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# Die Pariser Vororte- Verträge im Spiegel der Öffentlichkeit

LIT

**NIGHTMARES OF THE LITTLE MERMAID.  
INDOCTRINATION AND THE REPRESENTATION  
OF THE TRIANON TREATY  
IN HUNGARIAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS 1920–1988**

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*“You should listen to this. I know it comes from the other side,  
but something good might come from there, too.”*  
(Nyest)

If states may be subjects of anthropological inquiry,<sup>1</sup> the memory and public representation of the Trianon phenomenon should certainly be a central theme for research on the Hungarian state. The treaty Hungary signed after the First World War is not only a condition setting the stage for the contemporary history of Hungary, but Trianon has evolved as a catchword through which moral panic and political cleavages were constructed and reconstructed. Although it is clear that ideological positions have been far more significant in creating political cleavages than social status since the late 1990s,<sup>2</sup> a study trying to categorise and to relate the Trianon-discourse of political parties could not identify pure right- or left wing positions for the period of 1990–2002 despite the marked presence of the topic in the Parliament.<sup>3</sup> By the time of the referendum on whether Hungary shall natural-

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1 Cf. Fuller, Chris J./Harris, John: “For an Anthropology of the Modern Indian State.” In: Fuller, Chris J./Bénéï, Véronique (eds.): *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2009, pp. 1–30.

2 Cf. Fábrián, Zoltán: “Törésvonalak és a politikai-ideológiai azonosulás szerepe a pártosztimpátiák magyarázatában.” In: Angelusz, Róbert/Tardos, Róbert (eds.): *Törések, hálók, hidak. Választói magatartás és politikai tagolódás Magyarországon*. Budapest: Demokrácia Kutatások Magyar Központja, 2005, pp. 207–242.

3 Cf. Romsics, Gergely: “Trianon a Házban. A Trianon-fogalom megjelenése és funkciói a pártok diskurzusaiban az első három parlamenti ciklus idején (1990–2002).” In: Czoch, Gábor/Fedi-

ise virtually all ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries (5 December 2004), the web of issues regarding minority Hungarians had been simplified into the slogan “Trianon” and subsequently crystallised into one of the most rigid cleavages dividing the left and the right in Hungary.<sup>4</sup> This process has culminated in the race between the mainstream radical right and the government for the title of the better patriot during the summer of 2010 and subsequently in the vote about the Day of National Unity in the newly elected Parliament and somewhat more implicitly in one of the sentences of the new Hungarian Constitution. With the former the Hungarian state declared that the unity of all Hungarians living in different countries is reality and dedicated itself to the active support of autonomies, including the creation of autonomous regions. It formally rejects both territorial revision and the anti-nationalist approach. Somewhat ambiguously, the Constitution makes reference to the historic constitution of the Holy Crown. If Hungary “respects the tradition of the Holy Crown”, that may imply that it claims the sovereignty and property attributed to the Crown by medieval legal theory. Therefore, it does not only have a bearing on the division of power or questions the idea of republic, but may arguably be read as an imperative to – transcendent – territorial revision.

We may grasp the state of art of Trianon-related historiography by briefly confronting two essays that appeared in relatively widely circulated and non specialised journals with the aim of suggesting possible directions for historians interested in the topic. In the autumn of 2007, Balázs Ablonczy, a young and well established historian as well as conservative opinion leader, published an article with the title “Trianon-issues” (“Trianon-problémák”) in *Kommentár*. He points out some of the lacunas still persisting around the political history of the Treaty. However, within the historians-politicians-society triangle he sees the latter two as the strong side. He dwells on the lack of knowledge in the Hungarian society at large. He suggests that due to this knowledge deficit, the pressing issue of the Hungarian minority shall not be tackled on the basis of historical references.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Éva Kovács, a well known social historian wrote of the “Traumatic memory of Trianon” in the recent issue of *Limes*. In this text she rejects the idea that Trianon has a universally valid reading and thus that it can only be seen as tragedy or catastrophe. She calls on historians to present community level and personal histories and therefore points to the heterogeneity of experience across and within new borders. She argues that Trianon has not yet entered into the domain of cultural memory; rather it still operates as trauma or, in social historians’ current language, as lieux de memoir.<sup>6</sup> Thus, she rejects the conclusion of authorities such as Zsuzsa L. Nagy (1987) and Ignác Romsics (1996) who were willing to recognise Trianon as an unresolved

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nec, Csilla (eds.): *Az emlékezet konstrukciói*. Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2006, pp. 35–52.

