



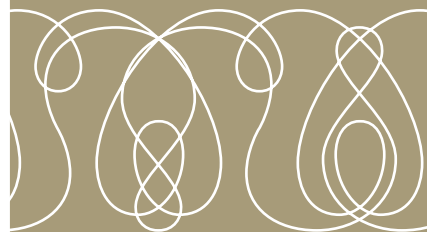
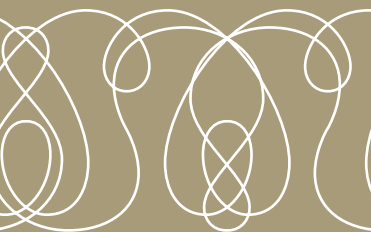
THE

Hungarian Historical Review

NEW SERIES OF ACTA HISTORICA
ACADEMIÆ SCIENTIARUM HUNGARICÆ
Trianon: Collapse 1918–1921

VOLUME **9** NUMBER **I**
2020

Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities



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Hungarian
Historical
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Supported by the HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (HAS) and
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INDEXED/ABSTRACTED IN: CEEOL, EBSCO, EPA, JSTOR, MATARKA, Recensio.net.



Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.
www.hunghist.org
HU ISSN 2063-8647

The Hungarian Historical Review

New Series of Acta Historica
Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae

Volume 9 No. 1 2020

Trianon: Collapse 1918–1921

Balázs Ablonczy
Special Editor of the Thematic Issue

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Addressing the Trianon Peace Treaty in Late Socialist Hungary: Societal Interest and Available Narratives

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In the 1970s and 1980s, the state socialist regime of Hungary was aware of its failure to provide serious ideological reflection on the national question. The party actively sought information about contemporary historical and national consciousness and reacted both in policy and institutional terms. Within the framework of these developments, discourses about the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920, which constitutes an especially traumatic episode of twentieth-century Hungarian history, also started to become more varied. Historians were in the center of these processes, although they operated often in a reactive manner both with regard to domestic journalistic and literary circles and to foreign scholars who discussed the same issue. The article provides an overview of the dynamics of late socialist science policy pertaining to the national question and the different discourses about the Trianon Peace Treaty that emerged during this period.

Keywords: socialist patriotism, Trianon Peace Treaty, historiography, science policy

This article analyzes the ways in which the Trianon Peace Treaty, a uniquely important point of reference in Hungarian national history, was discussed in the 1970s and 1980s and how the state learned about people's interests in this question and historical research itself, which indirectly fueled such conversations. The 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty brought about the breakup of Hungary, resulting in great territorial, economic, population, and political losses and significantly influencing the course of twentieth-century Hungarian history.¹ I was interested in what kinds of (historical) narratives people had access to during the years of late socialism if they sought to read about the event and its consequences, beyond the chronologically defined narratives used in primary and secondary education. In order to uncover the situatedness of these narratives, I built my analysis on an institutional and policy-based tenet, which is followed by discussion of the production of related historical knowledge. Reviewing the most important decisions of the people who defined limits of historical discourse in the socialist state, it also became crucial to engage with the development of the idea of

1 For a detailed discussion of the peace treaty, see Bárdi, Fedinec, and Szarka, *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century*, Section I.

socialist patriotism in this period, as its (in)capacity to reflect on Trianon was one of its ultimate tests of applicability.

Similar investigations merit scholarly attention, as memory politics in post-2010 illiberal Hungary and a parallel system of knowledge-producing institutions (in the making)² has a very specific and rather simplified agenda when it comes to depictions of historians as disinterested in issues that are corollary to national history under state socialism. These phenomena are perhaps particularly conspicuous and influential in Hungary, but there certainly is a regional trend in the devaluation of knowledge production under state socialism.³ Hence, the well-known argument for the “return of the national” after 1989 is often evoked and remains dominant in regional scholarship, although critiques of this argument have been published, mostly by researchers from outside the region, most recently, by John Connelly.⁴ With my analysis, which identifies instances of discourses on Trianon and investigates their structural embeddedness in the infrastructure and politics of historical knowledge production, I would like to contribute to the literature that emphasizes continuities between pre and post-1989(/1991) historiographies, especially the resilience of the nation as the main actor,⁵ while appreciating the importance of the realization of the freedom of speech, which gave great impetus to historical research after the transition.

Late socialist Hungarian historiography showed a gradual liberalization which found expression primarily in the growing variety of narratives. As there were practically no historical taboos left by the 1980s, with the exception of the 1956 uprising and the events of the Soviet occupation in World War II, this ongoing liberalization, which was non-linear nonetheless, was less palpable in terms of approaching topics that had been beyond reach. That being said, historical knowledge production remained tied to state-funded institutions, and various actors in science policy influenced their research agendas partially either by ordering specific projects or by issuing mid-term and long-term research plans.⁶

In what follows, first I am going to discuss the ways in which the party-state sought to familiarize itself with contemporary historical consciousness

2 Egry, “Constructing a New Past in Hungary.”

3 Michela, “The Struggle for Legitimacy,” 118.

4 Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations*, especially Chapter 21.

5 Górný, *The Nation Should Come First*; Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*; Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

6 Ember, “Tervezés és szervezés a történettudományban.”

and attitudes towards the national-nationality question. This will be followed by consideration of the different reactions prompted by the conclusions of these efforts. The third section investigates theoretical interventions of (mostly) historians in relation to the national question and its link to the issue of Hungarian minorities in national consciousness. Lastly, I offer a discursive typology to map the different historical narratives that were publicly available about the Trianon Peace Treaty in late socialist Hungary.

