

The Despair of *Magyarság*: In Pursuit of a Magyar Ontology

Erik R. Lynch

HIS 301

Dr. Varga-Harris

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NEM! NEM! SOHA!

Nem lesz kisebb Hazánk, nem, egy arasszal sem,

Úgy fogsz tündökölni, mint régen, fényesen,

Magyar rónán, hegyen egy kiáltás zúg át:

Nem engedjük soha! Soha Árpád honát!

Attila József, 1922 első fele

MAGYAR CREDO

I believe in God

I believe in a Fatherland

I believe in eternal divine justice

I believe in Hungary's resurrection!

*Amen*¹

¹ Tamás Bíró Balogh, "Truncated Hungary is Not a Country: The Functioning of the Revisionist Propaganda Machine," *Forrás* 39 (2007) via Gábor Kovács, "Burghers, Intellectuals, and Gentries: The Utopia of Alternative Modernization in the Interwar Hungarian Populist Movement: László Németh, Ferenc Erdei, and István Bibó," *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Social Analysis* 9 (2019): 72

The conclusion of the Great War was disastrous for Hungary. Her parent state, Austria-Hungary, was vanquished and ceased to exist. Independent Hungary went through a cascade of governments and regimes, enduring foreign occupations and the dismemberment of her historic borders.² Successive governments tore each other down in the space of months then went as quickly as they came. The most consequential of these ephemeral regimes was Béla Kun's revolutionary socialist *Räterepublik*. Despite existing for less than a year, flourishing in the summer of 1919, Kun's regime was massively influential to the self-conception of Interwar Hungary and cemented the centrality of anti-Bolshevism among the Hungarian *élite*.³ Kun's government was deposed by force of Rumanian arms, after which Budapest was occupied by Admiral Miklós Horthy's counterrevolutionary National Army.⁴ Political disorder festered for another year until the appointment of István Bethlen as Prime Minister in April 1921, after which the regime stabilized into the form it would maintain until 1944.⁵ It was from the chaos following the dissolution of the *Ancien Régime* that a new conception of Hungarian nation was to be built upon in the years between the World Wars.

For the fifty-one years preceding the Aster Revolution in autumn of 1918, Hungary had been an equal partner in the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary under the leadership of the House of Habsburg, having previously been subjects of the Habsburgs for several centuries. At the time the administrative bonds between Budapest and Vienna were severed, Hungary was in command of a formidable army of nearly a million and a half men, administered a fertile stretch

² Andrew Janos, "The Restoration of Neo-Corporatism (1919-1931)," *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 201-04.

³ Thomas Lorman, "István Bethlen and the 1922 Elections in Hungary," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 80, no. 4, 644.

⁴ Janos, *Restoration*, 201-02.

⁵ Lorman, "Elections," *Review*, 624.

of land that encompassed some 129,000 square miles, and governed twenty million souls.⁶ However, the pacifist nature of the first postrevolutionary democratic government of Mihály Károlyi, postwar demobilization, the seizure of power by Béla Kun's Bolshevik forces, and the subsequent Franco-Rumanian invasion all conspired to severely diminish the administrative capacity of the Hungarian state and to engender a crisis of meaning within the Hungarian national concept by the time the Treaty of Trianon, the onerous peace deal that formally ended Hungary's belligerency in the Great War, was promulgated in the summer of 1920.

The Treaty of Trianon is of such immanence to modern Hungarian history that 1920 might well be considered its *anno domini*. The catastrophe brought about by the Treaty of Trianon can hardly be overstated. The general shape of Hungary's borders as a political, cultural, and linguistic entity had been relatively stable for a thousand years before the Treaty of Trianon. The terms of the Treaty reduced Hungary's physical size from nearly 129,000 square miles to 36,000 square miles; the population within Hungary's borders plummeted from twenty millions to less than eight millions; regions of historical and cultural importance such as Transylvania were sealed off behind hostile borders, as were up to three million Magyars.⁷ Hungary before the Treaty had been a regional power within a great power, boasting access to large and stable markets in constant demand for Hungary's ample agricultural surplus that could furnish Hungary's nascent industrial base with all manner of raw materials. Trianon had not only cut off the rump state of Hungary from its former territories; the Treaty also cast down Hungary from its regional political and economic prominence and fundamentally altered their relationship to the Habsburg successor states and other neighboring polities.

⁶ Janos, "Restoration," 205.

⁷ Janos, "Restoration," 205-206.

The historiography of Interwar Hungary is underdeveloped in comparison to the period that preceded it – the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and to that which succeeded it – the Second World War. This lack is salient in the English language scholarship, though commendable efforts have been made by scholars within the last decade to rectify this. Within the last five years alone, there has been a significant proliferation of scholarship concerning itself with alternative approaches to the question of Magyar-Being, that differed in meaningful ways from government priorities and social-cultural orthodoxy. The new direction in Interwar Hungarian scholarship is being led by Réka Várkonyi-Nickel’s work on industrial centers in rural northern Hungary, Gábor Kovács’ work on the Populist literary and political movement amidst the Hungarian peasantry, and Louise Vasvári’s work on the intersection of Jewishness, femininity, and national identity in international beauty pageants, among others.⁸ These contributions to the scholarship are of vital importance and represent a laudable shift within the historiography. But, distressingly, each example of alternative self-conceptualization has been explored in isolation from each other, and as exceptional states. That there existed a general intellectual trend in the Interwar Hungary to reconfigure Hungarian national consciousness in some way or the other is well supported by primary sources and acknowledged at least tacitly in the secondary literature, yet the full meaning and contours of this trend have not been adequately explored in the historiography, nor has it been stated explicitly as a question of ontology.

The persisting absence of a general account of the nature of *Magyarság* between the World Wars in light of the emerging scholarship is not only an academic lacuna, but a social-

⁸ Réka Várkonyi-Nickel, “Revisiting Enterprise Politics in the Interwar Hungary: The Case of the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Iron Works Co.,” *Metszetek* 7, No. 4 (Debrecen: University of Debrecen, 2018), 151-164; Kovács, “Burghers, 71-82; Louise Vasvári, “Böske Simon, *Miss Hungária* and *Miss Europa* (1929): Beauty Pageants and Packaging Gender, Race, and National Identity in Interwar Hungary,” *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 12 (2019), 194-233.

historical blind spot that has poisonous consequences with regard to public memory. In considering this time period and others, Hungarian history has been neglected in comparison to that of other European states.⁹ The insufficiency of the historiography has made this period a playground for the fantasies of the far right while alienating moderates and the left from a vital and transformative era of Hungarian history.¹⁰

History has, as its ontology, ‘the past,’ yet it remains present-at-hand.¹¹ Further, the historical is the world-historical.¹² History was world-historical as it transpired, so it is world-historical in being recalled, as well. The present and the future are just as essential to history as is the past. How we go about interpreting history has its effect on the world, and the shrinking of the historian from public discourse, from the world that exists beyond lecture halls and conferences, leads only to the bastardization of historical understanding and history’s employment for ends that a subtler understanding of history would discourage. Historians might find a justification for their continued existence in this world by attending to the present and the future as aspects of their work equal to the past. In present-day Hungary, the Interwar era is often appealed to as the model for *Magyarság* and national identity by the politically-ascendent Right.¹³ As far as Magyar-Being existed in the Interwar period, it existed in constant conjunction to the Treaty of Trianon and its effects.

