

A MAGYARORSZÁGI PROTESTÁNS LELKÉSZEK
ELLENI 1674. ÉVI PER ÉS A BÉCSI UDVAR

THE VIENNESE COURT AND THE 1674 TRIAL AGAINST
PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN IN HUNGARY

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ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A tanulmány az 1674-es gályarabper előzményeit tárja fel, különös figyelmet szentelve az 1673 februárjában Kassán kidolgozott protestánsellenes kamarai és egyházi javaslatcsomagnak, valamint annak bécsi recepciójának. A szerző új források bevonásával rekonstruálja a per politikai és vallási előkészítését, rámutatva, hogy a prédikátorok elűzésének terve nem pusztán egyházi kezdeményezés volt, hanem széles körű városi, szerzetesi és kamarai támogatást élvezett. A bécsi udvar kezdeti mérsékelt reakcióját követően 1673 végére a protestánsokkal szembeni fellépés szorosan összekapcsolódott a Habsburg-ellenes felkelés politikai kezelésével.

A per közvetlen előzményei a Benczédi László kutatásai révén jól ismert 1673-as kassai tárgyalások mellett az év végén tartott bécsi konferenciában csúcsozódtak ki, amely megnyitotta az utat a pozsonyi rendkívüli bírósági eljárás előtt. A kormányzati források elemzéséből kiderül, hogy a vallási türelmetlenség és a politikai centralizáció miként fonódott össze a protestáns gyülekezetek és lelkészeik elleni eljárásokban.

ABSTRACT

This article examines the background to the galley trial of 1674 with a particular focus on the anti-Protestant chamber and church proposal package, which was drawn up in Kassa in February 1673, and its reception in Vienna. Using new sources, the author reconstructs the political and religious preparations for the trial and shows that the plan to expel the preachers was not a purely ecclesiastical initiative, but found broad support in the city, among the monks and in the chambers. After an initially moderate reaction from the Viennese court, the action against the Protestants at the end of 1673 was closely linked to the political control of the anti-Habsburg uprising.

The immediate background of the trial culminated in the Vienna Conference at the end of 1673, which paved the way for the extraordinary trial in Bratislava, and in the negotiations of 1673 in Kassa, which are well known through the research of László Benczédi. The analysis of the state sources shows how religious intolerance and political centralisation were interwoven in the proceedings against the Protestant congregations and their pastors.

Kulcsszavak: bécsi udvar, bujdosók, ellenreformáció, gályarabper, protestáns vallásgyakorlat, Szepesi Kamara, Wesselényi-mozgalom

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Keywords: counter-Reformation, court of Vienna, Protestant religious practice, refugees, slaver's lawsuit, Szepesi Chamber, Wesselényi movement

Introduction

"I know the sad stories of the preachers who were condemned to galley-slavery, and whose memory lives on in this congregation. Many such tragic events can be recalled in our memories," these were the words of remembrance Pope John Paul II shared with the congregation during his historic visit to Debrecen.¹ The town is often referred to as "Calvinist Rome" in Hungary, because of its prominent role in Hungarian Protestant history and culture. That is why the Pope's visit was so meaningful, and also that after his address, he laid a wreath at the memorial column of the Hungarian Protestant clergymen sentenced to galley-slavery. The trial of 1674 against the Protestant clergymen has indeed occupied a prominent place in the Hungarian Protestant remembrance culture. This is hardly surprising: the trial was an important milestone in Hungarian history at the end of the 17th century. The Peace of Vasvár, which ended the Austro-Turkish War of 1663–64, caused outrage and unrest among the Hungarian aristocracy, but also among the wider society. The conspiring aristocrats (Ferenc Wesselényi, Palatine of Hungary, Ferenc Nádasdy, Lord Chief Justice, Péter Zrínyi, Ban of Croatia, Fran Krsto Frankopan and Francis I Rákóczi) were Catholics, and the Catholic archpriests were aware of their movement – some of them (for example, György Lippay, the Archbishop of Esztergom) even supported it. The increasingly anti-Habsburg movement became a conspiracy, and although Wesselényi died in 1667, his fellow aristocrats rebelled against the Habsburg rule in 1670. However, the uprising had barely begun, and it had already failed – in 1671 the three overlords (Nádasdy, Zrínyi, Frankopan) were executed. The elected Transylvanian prince, Francis I Rákóczi, was saved only by his mother, Zsófia Báthory's connections in Vienna and the huge ransom paid to the Habsburg court.²

For the Habsburg court, it seemed that the time had come to abolish the dual system of the Hungarian estates and the monarch and to implement a centralizing policy. Johann Caspar von Ampringen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, was appointed governor of the Kingdom of Hungary from Vienna, a new tax policy was introduced and the confiscation of

¹ The full text of the Pope's speech is available on the official website of The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Hungary: <https://katolikus.hu/dokumentumtar/ii-janos-pal-papa-debrecenben> (Last Accessed: September 2, 2024)

² Regarding the Wesselényi conspiracy, a fundamental work to this day: PAULER, Gyula: *Wesselényi Ferencz nádor és társainak összeesküvése 1664–1671*, 2 volumes, Budapest, 1876.

important noble estates, especially in Upper Hungary, was started, while the country was occupied by the imperial troops. The nobles who were prosecuted and deprived of their estates, the Hungarian soldiers who were dismissed from the military outposts, and other groups of society also fled to Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire. From 1672 onwards, the fugitive and later *kuruc* movements that emerged from among the refugee population posed a constant threat to the Habsburg rule for nearly four decades.³ In the shadow of a threatening new Ottoman invasion from the end of the 1670s, and the *kuruc* attack led by Thököly, the Viennese Court was finally forced to come to an agreement with the Hungarian estates at the Diet of Sopron in 1681.⁴ The ten years from the fall of the Wesselényi conspiracy to the Diet of Sopron (1671–1681) are considered by Hungarian Protestant memory as the decade of mourning (*Trauerdekade*): peaking in the mass trial of Protestant preachers in 1674.

A vast amount of literature has been written about the trial, its antecedents and its aftermath over the past century and a half. Among the most important studies, I would like to highlight only four that are of particular importance regarding the context of the trial. The first, and still the most influential, is a study by László Benczédi published in 1975. Based on documents found in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, Benczédi explored the negotiations between the Upper Hungary Chamber and the Catholic Church leaders in Košice in early 1673. It was in these negotiations that the intention to expel the Protestant clergy from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary was formulated. The resulting “Košice model” became the forerunner of the great trial in the fall of 1673 that continued into 1674. Benczédi interpreted the Košice draft in the context of the ongoing debate between the political factions of the Viennese Court. At the Viennese Court, two major trends were competing against each other. One political group called for a reform of tax policy in order to exploit the economic resources of the Kingdom of Hungary for the benefit of the Habsburg court. The other party wanted to make a breakthrough in ecclesiastical polity, to break the Protestant church and nobility in Hungary with a comprehensive counter-reformation policy. The events in Košice and the emerging plans helped to strengthen the latter party.⁵

Similarly, Katalin Péter’s study is fundamental and inescapable, showing that individual lawsuits against Protestants had already been launched

³ BENCZÉDI, László: *Rendiség, abszolútizmus és centralizáció a XVII. század végi Magyarországon, 1664–1685*, Budapest, 1980, (Értekezések a történeti tudományok köréből 91.)

⁴ PÁLFFY, Géza: A szakítások és kiegyezések évszázada: a Magyar Királyság 17. századi története új megvilágításban, *Történelmi Szemle* 57, 2015, 1. sz., 51–65.

⁵ BENCZÉDI, László: A prédikátorperek történeti háttere I–II, *Theológiai Szemle*, Új folyam 18., 1975, 1st publication: 7–8. sz., 199–206.; 2nd publication: 9–10. sz., 264–267.

in the early 1670s. These lawsuits against individual clergymen became a collective action against multiple people through several stages, culminating in the trial of 1674. At the same time, Katalin Péter also pointed out that the trial of the galley-slave pastors was only one of many, which actually gained historic significance through the perseverance and heroic stance of the pastors.⁶

Katalin S. Varga found the original record of the trial in the Esztergom Primate Archives. She shared the record of the trial in a primary source publication, and in her preface to the volume she thoroughly explored the main accusations that appeared already in the first trials also mentioned by Katalin Péter and were used by the Viennese Court and the Catholic high clergy against the Protestant pastors.⁷ S. Varga has thoroughly investigated the two main charges using new, unknown, or unused sources, typically from the government. One of the basic charges was sedition, an umbrella term for the anti-Habsburg conspiracy of Hungarian aristocrats, the Wesselényi movement and the Protestant clergy. The other main accusation was Turkism (*turcismus*), which, in Hungarian terms, meant collaboration with the Ottoman conquerors. She examined how these two main charges were intertwined and gradually extended to the Protestant clergy as a whole by 1674.

