War I. Chapter Eight “Slovak-Affiliated Enterprises in the Rima and New Commercial-Political Strategies [1918–1924]” serves as Gaučík’s brief conclusion, while the last sections contain the appendices “Annual Composition of the Board of Directors”; “Organizational and Administrative Structure of the Company”; “Salary Scales within the Corporate Structure”; “Wage Distribution of Company Employees by Year, Division, and Position.”

Reading Gaučík’s brief summary of the research methods of economic history, it is clear that the author’s intention is to include international discourses in Slovak historiography.² In fact, he uses neo-institutionalist historiography to analyse the activities of economic actors through available archival sources. Since the role of national history became significant in the nation states emerging after the Paris Peace Treaties, and a company as important as Rima has attracted historians’ attention, let alone because of the availability of sources, both Slovak and Hungarian historians have dealt with the historical role of the factory. However, these studies were often born in separate literary spaces without creating a discourse between them. Following thorough research, Gaučík presents Slovak and Hungarian historical works in relation to Rima, adapting them to his research. Regarding Slovak historiography, the author criticizes the ethnocentric explanations, which in many cases, completely ignored internationally accepted methods of historiography. He agrees with historian Zdeněk Němec, who also criticized this attitude in the 1960s. Since the 1970s, Hungarian historians have paid more attention to the history of Rima, but they mostly addressed the years of Austria–Hungary and the socialist era and did not use the sources found in the State Archives of (Czecho)Slovakia.³

- 2 In the theoretical part, which got less attention than other parts of the monograph, Gaučík did not reflect on the methodological critiques of the new economic history or cliometrics on which his work is based. However, the author’s concept is explained by the historiographical tradition against which he aimed to create a Central European context in Slovak historiography in contrast to the nation-building narrative.
- 3 The author has expanded the range of Hungarian-language works dealing with the history of Rima in this field: Gaucsík, “A nosztrifkáció és a pénzügyi kérdések rendezése”; Gaucsík, “A Rimamurány-Salgótarjáni Vasmű Rt.”; Gaučík, “Válság és reintegráció.”

The two most interesting chapters of the monograph, which in fact constitute its backbone, are undoubtedly the historical analysis of the Rima company. By analysing the protocols of board meetings, Gaučík draws conclusions about the advocacy of the company's bankers and managers in the period between 1891 and 1918.⁴ He identifies twenty-four persons on the directorial board during this time, of whom thirteen were connected to banks (Foncière; Österreichische Länderbank; Wiener Bankverein [the 'parent bank' of the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest]; and the Anglo-Österreichische Bank), in addition to five managers and aristocrats, and one politician. For the purposes of financing, granting credits, and implementing capital increases, the group of bankers had extensive powers, which, however, did not mean genuine financial hegemony over the company, but within certain limits they still managed to advocate for certain interests. Managers enjoyed a strong position during the period. They were always present at board meetings and influenced the outcome of decisions with their expertise. Gaučík sees the history of Rima's management as a confirmation of Schumpeter's thesis that entrepreneurs are the engine of innovation in the company. However, without the cooperation of the banking sector, this would have been impossible.

The monograph discusses the firm's operation through the hierarchy of employees, thereby revealing the organizational structures and their individual motivations, as well as the company's social embeddedness. Gaučík identifies three 'sets' at Rima that connected the company to society. Firstly, the specific nature of production and the structural functions of the organization, which are the company's administration and its commercial and technical structure, point to the fact that the company was operated from inside by the lower strata of the leadership. Secondly, they promoted them externally in the spirit of the specific corporate identity and culture, since in addition to know-how, loyalty to the company was also expected. The third 'set' was the sum of external factors that generally characterized the country's iron and steel industry (such as competition, the development of markets and deposits of raw materials, cartels, and lobbying). The regulatory instruments examined by the author, which manifested in the hierarchy of employee positions, were among the formal institutional norms. Thus, Gaučík has analysed wages, bonuses, and their differentiated composition, established intra- and inter-company powers, obligations, authorizations, and sanctions. On the one hand, he identifies a narrow management group from whose perspective Rima was internally compact. Its members had the organizational and financial powers to develop and manage the entire production system, as well as the channels for hiring, firing, rewarding, disciplining, and controlling the workforce. The officials subordinated to them had a different

⁴ Using Granovetter's network analysis, he examined the strength of weak ties in the context of director relationships.

perspective. They were not in a position to determine the company's rules and regulations, but by accepting the formal principles, they also took part in the operation of the organization, enjoying better earnings and access to the company's social support system. On the other hand, the company management that constructed the structure of employee relations had to comply with the rules of the established system. The top management (technical and commercial directors) was thus able to implement the rules, effectively administer, and rationally organize the production process and the sale of iron and steel products, which indirectly facilitated the success of investment and innovation strategies.

