

Short History of the so-called Kossuth Coat of Arms after 1945

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ABSTRACT

One of the historical forms of the Hungarian coat of arms called the ‘Kossuth coat of arms’ raises a number of questions. Perhaps the most important is the complex problem of the relationship between this symbol and the republican form of government. This coat of arms was named after Lajos Kossuth, who was the Governor-President of Hungary after the dethronement of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine (14 April 1849). Despite of the use of crownless coats of arms by the Hungarian leadership after April 1849, the change of form of government was not proclaimed.

After the Second World War, the ‘republican’ interpretation of the crownless coat of arms became widespread. Hungary officially became a republic on 1 February 1946, but there was no coat of arms regulation. Zoltán Tildy, who was President of the Republic of Hungary, started to use the so-called Kossuth coat of arms. Over time, this practice became customary. After the total establishment of communist power, a new constitution was adopted, which included a new coat of arms. This symbol, however, marked a break with the Hungarian traditions.

KEYWORDS: Holy Crown of Hungary, Kossuth, form of government, occupations, communism

Historical Background and Questions

To this day, there are two common associations related to the Hungarian coat of arms. One is the symbolism of the ‘four rivers and the three hills’¹ and the other is the complex

1 For the history of the interpretation of the ‘Danube-Tisza-Drava-Sava’ (the stripes) and ‘Mátra-Fatra-Tatras’ (the trimount), see: Bertényi 2003, 71.

problem of the relationship between the so-called Kossuth coat of arms and the republican form of government. This version of the historical forms of the Hungarian coat of arms still raises a number of questions. Although heraldically the authenticity of a coat of arms is not affected by the shape of its shield, I think it is important to note here that public opinion clearly considers the representation of the Hungarian coat of arms without a crown in the curved side shield to be the so-called Kossuth coat of arms. It is important to note that in the Hungarian heraldic literature before 1945, the coat of arms of the Kossuth family was referred to as the 'Kossuth coat of arms'. The Republic of Hungary, which was formed after the Second World War, used the so-called Kossuth coat of arms under customary law. This symbol was named after Lajos Kossuth.²

In 1848, Hungarian legislation restored the ancient rights of the coat of arms of the country.³ The principle that the right to establish the coat of arms of the Hungarian State rested with the legislature was also expressed. However, the exact appearance of the coat of arms was not specified. As a result, the 19th century sources contain a wide variety of representations, both in terms of the shape of the shield and the graphic representation of the coat of arms. There were, of course, three different types of coat of arms used at the time: the greater, the medium and the lesser. Naturally, during the reigns of Ferdinand I (in Hungary, Ferdinand V),⁴ the Holy Crown of Hungary rested on the shield of the Hungarian coat of arms.⁵ The situation became more complicated after Franz Joseph⁶ became Emperor of Austria on 2 December 1848, because the Hungarian side considered Ferdinand's replacement of illegal. When Lajos Kossuth was Minister of Finance of Hungary from 7 April to 12 September 1848, his seal bore the medium coat of arms with the crown (Figure 1.). He later disagreed with the removal of the crown.⁷

2 Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894) was the Governor-President of Hungary after the dethronement of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine from 14 April 1849 to 11 August 1849.

3 Act 21 of 1848 on the National Colour and the Coat of Arms of the Country (1848. évi XXI. tc. A nemzeti színről és ország címéről). In: Magyar Törvénytár. 1836–1868., 244.

4 Ferdinand I of Austria, from the House of Habsburg-Lorraine (1793–1875). He reigned from 2 March 1835 to 2 December 1848. Under this name he was the first Emperor of Austria, and the fifth King of Hungary.

5 Iván Bertényi said that by this time the people did not see the Holy Crown as the royal crown, but as the crown of the country, the symbol of the Hungarian state. Bertényi 1999, 375.

6 Franz Joseph I of Austria of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine (1830–1916). He reigned from 2 December 1848 to 21 November 1916.

7 The coat of arms without the crown originally was the symbol of the Republicans in 1848, formed in the columns of their newspaper, *Marczius Tizenötödike* (Fifteenth of March). Lajos Kossuth opposed the abandonment of the Holy Crown from the coat of arms. Kumorovitz 1947–50, 11. Kossuth wrote on 16 March 1861 that Hungary did not have a royal coat of arms. The Holy Crown, the most important part of the Hungarian coat of arms, belongs to the nation and not to the king. Kossuth 1861.

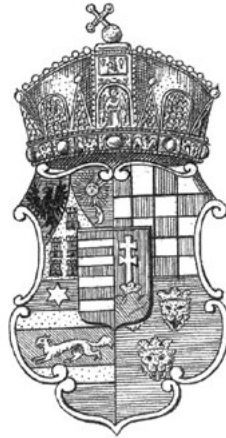


Figure 1. The Medium Coat of Arms of Hungary⁸ used by Lajos Kossuth in 1848.⁹

After the dethronement of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine (14 April 1849), although the Hungarian coat of arms was used without a crown (Figure 2.), the change of the form of government was not proclaimed.¹⁰ This therefore reflected the absence of a legitimate ruler rather than a republican form of government. However, by using it, contemporary Republicans (such as Sándor Petőfi¹¹ or Mihály Táncsics¹²) could express their desire to change the form of government. It is spectacular how the coat of arms gradually abandoned the crown in the newspaper *Marczius Tizenötödike*.¹³

8 In the middle, there is the small coat of arms of Hungary. Surrounding it are the coats of arms of the following territories: Transylvania, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia.

