

PRAGUE
PAPERS
ON THE
HISTORY OF
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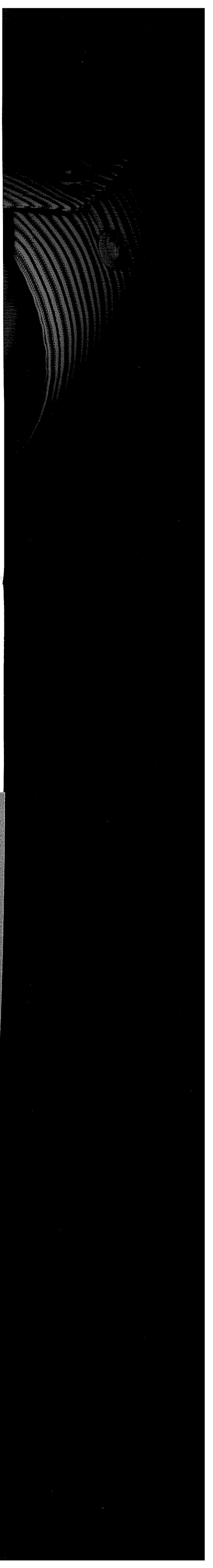
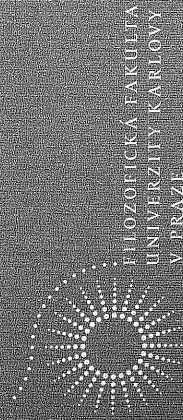
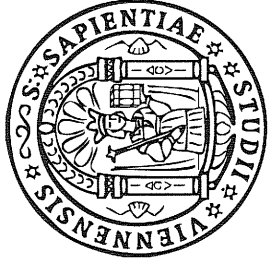
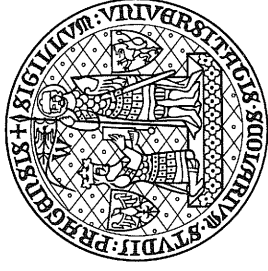
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**prague papers on the history
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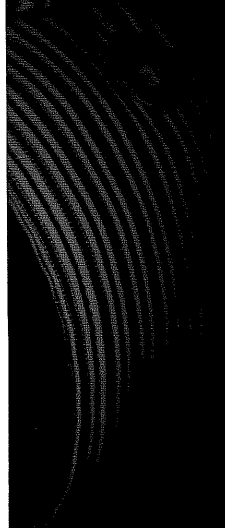
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**“... I beg Your Excellency, that you take steps”:
József Mindszenty, the Archbishop of Esztergom
in the Documents of the National Archives
and Records Administration (USA):
Part I: 1945–1948**

Margit Balogh

The name of József Mindszenty, the last Hungarian Prince Primate became world-famous as the symbol of fight against communism. He fulfilled the honour of the Archbishop of Esztergom and hereupon the honour of Prince Primate between 1945 and 1974 (after 1950 the title was in use without the prefix “Prince”). On December 26, 1948, he was taken into custody by the police authorities on the commonplace charges of the totalitarian regimes, such as conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of the republic, spying and currency trafficking, and on February 8, 1949, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, deprivation of political rights and confiscation of property. The sentence called the attention of the world to the violation of human rights and the discussion on the Hungarian situation was put on the agenda by the UN, too. The 1956 revolution put an end to the years of his imprisonment but after three and a half days of freedom, in the morning of November 4, 1956, József Mindszenty requested and got refuge at the American Legation Budapest. It is without precedent in world-history that a cardinal of the Catholic Church lived in diplomatic protection at a legation for 15 years, in a voluntary captivity chosen by himself.