In the 1918–1919 crises, Rima had to face economic and political challenges. Gaučík analyses how the company was manoeuvring state-power relations under these challenges. Ore mining was in a deep decline in Slovakia, and many of the company's mines and forests were not concentrated at the production site. Hungarian state supervision was replaced by Czechoslovak control, which required company officials with different knowledge. Based on the development of the management's new strategy, the author justifies Schumpeter's thesis, highlighting the role of Director Pál Bíró. As CEO, in the 1920s, Bíró launched a strategy based on five pillars, with the cooperation of the Wiener Bankverein and the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest. He developed ore mining, modernized production, received state subsidies related to coal mining, established close cooperation with the coal mining operations in Salgótarján, and increased the share capital. The financial reforms following the dissolution of the Monarchy also made Rima's operations more difficult, which Gaučík outlines by indicating the problems faced in the field of loans. The tension between the two countries affected Rima, though Gaučík shows that the network established by the company's management in Bratislava and Prague helped economic cooperation. In order to optimize the business, Bíró had opened an office in Bratislava already before the border changes were declared. Successful bilateral interstate agreements were concluded in the interests of the company, but overall, they did not ease Rima's situation. On the one hand, local administrators representing the Czechoslovak state impeded the company's operations, and on the other hand, the space for economic competition favoured Czech companies.

Meeting his main goal, Štefan Gaučík depicts the historical manifestation of entrepreneurs and enterprises through archival sources, using economic and socio-logical methods. He has raised several questions that provide directions for further research: among others, he highlights the need for analysing the relationship between the Czech iron and steel cartel and Rima. Since Gaučík consistently fulfils his goals, his book has made a significant contribution to Slovak economic history writing. In this way, scholars may expand the line of historical investigations of economic continuity in the nation states that succeeded the Habsburg Monarchy, focusing on corporate history and elite studies.

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“Ganz normale Familiengeschichten.” Bilder von Migration und migrierende Bilder im Familiengedächtnis. By Sandra Kreisslová, Jana Nosková, and Michal Pavlásek.

Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa 26. Münster: Waxmann, 2023. 462 pp.

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The authors' study focuses on four social groups that have experienced migration in various ways and to different degrees across generations. The first group consists of Czech families who emigrated to Croatia in the nineteenth century, with some returning to their homeland after World War II. The second group includes displaced Germans who were forced to leave the Czech Republic after 1945, as well as those who remained. These groups faced the dilemma of whether to 'stay' or 'emigrate' at certain points in their histories. The Czechs in Croatia had the freedom to choose between returning or remaining in their new home. In contrast, the Germans in the Czech Republic were subjected to persecution and expulsion based on the principle of collective responsibility. Those who stayed often faced long-term discrimination. Despite their different circumstances, all four groups had to integrate into unfamiliar local societies. They also had to adapt to the changes resulting from the departure and loss of family members, friends, and neighbors, as well as the arrival of newcomers.

The research focused on the preserved elements of events in family memory rather than on how contemporaries remembered and experienced those events. The authors also explored how memories are transmitted within families and how interpretations of narratives about migration can vary from one generation to the next.

The volume is divided into five major thematic units. It begins with a comprehensive theoretical and methodological introduction, in which the authors define the key concepts they will be using. The second section provides a detailed account of the fieldwork, including its organization, execution, the challenges faced, and the solutions implemented. In the third part, the authors focus on cultural memory, starting from the premise that families, as the smallest units of social memory,

can reflect the processes and contents of memory transmitted at higher levels. The fourth section presents the communicative memory of selected families, examining the content of family memory and the methods through which it is passed down from one generation to the next. The fifth part serves not only as a summary of the issues discussed in the volume but also as a comparative analysis of the groups under study. In this section, the authors highlight the similarities and differences that have been identified among these groups. The comparative analysis focuses on the content of family memories and the question of intergenerational transmission. Specifically, it examines who talks about what, to whom, and what topics are avoided or not discussed at all.

In Croatia, there are two groups of Czechs: those who moved to Czechoslovakia after World War II and those who chose to remain in Croatia. Until the remigration period, these two groups shared common themes in their collective memory. The story of their ancestors' arrival in Slavonia helps to clarify why these families are present in Yugoslavia/Croatia, a fact that is not immediately obvious.