⁹ Tibor Frank, “Luring the English-Speaking World: *Hungarian History* Diverted,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 69, no. 1 (London: University College London, 1991), 60.

¹⁰ Hungary Today, “Mi Hazánk Horthy Commemoration: ‘We Believe Hungary Belongs to Hungarians,’” *Hungary Today*, March 2, 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/mi-hazank-horthy-commemoration/>. While members of Mi Hazánk might not be persuaded by more scrupulous and public facing scholarship, the Hungarian public would be well served to have that organization’s distorted view of the Interwar era be squarely refuted in public.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward S. Robinson (Victoria: Must Have Books, 2021), 430.

¹² Heidegger, *Being*, 440. ‘*The historicizing of history is the historicizing of Being-in-the-world.*’ Italics original.

¹³ Gábor Sarnyai, “PM Moving to Buda Castle: Puritanism in a Former Monastery or Costly Restoration of the Horthy Era?” *Hungary Today*, January 7, 2019. <https://hungarytoday.hu/pm-moving-to-buda-castle-puritanism-in-a->

It is well established in the historiography that the guiding focus of the government and a plurality of the people of Hungary in the Interwar period was to revise the Treaty of Trianon.¹⁴ The implementation of the Treaty of Trianon did not only physically reduce the area of the Hungarian state; it also sparked a crisis of meaning and belonging within the Hungarian national concept. Previously salient theories of Hungarian nationhood, namely the civic-linguistic-historical troika of meaning in vogue during the Habsburg era, were discredited.¹⁵ Purely civic nationalisms are not especially durable, and crumble alongside the institutions that legitimate them. Purely linguistic nationalisms are vulnerable to ethnic cleansing in a manner that often eludes international condemnation. The enthusiastic Magyarization campaigns undertaken during the Dual Monarchy were replaced by anti-Magyarization and new national-linguistic campaigns in successor states such as Czechoslovakia, which made the Hungarian linguistic community a national legitimator immediately under siege.¹⁶ While the Hungarian language flourished within the borders of Hungary, the national concept was conceived of as transcending state borders. An historical basis of nationhood can be durable and effective, but purely historical bases removed from civic, linguistic, or other legitimators of nation are purely abstract and thus lose their efficacy entirely.¹⁷ Furthermore, the legitimacy derived from alliances of ‘throne and altar,’ the sort that had supported the Habsburg crown since the Middle Ages, could find little purchase in a

[former-monastery-or-costly-remembrance-of-horthy-era/](https://visegradpost.com/en/2017/06/27/orban-rehabilitates-horthy/); Ferenc Almásy, “Orbán Rehabilitates Horthy,” *Visegrad Post*, June 27, 2017, <https://visegradpost.com/en/2017/06/27/orban-rehabilitates-horthy/>.

¹⁴ Kovács, “Burghers,” 72.

¹⁵ Marius Turda, “Entangled Traditions of Race: Physical Anthropology in Hungary and Romania, 1900-1940,” *Focaal* no. 58 (2010), 3.

¹⁶ Várkonyi-Nickel, “Revisiting,” 153; Štefan Šutaj, “The Magyar Minority in Slovakia Before and After the Second World War,” in *Slovakia in History*, eds. Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin D. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 269-270.

¹⁷ The mythological is a massively potent force for national legitimation, as all nationalisms are at bottom mythological. However, for these national mythologies to have any force and vivacity, they must be in some way factual, with being-in-the-world. The purely mythological retreats into the fiction of storybooks. While historicized nationalisms are nonetheless illusory and socially constructed, they have a facticity in relation to the world that legitimates them above simple fiction.

country with a vacant throne and a religiously diverse populace.¹⁸ Even if these factors had not been salient, any appeal to the Catholic Church or even Christianity at large as basis for national feeling would be fraught, as these religions transcend nationalisms and state borders, and could not be relied upon to distinguish the Magyar from his Catholic and otherwise Christian neighbors. In defining *Magyarság*, religion could be part, but not parcel. All the mechanisms of legitimation that supported Hungarian nationhood during the Habsburg monarchy had become outmoded.¹⁹ As such, a new conception of nationhood was needed to legitimate the Hungarian state, the Magyar nation, and the movement to revise the Hungarian borders truncated by the Treaty of Trianon.

In the Interwar period, Hungary was thrown into a continent of nation-states. Gone were the days of multiethnic empires united in the body of the monarch; national legitimation had become as essential to statehood as soldiers and tax collectors. As Dasein, humans can content themselves simply to *be*, for their existence precedes their essence. It is not so for Nations and states which, as socially constructed phenomena, must justify their place in the world in some way or the other. Take Nation to be an inauthentic ‘mediator’ between Dasein and Being that seeks to cause Dasein to comport itself and act in one such way that is ontologically distinct from all others.²⁰ That Being was to be channeled into some set of existential structures was assumed,

¹⁸ Patrick Houlihan, “Imperial Frameworks of Religion: Catholic Military Chaplains of Germany and Austria-Hungary During the First World War,” *First World War Studies* 3 no. 2 (October 2012), 167. The Catholic Church retained a role in public education and state legitimation, but the large population of Hungarian Protestants, with Calvinists in particular being well represented in the Government Party, meant that the Church was both too inclusive of foreigners and insufficiently representative of Hungarians to be the basis of national feeling.

¹⁹ Turda, “Race,” 3-4.

²⁰ Heideggerian terminology via *Being and Time*.

“Dasein: The Being of self-conscious beings ... the Being of human beings.

Being: In German, this is the infinitive form of the verb “be.” (The verb that becomes “I am,” “you are,” etc.) Every thing that exists is a being--it *is*. A thing’s Being is whatever makes a thing the sort of thing that it is. Dogs, bicycles, colors, language, consciousness, etc., all have some form of Being. “Being in general,” or just “Being,” is the most general nature that literally everything that is, shares in common. [Being is the ontology of a thing].

Existentiell: Ontical analysis--looking at the ways a type of being or phenomenon manifests [in the world].

but which existentiells would be included, and excluded, and what sorts of existential structures would be supported, remained to question, one met with a multiplicity of answers. The thrust of this paper will be towards defining and analyzing several of the more prominent formulations of Magyar-Being that were elaborated in the Interwar period, including discussions of a purported ‘culture war,’ the place of the Government Party’s conception of *Magyarság*, the facticity of Hungary’s situation on the world stage, mediators of belonging in competition with Nation, namely class-belonging and Europeanness, and an assessment of the sort of relation to Being that actually emerged over the stretch of this era. A new *Magyarság* baptized in the redemptive waters of victory was dreamt of by the Government Party and by the Hungarian *élite* but was not realized. A fallen *Magyarság*, with despair as its fundamental quality, was dreaded, yet came to pass, despite the multiplicity of efforts made in the Interwar period to define the Nation otherwise.