4 Cf. Szabó, Ildikó: *Nemzeti tematika és politikai szocializáció. A politika szerepe az identitások formálódásában Magyarországon 1867–2006*. Budapest: L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2009, pp. 305–360.

5 Cf. Ablonczy, Balázs: “Trianon-problémák.” In: *Kommentár* 4 (2007), pp. 57–67.

6 Cf. Kovács, Éva: “Trianon traumatikus emlékezetéről.” In: *Limes* 4 (2010), pp. 47–56.

national catastrophe in their related essays written in the late 1980s and early 1990s respectively. Éva Kovács sees these historians' opinion as concessions made to a narcissist and strictly Magyar-centric interpretation of Hungarian history that blocks the way to advanced approaches. Interestingly, the essay is followed by a short study of Ablonczy that falls within the category of social history. He successfully confronts four migrant communities' Trianon discourses.<sup>7</sup>

In his long introduction written to the reader of contemporary French historiography, Jacques Revel explained the popularity of the field of lieux de memoir arguing that "Memory can reveal hidden or repressed historical processes, particularly when misfortune or shame is involved. It can also be an instrument for exploring collective identity (or identities)."<sup>8</sup> Although Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, a well known researcher of the memory of the Third Reich and of the Holocaust, acknowledges the decline of memory as a relevant subject for historians, we see this as a fruitful enterprise regarding the Trianon-problem.<sup>9</sup> We wish to contribute to the understanding of some features of Trianon as such a site of historical imagination by looking at how history textbooks represent the treaty and its causes. The narrative that unfolds on the pages of the studied history school textbooks essentially sees Hungarians as victims of injustice suffered at the hands of evil, foreign powers and, not the least, nationalities that resided within the Hungarian Kingdom until the dissolution of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The title of this paper wishes to bring attention to the paradox of presenting 7 to 14-year-old children with a discourse where they have to see themselves as insecure victims. Yet, the study of the particular narratives is not a futile exercise. In this paper we shall track the road the issue travelled in textbooks prepared for primary education between 1920 and the decline of the Socialist regime. Our aim is twofold. On the one hand, the analysis of the narratives helps us to understand why Hungarian society is unable to come to terms with the changes and furthermore what the roots of the recent and renewed moral panic are. On the other hand, we are interested in shedding light on the impact of regime change on the politics of memory.

Before turning directly to our subject: we do not intend to draw up a new, synthesised version of the causes and impact of the treaty. Rather, based on the recent literature on Hungarian irredentism we will sketch the political context for the texts to be analysed both for the interwar period and for the post-war regimes. In order to tackle the issue of Trianon as moral panic, we have to reconstruct the mental framework that each textbook tried to convey regarding the relationship between ethnic Hungarians and nationalities or ethnic groups living within the boundaries of the Hungarian Kingdom before 1918. As a strikingly general rule

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7 Cf. Ablonczy, Balázs: "Legitimitás és mítosz között." In: *Limes* 4 (2010), pp. 57–68.

8 Cf. Jacques Revel/Lynn Hunt (eds.): *Histories. French Constructions of the Past*. New York: The New Press, 1995, p. 51.

9 Cf. Gyimesi, Pálma: "Gavriel D. Rosenfeld: Az emlékezet jövője." In: *Klió* 4 (2010), pp.17–22.

the textbooks only mentioned the existence of nationalities when their presence was “problematic” and caused conflict. Therefore we shall confront passages written regarding the arrival of Hungarians within the Carpathian Basin, the settlement of German and Slavic groups in the Great Plains following the Ottoman era, the role of nationalities in the freedom fight of 1848–49 and the reasons for their claims-making at the end of the First World War respectively.

Undoubtedly, irredentism was one of the central features of the interwar period. However, this should not veil its changing role and space within Hungarian society and politics. Miklós Zeidler who dedicated his doctoral research to the issue pointed out the many roles irredentism had after 1920. While it partially served as a therapy,

[...] the cult could be viewed as being more successful as a social integrating factor and as a producer of a general revisionist mood. With its constant presence on holidays and weekdays, in the public and the private spheres, it penetrated deeply into the life of society and kept the program of territorial revision constantly on the agenda.<sup>10</sup>

Ignác Romsics, the author of the latest monograph on the Treaty of Trianon, clearly states in his closing chapter that while the Hungarian economy relatively quickly adapted to the new boundaries and barriers,

