

**“... do not forget this small honest nation”:
József Mindszenty, the Archbishop of Esztergom
in the Documents of the National Archives
and Records Administration (USA):
Part II: 1956–1971**

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The files of 1956–1971 relating to Mindszenty are maintained in three important fonds in the National Archives and Records Administration (USA). There are 6 boxes of the American Embassy Budapest; the documents of the Hungarian Desk among the documents of the Office of Eastern-European Affaires (EUR/EE) of the Department of State, as well as the Central Foreign Policy Files of the Department of State. The readers interested in the sources of the years of 1956–1971 can use several volumes, edited by Ádám Somorjai OSB.¹ The contents of the Mindszenty-documents are very mixed but fundamentally they can be classified into two groups: diplomatic dispatches written about him, and documents coming from the Cardinal himself; the most personal ones can be found in the latter group, such as his letters and notes dealing with his own fate, health, or his departure from the Embassy. The first of these in chronological order is his Testament, dated on November 6, 1956, to be probated “*If the Russians kidnapped me from the American Legation Budapest, deprived me of life or somehow paralysed my legal capacity*”.²

1 Á. SOMORJAI (Ed.), “His Eminence Files”: American Embassy Budapest. From Embassy Archives, 15 (1971) — Mindszenty bíboros az Amerikai Nagykövetségen. Követségi Levéltár 15 (1971), Budapest 2008; A. SOMORJAI, *Sancta Sedes Apostolica et Cardinalis Ioseph Mindszenty, II. Documenta 1956–1963: Az Apostoli Szentszék és Mindszenty József kapcsolattartása, II. Tanulmányok és szövegközlések*, Budapest 2009; A. SOMORJAI, *Sancta Sedes Apostolica et Cardinalis Ioseph Mindszenty, III/1: Documenta 1963–1966. — Az Apostoli Szentszék és Mindszenty József kapcsolattartása, III/1. Tanulmányok és szövegközlések*, Budapest 2010; A. SOMORJAI, *Mindszenty bíboros követségi levelei az Egyesült Államok elnökeihez: 1956–1971: Letters to the Presidents, Cardinal Mindszenty to the Political Leaders of the United States*, Budapest 2011; A. SOMORJAI, *Sancta Sedes Apostolica et Cardinalis Ioseph Mindszenty, III/2: Documenta 1967–1971. — Az Apostoli Szentszék és Mindszenty József kapcsolattartása, III/2. Tanulmányok és szövegközlések*, Budapest 2012.

2 National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA) Record Group (hereafter RG) 59. General Records of the Department of State. Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records Relating to Hungary 1941–1977, Box 9. Contingency Guidance.

REFUGE WITH LIMITATIONS

The first days of Mindszenty's residence on the Legation passed in the spirit of mutual relief: the Cardinal was alive and in a safe place, his mood was enthusiastic, his zeal to work was unquenchable. Ambassador Edward Thompson Wailes gave permission for the cinematographers of the CBS and NBC, residing in the building, to film Mindszenty while he was celebrating Mass with an American flag in the background, and also, he permitted two press conferences for American journalists; but to safeguard the Legation's interests, the questions and answers had to be formulated as if they had been sounded still prior to the refuge of the Cardinal in the Legation.³

First and foremost the Cardinal requested from Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the UN, to command UN-units to Hungary:

"In this country terror has increased beyond description. In many cities entire areas are on fire. Wallowing in the blood of murdered members of their families ten thousand women are being molested. Everyone is being unnerved by sounds never before heard — the cries of hosts of children rising in unison from various quarters of the city and carrying for miles as they are herded by Mongolian troops amid the chatter of machine guns and with wild mercilessness to the devastation of Siberia and its hunger, thirst, and frost. The populace too is being driven from their homes and taken to the East.

The Russians state that today world is ruled by Bolshevism and all nations are retreating in fright before it. Can this be true?

