

Peter Tibor NAGY
PhD History, Phd Education

Teaching about NATO – within the frameworks of teaching of history
The Hungarian case

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In different countries there are different solutions about NATO teaching. In this short contribution I would like to argue, that within the circumstances of a post-totalitarian state, the history teacher is the best person for this purpose. Naturally I would not like to suppose the strict excluding of the other teachers, and professionals but I would like to argue, that if you would like to share information about NATO within the school, the history teaching is the best frameworks, and the history teachers are the most effective appointed persons.

As every modern country the political forces had an ambition to bring actual and relevant (for them) informations, material, subjects into the school. Within the circumstances of a dictatorship, these political informations, materials, subjects were penetrated by the ideology and propaganda of the party. The school itself – despite of the officially declared ideological aims -remained a prestigious place and institution in contrary to the school activities of classmates, or political activist teachers aiming the serve the political propaganda of the regime.

In the seventies and eighties the gap between the traditional school activities and the teaching of the questions of international security has become deeper. The reasons of deeping were the nexts:

- the academic legitimacy of subject teachers were high. They graduated in the most selective university. (In some subjects 8-10 times (!) selection was at the entering point of university...) Contrary with them, the teachers – inviting for some concrete lessons - political questions, defense question, sexuality - academic legitimacy was much weaker.
- the professional autonomy of subject teachers became higher in the 1980s. After 1985 there were no an inspectorate over subject-teachers. The subject teachers was not forced to make an intensive political propaganda (other side the teachers does not belonged to the real opposition of the regime)
- the values of pluralism within different subjects appeared in the 1980s. The teachers – for teaching of history, geography, literature, physics, chemistry etc.– had right to tell different opinions. (There were debates about historical or literally questions in reviews and magazines, and articles were published about the newest concepts about the modern science. The teachers not only read that kind of materials but often used them in the classroom nearby the official textbooks.
- the teaching of questions of defense and the questions of international security remained very monolithic and deeply penetrated by ideology comparing to other political questions too. In the fields of political questions of economy, education etc. different open political opinions existed because of the half-market-half-plan economy

since 1968. There were some flexibility in foreign policy of Hungary, but not in the questions of defense and it was not openly debated.

Within that circumstances the parents and pupils had an antipathy against any kind of separated political education.

The contemporary parents experienced these phenomenon as pupils.

Therefore in the contemporary Hungarian society the people generally suspicious against the separated political education. Only an *other* legitimacy could help to annul this suspicion. A subject-teacher legitimacy is necessary for this. And – because of the NATO a historical and political phenomenon – the history is the best framework to explain the facts concerning the NATO.

What kind of historical specialities which are relevant on the level of secondary school – pupils? The pupils have learned a lot about international questions can focus to the NATO topic from different viewpoints:

- In the traditional European diplomacy the alliances was not formed on the basis of common political values. (Especially: Russia in the entente) This phenomenon caused a lot of problem. The NATO is on the basis of common political values.
- The previous attempts – League of Nations, Locarno etc – could not guarantee the European stability. The NATO was an extremely important in the avoiding a “hot war” in the time of cold war.
- The creating of NATO (Contrary to the isolationist tradition of US, contrary the “empire” tradition of British and French foreign policy)
- The NATO contrary to other post-second world war security systems (UN, SEATO etc) consist only the democratic countries.
- The German topic (The integration of Germany and Bundeswehr to the Western world, the role of this effect to the building of a strong anti-Nazi German state an society)
- The Spanish topic (parallel route to democracy and route to NATO)
- The Turkish topic (special role of NATO and Turkish army in the saving of secular state in a world in which the religious fundamentalism expanded..)
- The French topic (especially the 1966-1996 period, the “being in political meaning” “being out military meaning)
- Security problems of NATO countries outside from the NATO context (Falkland, Vietnam, Algerie, Suez etc.)
- NATO and the three country (Hungary, Czech and Poland) which were the “most efficient” in the process of democratization. The expansion of NATO toward East
- The active role of NATO in the Balkan crisis, stopping of genocide
- Sept 11, the realization of Article 5, Afganistan
- Debates among friends: Iraq

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Concerning the Hungary-NATO relation, it is possible to stress in the school:

- the Hungarian political elite “since the 11th century” defined Hungary as a “western state” contrary to the Ortodox-Europe, and contrary Ottoman Empire. It is a kind of

common place in the Hungarian public opinion. The NATO is the real inheritor of the European West, and consist the Anti-Ottoman Kemalist Turkey.

- There were great debates within the French-Friend, Anglo-Saxon friend and German friend groups of Hungarian cultural and political elites in the last centuries. The pupils learned a lot about it not only on history lessons, but on literature lessons too. The NATO is the first and the only framework in which the Hungarian elites does not forced *to choose* between that lines of foreign policy.
- Since the late 1980s there were great debate within the Hungarian political elite concerning the “Preferency of US”, or “preferency of EU” relation. The NATO is the framework which is a kind of compromise.
- Hungary since the 16th century belonged to different international security systems. The pupils learned a lot about it. They have learned that in these systems Hungary were not an equal partner. The NATO is the first in which Hungary is an equal rights member
- Hungary – as the Hungarian pupils know very well – laying in the neighbourhood of the ex-Soviet and Ex Yugoslav region. There are a lot of inner conflict and dangers within these territories. In the very concrete Hungarian situation, the NATO is the real guaranty of security of Hungary

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On the basis of above mentioned argumentations the Teachers Section of Hungarian Historical Association has worked out different activities concerning NATO teaching. All of these activities are organized by the president of Teacher Section, Dr Otto SZABOLCS.

- “NATO modul”. The Hungarian national curriculum determines only 80% of lessons, by the traditional subjects. There are a 20 % part of the lessons, which could be fulfilled by “modul”s, complete parcels of knowledge school by school. The teachers section - involving academics, with the support of NATO Hq and Wörner foundation – worked out a variative modul. A “parcel” which is useful for the schools, which want to integrate the “NATO-teaching” as a longer or shorter subject.

- The Teachers Section has a review about the methodological problems of history teaching. A specila issue was published, with articles about the methodological question of NATO teaching.

- The Teachers Section has an accredited 6 day course for teachers. about the methodological problems and factual questions of NATO teaching. In 2002 more than 100 teacher was trained in this course.

- The Teachers Section – together with the Faculty of Arts of University of Budapest – offer methodological consultation about NATO teaching.

- The Faculty of Arts of University of Budapest opened a new – two and half year long – university subject: “Teacher training of the subject of social and civic education teachers”. The precondition of being students of the course: a graduation from any other school-subject – a teacher qualification. The 10 % of the materials and lessons of this university subject concentrates on the NATO. The main organizer of this university subject professor Szabolcs Otto – the same person who organizes and leads the NATO projects within the Teachers Section.

The Teacher Section organizes championships for teachers – “How I teach about NATO”, and an other championships for pupils (age group 14-18) “What do you know about NATO.” The winner of the champions are invited by a the NATO HQ.

