

*Gábor Hamza*

## **Remembering Albert Apponyi (1846-1933), Honorary Member and Member of the Governing Board of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences**



### *Summary*

Commemoration of Albert Apponyi (1846-1933), honorary member and member of the governing board of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. A commemorative essay by Professor Gábor Hamza, a full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on the distinguished statesman and scholar.

**Keywords:** Albert Apponyi, commemorative essay, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

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### REMEMBERING ALBERT APPONYI

Albert Apponyi, statesman, minister, honorary and board member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, full member of the Kisfaludy Society, president of the Szent István Academy, head of the Hungarian delegation at the 1920 Paris Peace Conference, representative of Jászberény with a gold mandate, was born in Vienna on 29 May 1846, died in Geneva on 7 February 1933.

Between 1830 and 1949 – the new statutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, adopted in 1949, abolished the Governing Board – the Minister of Religion and Public Education was often elected as a member of the Governing Board of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In this way, Tivadar Pauler, Ágoston Trefort, Albin Csáky and Gyula Wlassics became members of the Governing Board as ministers. A year later, in 1908, Albert Apponyi, Minister of Religion and Public Education, was elected a member of the Governing Board of the Academy.

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Albert Apponyi's father was György Apponyi (1808-1899), his mother was Júlia Sztáray (1820-1871) from Nagymihály. György Apponyi was elected a member of the Governing Board of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 19 December 1858. His election took place after the adoption of the Statutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1858. It is worth mentioning here that the Statutes adopted in 1858 are the first to use the term "member of the Governing Board" instead of "governing member". For decades, György Apponyi was involved in the governance of the Academy, in the work of its governing body, the Governing Board. It is worth mentioning that on two occasions, in 1860 and 1861, he supported the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with substantial sums of money.

Albert Apponyi's mother tongue was Hungarian. It is important to mention that Apponyi had already learned several Western European languages at a high level of negotiation at a young age. He also mastered Classical Greek and Latin, and read the original-language works of the Greco-Roman antiquity authorities.

He held honorary doctorates in political science (*honoris causa*) from the Universities of Budapest and Cluj-Napoca. He was also awarded an honorary doctorate in medicine by the University of Budapest and was a regular member of numerous social and scientific associations. He was a citizen of honour of Budapest, Jászberény, Kispeszt and several Hungarian towns. He was also a regular member of the Budapest Law Commission.

Between 1911 and 1932, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize five times by several Hungarian universities and numerous scientific and political organisations. However, the nominations were unsuccessful.

Albert Apponyi was educated at the Jesuit institute in Kalksburg until 1863. He then studied law at the University of Pest and the University of Vienna. After completing his studies, between 1868 and 1870, he made extended visits to the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Apponyi married Countess Clothilde von Mensdorff-Pouilly on 1 March 1897. Albert Apponyi was the son of György Apponyi (1898-1970), a lawyer, member of parliament, journalist and politician. He was an ardent supporter of equal civil rights and openly attacked pro-German politics. After the German invasion of the country on 19 March 1944, he was captured by the Gestapo and held in Mauthausen. He did not return to Hungary after World War II.

Among the French aristocrats, Albert Apponyi was particularly influenced by Charles René Forbes Comte de Montalembert (1910-1870), who was elected an external member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on 16 December 1858. It was in Montalembert's house that he met Pierre Guillaume Frédéric Le Play (1806-1882), the creator of conservative social philosophy, whose works had a great influence on Apponyi's thinking and intellectual development.

Apponyi was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time in 1872. He won his first mandate in the constituency of Óbuda-Szentendre, with a pro-Deák platform. It is noteworthy that in 1872, in the detailed debate on the 1873 budget, he spoke in favour of the establishment of the National Academy of Music. The budget item for the establishment of the National Academy of Music was adopted by a large majority in the House. Unfortunately, however, in the same year, this budget item was cancelled as an unnecessary "luxury item".

In the general elections of 1875 – the Parliament's terms were then still three years (triennium) – it was in a minority in three seats. Albert Apponyi was elected two years later, in 1877, in the now vacant district of Bobro in the province of Orva, on the platform of the conservative Sennyey party.