Though there is no food in Budapest and water service has to a great extent ceased to exist, the fight for freedom continues. The armed might of Russia is powerful only against the unarmed. To establish order, I beseech the United Nations to send an international police force to Hungary. Before troops on such a mission, the Russians will be inclined to yield.

Our lives can only be saved by deeds and deliberation is death.

*Signed: Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty (The prisoner of the Bolshevits, who was released after eight years of internment)."*⁴

³ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest, Subject Files Relating to Cardinal Mindszenty 1956–1972. Entry 2691-B, Box 1. Mindszenty-Classified 1956–June 1957. The No. 322 outgoing telegram from the USA Mission Budapest to the Department of State, November 19, 1956. According to this source the filming took place on 5 November 1956.

⁴ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest, Subject Files Relating to Cardinal Mindszenty 1956–1972. Entry 2691-B, Box 1. Mindszenty-Classified 1956–June 1957. Outgoing telegram of the USA Mission Budapest, No. 256, to the Department of State, November 9, 1956. However, the message was not forwarded to the addressee; at least there is not a trace of it neither in the Archives of the Department of State in Washington, nor in the Archives of the UN in New York (the communication of Gusztáv Kecskés D.).

The Legation refused to forward the dramatic appeal to the addressee but they gave a detailed report about the happenings to their superiors. It is known from this correspondence that the probable advantages and disadvantages of the publication of the appeal were seriously considered. In the end the file was closed and it did not trickle out (it can be read in English for the first time in our present study).

The other letter written by Mindszenty in the first days of his refuge was addressed to the American President, and smuggled through the borders by a journalist, named Leslie Balogh Bain. On November 11, 1956, the journalist cabled the text of the letter to the White House,⁵ then — as an illustration of his interview with the Cardinal but without asking permission from the President's administration or from the Cardinal — he published the photocopy of the letter. Comparing the telegram kept in the National Archives and Records Administration⁶ and the letter published in the *Look Magazine*, it can be ascertained that for some mysterious reason the ending of Mindszenty's letter is missing from the former one. It is that paragraph in which the Prelate, profoundly anxious about the fate of his country, appeals to the conscience of the President with a dramatic demand: *"God bless you, Mr. President and the People of the United States. I am ardently praying to our common aims of bringing peace and happiness to this sorely tried world. May The Lord grant you and your nation greater strength and richer life. On the threshold of an ever greater future, I beg of you, do not forget, do not forget, do not forget this small honest nation who is enduring torture and death in service of humanity."*⁷

The indiscretion got the Budapest Legation into a very awkward position; they had to explain themselves repeatedly to the Department of State. Moreover, the Cardinal definitely denied to Wailes that he had shown to anyone the letter written to the President; according to him it remained a rough copy. (It is justified by the literal mistakes — that's why the idea occurred that the original of the published letter could not have got to Bain, he merely treacherously took a photo of it and published it in the magazine).⁸

This case contributed to the decision of Washington that their Guest could see visitors only restrictedly, and apart from his family members, he was allowed to write letters exclusively to Washington or Rome. From the American Legation Mindszenty sent letters to the Presidents in office: 22 letters to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 21 to John F. Kennedy, 28 to Lyndon B. Johnson and 8 to Richard M. Nixon.⁹ However, this corre-

⁵ L. B. BAIN, *Reluctant Satellites: An Eyewitness Report on East Europe and the Hungarian Revolution*, New York 1960, p. 178.

⁶ See the text of the telegram: Á. SOMORJAI, *Mindszenty bíboros követségi levelei az Egyesült Államok elnökeihez. 1956–1971: Letters to the Presidents, Cardinal Mindszenty to the Political Leaders of the United States*, Budapest 2011, in Hungarian, pp. 15–16, in English, pp. 427–428.

⁷ *Look Magazine*, Vol. 20, No. 26, December 25, 1956, p. 23.

⁸ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest, Records Relating to Cardinal Mindszenty 1956–1972, Entry 2691-B, Box 1. Mindszenty-Classified, 1956 — June 1957. Outgoing telegram from the USA Mission Budapest to the Department of State, December 8, 1956; *ibid*: handwritten, original note of Mindszenty in Hungarian; respectively, its English translation, December 7, 1956.