9 Source of the image: Ungarns Staats-Wappen Während des Freiheitskampfes 1848–49. In: Bárczay et al. 1898., 315., Taf. 5. [https://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN828669023?ti-fy={%22pages%22:\[315\],%22view%22:%22thumbnails%22},12/16/2021](https://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN828669023?ti-fy={%22pages%22:[315],%22view%22:%22thumbnails%22},12/16/2021)

10 On 25 April 1849, Kossuth instructed the Ministry of Justice to replace the circular inscription 'V. Ferdinánd' of the seal with 'Hungarian State'. Bertényi 2010, 295–297.

11 Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) was one of the greatest Hungarian poets and a key figure of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. The 1848 lithograph by Miklós Barabás entitled 'Petőfi as a National Guard', clearly shows the crownless coat of arms on the poet's dolman. According to Attila Kovács Selmeczi, this may be the first documented uncrowned Hungarian coat of arms that consciously proclaimed national independence without a king. Selmeczi Kovács 1999, 9.

12 Mihály Táncsics (1799–1884) was a Hungarian writer, journalist and politician. He stated that he would have thrown the Pragmatica Sanctio (female inheritance of the House of Habsburg in the Kingdom of Hungary, 1723) together with the Holy Crown on fire. He even posted a picture of it on the front page of his newspaper. *Munkások Ujsága*, 1. (13 October 1848) 5., Budapest.

13 In the issue of 2 December 1848, there was the crowned coat of arms. *Marczius Tizenötödike*, 2 December 1848, 224, Pest, 904. By 4 December, the crown had already slipped to the edge of the shield of the coat of arms. *Marczius Tizenötödike*, 4 December 1848, 225, Pest, 908. On 9 December, the coat of arms already was without a crown. *Marczius Tizenötödike*, 9 December



Figure 2. The Seal with the Great Coat of Arms of the Hungarian State¹⁴ in 1849¹⁵

After the First World War, a new state coat of arms was introduced on 29 November 1918 for the Hungarian People's Republic, which was proclaimed on 16 November 1918. The decree was signed the previous day by Mihály Károlyi¹⁶ (Prime Minister). In its wording: 'The coat of arms of the Hungarian People's Republic differs from the small state coat of arms used hitherto in that, the royal crown resting on the coat of arms and the open crown in the middle of the trimount are missing.'¹⁷ (Figure 3.). So the Károlyi Government had seen the symbol of the monarchy in the Holy Crown. Between 1 March 1920 and 1 February 1946, the official form of government of Hungary was a kingdom.



Figure 3. Coat of Arms of the Hungarian People's Republic in 1918.¹⁸

1848, 230, Pest, 928.

14 In the middle, there is the small coat of arms of Hungary. Surrounding it, from right (left of the viewer) to left (right of the viewer) are the coats of arms of the following territories: Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Galicia, Lodomeria, Rascia, Serbia, Cumania, Bulgaria, Transylvania.

15 Source of the image: Márki–Beksics 1898, 285.

16 Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955) was Prime Minister from 31 October 1918 to 11 January 1919 and he became the first President of Hungary from 11 January 1919 to 21 March 1919.

17 Decree 5746/1918 (XI.28) M.E. In: *Budapesti Közlöny*, 52. (29 November 1918) 274., Budapest, 5.

18 Source of the image: *Pénzügyi Közlöny*, 45. (1918), Budapest, front page.

By 1945, the ‘republican’ interpretation of the crownless coat of arms had become widespread, probably in which the events of 1918 played a role. The connection between the coat of arms and Kossuth’s name can also be placed back the initial period after the Second World War. This is not surprising given that the centenary of 1848 was approaching. The centenary atmosphere can also be observed in the Hungarian state honours of the period between 1945 and 1949.¹⁹ On 21 December 1944, the Hungarian Provisional National Assembly was established in the Oratorio of the Reformed (Calvinist) College in Debrecen. This was the place where the Hungarian Parliament had convened in 1849. For Hungary, the period between 1944 and 1945 marked the transition from German occupation²⁰ to Soviet occupation.²¹ Under the military occupation by the Soviet Union, communist power gradually emerged in Hungary and the other countries which later became the ‘Eastern Bloc’. The changes in the Hungarian coat of arms at the time also reflect this process.

The State Symbol of Hungary during the Occupations

Already in September 1944, the command of the Soviet Red Army issued pengő²² in Hungary with the red star as a symbol.²³ The first meeting of the Hungarian Provisional National Government took place on 23 December 1944. It was agreed that the official seals would bear the old crowned coat of arms with angels.²⁴ The newly established official journal of Hungary, the *Magyar Közlöny* (Hungarian Gazette), had the coat of arms of 1896²⁵ (Figure 4.) on its cover. This coat of arms was on the cover from 4 January 1945²⁶ to 4 June 1946.²⁷

19 Pandula 2003, 34. See for more details about the Hungarian state honours from this period: Molnár 1986.

20 From 19 March 1944 to 4 (completely 12) April 1945.

21 From 4 April 1945 to 19 June 1991.

22 The pengő was the currency of Hungary between 1927 and 1946.

23 See: 100 Hungarian pengő (1944) issued by the Red Army - obverse. https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_magyar_peng%C5%91_p%C3%A9nzjegyei#/media/F%C3%A1jl:HUP_100_1944_obverse.jpg, 20/10/2022

24 Szűcs 1997, 89.

25 Decree 3755/1895 (I.12, 1896) M.E. In: Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára. 30. (1896), Budapest, 675–677.