Forming a judgement of his activities fluctuates between extremes, from uncritical canonisation to degrading demonisation. It is undeniable that a Mindszenty-phenomenon has existed up to the present, and it is just like an eel: it cannot be grasped; because if we consider the Head of Church, he cannot be criticized, since he was the leading figure of the national resistance of the time; if someone means to grasp his role and activity as a politician, he is covered with the cope of the Cardinal who suffered imprisonment. A collection of sources, essential to the historical analysis, can be found in the United States of America: a lot of documents have survived, mainly owing to the one and a half decade at the Legation; but on account of his public role, the name of Mindszenty appears in the American sources from 1945. The following paper is written on the basis of the documents kept in the National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, Maryland); but relevant documents can be found in abundance in any one of the 1945–1974 American presidential archives — Harry S. Truman Library (Independence, Missouri), Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (Abilene, Kansas), John F. Kennedy Presidential

Library and Museum (Boston, Massachusetts), Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum (Austin, Texas), Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (Yorba Linda, California).

“IT WAS NOT SIBERIA THAT WAS PROMISED...”

H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld, the 56-year old representative of the American diplomatic service in Budapest, had been staying in Hungary for barely three months when he heard the name of József Mindszenty for the first time. On April 30, 1945, he informed his State Secretary about the visit of Count József Pálffy, the leader of the Christian-Democratic People's Party that was being organized at that time, who asked him confidentially to forward his personal recommendation to Rome on the vacant seat of the Prince Primate of Esztergom. Count Pálffy recommended József P. János, Jesuit, and József Mindszenty, Bishop of Veszprém; and out of the two he preferred the bishop. However, the experienced diplomat considered the “posting” of the recommendation politically very risky; he was afraid that the bare fact of the recommendation would generate distrust and suspicion in the Soviet-American relation.¹ As Hungary was strategically unimportant in the post-war foreign policy of the United States, it is obvious that he wanted to avoid even the slightest conflict with the Soviets on the succession of the Primacy.

On September 16, 1945, József Mindszenty was appointed as Archbishop of Esztergom by Pope Pius XII, without any American mediation. The new Primate took possession of his powers energetically, very confidently and with exaggerated hopes. Naturally, he also considered the pastoral work as the primary function of the church. But he added to this: although it is a necessary evil, taking up a position in public political issues, or informing the congregation on party politics questions belong to the interpretation of the gospel.

Since the same community of people constitute the state as well, he considered politics as possible means of apologetics. His manifestations as Primate were based on a clear-cut opinion: relying on the historic constitutional role of the Prince Primate, as a mental-spiritual leader of Hungarian Catholics, he felt it is his duty to orient people not only in questions of religious life and ethics but in public and social issues as well. He counted on the Western democracies to enforce human rights and freedom of religion, and he especially expected America — as a symbol of democracy and human rights — to make a stand against the violation of law.

For this reason the Hungarian Prince Primate carried on very intensive correspondence with the American diplomatic corps in Budapest. One group of his letters, which arrived almost monthly, relentlessly calls attention to the various grievances of the church, in an abrupt style, not unusual from him. Another significant group of the documents deals with various matters of Hungarian domestic politics, and a fur-

¹ Magyar Országos Levéltár (hereafter MOL), XX-10-k. Legfőbb Ügyészség Politikai Osztály (hereafter LÜ/PO), 18.300/1989. The incoming telegram of the American Department of State, No. 1817. Budapest, April 30, 1945.

ther one deals with human rights generally in Hungarian and international context. The American archival documents explicitly prove: there were hardly any significant political events that were not given an opinion by József Mindszenty as the leading prelate of Hungary.

He signed his first letters of complaints to Schoenfeld on August 24, 1945, and then on 14 September as bishop of Veszprém, although his appointment to the seat of the Archbishop of Esztergom had already entered into force. In his first, two-lined letter, addressed simply to the "American Mission", he called attention to the KALOT, a Catholic movement that had been remarkably successful among the agrarian youth between the two world wars, and he enclosed a review describing the merits of the movement.² In his second, full-page letter he lodged a complaint that his Episcopal circular letter was seized and taken away by the local police on suspicion of "Fascist propaganda". It is really baffling what was found suspicious by the authorities, since Mindszenty merely argued against the spreading of the "dance-epidemic" that was unworthy under the circumstances following the war, and spoke in favour of the sanctity of the house of God: "The secular power should not enter the churches, because it is a serious offence of the freedom of conscience. [...] If the Hungarians do not dance, with this they certainly do not interfere with the interests of the United Nations."³ This almost petty affair was succeeded by issues of much greater importance between 1945 and 1948; among them the most significant one was the anxiety about the Hungarians living in Slovakia.