Georg B. Michels, an excellent scholar of 17th-century Russian history, came across the history of the anti-Habsburg uprising in Hungary, while exploring the question of popular politics and popular violence, and he compared this with similar events in Russia.⁸ The micro-historical approach of the investigation turned more and more towards the years preceding the trial, especially towards the 1672 anti-Habsburg uprising of the “fugitives” in Upper Hungary. The core of the fugitives were the Protestant nobles of Upper Hungary who fled to Transylvania and the Ottoman territories to escape Habsburg retaliation after the fall of the Wesselényi conspiracy. This social stratum therefore already had a really close relationship with the Protestant clergy. For this reason, Michels explored the first lawsuit and investigation against Protestant pastors in Sabinov (Kisszeben), a town in present-day Slovakia. His reason for focusing on this event

⁶ PÉTER, Katalin: A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok és tanítók ellen indított per 1674-ben, in PÉTER, Katalin: *Papok és nemesek. Magyar művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból*, Budapest, 1995, A Ráday Gyűjtemény Tanulmányai 8., 200–210.

⁷ S. VARGA, Katalin: *Vitetnek ítélőszékre... Az 1674-es gályarabper jegyzőkönyve*, Pozsony, 2002, 11–38. Katalin S. Varga provided a thorough comparative analysis of the texts of the court record in a separate volume, embedding them in a broad context: S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es gályarabper jegyzőkönyve. Textus és értelmezés*, Budapest, 2008, (*Historia Litteraria* 24.)

⁸ MICHELS, Georg B.: Rituals of Violence: Retaliatory acts by Russian and Hungarian Rebels, *Russian History* 35, 2008, 3–4. sz., 383–394.

was to determine the extent to which the charges brought against the pastors were true. However, perhaps one of the most important contributions of his research was the inclusion of the case of the free royal towns and the relevant sources in his investigation. Namely, the issue of the action against the free royal towns with a Lutheran majority, and especially the punishments imposed on the towns of Upper Hungary, was closely intertwined with the preparation of the trial against the clergy.⁹ Michels' latest book examines the decade following the Peace of Vasvár established between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire in 1664.¹⁰ According to his research, the Ottoman influence in the Hungarian borderlands, the aggressive economic and ecclesiastical polity of the Habsburgs, and the constant threat of another Ottoman campaign pushed Hungarian society and the nobility in such a direction that the incorporation into the Ottoman Empire became a real alternative. This would have indeed exhausted the concept of *turcismus*, which was interpreted as a crime in the Hungarian jurisprudence of the time, and which was indeed used by the Hungarian Catholic high priesthood and the Viennese Court in the trial of Protestant preachers.

In recent decades, newer research has been essentially based on Benczédi's findings, which viewed the Košice negotiations of early February 1673 as the immediate antecedents of the trial. However, an important question remains unanswered in terms of the chronology: What happened from February 12, 1673 – the Košice meeting of Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy, Bishop of Eger, Ottó Ferdinánd Theophil Volkra, the senior administrator of the Szepes Chamber, and Zsigmond Holló, the Chamber Councilor – until September 1673, when György Szelepcsényi, Archbishop of Esztergom, initiated the first mass lawsuit against 33 preachers? How did the Košice proposal stay on the political agenda for half a year and how was it received at the Viennese Court? We will seek to involve new sources to further develop the findings of previous research.

Conspiracy, rebellion, revenge

On August 1, 1664, the imperial troops led by Raimundo Montecuccoli, together with European auxiliaries, won a brilliant victory over the Ottomans at Szentgotthárd. However, a few days after the victory, the Habsburg envoy made peace with the Turks. The Peace of Vasvár, which ended the war, was already considered a “bad peace” by contemporaries, and later, based on the stance of 19th century Hungarian historiography, the adjective “shameful” was anchored to it in public opinion, which has last until

⁹ MICHELS, Georg B.: Az 1674. évi prédikátorper történetéhez, *Történelmi Szemle* 55, 2013, 1. sz., 55–78.

¹⁰ MICHELS, Georg B.: *The Habsburg Empire under Siege. Ottoman Expansion and Hungarian Revolt in the Age of Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661–76)*, Montreal, 2021.

today.¹¹ It was not only the “secrecy” of the Viennese Court about peace, but also the points of the peace agreement that gave rise to bitterness. The biggest problem was the uncertainty of borders, which the Ottomans took advantage of in the following years to extend their taxation to increasingly larger areas.¹²

The conspiracy was led by the three highest ranked dignitaries among the nobility dissatisfied with the Habsburg-government: Ferenc Wesselényi, Palatine of Hungary; Ferenc Nádasdy, Lord Chief Justice; and Péter Zrínyi, Ban of Croatia. Although all three were Catholic aristocrats, they were joined by the Protestant nobility in the summer of 1666. However, the movement alone was insufficient to take action against Vienna, so foreign allies had to be sought.¹³ The aristocratic leaders tended to be French-oriented, towards Louis XIV, whose Viennese resident, the knight Jacques Brethel de Grémonville, they were closely associated with.¹⁴ On the other hand, a pro-Ottoman tendency was stronger among the Protestant nobility who joined the movement. French foreign policy offered no real alternative, and as a result, the commitment to the Ottomans grew. This was not at odds with Hungarian political reality, since the Principality of Transylvania, although loosely dependent, was still an Ottoman vassal, and the Transylvanian princes represented the wider Hungarian interests against the Habsburgs many times during the 17th century, even with armed force.¹⁵ Ferenc Wesselényi, Palatine of Hungary, came into contact with the Sublime Porte through the Constantinople envoy of the Prince of Transylvania, Michael I Apafi.¹⁶ This policy of rapprochement with the Ottomans and opposition to the Habsburgs did not cease even after the death of Palatine of Hungary Wesselényi in 1667.

In addition to the French and Turkish orientations, a third foreign policy trend should be mentioned as well, which has surfaced in recent research. Péter Tusor has uncovered the secret nuncio’s report to Pope Alexander VII of November 1665, which described the discussion between nuncio Giulio Spinola and György Szelepcsényi, Archbishop of Kalocsa

¹¹ R. VÁRKONYI, Ágnes: A vasvári béke jelentősége a magyar történelemben, in TÓTH, Ferenc – ZÁGORHIDI CZIGÁNY, Balázs (eds.): *A szentgotthárdi csata és a vasvári béke. Oszmán terjeszkedés – európai összefogás*, Budapest, 2018, 339–368.

¹² MICHELS, G. B.: *The Habsburg Empire*, op. cit., 40–50.

¹³ BENCZÉDI, L.: *Rendiség*, op. cit., 17–19.

¹⁴ BÉRENGER, Jean: Francia-magyar kapcsolatok a Wesselényi-összeesküvés idején (1664–1668), *Történelmi Szemle* 10, 1967, 3. sz., 275–291. Reassessment and clarification of the French relations and negotiations with Grémonville: TUSOR, Péter: Forráskritikai megjegyzések a Wesselényi-összeesküvés történetéhez, *Századok* 155, 2021, 1233–1277.

¹⁵ BENCZÉDI, L.: *Rendiség*, op. cit., 19–21.

¹⁶ VARGA, J. János: A török orientáció változatai Magyarországon. Wesselényi – Apafi – Thököly, 1663–1683, *Történelmi Szemle* 49, 2007, 2. sz., 292–294.

and Hungarian Royal Chancellor. The Hungarian clergy, headed by Archbishop György Lippay of Esztergom, also oriented themselves towards France initially, but by the end of 1665, they had leaned more towards the Holy See.¹⁷ For the high priests to think along these lines, one of the reasons was that by the fall of 1665, Leopold I was the last surviving male member of the Austrian line of the Habsburg dynasty, but still unmarried and in frail health.¹⁸ Thus, both the Catholic high clergy and the Protestant nobility were involved in the conspiracy initiated by the Catholic aristocrats. For a brief historical moment, the two sides rose above the denominational barriers that separated them and put the interests of the estates (“the national interests”) first.¹⁹ Although the Catholic clergy later gradually withdrew from the conspiracy of the estates, their participation and collaboration had a number of consequences that influenced the political changes after 1670.