⁹ Their omnibus publication in Hungarian and English language, see: Á. SOMORJAI, *Mind-*

spondence was one-way, and he received written answers only for two of these: for the first time from Kennedy in 1961, following his taking office; and for the second time from Nixon in 1971, when he inquired his opinion about leaving the Embassy. President Eisenhower never answered him, not even for the Cardinal's first message, in which he expressed his sincere gratitude for his life and praised the American hospitality.¹⁰ "The interesting part of it is that Eisenhower was angry because Mindszenty wrote him a letter every week" — remembered the Chief of the European Division of that time.¹¹ The tone of his letters is baroque-like, theatrical, and emotionally extremely feverish, which is characteristic of Mindszenty's style. The Cardinal practically in all of his letters referred to some political issue, national, fateful Hungarian or East-Central European problems. Actually, they did not give substantive answers to Mindszenty's letters of a political nature in order to discourage the Cardinal from using the Legation as a base for either political or ecclesiastical activities.¹² The Cardinal noted in his memoirs: "That was the first time when I experienced the thorns of political asylum..." But he did not receive asylum but refuge, and he received it as a "delicate and unusual exception".¹³ Although the Hungarian state and party leaders always made arrogant declarations on the situation to the outside world and spoke about violation of the law but eventually they did not mind the confinement of the Prelate in the Legation. A few years later János Kádár, General Secretary of the party, admitted in inner circle that if the Prince-Primate were not in the Legation, the Americans could break the diplomatic relations with Hungary.¹⁴

szenty bíboros követségi levelei az Egyesült Államok elnökeihez. 1956–1971: *Letters to the Presidents, Cardinal Mindszenty to the Political Leaders of the United States*, Budapest 2011. After his departure from the Embassy, between 1971 and 1974 Mindszenty wrote further letters to President Nixon, and he himself received at least two letters from the President; one for his 80th birthday in 1972, and another one on the occasion of his first American journey in 1973. See: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum — Yorba Linda, California (Nixon Library), National Security Council (NSC) Files, Name Files, Box 828. Mindszenty, Cardinal (April 70 — May 74) 3613. Birthday Greeting for Cardinal Mindszenty; Nixon Library National Security Council (NSC) Files, Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974. Box 755. Letter to József Mindszenty József. Washington, September 29, 1973.

- 10 NARA, RG 59. General Records of the Department of State. Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records Relating to Hungary 1941–1977, Entry A-1(5577), Lot 71 D 313, Box 10. Refuge Part I. 1956–1957 (1971). The message of József Mindszenty to Eisenhower, American President, November 8, 1956.
- 11 <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/beamjw.htm> Oral History Interview with Jacob D. Beam. Washington D. C. June 20, 1989, Made by: Niel M. Johnson. (Downloading: September 12, 2011).
- 12 NARA, RG 59. General Records of the Department of State. Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records Relating to Hungary 1941–1977, Box 10. Refuge Part IV. The letter of Cardinal József Mindszenty to the American President, June 8, 1962.
- 13 NARA, RG 59. General Records of the Department of State. Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records Relating to Hungary 1941–1977, Box 10. Refuge Part I. 1956–1967. Memorandum on the refuge of Cardinal József Mindszenty, November 7, 1956.
- 14 Z. ÓLMOSI (Ed.), *Mindszenty és a hatalom*, Budapest 1991, No. 73. VIII document. An excerpt from the speech of János Kádár on the session of the Political Committee on March 1, 1960.