The first letter, in which he called the attention of the Americans to the persecution and kidnapping of the Hungarians who got to Czechoslovakia as a consequence of the Trianon borders, was dated on October 7, 1945, on the day of his inauguration as an Archbishop. As many people, he dreamed about a revision of the borders, and he saw the only solution in the territorial integrity: "It is now evident that this can be satisfactorily settled only by adjusting the border to Hungary in accordance with the desire of the Hungarians living there in a solid group for centuries. The Czechoslovak Government will the result of the plebiscit make smaller, therefore, certainly, persecute and expell now the Hungarians from this territory. I feel sure, that Your Excellency's Government already up to the present made much in the cause of truth and particularly in the interests of the Hungarian People, but I beg Your Excellency again, that You take steps, that the measures which injure people's rights and are unlawful be urgently remedies and that suitable reparations be made."⁴ This letter was followed by a lot of others: in November of 1946 Spellmann, the Archbishop of New York and Griffin, the Archbishop of London; on January 31, 1947, King George VI of the United Kingdom, Truman American President and G. B. Montini, Deputy Secretary of State at the Vatican received telegrams from

² National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA) Record Group (hereafter RG) 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Mission 1945, Box 66. 843-850.7 Kalot.

³ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Mission 1945, Box 65. 840.0-840.7 Catholic Church.

⁴ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Mission 1945, Box 65. 840.0-840.7 Catholic Church. The letter of József Mindszenty to Ambassador H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld. Original, in English language, autograph. Esztergom, October 7, 1945.

him, protesting against the deprivation of civil rights of the Hungarians living in Slovakia. He asked the addressees to help in the same way as they had earlier helped the Jews.⁵ In the summer of 1948 he blamed Alexej Čepička, Czechoslovak Minister of Justice, because nothing was realized from his promises concerning the freedom of religion.⁶ On August 10, 1948, he wrote to Ambassador Chapin about a slave market, extinguishing embryos and endless deportations.⁷

It would be naive to believe that Mindszenty's entreaties mixed with protests led to the cessation of deportations, confiscations of property and mass sentences of tribunals in Czechoslovakia. Though, the call for assistance heard by the Western powers did not come from an ordinary man; as the Hungarian Head of Church criticized the condemnation of Hungarians (and Germans) on the basis of collective responsibility, as well as the policy of Beneš, who considered their expulsion from their homeland as "national revolutionary objective", his criticism came from the heights of the universal church. Without the conceptual attitude of the Western democracies shown on the Paris Peace Conference, the government of Prague presumably would have eliminated the Hungarian minority community. Although the proposal for the revision of the borders is political short-sightedness, raising the question of the legal offences against Hungarians could have been the only consideration to elicit sympathy towards a German satellite state in the Western public opinion.

Mindszenty repeatedly called attention to the encroachments of the political police, the jurisdiction that was degenerated into the puppet of party policy and the multiplying "conspiracies". In his letter dated on December 16, 1946, after having described the domestic political situation, he called upon the help of England and the United States as "protectors of freedom and justice" to halt the enormous pressure and the corruption. The Cardinal, who characterized himself as the "only independent" Hungarian, added that with the help of England and the United States there would be a possibility to solve these problems. In his letter dated on December 27, 1946, Ambassador Schoenfeld succinctly and decidedly refused the request of the Cardinal. "... you are of course aware of my Government's long standing policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. This policy has proven over a long period of time and through many trying situations the best guarantee of spontaneous, vigorous and genuine democratic development. It will be clear to Your Eminence that it necessarily precludes action by this Legation which could properly be construed as interference in Hungarian domestic affairs or which lies outside the normal functions of diplomatic missions."⁸ On 8 January 1947 he in-

⁵ Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár (hereafter PIL) f. 274, 7/248. ó. e., fol. 184. The selection of Gábor Péter about József Mindszenty, May 12, 1948.