26 Magyar Közlöny, 4 January 1945, 1., Debrecen.

27 Magyar Közlöny, 4 June 1946, 125., Budapest.



Figure 4. Coat of Arms of Hungary flanked by angels, regulated in 1896²⁸

It should be mentioned that at the beginning of 1945, the government of Ferenc Szálasi²⁹ was still in power in the western part of the country. They also determined the coat of arms to be used in their territory. On 27 December 1944, Szálasi approved the coat of arms that united the Hungarian coat of arms with the symbols of the Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement (Figure 5.). This coat of arms was published on 27 January 1945 in the *Hivatalos Közlöny* (Official Gazette), which was the official journal of the Szálasi government.³⁰ It is another question how widely this symbol became known to the public. The ministries did not make its use exclusive either. Nor could it be called the coat of arms of Hungary, because the Arrow Cross Government was not recognized internationally.³¹

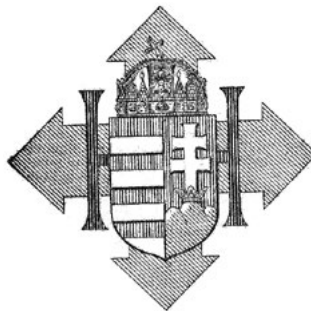


Figure 5. The Coat of Arms regulated by the Government of Ferenc Szálasi in 1945³²

28 Source of the image: Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára. 30. (1896), Budapest, 675.

29 Ferenc Szálasi (1897–1946) was the leader of the Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement, and he became so-called ‘Leader of the Nation’ (a fictitious position) after the removal of Regent Miklós Horthy (15–16 October 1944).

30 Hivatalos Közlöny, 27 January 1945, 6., Sopron, 1–2.

31 Bertényi 2015, 72–73.

32 Decree 23/1945 (I.1) M.E. In: Hivatalos Közlöny, 27 January 1945, 6., Sopron, 2. Source of the image: Ibid.

From the middle and the end of the year 1945, we can observe a transition in the use of the Hungarian coat of arms. This is especially visible on paper money. The new revenue stamps, issued from October 1945 onwards bore a crownless coat of arms.³³ By mid-1946, paper money with crowned³⁴ and uncrowned coat of arms³⁵ was also in circulation. The main feature of the so-called Kossuth coat of arms is the curved side of its shield (Figure 6.).



Figure 6. The Kossuth Coat of Arms between 1946 and 1949³⁶

- 33 Decree 190.465. XI. a./1945. (X.10) P.M. about the new fee stamps. In: Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára. 79. (1946), Budapest, 1685–1686.
- 34 E.g.: Ten thousand Milpengő (issued on 29 April 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.4., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828301>, 25/08/2021
 One hundred thousand Milpengő (issued on 29 April 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.5., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828314>, 25/08/2021
 One million Milpengő (issued on 24 May 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.6., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828319>, 12/08/2021
 Ten million Milpengő (issued on 24 May 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.7., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1816753>, 31/08/2021
 Ten thousand B.-Pengő (issued on 3 June 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.10., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828341>, 25/08/2021
 Ten million B.-Pengő (issued on 3 June 1946) See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.13., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828351>, 12/08/2021
- 35 E.g.: One hundred million Pengő (issued on 18 March 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.2., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828279>, 12/08/2021
 One hundred million Milpengő (issued on 3 June 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.8., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828326>, 12/08/2021
 One hundred million B.-Pengő (issued on 3 June 1946). See: MNM Coins Collection, Collection Unit “D”, 50.1946.14., <https://gyujtemenyek.mnm.hu:443/hu/record/-/record/MNMMUSEUM1828377>, 25/08/2021
- 36 Source of the image: Honvédségi Közlöny, 74. (1947), Budapest, front page.

During this period, one of the most difficult tasks of the Hungarian leadership was the preparation for the Paris Peace Treaties and to establish diplomatic relations with the surrounding states. At this time, the symbolism of the ‘mountains and rivers’ of the Hungarian coat of arms was present not only in the public consciousness of the Hungarians but also in that of the neighbouring peoples. István Kertész, the Secretary General of the Hungarian Peace Delegation in Paris in 1946, recalled a typical case of the Czechs’ protest against the appearance of the Hungarian coat of arms. Between 3 and 6 December 1945, a small Hungarian delegation arrived in Prague at the invitation of the Czechoslovak government. The main topic of discussion was the Hungarian-Slovak population exchange. Kertész described how, at the farewell meeting of the Hungarian delegation, Vladimír Clementis, the head of the Czechoslovak delegation, suggested to him face-to-face that it would be a good service to the Hungarian-Czechoslovak reconciliation if Hungary were to leave the rivers and mountains off its coat of arms. This was met with dismay by Kertész, who refused, saying that ‘the Hungarian coat of arms is not up for negotiation.’³⁷

Change of the Form of Government without Coat of Arms Regulation

Hungary was officially a kingdom until 1 February 1946, but there was no king or regent from 16 October 1944. After the Second World War, Hungary’s first democratic parliamentary elections were held on 4 November 1945, which were won by the Independent Smallholders’ Party with 57% of the votes. The government led by Zoltán Tildy³⁸ created a law on the change of the form of government. However, no decision was taken yet on the official display of the coat of arms.³⁹ The three largest parties (the Independent Smallholders’ Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Communist Party) were ready with their own draft texts for the ‘republican law’ as early as in January 1946. The smallholders went back to 1849, the social democrats to 1918, and the communists to 1919⁴⁰ as historical precedents. It is interesting that the coat of arms was mentioned only in the text proposed

37 Kertész 1995, 241–245.

38 Zoltán Tildy (1889–1961) was Prime Minister from 15 November 1945 to 1 February 1946 and President of the Republic of Hungary from 1 February 1946 to 3 August 1948. He was Minister of State between 27 October and 4 November 1956.