THE PRICE OF (HAVING) THE GUEST

The first seven years of Mindszenty's residence at the Legation meant a low point in the Hungarian-American relations. The first opportunity to solve Mindszenty's situation quickly and painlessly presented itself in October of 1958. On the pretext of the death of Pope Pius XII (October 9), the Americans left no stones unturned to have Mindszenty invited to Rome for the papal conclave. Mindszenty brought himself to the journey, too, and made preparations, risking even another imprisonment. However, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a flat refusal of the proposal requesting the permit to leave.¹⁵ At this time it was not in the interest of the Hungarian Government to change the given circumstances, in their opinion the "Guest" was more inconvenient for the American government than for them. The incident indicated that for years on end the Mindszenty-case would be the most intricate problem in the relation of the two countries.

On March 1, 1960, on the session of the Political Committee of the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party) János Kádár clearly put into words that they had no reason and interest in changing the situation unless it could be the subject of *political bargain*. They hoped that Washington would play a key role in the game, the stake of which was the striking "the Hungarian Question" (that is the report on the suppression of the 1956 revolution and war of independence) off the agenda of the UN General Assembly and the recovery of the UN mandate of Hungary that had been suspended in 1957. The gist of the expected deal was: the sooner America helps Hungary to achieve this, the sooner they can "get rid of" their Guest. Nevertheless, the price asked by Kádár was too high; the "deal" fell through: Washington did not give in and insisted on the Hungarian question. However, in the autumn John Fitzgerald Kennedy defeated his rival, Richard Nixon on the presidential election. *The new presidential administration preferred the networking to the isolation and it did not exclude the settling of the Hungarian question by a fixed date.*

After some soundings a substantive step was taken in the summer of 1962. There was an absolutely new element in the solution of the problem: the conduct of the Vatican. Hitherto the Vatican did not take a stand but now it turned to the Hungarian political leaders requesting permission for Mindszenty to leave for the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962. According to the proposal forwarded to the Hungarian Legation in Rome, Mindszenty would remain in the Vatican and be appointed to a position at the Roman Curia if he was allowed to leave the country.¹⁶ However, the Hungarian government did not consider Mindszenty's departure timely.¹⁷ They concluded that the tides had turned and the Americans wanted to get

15 Both the American note and the reply for it were published anew by L. BORHI, *Magyar-amerikai kapcsolatok 1945–1989: Források*, Budapest 2009, pp. 331–333, documents 29/A and 29/B.

16 Proposal to the Political Committee in the Mindszenty (!)-case. Budapest, August 4, 1962. Magyar Országos Levéltár (hereafter MOL), M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 274. ő. e. 92. fol.

17 Proposition to the Political Committee. Declaratory resolution on the normalization of the Hungarian-American relation and in the question of the negotiations to be carried on about the Mindszenty-case. Budapest, August 10, 1962. Published by: ÓLMOSI, pp. 88–90.

rid of Mindszenty and a high price could be charged for it. The objective of the Hungarian politicians was the same as two years earlier: striking the Hungarian Question off the agenda of the UN and the recovery of the UN mandate of Hungary. They wanted the Vatican to accept three conditions: 1) the Vatican should have respect for the traditional right of patronage of the Hungarian state, 2) it should guarantee that Mindszenty would be passed over and prohibited from any activity against the Hungarian People's Republic; 3) Mindszenty should ask from the Hungarian government in writing his dispensation from the final judgment.

However, the Hungarians (as well as the person concerned) once more exaggerated the significance of the Cardinal's residence at the Legation, and overstated the American demand for "getting rid of" him. Mindszenty, who by then became 70 years old, was not willing to leave the building of the American Legation voluntarily, because of the impossible conditions. Therefore, on the opening of the Second Vatican Council only the Hungarian and the Cuban Cardinals were not present from among the Prelates assembled from all parts of the world. On top of it all, three days later the "hottest" period of the Cold War began: the first Cuban missile crisis threatened with the outbreak of a nuclear war.

