

Tengely, Adrienn

⋮ PhD docent, Eszterházy Károly University, Eger

⋮ tengely.adrienn@uni-eszterhazy.hu

## CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT YOUTH PLANS ABOUT THE COOPERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPEAN PEOPLES IN THE 1930<sup>S</sup>

*A katolikus és protestáns fiatalok elképzelései a közép-európai népek együttműködéséről az 1930-as években*

*Planovi katoličke i protestantske omladine o saradnji naroda Srednje Evrope u tridesetim godinama prošlog veka*

Hungary regained consciousness with difficulty from the shock of Trianon. In the following years it was an unambiguous fact for most people that future is only meant by the regaining of territories ceded, the revision. The Churches entirely identified with this idea too – at least in their external manifestations – and became supporters of the governmental irredentist politics. But at the beginning of the 1930s a new generation emerged related to the Churches, which, in contrast, propagated the collaboration of the nations of the Danube basin and the plan to organize them in a union. The ideas of the Catholic and the Protestant youth can broadly be seen as parallel to each other, but so many kinds of different trends were in this tendency as many people dealt with the question. However, beside the same features on the basis of several important traits the Catholic and the Protestant notions can be separated from one another, these rooted in denominational differences. Létünk 2018/2. 107–124. Although both groups advocated the necessity of the Danube basin co-operation, the basic difference between them is how they imagined this, with the participation of which nations. The Catholics unambiguously turned to West, and kept aloof from the East, they always looked for allies in West, first of all in the Catholic Austria. In contrast to this the situation is just reversed at the Protestants. They looked towards East and South, mostly seeking relations with Rumania and Jugoslavia.

*Key words:* Horthy era, Trianon, Central Europe, churches, ecumenism

## INTRODUCTION

Hungary regained consciousness with difficulty from the shock of Trianon. In the following years it was an unambiguous fact for most people that future is only meant by the regaining of territories ceded, the revision. Beside the emotional reasons, this feeling was strengthened by the propaganda of the Horthy regime stating that the source of every problem was the dismemberment of the country and the winning back of the torn territories, and it would immediately solve the economic and social problems. Hungary would be again the “Paradise.” The Churches entirely identified with this idea too – at least in their external manifestations – these became supporters of the governmental irredentist politics. But at the beginning of the 1930s a new generation emerged related to the Churches, which, in contrast, propagated the collaboration of the nations of the Danube basin and the plan to organize them in a union.

At the beginning of the 1930s the Hungarian intellectual life reached a state of a specific ferment. The youth asked permission to speak, “the young, new generation, (...) whose members were born in the one-time Austro-Hungarian Monarchy but they had not had any personal experience about «the good old days». They felt that age to be immensely distant, too. The Hungary of the Trianon peace-treaty was obvious for this generation, they remarked on this and were discontented with this” (DOROMBY 1975: 171–173). This circumstance manifested in the Catholic and Protestant community too, the young intellectuals noticed the problems of the economic, political, spiritual and social life, criticized these and searched for solutions. Although this group was not unified, the characteristic feature of their political disposition was the same: they stood opposite to the rigid conservatism and were open towards the new ideas.

### THE THOUGHTS OF THE CATHOLIC REFORM-GENERATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL EUROPE

The idea of the thousand-year-old Saint Stephen King’s Empire was the base of all conceptions in foreign policy created by the conservative wing of the Catholicism. They did not think in “Central Europe” or some kind of a bigger union, but in “Great Hungary”. They looked this concept as the only solution of the ethnic, politic and economic problems of the region and – even most of the Catholics – in the Habsburg-restoration. The activity of Turi Béla prelate excelled from these circles. Turi did not think in the old Hungarian Empire because he already considered this to be impossible.

The base of his plans was this realisation, but he thought the vocation of the Hungarian nation is to strengthen the order and peace of Central Europe, thus it needed allies. The idea of the co-operation with Austria is an unvaried detail of Turi's changing conceptions, which is completed with other countries – like Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia – from time to time, according to the actual political situation. He thought the Habsburg-restoration to be a good solution for both Hungary and Austria, but not absolutely necessary. A very significant and typical motive of his activity was the important part of the Catholicism in the political organization of the states because in his view this common mentality was a very important connecting power in Central Europe where the race and the nationality could not fill this role (TURI 1935).