The nation could not and did not want to adapt to the political conditions of the treaty. The majority of Hungarians both in the home country and in minority perceived the situation as temporary and was preparing for reunification. This hope was also fed by the propaganda activities of the government.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, the study of texts produced by the emblematic Prime minister István Bethlen suggests that the government did not advocate a plain and blunt irredentist approach throughout the period.<sup>12</sup> Irredentist propaganda became a real tool only after 1927. This was the year when Italy’s support of Hungarian foreign policy was secured and it is generally seen as one of the major turning points in the political history of the interwar regime.<sup>13</sup> Between 1921 and 1927 the main concern of Hungarian foreign policy was the recognition of the country and its government and thus large scale anti-treaty rituals were not welcome. The increasing weight of

10 Zeidler, Miklós: *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary 1920–1945*. New Jersey: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2007, p. 247.

11 Romsics, Ignác: *A trianoni békeszerződés*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001, p. 235.

12 Cf. Péteri, Lóránt: “Bethlen István.” In: Romsics, Ignác (ed.): *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás 1920–1953*. Budapest: Osiris, 1998, pp. 31–50.

13 Romsics, Ignác: *Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz*, Budapest: Magyarságkutató Intézet, 1991, p. 181.

the German-led axis and the prospect of territorial revision brought new attitudes. In popular culture the romantic image of the Hungarian as exotic, *völkisch*, but European regained its space<sup>14</sup> and the cult of injustice and irredentism forcefully returned to the rank of par excellence state ritual. Although overly explicit displays were discouraged in years when the entire Catholic world paid attention to Hungary as in 1931 and 1938 (during the jubilee of Saint Emeric and King Saint Stephen respectively), revision of borders was no less than the underlying reason for doing politics. As we shall see, such a shift left its mark on educational goals in the different editions of interwar history textbooks. Altogether, we share Zeidler's view that irredentism worked as a cult in interwar Hungary. However, instead of emphasising its impact as a therapy for the community of Hungarians we will focus on its failure to explain the status quo or, in other words, to give a plausible diagnosis. While the healing effect was undoubtedly set in motion by the 1930s, of the victimising narrative deserves major attention for its longevity and impact.

We analysed four textbooks from the period between 1920 and 1945. Each of these had many editions and was widely used in the so-called undivided (*osztatlan*) primary schools where the majority of students were enrolled.<sup>15</sup> In such schools the students from the first to the sixth grade formed a single group very often in a single classroom.

In chronological order the first textbook is the one written by János Györffy, who prepared his work for elementary schools maintained by the Catholic Church. The last, 8<sup>th</sup> edition of his History of the Hungarian nation in connection with the major developments of world history appeared in 1922. The chapters do not cover events beyond 1916.

Regarding the arrival of Hungarians, Györffy emphasises the role of the political skills of the Hungarian leaders, but clearly sees the "indigenous" as defeated. "The success of the invasion was due to the fact that Hungarians treated defeated people well."<sup>16</sup>

Despite the importance the author attributes to the non-Hungarians in the initial phase of nation building, they do not figure significantly in subsequent centuries. They return only seventy pages later just to prove unfair during the freedom fight of 1848–49.

Evil spirited conspirators spread the view that Hungarians claim all liberty and rights only to themselves and want to oppress others. These fellow compatriots

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14 Cf. Frey, David S.: Aristocrats, gypsies, and cowboys all. Film stereotypes and Hungarian national identity in the 1930s." In: *Nationalities Papers* 3 (2002), pp. 383–401.

15 Cf. Farkas, Mária: "Szemléletformálás és érték közvetítés a népiskolai történelemoktatásban a két világháború között." Online: [http://www.tofk.elte.hu/tarstud/filmuvtort\\_2001/farkas.htm#\\_ftnref9](http://www.tofk.elte.hu/tarstud/filmuvtort_2001/farkas.htm#_ftnref9), (08. 05. 2011).

16 Györffy, János: *A Magyar nemzet története kapcsolatban a világtörténet főbb eseményeivel*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1922, p. 21.

speaking other languages took up arms and launched war on the Hungarian nation while the latter shared its liberties and rights with them.<sup>17</sup>

Lacking independent will is a recurring feature of nationalities. They are either neutralised by wise policy or used as weapons by evil powers.

Following the publication of the new official syllabus in 1925, publishers prepared new text books. The one published by the well known Kalász cooperation was intended for public schools with undivided classes. The textbook was a work of four authors who were school teachers and principals themselves and it contained a separate section on the constitution.