The voluntary emigration or return of some Czechs in Croatia, particularly families with partisan experience, led to divergence in the memories of two groups. These memories were tied to different post-war experiences: on the one side, of the Czechs who remained in Yugoslavia, and on the other, of the 'remigrants' who returned to post-war Czechoslovakia. For the generation that experienced remigration, this event became a significant part of their narratives. Their recollections of this experience were crucial in reflecting on their gradual integration into Czechoslovak society, which came with its own set of challenges.

The experience of non-ethnic otherness, characterized as the 'topos of the hostile immigrant,' emerged in the recollections shared by the descendants of those who had been resettled after 1989. The descendants of those who had been resettled found themselves struggling for recognition of their parents' historical contributions, as the anti-communist memory politics of the liberal-democratic regime overshadowed the significance of the resettlers' actions. This context meant that criticism of the post-communist era was prevalent in the history of all (re)migrants. For the Czechs who remained in Croatia, the event of return migration was not as significant. The narratives of second and third-generation interviewees focused more on economically motivated migration from present-day Croatia, where they voiced their criticism of the country's post-war economic and political situation. In the context of memory for Czechs in Croatia, the primary themes included not only World War II but also the Yugoslav Civil War.

The situation for different groups of the German population in the Czech Republic was distinct. The life stories of generations who experienced the events —both the Germans who were forcibly displaced and those who remained in their

homeland—highlight several key historical periods and processes. We can categorize these periods into four main phases: before 1938, after 1938, during World War II, and the era of forced emigration. Although the shared history of Germans in the Czech Republic was interrupted by deportation, both those who emigrated and those who stayed perceived themselves as an unwanted and excluded social group due to their ethnic identity. Both groups encountered challenges in integrating into mainstream society. For those who left their homeland as a result of forced emigration, integration into West German society was a significant concern. Meanwhile, members of the German minority who lived under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia underwent an assimilation process. Post-war migration is viewed by both groups as a fundamental disruption, with the theme of forced migration echoing throughout the accounts of all interviewees. It is also a crucial part of the narrative for Germans who did not emigrate, in contrast to the Czechs who remained in Croatia. Both groups of Germans unanimously perceived forced migration as an injustice and a loss. Although the Germans who stayed in their homeland were largely unaffected by physical relocation, the social and cultural landscape of their territory changed drastically. Like their displaced relatives and neighbors, the Germans who remained in Czechoslovakia experienced radical changes in their living environment due to the resettlement of different social groups. Particularly in the first decade after the war, they faced ethnic segregation and stigmatization. The new environment, along with the integration and assimilation processes, led to a gradual loss of certain cultural and linguistic characteristics in both groups. While the Germans who remained in the Czech Republic acknowledged the higher living standards achieved by the expellees, they did not question their decision to stay. They attributed their choice to family, social, and professional ties, as well as the fear of potential political repercussions for their family. Additionally, they expressed a reluctance to experience the homesickness endured by their displaced relatives. In contrast, the life stories of German expellees illustrated a sense of reconciliation with the irreversible loss of their homeland, along with pride in the new lives they had built in Germany. In all four groups, the narratives of the interviewees primarily reflect those of the victor and the hero.

In the context of the Czechs in Croatia, the narrative surrounding the victims of National Socialism and the victors of the World War II is clearly defined. In the Czech Republic, Germans—both those who were forcibly displaced and those who remained—have also attempted to negotiate their place in this historical narrative by reversing the roles of victim and perpetrator. These individuals, along with their families, friends, and relatives, present themselves as victims of the National Socialist regime. They construct the legitimacy of their victimhood by citing the undeniable cause-and-effect relationship present in historical events. They argue

that the humiliation faced by the German population in Czechoslovakia after 1918 and the discrimination between native and imperial Germans contributed to their eventual support for the National Socialist regime. They portray themselves as an oppressed and passive group, emphasizing that they had their own real heroes, the German anti-fascists. This narrative of exoneration is further supported by the argument that the crimes of National Socialism only became widely known after the war, suggesting that people were unaware of them beforehand. Research by the authors indicates that when recounting family stories, children and grandchildren are very protective of their ancestors.