This was partly due to the internal political momentum of the Viennese Court, not just to events in Hungary. In the 1660s, a new political center gradually emerged around the talented Johann Paul Hoher, Austrian court chancellor and one of the most influential members of the Secret Council. Basically, politicians interested in changing the direction of economic policy emerged in his entourage. The “Hungarians” in Hoher’s political party included Count Johann Rottal, who was the Hungarian affairs official in Vienna, and Count Lipót Kollonich, originally from a Croatian noble family, who had just won the title of Bishop of Nyitra. The aim of this new political party, which took form by the early 1670s, was to create a more efficient governance system with a Vienna center. In order to achieve their goals, the representatives of the old Viennese leadership – the first man of the Privy Council, Prince Johann Weikhard von Auersperg, and his successor, Prince Wenzel Lobkowitz, as well as the President of the Court Chamber, Count Ludwig Sinzendorf – were gradually marginalized. Already in parallel with the Wesselényi conspiracy, Hoher and his circle sought to eliminate the institutions of the estates in the governance of Hungary.²⁰ This circle called for a change in economic policy after the political change in 1670 and wanted to achieve better exploitation of the Hungarian economy through new tax laws. After the downfall of the con-

¹⁷ TUSOR, Péter: “Et a pensare al successore in caso.” Szelepcvény György és a rendi szervezkedés. (Egy nunciusi jelentés forrásértéke), *Levéltári Közlemények* 92, 2021, 43–49. Regarding the French relations of Lippay: TUSOR, Péter: “Pous les intérêts d’un si grand roi?” Lippay György esztergomi érsek és a “Wesselényi-összeesküvés”, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 22, 2021, 4. sz., 7–42.

¹⁸ TUSOR, P.: *Szelepcvény*, op. cit., 52–53.

¹⁹ TUSOR, P.: *Szelepcvény*, op. cit., 98–99.

²⁰ R. VÁRKONYI, Ágnes: A Wesselényi-szervezkedés történetéhez, 1664–1671, in FODOR, Pál – PÁLFFY, Géza – TÓTH, István György (eds.): *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc emlékére*, Budapest, 2002, 445–448, 452.

spiracy, the tax decree of March 21, 1671 would have drastically increased the amount of the tax imposed, under the pretext of the need to supply the imperial army occupying the Kingdom of Hungary. The country, which was already suffering the Ottoman conquest and taxation, would have accounted for 40% of the total revenue of the entire Habsburg Monarchy, according to the plans of the Viennese Court.²¹

On the other hand, a group with a focus on ecclesiastical polity was formed, whose members were mainly Hungarian high priests but were very divided. One of its leading figures was György Szelepcsényi, who, as we have seen above, was still negotiating with the Vienna nuncio at the end of 1665 about a solution to the situation in Hungary. Szelepcsényi was elected Archbishop of Esztergom in 1666, making him the Primate of Hungary and the head of the Hungarian Catholic hierarchy. Primate's were in a constricted political situation in the 17th century: they represented the interests of the Hungarian estates in Vienna and those of the Viennese Court in Hungary. At the Viennese Court in 1670, Szelepcsényi's involvement in the Wesselényi conspiracy was the main reason why the Court was able to force him to give up on some of the interests of the estates. In return, they strengthened his position in Hungary and gave him a free hand in violent counter-reformation.²² Szelepcsényi did not only use this political dynamism, reminiscent of a seesaw, to his own advantage, but also to clear the name of other Hungarian high priests in Vienna who were accused of taking part in the conspiracy. Thus, Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy, Bishop of Eger, and István Sennyei, Bishop of Veszprém were both rescued by the Primate-Archbishop and would later actively support Szelepcsényi's counter-reformation efforts.²³

The skillful political maneuvering of the Archbishop of Esztergom contributed to the fact that after the failure of the armed rebellion of 1670, which broke out as a result of the Wesselényi conspiracy, and the beheading of the three Catholic aristocrats leading the conspiracy (Ferenc Nádasdy, Péter Zrínyi and Fran Krsto Frankopan), the Hungarian high clergy did not only save themselves, but also directed the revenge of the Viennese Court against the Protestant estates. Of course, this also required Vienna's need for the political support of the compromised Hungarian Catholic bishops regarding the centralizing measures. The inevitable alliance between the Hungarian Catholic episcopate and the Viennese Court, as well as its anti-Protestant edge were ideologically founded by the work of the Bishop of Warsaw and Provost of Szepes, György Bársony, the *Veritas toti mundo declarata*. Although the leaders of the Wesselényi conspiracy were all members of the Catholic aristocracy, Bishop Bársony tried to

²¹ BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorpercek*, op. cit., I., 203.

²² BENCZÉDI, László: Szelepcsényi érsek ügye és a lipóti abszolútizmus megalapozása 1670 őszén, *Történelmi Szemle* 18, 1975, 2–3. sz., 501.

²³ PAULER, Gy.: *Wesselényi Ferencz nádor*, op. cit., Vol. 2, 156–159.

limit the accusations of treason and the application of the rights forfeiture theory (*Verwirkungstheorie*) to Protestants. The *Veritas* reduced the ideological basis of the Viennese centralizing efforts, i.e. that the Hungarians had forfeited their political rights by conspiring, to a narrower, Catholic interpretation: the Protestants had forfeited their rights to their religious practice as guaranteed by earlier laws and peace treaties.²⁴

The violent counter-reformation that unfolded in 1670–1672 made use of a variety of means. One of its main elements was the dismantling of the Protestant church infrastructure: the confiscation of churches, parsonages and schools. They also tried to strengthen the economic background of the church. The lands and revenues belonging to Protestant churches and parishes were acquired by the Catholic Church, and the massive confiscation of property against the Protestant nobility meant that the former support base disappeared as well.²⁵ The third phase was the action against the pastors. This, as already indicated above, manifested itself mainly in individual lawsuits between 1670 and 1672.²⁶ One of the most symbolic cases of this was the treason trial against István Czeglédy, the Reformed pastor of Košice. The Catholic lords who led the conspiracy had not even raised their flags, when on January 15, 1670, Leopold I ordered an investigation against Czeglédy. On March 6, 1670, the Hungarian Chamber sent a specific list of questions to Košice targeting the clergymen who had contacts, or '*correspondentia*', with the Turks, the first two of which specifically concerned Czeglédy. The first question raised the issue of whether he had actually prayed in public for the Ottoman victory in the Kingdom of Candia (Crete), and the second asked whether he had actually edited or commissioned the printing of a lampoon of the emperor. The other questions concerned whether anyone was prepared to accept Ottoman rule and

²⁴ BENCZÉDI, L.: *Rendiség*, op. cit., 53.

²⁵ MIHALIK, Béla Vilmos: Katolikus megújulás az egri egyházmegyében (1649–1699), in SZABÓ, Irén (ed.): *Katolikus megújulás Északkelet-Magyarországon*, Sárospatak, 2014, (Folia Collecta II.), 47–48. The denominational situation in Upper-Hungary was already quite tense before 1670, after the previously Reformed Transylvanian princely family, the widowed princess Zsófia Báthory and her son Francis I Rákóczi converted to Catholicism. In 1663, they settled Jesuits in Sárospatak, a Reformed cultural and religious center. In 1669, Zsófia Báthory withdrew her patronage from the Reformed College of Sárospatak and the local clergy, but she had to reinstate her support under pressure from the Protestant nobility. PÉTER, Katalin: A jezsuiták működésének első szakasza Sárospatakon, in PÉTER, Katalin: *Papok és nemesek. Magyar művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a reformációval kezdődő másfél évszázadból*, Budapest, 1995, (A Ráday Gyűjtemény tanulmányai 8.) 186–199.

²⁶ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 203, 206.

turn against the emperor, and the imperial military.²⁷ The fact that proceedings were initiated against Czeglédý and other anonymous Protestant clergymen even before the rebellion of the conspiracy of the Catholic lords shows that there was a willingness in Vienna from the very beginning to look for the instigators of the rebellion among Protestant clergymen.