The short section on the arrival of Hungarians<sup>18</sup> concentrates on the ability of Hungarians to unify people and presents the presumed fights as a short period during which strong peoples were subdued in the Carpathian Basin. Nationalities only reappear in the section that explains developments in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to the account, the Habsburg king Leopold wished to create as many divisions as possible among Hungarians therefore he put German and Serbian settlers on the Great Plains.<sup>19</sup> A few pages later the short discussion of new settlements following the freedom fights is more neutral. It simply states that many Germans arrived while Hungarians returned to previously abandoned areas.

The next occasion where non-Hungarians are mentioned is the large scale peasant uprising that took place in Transylvania at the end of 1784. The clashes started in the county Zarand, but the movement quickly spread in the Apuseni Mountains. The leaders of the fights were three Romanian serfs known by the names Horea, Closca and Crisan. In the Kalász textbook, the events are interpreted within the context of Hungarian national opposition to the rule and politics of Joseph II. In this light the uprising is a series of brutal acts, plunder and murder committed against those Hungarian noblemen who were ready to oppose authoritarian rule. Romanians peasants are driven by primitive ideas about kingship and false rumours, at the same time they are merciless.

Thus it is hardly surprising that the joint venture shared the views of Györfly about the role of nationalities in the fights of 1848–49 and saw the nationalities as violent aggressors misled by false desires.<sup>20</sup>

The authors dedicated nearly six pages to the “Crisis of the nation” accounting for the events between 1918 and 1920. The argument runs along the line that while the government of the revolution of 1918 and the Communists drastically weakened the nation and prepared the ground for external enemies. “[...] After their [the

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17 Ibid., p. 89.

18 Cf. Bagdy, István/Berkényi, Károly/Bervoldszky, Kálmán/Sugár, Vilmos: *A Magyar nemzet története alkotmánytörténet és honpolgári ismeretekkel: az elemi népiskolák 5–6. osztálya számára*. Budapest: Kalász Könyvkiadó, 1926. (=Kalász-iskolakönyvek), p. 9.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 66

20 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 100.

Communists'] evil rule that lasted four and a half months, the Olahs [i.e. Romanians] occupied the capital and the Great Plains. The Olahs robbed us."<sup>21</sup>

From this angle the Great Powers are presented as careless and ignorant ones that forgot that Hungary had been defending Europe for a thousand years. It is clear that the nationalities are perceived as brute force and they are associated with harm and injustice done to the Hungarian nation fighting the right cause.

One of the most widely circulated and lasting textbook was that of the Protestant Church. György Szondy wrote his work specifically for those schools managed by the Protestant Church where students formed one, undivided group independently of their age and grade. This textbook is particularly relevant since the 8<sup>th</sup> edition was written after the Vienna Awards of 1938–40 and the subsequent annexation of 55.000 km<sup>2</sup> of the territory of the pre-1918 Hungarian Kingdom to interwar Hungary.

Szondy does not attribute much significance and therefore space to the arrival of Hungarians. As historical proof is lacking, he dismisses the fights as legends in minuscule letters. He briefly mentions an "abandoned countryside where we find small Slavic, Bulgarian and Moravian elements scattered around" as the scene for the start.<sup>22</sup> He mentions the positive role of German settlers invited after the Mongol invasion of 1241–42, but nationalities do not figure until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is not particularly concerned with the role nationalities played in 1848–49. He simply states that the Habsburg government set them up against Hungarians, but the Hungarian army defeated them. He dwells more on the problem of nationalities regarding the period after 1867. According to his judgement, Hungary gave full recognition and equal rights to nationalities in the areas of language policy and schooling. Moreover, he sees the birth of independent states on the Balkan largely as an outcome of the activities of Austria-Hungary. Therefore, the nationalities proved excessively unfair in their claims and conduct after 1918.

In Szondy's account of the developments between 1914–1920 an instinct of objective evaluation and an attempt to present Hungary as victim of evil activities run parallel. On the one hand, he declares that it is impossible to see the exact causes of the First World War, on the other hand, he also writes that the fatal point was the Serbian-Russian alliance that Serbia initiated. Similarly, at first he does not link the collapse of 1918 directly and passionately to the activities of the Communists and the revolution. "Although our armies fought with outstanding bravery, as a result of exhaustion a revolution broke out in the capital. We lost the war."<sup>23</sup> From this point for there is a significant difference between the edition of 1930 and that of 1941. The earlier account ends with a simple map showing present-day Hungary as "Dismembered Hungary" surrounded by "Territories Cut out" from the body of

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21 Ibid., p. 127.