The subject of this opus is Interwar Hungary. I do not use the term “Horthy Era” due to the undue bias towards the Regent as historical agent and moral center in this era that such terminology evokes, especially among native Hungarians. To avoid such entanglements, the preferred term herein will be ‘Interwar Hungary.’ The concept at the heart of this project is *Magyarság*.²¹ *Magyarság* is not an invention of the author, but its untranslated use in the English scholarship is to my knowledge an innovation. *Magyarság* is the coherent (yet arbitrary) grouping of existentiell qualities and signifiers into the synthetic, existential structure of Nation, one that includes, varyingly, language, religion, place of origin, phenotypical characteristics,

Existential: Ontological analysis--looking at the structures of a being or phenomenon.”

Definitions drawn from the in-class correspondence of Dr. Derek O’Connell to PHI 270 – Existentialism, Spring Semester 2022, Illinois State University.

²¹ *Magyarság*: (Hungarian) Magyar + ság. The suffix *-ság* transfigures an adjective into a noun expressing a concept. Take *Magyarság* to mean, “an understanding of the Nation, nationality, and nationalisms of the Magyars; essential Hungarian-ness; the ontological Being of the Magyar.”

ancestry, and various other considerations.²² At the bottom, *Magyarság* is the Being of being Hungarian.

Furthermore, in their relation to *Magyarság*, the Uralic-speaking inhabitants of the Carpathian Basin will be referred to by their endonym, Magyar, rather than as Hungarians. Not all of the putative members of *Magyarság* lived within Hungary's post-Trianon borders. The enclosure of millions of Magyars within the borders of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia was the fundamental and salient concern for the would-be rescuers of *Magyarság*.²³ Likewise, not all of those living within Hungary's Trianon borders were considered part of *Magyarság*, most prominently, though in varying ways, the Jewish religious community, and the German and Slavic ethnolinguistic communities who, over the stretch of this era, were subject to a general trend of distancing from the political nation and from *Magyarság*.²⁴

The rhetoric of 'culture war' is frequently employed in the historiography to explain the dynamics surrounding the pursuit of the Being of *Magyarság* in Interwar Hungary.²⁵ Notions of 'culture war' conjure up images of two discrete sides locked in battle for dominance at the total exclusion of the other. This conception is misleading. The cultural-intellectual landscape of Interwar Hungary was not neatly bisected into feuding opposites, such as rurality vs urbanism, or tradition vs modernity, or other clean binaries. It is also not the case that the intellectual life of

²² 'Existentiell' and 'Existential' are here used in Martin Heidegger's sense, with the existentiell being specific, ontical manifestations of a phenomenon, and the existential being general, ontological structures of phenomena. Heidegger's language is obtuse as an intentional and indispensable facet of his philosophical project. This choice has confounded readers for decades.

²³ Janos, "Restoration," 205.

²⁴ Janos, "Restoration," *Backwardness*, 222-228. The Jewish religionists of Interwar Hungary were largely kept out of the political nation but continued to play a central role in the economic life of Hungary, particularly during the Bethlen premiership. As Janos notes in a footnote, the Jews of Hungary continued to be understood as a religious group, rather than a racial category as was the case in nearby Rumania, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

²⁵ Richard Esbenshade, "The Populist-Urbanist Debate in Hungary and the Divided Construction of Hungarian National Identity, 1929-1944" (PhD. diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2006), 55.

Interwar Hungary could be conceptualized as a spectrum ranging from the political right to left, as groups such as the Populists and other peasant movements transcended the vulgar political and sought to find Being outside of the narrow bounds of the political.²⁶ Despite its invalidity, this sort of thinking was prominent in the period, especially among the luminaries of the Government Party, which warrants a further exploration of the supposed ‘culture war’ in these terms, even lacking in facticity as it is.

The Government Party took an active, yet contradictory, role in the ‘culture war’ in Interwar Hungary. The Government Party and many of their contemporaries saw the landscape of Hungarian political life as being divided between two broad camps. There existed a conservative, aristocratic, and rural faction embodied by the Government Party itself, along with its allies in the Agrarian Smallholders Party and the Church.²⁷ Against this coalition was arrayed urban, industrial, and liberal interests, embodied by the city of Budapest itself. The base of support for the Government Party was largely in the countryside, and their cadre was primarily composed of aristocratic landholders, so it follows easily that the Government Party’s rhetoric was generally rural-traditional in character. However, the lavishing of rural Hungary with rhetorical valorization was not always represented by actual policy commitments. Despite their stated commitments to traditional Hungarian life as embodied by the country estate, Interwar Hungary gave rise to industrial and urban growth, while Hungary’s longstanding prominence in agricultural exports receded.²⁸ The policy of the Government Party in its difference from their rhetorical positions reveals a contradiction at the heart of their conception of *Magyarság* that would make more difficult their attempts to come to realize it.

²⁶ Kovács, “Burghers,” 74.

²⁷ Janos, “Restoration,” *Backwardness*, 202, 228-232.

²⁸ Janos, “Revolution,” *Backwardness*, 238.

If there was but one aspect of *Magyarság* as it emerged in the Interwar era that revealed itself clearly, it was the fundamental importance of pursuing the revision of the Treaty of Trianon. This consideration was vital to the ontology of the Government Party. Thus, the rhetorical valor heaped upon manorial tradition was not more than gilding. Reactionary agrarianism stood at odds with the practical means available to the Government Party for realizing revision. The *telos* of revision stood at the core of the Government Party's conception of *Magyarság*, an historical mission that was *sine qua non*, and as such prevented any existentiells at odds with this mission from cohabitating *Magyarság* while retaining coherence. The Arcadian idyll praised by voices sympathetic to the Government Party stood at loggerheads with the industrial expansion, and the realities of urbanization and modernization that necessarily followed, that was necessitated by putting Hungary on a war footing. Such unresolved contradiction at the heart of the Government Party's conception of *Magyarság* could contribute only negatively to their pursuit of their *telos* and to the coherence of *Magyarság* as they understood it.

While most conceptions of *Magyarság* concerned themselves with Trianon border revision, the Government Party was uniquely equipped with state power to realize their ends. However, the Government Party, and the assembled forces of revision and reaction at large, were caught in a paradoxical situation. Their *telos* was to restore and maintain order – the pre-Trianon *Ancien Régime* or the closest approximation they might manage – but the only means available to them were directly opposed to this *telos*. To revise the borders of Hungary would require military force, as the prevailing winds of diplomacy in Europe blew against a negotiated

settlement in Hungary's favor for most of this period.²⁹ It was not until 1938 that Hungary could wrest a diplomatic victory *qua* border revision. Warfare in the 20th century was an industrial affair, with victory brought by efficiently managed railroads as much as deftly conducted maneuvers in the field, by tonnage of artillery shells produced as the genius of their deployment, and by the weight of numbers one could equip and arm more than the *élan* of the soldiery. To win the future war that revision necessitated, and to realize their conception of *Magyarság*, Hungary would have to industrialize.