39 Despite the fact that the matter was dealt with in the Ministry of the Interior, where the draft law was proposed. There was no unanimity on the issue, with some people wanting to shape the appearance of the coat of arms according to current political considerations, others according to historical traditions. Föglein 1991, 4.

40 The Hungarian Soviet Republic from 21 March to 1 August 1919.

by the smallholders: ‘the coat of arms of the State is the historical Hungarian coat of arms.’⁴¹ However, its appearance was not precisely described. On 23 January 1946, the Government adopted a bill on the change of the form of state.⁴² On the day of the promulgation of the law (31 January 1946), the issue of the coat of arms and the Holy Crown was raised by Margit Slachta even during the preliminary hearing.⁴³ She made the observation that the law on the Republic did not contain any provision regarding the Holy Crown. As she said: ‘The Hungarian Holy Crown is not the badge of the King, but the emblem of the country. [...] Hungary is the country of the Holy Crown.’ At this point László Jékely,⁴⁴ the later head of the Office of the President of the Republic, intervened: ‘The country of Kossuth! The country of the Hungarian people!’⁴⁵ The text of the bill was finally passed by the National Assembly⁴⁶ and promulgated as Act I of 1946 (the ‘little constitution’).⁴⁷

In the National Assembly on 12 March 1946, the Social Democrat MP Péter Bechtler asked why the use of the crowned coat of arms on official forms and cars would not be abolished. In his view, the fact that the issue of the coat of arms had not been resolved at the time of the establishment of the republic meant that everyone could assume that Hungary was a ‘royal republic’; and he therefore proposed that the ambiguity should be eliminated as a matter of urgency.⁴⁸ On 11 April 1946, László Jékely wrote a letter to László Rajk⁴⁹ (Minister of the Interior) that the Ministry of the Interior was responsible for submitting a text on the state coat of arms to the National Assembly. Jékely wrote to János Gyöngyösi⁵⁰ (Minister of Foreign Affairs) that as long as the National Assembly determines the state coat of arms, the Arms of the President of the Republic should be used. The Prime Minister’s Office sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the President of the Republic used the Kossuth coat of arms, so until the National Assembly determines the state arms, it would be used for official purposes. The Minister of the Interior or the Prime

41 Text of the draft proposal by the Smallholders’ Party, see: Föglein 2001, 211.

42 G. Vass, 2005, 594.

43 Margit Slachta (1884–1974) was a catholic nun, social activist and politician. In 1920, she was the first woman to be elected member of the National Assembly of Hungary.

44 László Jékely [Dr. Leslie J. Jekely] (1906–1997) was the head of the Office of the President of the Republic of Hungary between 1 February 1946 and 20 June 1947. He emigrated to the United States of America.

45 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 I. 302–303.

46 Ibid., 346.

47 The Act I of 1946 about the form of government of Hungary was promulgated in the National Assembly and in the *Országos Törvénytár* on 31 January 1946. It did not appear in the *Magyar Közlöny*.

48 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 I. 726.

49 László Rajk (1909–1949) was Minister of the Interior of Hungary from 1946 to 1948.

50 János Gyöngyösi (1893–1951) was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary from 1944 to 1947.

Minister is competent to submit a bill on the establishment of the national coat of arms.⁵¹ On the International Workers' Day, 1 May 1946 in Budapest, the marchers of the Hungarian Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the National Peasant Party in addition to the portraits of Stalin, Mátyás Rákosi⁵² and Árpád Szakasits,⁵³ carried a banner with the words 'Long live the Republic of Hungary!', and in the background, together with the Kossuth coat of arms, were the portraits of Zoltán Tildy with the year 1946, Mihály Károlyi with the years 1918–1919 and Lajos Kossuth with the year 1848.⁵⁴ On 23 May 1946, the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* published that a new monetary system would be introduced on August 1, and that 'the reverse of the new money would bear the 1848 coats of arms.'⁵⁵ On 31 July 1946, in the description of the coins to be issued it was stated, for example, that: 'The reconstructed Kossuth coat of arms is depicted in the centre of the image plate of the aluminium one forint coin.'⁵⁶ Thus, the forint coins and banknotes introduced on 1 August 1946 featured the Kossuth coat of arms. It is thought-provoking, that the hammer and the wheat ear already appeared on the 100 forint banknote (issued on 3 June 1946), and on the 20 forint banknote (issued on 27 February 1947),⁵⁷. These would be the main elements of the so-called Rákosi coat of arms in 1949. On 27 May 1946, 200 business cards with the Kossuth coat of arms were ordered for autographic transfer to Zoltán Tildy, President of the Republic.⁵⁸

The Kossuth coat of arms, which was used by the President of the Republic on seals and which appeared on money and elsewhere was not regulated by law. As a result, the National

51 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 54. d. Prime Minister's Office, Docket: 'Regulation of the state coat of arms'

52 Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) was the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party (later the Hungarian Working People's Party), who led Hungary during the Stalin era. He was Deputy Prime Minister from 4 February 1946 to 5 September 1949, then Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary until 14 August 1952. Between 1952 and 1953 he was Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

53 Árpád Szakasits (1888–1965) was the leader of the Social Democratic Party and he was President of the Republic of Hungary from 3 August 1948 to 23 August 1949. He was the first Chairman of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary from 23 August 1949 to 8 May 1950.