⁶ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Legation 1948, Box 167. 814.2-840.4. The letter of József Mindszenty, dated July 6, 1948, to Alexej Čepička, Minister of Justice. Typewritten copy from the American Embassy, Prague.

⁷ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Legation 1948, Box 167. 814.2-840.4. Original, typewritten, autograph letter.

⁸ MOL, IÜ/PO, 18.300/1989 Enclosure to Despatch No. 2406, dated January 8, 1947, from the American Legation, Budapest, Hungary — The letter of Ambassador H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld to József Mindszenty. Budapest, 27 December 1946. Copy.

formed the American Secretary of State in a confidential memorandum on the letters received from the Prince Primate. In his report he condemned Mindszenty's initiative. "Apart from the risk to which Cardinal Mindszenty has subjected himself in writing these letters, I consider that they provide adequate evidence of the Prince Primate's misunderstanding of diplomatic function and practices."⁹ He thought it was worthwhile to mention that Mindszenty's daring espousal was based on his conviction that in the near future a war would break out between the Soviet Union and the Western powers; and accordingly, the Cardinal did not want to allow any doubt for the future concerning which side the Hungarian Catholic Church supported, even if it involved personal martyrdom. It must be admitted that Mindszenty believed in another world war, and some irresponsible and unreliable political factors encouraged him to do so. In the mirror of it Mindszenty's obstinacy is more understandable: he thought that any compromise with the new political power was impractical. His soul became as hard as steel, he was determined to endure till death, and he practically desired to turn into a hero. However, thus he created utopias, because the Westerners abandoned this region to the Soviets (they did not intervene here in effect until the collapse of the Soviet Union). Even in the colder and colder international political atmosphere, the Cardinal only transformed his desires into English-American interests.

As an answer for the reprimand of the ambassador, Mindszenty demanded an explanation for the unkept Anglo-Saxon promises: "Recollecting that in the years of 1942-1944 we were promised democracy and not Siberia, or Russian and Marxist prisons in Hungary, I beg Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador, be so kind as to enforce the human rights guaranteed by the Allies, and put an end to this permanent persecution of people."¹⁰ A subsequent letter reveals real offendedness: he described the American principle of non-interference as dangerous idealism that would be acceptable for Hungary only then if all the Allied Powers being present were of the same view. "The situation, however, is different today: the interference of detrimental violence is permanent and the benevolent succour (!) is neutral." If the Powers observe the suppression of human rights, the spread of fear and poverty with cool resignation, they "...no more do not interfere into our inner affairs, but — negatively — seem to accept a partnership in the reprehensible actions of the other power and omit the support and the protection of their own great ideas and truths." He thought that the answer of the ambassador was acceptable only in one case: if it was just a gesture towards the outside world, but otherwise he could trust him.¹¹

⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union*, Vol. 6, Washington 1969, p. 360. (<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/frus/frus-idx?id=frus.frus1946> Downloading: July 1, 2012).

¹⁰ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. U. S. Legation, Hungary, Budapest, General Records 1946-1963, Box 4. 1947 — 840.4 Catholic Church. The letter of József Mindszenty to American Ambassador H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld, dated January 6, 1947. Original, autograph. Its copy: Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára (hereafter ÁBTL), A-2004, 74. Methodological material.

¹¹ NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. U. S. Legation, Hungary, Budapest, General Records 1946-1963, Box 4. 1947 — 840.4 Catholic Church. The letter of József Mindszenty to Ambassador H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld. Esztergom, January 16, 1947. Original,

He treated the Paris Peace Settlement disappointedly and with emphasis. Concerning the future he concluded that the fact that the Soviet Army remained here, bringing the appearance of independence: "the GPU, the undisguised as well as the secret prisons remain, the deportations will continue. Conspiracies will be discovered day after day. The last Hungarian properties will be carried away innumerable. The only help" — said the Cardinal — "if the United States purchased all the Russian claims on Hungary, and the final claim of the purchase would be the complete withdrawal."¹² His proposal could have been encouraged by the fact that in the summer of 1945 the USA criticized the Hungarian-Soviet economic and trade agreement. Yet the USA did not encourage the refusal of the ratification, and as time passed, they could influence the events still less and also, they did not really want to do so. As early as at the beginning of 1946, Ambassador Schoenfeld described Hungary as a Soviet economic colony,¹³ and claimed that his country could not do much against it without risking the European stability and peace. By then it became clear: the Soviets do not accept an ambiguous situation in Hungary, and they will effectuate the complete communist takeover.