The Inquisitive State: Surveys of National Consciousness during Late Socialism

State socialist regimes, including Kádár regime, aimed actively to shape social consciousness, mainly through the channels of state education but also through popular and party education. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, numerous works pointed towards the decreasing appeal of communist ideological messages, as they were increasingly deemed empty and detached from reality. These calls were not independent from the practical implication of György Aczél's often contradictory, conciliatory claims aiming to solidify the hegemony of Marxism. The mastermind of Hungarian cultural politics in most of the 1970s and the early 1980s, Aczél claimed that hegemony is desirable instead of monopoly, while he rejected the idea of “multiple Marxisms.”⁷ At the same time, other state socialist regimes in the region also had to come to terms with the realization that the importance of national belonging does not seem to wither.

A telling example of how socialist leaders understood that national consciousness did not fade away is that of literary historian István Király, a close collaborator of Aczél. An entry in his diary in November 1970 reads, “It is rather strange how freely we can be anti-Romanian. Only a few years ago, I got into an argument with Illyés [Gyula Illyés, internationally acclaimed writer – R.K.] because of the five million Hungarians who live beyond the borders of Hungary proper. I defended the Party. Today, good Communists are echoing him.”⁸ Király was an ideologist of culture who tried to position himself somewhere halfway between reform communists and the so-called agrarian populist authors.⁹ His

7 Aczél, “Művelődéspolitikánk a marxizmus hegemoniájáért,” 111.

8 *Napló 1956–1989*, 199.

9 Agrarian populists, a loosely organized circle of intellectuals who rose to prominence in the interwar period, propagating a “third way” for Hungary that would be built on the pure power of the allegedly hitherto oppressed peasantry. Many of the writers published sociographies and showed a genuine interest in the everyday struggles of people living in rural Hungary. After a strained relationship with the Stalinist regime, during the Kádár era, some of the writers made their compromises with the softening dictatorship,

observation indicates that at the beginning of the period under investigation, the national question, often in connection with the Trianon Peace Treaty, was not only a concern of those who were linked to the loose group of agrarian populist authors or part of a current that voluntarily withdrew from the public sphere because of their incompatibility with the regime. Rather, it was self-evident that the nation as a historical category remained important for the individuals who made up contemporary socialist society. Therefore, Király believed, taking into consideration the existing though fading ideological complex, both literature and historiography had to preserve and develop contents relevant for national consciousness (and subsequently raised awareness) that would be compatible with the values of socialist society. Király, who was an important representative of the current that advocated for the cultivation of socialist ideology, considered emotional attachment part and parcel of this national consciousness that was to be hammered out.¹⁰ He thus realized quite soon the limited appeal of theorization concerning socialist national consciousness and the perhaps more limited potential of any state attempt actually to fashion such a national consciousness.

These impressions found expression not only in the challenges that state socialist regimes faced all across the Eastern Bloc and in Yugoslavia (Polish, Hungarian, East German uprisings, the Croatian Spring, and the Belgrade protests). Király's observation was confirmed by polls which measured habits of cultural consumption and value changes. A poll conducted in 1971 (but only published in 1976) asserted that a large portion of Hungarian society was interested in the interrelated issues of the Trianon Peace Treaty and the minority Hungarian communities:

The answers were quite equitable in relation to the statement that "He/she is deeply embittered by the Trianon Peace Treaty." 70.4 percent of the participants consider this statement valid for them (mostly the intellectuals, unskilled workers, and agricultural physical workers, it is least likely among free professions, employees, and skilled workers). 19.4 percent answered no (in the cases of the two youngest age cohorts, these answers exceeded 40 percent). (We obtained valuable answers from 46 percent of the participants).

With a small margin, the people who rejected the following statement with a double negation formed majority: "He/she did not approve of

while others became active in the emerging opposition. Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, 2/1: 143.

10 Király, "Hazafiság és internacionalizmus," 360.

the returning of the Transylvanian and Upper Hungarian [i.e. Slovakia] territories” (50.2 percent). 42.2 percent of the participants agreed with the statement (especially employees, skilled workers, and homemakers). (Only 59 percent of the sample gave valid answers).¹¹

The researchers emphasized that numerous circumstances may have prevented the participants from giving honest answers. However, the conclusion was still easily drawn on the basis of the 500 samples: the national question, which included Trianon, remained a relevant issue for a significant portion of Hungarian society. Although generational differences were palpable in the ways in which people related to the past, the topic continued to generate interest, as György Csepeli has concluded in his monograph.¹²

Partly due to these phenomena, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) put the investigation of the national issue on its agenda of long-term research projects, with a promise that interdisciplinary cooperation would be an element of the projects at every stage of the research. The Mass Communication Research Center of the Hungarian Radio and Television (*Magyar Rádió és Televízió Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont*), in cooperation with HAS, became a central organ to research on national consciousness in the beginning of the 1970s.