54 See: Celebrations 1 May 1946 in Budapest. MAFIRT photo. MTI-FOTO-755977. MTI photo archive. <https://archivum.mtva.hu/photobank/item/MTI-FOTO-Nnl2WktIM2FFM2FUMXd5UX-FxSUo3dz09,02/09/2020>

55 *Magyar Nemzet*, 2. (23 May 1946) 113., front page.

56 *Magyar Közlöny*, 31 July 1946, 172/b, Budapest, 16.

57 See: Bertók et al. 2021. 136–138. <https://www.mnb.hu/kiadvanyok/mnb-szakkonyvsorozat/75-eves-a-forint-75-ev-75-tortenet,19/10/2022>

58 MNL OL XVIII-8 Office of the President of the Republic of Hungary, 1946–1949, 1. d. 5. Mixed matters, note by Gyursánszky Ferenc (co-worker of the Office of the President) in 27 May 1946.

Assembly was constantly receiving requests for redress. On 3 May 1946, Veszprém County,⁵⁹ on 23 July, Szatmár Bereg County, the city of Székesfehérvár, Zala County and Nógrád Hont County,⁶⁰ on 22 August, Győr Moson County⁶¹ and on 20 January 1947 Szabolcs County⁶² submitted a request for the regulation of the coat of arms of the Republic of Hungary. At the same time, letters were received from the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow and the Turkish Embassy in Budapest concerning the appearance of the official Hungarian state flag and coat of arms.⁶³ On 13 July 1946, the jurist Gyula Moór wrote a letter with his opinion on the Hungarian coat of arms. According to him, the coat of arms which had been regulated in 1915⁶⁴ was the coat of arms of the Hungarian Kingdom. In his view, the kingdom is referred to not only by the Holy Crown, but also by the apostolic double cross and trimount in the coat of arms. On the other hand, the other elements of the coat of arms, the ‘four rivers’ and the ‘three mountains’ symbolize the whole of Hungary. According to him, irrespective of their historical origin, some parts of the coat of arms have the above meaning in public consciousness and in the Hungarian legal conception. He also stated that the Republic of Hungary represents a radical break with the nearly thousand-year-old form of state, and therefore the coat of arms, which expresses the old constitutional status, must also be broken with. Moór wrote: Whether the new ‘republican’ coat of arms should be completely new or whether it should be made using some of the old parts was considered a matter of political expediency, because a complete break with the traditional Hungarian coat of arms could lead to widespread dissatisfaction.⁶⁵ At a meeting of the Government of Ferenc Nagy⁶⁶ on 8 November 1946, Minister of the Interior László Rajk remarked: ‘In fact, the Republic does not yet have a coat of arms. In some respects, the Kossuth coat of arms has become common, but it is not yet regulated by law.’⁶⁷

The Kossuth coat of arms with a tern branch and olive branch appeared on the cover of the *Magyar Közlöny* from 1 December 1946.⁶⁸ Returning to Gyula Moór’s letter of July 1946, Imre Viczián (Ministerial Adviser to the Prime Minister’s Office) wrote his opinion in

59 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 I. 827.

60 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 II. 319.

61 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 III. 145.

62 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 IV. 943.

63 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 54. d.

64 Decree 3970/1915. (XI.5) M.E. In: *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára*. 49. (1915), Budapest, 1718–1723.

65 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 7. d. Prime Minister’s Office (7416/1946), Law Reform Commission of Budapest.

66 Ferenc Nagy (1903–1979) was Prime Minister of Hungary from 4 February 1946 to 31 May 1947.

67 Szűcs 2003, 1636.

68 *Magyar Közlöny*, 1 December 1946, 275., Budapest, front page.

April 1947. According to him, the issue of the form of the coat of arms had been resolved in practice, as the President of the Republic had introduced the use of the so-called Kossuth coat of arms, which had been adopted by most offices and authorities. Thus, the use of the Kossuth coat of arms could be regarded as the customary law of the Republic of Hungary.⁶⁹ On 10 January 1947, Foreign Minister János Gyöngyösi wrote a letter to Minister of Justice István Ries.⁷⁰ In his opinion, the form of government of the Republic of Hungary justified the final adoption of the new changed coat of arms.⁷¹ On 26 February 1947, in the National Assembly, Imre Jancsecz, a Social Democrat MP, asked why there was still no Hungarian coat of arms that would have expressed the new world of the Republic.⁷² Gyula Ortutay⁷³ (Minister of Religion and Education) disagreed with the principle that the issue of the coat of arms should be settled by customary law. On 28 February 1947, he wrote to the Prime Minister: 'I have ordered the use of the Kossuth coat of arms both in the Ministry under my own leadership and in the Offices subordinate to it. [...] I consider it is necessary to settle this matter by legislation as soon as possible, all the more so as the description, definition, method of use and compulsory use of the state coat of arms are among the primary tasks of the legislature.'⁷⁴