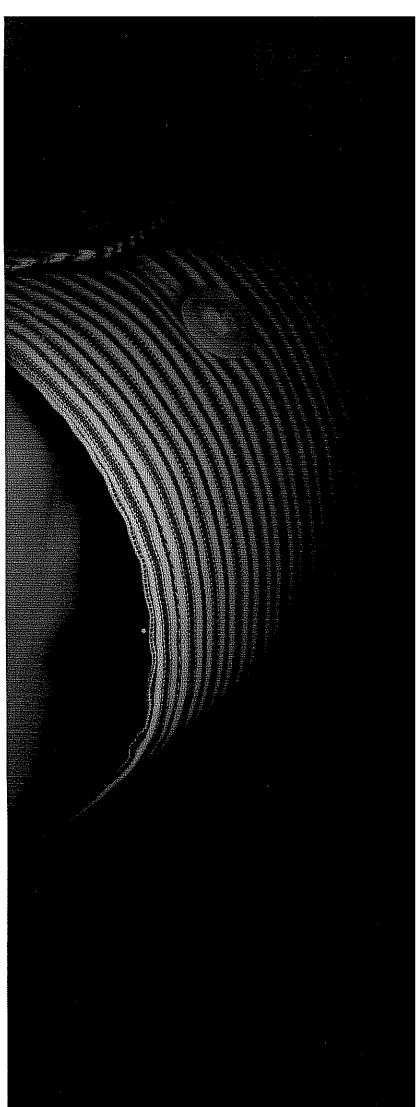
The Archbishop of Esztergom had contacts with two American diplomats between 1945 and 1948: with Arthur Schoenfeld and Selden Chapin. The two diplomats maintained different relations to the Hungarian prelate. Schoenfeld was reserved; his reports reveal cold logic and only mild sympathy. "...The Cardinal unable to understand the recent Hungarian realities" — he wrote about him once still in the middle of 1946.¹⁴ Selden Chapin arrived at Hungary in the summer of 1947, in the midst of the preparations for the parliamentary elections. Mindszenty had got a positive reference about him earlier, personally from Otto Habsburg, who emphasised that Chapin was an active Catholic, opposite to the Jewish Schoenfeld. The new ambassador used the salutation "Dear Mr. Cardinal Mindszenty" in his letters, and just a month after his arrival at his post, on 13 August 1947 he paid a formal call in Esztergom. However, the greater cordiality did not mean the abandonment of the aloofness of American diplomacy. Although the alliance having been formed during the World War disintegrated and the Cold War era commenced, the American diplomacy did not promise any kind of intervention in Hungary. From the viewpoint of the global interests of the United States of America, Eastern-Europe — and within that Hungary — was considered as "secondary". Therefore, the new ambassador, Selden Chapin maintained a closer and more personal relationship with Mindszenty, but he did not encourage him for resistance and did not mislead him with hopes of war. Though, he did not really try to dissuade him. For the present just one letter is known, in which he took a clear stand on the issue of the war:

English language, autograph. The copy of the typewritten fair copy: ÁBTL 3.1.9, V-700/15A, 284-285. Its text is published in Hungarian: Á. SOMORJAI — T. ZINNER, *Majd' hald'ira ítélt ve. Dokumentumok Mindszenty József életéről*, Budapest 2008, pp. 350-351.

¹² NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Legation 1948, Box 167. 814.2-840.4 The letter of József Mindszenty to Ambassador Selden Chapin, September 20, 1947. Original, Hungarian language, autograph.

¹³ L. BORHI, *Magyar-amerikai kapcsolatok 1945-1989*. Források, Budapest 2009, p. 26.