One of the most important cooperative endeavors was realized within the framework of the main research focus of HAS. It was entitled *The Development of Hungarian Historical Consciousness after the Liberation*, and it can be considered an early attempt at researching national consciousness.¹³ Although the main goals of the research did not point directly towards the issue of Trianon, it is important to emphasize here that a prehistory existed to the broad sociological surveys which also sought to investigate historical and national consciousness and the ways in which historical knowledge was mobilized by Hungarian society.¹⁴

Perhaps the most important comprehensive research project was launched at the beginning of the 1980s. The project proposal, entitled *National Consciousness*

11 Hunyady and Pörzse, “Vélekedések a XX. század történetéről és a családok múltjáról,” 53.

12 “These research projects... [those dealing with national consciousness – R.K.] showed that the patterns of national feeling and identity are alive within the population. If one knows the political and ideological system of state socialism, these results may come as a surprise, since in general we may say that public official discourse suppressed the expression of alternative social identifications.” Csepeli, *A nagyvilágon e kívül*, 123.

13 Témabeszámoló 1972–1975. MTA Történettudományi Intézete [Report 1972–1975, HAS Institute of History]. MTA Levéltára, II. Filozófiai és Történettudományok Osztályának iratai, box 241, folder 5, 72–75, 76–80.

14 Ibid.

in Hungary: The National-Nationality Question in Our Politics, was drafted by the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee. The main goal of the project was to determine “what the population of Hungary feels and thinks about the national question, what they identify with, what the contradictory elements of their thinking and feelings are, what the content of contemporary national consciousness is, and what the tendencies of development are.”¹⁵ The subsequent studies delivered important conclusions to the leaders of the regime, who had been hoping for a gradual withering away of the significance of identification with the “nation.”

Institutional Reactions: Science Policy and Research Plans

The politics of science and culture drew the necessary conclusions. The issue of patriotic education became ever more pressing under the aegis of the “youth problem,” and new momentum gathered in the support for popular historiography, a hitherto less influential genre. In the end, the state socialist regime was aware of and made efforts to understand and give a (new) scientific basis to the national question, not only in a reactive (e.g. to manifestations of Romanian nationalism) but also in a proactive manner.

The Science Policy Committee (*Tudománypolitikai Bizottság*), an institution under the auspices of the Council of Ministers,¹⁶ acted as the supporting institution of deliberating organs with competence in matters of science policies in the period under investigation. The committee was headed by one of the appointed deputy prime ministers.¹⁷ Other committees were also involved in policy-making, most importantly the Coordinating Committee for Social Sciences (*Társadalomtudományi Koordinációs Bizottság*), which was founded as a sub-committee to the Science Policy Committee in 1975 to serve as an advising and evaluating body, which also had the right to submit proposals. The latter prepared proposals for the Central Committee and was entrusted with instructing working groups which collaborated in research projects already underway.

For the purposes of this study, I am going to focus on the competencies and activities of the Science Policy Committee that directly pertained to the

15 Tájékoztató a Társadalomtudományi Koordinációs Bizottság 1981. dec. 10-i üléséről [Prospectus about the session of the Science Policy Committee on December 10, 1981], May 1982. MTA Levéltára, Tudománypolitikai Bizottság, box 23.

16 Kónya, “Az Akadémia szerepe,” 346.

17 Tolnai, “A hazai tudomány- és műszaki politika,” 125.

initiatives that were connected to research on national consciousness and, therefore, the place of Trianon on the mental map of the average Hungarian. The documents that were preserved in the archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences enable a partial reconstruction of the committee's activities. One should add that the length and utility of the records are rather uneven.

In 1982, the Science Policy Committee adopted a resolution in the presence of Imre Pozsgay, the Minister of Education at the time. This resolution established that the Ministry of Culture and the HAS would launch a new, long-term research direction entitled *The Exploration, Cataloging, and Publication of Our Cultural and Historical Traditions*. The resolution emphasized the need to take into consideration research projects that had been initiated earlier but were directly connected to the realization of this research trend, noting that these running projects had already been given a high priority by party organs.¹⁸

General objectives were set and a detailed list of tasks was also prepared in order to provide clear instructions for research institutes that were to be involved in the implementation of the research plan (Institute of History HAS, Institute of Literature HAS, Mass Communication Research Center HRT¹⁹). The main areas of interest included the development of political and historical thought, especially Marxist thought in Hungary, the national question in capitalist and developing countries, press coverage of the preceding five years on issues of patriotism and socialist internationalism and the presence of patriotism and socialist internationalism in primary and secondary education, recent manifestations of socialist patriotism and internationalism in Hungary's neighboring countries, and artistic depictions of Hungarian history.²⁰

The records of the Committee that dealt with the history of Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia and their relations to Hungary mostly used terms like “(people of the) Danube Region” (*Duna-táji népek*), “(people of the) Danube Valley” (*Duna-völgyi népek*), and Central Eastern

18 Tájékoztató a Tudománypolitikai Bizottság 1982. febr. 5-i üléséről [Prospectus about the session of the Science Policy Committee on February 5, 1982]. December 19, 1981 - March 12, 1982. MTA Levéltára, Tudománypolitikai Bizottság, box 23, folder 3.

19 A short overview of the activities of the research institute that was established in 1969 is provided in Hunyady, “Áttekintés Az MRT Tömegkommunikációs Központ munkájáról.” The national question is also addressed, see *ibid.*, 576.

20 A MTA kutatási-fejlesztési terve az 1981–1985 közötti időszakra BT/7. Témakör A nemzeti tudat és a nemzeti kérdés korunkban [The research and development plan of the HAS for the period between 1981–1985. December 19, 1981 – March 12, 1982. MTA Levéltára, Tudománypolitikai Bizottság, box 23, folder 1.