Notwithstanding the reservations, the changes started. In April 1963 general amnesty was declared in Hungary, although it did not apply to the ecclesiastic convicts; in May the Hungarian mandate was accepted in the UN and at the end of the year the Hungarian question was struck off the agenda. Unquestionably, it was a great feat of arms of the Kádár-regime. In the same year, on April 18, Franz Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna was allowed to visit Mindszenty. Then on May 7, 1963, Agostino Casaroli, the official delegate of Pope John XXIII arrived at Budapest incognito, assuming an air of secrecy. It was a historic moment, because 18 years had passed since the Apostolic Nuncio to Hungary was expelled from the country, and although the diplomatic relations were not broken off *de iure*, that took place *de facto* all the same. For the present Casaroli left the country without apparent results; all the same something changed: due to the direct relation, the prelates in Rome stopped treating the Primate as a mythical figure and started to think about him as a fallible, real person. However, immediately after he had opened the way to the East, on June 3, 1963, Pope John XXIII died. The same problem arose as in 1958: whether Cardinal József Mindszenty is allowed to leave for the papal conclave. The reply was similar: the Cardinal could not be present at the election of the new pope, Paul VI.¹⁸

The Cardinal, who considered himself partly a prisoner, was informed about the world events from the press, the TV and conversations but he could only follow them without shaping the events. He learnt from a Viennese paper — and he was really disappointed — that Hungarian-American economic, cultural and political negotiations had started and the agreement of the Hungarian Government and the Vatican as well as his rehabilitation were imminent. No-one asked his opinion, he was not even informed. When eventually he was informed, it was a great disappointment for him that the Holy See was willing to enter into negotiations with a communist re-

¹⁸ A selection of the American sources of the year of 1963 is published by: SOMORJAI, *Santa Sedes*, II, pp. 47-138.

gime without being duly informed about the real situation of the Hungarian church. Mindszenty refused the negotiations; according to him the only way to help the Hungarian church and the Hungarian people was to eliminate the communist regime. He condemned the West, or rather the United States, because they accepted that the Soviet Union extended its political, military and ideological authority over a significant part of Europe. His firmness — or his ignorance of the developments of the international politics — made him callous to the change that in the meantime the “world” had learnt something from the threat of the Cold War: the American policy was aimed at avoiding the direct conflict with the Soviets and their allies, since that could have led to the immediate danger of nuclear war (as it faintly occurred on the occasion of the above-mentioned Cuban missile crisis).

Neither Casaroli, nor Koenig could persuade Mindszenty to leave voluntarily and it was not urged by the Vatican either. The Cardinal himself insisted on staying in his country until the main problems of the church would not be remedied. However, the Kádár-leadership waited; they considered the Mindszenty-case an independent issue and they were not willing to connect it with the general problems of the state and the church. Accordingly, the partial agreement signed on September 14, 1964, between the Holy See and Hungary handled the case of the Cardinal separately, or rather did not handle it at all. To approve his departure, both parties expected from the Cardinal his resignation from primacy (or naming a person with right of succession) and filing a petition for clemency. However, Mindszenty definitely refused it and repeatedly modified his conditions. He did not change his opinion albeit his state of health significantly impaired. In the summer of 1965 his tuberculosis, which he got in the prison, began again and he had haemorrhage of the lungs. The Legation really worried about the infection, therefore the doctor restricted the Prelate's movement and the contact with him, and he even forbade him from administering the sacrament. Owing to his life-threatening condition, the Americans as well as the members of the Political Committee of the MSZMP dealt with the possible death of Mindszenty and the details of his funeral.¹⁹

However, much to the annoyance of those who counted on his death, Mindszenty recovered in a few months. Not only his health but his resolution was recovered as well, although his sense of reality began to fail. For instance, he asked a diplomat of the Legation, Joe Kecskeméthy, to forward his letter written to Pope Paul VI without his superior's knowledge; in it he advised to ask justice in the world and not merely peace. The letter was written on the occasion that the Soviet Union made a proposal for the resumption of the disarmament negotiations in Geneva (because in 1964 the People's Republic of China — following the United States of America, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France — introduced itself as the fifth nuclear power). According to Mindszenty, it would be a disaster for Eastern-Europe if the Americans consented to the negotiations.²⁰

19 ÓLMOSI, No. 111. XVII, document. The proposition of János Péter Foreign Minister to the Political Committee of the MSZMP, August 28, 1965. NARA, RG 59. General Records of the Department of State. Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Eastern European Affairs, Records Relating to Hungary 1941-1977, Box. 9. Contingencies and Emergencies.