¹⁴ MOL, LÚ/PO 18.300/1989. The incoming telegrams of the American Department of State, 1829. Budapest, August 13, 1946.



he responded to Mindszenty's question whether "he should prepare for a short or a long term accommodation with Communists since apparently" — according to him — "war was inevitable". The ambassador reported to his superiors: "I told him that I did not personally share the opinion that war was inevitable, I said that I felt I could go so far as to say that US certainly would never attack first and to best my knowledge and belief Soviet Government itself did not wish war but that of course there was always a possibility that some irresponsible persons might bring about a prestige situation which would have serious results."¹⁵ Mindszenty could have interpreted the equivocal answer of the ambassador as an encouragement.

Mindszenty's letter of April 6, 1948, which is rather unusual as regards to its contents, indicates the cordiality of their relationship: the Cardinal asked the American ambassador to help one of his men, who has a certification-letter in Latin language, and his three companions to leave the country.¹⁶ In these days hot contest took place for the church schools, and in connection with it the Catholic Church was unavoidably marked as "clerical reaction"; and only eight months later, on December 26, 1948, József Mindszenty was arrested by the political police, and among other things he was accused of spying for the Americans. His letters — the drafts or copies of which were shown to the state security by Secretary András Zakar, when the Primate's Palace was being searched — were cited profusely in the lawsuit against him.

In the course of the trial Mindszenty — with the expression used by him repeatedly — "fundamentally admitted" the charges brought up against him, and described the introduced evidence, which were mainly the letters written by him, as authentic. He repeatedly regretted the past, and made promises as to the future. Quoting his words from the original sound records kept in the Sound Archives of the Hungarian Radio, the Cardinal said about the letters as follows: "I divide these documents into three groups. In the first group there is a smaller group that was written and addressed but was not sent but remained, and such letters were put among the evidence, too. Not all of them were sent, every single one, which is here among the evidence, but I emphasise that it is the minority. [...] The greater part was really sent. The primary objective of these [...] was not to uncover mistakes and their primary objective was not to harm, to blacken; the objective was to help somehow but the good and right was not carried out rightly. Anyhow, it would have been more proper not to send these letters. Now I regret that I sent them. [...] In addition, there was a third group, and as a matter of fact, this falls within the second category, too; and [...] namely, these were sent in favour of the Hungarian war prisoners, sent to foreign powers about the control over Hungarian war prisoners practiced by the Red Cross, also, in favour of the Hungarians who were

¹⁵ MOL, LÚ/PO 18.300/1989. The incoming telegrams of the American Department of State, 688. April 26, 1948.

¹⁶ "May I beg Your Excellence to kindly receive one of my faithful, who have a separate certification-letter in Latin language. He will tell all about of his aims which I behold very important and which I accept ad mines. Considering our circumstances I take extraordinary to beg Your Excellence to help him and his three companions to leave Hungary as soon as possible, and kindly intercede to secure them all support in this work for peace and interesting of Hungarian people." NARA, RG 84. Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State. Hungary, Budapest Legation 1948, Box 167. 840.4 Catholic Church. The letter of József Mindszenty to Ambassador Chapin. Budapest, April 6, 1948. Original, English language, autograph.

deported and prosecuted in Hungarian territory [...] I could not avoid it, I had to write these letters, and my regret does not include these matters, because here I fulfilled a pastoral and humanitarian duty."¹⁷ Notwithstanding the "fundamental" confession, József Mindszenty persisted on his activity, displayed in favour of the protection of human rights.

SANCTIONS AND PROTESTS

It presented a serious problem to the diplomats, how their states should express their opinion on the arrest of the Cardinal, then on his life imprisonment: presenting an official protest, a declaration of condemnation or merely sending messages through the press. In spite of the advice of his colleagues, the British H. McNeil, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, wanted to protest officially against the arrest of the Archbishop in any case, for domestic political reasons. He did not worry about the possible worsening of the situation of Mindszenty, because according to him the Archbishop, whatever happens, strives for martyrdom.¹⁸ Selden Chapin, the Chief of the American Mission, proposed American-British commercial sanctions on a global scale as a weapon against the East-European states in the case of Mindszenty.¹⁹ He considered the events as a part of the anti-religious campaign of the communists, and urged the international action of all organizations devoted to freedom and religion.