Europe. This set of terms can be seen as a semantic experiment. Instead of using terms that were associated with the former Hungarian rule and evoked by the dominant, nationalist-irredentist discourses of the interwar era, the Committee opted to use strictly geographical, often composite units, pointing towards the creation of a discourse that would include these topics in a manner which was compatible with the idea of socialist patriotism. This language was rooted in interwar and immediate post-1945 discussions of the left, especially in the writings of Oszkár Jászi and István Bibó. The fact that the Committee ordered this research project signals the genuine wish of the state socialist leadership to learn more about the relevance and content of contemporary national consciousness by using the available interdisciplinary research methods.

The analysis of Hungarian national consciousness showed that, even if the dominant frame of reference remained the nation state, contemporary Hungarian national consciousness included a sense of solidarity among several segments of society with the minority Hungarian communities. Although these tendencies had been acknowledged in the secondary literature since the beginning of the 1970s, it was not until 1984 that the first institution was established the existence of which confirmed that leaders in science and cultural politics drew the necessary conclusions from the abovementioned studies and acknowledged the *raison d'être* of these ideas.

This institution called Hungarian Studies Group (*Magyarságkutató Csoport*) was established based on the 1984 resolution of the Agitation and Propaganda Committee. The research group was to operate under the umbrella of the National Széchényi Library. The historian Gyula Juhász was appointed head of the research group. According to the resolution, the research group was supposed to focus on three major areas:

1. The national-nationality questions and problems of national consciousness. Relying on the research that had been carried out previously primarily by the IH HAS under the title “National Consciousness in Hungary, the National-Nationality Question in Our Age,” but also research carried out by others...[...]...The main purpose of this study is to clarify how we can encourage the expression of the great forces that the national idea contains in harmony with socialist consciousness. It is also important to pursue research in order to develop further the Marxist theory of the nation according to our contemporary standards.

The continuation of the research initiatives that are developing further the Marxist theory of nations is essential according to the needs of our time. Providing help in the demanding realization of the national-nationality question in education, tertiary education, and public education is a priority in the course of the investigation of this topic.

2. The second large topic of Hungarian studies is the complex and continuous research on the contemporary as well as historical, economic, social, and cultural circumstances of Hungarians living abroad. Since no systematic research has been carried out yet, an essential prerequisite of truly scientific research includes the consecutive exploration, collection, and ordering of sources, statistical data, etc. in order to prepare a so-called databank.²¹

The third topic pertained to Hungarian studies and related research abroad. The fact that the resolution relied heavily on the results of previously conducted research into national consciousness is proven best by the description of the first topic.²²

The authors of the resolution specified the ways in which they envisioned the realization of the tasks and dedicated four subprograms to it. Pál Zsigmond Pach, head of the Institute of History of HAS, was appointed to lead the activities of the first subprogram, which was entitled *The National-Nationality Question and Research into the Problems of National Consciousness*. Director Juhász was entrusted with the leadership of the second subprogram, called *Complex and Continuous Research into the History and Contemporary Circumstances of Hungarians Living Abroad*. The third subprogram was assigned to Péter Dippold, an expert in library studies, under the title *The Exploration and Ordering of Sources that Concern Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries as Well as in Diaspora: The Creation of a So-Called Data Bank*. The last subprogram was named *Research Aiding the Transmission and Education of Hungarian Studies*. It was put under the leadership of linguist János Pusztay.²³ The slow process of institutionalization manifested most visibly in the configurations of the research community and the new variations to describe and interpret the national-nationality question. It was not long before this growing plurality became apparent on the international scene as well.

21 *A művelődési folyamatok és történelmi-kulturális hagyományaink kutatása*, 44.

22 *Ibid.*, 45–48.

23 *Ibid.*, 49.

Historians, Socialist National Consciousness, and Minority Hungarians

Informed by the surveys already discussed and various debates among regime-compatible intellectuals and fellow travelers, the state treated the issue of shaping national consciousness within the broader framework of socialist thought-shaping (*szocialista tudatformálás*). In that process, research centers were considered background institutions,²⁴ and historians came to play a prominent role. Neither professional nor popularizing discussions about national consciousness were confined to the research institutions or the pages of professional journals though. Various influential outlets including the party's theoretical journal *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review) published regularly on the issue (sometimes quite lengthy articles), but from time to time, the topic emerged in dailies and even in interviews.²⁵

Socialist national consciousness was primarily conceptualized in juxtaposition to bourgeois national consciousness. The scholarship of the 1970s acknowledged several further stages of national consciousness: undeveloped national formations, nation of the transitory period, the communist nation, as well as corresponding, self-reflexive national consciousness in the case of each.²⁶ A theoretical piece suggested the adoption of the Soviet definition in order to identify the prerequisites of socialist national consciousness: social homogeneity, a community of interest in terms of economy and politics, uniform cultural and intellectual identity, an internationalist worldview of society.²⁷ It is important to notice the centrality of the nation state, a geographical and spiritual entity that is defined by solid borders: its acknowledged continuous importance preempted a conflict between the nation-centered historiography that was inherited from the interwar period and the political expectations that were transmitted in party resolutions.