Czeglédý did not survive the prosecution and died in 1671 on his way to the extraordinary court of Pressburg (Bratislava), during Holy Saturday. The case of Miklós Drábik, a pastor from Lehotka, was a special one: the 83-year-old preacher, who fled to Hungary from Bohemia after 1628, was arrested for his prophecies during the reprisals following the Wesselényi conspiracy. In 1657, he became known throughout Europe for his visions of the fall and ultimate ruin of the Habsburg dynasty.²⁸ Leopold I personally followed Drábik's trial, which began in 1671, and did not allow him to be executed until the broken old man converted to Catholicism.²⁹ The public mood is well illustrated by the fact that after Drábik was executed on July 16, 1671, unfounded rumors spread that he had been mutilated prior his death, his tongue was cut out and that he was burnt alive.³⁰

When it came to church occupations or even the expulsion of pastors, the greatest resistance was shown by local community leaders. This was particularly true in free royal towns where the town leaders and council members belonged to the local Protestant, typically Lutheran, elite. Action against them gave the Court an excuse to assert its influence over the towns. The means of this was the chamber system, that is, the Hungarian Chamber in Lower Hungary, based in Bratislava, and the Szepes Chamber in Upper Hungary, based in Košice. Although the Hungarian Chamber administration was legally independent, it was in fact strongly tied to the Court Chamber in Vienna, a dependence that was further strengthened in the 1670s, especially after the influential Lipót Kollonich became president of the Hungarian Chamber in 1672. From the early 1670s, chamber commissioners were sent to oversee the election of new town councils, and this way they could make sure that at least half of the judges, notaries and senators were elected from among Catholics in an increasing number of free royal towns.³¹

The confiscation of property alienated the nobility, the taxation alienated the peasantry, and interference in urban affairs alienated the bourgeoisie from the Habsburgs. The provisioning of the imperial army of occupation and the excesses of the soldiers, as well as the raging coun-

²⁷ MIHALIK, Béla Vilmos: *Papok, polgárok, konvertiták. Katolikus megújulás az egri egyházmegyében (1670–1699)*, Budapest, 2017, 177.

²⁸ PÉTER, Katalin: Drábik Miklós, a lehotkai próféta, *Egyháztörténeti Szemle* 7, 2006, 2. sz., 7–16.

²⁹ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 203.

³⁰ MICHELS, G. B.: *The Habsburg Empire*, op. cit., 243.

³¹ MIHALIK, B. V.: *Katolikus megújulás*, op. cit., 48.

ter-reformation, affected broad sections of society. Soldiers who had been dismissed or had escaped from the military outposts also joined those who had fled to Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire. Thus was the camp of the fugitives formed, which soon felt strong enough in militarily terms to rise up and oppose the imperial troops occupying Upper Hungary.

In the fall of 1672, the pendulum of religious dissent, which had swung to extremes in the wake of the violent wave of counter-reformation after 1670, swung back with the attack of the fugitives sweeping through the ranks of the Catholic clergy, both monks and parish priests. There are plenty of examples of how Catholic priests were tortured by various means and some even murdered. The estates of the Catholic nobles were burned and plundered, and no one was safe—be they gentry, aristocracy, or even urban bourgeoisie.³² Already the first attack in August targeted the Minorite monastery in Nagyszöllős, which was robbed and the two monks captured there castrated.³³ The attack of the fugitives was also intertwined with symbolic manifestations of ritual violence. This meant that altars, holy images, pictures of Mary and statues were desecrated, the wafer was scattered and trampled on, in other words, actions were taken against symbols that were clearly associated with the Catholic denomination.³⁴ But the rebels' campaign ended as quickly as suddenly and successfully it started. On October 26, 1672, the imperial troops led by General Wolf Friedrich Cobb dispersed the fugitives at Győrke.³⁵ The fall uprising of 1672 brought a complete victory for the Catholic party at the Viennese Court, which was pushing for counter-reformation, although it was based on a great deal of controversy. Namely, the previous tax policy was blamed for the outbreak of the rebellion, while the new wave of counter-reformation was justified by blaming the Protestant clergy for the uprising.³⁶

The momentary unity of the estates, which basically transcended denominations and had existed in the few years following the Peace of Vasvár, completely disintegrated by the early 1670s. Although there were many social and economic reasons for the anti-Habsburg uprising and the 1672 campaign of the fugitives, the Kingdom of Hungary had essentially drifted into a religious civil war by the early 1670s. The Hungarian Catholic episcopate, partly to prove its loyalty to the Habsburgs and partly to

³² Numerous specific examples of attacks on the Catholic clergy: MICHELS, Georg B.: The Counter-Reformation and the 1672 Kuruc Revolt, in MILLER, Jaroslav – KONTLER, László (eds.): *Friars, Nobles and Burghers – Sermons, Images and Prints. Studies of Culture and Society in Early-Modern Europe*. In Memoriam István György Tóth, Budapest, 2010, 112–122.

³³ PAULER, Gyula: A bujdosók támadása 1672-ben I., *Századok* 3, 1869, 11.

³⁴ MIHALIK, Béla Vilmos: Sacred Urban Spaces in Seventeenth-Century Upper-Hungary, *Hungarian Historical Review* 1. 2012, 1–2. sz., 34–36.

³⁵ PAULER, Gy.: A bujdosók, op. cit. III. *Századok* 3, 1869, 172–173.

³⁶ BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorperek*, op. cit., II. 266.

strengthen its own position, decided that the time had come to take action against the Protestant denominations.

The Košice model

By the 1670s, Košice had undoubtedly become the administrative, cultural and religious center of Upper Hungary. It was the seat of the Szepes Chamber, the most important governmental body of the region, the chief captains of Upper Hungary, and from 1649 until the end of the century, the bishops of Eger. Despite the town's established Lutheran bourgeoisie, a Reformed congregation evolved by the mid-17th century; as for the Catholic denomination, a Jesuit primary school was founded in 1650, and from 1660 an academy joined as well, while five years later the Catholic seminary, the *Kisdianum*, opened its doors. Alongside the Jesuits, Franciscans also settled in Košice, further strengthening the presence of the Catholic Church.³⁷ This is where the representatives of the Chamber and the Catholic Church met in early 1673 to discuss the situation and the possibilities of eliminating the Protestant Church, primarily in Upper Hungary, but also in the whole Kingdom of Hungary.

It is no wonder that when the Jesuit Father Bálint Balogh, the former vice-regent of the seminary in Košice, was carried away from Tarcal by the rebels on December 8, 1672, it caused a great uproar in Košice.³⁸ In response, the chamber and church leaders in Košice arrested first the Reformed and then the Lutheran pastor of Košice, expecting that this would be sufficient grounds for negotiating with the fugitives.³⁹ Eventually, the kidnapped Catholic priests were freed by General Cobb at Diósgyőr, where the fugitives retreated and left the priests behind. Jesuit Father Bálint Balogh was released on February 6, and arrived in Košice three days later, at noon on February 9.⁴⁰

This latter date is also important because it suggests that Bálint Balogh's arrival in Košice was the trigger for the events that took place the following days. Two days later, on February 11, 1673, the Szepes Chamber summoned Ferenc Lénárd Szegedy, Bishop of Eger, to a hearing – as the invitation put it – on matters that should be written about to higher places.⁴¹ According to the dates (February 14 and 15) of the drafts sent to

³⁷ MIHALIK, B. V.: *Papok, polgárok, konvertiták* op. cit. throughout.

³⁸ Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (hereinafter: ÖNB), Handschriftensammlung, Cod. 12.224., Litterae Annuae (LA) 1672., fol. 92r–v. In addition to Bálint Balogh, other priests were also captured, namely János Munkácsy, the parish priest of Héce.

³⁹ BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorperek*, op. cit., I., 200.