Pál Sennyey retired from political life in 1878. Afterwards, the united opposition was formed by the fusion of the Conservative Party, Dezső Szilágyi's extraordinary party group and the Independent Libertarian Party. Apponyi joined the united opposition. In this party, he took a leading role after Dezső Szilágyi's departure. In October 1892, his party took the name National Party, which it held until it coalesced with the Libertarian Party in February 1900. In 1889, Apponyi took an active part in the defence debate at the head of the opposition parties. In the parliamentary debate, he stressed the need to enforce the national rights laid down in the Austro-Hungarian Constitution.

As is well known, the dispute over the defensive forces put an end to Kálmán Tisza's fifteen-year premiership in 1890. Tisza's successor, Gyula Szapáry, was initially supported by Apponyi. He turned against him, however, when Szapáry, instead of the original administrative reform bill, would have been satisfied with the introduction of a law stating that public administration was a state function.

On 27 May 1892, Albert Apponyi delivered his famous speech in the House of Representatives, which marked the beginning of the parliamentary debate on the reform of church policy. Following the formation of the government of Sándor Wekerle, Apponyi, although he supported the reform of church policy, disagreed with the head of government on the issue of compulsory civil wedding. He joined forces with the opposition to fight the government's proposals. However, these were enacted through the imperialist intervention in the General Council. The position of the Liberal Party was thus considerably strengthened, but the government's relations with the King deteriorated. The Wekerle government was forced to resign in 1894.

The repeated resignation of Sándor Wekerle had led to another internal political crisis. During the crisis, the ruler also sought Apponyi's opinion. The crisis ended on 17 January 1895, with the appointment of Dezső Bánffy, Speaker of the House of Representatives, as Prime Minister. Bánffy invited Apponyi to formal merger talks. These negotiations, because Bánffy insisted on the renunciation of national military claims as a condition for the merger of the parties, ended without result.

In 1895, Albert Apponyi attended the first meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Brussels. It is worth noting that Bánffy is credited with initiating the active participation of the Hungarian Parliament in the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

At the end of 1895 the opposition, led by Apponyi, was again at war with the government. Apponyi was so taken by the idea of the forthcoming millennium celebrations that he proclaimed a *Treuga Dei* in the journal of the party, the *Nemzeti Újság*. At the end of 1896, Apponyi's conflict with Bánffy took off once again. Apponyi strongly opposed electoral abuses and public corruption.

Apponyi reached an agreement with Széll Kálmán, Dezső Bánffy's successor as prime minister. He therefore joined the Libertarian Party with his party. Shortly afterwards, the

1901 Parliament elected him President of the House of Representatives. In the same year, he became a de facto internal secret councillor. Before the 1903 recruitment bill was discussed, he presented his military programme, calling for the implementation of the so-called national concessions. On 1 July 1903, after Széll Kálmán's resignation, he resigned from his presidency in order to stop the filibuster and made a speech in favour of parliamentary peace. The filibuster nevertheless continued until Khuen-Héderváry's second resignation.

Apponyi has moved closer to the opposition. Although he could not get his position accepted, he remained a member of the Libertarian Party. His membership was short-lived. It became clear that he could not realise his military demands in the Libertarian Party. He resigned from the party on 26 November, having resigned from the presidency of the House shortly before on 3 November. Apponyi was succeeded by members of the former National Party, with whom he re-formed the National Party.

Albert Apponyi was the leader of the opposition in the struggle against the revision of the standing orders, and on 18 November 1904 he declared on behalf of the whole opposition that he would not recognise the validity of the revision forced by the majority. This was followed by the Perczel 'handkerchief vote'. Apponyi, deeply disappointed with the so-called sixty-week policy, became a member of the Independence Party at the end of the year. He directed the 1904/1905 winter election campaign, which ended in the victory of the opposition on 26 January 1905. The entry into office of the Fejérváry government led to a serious internal political crisis. On 23 September, the King invited the leaders of the allied opposition, including Apponyi, who was the leader of the national resistance. Apponyi then committed himself to a broad extension of suffrage to thwart the plans of József Kristóffy, the Minister of the Interior.