Of the historians of the Modern era, two leaders of the Institute of History of HAS contributed most frequently to the debates about national consciousness. Alongside Pál Zsigmond Pach, head of the Institute of History of HAS, and research fellow Ferenc Glatz, (later deputy head of the Institute of History)

24 "Beszámoló a Filozófiai és Történettudományok Osztályának tevékenységéről," 224.

25 Tandí, "Társadalmi tudat, műveltség, minőség."

26 Farkas, "A szocialista nemzetté fejlődés kérdései," 161.

27 Ibid., 161.

and research fellow Mária Ormos²⁸ also published on the topic in the course of the 1980s.²⁹ However, only Pach and Glatz participated systematically in these discussions, and their publications concentrated explicitly on the ideological implications of the national question. Therefore, my study is going to limit itself to the analysis of their writings. Most of the reflections on contemporary historical consciousness encompassed centuries in their argumentative parts and avoided a clear focus on a single event. The rhetorical strength of these arguments was in fact provided in part by the large temporal framework and well-established generalizations.

Contributions pertaining to the development of socialist consciousness during late socialism harkened back to the Molnár debate, the single most important ideological-historical debate of the early years of the Kádár regime. Erik Molnár (1894–1966) was a lawyer by training, and he tried his hand in historical research and concomitant ideological work as well when he was member of the Hungarian government between 1944 and 1956. In 1949, he also took the position of the head of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences. The Molnár debate took place after the 1956 uprising³⁰ and provided a forum for presentations of multiple forms of possible historical consciousness under state socialism. Molnár was staunchly internationalist, and he characterized all national movements in Hungarian history as having only benefitted the ruling classes (feudal lords and the bourgeoisie) and criticized scholarship, interwar and communist alike, when it tried to locate the “national” in settings when it was anachronistic or simply absent (e.g. conflation with religious identity). Molnár’s internationalist inclinations were especially critical of “popular Marxist” tendencies (propagated by Aladár Mód and Erzsébet Andics among others from early on),³¹ according to which the anti-Habsburg struggles were progressive movements. Molnár, on the one hand, was challenged by a handful of historians (including György Ránki and Péter Hanák) for absolutizing class antagonisms.³² This brief contextualization was necessary, as much of the following analysis

28 Ormos got a teaching position around that time. She was appointed to the newly established Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pécs. Her political career was also progressing.

29 Ormos, “A reális történelmi tudat a hazaszeretet hordozója.”

30 Litkei dealt with the first controversy in which Molnár played a leading role in 1950. Litkei, “The Molnár Debate of 1950.”

31 Lackó, “Molnár Erik és a 60-as évek történészvitéja,” 1483.

32 Ibid., 1525.

was framed even by contemporaries as a later stage of this very same debate, though Molnár died in 1966.³³

Pach claimed repeatedly throughout the 1970s and 1980s that the post-1945 patriotism of the builders of socialism was continuous with what he called the popular-democratic national consciousness of the Revolution of 1848–1849. Pach identified the radical fringe of the 1848 revolutionary leaders (Sándor Petőfi, Mihály Táncsics, and Pál Vasvári) as the first representatives of this trend.³⁴ After the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, nationalism and patriotism parted ways according to the Marxist interpretations that Pach adopted. However, he successfully linked the 1848 Revolution to the democratic revolution of 1918 and the short-lived 1919 Communist regime based on the premise that “the idea of social progress intertwined with the progressive trends of national ideology in both cases.”³⁵ Pach reacted to Király’s study as well, claiming that Király’s judgement failed when he proclaimed that supranationalism posed the greater ideological danger as opposed to nationalism. Pach had a historicized view of the development of socialist consciousness and surrounding discussions, which naturally meant that he was ready to historicize its role in it as well.

Revisiting the Molnár debate explicitly, Pach criticized the fact that in support of the different arguments, only Hungarian historical examples were cited, though he immediately explained the reason for this: “On the one hand, our view of history was only beginning to gain certain national colors...; on the other hand, among historians it was still something of a taboo—we did not want to stir the issue. We only dealt with our shortcomings, this was not only dominant but exclusive.”³⁶ This use of words can only be interpreted fully within the semantic field of earlier works. It was previously often emphasized by policy makers and historians (in fact, this attitude only faded away in the mid-1980s) that those who had an objection against nationalism(s) of neighboring countries should make sure first that the domestic scene was devoid of any distortions of bourgeois nationalism.³⁷

Although Pach himself discussed the issue of national consciousness in relation to minority Hungarians, he usually did so in a rather opaque way, using

33 Pach, “‘Molnár-vita’ – nacionalizmus – szupranacionalizmus.”

34 Pach, “A hazafiság néhány kérdése,” 44.

35 Pach, “Nemzeti fejlődés, nemzeti öntudat,” 27.

36 Pach, “‘Molnár-vita’ – nacionalizmus – szupranacionalizmus,” 257.

37 “Some of the scrupulous exorbitance in the criticism of nationalism escalated the disturbance of national consciousness instead of decreasing it.” Pach, “A nemzetudatról napjainkban,” 27.

periphrases. The contributions of Glatz and Péter Hanák, renowned historian of the Dualist Era,³⁸ were more direct and radical. Still, it is worth paying attention to the less dynamically changing semantics of Pach they are good indicators of changes in the rhetoric of the party in matters of the national-nationality question, as he was in the Institute of History since its creation in 1949, and he proved politically reliable both before and after 1956. Eventually, he rose to the position of head of the institute, which he held between 1967 and 1987.