22 Szondy, György: *A magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V–VI. osztálya számára*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Debrecen: Tiszántúli Nyomda, 1941, p. 7.

23 Ibid., p. 107.



the Hungarian Kingdom and with the simply rhyme elevated to the rank of official school prayer at the end of 1920:

I believe in one God.  
 I believe in the one Country.  
 I believe in one Eternal Divine Justice.  
 I believe in the Resurrection of Hungary<sup>24</sup>

Eleven years later, the map was replaced by another one where “Dismembered Hungary” is surrounded by shaded areas representing the “Returned Territories”. The text itself also becomes more optimistic. Only the last line of the verse appears and the text finishes in the following way:

After twenty years of suffering, in the Autumn of 1938 and Spring 1939 the North-Eastern Highlands [Felvidék], and those parts of the Northwestern Highlands that are inhabited by Hungarians, returned. In the summer of 1940, the Northern and Eastern parts of Transylvania while in the Spring of 1941 the counties under Serbian occupation also returned. Since then we look into the future with even more trust as future will recover the integrity of our homeland.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, Szondy assured his young readers that the only real future is one where the Kingdom of Hungary engulfs the entire Carpathian Basin and that by 1941 the country was on its way to justice. The World War was simply left out of the picture. More importantly, this is exactly the framework that the founding father of the institutionalised, “scientifically sound and objective” revisionist discourses and, not the least, the Prime Minister, Pál Teleki, judged as the lethally erroneous diagnosis on the night of his suicide in April 1941: “We broke our word out of cowardice [...] The nation feels it and we threw away its honour. We have allied ourselves with scoundrels – since nothing is true of the alleged atrocities. We will become body-snatchers! a nation of trash.”<sup>26</sup>

The Catholic Church was the politically most relevant non-governmental organisation in interwar Hungary. It was a major factor in the anti-communist fights of 1919 that allied itself to Horthy’s political group by 1920.

The state protected the cultural and material interests of the Church (keeping educational institutions in the hands of the clergy and preventing radical land

24 Szondy, György: *A magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V–VI. osztálya számára*. Debrecen: Tiszántúli Nyomda, 1930, p. 110.

25 Szondy, György: *A magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V–VI. osztálya számára*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Debrecen: Tiszántúli Nyomda, 1941, pp. 113–114.

26 Teleki Pál: *Teleki Pál miniszterelnök öngyilkossága előtt Horthy Miklóshoz írt búcsúlevele, 1941. április 3.* Online: <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu/bibl/mil/ww2/doksi/k10403a.html#jzet>, (08. 05. 2011).

reform), while the church educated children in the conservative spirit and indirectly supported the government party.<sup>27</sup>

The structure that Géza Szügyi-Trajtler and Gyula Greiner chose for their textbook confirms the above statement since it contains an elaborate section explaining the political institutions. The text survived eight editions between 1926 and the war while the publishing house was always the well established Catholic Saint Stephen Company (Szent István Társulat). We focussed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published in 1928 and the modified 7<sup>th</sup> edition of 1936.

Szügyi-Trajtler's chapter proves to be the most uncompromising regarding the establishment of the Hungarian state within the Carpathian Basin. He asserts that the duty of establishing dominion was awaiting the Hungarians as the Slavs were unable to found a state. In other words, they suggest right at the point of departure that Slavic people are historically doomed to live in a state established by Hungarians within the Carpathians. Vice versa it also means that Hungarians are entitled to this land by God's grace. The authors share the view of the Kalász textbook when they are concerned with the settlement policies of Habsburgs in the 18th century. They argue that Charles III arranged for German and Serb settlers in order to break the resistance of Hungarians. Interestingly however, they also differentiate among the different groups both explicitly and implicitly. While German peasants set good examples and could be followed in their customs, Serbs and Olahs (i.e. Romanians) invaded the Hungarian territories. On this basis they are somewhat surprisingly liberal in sharing the burden of responsibility for the fights of 1848–49. The text posits that the laws of 1848 did not pay enough attention to the nationality issue and this was the underlying cause of the anti-Hungarian uprising. For Szügyi-Trajtler and Greiner the decades after 1867 were the ones when the country became truly Hungarian. They see the root cause of the First World War in the desire of the surrounding states to cut the territory into pieces. This threat forced Austria-Hungary into a defensive military alliance. However, they emphasize that the war itself was not a necessary turning point or gate to the catastrophe. They see the revolution of 1918 and the subsequent misery as alternative of a possible "fair peace". Until this point the different editions are virtually identical. However, the presentation of the current status quo changes significantly between the second and the seventh edition. While in 1928 we read that "[o]nly God knows for how much longer our poor country continues to groan and struggle under the weight of the cruel Trianon treaty"<sup>28</sup>, eight years later we hear of "Christian and national rebirth"<sup>29</sup> from the ruins left by socialism, merciless Romanians, unfaithful nationalities and European