⁴⁰ ÖNB, Handschriftensammlung, Cod. 12.224, LA 1673., fol. 169v–170r.; Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Egyetemi Könyvtár, Kézirattár, Ab 86/I. Diarium Cassoviensis, fol. 4v. February 9, 1673

⁴¹ Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (hereinafter: MNL OL), E 244, Szepesi Kamarai Levéltár, Repraesentationes, informationes et instantiae, fasc. 31.,

the Viennese Court, noted by the Szepes Chamber, the Bishop of Eger and the Bishopric of Eger, the trial must have taken place on February 12 and 13. This proposal package essentially consisted of action against the Protestant clergy on various grounds. There was a maximum and a minimum plan: to drive the preachers out of the whole country, or at least out of the free royal cities. They believed this would help to overcome the remaining resistance of Protestant communities that had already been deprived of their churches, schools and ecclesiastical infrastructure, and thus open up the possibility of their Catholicization. Among the free royal towns, Košice stood out as the primary town in Upper Hungary, which set as an example for other towns.⁴²

They tried to support this from two aspects, one theoretical and one practical. The theoretical background was provided by the already mentioned pamphlet of Bishop Bársony, the *Veritas toti mundo declarata*. Bársony rejected the treaties guaranteeing the freedom of Protestant religious practice (the Treaties of Vienna and Linz) and their enactment by Parliament, but considered Article 4 of the Law of 1525, the law on the burning of Lutherans, to be effective.⁴³ The same reasoning, and a reversion to the anti-Protestant laws, was echoed in the Košice proposals of February 1673.

The practical justification was provided by the arrests of Reformed and Lutheran pastors in Košice. Although the ecclesiastical and chamber proposals in Košice highlighted the effect of this, i.e. the Catholicization of the Protestant population of the town, they also sought to support this with certificates. The Franciscans and Jesuits of Košice, as well as the Bishopric of Eger, attached a brief statement on the number of converts to the proposal, thus confirming its importance and expected effectiveness.⁴⁴

Newly revealed sources in Vienna, however, outline an even broader coalition in Košice behind the submission of these proposals. In addition to the proposal of the Bishop and Bishopric of Eger, as well as the leaders of the Chamber, there was a short draft reasoning for the expulsion of the Protestant pastors and its benefits submitted by the Franciscans, the Jesuits, and even the Catholic leaders of Košice, headed by Judge János Fodor.⁴⁵

February 1673, fol. 238., February 11, 1673.

⁴² BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorperek*, op. cit., I., 200–201.

⁴³ ESZE, Tamás: Bársony György „Veritas”-a, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 75, 1971, 6. sz., 667–693.; BÄHLCKE, Joachim: „Veritas toti mundo declarata”. Der publizistische Diskurs um Religionsfreiheit, Verfassungsordnung und Kirchenrecht in Ungarn im letzten Drittel des 17. Jahrhunderts – eine Fallstudie, in BÄHLCKE, Joachim – LAMBRECHT, Karen – MANER, Hans-Christian (eds.): *Konfessionelle Pluralität als Herausforderung. Koexistenz und Konflikt im Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*. Winfried Eberhard zum 65. Geburtstag, Leipzig, 2006, 553–574.

⁴⁴ BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorperek*, op. cit., 200.

⁴⁵ Österreichische Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereinafter ÖStA, HHStA), Ungarische Akten, fasc. 432., konv. A., fol. 86–87. A ferenesek kelteze-

In other words, besides the leaders of the Chamber, the bishop and the bishopric, the leaders of the town and the monastic orders of Košice also supported the expulsion of the preachers with all their power.

The direct impact of these proposals on the Viennese Court and their reception there is not known. We know that Benczédi does quote the letter of Bishop Lipót Kollonics, president of the Chamber, in which he tried to reassure the Chamber councilors that all necessary steps would be taken at the Court, and that the emperor would confirm the earlier arrest of the clergymen of Košice. Also, on February 20, 1673, the monarch did confirm and approve the arrest of the preachers.⁴⁶ However, this was intended to allay the concerns of the Szepes Chamber expressed earlier, at the end of January and beginning of February, so it was not a response to the drafts of February 14–15.⁴⁷ This is essentially where Benczédi finished his investigation, leaving open the question of what would happen in the months to come.

But it was then that the evolving situation became really exciting. Namely, although we do not know Vienna's direct reaction or response to the February proposals, but they were eventually successfully kept on the agenda in Košice. And this was in connection with the question of punishing the free royal towns. On the same day that Father Balogh Bálint was freed from the captivity of the fugitives, a conference was held in Vienna on the rebellion of the town of Eperjes. The wealthy Lutheran free royal town opened its doors to anti-Habsburg fugitives in 1672, and then resisted the advancing imperial troops for a long time.⁴⁸ Following a proposal made at the meeting, Leopold I approved the restitution of not only

tlen folyamodványa; fol. 88–89. A kassai városvezetők folyamodványa; fol. 232–233. Vid László, kassai rektor keltezetlen folyamodványa. Benczédi did not use these submissions for his foundational study, as these documents were mixed up with the documents entitled “1671 A kassai dómnak a protestánsok kezéből való kivétele”, which Árpád Károlyi had kept separately in a collection of documents related to Protestant church history. However, based on the dates of the Jesuit László Vid's work in Košice (he became rector in November 1672) and the operation of János Fodor's court (from 1672), these documents could not have been created in 1671.

⁴⁶ MNL OL, E 41, Magyar Kamarai Levéltár, Litterae ad camerae exaratae, 1673, nr. 44., Vienna, February 19, 1673. The Hungarian Chamber also forwarded Kollonics's confirmation to Košice: MNL OL, E 250, Szepesi Kamarai Levéltár, Litterae Camerae Poseniensis et aliorum, fasc. 44., nr. 84. February 20, 1673

⁴⁷ The report on the concerns of the Szepes Chamber was forwarded by the Hungarian Chamber from Bratislava to Kollonics in Vienna on February 16: MNL OL, E 15, Magyar Kamarai Levéltár, Expeditiones camerales, 1673. február, nr. 63., February 16, 1673.

⁴⁸ ÖStA, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (hereinafter: FHKA), Hoffinanz Ungarn (HFU), r.Nr. 242., February 1673, fol. 12–35., February 6, 1673.

the main church, but also of the Minorite church in Eperjes to the Catholic Church, and a resolution was made to take the building of the Lutheran Academy of Eperjes too.

However, the court conference's proposal already at that time called for a broader investigation among the towns of Upper Hungary, and mentioned Bártfa, Késmárk and Kisszeben. The latter was singled out as an example of where, during the advance of the fugitives, churches were forcibly recaptured by Protestants and the Sacrament of the Altar was trampled on. And indeed, the monarch did order an investigation of the towns.⁴⁹ At that time, only a few of the thirty-one questions in the survey were related to the Reformed pastors. However, the sin of Eperjes was extended to other towns in Upper Hungary via this gesture. The investigators were in constant contact with the administrator of the Szepes Chamber, Count Ottó Teofil Ferdinánd Volkra, and submitted their final report on March 24, 1673.⁵⁰

However, Count Volkra had already sent his opinion to the Hungarian Chamber on March 4.⁵¹ Volkra actually put a complex proposal package on the table. The document touched on a whole range of urban privileges, but I will now only look at the points that are more significant from a denominational point of view. He proposed to remove Protestants from judgeships, senatorships and other urban offices to be replaced by Catholics. Related to this, he proposed that the town houses and properties seized by the royal treasury be sold at a favorable price to Catholics. This may have been necessary because it would have made it easier to increase the number of eligible Catholic citizens who could be elected to town offices. In the third point, he also suggested changing the existing electoral system in order to achieve an appropriate election result. Namely, whereas before the citizens were free to choose from the candidates for the main offices (judge, notary), Volkra proposed that the Senate and the elected municipality should nominate 3 people each for the Chamber. From these, the Chamber would select the appropriate person, who would be installed by the Chamber's delegate. This would have excluded the Protestant-majority bourgeoisie from the electoral process and delegated the nomination to the already partially Catholicized municipal councils. If the Szepes Chamber could not reach a decision on the appointment, it would have to be referred to the Hungarian Chamber. Some of the former officials should be confirmed as "acting agents" for the decision-making process. The other officials and members of the Senate must resign by Christmas

⁴⁹ On February 13, the Hungarian Chamber forwarded the monarch's decree to the Szepes Chamber, asking them to start the investigation and to send their findings: MNL OL, E 15, February 1673, nr. 18., February 13, 1673.

⁵⁰ MICHELS, G. B.: *Az 1674. évi prédikátorper*, op. cit., 62–63.

⁵¹ ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r. Nr. 243, 1673. június, 1673. június 27., fol. 474r–476v., 1673. március 4.

so that the newly elected body can be up and running in the New Year. In order to increase the number of Catholics, the administrator of the Szepes Chamber proposed in the fourth point that no other persons than those of the Catholic denomination should be admitted as citizens of the town henceforth. To a similar end, in point 14 Volkra proposed the introduction of a new tax. This would have had each Protestant household pay one forint per year, from which Catholic residents would have been exempt. The points concerning Protestant religious practice and pastors clearly reflect the principles of the proposal developed in mid-February together with the bishop and church leaders of Košice. The chamber administrator took the opportunity to include action against preachers in the chamber's agenda and proposals, now linked to the procedures against specific towns. He linked the punishment of the towns to the punishment of preachers. Volkra proposed that the clergy, as organizers of secret meetings and instigators of rebellion, should be driven out of both towns and their suburbs and their churches handed over to the Catholics.