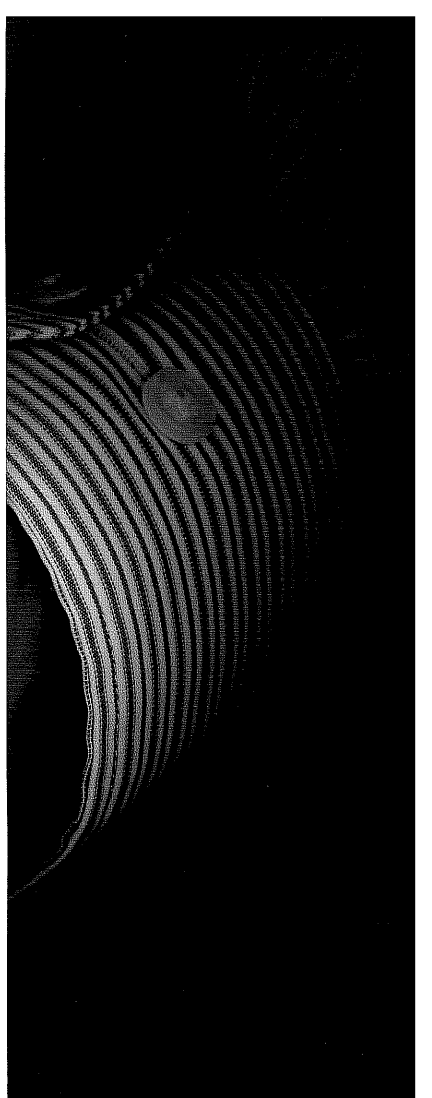
According to the British, the following factors argued in favour of the protest: the pressure of public opinion, the accompanying domestic political benefit, as well as the opinion that the protest would not increase the communist antipathy against the archbishop and would not lead to his execution; because the effect of his expulsion, imprisonment or execution would be the same: Mindszenty was no more the focus of the Hungarian resistance against communists. One of the arguments against the protest was that with the charges levelled against the Cardinal — currency trafficking, spying, treason — the communists skilfully avoided the issue of human rights. The proofs of the prosecutor's office could be insufficient and falsified according to the Western way of thinking, but they admitted that it created satisfactory basis for the lawsuit. The formal British protest would provide the communists what they wish: an outside hostile step, against which the members of the earlier uncertain leadership could unite. Whereas, the public, general declarations of condemnation properly irritate them and make them cautious, but do not provide them a concrete target, against which they could unite. It is too soon to write off the Cardinal, he can be an important factor of the resistance and fight for religious freedom despite being in prison or in exile.²⁰ Neither the French, nor the Americans decided on the formal protest.

¹⁷ Magyar Rádió Hangarchívuma, dr. Mindszenty József és társai pere, reel 6, about minute 47.

¹⁸ The National Archives, London, Kew (hereafter TNA), Foreign Office 044045 (hereafter FO), (PIL 508, f. 1/125. ó. e.).

¹⁹ TNA, FO 044045 and FO 371/78573 (PIL 508, f. 1/125. and 122. ó. e.).

²⁰ TNA, FO 370/78581/1263. Detailed description to the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Charles Bateman about the problems ensuing from the Mindszenty-case. 1 February 1949. (PIL 508, f. 1/125. ó. e.)



In the end the press release of the American Department of State expressed profound indignation, and it confidentially advised to the American President not to intervene on behalf of Mindszenty, since it would be useless and unsuccessful. Only the official protest of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations — that is the governments of Australia, New-Zealand and Canada — is known; and it was of much less significance. However, when the Hungarians refused the presence of the British Mission in the course of the trial, the British government addressed a protesting declaration to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which it promised countermeasures, and to maintain its rights based on the 1947 Peace Treaty.²¹ The waves of indignation reached the UN General Assembly. It did not alter the days of the prisoner at all: he was deprived of his personal liberty. Mindszenty was released from his captivity by the revolution on 30 October 1956, and its defeat took him to the Legation of the United States of America, where his long, voluntary confinement began that lasted 15 years.