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27 Bodó, Béla: "Do not Lead us into (Fascist) Temptation": The Catholic Church in Interwar Hungary." In: *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 2 (2007), pp. 413–431, here: p. 429.

28 Szügyi-Trajtler, Géza/Greiner, Gyula: *A Magyar nemzet történelme és alkotmánya*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1928, p. 102.

29 Szügyi-Trajtler, Géza/Greiner, Gyula: *A Magyar nemzet történelme és alkotmánya*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1936, p. 104.

powers. By 1936, the official paradigm had changed from sorrow to active renewal or resurrection of the victim.

From the episodes of national history presented by interwar textbooks, the picture that emerged is one where nationalities are simple-minded forces that unjustly attack Hungarians during crucial periods. The crudeness and ignorance of ethnic groups is often exploited by foreign powers who short-sightedly believe that their interest is to weaken Hungary. This recurring image that we read about the settlements of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the uprisings of 1784 or 1848 is identical with the victim-discourse following the First World War. Culturally inferior nationalities do not have an independent political will, but execute those of evil powers with uncivilised brutality throughout history just as Romanians (i.e. Olahs) robbed the country in 1919. The textbooks do not account for interaction other than violence and they are implicitly unwilling to accept the existence of multiethnic regions. Homogeneity, clear cut “we and them” definitions rule over other considerations. By placing nationalities on the remote periphery and failing to account for the emerging claims, these textbooks did not provide a diagnosis for the interwar generation. This package remained a heavy and unsettling one that weighed on identities and political consciousness for many decades to come. Accounting for the immediate post-war months, János M. Rainer summarises the state of mind of the surviving sections of interwar middle classes as follows:

The analysis of the defeat and of social collapse was forced to remain in the background, it was stuck. The war looked like a national and individual mishap, like an accident on the road that perhaps could (and should) be followed, but that was blocked by the ruins accumulated as the “outcome” of the catastrophe. Instead of diagnosis there remained the deep feeling of pain over wounds and even more threatening consequences.<sup>30</sup>

History textbooks covering the modern era are excellent imprints of the regime changes that took place between 1945 and 1949. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education under the direction of Gyula Ortutay set a group of four authors the task of composing a history textbook and thus a new official narrative of modern Hungarian history. Two of whom were professional historians active within the Hungarian Workers Party (MDP). László Zsigmond, mostly interested in the labour movements of the West, was in his late forties, while Gusztáv Heckenast was hardly twenty-five years old in 1948. The third member of the group, Klára Feuer or Fejér was born in 1911 and she was a relatively experienced school teacher. The new account of modern history was seen by the party leadership as an important step towards the construction of a new social and political order since the authors were awarded with the most important official state

30 Rainer M., János: “A volt ,keresztény középosztály’ és a demokrácia reménye.” In: Rainer M., János/Standesky, Éva: *A demokrácia reménye. Magyarország, 1945*, Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2005, pp. 100–118, here: p. 116.