Mass production necessitates the centralization of logistics, factories, materiel, and manpower. Invariably, this meant locating industries in and around cities, so urbanization was attendant to the policies of the Government Party. To stave off modernity, Hungary would have to modernize entirely. To achieve the reactionary dream of Arcadian idyll, the meadows would have to be buried under rails and ties, the valleys sown with factories, the rivers clogged with barges, the skies blackened by smog, and the country estates denuded of their peasants. In building a state apparatus and economic base able to act towards the realization of the Government Party *Magyarság's* embedded *telos*, the last vestiges of the stagnant aristocratic demesne that had dominated the greater part of Hungary was dealt its mortal blow.

In the first decade of the Interwar period, the proportion of Hungarians living in rural localities fell from 58% to 51%. In the same period, the number of factory workers across Hungary swelled from 137,000 to 236,000.³⁰ Rural-to-urban migration occurred rapidly and at a large scale during the 1920s and continued at a slower pace after the onset of the Great

²⁹ Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946*, trans. Mario D. Fenyo (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 183; A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961), 40; Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace*, (London: MacMillan, 1976), 37.

³⁰ Janos, "Revolution," *Backwardness*, 238.

Depression. This mass internal migration was facilitated by government expenditures inaugurated by the Bethlen government. This government's second largest disbursement of funds was direct subsidies to key economic sectors, such as agriculture, finance, and resource extraction.³¹ Smaller but still substantial investments were made in culture, education, public health, and housing.³² The influx of funding from the government spurred development in industry and the social services that buttress it, and helped to realize the existential structure of Government Party *Magyarság* – the preparation of the country to revise the Treaty of Trianon by physical force – but it came at the expense of a key existentiell of this national conception, namely the manorial-aristocratic composition of the Hungarian countryside.

Despite the material changes rendered by the Government Party's industrial policy, Hungary's anti-modern *élites*, even those carried over from the Habsburg era "service nobility," simply did not have the requisite enthusiasm for bureaucracy that propelled all of the great State endeavors of the twentieth century.³³ The conspicuous absence of bureaucratic *élan* severely limited the possibilities of the State in remaking itself materially and in supporting the historical mission of pursuing Trianon revision.³⁴ A renovated State apparatus was sought to accommodate the new, rejuvenated, and ascendant Hungary on its mission of revision. Unhappily for those who sought it, the Magyar Nation was remade, but in the image of catastrophic defeat and fallenness, not Phoenician victory; the damage dealt by the failure to materialize of a state

³¹ Romsics, *Bethlen*, 204. ~\$200 million over the period for subsidies of all types.

³² Romsics, *Bethlen*, 204. ~\$122 million for culture, of which ~\$68 million went to education. ~\$105 million for social causes over the period.

³³ Stephen Herzog, "Negotiating Modernity: Cultural Reform in 1920s Hungary," PhD diss. (University of Illinois, 2003), 1.

³⁴ Sándor Márai, *Journal: Les Années Hongroise 1943-1948* (Paris : Éditions Albin Michel, 2019), 56-57.

capable of supporting the ambitions of an ascendent Hungary was tempered by the failure of an ascendant Hungary to emerge.

Thus, the realization of one aspect of Government Party *Magyarság* came always at the expense of another. This ouroboros of contradiction hampered the Government Party's ability to proselytize its version of *Magyarság* over all others, which left the Interwar Hungary ripe for a multiplicity of ontological conceptions to arise as the nation reconstituted itself after having been thrown into factically different circumstances following the implementation of the Treaty of Trianon. Despite its incomplete intellectual dominance in the Interwar Hungary, the Government Party's conception of national Being was nonetheless uniquely positioned to be brought towards realization, and attempts were made by the state to realize its key existential structure – the pursuit of Trianon revision – throughout the period, though with limited success. The quest for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon was necessarily an international affair, and diplomats in Hungary and abroad recognized that the country was not capable of pursuing revision without the assistance of other states acting in coordination.

Hungary's standing in the international affairs of Europe in the Interwar period was far from enviable. Hungary was surrounded on nearly all sides by an alliance of hostile states comprised of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, constituted specifically to contain Hungarian revanchism.³⁵ Further east, over the crest of the Carpathian Mountains, loomed the Soviet Union, the spectre of which haunted the imaginations of many in Hungary, ranging from Budapest liberals to manorial reactionaries. The Russian Imperial Army had marched forth as the forces of reaction to crush the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49 in their hundreds of thousands;

³⁵ Marks, *Illusion*, 37.

communists from within, but in the intellectual orbit of the Bolsheviks in the soon-to-be Soviet Union, had briefly seized power in 1919 and enacted a terror that loomed much larger in fearful memory than it had in actuality.³⁶ The conflation of these two disparate historical facts into a looming Other animated much of the thinking in Hungarian political life among reactionaries, moderates, and liberals. It was for to defend against Soviet incursion as much as it was to pursue Trianon revision that Hungary found herself in need of the patronage of a Great Power in the Interwar era.

Potential allies were few and far between for Hungary. Her old partner, Austria, had experienced a similar fall from prominence and power as had Hungary, and could not be relied upon as an effective ally in and of themselves. Nonetheless, efforts were made throughout the period to draw together the two halves of the former Dual Monarchy in a variety of security arrangements, culminating in a tripartite agreement outlining a framework for cooperation and diplomatic consultation between Hungary, Austria, and Italy in 1934.³⁷ These Rome Protocols provided a potential basis for joint cooperation in Europe independent from the whims of the old Entente or the newly ascendent Nazis of Germany, but were undermined in 1936 as Italy sought to maneuver itself into a better position *qua* Austria and Hitler at the exclusion of the Hungarians, and done away with entirely in 1938 when the Italians acceded to the German *Anschluss* with Austria.³⁸ Despite the Italian retreat in the face of Germany on the Austrian question, Mussolini's Italy had been Hungary's staunchest ally in the quest for border revision, particularly in regard to their shared designs on the territory of Yugoslavia. Yet, Italy's caliber as a great power was of a second order, and Mussolini could not be relied upon to pursue a

³⁶ Janos, "Restoration," 201-202.

³⁷ Royal Institute of International Affairs, "The Rome Protocols and the Question of the Danube Basin," *Bulletin of International News* 13, no. 11 (November 1936): 423-4.