In the meantime, the Soviet authorities arrested Béla Kovács⁷⁵ (general secretary of the Smallholders' Party) on 25 February 1947; Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy was forced to resign in May-June 1947. Speaker of the National Assembly Béla Varga⁷⁶ emigrated to the United States on 2 June 1947. The Smallholders' Party was thus considerably weakened. On 19 June 1947, at a meeting of the Government of Lajos Dinnyés,⁷⁷ it was agreed that the Kossuth coat of arms should be used on the state control ticket.⁷⁸ Lajos Dinnyés, who was also interim Minister of Defense at the beginning of his premiership, introduced a new cap

69 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 17. d. Prime Minister's Office (5210/25.IV.1947.).

70 István Ries (1885–1950) was Minister of Justice in Hungary between 1945 and 1950.

71 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 17. d. Docket: 'Coat of arms to be used on flags and seals'.

72 Archives of the Hungarian Parliament 1945 V. 1023.

73 Gyula Ortutay (1910–1978) was Minister of Religion and Education in Hungary between 1947 and 1950.

74 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 99. d. Prime Minister's Office (1721/II.1947.).

75 Béla Kovács (1908–1959) was the general secretary of the Independent Smallholders' Party from 1945. He was Minister of Agriculture between 1945 and 1946 and during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

76 Béla Varga (1903–1995) was catholic priest and President of the National Assembly of Hungary between 1946 and 1947. He became the leader of the Hungarian emigration abroad in the United States of America.

77 Lajos Dinnyés (1901–1961) was Prime Minister of Hungary from 31 May 1947 to 10 December 1948.

78 Szűcs 2000, 211.

badge and button for officers' and deputy officers' caps and crew uniforms. According to the description, the cap badge featured the Hungarian coat of arms in the centre, a cross with a rifle and a sword, and 3 drawings of the 1848/49 military flags on both sides (Figure 7.). The buttons featured a simple, unadorned version of the Kossuth coat of arms.⁷⁹ A drawing was also attached to the decree regulating the wearing of a green shirt without a jacket.⁸⁰ This showed a slightly decorated coat of arms (Figure 8.). On both versions, the crown of the trimount disappeared. The coat of arms of the military cap badge essentially dates back to the 1849 post-throne coat of arms design.

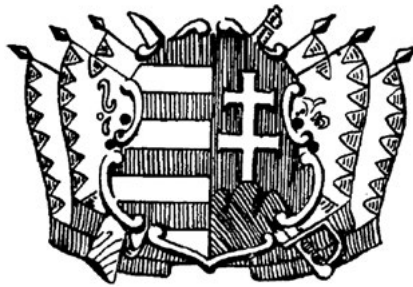


Figure 7. Drawing of Military Cap Badge (1947)⁸¹



Figure 8. Drawing of the Coat of Arms on the Rank Markings applicable to the Green Shirt⁸²

At a meeting of the Government held on 10 July 1947, Aladár Pongrácz (Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office) proposed that the Kossuth coat of arms, which was

79 Decree 440.340/ruh.-1947. In: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 74. (3 July 1947) 20., Budapest, 195.

80 Decree 440.326/ruh.-1947. In: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 74. (10 July 1947) 21., Budapest, 200.

81 Source of the image: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 74 (3 July 1947) 20., Budapest. Appendix 1. to the Decree 440.340/ruh.-1947.

82 Source of image: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 74. (21 July 1947) 22., Budapest. Appendix to the Decree 440.326/ruh.-1947.

used under customary law, should be generally obligatory.⁸³ László Rajk (Minister of the Interior) added that there had been a long debate between the Ministry of the Interior and the Prime Minister's Office on this issue. However, he added that the issue should be settled after the elections. Prime Minister Dinnyés announced that the Kossuth coat of arms he had introduced for the Army had caused a lot of foreign policy sensitivity. Pongrácz then withdrew his motion from the agenda.⁸⁴ The parliamentary elections, later known as the infamous 'blue-card' elections, were held on 31 August 1947. The communists committed a series of frauds to win, with the help of the Minister of the Interior László Rajk. Despite this, the Communist Party received only 22% of the votes. Gyula Ortutay (Minister of Religion and Education) wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior on 3 December 1947. He proposed a tender for the design of a uniform coat of arms. The reply was however, that the temporary use of the Kossuth coat of arms was appropriate. In a letter of reply dated 28 January 1948, Minister of the Interior László Rajk stated that he, not Ortutay was in charge of the matter.⁸⁵

The Hungarian government delegation travelled to the Soviet Union to sign the Hungarian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. They arrived at the Moscow railway station on 16 February 1948. President Zoltán Tildy, who arrived with the delegation, gave a speech here. The railway station was decorated with red flags and Hungarian national flags with the Kossuth coats of arms in the middle.⁸⁶ On the occasion of the centenary of 1848, 15 March 1948, new flags and insignia were issued to the Honvéd River Guard. As described, the ensign of the President of the Republic of Hungary was used on the vessels of the Honvéd River Guard when the President was on board. The basic colour of the flag was white with a red-green triangular border on each side. In the middle of the flag was the Kossuth coat of arms with laurel and oak branches, with 2 intersecting swords above it (Figure 9.). In addition, a new commander's flag, mast ribbon, naval ensign and boat flag were introduced. The naval ensign was carried by all deployed and commissioned river units of the army. The central part of the flag was decorated with a Kossuth coat of arms surrounded by laurel and oak branches.⁸⁷ (Figure 10.).