20 SOMORJAI, *Sancta Sedes*, III/1, pp. 284-286.

The disappointment was almost palpable because the Mindszenty-case was not settled. The considerations and possibilities had to be reconsidered. A new phase of attempts started again in 1967, when Washington raised his Budapest Legation to Embassy status as a sign of the end of the Cold War, and as a consequence an American-Hungarian rapprochement started. Mindszenty almost upset the forthcoming exchange of ambassadors, because on hearing the news he decided to give himself up to the Hungarian police authorities. His intention presented a serious problem to the Vatican-American-Hungarian diplomacy. Real team work of the three parties was necessary to avoid the scandal and thus the failure of the exchange of ambassadors. The Hungarians communicated to the Vatican: instead of Mindszenty's resignation, they accept the appointment of an apostolic administrator for the Esztergom archdiocese of the rank of archbishop or prelate; but they insist on the other, well-known guarantees.²¹ Casaroli accepted the conditions and with the help of Koenig he dissuaded Mindszenty from his daring plan to give himself up. However, the question of the Cardinal's departure moved with difficulty only. Negotiations followed negotiations but it was difficult to overcome Mindszenty's distrust. Since he thought that the communist were interested in his departure, he charged a price for it. He edited a list of the problems of the church and expected the settling of these issues as a condition for his leaving the country. He put in writing as a repeated complaint that after 1956 thirty-five thousand young people were deported to Siberia. For today historical research has shown that their number that can be proved was less than one thousand persons.²²

As the envoy of the Holy See, Casaroli handed over a memorandum to the Hungarian ambassador in Rome on the request of the Pope: Mindszenty should be given an opportunity to leave the country. In return for it, the Vatican is willing to appoint an apostolic administrator as the head of the Esztergom archdiocese and also, the Pope will use his influence to dissuade Mindszenty from intervening in the life of the Hungarian church and making hostile statements — but only after the departure of the Cardinal.²³ Thus Pope Paul VI assumed a personal obligation concerning Mindszenty's public appearances, and — no matter how we beat around the bush — he seemed to be disposed to suspend Mindszenty's jurisdiction. The Hungarians appreciated the flexibility and supported the negotiations that meanwhile sometimes came to a stop, sometimes revived. Mindszenty, too, reconsidered the conditions for

21 ÓLMOSI, pp. 120–122, document No. XX. Central Committee of the MSZMP, Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Proposal to the Political Committee, Budapest, September 25, 1967.

22 G. LUPKOVICS, *Az 1956-os forradalom utáni megtorlás. A Szilágyi László és társai-per jogtörténeti elemzése*, Debrecen 2009, pp. 37, 40 and 105. http://jog.unideb.hu/documents/doktori_iskola/lupkovicsgyorgy-ertekezes-nyilvanos.pdf (downloading: March 2010). The author verifies a list of 846 names; according to the most large-scale estimations there could have been 2,000–2,500 persons at the highest.

23 ÓLMOSI, pp. 126–127, document No. XXII. Central Committee of the MSZMP, Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Proposal to the Political Committee for the directives of the negotiations in the Mindszenty-case. Budapest, October 19, 1967.

his departure again and again. Another two years had passed until the Pope — urged by the American Presidents as well — personally attempted to break the deadlock in this case.²⁴

THE SOLUTION

As a minute sign and consequence of the easing of the tension between the two world powers as well as the peaceful coexistence, on April 16, 1971, Pope Paul VI personally received János Péter foreign minister and he mentioned the case of Mindszenty on the first place, describing the Cardinal as a “victim of history”. He indicated that he rather had Mindszenty brought out from Hungary, “*settling him somewhere in a monastery and with due stress forbidding him public performance by appropriate church regulations*”.²⁵ The foreign minister assured the Pope of “*benevolent studying of each concrete proposal*”. Meanwhile Alfred Puhán, the American Ambassador of the time mentioned the case of this “stubborn, rigid old man”, “*with whom nothing can be done*”²⁶ — expressing himself so straightforwardly and firmly that is unusual from a diplomat. According to the ambassador, the settlement of Mindszenty’s situation could be a step justifying the return of the crown jewels in the eyes of the American public opinion.