The Viennese Court handed Volkra's proposals to the Hungarian Chamber for its opinion, and also to the newly established *Gubernium*, headed by the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order Johann Kaspar Ampringen, in March 1673. However, the comments received did not fully support Volkra's proposal.⁵² The Hungarian Chamber would not have restricted the right of citizenship completely, but rather suggested that towns should submit the names of those to be admitted to the Szepes Chamber in advance, so that the Chamber could exclude candidates who were obviously "heretical and seditious". The *Gubernium* agreed to the amendment of the Hungarian Chamber, so that Lutherans would not be completely excluded from the possibility of obtaining citizenship, only significantly restricted. The Hungarian Chamber and the *Gubernium* also agreed that a tax on Protestants could lead to the depopulation of the towns, and the proposal was fully rejected. However, neither the Hungarian Chamber nor Governor Ampringen gave their preliminary comments on the points aimed at expelling the clergy and confiscating the churches in their opinions sent to the Court Chamber.

The draft of the Szepes Chamber administrator Count Volkra, together with the opinions of the Hungarian Chamber and the *Gubernium*, was discussed on May 20, 1673, by the conference of the dicasteries in Vienna.⁵³ The meeting was attended by Raimondo Montecuccoli, President of the Imperial Military Council, Hungarian Chancellor Tamás Pálffy, Count Hohenfeld and Austrian Chancellor Johann Paul Hoher. In its submis-

⁵² ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r. Nr. 243, 1673. június, 1673. június 27., 460r-v; 472r-473v., 1673. március 13. The opinion of the Hungarian Chamber; fol. 463r - 464v; 467r-468v. April 14, 1673, The opinion of the Gubernium.

⁵³ ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r. Nr. 243, 1673. június, 1673. június 27., fol. 453r-457v, 479r-482v. May 20, 1673, Proposal of the Court Conference to Leopold I.

sion to the Emperor Leopold I, the Conference took a much more cautious position regarding religious proposals. They agreed with the proposal of the *Gubernium* and the Hungarian Chamber, advising that a ratio of three to one should be followed in admitting new citizens, i.e. one new Lutheran citizen could be allowed for every three Catholic citizens. Similarly, the conference rejected the idea of a special tax on Protestants. The meeting also took a softer stance on the issue of Protestant religious practice and pastors. Referring to examples from the Empire and France, they believed it was still better to tolerate an erroneous religion than to push subjects into atheism (*viel ehender eine falsche irrige religion zu gedulden als den atheismus bey diesen verzweifelten leuchten einzuführen*). For this reason, it was proposed, contrary to the February and March proposals drafted in Košice, that Protestant worship be temporarily tolerated in the suburban areas. It was also suggested that towns should be assessed separately because their sins were of different degrees. Separate investigations were deemed necessary for the blasphemy offenses in Kisszeben and Bártfa.

Montecuccoli, the “host” of the conference, wrote down a short record of the meeting.⁵⁴ It reveals that it was probably the Austrian Chancellor Hoher who suggested that Protestant religious practice should be tolerated to some extent. The monarch accepted the proposal of the conference at an audience in the presence of his most senior councilors. On May 26, Leopold I ordered that where the clergy had not yet been persecuted and Protestant worship had not yet been suspended, it should temporarily remain unchanged, and that Protestants should be allowed free exercise of religion in the suburbs.⁵⁵ In other words, the extreme idea of the complete abolition of the Protestant clergy, at least in the free royal towns, which was proposed by the Chamber and church leaders in Košice, was not supported by the Viennese Court in May 1673, based on the recommendations of the Hungarian Chamber and the *Gubernium*, and even allowed religious practice in the suburbs, albeit within limited limits!

However, parallel with the Vienna Conference, on May 16, 1673, the Hungarian Chamber received a royal document that initiated an investigation against a pastor accused of *turcismus*.⁵⁶ The Bishop of Eger did not let go off the action against the pastors either. On June 7, 1673, the Imperial Military Council informed General Cobb that the removal of the preachers requested by the Bishop of Eger was a matter for the *Gubernium*, not

⁵⁴ ÖStA, Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten, Akten, fasz. 173., fol. 85–86.

⁵⁵ The draft decree of the emperor was dated May 26: ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r.Nr. 243., 1673. május, fol. 343r–345v, 350r–354v.

⁵⁶ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 206. The document has disappeared, so unfortunately it is not possible to identify the location, nor the pastor or whether it was against one or more preachers.

the Military Council.⁵⁷ However, there is only one known transcript written by the *Gubernium* to the Hungarian Chamber in July, reminding them of the points of the Imperial Decree of May 26, asking them to act on any of them if they had not started to do so, and requesting that a report be sent to the *Gubernium*.⁵⁸

All this doesn't clarify, what shift occurred in the summer of 1673 that led Archbishop György Szelepcsényi to believe that the time was right for a more vigorous action against the clergy. It could also be that this was the self-initiated action of the archbishop as the royal governor overseeing the administration of justice, presenting the Court with a *fait accompli*. This is contradicted by the fact that, according to the information of the canon of Szepes, it was the Governor of Ampringen who visited the county of Liptó to summon the clergymen to his own court as the initiators and instigators of the recent rebellions. An unspecified petition has been submitted to the Gubernator and Szelepcsényi. That is, Szelepcsényi would have started the action against the clergy in close cooperation with the *Gubernium*.⁵⁹

However, when the proceedings beginning on September 25, 1673, reached the mining towns of Lower Hungary, the Court intervened once again. Following reports from Selmecebánya and Besztercebánya in October and November, the expulsion of the clergymen of the Lower Hungary mining towns and their summoning to Bratislava was temporarily suspended by the Emperor on the advice of the Court Chamber. But this was purely for political-economic reasons. The Court started to fear that the miners and the population might move to Transylvania, or, in a worse scenario, that the valuable mining towns would fall into the hands of the rebels and thus the Turks, resulting in a huge loss. However, the Court's intervention came relatively late, and the documents received from the mining chamber were accompanied by *reversalis* certificates (letters of obligation) issued by the leaders of the surrounding villages and settlements, stating that they would not accept Reformed pastors, or by Reformed pastors themselves, declaring that they would suspend their profession and leave the territory of the imperial manor. These letters of obligation already show a partial similarity with the documents that were later forced on Protestant clergymen during the infamous galley-slave trial a few months later. The chamber was also shocked to learn from reports that the local military leader, Colonel Collalto, had taken the initiative to expel the Reformed pastors. The Imperial Military Council questioned the officer, but all they could report in their reply to the Court Chamber was that the Colonel had acted

⁵⁷ SZABÓ, István: Protestáns egyháztörténeti adattár az 1670–1681. évekből a bécsi hadilevéltárból III., *Egyháztörténet* 2., 1959, 3–4. sz., 301.

⁵⁸ MNL OL, E 39, Magyar Kamarai Levéltár, Insinuata regii gubernii Hungarici Ampringeniani, 1673. július, nr. 1., July 11, 1673.