What is common to all the studied groups, such as Czechs and Germans, across all generations, is the narrative of diligence and hard work. The authors attribute this narrative to a sense of alienation and minority status. This crafting of a positive self-image serves as a practical tool for self- and group-assertion in new and challenging social circumstances, aiding acceptance by the majority society. Consequently, the interviewees transition from being seen as victims of a larger narrative to being regarded as everyday heroes. The emphasis on diligence is a recurring theme in the narratives of all generations, alongside references to modesty and thrift. These values have allowed previous generations of the family to prosper. Therefore, family memory encompasses not only information about the ancestors' lives but also the values, norms, and outlooks on life that these stories represent. As the authors highlight, in some instances, the complex of inherited values may bear even more significance than the 'objective' content of family memory.

The life stories also involve a significant negotiation of both group and personal identities. Identity emerges from feelings of alienation and the experience of being part of a minority, as previously mentioned. It is an essential aspect of both the individual and the group that cannot be taken for granted. Through the narrative construction of identity, the authors were able to highlight the various meanings that speakers attribute to the concept of identity. In these narratives, all models of identity transmission can be identified. Notably, I found the presence of the so-called 'embracing model' particularly interesting, where the interest in family stories begins with the youngest generation, without the middle generation necessarily acting as an imaginary bridge. Another important aspect of the detailed comparative analysis is the investigation of the mechanisms and strategies involved in family memory and its formation. The authors also examined the tensions between family memory and the dominant narratives surrounding past interpretations by situating the specific case studies within a broader context.

The authors have thoroughly detailed the process by which family memories emerge from traditional stories about ancestors' experiences, knowledge, values, and moral concepts. Family members interpret and relate to their own experiences

in unique ways. As a result, the intergenerational transmission of memories within families goes beyond merely passing along information. The case studies in this volume illustrate that family histories, whether transmitted critically or uncritically, consciously or unconsciously, significantly shape individuals' identities. Family memory is created through everyday communication. It is therefore not surprising that one of the most important ways families represent the past is simply by discussing it. Family celebrations and gatherings provide the most suitable occasions for these conversations about the past.

The photographs serve as both a reflection of the current state of their lives and as imaginary bridges connecting the present—whether in the Czech Republic or Germany—with the past, rooted in the former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. It is evident that documenting family life through photographs significantly strengthens family ties and enhances the sense of belonging to both the family and its history. For future generations, these photographs become a way to preserve an idealized image of the family. Sharing and viewing family photographs together is therefore an important method that families use to pass down memories across generations. Along with photo albums and photographs, the families' communicative memory is also connected to other objects that reference their ancestors' past.

This is especially evident among families with migration experiences, such as German expellees, returnees, and Czechs who remained in Croatia. For these families, certain objects serve as 'small monuments' that commemorate significant events and family histories. Objects that might seem mundane can acquire deep significance due to their connections to personal experiences and events. Members of the older generation often have strong emotional attachments to specific objects, given that these items are tied to their past and personal stories. The act of collecting, preserving, and cherishing these objects not only helps them process their loss of homeland but also allows them to preserve a piece of it, ensuring that their old homeland is not forgotten.

The desire to maintain a connection to their homeland and the memories of their ancestors is particularly strong among German expellees. This sentiment is evident in the phenomenon known as 'homesick tourism,' which gradually emerged in the second half of the 1950s.

The visits of displaced Germans are of significant importance for those who remain in their homeland. These reunions allow family members and local communities to reconnect. On the one hand, such encounters grant them a special status, as they receive Western goods and gifts from their relatives. On the other hand, these connections set them apart from the Czech majority society, which can lead to mistrust from the state and their surrounding community. For both Czechs and Germans, it is common for the generation that experienced these events to invite

their children and grandchildren to join them. Additionally, it has become increasingly common for descendants to visit these places, reflecting intensification in the search for roots in the postmodern era. Finally, the authors emphasize the significance of new sources of information in preserving family history. While older generations may be unaware of these tools, younger generations find the internet to be a vital channel for learning about their ancestral homelands and staying connected. This means that information flows both ways: not only do grandparents and elders pass down stories, but grandchildren also share knowledge gained from their education and exploration, including reading, school lessons, or personal archival research. As a result, family history evolves into a dialogue that bridges different generations.

The book was originally published in Czech in Prague in 2019 and received the Czech Ethnographic Society's 'Best Book of the Year' award, and rightly so. The German edition was made possible through collaboration between the Czech Academic Institute of Ethnography and the Institut für Volkskunde der Deutschen in Eastern Europe, with support from the Deutsch-Tschechischen Zukunfts fond and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. The translation pays tribute to the work of Corinna Anton. This volume will be of interest to historians, sociologists, ethnographers, cultural anthropologists, and the general public who are concerned with inter-ethnic relations and recent migration issues. The authors have compiled a substantial source base on the topic, processed with remarkable theoretical and methodological rigor while considering a wide range of aspects. There is a significant need for a similar study focusing on the memorial history of dispersed German families in Hungary.