³⁸ Royal Institute, "Protocols," 423, 427.

campaign of physical force against the Little Entente and their French patron in service of revision, though he was able to provide limited diplomatic support for Hungary's revanchist cause.³⁹

The eventual turn towards Germany as Hungary's patron had its supporters within the military establishment and the industrial and economic bases of Hungary, but it was far from inexorable or uncontested. Hungary's situation within the Rome Protocols framework was understood, in a secondary sense, to be a bastion against the encroachment of German power. Rather, Hungary was to be under the aegis of Italy, an understanding that persisted in diplomatic communication between Germany, Italy, and Hungary at least as late as 1936.⁴⁰ The facticity of international affairs was ever shifting, and the disappearance of Austria from the map in 1938, along with the Italian turn towards Germany that allowed it, necessitated a change in Hungary's bearing towards Germany. The Rome Protocols were dead and gone by 1938. Yet, the existential structure of Trianon revision persisted, and Germany was then the only possible ally remaining to realize this key aspect of Government Party *Magyarság*, as the states of western Europe were uniformly hostile to Hungary's designs on the post-Great War peace settlements.

There did exist in the United Kingdom, to a degree, the same sense that, as the Treaty of Versailles had been cruel and unjust to Germany, so too had the Treaty of Trianon been to Hungary.⁴¹ Yet, this vague and remorseful sense that wrongdoing had been done did not surmount the sober considerations of international relations in Europe. To pursue Trianon revision would require war, and it would require war against countries deep in the heart of the

³⁹ Royal Institute, "Protocols," 424.

⁴⁰ Royal Institute, "Protocols," 428.

⁴¹ Steven Jobbit, "Playing the Part: Hungarian Boy Scouts and the Performance of Trauma in Interwar Hungary," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 4, (2011), 4.; Iván Vitáris, "Anthropological Appendix: Interview with Iván Vitáris," ed. Erik Lynch (unpublished manuscript, April 29, 2022), typescript, 2, 4-5.

Continent, none of which had significant ethnic, emotional, or economic ties to the United Kingdom. Had this not been enough to dissuade the British government and public from coming out in favor of Trianon revision and the reunification of all Magyars within one state, the necessary foes of a war of Trianon revision were Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, known collectively as the Little Entente.⁴² The Little Entente was the keystone of French security arrangements *qua* Germany on the Continent; France was the United Kingdom's principal ally in Europe; the United Kingdom in the Interwar period was characterized with a distinct disinterest in taking active part in the affairs of the Continent so soon after the traumatizing massacre of the Great War, thus subordinating their particular concerns and ends to those of the French; the greatest threat and concern to the French in the Interwar period was a resurgent and revanchist Germany, kept in check by the Little Entente.⁴³ Therefore, by dint of the web of obligations and alliances that knit together the various countries in orbit of Paris, London was prevented from undertaking any action against the interests of the Little Entente, including those in favor of revising the State borders of Central Europe to the liking of Hungarian revanchists. The question of Western-backed revision was never open, and the possibility of revision could only be attained through association with states hostile to the Versailles order. By 1938, the only power meeting this criterion was Nazi Germany.

Nazi Germany was the only state in Europe that could act in support of the *telos* of Government Party *Magyarság*. The United States mostly eluded the consideration of Trianon revisionists, and like Japan was too far flung to be of bearing on the reorganization of Central-Eastern Europe.⁴⁴ When Germany and Hungary had opposing ends, such as *qua* the Slovak

⁴² Marks, *Illusion*, 37.

⁴³ Taylor, *Origins*, 40; Marks, *Illusion*, 40.

⁴⁴ Frank, "Luring," 67.

question, the German position typically prevailed.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, at the cost of drawing nearer to Germany economically and socially – via the passage of antisemitic legislation during the later 1930s – Hungary was furnished with some, but not all, of the territories that had been stripped from it by the Treaty of Trianon as a result of the First and Second Vienna Awards of 1938 and 1940.⁴⁶ This enlargement came at a terrible cost, as the drawing nearer to Nazi Germany set Hungary down the path of participating in the Second World War, where hundreds of thousands of Magyars would perish on the Russian steppe for German ends, only for their country to be occupied by the Soviets for the next half century. After the second defeat of Hungary in a World War, her borders would be returned to their Trianon configuration, but all of this extends beyond the scope of this paper.

Dasein's possibilities are shaped by the facticity of the situation it is thrown into as Being-in-the-world.⁴⁷ When Nation acts as an inauthentic mediator between Dasein and Being, Nation assumes the role of Dasein in the relation between Dasein and Being at the scale of millions of otherwise individual Dasein and, thus, the question of Being becomes an issue for Nation. This is the inauthenticity of the mediation, as Dasein's possibilities have as an essential quality mineness, that their possibilities are and must always be theirs alone.⁴⁸ In this way, Nation reproduces the role of *das Man*, but with a definite historical mission and identifiable set

⁴⁵ Romsics, *Bethlen*, 171. The Hungarians sought the total restoration of Slovakia to their rule, whereas the Germans favored installing a puppet government in Bratislava. Eventually, a compromise was reached with Hungary reannexing the Magyar-populated regions of the south and east, and the Germans installing a puppet government administering the remainder.

⁴⁶ Leslie Waters, "Adjudicating Loyalty: Identity Politics and Civil Administration in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderlands, 1938-1940," *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 3 (August 2015): 351-352.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Being*, 174, 231-233.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Being*, 304-311.

of existential structures and existentiell characteristics in place of *das Man*'s indefinite otherhood.⁴⁹

Nation, masquerading as Being-in-the-world, is thrown in the same way as Dasein into a world already existing. The turn towards Germany as patron of the quest to realize Government Party *Magyarság* occurred as a result of the dissolution of the Rome Protocol axis, in which Hungary had already struggled to assert itself.⁵⁰ The *telos* of Government Party *Magyarság* was acted towards by the Germans when it suited their own ends, but never to the degree of completion sought by the revisionists within Hungary and never to the degree where all other conceptions of Magyar Being would be suppressed. The patronage of a great power opened up Hungary's possibilities in a way that would be unthinkable in the absence of it, but patronage entailed the routine subordination of Hungary's particular ends to those of Nazi Germany, and gave cover for the most Germanophilic, militaristic, and xenophobic elements within the Government Party to assert themselves at the expense of pro-western and peaceable elements.

Nation was the most salient mediator between Dasein and Being, but it was not the only sort that emerged in Interwar Hungary. Many industrial workers and partisans of the left understood class as mediating between their individual Dasein and Being, while many liberals, clustered primarily around Budapest, imagined a transcendent Europeanness as mediating between Dasein and Being. Class as a mediator and shaper of what it meant to Be stood at odds with Nation, which existed to fill the same role. A salient and interesting example of class,

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Being*, 163-168. Heidegger's *das Man*, translated as "the They," is an indefinite Other that any Other can represent. "The 'they,' which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness." Nation, then, is *das Man* made definite. Where the They has averageness as an existential characteristic, Government Party *Magyarság* had the historical mission of Trianon revision, though both phenomena share, to a degree, distanciality.