⁵⁹ MNL OL, E 254, fasc. 61., 1673. szeptember, nr. 79., Szepes, September 20, 1673, Letter of György Lencsovcics, canon of Szepes to István Kolosváry, canon of Eger.

without the knowledge and permission of the Military Council on this sensitive religious issue.⁶⁰

Furthermore, on November 26, 1673, on the order of Archbishop Szelepcsényi, a new investigation was started into the occupation and plundering of the churches of Eperjes in the fall of 1672 and the resistance of the people of Eperjes in general.⁶¹ The affairs of the Lower and Upper Hungary towns and the action against their pastors thus gradually began to converge. In November 1673, the representatives of the central government authorities met again in Vienna for a conference. The four-day conference (November 14–16, 20) covered a wide range of issues. These included the case of the Lőcse preachers and their fellows, the expulsion of the pastors of the mining towns, and the issue of punishing the towns of Bártfa, Kisszeben, Késmárk and Lőcse.⁶² For in Lőcse, the exiled pastors gathered and continued their ministry under the protection of the town. The conference was informed by the Hungarian Chancellery that in their public sermons from the pulpit they urged the people of Lőcse to resist and rise up. On the issue of punishing the towns, they referred back to the decisions of the May conference, which seems to indicate that they were not very satisfied with the investigations, if any, that were conducted at that time. In the case of the pastors of the mining towns, Lipót Kollonics as president of the Hungarian Chamber and Bishop of Nyitra Tamás Pálffy, as Hungarian Chancellor, underlined that the preachers should be summoned to Bratislava as rebels, that is, not for religious reasons, but for political ones. At the two-day audience in Vienna (November 26–27, 1673), the emperor ordered that the preachers from Lőcse and their companions, as well as the pastors of the mining towns, should be summoned to Bratislava and tried there. Similarly, from each of the free royal towns mentioned, three or four representatives should be summoned who have the greatest knowledge (*so die meiste wissenschaft haben*).⁶³

In my opinion, through this conference at the end of November, the Court gave free rein to the preachers' trials. While a few weeks earlier they had tried to mitigate the effects in the case of the mining towns, or while in the late spring of 1673 they had been even more lenient in the case of the Upper Hungarian towns, here they had clearly opted for a trial before the extraordinary court of Pressburg (Bratislava). It is very important to note

⁶⁰ ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r.Nr. 245., October 1673, fol. 98–108. October 12, 1673; fol. 119–126. October 14, 1673; fol. 249–250. October 24, 1673; November 1673, fol. 3–14. November 6, 1673; Szabó, op. cit., 307–308.

⁶¹ MNL OL, E 148, Magyar Kamara Archívuma, Neoregstrata acta, fasc. 1744., nr. 54.

⁶² ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r.Nr. 245., 1673. november, fol. 175–292., November 29, 1673. The importance of the November conference has already been pointed out by Katalin S. Varga: S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es*, op. cit., 65–66.

⁶³ ÖStA, FHKA, HFU, r.Nr. 245., 1673. november, fol. 269r–277v, 291r–292r.

that, under the influence of Kollonics and Pálffy, it was already emphasized here that the trials were politically motivated, charging the accused with sedition rather than being driven by religious motives. This became a recurring element in the galley-slave trial of 1674. This is hardly a coincidence, since Kollonics and Pálffy were the two heads of the national dicasteries, and they were among the judges conducting the preacher trials in Bratislava.⁶⁴ Historians dealing with the galley trial have invariably pointed out that the royal decree of January 6, 1674 addressed to the Archbishop Szelepcsényi, ordering proceedings against the preachers and their companions from Lőcse and Késmárk, as well as the citizens of Sopron, is known only from the minutes.⁶⁵ However, on January 4, two days earlier, the Hungarian Chamber sent the points discussed at the November conference, and issued on November 29, to the Szepes Chamber.⁶⁶ The phrase “*Praedicans Leutschoviensis, una cum complicibus suis, nota infidelitatis infectis, ad inquisitionem huc Posonium citandus*” contained in this is clearly reflected in the wording of the January 6 decree copied in the minutes: “*Leuchouienses et Késmarkienses praedicantes, veluti non postremi foedae illius rebellionis auctores cum complicibus ac aliis sibi similibus (...) citandi sint*”.⁶⁷ On the basis of all this, it is my opinion that the galley trial against the clergy was decided at the Vienna audience of November 26–27, 1673.

The “Košice model” was a response to the 1672 attack by the fugitives, in which a comprehensive plan of violent counter-reformation against Protestants was outlined. Although the Viennese Court did not react to the draft in the spring of 1673, the leaders of the Szepes Chamber kept it on the agenda via the issue of the towns that had sided with the uprising. The final step, however, was taken by Archbishop of Esztergom György Szelepcsényi with the first lawsuit against the 33 pastors. Finally, in November 1674, the Viennese Court basically gave the go-ahead for action against the Protestant clergy.

The trial and the fate of the preachers

The fact that the imperial decree was directed only against the pastors of individual towns, and not against the entire clergy, is probably due to the awareness of the Viennese Court that such a decree could have caused a political storm. The Lutheran orders of the empire, the *Corpus Evangelicorum*, headed by the electorate of Brandenburg, protested against the

⁶⁴ S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es*, op. cit., 40–41. Judges beside Pálffy and Kollonics: Archbishop György Szelepcsényi, viceroy; Archbishop of Kalocsa György Széchényi, Bishop of Veszprém István Sennyey, Bishop of Pécs János Gubasóczy, Lord Chief Justice Ádám Forgách, Pál Esterházy, Miklós Pálffy, László Károlyi.

⁶⁵ S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es*, op. cit., 149–150.

⁶⁶ MNL OL E 250, fasc. 46., nr. 8., January 04, 1674.

⁶⁷ S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es*, op. cit., 149.

insults to Protestants in Hungary already as early as 1672.⁶⁸ However, this did not stop the Bratislava court from initiating a mass trial in 1674, targeting essentially the entire Protestant clergy and schoolmasters in Hungary.

On January 19, 1674, the Hungarian Chamber sent to the Szepes Chamber a decree summoning the pastors of Késmárk, Lőcse and the thirteen town pastors of Szepes to Bratislava for March 5. At the same time, the Hungarian Chamber ordered the opening of an investigation against the towns of Lőcse, Bátfá, Kisszeben, and Késmárk.⁶⁹ The accusations were the same as the already known list of charges, which was expanded after 1670: participation in and incitement to rebellion, blasphemy and sacrilege, and association with the Turks. A little over seven hundred people were summoned, of whom more than three hundred eventually appeared in person in Bratislava. As Katalin Péter has pointed out, the trial did not become famous because of the large number of summonses and was essentially no different from the majority of insurrection trials before 1674. What made the proceedings in Bratislava in the spring of 1674 extraordinary was the resistance and perseverance of the clergymen who had been summoned and appeared at the trial.⁷⁰

There are several indications of a bias in the compilation of testimonies during the procedure. The testimonies from Pápa, recorded by the Bishopric of Csorna were so extremely falsified that the recording of the testimonies had to be repeated after the proceedings that were initiated by the witnesses. The question of the falsification of the Veszprém testimonies was also raised; here two of the accused, as well as soldiers of the Veszprém fortress, protested against the manipulation of testimonies.⁷¹ The analysis of the minutes points in this direction as well: for example, the translation of the Hungarian testimonies into Latin expanded the information contained therein. Katalin S. Varga also pointed out that the recording of the testimonies against Protestant clergymen had been continuous from the early 1670s, and that these earlier testimonies were used in the great trial in a targeted way.⁷²

At the beginning of the trial, the tribunal had already announced the possibility of the death penalty, from which there were three ways to escape:

⁶⁸ BAHLCKE, Joachim: *Ungarischer Episkopat und österreichische Monarchie. Von einer Partnerschaft zur Konfrontation (1686–1790)*, Stuttgart, 2005, 217.

⁶⁹ MNL OL E 250, fasc. 46., nr. 15., January 19, 1674.

⁷⁰ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 206–207.

⁷¹ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 200–201. For a thorough comparison of the testimonies of the witnesses and the minutes taken in Veszprém, as well as the testimonies of the Veszprém witnesses included in the Bratislava minutes, see: F. TÓTH, Péter: „Igen elkezdődtek kergetésünket”. *Az 1674-es gályarabper veszprémi jegyzőkönyve*, Veszprém, 2018. (*A Veszprém Megyei Levéltár kiadványai* 41.) 18–23.