Pach's interpretative frameworks and use of words reflected quite reliably the discourse about the contemporary national question (reflecting indirectly on the current trends of Hungarian-Romanian relations). He published his views fairly often in *Társadalmi Szemle*, for instance on the goals of socialist minority politics, which would be the creation of a community the members of which would be "bilingual people who have a dual cultural embeddedness and who concomitantly possess a citizenry-based and a healthy national-nationality consciousness."³⁹

Péter Hanák clearly went beyond the usual joint mentioning of the national-nationality question. In his article entitled "Nation–National Loyalty–National Consciousness" (*Nemzet – nemzeti lojalitás – nemzettudat*), Hanák granted equal status to the issue of minority Hungarians in contemporary historical consciousness:

we should treat the Hungarian population of neighboring countries as national minorities, that is to say, as a community with dual bonding. A community that is tied to the Hungarian nation by the threads of history and culture while citizen loyalty and the functioning community links them to their current homeland. This dual bond and dual identity do not necessarily create a paradox, on the contrary, in theory, they may be harmonized in socialist states. In reality, the obligations of dual identity may only be harmoniously integrated if the political system is ready to provide sufficient circumstances for the expression, realization, and development of both identities.⁴⁰

38 The ways in which Hungarian minority politics during the Dualist Era was addressed exerted a strong influence on interpretations of the behavior of the minorities that ultimately seceded and joined the new emerging states. Going beyond the issue of minority politics, evaluations of the 1848–1918 period had a significant impact on the shaping of national consciousness.

39 Pach, "Nemzeti fejlődés, nemzeti öntudat," 36.

40 Hanák, "Nemzet – lojalitás – nemzettudat," 184.

A similar position was taken by Glatz, whose interventions were published in his own popular historical outlet, *História*, featuring as editorials or in the column called “Self-Critical Historiography” (*Önkritikus Történettudomány*). These writings were not historical essays. Rather, they were musings or “readers’ guidelines.” Glatz knew well the proceedings of party meetings where ideological issues were debated, and he quickly adopted the notion of cultural nation as opposed to state nation. Moreover, contrary to the practices of narrowly conceived historical fora, Glatz regularly explicated the anomalies of the minority Hungarian communities whose minority status emanated from the Trianon (and Paris) peace treaty and that of contemporary historical consciousness. Glatz’s line of thought is well illustrated by the following excerpt from 1982:

Trianon. The figures concerning Hungary’s territorial, economical, and first and foremost, social-populational losses after World War I are well-known. Hungary lost almost 70 percent of its former territories and more than half of its population. About 40 percent of Magyars were left outside the borders of the new Hungary and became nationalities, minorities in the new states. The historian has to tell this: there was no other people in history, not even before the national and state formation, which would have taken the loss of two thirds of its population and territory with tranquility, after two generations had passed. For a long time, our historiography and intellectual circles were ruled by incomprehension concerning the national shock of Trianon. We were afraid of lurking nationalism even when concerns were only raised to point to the continuity and presence of the problem. Our historiography today is not particularly surprised anymore that great territorial rearrangements (1920, the collapse of historical Hungary, the territorial revisions of 1938–1942, the return of territories after 1945), the collapse of states and new settlements, the evacuation of the population of entire provinces kept regional historiographies in the aura of momentary “rights,” the mutually committed sins and their supportive arguments.⁴¹

Glatz frequently used this framework in the years of late socialism. The fact that these views were transmitted by a popularizing magazine that was published in thousands of copies from the beginning of the 1980s shows that by that time, the Trianon Peace Treaty was a topic that could be approached and read about in various ways.

41 Glatz, “Kérdések etnikumról, nemzetről a 20. század végén,” 34–35.

Historians were involved in the development processes of a gradually more inclusive notion of the nation which included members of the Hungarian minorities in the surrounding states. Research was conducted both on the basis of individual interests and party orderings. The conclusions drawn from the findings of these research projects and their publication for professional, administrative, or popularizing purposes influenced the language that the party used in related issues: the terminologies mutually affected each other.

Narrating Trianon in Historical Works: Three Patterns

Historians, naturally, took part in the shaping of a discourse about Trianon in more direct ways as well, as they researched the peace-making process itself, the genesis of the interwar state, and related aspects. My close reading of the literature produced about the Trianon Peace Treaty reveals three discursive patterns in the historiography, both in professional and in popularizing fora.⁴² I chose to discuss these two fields together, as popular history was institutionally part of the profession, and the difference between the two was more a matter of style and format than a difference in the quality of supporting research. While the grouping of the discourses yielded significant analytical benefits, I would also like to point to their occasional confluence.