award, the Kossuth-prize in 1949. Yet, the work did not end there and the textbook went through continuous adjustments until 1955. While the first six editions took up the narrative in 1711, the 8<sup>th</sup> edition started with the revolution of 1848. It is important to note that compulsory primary education was extended by two years and thus the book was intended for 14-year-old students attending the 8<sup>th</sup> grade of state controlled primary schools. The minister, Gyula Ortutay, who had been an established ethnographer, was also in charge of completing the nationalisation of educational institutions. The institutional changes are reflected in the official publisher that was called Textbook Publisher National Company (Tankönyvkiadó Nemzeti Vállalat) in 1948 while simply Textbook Publisher (Tankönyvkiadó) in 1950. The name of the ministry also changed, “religious affairs” were dropped from the designation in 1950. For the new, increasingly monolithic Communist regime, the narrative regarding the issue of Trianon was a relevant factor in the process of consolidation. The textbook turned the previous discourse upside down and blamed the Horthy-regime for accepting the terms of the treaty in exchange for international (“bourgeois”) political recognition. Although this line of argument remained a constant feature of textbooks throughout the period, we can also track modifications in the way of presentation. In the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Gusztáv Heckenast et al. Textbook, the existence of an alternative figures prominently in the discussion of the treaty.<sup>31</sup> According to László Zsigmond, if Hungarian forces had actively helped the Soviets in the Polish-Soviet war, it could have altered the course of events. This alternative appears in minuscule letters in 1949, but disappears in the next edition in 1950. Significantly, the cult of personality also enters the scene for a brief period. A painting featuring Rákosi in the northern campaign of the Hungarian Red Army in 1919 appears on one of the pages and Rákosi’s role in the organisation of the patriotic and revolutionary fight is highlighted in a paragraph written in minuscule letters. This section also vanished from later editions of the same textbook and from all later textbooks as well.

By 1957, there were a number of reasons to write a new history textbook. After the revolution, the Kádár regime replacing the Imre Nagy government had to include its own claims for legitimacy in the narrative of the past. Moreover, since the official verdict condemned the revolution as a nationalist and Horthys counter-revolution it became ever more important to publically and convincingly blame both nationalism and the interwar political system. Nagy was presented as a dissenter politician following the footsteps of the Horthy-era leaders who willingly committed treason when stabbing the Communist Regime of 1919 in the back.<sup>32</sup> On 11 March 1957, recognising that the revolution mainly involved the youth, the Central Committee called for a more active ideological education while the 8<sup>th</sup> Party

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31 Zsigmond, László/Fejér, Klára/Karácsonyi, Béla/Heckenast, Gusztáv: *Történelem az általános iskolák VIII. osztálya számára 1711–1945*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1949, p. 208.

32 Cf. Somlai, Katalin: “Trianon és a marxista történetírás.” In: *Limes* 2 (2002), pp. 51–62.

Congress of 1959 called for a renewed fight against nationalism.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the result of a debate on the role of nationalism for Marxist historiography initiated by the historian Erik Molnár did not lead to a new dogma. Molnár basically argued that freedom fights motivated by nationalist ideology should not be seen as progressive events in Hungarian history. The numerous historians contributing to the various stages of the lasting debate did not endorse this view. The lively debate led to some valuable research into the origins of national identity (especially those of Jenő Szűcs) and directed more interest to nationalities as well as to comparative research questions. The party did not superimpose a rigid line, the Kádárist regime was more interested in balancing what was increasingly turning into a renewed urban versus popular controversy.<sup>34</sup> The issue of reviewing the borders and Trianon itself disappeared from the spectrum until the 1980s. The loose official framework supposedly replacing chauvinist nationalism was a socialist patriotism that recognised the neighbouring socialist regimes as allies and was willing to make sacrifices for the socialist society while being loyal to one's homeland. While the historians' debate also led to the rejection of the narrative telling the story of Hungarians in terms of national injuries, nationalities were hardly able to break into the ethically homogeneous world of Hungarian history appearing in primary school textbooks.

Despite the criticism of magyarization during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Heckenast notes that if it had been up to the Habsburg government in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, no Hungarian peasant would have lived on the Great Plains.<sup>35</sup> The thesis of cultural inferiority and brutality of Slavs and Romanians was simply replaced by their image as starving masses living on the periphery. János Petrik, István Vörös and Béla Kiss, the authors of the new series, did not manage to find a new role for the different ethnic groups and bring the picture of a multinational country to the pages. Regarding the 1840s and the freedom fight, they stated that both the Hungarian political elite and the Serb, Croatian and Romanian elites have responsibility for the bloodshed, but, perhaps in line with Erik Molnár, they attributed feudalist and therefore still counter-progressive motivations to the claims. Thus, the picture of anti-Hungarian uprisings as essentially unjust acts did not disappear from the narrative.

While the number of chapters and pages dedicated to the period of 1918–1920 significantly increased with the publication of the new official textbook written by Gusztáv Sári and Béla Csiszér, the basic arguments were virtually unchanged. Relatively detailed maps were showing the consequences of the Vix-memorandum and the military actions during 1919, students were provided with more details than ever before. Yet, Trianon was still presented as the price for the international (anti-

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33 Cf. Somlai, Katalin: *The Trianon Question in the Historiography of the Kádár regime*. Budapest: [Central European University, unpublished thesis], [1996], [n.p.].