ABSTRACT

The name of József Mindszenty became world-famous as the symbol of fight against communism. He fulfilled the honour of the Archbishop of Esztergom and hereupon the honour of Primate between 1945 and 1974. On 26 December 1948 he was taken into custody by the police authorities on the commonplace charges of the totalitarian regimes, such as conspiracy aimed at the overthrow of the republic, spying and currency trafficking, and on 8 February 1949 he was sentenced to life imprisonment, deprivation of political rights and confiscation of property. The sentence called the attention of the world to the violation of human rights and the discussion on the Hungarian situation was put on the agenda by the UN, too. The 1956 revolution put an end to the years of his imprisonment but after three and a half days of freedom, in the morning of 4 November 1956 József Mindszenty requested and got refuge at the American Legation Budapest. It is without precedent in world-history that a cardinal of the Catholic Church lived in diplomatic protection in a legation for 15 years, in a voluntary captivity chosen by himself.

Forming a judgement of his activities fluctuates between extremes, from uncritical canonisation to degrading demonization. A collection of sources, essential to the historical analysis, can be found in the United States of America: a lot of documents have survived, mainly owing to the one and a half decade at the Legation; but on account of his public role, the name of Mindszenty appears in the American sources from 1945. The paper is written on the basis of the documents kept in the National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, Maryland).

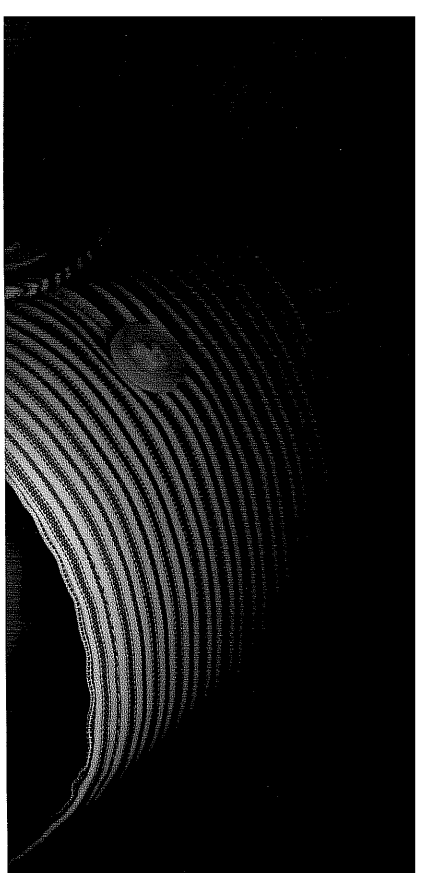
The Archbishop of Esztergom had contacts with two American diplomats between 1945 and 1948: with Arthur Schoenfeld and Selden Chapin. The Hungarian Prince Primate carried on very intensive correspondence with the American diplomatic corps in Budapest. One group of his letters, which arrived almost monthly, relentlessly calls attention to the various grievances of the church, in an abrupt style, not unusual from him. Another significant group of the documents deals with various matters of Hungarian domestic politics, and a further one deals with human rights generally in Hungarian and international context. The American archival documents explicitly prove: there were hardly any significant political events that were not given an opinion by József Mindszenty as the leading prelate of Hungary.

21 TNA, FO 371/78581. Public response from the British to the members of the Commonwealth. (PIL 508, f. 1/125. ó. e.)

The American documents of 1956–1971 relating to Mindszenty are maintained in three important fonds in the National Archives and Records Administration. The contents of the Mindszenty-documents are very mixed. First and foremost the Cardinal requested from Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the UN, to command UN-units to Hungary (it can be read in English for the first time in our present study). The paper presents and concisely analyses the main landmarks of the Cardinal's life in the Legation and at last it touches upon the circumstances of his departure.

KEYWORDS

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



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