On April 8, 1906, the so-called pact between the ruler and the allied opposition was concluded, by eliminating the issues regarding the military. Apponyi took over the cult ministry in the government appointed on 9 April under the presidency of Sándor Wekerle. In the elections held on 11 April, which confirmed this, his party won an absolute majority in parliament and, together with its coalition partners, won almost 90 percent of the seats.

He was a member of the government until 17 January 1910, when the cabinet resigned. His ministry included the laws on the remuneration of teachers, the regulation of the legal relations between state and non-state schools, free public education and the clerical congress. The *Lex-Apponyi* actually comprises three articles of law. Apponyi introduced Article XXVI of 1907 on the regulation of the salaries of state elementary school teachers and the local supervision of state elementary schools, Article XXVII of 1907 on the legal status of non-state elementary schools and the salaries of municipal and religious teachers, and Article XLVI of 1908 on the free education in elementary schools. During this period in Hungary, as in other European states, the prevailing view was that nationalities had to learn the official language as well as the mother tongue of the country. The above-mentioned bill on the People's Schools, which was named after Albert Apponyi, required "impeccably patriotic civic education". The bill set the goal that pupils in non-Hungarian-speaking schools should be able to express themselves verbally and in writing in Hungarian after completing the four elementary grades. Since other members of the parties represented in parliament also exercised their right to

make proposals, it can be concluded that Apponyi, whose educational policy ideas essentially fit into the framework of Hungarian education policy following the Austro-Hungarian unification, was unable to fully implement his ideas.

István Tisza, in a statement criticizing the coalition government's nationality policy, considered the provision of Lex Apponyi on Hungarian language teaching a serious mistake. The crucial question was who should be the operator and maintainer of the school. For religious educational institutions, the language of instruction was determined by the operator. This was undoubtedly an important guarantee for the use of the mother tongue. Article XXXVII of the 1868 Act on public education for the people's schools defined public education as the responsibility of the individual denominations as a general rule. The Nationalities Act provided that parishes had discretionary powers to determine the language of instruction within the framework of the National Schools Act.

In 1909 the Independence Party split into a pro- Ferenc Kossuth faction and a pro- Gábor Ugron faction. Apponyi remained with the pro-Kossuth faction. In the parliamentary elections held in 1910, Apponyi again won a seat in the district of Jászberény, which he had represented in the House without interruption since 1881. The elections ended in victory for István Tisza of the National Workers' Party. In this way, the parties of the former coalition opposition, which had already disintegrated, were once again forced into opposition. Apponyi took part in the opposition struggles at the head of the Kossuth Party. After the death of Ferenc Kossuth in 1914, he became the party's chairman. After the outbreak of World War I, Apponyi advocated peace between the parties. It is worth mentioning that he was a member of the International Red Cross and helped prisoners of war. He also established a war hospital on his estate, Éberhard.

Apponyi was one of the politicians who called for the democratic extension of suffrage. István Tisza, the prime minister, did not give in. After the publication of Charles IV's manuscript on suffrage in April 1917, Tisza's position was shaken and he was soon forced to resign. In the subsequent Esterházy government, and then in the third Wekerle government, Apponyi was again Minister of Religion and Education.

After Mihály Károlyi came to power, Apponyi retired from public life. After 21 March 1919 he was forced to flee. He hid for a while in the Transdanubian region until he finally managed to reach his estate in Éberhard. He returned in November 1919. His presence in Budapest was indispensable in the unfolding negotiations initiated by Sir George Clark, the Entente's chief envoy in Budapest.

He took an active part in the negotiations for the formation of a government of concentration. It seemed likely that he would form the new government when this idea finally failed due to opposition from the Christian-National Union.

Apponyi again withdrew from current politics and devoted all his time to preparing the peace negotiations. He took over the chairmanship of the peace mission. At the head of the peace mission, he arrived in Paris on 7 January and delivered his famous speech to the Supreme Council on 16 January.

Apponyi resigned when it became clear that the Supreme Council was not prepared to amend the peace treaty. In the meantime, Jászberény elected him as a member of the Natio-

nal Assembly. Apponyi did not join any party. However, his words carried a lot of weight, despite the fact that his views often did not follow the prevailing political trend. In his speeches he preached the need for understanding and reconciliation.