⁵⁰ Royal Institute, "Protocols," 424.

particularly of the proletariat, as mediator between Dasein and Being flourished in the Rimamurány-Salgótarján Iron Works in Salgótarján, an industrial town tucked away in the otherwise unbroken rurality of far northern Hungary.

Northern Hungary's Rimamurány-Salgótarján Iron Works was a large and prosperous steel mill. Salgótarján was once a small village in Nógrád county but had been, since the late 19th century, transformed into a company town for the works, boasting a workers' colony with all manner of modern amenities, from paved streets, to streetlights, to sturdy housing, to company-owned shops with less-than-market prices for workers.⁵¹ These amenities were not often found in the neighboring villages, though they were commonplace in the major cities. The situation at the Salgótarján works was distinct, but still illustrative of national phenomena. The average wage for workers at the works – day laborers of both genders, as well as unskilled and skilled workers – was higher than the national average in those industries, especially so in the case of female workers.⁵² Yet, even the most prosperous of proletarians are subject to the class antagonism of the bourgeois, and the proletariat of Salgótarján was certainly no exception.

The Salgótarján iron works bore witness to controversies that were emblematic of industrial relations in Hungary as a whole, controversies that were filtered through the lens of class struggle and identity. Wages were a persistent issue, with the leftwing press printing claims that Salgótarján workers were so poorly compensated that they could not afford a kilogram of bread with an hour's pay. Empirically, this claim was false, even for female day laborers, the lowest bracket of wage-earners, but the class conflict that animated the pages of *Népszava* and

⁵¹ Várkonyi-Nickel, "Revisiting," *Metszetek*, 151.

⁵² Várkonyi-Nickel, "Revisiting," *Metszetek*, 161.

the shop floor at Salgótarján was certainly real.⁵³ That workers were paid a pittance for their labor was an issue endemic to Hungarian industry, with 82% of Hungarians falling into the ‘lower’ class and 9.8% falling into the ‘lower middle’ class according to tax figures.⁵⁴ The workers at Salgótarján were more materially secure than their counterparts in Budapest or in other industrial areas, with the works providing housing, medical facilities, education, insurance, and various other benefits and social programs, but by no means were they affluent.⁵⁵ The proliferation of industrial scandal contributed to the identity formation of Salgótarján workers coalescing around their shared class consciousness moreso than any national fraternity, strengthened further by a diverse corps of workers.

Class as a mediator between Dasein and Being amounted to the rejection of Hungarian particularism and an embrace of transcendent class identities and economic concepts, or of ‘plugging in’ to Western industrial-capitalist and Marxist metanarratives. The Being of the Salgótarján workers stands as a microcosm for a pervasive conception of Being amongst Hungary’s burgeoning proletariat. Their Being was not national in character. Rather, Salgótarján Being existed in relation to class position. That Salgótarján workers discussed wages and greeted their neighbors in Hungarian, rather than French, Arabic, or English was a purely factual consideration and could not be construed as holding any normative content. It was not essential that the men and women at Salgótarján were Magyars (rather than Rumanian or German or Congolese); it *was* essential to their conception of self that they were proletarians.⁵⁶ The political

⁵³ Várkonyi-Nickel, “Revisiting,” *Metszetek*, 158, 161. Price of bread at Salgótarján: 34 fillér (cents) per hour. Hourly pay of female day laborer (lowest pay scale): 42 fillér per hour. Hourly pay of (male) skilled laborer: 74 fillér per hour.

⁵⁴ Janos, “Restoration,” *Backwardness*, 225. The ‘middle’ class, ‘upper middle’ class, and ‘upper’ class taken all together represented barely 8% of the population of Hungary.

⁵⁵ Várkonyi-Nickel, “Revisiting,” *Metszetek*, 155, 157, 161, 164.

⁵⁶ In fact, the plurality of workers at the Salgótarján works in the last decade of the XIX c. were Magyarized Slovaks.

power of the Communists in Hungary was broken after the fall of Béla Kun's *Räterepublik*, but the intellectual and social influence of Marxist conceptions of the relation between worker, state, and class persisted, even with Hungary's most famous Marxist, György Lukács, spending the period in exile between Vienna and the Soviet Union. Beyond the simple durability of such ideas, the largest socialist party in Hungary, the *Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt* (MSZDP) continued to advocate publicly for the causes of labor and proletarian internationalism throughout the entire period.⁵⁷ Newspapers aligned with the MSZDP such as *Népszava* published sometimes libelous stories regarding the working conditions at the Salgótarján works, situated within the context of class struggle as an international, transcendent concept. As the class struggle was transcendent and international; so too was class-belonging. That the iron works were located in Hungary signified only that; the workers of Salgótarján were first and foremost to be understood through the transcendent terms of class, not Nation.

Alongside concepts of Nation and class consciousness, the relationship between Dasein and Being in Interwar Hungary was mediated by many among the intelligentsia through Europeanness. The appeal to Europeanness was the wont of Hungary's liberals, who were well represented among her *hommes de lettres*. Liberal Europeanness was the order of the day for the elder generation of the Hungarian literary establishment, whereas many younger figures, increasingly so as the era wore on, broke from this orthodoxy and embraced avant-garde and modernist positions buttressed by vaguely socialist politics.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the literary establishment remained firmly rooted in its sense of belonging within Europeanness, which

⁵⁷ Romsics 174-175.

⁵⁸ Dávid Szolláth, "Literary Modernism, Anti-Semitism, Jewishness, and the Anxiety of Assimilation in Interwar Hungary," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 10 (2017): 146, 151.

mediated its relation between Dasein and Being, and even the avant-garde distinguished themselves in relation to, and through, Europeanness.⁵⁹

Just as it was in the era of the Dual Monarchy, Hungary's Interwar intelligentsia was, on the whole, liberal. Prominent politically during the last years of the Habsburg era, Hungary's liberal men of letters shrank from political engagement after the downfall of Mihály Károlyi's liberal democratic regime in 1919. While the Interwar Period did not see the dimming of the brilliance in the literary output of Hungary's community of artists and writers, a widespread disaffection and retreat from political life spread among this class.⁶⁰ Some, like the composer Béla Bartók or philosopher György Lukács, emigrated. Others disconnected their literary output from the explicitly political and turn inwards towards psychological themes and a neutered humanism.⁶¹ Many among the pro-western intelligentsia in Hungary were disillusioned by the failure of the democratic revolution of October 1918 and the colorful Terrors that followed, deflating pre-war dreams of reforming Hungary to conform to western ideals of 'democratic humanism.'⁶² The premature death of clarion liberal poet Endre Ady in early 1919 dealt a further major blow to the politically pro-western element in Hungarian arts and letters. Like liberalism at large in Interwar Hungary, the liberal element within Hungarian arts and letters was in a state of disarray and had little organized power, though pro-western and liberal voices continued to dominate cultural production all throughout the period.⁶³ The disarray and disunion within Hungarian liberalism precluded the formulation and proselytization of a coherent *Magyarság* that reflected liberal values and a belong within European traditions of humanism and

⁵⁹ Szolláth, "Literary," 146.