The Catholic reform-generation took lively interest towards the actual questions of the age therefore they showed great concern about the problem of the Danube basin, too. They studied the question from a totally new side, in contrast with the earlier notions: they considered that it was not only a Hungarian affair, but examined all Central Europe and put Hungary into this concept. They carried the widespread view of the age, too: the idea of the danger of the Pan-Slavic and the Pan-Germanic expansion (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> June 1935 195–196, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1937 146–147, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1938 222; ÚK 18<sup>th</sup> May 1935 22–23; KOKAS 6; PAPP 3; ARADI 1934: 113–117) and some also worried about the total agreement of the Orthodox Balkan unified by the Balkan pact except Bulgaria (ARADI 1934: 113). Beside the hypothetical menace, they realized the much tangible collective problem in this area that the attempts of the successor-states to the economic autarchy proved a fiasco, just as in Hungary.

The “active-Catholics” – as occasionally they were named after their journal, the “active Catholic organ” called *Korunk Szava* – saw the solution of the problems in a kind of political co-operation of the little Danubian peoples, which could resist the exterior dangers on the one hand and would be able to restore the economic life of this area. Although the opinions about the character of this union diverged considerably, there were nevertheless some general features in these (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 1932 9–10, 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1933 295–296, 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. 1933 121–122, 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1935 286–287, 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935 299–300, June-July 1935 195–196, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1935 379–380; KaSz 1936/4. 453–460; ARADI 1934: 117–120, ARADI 1936; KOKAS 8.).

Let's look at first what role they intended for Hungary, for the Hungarian people in the big Danubian cooperation. The general opinion was that the Hungarian nation is “first among the equals” here therefore it should seize the leading part of the Central Europe organization and rally the nearby peo-

ple around itself on the base of Saint Stephen King's ideas (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1935 377–380; ARADI 1934: 117–120; ÚK 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1935 21).

We can find different viewpoints in the Habsburg-question: the young Catholic generation was not uniformly legitimist any more. József Bajza, György Széchenyi and Gábor N. Czike thought the Habsburg-dynasty to be blessed with a Central European mission, and their vocation was the unification of the little nations and safeguarding the balance of power in the Danube basin and Europe and therefore the peace (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> June 1935 195–196, 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1935 286–287, 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935 299–300, 1<sup>st</sup> Febr. 1938 94). But other ones had a totally different opinion about this question. Elemér Kokas did not take a stand on this problem in his plan, so it may be concluded that he did not consider this to be especially important, a determinative factor (KOKAS 6). Zsolt Aradi thought that the Habsburg-Monarchy might not be the final aim, only an intermediate status as a pacifier power (ARADI 1934: 119).

In terms of our theme the most typical and perhaps the most interesting question is the role of the Catholicism as a religion and as a culture in the Danube basin idea. This was a motive of the “active-Catholics” too, and nearly all of them emphasized it in some form, the study of this question proved that their policy was based on religion and the Church. Do not forget this was the age of the “neo-Baroque” flowering of the Catholicism and these young men were extraordinarily pious, followers of the serious religious deepening teaching “New Mentality” originating from France (DOROMBY 1975: 173). They considered Catholicism to be the most important joining power of Central Europe. According to Aradi, Hungary and Austria could form a Central European Empire only on the basis of this and “those who defend the Catholic culture defend the Hungarian and the organic Danube basin culture.” (ARADI 1934: 120–121) In Bajza József's conception the future Danube basin union of the Hungarians, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians, Slovenians and Ruthens appeared to be Catholic a priori (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> June 1935 195–196; KaSz Apr. 1936 234–235) – in spite of the fact that some of these were not at all a totally Catholic nation. In Talpassy's essays it would not be the culture but – fundamental difference! – the Catholic religion would “solder together untearably and undeniably” the peoples of the Danube basin which, in his opinion, was stronger than the political conflicts that separated them (KoSz 1<sup>st</sup> March 1937 146–147). Anyway, they handled this theme considerably “generously”, often “forgot” that lots of Protestants lived in Central Europe, not to mention the rather orthodox than Latin culture of the Ruthens. True enough that they tried to undo this contradiction stating that the Protestants root from the Western, the Latin culture. Solely Széchenyi did not use the Catholic expression but – the more objective –

Christian or Western attribute to the Danube basin culture and the future union (KoSz 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935 299–300).