From this time onwards the events really accelerated. On the initiative of the Vatican on June 23, 1971, for the 12th time, Cardinal Franz Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna arrived at Budapest on behalf of the Pope; then on the next day two further envoys arrived from the Vatican: Giovanni Cheli, Vatican advisor; and József Zágon, the prelate responsible for attending to the Hungarian emigrants, former office director from Győr, who had emigrated in 1949. Zágon met Mindszenty three times, on June 25, 26 and 27. He proved to be a clever and skilled envoy. He appreciated Mindszenty’s heroism and then at this point he started to argue: the Cardinal’s martyrdom would wear out if he remained at the embassy.

The four conditions of leaving the Embassy were as follows:

1. The capacity of Mindszenty as Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate remain intact but he should suspend exercising the ensuing rights and obligations; he should not deal with the matters of the country or the Esztergom diocese, where an apostolic administrator would govern instead of him.

²⁴ From the American sources of the year of 1971, see: Á. SOMORJAI, “His Eminence Files”: American Embassy, Budapest. From Embassy Archives, 15 (1971) — Mindszenty bíboros az amerikai nagykövetségen. Követségi Levéltár, 15 (1971), Budapest 2008; Á. SOMORJAI — T. ZINNER, Washingtonból jelentjük: A budapesti amerikai nagykövetség Mindszenty bíboros tevékenységére vonatkozó, 1971-ben keletkezett iratai, in: Századok, Vol. 144, No. 1, 2010, pp. 143–196.

²⁵ Á. SOMORJAI — T. ZINNER, Majd’ halálra ítélve: Dokumentumok Mindszenty József élettörténetéhez, Budapest 2008, p. 1115.

²⁶ Z. SZATUCSEK, Makacs öregúr vagy nemzetmentő vátesz?: Diplomáciai egyeztetések Mindszenty sorsáról 1970–1971-ben, in: G. MAJTÉNYI — O. RING (Ed.), Közel-Múlt. Húsz történet a 20. századból, Budapest 2002, pp. 20–35.

2. Mindszenty should leave his present residence and "if circumstances require", he should leave the country as well. He is not allowed to make a pronouncement or circular letter about it.
3. In his new situation the Cardinal will not make such a pronouncement that would disturb the relation of the Holy See and the Hungarian government or would offend the Hungarian government and the People's Republic.
4. He should not publish his memoirs; he should leave them by will to the Holy See.

From among the four points Mindszenty refused the third and the fourth ones and he did not promise to stop dealing with the matters of the country in his new situation. He did not even sign the memorandum of the discussion.²⁷ He met Zágon on July 14 and 16 as well; the record of the meetings can be found among the American sources. At this time Zágon informed the Cardinal that after having written his letter to the Pope on June 28 and having announced his departure from the embassy, he could no longer lay down conditions. If Mindszenty wanted to have his memoirs in safety, he hardly had any other choice than to yield to the gentle but explicit pressure and leave Hungary. In his memoirs the Cardinal claimed that he had not been informed about the details of the conditions but the sources seem to contradict to it. He rather did not want to accept the specified rules of the game.