The largest group is constituted by the publications that followed the chronological-neutral pattern. Their common features include a strictly descriptive language that does not allow for the evaluation of the peace treaty or at least dramatically limits criticism. In them, the Trianon Peace Treaty was depicted as a diplomatic act, usually within a broader context of international relations. They strove for a meticulous reconstruction of the preparation process and the effects of the treaty. In order to do this, historians utilized the holdings of Hungarian and Western (most notably English and French) archives. Their reliance on archival sources predestined diplomatic historians to produce texts in which sources are simply rearranged into a narrative. This practice occasionally led to the inclusion of contemporary expressions in scholarly articles in a manner that was not adequately self-reflexive. The two citations that follow are typical representatives of this category. Both were chosen from texts by two

42 In this section, I am not going to extend the scope of inquiry to source publications, as narrative options and frameworks are the primary focus of my article. However, the publication record of such volumes was also rich in these kinds of terms.

prominent diplomatic historians of the period, Mária Ormos and Magda Ádám, respectively:

The peace treaty was made ready, the allied got by and large what they wanted and the former enemies swallowed the bitter pill.⁴³

While earlier England, Italy, and the United States had taken a stand to correct the unjust decisions of the peace treaty and managed to put this possibility in writing in a *lettre d'envoi*, now the tables have been turned. They discarded Millerand's suggestion, even though it was originally their idea.⁴⁴

Gyula Juhász, one of Ormos's and Ádám's colleagues at the Institute of History of HAS, and also Géza Jeszenszky, an affiliate of the Karl Marx University of Economics, were important representatives of this trend.

This discursive pattern was not without predecessors, of course. Its most important antecedent or, indeed, the groundwork was the monograph by Zsuzsa L. Nagy (Institute of History, HAS), which was published in 1965.⁴⁵ As these works all represented the chronology-focused trend of diplomatic history, this made them especially apt for the purposes of textbooks.

The second category consists of works that aimed at the integration of the discussion of the Trianon Peace Treaty within the frameworks of socialist patriotism, hence I call it socialist patriotic pattern. As I pointed out earlier, the interventions of Hungarian intellectuals rarely produced specific theoretical results fitting the local context during late socialism. The overall picture of the field is rather undertheorized and fragmented. However, this apparent lack of a larger, comprehensive framework did not mean a lack of theorizing attempts. The interventions of Erik Molnár, Zsigmond Pál Pach, and István Király are among the most important ones, even though they failed to create a decidedly Hungarian socialist patriotism. Beyond historical works, this pattern was prevalent in policy papers and institutional programs as well, including those that have been introduced in previous sections of this article. The works that qualify for this category contained more evaluative comments and repeatedly cited Lenin's condemnation of the peace system that emerged after the Great War.⁴⁶ On a

43 Ormos, "Francia-magyar tárgyalások 1920-ban," 907.

44 Ádám, "Dunai konföderáció vagy kisantant," 463.

45 L. Nagy, *A párizsi békekonferencia és Magyarország 1918–1919*.

46 Lenin, "A nemzeti és gyarmati kérdéstről szóló tézisek," 127–31.

semantic level, these publications used most extensively the terms *imperialista békediktátum*, or “imperialist peace dictate,” and *rablóbéke*, or “predacious peace.”

The first example is from *História*, the first popular historical journal. It was established in 1979. The author is László Kővágó (1923–1990), who was born in Senta/Zenta (Yugoslavia) and who spent his active years in the employment of the Party History Institute. He was known for his publications about the interwar Communist party and the national question and the national-nationality question in the region throughout the twentieth century.

The theses about the national and colonial question called the Paris Peace Treaties and the Western democracies’ brutal and nefarious violence against weak nations and the Comintern repeatedly emphasized the necessity of revolutionary destruction of the peace treaties. At the same time, the Comintern advocated the expediency of federal unification of nation states, based on the Russian experience.⁴⁷

The second excerpt is from an article by Pach. It showcases the use of the most common terms that denoted the peace treaty.

Later, the severe trauma, the defeat in the Great War, the ruthless history which materialized in the imperialist peace dictate of Trianon, did not become the teacher of life either. What had been done within the boundaries of the homeland before continued beyond it in the post-Trianon times. The thesis of Hungarian cultural supremacy blossomed at a time when the means of direct power were obviously missing.⁴⁸

Iván T. Berend, the renowned economic historian and President of the HAS 1985–1990, commented in his presidential capacity on the international controversy that emerged around the publication of *The History of Transylvania*.⁴⁹

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the affiliates of its respective institutes accept historical realities, and we all, as has been emphasized

47 Kővágó, “A Kommunista Párt és Trianon,” 7.

48 Pach, “Nemzeti fejlődés, nemzeti öntudat,” 32.

49 *The History of Transylvania* had been long in the making and was considered a project of the Institute of History of HAS. Even though the historians addressed post-1918 history only briefly, it was perceived as an attack on Romanian historiography and historical consciousness, as Transylvania was not described as an *ab ovo* Romanian territorial unit. For an overview of the controversy, see Köpeczi, “Erdély története harminc év távlatából.”

in our Presidential Proclamation, share the relevant resolutions of the Helsinki closing accords, which include both guarantees for the current status quo and human rights. However, this does not change the truth that was proclaimed by Lenin as well, that the peace following the Great War was imperialist and predacious and that the Hungarian Soviet Republic cannot be seen as a nationalist action against Romania.⁵⁰

The contexts of the three excerpts show that authors, who were trying to situate their contributions in relation to socialist patriotism, did so in several formats and at times when they belonged to different institutions of historical knowledge production with similarly diverse positions in their respective hierarchies. Therefore, it can be established that discussions of the Trianon Peace Treaty within the framework of socialist patriotism were not confined to a single genre, institution, or political self-positioning.