## THE IDEAS OF THE YOUNG PROTESTANT GENERATION ABOUT THE PEACE OF THE DANUBIAN NATIONS

There were several people in the leadership of the Protestant Churches who thought more liberally and democratically in the Central Europe question than they were expected. First of all, mainly Dezső Balthazár trans-Tisza Calvinist bishop and Imre Révész, pastor from Debrecen, who followed him in the position in 1936, following his death, represented this group and Sándor Karácsony, János Victor, Albert Bereczky and Jenő Sebestyén (KORMOS 1983: 278). They did not support the irredentist foreign policy of the Horthy-regime, Balthazár criticized the activity of the Hungarian government in the presence of the foreign board of the French cabinet and recommended the rapprochement towards the neighbouring states based on Kossuth's Danubian-confederation plan in 1930 instead. It is needless to say that a lot of people did not leave this unanswered in Hungary... (KORMOS 1983: 280; LENDVAI 1987: 16; KÓNYA 1967: 77–79).

The opinion that Hungary has to approach to the neighbouring nations because of the Pan-Slavic and the Pan-Germanic dangers and the economic interdependence was general among the protestant young people, too. These ideas appeared on different levels: there were some who exhorted only to get to know each other, others already stressed the necessity of the mutual reconciliation, but the vast majority of these attained to the idea of the effective co-operation of the Central European peoples, even to the nation of the Danubian confederation too (MÚ 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1934 6–7., 15<sup>th</sup> Febr. 1935 4., 15<sup>th</sup> March 1935 2., 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935 3–4., 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1936 3–4., 1<sup>st</sup> May 1936 3–4., 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1937 6., 6<sup>th</sup> May 1937 3., 26<sup>th</sup> May 1938 5., 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1938 4–5., 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1939 1., 15<sup>th</sup> Febr. 1940 3.; DV Nov. 1934 13–14., Dec. 1934 7–8.; PAP 1936: 152–160). The group of the Central European future plans of the Protestant youth not containing the idea of Hungary as a country with a leading role, but as an equal party, can be considered as a novelty if compared to the Catholic conceptions (DV Dec. 1934 7–8; MÚ 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1936 2–3, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1936 3–4, 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1937 6; 26<sup>th</sup> May 1938 5).

I should emphasize the distrust towards the Great Powers as one of the general characteristics of the ideas of young Protestant intellectuals and that's why they expected the solution of the Danube basin question not from them but from the Central European youth just like the "active-Catholics" (MÚ 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1936 2–3, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1936 3–4, 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1937 6, 1<sup>st</sup> Aug. 1936 4;

ÚM June 1933 135, 140). The idea of the Habsburg-restoration only rarely arose in their plans, and as an unsuccessful, stillborn scheme (MÚ 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1937 6, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1937. 3; ÚM June 1933 135, 140; PAP 1936: 154).

Contrary to the Catholics, the main forum of the young Protestant intellectuals was not the journals, but the activities of the religious youth associations – the Keresztyén Ifjúsági Egyesület (KIE) (Christian Youth Association), the Magyar Evangéliumi Keresztyén Diákszövetség (MEKDSZ) (Hungarian Evangelical Christian Student Union) and the Soli Deo Gloria Református Diákszövetség (SDG) (Soli Deo Gloria Calvinist Student Alliance) – flourishing in this age. The work of the youth movements specially took up this cause because the base of every co-operation is to get acquainted and to learn to estimate values of the others.

The World's Student Christian Federation – the MEKDSZ was the Hungarian organization of this – systematically organized South-Eastern-European conferences for the sake of friendship of young people of different nationalities (MRZSL 23. 6. Historical summary about the work of the MEKDSZ 1918–1945). We have much more information about these because in the student-journals the participants gave accounts of their experiences and impressions. From these journals and from several survived conference-brochures it turns out that political questions were not brought up in the informal conversations, the official programme contained only religious themes, but political questions often came up in the conversations and the exchange of views of the youth. These meetings were very good possibilities to get to know the opinions of the neighbouring peoples, to change different opinions and to build up connections which – in accordance with the aim of the Federation – showed the way to the reconciliation (MRZSL 23. 2. Zweite Ost- und Südosteuropäische Führer Konferenz 9–16. Apr. 1923 im Visegrad, Programm für die Mitteleuropäische 11–15. Sept. 1933 im Zwingliheim). Moreover, the idea of political co-operation of the Danube basin came up, too. On the Rezek conference in 1933 the Czech and the Hungarian participants held a private discussion about the common issues when they attained the notion of the Danubian union, too (DV Oct. 1933. 35–36).