⁷² S. VARGA, Katalin: *Az 1674-es*, op. cit., 88–98.

by becoming a Catholic, by emigrating from the country or by resigning their ministry. On April 4, 1674, the summoned pastors were called to the Archbishop's Palace in Bratislava. Those who wished to remain in Hungary and leaving their office had to gather to the right of the door, while those who wished to emigrate had to stand to the left. Only those who choose death were to remain in the doorway. The preachers present all moved together: remaining in the doorway, expecting the death sentence. The tribunal was forced into a situation of necessity by the unexpected opposition and was forced to declare capital punishment and the forfeiture of property, although it was obvious that it could not be enforced. Leopold I could not, of course, sign so many death sentences, so orders were sent from Vienna to imprison four clergymen and exile the rest. The court, however, refused to accept this, and insisted on trying to have the summoned pastors sign letters of obligation, or choose the exile. After a long, unsuccessful trial, the possibility of galley-slavery was finally raised at the suggestion of Lipót Kollonich, although the death sentence passed earlier was never suspended.⁷³

Over the following months, an increasing number of prisoners were broken and persuaded to sign the letters of obligation, after many were transferred to various prisons around the country. By the beginning of 1675, forty-two prisoners remained scattered in the fortresses of Berencs, Komárom and Lipótvár. They were driven to Naples in the spring of 1675. On the way there, three escaped and seven died. The thirty-two surviving prisoners were sold as galley-slaves in Buccari and Naples.⁷⁴

Conclusions

In the Protestant countries of Europe, the fate of the Hungarian pastors caused a huge uproar. In Switzerland, donations were collected to bail out the preachers at the Viceroy of Naples, but in the end, Dutch diplomacy was more successful. The Dutch envoy in Vienna, Hamel Bruyninx, managed to persuade the Dutch government to take diplomatic action. At the Viennese Court, however, the release of prisoners was still conditional on the signing of letters of obligation. The Dutch envoy eventually did this on behalf of the prisoners, and also paid the ransom of 100 thalers per person using the donations collected in Switzerland.

As a result of the Franco-Dutch War, a large Dutch fleet was operating in the Mediterranean under the command of Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, which was stationed off the coast of Naples at the end of 1675. De Ruyter himself wrote several letters to the Viceroy of Naples, Fernando Fajardo, Marquis of Los Velez, asking him to help free the Hungarian galley-slaves. This took place on February 11, 1676, when the twenty-six surviving Hun-

⁷³ PÉTER, K.: *A magyarországi protestáns prédikátorok*, op. cit., 207–209.

⁷⁴ BUCSAY, Mihály: *A protestantizmus története Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1985, 115–116.

garian prisoners were transferred to the Dutch admiral's ship. In addition, five survivors of the group sold at Buccari on the seacoast were freed in May 1676, thanks to the intervention of John George II, Prince-Elector of Saxony⁷⁵

The thirty-one freed galley-slave preachers found new homes in Switzerland, in Protestant German provinces, in the Netherlands and in England. However, their initial positive reception was overshadowed in the host countries by the fact that the freed galley-slave preachers, such as the Lutheran György Lányi, attacked – even in writing – the exiled preachers who had fled Hungary by signing the letter of obligation.⁷⁶ However, the shock of the “decade of mourning” (when Protestant clergy was persecuted from 1671–1681) also had a major impact on Protestant church history writing. On the Reformed side, Bálint Kocsi Csergő presented the story of the galley-slaves in his *Narratio brevis*, which was later included in the great church history of the Reformed Church written by Pál Debreceni Ember, entitled *Historia ecclesiae reformatae in Hungaria et Transylvania*. As for the Lutherans, it was János Burius, Sr., who collected church historical data in his *Micae historico-chronologicae Evangelico-Pannonicae*, primarily about events of the decade of mourning.⁷⁷ A comprehensive Lutheran church history was not written until the 18th century, although Dániel Krmann's *Hungaria evangelica* remained in manuscript after all.⁷⁸

The attempt at counter-reformation – as László Benczédi pointed out in 1975 – remained fruitless. The preachers who had persevered to the end were still agonizing on the galleys when, in the course of 1675–1676, reports from representatives of the chambers, the military and the Catholic Church started to arrive from more and more parts of the Kingdom of Hungary about the return of Protestant pastors and schoolmasters and the resumption of congregational life.⁷⁹ Moreover, almost already during the great trial, the Viennese Court realized that it would have to make concessions in order to reduce social tensions. In order to reduce the military potential of the fugitives and to lure back the soldiers who had joined to the rebels, the court and the authorities were forced to make concessions, especially regarding the Protestant religious practice among the soldiers in the frontier fortresses. It was mainly the Military Council and the *Guber-*

⁷⁵ BITSKEY, István and PUSZTAI, Gábor (eds.): *Michiel Ruyter és Magyarország*, Budapest, 2008,

⁷⁶ KOWALSKÁ, Eva: GÜNTHER, Klesch, LÁNYI und die anderen. Zur Typologie der ungarischen Exulanten des 17. Jahrhunderts, *Acta Comeniana* 20–21 (2007) 49–64.

⁷⁷ MAKKA, László (ed.): *Galeria omnium sanctorum. A magyarországi gályarab prédikátorok emlékezete*, Budapest, 1976, 23–28.

⁷⁸ ZSILINSZKY, Mihály: *Kermann Dániel evangélikus püspök élete és művei, 1663–1740*, Budapest, 1899, 83–94.

⁷⁹ BENCZÉDI, L.: *A prédikátorperek*, op. cit., II. 266–267.

nium that were inclined to reconciliation and the settlement of religious issues, without, of course, prejudice to the Catholic results achieved so far. The royal decree sent to General Paris von Spankau on April 26, 1674, allowed the presence of a Reformed and a Lutheran pastor in certain places, such as Szendrő, Ónod, Putnok, Nagykálló and Szatmár, partly because of the hope that this would help retaining the Protestant soldiers. The concessions granted to the Upper-Hungarian outposts were soon followed by others. On January 13, 1675, the Protestants serving in the Pápa, Veszprém, Vázsony, Tihany, Léva and Fülek fortresses were granted a letter of religious protection. In theory, however, this did not mean that preachers were allowed to operate or churches to be restored, yet in reality that is what happened. Thus, the main principle that evolved was that the pastors in the outposts should not go out under any circumstances to the nearby villages to serve the orphaned congregations there.⁸⁰

Of course, this was not nearly enough to resolve the social and denominational conflicts. From the late 1670s, the military successes of the emerging Imre Thököly and his *kuruc* movement, followed by the threat of a new Ottoman attack and campaign, forced the Viennese Court to retreat. The attempt of the Habsburg court to establish a central government failed with the Diet of Sopron in 1681, and the Hungarian estates were restored, the most symbolic step of which was the election of a new palatine in the person of Pál Esterházy. The religious laws passed by the Diet (Articles 25–26) were an attempt to reach an inter-denominational compromise, based in part on the territorial concessions made to military outposts from 1674.

Article 25 allowed the free exercise of religion, but with the important stipulation that the rights of the landlords were to be preserved. This meant that if the landlord objected, it was not possible to renew the Protestant religious practice in the settlement. The personal consequences of the preacher trials were also eliminated by this article, as it allowed the return and practicing of their profession for the pastors and schoolmasters who had been exiled or forced to sign a letter of obligation. Article 26 dealt mainly with churches. As a general principle, Protestant denominations were allowed to keep the churches that had been built by their followers but never consecrated according to the Roman Catholic rite. However, this meant that medieval churches of Catholic origin or churches built by Protestants but occupied during the Counter-Reformation of the 1670s and consecrated according to Catholic rites were not covered by the article. The law also made a strict territorial division: while in Lower Hungary it designated the places for the practice of Protestant religion for each county, in the counties of Upper Hungary and the counties that had just been liberated from Ottoman rule, it essentially left the status quo in place.

⁸⁰ MIHALIK, B. V.: *Papok, polgárok, konvertiták*, op. cit., 199–200.

In the free royal towns and in the mining towns, following the example of Bratislava, Lutherans were allowed to build a church, a school and a rectory in the suburbs at their own expense, in the designated places. Everyone was dissatisfied with the law already at the time of its birth: Catholics found it too lenient, Protestants scorned the too restricted concessions it granted. Moreover, the Viennese Court, especially after the fall of Imre Thököly (1685), interpreted the laws in an increasingly restrictive way, as expressed in the famous royal decree of 1691, the *Explanatio Leopoldina*.⁸¹

Although the violent counter-reformation subsided, the only possibility for Protestant religious practice was the limited allowances offered by the Sopron Articles of Religion and the royal decrees reinterpreting them, until the Edict of Tolerance of Emperor Joseph II. Because of the perseverance of the clergy and the consequences of the “decade of mourning” between 1671–1681, the galley-slave trial became a strong historical “memorial” of Protestant identity in Hungary.

⁸¹ MIHALIK, Béla Vilmos: Az 1681. évi vallásügyi cikkelyek alkalmazása a gyakorlatban. A Draskovich-Erdődy és a Csáky-féle királyi vallásügyi bizottságok működése, in Csorba, Dávid (ed.): *Vértelen ellenreformáció*, Budapest, 2020, 55–68.