34 Cf. Lackó Miklós: *Molnár Erik és a 60-as évek történész-vitája*, p. 37. Online: [www.penzugykutato.hu/files/2008március5-Lackó%20Miklós.doc](http://www.penzugykutato.hu/files/2008március5-Lackó%20Miklós.doc), (27. 01. 2012).

35 Zsigmond, László/Fejér, Klára/Karácsonyi, Béla/Heckenast, Gusztáv: *Történelem az általános iskolák VIII. osztálya számára 1711–1945*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1950, p. 18.

communist) recognition of the new feudal-bourgeois regime that later served as a propaganda tool to cover class struggle and social injustice with chauvinism. The longevity and rigidity of the formula was arguably due to the link that the official interpretation of the 1956 revolution created between the anti-Communist terror of the Horthy and the events of November 1956. However, a new paradox arose. Csizsér and Sári saw nationalities as actively and justly joining their national states. At the same time the treaty was imperialist as it was serving the political interests of anti-Communist and anti-progressive elites in the whole region. For the first time a map was inserted showing the disintegration of Austria-Hungary.<sup>36</sup> Once the authors accepted the birth of nation-states as a just driving force for political history, logically they were on the brink of recognising some form of revisionism as legitimate. Naturally, instead of doing so they stuck to their original paragraph for the next 18 editions. Instead, they suggested that if the Communist regime had not lasted only 133 days it would have been possible to settle the border issue within an internationalist political framework free of chauvinist claims and united by the rule and ideals of the proletariat. However, they did not provide a new bridge that might apply to the contemporary Eastern Block.

The unrecognised logical gap opened even wider in the next venture first published in 1984 and written by Mrs. Bíró Ferenc. This textbook also contained a second volume on constitutional matters. The time span that the first volume covered was reduced to 45 years ranging from 1917 to 1962. The maps disappeared, however, the exact extent of territorial and population losses were listed along with the fact that 3,000,000 ethnic Hungarians found themselves on the far side of the Hungarian borders. The paragraph also stated that minority Hungarians often had to suffer from discrimination and forced assimilation. In other words, Mrs. Bíró saw the consequences of the treaty as a national injury causing injustice. While she put the blame on Teleki and on the Horthy-regime in general, she also rejected revisionism.

Importantly, Kádár himself arrived at a similar stage as well in the optimistic environment of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in 1975. For the first time, during his final and later published speech he referred to elements previously used by irredentist propaganda such as the defence of European culture, the 1100 years of statehood, the militant past and the loss of 8% of the adult population in 1920. By the late 1970s, the drive to establish a form of internationalist patriotism has given its place to a new sense of superiority especially vis á vis Romania and the dissenting and hostile Ceausescu-regime.

We have seen that there is a strong linear link between the discourse that unfolds about the role of nationalities on the pages of interwar history textbooks and the core of irredentist narrative about injustice. Slovaks, Serbs and Romanians are places of injustice in the web of memory produced in the textbooks. After the Second World War, the evolving Communist regime did not find a paradigm

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36 Csizsér, Béla/Sári, Gusztáv: *Történelem 8: 1905–1962*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1966, p. 92.

matically new role for nationalities, but focussed on delegitimizing the Horthy-regime at the point of its birth and used the Trianon-issue to this end. The textbooks of the Kádár-regime did not introduce major changes to this rigid setting, instead they made concessions towards the earlier nationalist discourse distantly following the developments of the historians' loosely directed debate on nationalism or sensing the shift in official rhetoric in the mid-70s. Thus, Trianon appears as a massive and homogenous site of injustice. Moreover, the group that is to blame for it loses all rights and becomes dehumanised. In cases where identity is the main concern we might take the axioms of the linguistic turn seriously and see the conflict as an issue of dysfunctional stories. Trianon needs stories of belonging, love and loss, power and survival on the small and differentiated scale. As the narrative of the late Kádár-regime and our own time demonstrates, compromises between existing nationalist and anti-nationalist or liberal and conservative statements will only bring Hungarian public life to a new and inward-looking stalemate and frustration. New metaphors may be invented by social historians, but they will only be legible in a new configuration, in a niche crossing over known boundaries. With the drastically changing patterns of geographical mobility and media environment such a new setting based on network and experiences is in the making. The mermaid might also leave behind her underwater cave filled with nightmares and head towards more silent lacunas.

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