In May 1921, he celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday and the fiftieth anniversary of his public life. The National Assembly dedicated its session of 27 May to him. On the occasion of the celebrations, the capital city of Budapest made him an honorary citizen and erected a commemorative plaque in the square named after him - today Ferenciek Square. A few weeks later, he was in Geneva, where he participated with great success in the Conference of the Union of the League of Nations, held in early June. On that occasion, he visited Charles IV in Hertenstein, who made him a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

The arrival of Charles IV in Hungary on 20 October 1921 was a surprise for Apponyi. He did not meet the king until 1 November in Tihany, where he travelled with Miklós Szécsen, former Vatican ambassador, with the government's permission and approval.

Apponyi opposed the motion for the dethronement. At the end of his speech at the National Assembly session on 3 November, he read out the declaration of the legitimists, according to which the proposal for dethronement was a clear break with the ancient constitution and therefore had no legal force (*vigor iuris*). In the last session of the National Assembly, Apponyi proposed that the National Assembly address a note to the Governor stating that, in the event of the failure to enact the electoral law, new elections could be held only on the basis of the electoral law of Stephen Frederick. The National Assembly was dissolved on 16 February. The Opposition's Constitutional Defence Committee, which had been formed on the same day, elected Apponyi as its president.

He was the oldest member of the Second National Assembly, but did not attend the opening ceremony on 7 June 1922 for reasons of public law. He took an abstentionist position at the beginning of the term. His vote in favour of the Reconstruction proposals on 15 April 1924 is memorable. His speech against the revision of the house rules on 3 December 1924 is also worth mentioning in this context.

In the autumn of 1924 Apponyi was the head of the Hungarian delegation to the General Assembly of the League of Nations. At the meeting on 9 September, he made a powerful speech on the minority problem and the question of disarmament. He stressed the inadequate handling of the minority question by the League of Nations and the need to give minorities the right to present their grievances directly to the Council. He called for the Council to refer all cases to the Permanent International Court of Justice of the League of Nations.

He made a major speech at the Autumn 1925 General Assembly of the League of Nations, during the negotiation of the Security Pact. He commemorated the achievements of the League of Nations High Commissioner Jeremias Smith in the Hungarian Reconstruction. He then presented his motion on the minorities, the essential content of which was that complaints from minorities in church and school matters should be compulsorily heard. He urged the League of Nations to begin preparations for a general disarmament conference without delay. In the opinion of the members of the conference and of the international press present, Apponyi's speech was one of the most significant events of the session. However, his motion was not accepted by the relevant sub-committee, before which it was submitted for discussion.

At the Inter-Parliamentary Union conferences, he was the keynote speaker of the Hungarian group and represented his country on a number of issues. In 1923 he travelled to the United States of America at the invitation of American universities. Several American statesmen, teachers, businessmen and industrialists made attempts to awaken the interest of the United States of America in Europe and to remind it of its responsibility for the destiny of humanity. For this reason, it was also considered necessary to make the American public aware of the situation in Central Europe.

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday, the National Assembly wanted to give him a big celebration, but he thankfully declined. But the country still showered him with many testimonies of affection and gratitude. He received a gold medal from his admirers in the United States of America. Apponyi did not rest in the last decade of his life, the ninth. For almost three years he represented Hungary before the League of Nations in the optants' case, which was a long-standing issue of world and national public opinion. From 19 September 1927, when the matter was brought before the League of Nations, until the beginning of 1930, when the Hague Conference, which finally decided the matter, began, this issue formed the backbone of his foreign policy work. Apponyi played a major role in István Bethlen's success in achieving often criticised but nevertheless satisfactory results on these issues in The Hague and Paris. This struggle for law and justice was appreciated above all by Hungarian lawyers. A sign of this was the fact that on 29 November 1929 Albert Apponyi, 'the great lawyer of the nation', was solemnly elected a member of the Budapest Bar Association.