83 The presentation of the Prime Minister's Office pointed out that the use of the coat of arms had already been solved in practice. The President of the Republic had used the so-called Kossuth coat of arms (the curved shield without a crown) more than a year earlier. The use of the Kossuth coat of arms was based on the customary law of the Republic of Hungary. He asked the Council of Ministers to agree to the mandatory use of this form of coat of arms. Szűcs 2000, 461., footnote 28.

84 Szűcs 2000, 461.; MNL OL XIX-A-83-a Notes of the Council of Ministers, 189., 10 July 1947.

85 MNL OL XIX-A-1-j. XV. 17. d. Prime Minister's Office (14.808/31.XII.1947.), Minister of the Interior.

86 A magyar kormányküldöttség megérkezett Moszkvába. In: Magyar Nemzet, 4. (17 February 1948) 39., front page.

87 Decree 7500/Elnökség - 1948. In: Honvédségi Közlöny, 75. (1 April 1948) 10., Budapest, 121.

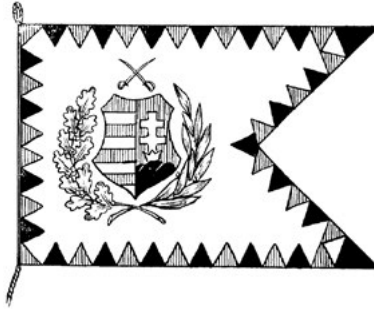


Figure 9. Ensign of the President of Hungary used by the Honvéd River Guard (1948)⁸⁸



Figure 10. Naval Ensign of the Honvéd River Guard (1948)⁸⁹

Centenary flags were also regularized for some police teams. According to the text of the decree of the Minister of the Interior, ‘in memory of the heroes of 1848, in order to create a democratic and united spirit of the police’.⁹⁰ These flags also featured the Kossuth coat of arms, but the crown was removed from the trimount. Later in the year, badges with the Kossuth coat of arms were also introduced for the air force⁹¹ and the paratroopers.⁹² At a meeting of the Dinnyés government on 19 March 1948, László Rajk (Minister of the Interior) had already proposed that a national tender be launched for the creation of the new state coat of arms and state seal. However, this was taken off the agenda. In this connection, Mátyás Rákosi (deputy prime minister, leader of the communists) remarked that such a tender would be politically ill-timed. He said that ‘if there is a public tender, then everyone will understand the radical change and we don’t need that.’⁹³ As early as

88 Source of the image: *Ibid.*, appendix to the Decree 7500 Elnökség – 1948.

89 Source of the image: *Ibid.*

90 Decree 396.552/1948. (IV.1) B.M. In: *Rendőrségi Közlöny*, 4. (1 April 1948) 8., 291.

91 Decree 16.756/el. Kcsf.XI. - 1948. In: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 75. (15 May 1948) 13., Budapest, 186.

92 Decree 457.087. ruh. - 1948. In: *Honvédségi Közlöny*, 75. (15 July 1948) 20., Budapest, 277.

93 MNL OL XIX-A-83-a Notes of the Council of Ministers, 228., 19 March 1948., 9.

23 March 1948, it was published in the newspaper *Magyar Nemzet*: ‘The competent circles of the government stated that the new Hungarian coat of arms would be planned only after careful consideration. The current coat of arms does not meet the requirements of the times and does not express the new content of our popular democracy.’⁹⁴ On 12 June 1948, with the merger of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party the Hungarian Working People’s Party was formed, which became the largest and most powerful party in Hungary. The confusion over the use of the coat of arms of the ministries between 1946 and 1949 is clearly visible on the seals of the official letters. From April 1946, the Kossuth coat of arms was used by the Office of the President of the Republic, which was later taken over by most offices and ministries.⁹⁵

The year 1949 did not recall the times of Kossuth 100 years ago, but rather the times of the Hungarian Soviet Republic 30 years ago. The Hungarian Independence People’s Front, which was an ‘alliance of political parties’, naturally with communist dominance, published its declaration on 31 January 1949. Among its stated goals was the transformation of the republic into a ‘state of the working people’, a people’s republic.⁹⁶ The proposed text of the Constitution of the Hungarian People’s Republic was published in the newspaper *Szabad Nép* on 7 August 1949. The front page featured a picture of the future new coat of arms.⁹⁷ This constitution was promulgated in the *Magyar Közlöny* on 20 August 1949, the day of Saint Stephen.⁹⁸ The first sentence of the preamble of the Constitution read: ‘The armed forces of the great Soviet Union liberated our country.’ The text also mentions the Hungarian Soviet Republic: ‘under the leadership of our working class, enriched by the experience of the socialist revolution of 1919, and relying on the Soviet Union, our people began to lay the foundations of socialism’. It then declared that the ‘Hungarian People’s Republic is a state of workers and working peasants.’ In line with this, the country also received a new coat of arms, which replaced the crowned small coat of arms and the Kossuth coat of arms used in customary law. The symbol, called the ‘constitutional coat of arms’ and (later called by people: the ‘Rákosi coat of arms’), was described as follows: ‘The coat of arms of the Hungarian People’s Republic: a hammer and a wheat ear in a round light blue field connected on both sides by a wreath of wheat; a five-pointed red star emitting rays at the top of the field, a pleated red-white-green ribbon at the bottom.’ (Figure 11.). This symbol

94 *Magyar Nemzet*, 4. (23 March 1948) 68., 2.