The third and least voluminous discussion referred to the peace treaty through its most visible contemporary impacts, and for that reason I refer to it as the pattern defined by the national-nationality question. It appeared at various fora, including cultural journals and policy speeches. The most important feature of this discourse was the way it used the notion of Trianon as a metonym to allude to the “questions concerning the fate of the Hungarian nation,” or “*a magyarság sorskérdései*” or to call attention to current issues. The fact that this strategy worked (the works were allowed to appear in print, the readership was able to decode them, and they were soon sought after) proves that Trianon has been made into a cultural code that garnered attention and established a place for itself in late socialist media. These texts, irrespective of their authors, who might have been ministers or historians who regularly published in samizdat, emphasized the need to incentivize research with regard to Hungarian communities in the neighboring countries. For instance, Lajos Für, a historian with an agrarian populist agenda, made the following claim:

When we say that the territory of the country shrunk to its ca. one third, sticking to the mere facts, it appears to be expedient to add that one third of the Hungarian-speaking population was left beyond the borders of the new country and became one of the minority communities of neighboring states. Our textbooks diligently and accurately describe the national minorities of historical Hungary and mention in a sober and open manner that in the territories that were

50 Berend T., “Tudományos-szellemi életünk néhány központi kérdése,” 443.

ripped away...Hungarians lived. Would it hurt anybody's sensitivities to publish exact numerical data as well?⁵¹

The second example is provided by an article by Béla Köpeczi, General Secretary of the HAS at the time of publication and later Minister of Education:

Concerning the nationalism of the peoples of the Danube region, even though we may understand their aggressiveness until the formation of their nation states, their responsibility cannot be denied for the fate of the region after 1919. The ruling class of the new nation states learned much from Hungarian landlords and bourgeoisie with regard to the oppression of minorities. A comparative analysis of these nationalisms would be most beneficial, as it would show that they have many common sources and mutually reinforced one another.⁵²

In this format, emotional approaches became apparent, either in a fervent condemnation of the peace treaty and current minority affairs or in a more personal manner.

Conclusions

Late socialism in Hungary is usually described as a period of gradual relaxation in which ideological rigidity and ideology's general significance steadily decreased. Arguably, the late and timid acceptance of the persistence of the nationality question was of special importance in this context. The ultimate failure of the regime to establish a long-lasting relatable ideological promise and identification (socialist patriotism practically vanished soon after the transition) does not mean that no efforts had been taken on the part of different actors. Leading ideologues and strongmen of science and cultural policy were completely blindsided or paralyzed by this phenomenon.

My article sought to recover a single aspect of the attempt to fill the ideological notion of socialist patriotism with a content which would give it serious societal resonance. Zooming in on the ideological interventions and historiographical narrative strategies of the period in relation to the Trianon Peace Treaty, I offer an account of diverse approaches that were available in official publications. The fact that the consequences of the peace treaty, a key

51 Für, "Milyen nyelven beszélnek a székelyek?" 64–65.

52 Köpeczi, "A szocialista nemzeti tudat," 3.

issue in national memory, were not present simply in diverse historical works, but rather several distinct patterns emerged, proves that there was a discursive space which allowed for the pursuit and publication of related research. Excerpts from the writings of prominent historians at the time demonstrate that they were able to establish explicitly the logical link between Trianon and the contemporary situation of Hungarian minorities, even if samizdat publications went further in that direction.

From the perspective of today, we know that historians enjoyed the last decades of authority over matters of historical issues in late socialism, though writers, especially agrarian populist writers, were already posing a serious challenge to them. Approaching the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty, insightful observations may be made in relation to the afterlives of the discursive patterns introduced here, and their place in the context of policy and institutional survival.

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Hungarian Historical Review

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The Hungarian Historical Review is a peer-reviewed international journal of the social sciences and humanities with a focus on Hungarian history. The journal's geographical scope—Hungary and East-Central Europe—makes it unique: the Hungarian Historical Review explores historical events in Hungary, but also raises broader questions in a transnational context. The articles and book reviews cover topics regarding Hungarian and East-Central European History. The journal aims to stimulate dialogue on Hungarian and East-Central European History in a transnational context. The journal fills lacuna, as it provides a forum for articles and reviews in English on Hungarian and East-Central European history, making Hungarian historiography accessible to the international reading public and part of the larger international scholarly discourse.

The Hungarian Historical Reviews

(Formerly *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*)

4 Tóth Kálmán utca, Budapest H – 1097 Hungary

Postal address: H-1453 Budapest, P.O. Box 33. Hungary

E-mail: hunghist@btk.mta.hu

Homepage: <http://www.hunghist.org>

Published quarterly by the Institute of History,
Research Centre for the Humanities (RCH).

Responsible Editor: Pál Fodor (Director General).

Prepress preparation by the Institute of History, RCH, Research Assistance Team;
Leader: Éva Kovács. Page layout: Imre Horváth. Cover design: Gergely Böhm.

Printed in Hungary, by Prime Rate Kft, Budapest.

Translators/proofreaders: Alan Campbell, Matthew W. Caples, Thomas Cooper,
Sean Lambert, Thomas Szerecz.

Annual subscriptions: \$80/€60 (\$100/€75 for institutions), postage excluded.

For Hungarian institutions HUF7900 per year, postage included.

Single copy \$25/€20. For Hungarian institutions HUF2000.

Send orders to *The Hungarian Historical Review*, H-1453 Budapest, P.O. Box 33.
Hungary; e-mail: hunghist@btk.mta.hu

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Trianon: Collapse 1918–1921

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HU ISSN
2063-8647



9 772063 864004 2 0001