On the Chamkoria conference in 1935 concrete plans were created for the South-East-European Christian youth's co-operation: They would visit more frequently each other's conferences, would write to each other regularly, would organize study tours to the neighbouring countries, would create scholarships on the better knowledge of each other's culture and would establish a regular committee to expand the connections. An unparalleled initiative in the history of the Hungarian Churches between the two World Wars cropped up here, too: the Hungarian delegation raised the thought of

a three-language (Hungarian, Rumanian, Slavic) South-east European journal. But this undertaking was beyond the financial power of the Federation and for this reason they agreed about a quarterly 15-page supplement in the journal of the Federation, New Sheet, in German and French (DV July-Sept. 1935 3). In the end three issues were published: in November of 1937, in March of 1938 and in June of 1940 (MRZSL 23. 6. Historical summary about the work of the MEKDSZ 1918–1945).

The KIE did not organize conferences in the interest of the reconciliation but international camps where the sons and daughters of the enemy nations could meet, got acquainted and became attached to each other through the common adventures and they could change their thoughts “searching the answers for the big international questions at Jesus” (Éb Febr. 1931 73–74). They organized camps in the KIE holiday camp several times with the Danube basin youth’s participation in Dunavecse (MI July-Aug. 1936, Aug. 1938).

The Danubian notion was present powerfully in the SDG, every area of its work was imbued with this (MRZSL 24. a. 3. Minutes of the SDG leadership’s meeting 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1935). They carried on discussions and disputes and the foreign section of the alliance organized a conference with the participation of different Budapest student unions about this theme, too (TÓTH 1983: 175; DENKE 1993a: 393). They looked for a connection with the youth of the other Central European nations (MRZSL 24. a. 3. Minutes of the SDG leadership’s meeting 28<sup>th</sup> June 1934; DENKE 1993a: 389), arranged Rumanian and Slovak language courses several times for the sake of the better knowledge of the neighbouring peoples (DENKE 1993a: 390–393; MRZSL 24. a. 3. Minutes of the SDG general assembly 2–4<sup>th</sup> July 1936, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1940, 24. a. 4. Minutes of the SDG Executive Committee 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1932) and published a series of articles in the journal of the SDG, in the *Magyar Út* about the literature of the nearby nations in 1934–1935 (MÚ 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1934 4, 1<sup>st</sup> Febr. 1935 4, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1935 2). They announced competitions about the reconciliation too, arm in arm with other Protestants and international ecumenical organizations (MRZSL 50. f. 1. Elek Boér’s letter to Miklós Makay 29<sup>th</sup> January 1936, Minutes of the Hungarian Ecumenical Youth Committee 18<sup>th</sup> May 1938, 50. 2. 5/4 Henriod: The Joint Ecumenical Youth Commission: How and why it came to be. 1936. 10; DENKE 1993a: 400–401). A lot of essays had been sent to these requests, but the students wrote only in generalities about the international situation, we cannot find concrete political ideas, the religious expositions were determinative in these works (MRZSL 50. f. 1. Makay Miklós’s legacy). In spite of this, Hungary was well placed in the international competition, it won the second prize in the senior category and the third in the junior (DENKE 1993a: 401).



The SDG organized a lot of lectures, too, in connection with the future of Central Europe, the first of all on the famous and popular “Wednesday Evenings” (KULIFAY 1993: 456–464; MRZSL 24. a. 3. Minutes of the SDG Spiritual and Social Committee (1934), Minutes of the SDG general assembly 19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1941; MRZSL 24. a. 4. Minutes of the SDG Mission Committee 1932, Minutes of the SDG general assembly 30 July 1933) and the SDG conferences in Balatonszárszó (ÁZSÓTH 1990). But the question of Central Europe often came up in other forums, Béla Szentpéteri Kun delivered a lecture entitled “Revolting Europe (national question, war-peace, Pan-Europe) on the undergraduate boy-conference in 1929 (MRZSL 24. a. 2. Minutes of the SDG Executive Committee 17<sup>th</sup> Apr. 1929), the question of the world peace was discussed on the undergraduate debates in 1933 (MRZSL 24. a. 4. Minutes of the SDG undergraduate work 1932), in the Law and Economist Students College Lajos Szakáll spoke about the economic cooperation among the Danubian states (MRZSL 24. a. 34. Report on the work of the Law and Economist Students College).