⁶⁰ Márai, *Journal*, 41.

⁶¹ Márai, *Journal*, 16-17.

⁶² Janos, "Restoration," *Backwardness*, 235.

⁶³ Anna Manchin, "Interwar Hungarian Entertainment Films and the Reinvention of Rural Modernity," *Rural History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 199.

democracy. The general disarray of liberalism within Hungary is well represented by the fractured landscape of liberal-democratic political parties, with no less than five at a time vying for the votes of Hungary's receding liberal tide.⁶⁴

To be liberal was to be Western, and to be situated within a transnational Europeanness. In much the same way many socialists rejected the national-particular mediator between themselves (as Dasein) and Being, being mediated instead through class consciousness, the great majority of Hungary's liberals mediated their relationship to Being through a transcendent Europeanness. Often inherited or carried over from the facticity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, liberality, Westernism, and Europeanness were triune.⁶⁵ This great belongingness transcended the national and the particular and brought its adherents into the heritage of the Enlightenment and all that was imagined to entail. This situatedness within Europeanness is well exposed in the work of the author Sándor Márai. Márai's most well-known work, and the most relevant to the mediation of Being by Europeanness, is his 1942 novel, *Embers*.⁶⁶

Sándor Márai had been born in Kassa, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1900, and embarked on a literary career. Of all the works he produced, none would receive greater acclaim than 1942's *Embers*. *Embers* is a meditation on the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on two men, a Magyar and a Pole, who had been raised and flourished in the mores and society of the Imperial *élite*, only to be thrown into wholly new circumstances, left with a lingering set of cosmopolitan, European ideals that were no longer compatible with the facticity of the Interwar era. The main thrust of the novel is the interpersonal conflict between

⁶⁴ Janos, "Restoration," *Backwards*, 227. "The voters of Budapest split their ballots between the small Democratic bloc—the National Democratic, Citizens' Liberty, Radical, Independence, and Kossuth parties."

⁶⁵ Márai, *Journal*, 30.

⁶⁶ Sándor Márai, *Embers*, trans. Carol Brown Janeway (New York: Vintage International Random House, 2002), 126. Published in Hungarian in 1942 as *A gyertyák csonkig égnek*.

the General – Henrik – and the man who had been his closest friend since childhood, Konrad, as they meet for one last evening to discuss their embittered past before they, old men, die.⁶⁷ Yet it is this incompatibility of liberal, Habsburg-era mores with the facticity of the Interwar era that has the greatest bearing on the role of Europeanness as mediator between liberals and Being. While *Embers* is of course a work of fiction, the sentiments expressed by Henrik regarding both the situatedness of *Magyarság* within Europeanness, and the imperfection of this situatedness, are reflected in his personal diaries and can thus be appealed to as his genuine position.⁶⁸

The position of the Magyar within Europeanness was always contentious. While an identifying within Europeanness was the dominant trend among Hungary's *hommes de lettres*, the younger generation, influenced by modernism, futurism, and the cultural upheaval of the October Revolution in the former Russian Empire, rejected traditional senses of belonging, both within *Magyarság* and Europeanness, to clear the ground for the building of something entirely new.⁶⁹ Others distanced themselves from Europeanness further still, with a trend towards Turanism, the identifying with the Magyars' past as a nomadic steppe people rather than their European situation, emerging as a force in this period.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Europeanness remained a prominent mediator between liberals and Being in the Interwar period, one that existed in contention with class consciousness and Nation as answers to the question of Magyar Being.

The relation of Magyar to Being in the Interwar era was met with many answers and many formulations for its mediation, which can be distilled into six general types. Prominent among the liberals of Budapest was Europeanness as a mediator between themselves and Magyar

⁶⁷ Márai, *Embers*, 103-105.

⁶⁸ Márai, *Journal*, 29-30; Márai, *Embers*, 27, 126-127. The Hungarian exists in an intellectual tension between being "the little savage from a faraway country," and as "the product of Western civilization."

⁶⁹ Szolláth, "Literary," 154-155.

⁷⁰ Balázs Ablonczy, *Go East! A History of Hungarian Turanism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022), 4-5.

Being, which held that what it meant to be a Hungarian was to be European, a vague and multifarious concept that opened itself to – and was filled by – a variety of existentiells, with an existential structure of realizing Hegelian and Whiggish ideas of history as a stretch towards ever greater freedom in the world, best expressed through Western style liberal democracy, capitalism, urbanity, and an embrace of the modern. There also existed the mediation of proletarian and Being by class consciousness, by which the proletarian primarily understood their Being as being of the working class. This mediation of Being had an existential structure of class conflict shaping the proletarian's place in and relation to the world.

Other conceptions of *Magyarság* relied upon senses of Nation as their mediator between Dasein and Being. The existentiells that comprised each conception of Nation varied significantly. Many sought to distill phenotypically identifiable racial classifications, but such projects were frustrated by race's lack of basis in biology.⁷¹ Others were primarily historical in character, such as the Populist conception of *Magyarság*, which valorized the Magyar peasantry as a 'pure' and traditional guardian of *Magyarság* against the influence of foreigners as represented by the Church, the nobility, and the bourgeois, and transcended the divide between the political rightwing and left.⁷² Also historically legitimated, the Turanian conception of *Magyarság* casted the Magyar as belonging to an 'Asian' people, in contrast to his European neighbors, a difference inherited from the Magyar's past as a steppe nomad.⁷³

The most prominent use of Nation as mediator between Dasein and Being in Interwar Hungary was the *Magyarság* of the Government Party. This *Magyarság* rested upon the existential structure of an historical mission to pursue the means to revise the Treaty of Trianon

⁷¹ Turda, "Race," 10.

⁷² Kovács, "Burghers," 73.

⁷³ Ablonczy, *East*, 4.

and thus foster a national renaissance and rescue *Magyarság* from its fallenness. As discussed at length, this *Magyarság* wreathed in redemptive victory did not come to pass. Rather, its opposite triumphed, a *Magyarság* of despair, of fallenness, and of relegation from prominence. The character of *Magyarság* that emerged between the World Wars existed in constant conjunction to the Treaty of Trianon. The relation of Magyar and Trianon within *Magyarság* was of such intimacy, such near-numerical identity, that the nationality born of this era deserves to be called the post-Trianon Magyar. The key existentiells of *Magyarság* as it developed in the Interwar era, and as it persisted afterwards, included a semiotic Christianity, shared traumatization, and above all else, an overarching mood of despair.

The post-Trianon Magyar was Christian, but only in the barest semiotic sense. Belief in the existence of the Christian God was included in the Magyar Credo, an oath recited each morning by youths across Hungary to the same effect American youth recite the Pledge of Allegiance.⁷⁴ Hungary in the Interwar period, as today, was religiously diverse. The majority of the population was nominally Christian in some sense, with the largest group being Roman Catholics, but there also existed influential and sizable populations of Calvinists and Jews that precluded any subtler understanding of religious identity as relates to nation from flourishing. Though Catholics comprised the plurality of the population in Hungary, Catholicism could not be relied upon as the basis of national feeling.