Religion as Securitization in Central and Eastern Europe. Edited by András Máté-Tóth and Kinga Povedák.

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The present volume, edited by András Máté-Tóth and Kinga Povedák, sets out to explore the intersection of collective victimization and religion. The authors primarily focus on the Central and Eastern European context. The volume's central theme explores the relationship between religion and society within the context of the security complex. The authors have built on Máté-Tóth's theoretical framework in their studies. The authors adopt the Copenhagen School's approach to security policy as a point of reference, arguing that securitization is a discursive process in which a problem is conceptualized as an existential threat to a valued 'referential object' (e.g., nation, culture, religion). The acceptance of this threat by the audience, according to the authors, justifies the implementation of extraordinary measures to avert the alleged (or real) threat.

The team of András Máté-Tóth situates religion and religious communities within this theoretical framework. However, it is evident from the individual studies that most authors are not security policy experts, which results in the criticisms of the various schools, particularly the Copenhagen School mentioned above, being less prominent. Contributions from specialists in security policy or the inclusion of its broader context would have improved the quality of the individual studies. Notwithstanding this, the work is valuable, particularly concerning the foundational studies. Key concepts are presented, such as the speech act (based on Austin's theory) and the objective and constructed aspects of the security threat with religion. The legitimacy of the security actor, or even the question of manipulation, is linked to religion. The authors' decision to reveal the use of religion by political and religious actors to advance their agendas is commendable. The notion of collective victimization, a concept of paramount importance to the region, is also anchored in this paradigm. The concept is characterized by a sense of shared belonging to

a group (whether national, ethnic, or religious) that is firmly entrenched in the region's historical memory. This sense of belonging is deeply rooted in the collective trauma and narratives transmitted across generations. The authors further explore other pivotal concepts, including collective memory, historical narratives, and group identity, drawing upon the principles of narrative psychology. However, the authors from diverse academic backgrounds appear to interpret these key concepts differently.

The volume would have benefited from greater transdisciplinarity, with research findings being more intertwined. This would have required a specific methodology. Notwithstanding this, the work presents significant findings and definitions. The volume addresses the functions of victimization, both in its inclusive and exclusive forms. It also explores hostile attitudes towards external groups. While these concepts have been explored in other works, this volume is noteworthy for its focus on an Eastern European regional context. Furthermore, the text explores the relationship between securitization and collective victimization. The authors employ a range of historical analogies, contextualizing them within contemporary events. They conclude from both historical examples and current experience that fear of re-victimization can lead groups to support preventive violence or aggressive policies. Religion is central to the volume and individual studies, as they observe how religion is instrumentalized. The analysis examines how political actors utilize religious concepts, symbols, and narratives. These include the 'sectarian threat,' the 'Islamic threat,' the 'LGBTQ+ threat,' and 'imported holidays.' Furthermore, certain political actors invoke religion as a basis for legitimacy, claiming to defend security and tradition. In some cases, however, religious leaders come close to identifying threats to broader society, often in collaboration with political actors. In this context, religious and political actors present themselves as defenders.

A notable strength of the book lies in its integration of the concepts employed in international literature on security within the context of Hungary, Central and Eastern Europe. András Máté-Tóth's observation that the region is characterized by a strong sense of historical trauma, fear of foreign influence, and exclusive victimization runs through the volume. This dynamic engenders a favourable environment for the appropriation of security. Examples less familiar to the international reader, such as Hungarian Trianon trauma, anti-communist sentiments, the refugee crisis, the 'Soros' and 'EU-sceptic' campaigns, and the new pagan movements, are also examined through the lens of religion and security. Subsequent analysis will demonstrate, through the utilization of case studies, the pervasiveness of this collective belief of victimization within Central and Eastern Europe and its capacity to render societies more susceptible to manipulation. It will be demonstrated that political and religious actors can exploit this vulnerability by framing different issues

as existential threats, often drawing on historical narratives and traumas. Religion itself is ensnared in this security paradigm.

Kinga Povedák's observations, drawn from the context of communist Hungary, underscore this point. Departing from the conventional discourse on state repression of religion, the study delves into the experiences and responses of the Hungarian populace to the regime's endeavours to regulate religion. The communist state, despite its outward appearance of control, harboured a deep-seated paranoia regarding religious movements that were organized from the grassroots. Concurrently, the official church hierarchy collaborated with the state to ensure its survival, whilst concurrently suppressing internal renewal movements.