On September 9, 1971, the agreement between the Holy See and the Hungarian government was signed. The traditional analysis emphasises that although Mindszenty did not accept any of the three original demands (that he pleas for mercy, promises silence and resigns from his archiepiscopal title), he was released and on September 28, 1971 he left for Rome via Vienna. Yet in the light of the new sources it is worthwhile to examine whether what led the very old Cardinal. Why did the Holy See accept the conditions of the Hungarian politicians? It is indisputable that none of the parties wanted the Cardinal to die in the building of the Embassy. The Holy See believed in the advance of the negotiations on the appointments of bishops — the large-scale, comprehensive strategic goals of the Eastern policy allowed a "queen sacrifice", acknowledging and appreciating Mindszenty's loyalty to Christ's church. Also, Mindszenty himself could fulfil his last wish in this way: the publication of his memoirs, which meant that the world could see the events from his aspect and could form an opinion about the Cardinal and the three decades of the Hungarian church policy on this basis. The writing, which had been waited for nearly two decades, was published in Frankfurt in 1974, and it made its exceptional impact on generations. Besides recording his memories, in the following four years — lasting till his death — the pastoral visits of Hungarians living dispersedly all over the world meant the most important foundation of Mindszenty's activities. Eventually, that was the principal argument for his departure, which Mindszenty could accept; since in the light of it, his reasons to leave the American Embassy in Budapest and his country were not of a personal or political nature but he could refer to religious interests and his unconditional love for his church.

²⁷ The pro memoria of József Zágon is partially published: G. ADRIÁNYI, *Miért hagyta el Mindszenty az amerikai nagykövetséget?*, in: J. TÖRÖK (Ed.), *Mindszenty József emlékezete*, Budapest 1995, pp. 81–85.

ABSTRACT

The name of József Mindszenty became world-famous as the symbol of fight against communism. He fulfilled the honour of the Archbishop of Esztergom and hereupon the honour of Primate between 1945 and 1974. On December 26, 1948, he was taken into custody by the police authorities on the commonplace charges of the totalitarian regimes, such as conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of the republic, spying and currency trafficking, and on 8 February 1949 he was sentenced to life imprisonment, deprivation of political rights and confiscation of property. The sentence called the attention of the world to the violation of human rights and the discussion on the Hungarian situation was put on the agenda by the UN, too. The 1956 revolution put an end to the years of his imprisonment but after three and a half days of freedom, in the morning of November 4, 1956, József Mindszenty requested and got refuge at the American Legation Budapest. It is without precedent in world-history that a cardinal of the Catholic Church lived in diplomatic protection in a legation for 15 years, in a voluntary captivity chosen by himself. Forming a judgement of his activities fluctuates between extremes, from uncritical canonisation to degrading demonization. A collection of sources, essential to the historical analysis, can be found in the United States of America: a lot of documents have survived, mainly owing to the one and a half decade at the Legation; but on account of his public role, the name of Mindszenty appears in the American sources from 1945. The paper is written on the basis of the documents kept in the National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, Maryland). The Archbishop of Esztergom had contacts with two American diplomats between 1945 and 1948: with Arthur Schoenfeld and Selden Chapin. The Hungarian Prince Primate carried on very intensive correspondence with the American diplomatic corps in Budapest. One group of his letters, which arrived almost monthly, relentlessly calls attention to the various grievances of the church, in an abrupt style, not unusual from him. Another significant group of the documents deals with various matters of Hungarian domestic politics, and a further one deals with human rights generally in Hungarian and international context. The American archival documents explicitly prove: there were hardly any significant political events that were not given an opinion by József Mindszenty as the leading prelate of Hungary. The American documents of 1956–1971 relating to Mindszenty are maintained in three important fonds in the National Archives and Records Administration. The contents of the Mindszenty-documents are very mixed. First and foremost the Cardinal requested from Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the UN, to command UN-units to Hungary (it can be read in English for the first time in our present study). The paper presents and concisely analyses the main landmarks of the Cardinal's life in the Legation and at last it touches upon the circumstances of his departure.

KEYWORDS

Prince Primate of Hungary, Archbishop of Esztergom, Human Rights, Freedom of Religion, Martyrdom, Paris Peace Settlement, Political Refuge, Hungarian-American Relations, "the Hungarian Question", Cold War, Second Vatican Council, Eastern Policy