95 Albert 2014, 23.

96 MNL OL XXVI-A-14-b 0101 MTI home news. 31 January 1949.

97 *Szabad Nép*, 7. (7 August 1949) 182., front page.

98 Saint Stephen I (c. 975–1038) was the first King of Hungary from 1000 to 1038. Today the official state holiday of Hungary is the 20th day of August, in memory of the foundation of the state and King Saint Stephen the state founder.

also appeared on the flag of the state.⁹⁹ Mátyás Rákosi (deputy prime minister, leader of the communists) had the following thoughts about the new emblem: ‘The coat of arms of people’s democracy, like its constitution, must reflect the reality of the situation. [...] The Hungarian People’s Republic, the state of the working people, has the right to express in its coat of arms the symbol of the self-conscious, socialist worker and working peasant in a simple, clear and unambiguous way: the hammer, the red star, the wheat wreath and the golden wheat ear in red-white-green national colours.’¹⁰⁰



Figure 11. Coat of Arms of the Hungarian People’s Republic between 1949 and 1956¹⁰¹

Of course, most people considered a national grievance this Soviet-type symbol. It is interesting, that this emblem essentially united the symbols of the three largest parties (the logos see: Figure 12.). According to the Soviet pattern, the wheat ear (as a symbol of the peasantry) and crossed with it the hammer (as a symbol of labours) are bathing under the red star in its light. In fact, only the national ribbon referred to Hungary. The practice of elevating party symbols to state symbols, as discussed earlier, was already observed in Szálasi’s coat of arms.

99 Act 20 of 1949 the Constitution of the Hungarian People’s Republic. In: Magyar Közlöny. Törvények és rendeletek tára. 20 August 1949, 174., Budapest, 1355–1362.

100 Állam és Közigazgatás, 1. (July–August 1949) 3–4., 151–152.

101 Source of the image: Országgyűlési irományok. 1949. Vol. 1., 25., 89.



Figure 12. Party Logos on the Ballot Paper of the Hungarian Parliamentary Elections in 1945. From left to right: Independent Smallholders' Party, Hungarian Communist Party, Social Democratic Party.¹⁰²

In summary, at the end of the Second World War, the Holy Crown was taken out from Hungary,¹⁰³ and after a while it was no longer part of the coat of arms of the country. After the establishment of the republic, a reconstructed version of the Kossuth coat of arms was used. It thus became the 'official' coat of arms of the country under customary law, although it was not regulated by law. The transitional status was abolished by the 1949 Constitution of the People's Republic. With the introduction of the so-called Rákosi coat of arms, Hungary, like the other countries of the 'Eastern Bloc',¹⁰⁴ replaced its historical coat of arms in line with the Soviet system of symbols. The historical Hungarian coat of arms did not satisfy the communist power for several reasons. In addition to the 'ecclesiastical aspect' of the Holy Crown and the double cross, the stripes and the trimount could have been a cause of 'foreign policy sensitivity'. However, given the need for the full adoption of the socialist symbolism, it is no coincidence that this issue was not resolved from 1945 until 1949. ■

102 Source of the images: Wikimedia Commons. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ec/Nemzetgy%C5%B1l%C3%A9si_k%C3%A9pvisel%C5%91-v%C3%A1laszt%C3%A1s_budapesti_szavaz%C3%B3lapja_1945._november_4-%C3%A9n.jpg, 10/27/2021

103 For the history of the transportation of the Holy Crown abroad, then its retention in the United States, and finally its retrieval, see: Bertényi 1996, 174–182.; Glant 2018.

104 Some exceptions: Only the crown of the white eagle disappeared from the Polish coat of arms. The historical coats of arms of Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Albania were associated with communist symbols.

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KIVONAT

Az úgynevezett Kossuth-címer rövid története 1945 után

A magyar címer egyik történetileg kialakult formája, az úgynevezett Kossuth-címer számos kérdést vet fel. Talán a legfontosabb a jelkép és a köztársasági államforma kapcsolatának összetett problematikája. A címet Kossuth Lajosról nevezték el, aki a Habsburg-Lotaringiai-ház trónfosztását követően (1849. április 14.) Magyarország kormányzó-elnöke lett. Annak ellenére, hogy 1849 áprilisa után a magyar vezetés korona nélküli címereket használt, államformaváltást nem kiáltottak ki.

A második világháború után elterjedt a korona nélküli címer „köztársasági” értelmezése. Magyarország 1946. február 1-én lett hivatalosan köztársaság, azonban elmaradt a címer szabályozása. Tildy Zoltán köztársasági elnök kezdte el használni az úgynevezett Kossuth-címet, amely gyakorlat idővel szokásjoggá vált. A kommunista hatalom teljes kiépülését követően új alkotmányt hoztak létre, amely új címet is tartalmazott. Ez a jelkép azonban szakított a magyar hagyományokkal.

KULCSSZAVAK: Szent Korona, Kossuth, államforma, megszállások, kommunizmus