Since the era of the Dual Monarchy, many Hungarian nationalists had been wary of the transnational power of the Catholic Church.⁷⁵ The hesitance of *élites* – particularly Calvinist *élites* – was a consideration, yet the Government Party also recognized the potency of an alliance

⁷⁴ Kovács, “Burghers,” 72.

⁷⁵ Janos, “Restoration,” 230.

of throne and altar, the kind that had legitimated the Habsburg monarchy for centuries. The Government Party made significant concessions to the Catholic Church in the field of education and the relevant bureaucracy, but these concessions in education were largely bracketed off from the remainder of the administration, which remained generally secular, and were only to be applied to villages with a predominately Catholic composition.⁷⁶ The most intrusive concession given to the Church was their right to review bureaucrats and functionaries that represented Catholic districts, intended to weed out Freemasons and atheists. The *élites* of the Interwar did not pursue the *laïcité* of the Habsburg era liberal anti-clericalists, but neither did they overturn the secularizing laws the former group had promulgated. Outside of the concessions made regarding education, the progress of integrating Church and State in this era went not much further.

The Catholic Church was both too inclusive of foreigners and insufficiently representative of Hungarians to be relied upon as the basis of national feeling. In light of this, a broader sense of Christianity, emptied of all theological particulars and retaining only its veneer of the historized mythological, was appealed to as a fundamental aspect of *Magyarság*.⁷⁷ This purely semiotic Christianity was conceptually hollow. With it one could aver their belief in God, but they could not say anything substantive about Him. With its dearth of theological content and sole focus on the worldly, the bearing of *Magyarság* is better deemed a Christianity rather than proper Christianity.⁷⁸ The Christianity of *Magyarság* was without ontology, which removed its

⁷⁶ Janos, "Restoration," 231.

⁷⁷ Kovács, "Burghers," 72.

⁷⁸ Andrew Sullivan, "Christianity vs Christianity, Love vs Power," *The Atlantic*, November 29, 2009, <https://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2009/11/christianity-vs-christianism-love-vs-power/193565/>. Sullivan's article contends with the abuse of Christian identity in legitimating homophobic legislation in Uganda, but I use the term in his sense and credit is thusly owed.

power to distinguish *Magyarság* from other nationalisms and identities. Christianity was a symbol of *Magyarság*, but there was very little of Christ in it.

While the Christianity of *Magyarság* had very little theological content, it did legitimate in part the pervasive sense of Christlike persecution that many Magyars believed themselves to be subject to. Christ's wounds were physical, but the stigmata of *Magyarság* was psychological and cultural, as revealed by the sense of traumatization at the core of *Magyarság*. The sense of catastrophe that the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the transition to independent statehood had entailed left its mark on many of those who lived through it, but this traumatization was neither automatic nor universal. Rather, in many cases a sense of traumatization had to be instilled into the masses by the public performance of woundedness and traumatization.⁷⁹ The traumatization of Trianon, and all that it represents of the fallenness of the Magyar, was not to be the sole possession of those who themselves lived through it. Within a handful of years, a sense had developed among many in Hungary that the youth, the so-called 'Trianon Generation,' comprised of those having been born after or immediately prior to the promulgation of that Treaty, did not have an adequate sense of the national woundedness and trauma they ought to be afflicted by, and so organizations such as the Hungarian Boy Scouts set out to educate them in the proper comportment to national-historical trauma.⁸⁰ Merely four years after the promulgation of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungarian Boy Scouts took to the international stage at the World Scout Jamboree in Copenhagen, Denmark, with explicit instructions to comport themselves as mourning, in a solemn state of defeatedness in relation to their national catastrophe, with mind to garnering international support for Trianon revision.⁸¹

⁷⁹Jobbitt, "Playing," 1.

⁸⁰ Jobbitt, "Playing," 1-2.

⁸¹ Jobbitt, "Playing," 2-3.

All the theatrics and mourning the youth of Hungary could perform would not be enough to surmount the factual limits on Hungary's possibilities towards Trianon revision.⁸² This inability to become what one wishes to be is a form of despair, and this form of despair formed the most important facet of post-Trianon *Magyarság*. The dream of Government Party *Magyarság* was to resurrect the defeated Magyar nation, to rise from the ashes of disgrace like a phoenix and have itself a glorious rebirth in victory, prominence, and flourishing, washing away and absolving itself of the sins of the national past.⁸³ But this would not come to pass. Instead, the tragedy, the shame, and the defeat of Trianon became the very essence of *Magyarság*. Rather than expunge the memory of victimhood, of defeat, that memory would haunt *Magyarság* as a looming air of despair at the inability of *Magyarság* to realize the historical mission it had set out for itself.⁸⁴

Magyarság was not only a national concept in despair with itself; *Magyarság* was of despair. *Magyarság* was in despair at its inability to realize its historical mission and, as the metanarrative of Hungary's Interwar was the quest to become able to achieve this end, that it ended in failure with Hungary's catastrophic defeats at the Don River in 1943, in Budapest in 1945, and ultimately with the 1947 Treaty of Peace with Hungary, which reverted Hungary's borders to their 1920-1938 – which is to say, their Trianon – position and subjected Hungary to

⁸² Jobbitt, "Playing," 5. One of the more striking displays of national woundedness was made by a troupe of Hungarian folk dancers. At the 1924 World Scout Jamboree, a group of Magyar girls, "dancing ... the Csárdás...formed themselves up in the shape of the original frontiers of Hungary. Then other girls, dressed in black, and carrying black flags, cut into this human outline of Magyar territory, and marked the postwar frontiers of Hungary, while the girls left outside the line of mourning-banners prostrated themselves on the ground, and a choir sang that vibrant passionate anthem which since the war had become almost the national air of Hungary: *Nem! Nem! Soha!*"

⁸³ Kovács, "Burghers," 72.

⁸⁴ James Traub, "Hungary's 500-Year-Old Victim Complex," *Foreign Policy*, October 28, 2015. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/28/hungarys-500-year-old-victim-complex-nazis-habsburgs/>. Traub is sneering, condescending, and often misguided in his interpretation of the character of Interwar Hungary, but he adequately explains the vital linkage between Trianon, its reception, and contemporary Hungarian conceptions of Nation.

the occupation of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, meant that Magyar Being was rendered in a permanent state of unfulfillingness towards its existential structure of Trianon revision, subjecting post-Trianon *Magyarság* to a state of despair it has not yet been able to surmount.⁸⁵ Under the thin veneer of semiotic Christianity, and behind the behavior of national traumatization, the Being of Magyar Being is despair.

⁸⁵ The American Journal of International Law, "Treaty of Peace with Hungary, 1947," *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 4 (October 1948), 225-226.

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