As the chief delegate of the Hungarian government, he continued to fight for Hungary in Geneva. His two speeches at the Assembly of the League of Nations at this time are particularly noteworthy. One was on 10 September 1929, when, pointing out the absurdity and untenability of the Trianon peace treaty, he reminded the "powers" of the world that "nothing is eternal in the political world". The other was on 20 September 1930, when he put forward new and powerful arguments in defence of national minorities. At the 1930 General Assembly of the League of Nations, he was also honoured by the election of his wife as chairman of the Social Committee. This caused a worldwide sensation at the time, because it was the first time that the General Assembly had elected a woman delegate to chair a committee. Apponyi's prestige and popularity in international politics rivalled that of the best-known and greatest foreign statesmen. The great respect in which he and, through him, Hungary were held by the League of Nations is best illustrated by the fact that when the League of Nations Union (LNU) held its General Assembly in Budapest in May 1931, the opening session of the Congress on 26 May, on the occasion of his approaching 85th birthday, was devoted almost entirely to a celebration of Albert Apponyi.

Everywhere he travelled abroad, he received with exceptional respect in official circles and his parliamentary speeches were well received. His speech at the unveiling of János Horvay's statue of Kossuth in Budapest on 6 November 1927 and his poignant eulogy in the House of Representatives on 4 June 1930, on the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty, were the highlights of his oratorical career. He did not share the government's views on suffrage. He took an oppositional position. In his parliamentary speeches, he referred to the political and moral dangers of open voting and the controversial system of recommendations.



On his 85th birthday, Apponyi was the subject of an exceptional national celebration. He was invited to write his memoirs. He received a writer's fee of 250 000 pence for his memoirs. In addition, he received a full ministerial pension and his wife half a ministerial pension from the National Assembly's budget. He was re-elected to the House of Representatives in the summer of 1931 with a seat from Jászberény. Apponyi died in Geneva on 7 February 1933. Delegates of the League of Nations were present at the funeral service. Giuseppe Motta, former President of the Republic, represented Switzerland at the farewell. Apponyi was buried in the Coronation Church in Buda Castle on 14 February 1933, following a funeral service in the Domed Hall of the Parliament. Three years after the First Vienna Decision (2 November 1938), in 1942, in accordance with his will, his remains were laid to rest in the crypt of the Apponyi family's church in the village of Malinovo (Slovak: Malinovo, German: Eberhard), in the middle of the Chaldean town of Eberhard, now part of Slovakia. Apponyi's death was a cause of condolence throughout the world.

Romanian Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu sent a telegram of condolence to the widow of Albert Apponyi. The death of Albert Apponyi was widely reported in the press in Europe and other continents. It is worth mentioning that in 2020, for the 100th anniversary of the Trianon Peace Treaty, a film was made entitled "The Speech - Apponyi in Defence of the Hungarian Cause", which recalls his famous speech at the Peace Conference.

His collected speeches were published in two volumes. An important work is "The juridical nature of the relations between Austria and Hungary", published in 1907. The Kisfaludy Society published his lecture entitled "Aesthetics and Politics, Artist and Statesman", which he delivered at the Society in 1895. Shortly before the assassination attempt on Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Apponyi published an study in two consecutive issues of the journal *Magyar Kultúra* in April 1914. In the study, he analyses the peculiarities of international law (*ius gentium* or *ius inter gentes*) at that time, in the second decade of the 20th century. He points out that in the past, treaties were concluded by nations (*nationes*) only before or after wars, but later, when issues of interest to several nations were to be resolved, they were discussed in congresses. From the Peace of Westphalia to the Peace Congresses of Vienna in 1815, Paris in 1854, Berlin in 1878 and The Hague in 1907, Apponyi lists the congresses. This form of settlement by treaty was complemented, in his view, by a 'custom of law', established in the 17th century by Hugo Grotius, under which international law distinguished between states of peace and war, regarding both as legitimate. According to Apponyi, in April 1914, the heads of state and their ministers were only concerned to maintain an ephemeral, 'yew-flower-life' peace.

We emphasise that the "Memoirs. Fifty years. My Youth - Twenty-Five Years in Opposition", published in 1922, is an important part of memoir literature and a work of history. Apponyi writes about this period as the last era of the old Hungary and "trusts in the new Hungary with unbroken faith, in the vitality and vocation of the Hungarian nation, now fallen and disturbed, but destined for resurrection". Apponyi has on numerous occasions expressed his highly valued professional opinions on topical issues of public law (*ius publicum*) and political science, both in Hungary and abroad. In addition to law and economics, his academic research focused on history, politics, education and cultural policy.



A COLLECTION OF THE MAIN WORKS OF ALBERT APPONYI

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