Réka Szilárdi and Gabriella Judit Kengyel further explore the issue of securitization and collective victimization. They explore the dangerous interplay between how societies frame threats (securitization) and how groups construct identities around shared experiences of suffering (collective victimization). Utilizing the theoretical framework of the Copenhagen school of securitization and narrative psychology, the authors contend that a pre-existing sentiment of collective victimization renders societies more vulnerable to perceiving challenges as existential threats, frequently orchestrated by political and religious actors seeking to fortify their hold on power. While the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) phenomenon, it draws heavily on Hungarian examples. The authors contend that religion functions as both an instrument of securitization and a site for the unfolding of securitization processes.

Srđan M. Jovanović analyses the political currents within the Serbian Orthodox Church, highlighting the Church's influential role in Serbian politics, focusing on the discourse surrounding the deeply contested territory of Kosovo. Utilizing ProfilerPlus software, the author has sought to analyse the official statements of the Orthodox Church. This enables a systematic and quantifiable examination of the political rhetoric of the Church. The result of this analysis is the creation of a dictionary of religious secularization. The discourse surrounding Kosovo has evolved to portray it as a threatened 'sacred space,' with Kosovar Albanians, frequently linked to 'extremist' or 'Islamist' factions, being cast as an existential threat. András Máté-Tóth explores churches as strategic actors in his study. Drawing on the Copenhagen School, he examines the threats identified by the churches and how their rhetoric has shaped their social perception. The study offers a compelling argument for how religious institutions can strategically utilize language and framing to achieve significant political and social power.

Silviu Rogobete and Serghei Pricopiu explore the potential implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The authors provide a detailed analysis of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the context of the conflict in Ukraine, exploring

its transformation into a tool of state power and its role in perpetuating the conflict. This study does not merely examine the political influence of religion; instead, it delves into the process by which an existential threat to the state legitimizes extraordinary action. The authors analyse in detail how the Russian state under Putin has utilized the Russian Orthodox Church, interweaving it into the fabric of national security and even associating it with nuclear strategy. The analysis demonstrates the capacity of religious institutions to be employed as instruments of political influence. Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik's article, "The Orthodox Church and the Russian-Speaking in Latvian Political Security Discourse," examines the complex relationship between the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, the Latvian Orthodox Church (historically linked to Moscow), and the perception of these groups as potential security threats. The article highlights a dichotomy between legitimate security concerns and the potential utilization of securitization as a mechanism for the exclusion of minorities and the restriction of religious freedom.

Viktor Yelensky also writes about the Russo-Ukrainian war under the title "Symbol of Our Kinship Versus Badge of Our Bondage." In this work, he analyses how Eastern Orthodoxy has become a central battleground in the Russo–Ukrainian conflict. He demonstrates how both nations have utilized the church as a tool for political and military purposes. Egdūnas Račius' analysis focuses on Muslim religious organizations in south-eastern Europe. The author posits the argument that governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and northern Macedonia are compelling Muslim organizations to emulate Christian churches. Concurrently, these states portray certain forms of Islam as a security threat. Račius employs case studies to demonstrate how these 'national Muslim churches' utilize their position to control religious discourse and stifle dissent, frequently with state support.

The study by Michaela Grančayová, Aliaksei Kazharski, and Clarissa Tabosa offers a comparison of how religious actors in Poland and Slovakia thematize social issues. The authors explore the relationship between religious institutions and political actors in the two countries regarding multiculturalism, sexuality, and gender issues. While political elites frequently depict migrants as a threat to our 'Christian civilization,' Catholic institutions are more accommodating towards migrants. Conversely, concerning issues of gender identity and sexuality, conservative politicians and the Church frequently concur that the LGBTQ+ community poses a threat to the 'traditional' family unit. The present study offers a nuanced depiction of the intricate relationship between religion and politics, emphasizing the multifaceted dynamics of securitization within the Central European context. The authors demonstrate limited sensitivity to the significant transformations that are taking place in the fundamentally conservative Slovak and especially Polish Church in the light of Vatican II. Notwithstanding, the volume under review here

is a commendable initiative for presenting the Eastern European context regarding religion and security. To this end, it is recommended that the work be continued and further research conducted to incorporate additional countries from the region and provide more in-depth insights into security policy.