The most effective student conferences of this age dealing with this theme were the two Debreceni Diétas. On 22–25<sup>th</sup> of March 1935 the Debrecen class of the SDG, the Catholic Saint Ladislas Ring and the Árpád Comrade Society organized the first Diéta in the Calvinist College in Debrecen. The importance of this conference indicates that great many people from the other universities and colleges of the country took part beside the Debrecen students (MÚ 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1935 3, 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. 1936 5–6, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1936 5; FM June 1936 121–122). The debate comprised two themes: the problem of the Hungarian nation and the relation between Hungary and Europe. The general view in the question of the revision and the Danube basin gives the particular significance of the conference for us: “The repetitive irredentism has to be ended. We live in the Danube basin. This is an unchangeable fact; consequently there is no other solution than to look for the rapprochement to the local peoples. (...) Today we have only one unique way out if we join to a kind of confederation with the local nations in our own interest. (...) Today the revision is named Danubian confederation” (FM Sept. 1935 148–149; TÓTH 1983: 119–120).

One year later, on 26–28<sup>th</sup> of March 1936 the second Debreceni Diéta was organized where the participants dealt again with the question of Central Europe. The attendants emphasized once more the importance of the adapting to “the constructive community of the European nations” and the necessity of the agreement with the surrounding peoples (TÓTH 1983: 130–135).

We have to further mention two junctions at the showing of the Danube basin ideas of the young Protestant generation, the Szárszó Conferences in



1942 and 1943 and the Márciusi Front. Although neither was a religious occurrence or organization, great many Protestant young men and women took part in these. But both of them possess plentiful specialized literature thus it is unnecessary to deal in detail with them in this essay (HAVAS 1993: 274–314; GYÓRFFY 1983; ÁZSÓTH 1990; Szárszó 1993; DENKE 1993b: 420–431; FÉJA 2003; PINTÉR 1989; KOVÁCS 1980; SALAMON 1980; PINTÉR 1987; A Márciusi Front és Debrecen 1987; Márciusi Front 1937–1987).

## THE WORKS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENTS FOR THE RECONCILIATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

In consequence of the terrible devastation of the World War I a great co-operation started among the different Protestant Churches and the orthodox denominations shortly joined this, too. The hope of preventing future wars was the most important motive of the ecumenical co-operation, and they intended to achieve it by giving the voice of Christian Churches jointly. First of all, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work under Nathan Söderblom's leadership and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation named organizations worked on behalf of this. In a little while these different movements harmonized their works and in the 1930s they already organized large scale common international conferences and issued communiqués about the disapprobation of the wars and the friendship of the nations. Of course these were quite aware of the danger of war in Central Europe therefore they made an effort to work in the reconciliation among the peoples by organizing regional conferences in this area (ROUSE–NEILL 1954; OTTYK 1979; BÉKÉS 1993; MAKAY 1941), although Hungary treated them with suspicion for the maintenance of the Versailles peace-system and the international status quo (MRZSL 2. II. 21. 837/39; BH 6<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1924).

We have only few sources about the conferences of the World Alliance, we only get to know that it held discussions on 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1923 in Újvidék with Jugoslavian, Rumanian, Hungarian and Bulgarian, on 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1923 in Budapest with Hungarian and Czechoslovak and on 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1924 in Bratislava with Austrian, Czechoslovak and Hungarian delegates. We only know about the course of these conferences that important disputes ran on among the different national participants especially about the problems of the ethnic and religious minorities (Handbook 1930: 69).

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation organized South-East-European conferences, too – 1924. Stramberg, 1925. Gammig, 1934. Luden-

berg – but we do not possess more detailed information about these (STEVENSON 1941: 15).

The common youth organization of the World Alliance and the Life and Work, the Joint Ecumenical Youth Commission organized a Central European ecumenical youth conference in the autumn of 1936 in Hungary, too. The discussion went off on 13–16<sup>th</sup> of November 1936 in Budapest with Bulgarian, Rumanian, Yugoslavian, Greek, Polish, Austrian and Czechoslovak delegations. 15 people represented Hungary from different denominations. It was important because it had set itself to the talk of the Danubian problems, but the organizers soon realized that the minority-question was so delicate a matter that it might not be the central theme of the conference which was a consequence of the blinded chauvinism of the successor-states (PAP 1936: 113; MRZSL 50. 1. 5/1 Minutes of the Hungarian Ecumenical Youth Committee 9<sup>th</sup> June 1936, 50. 3. Budapest 1936 Siegmund-Sulchze's letters to Miklós Makay 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1936, 10<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1936). The general theme of the meeting was "The problems and the results of the ecumenism" which showed the political character of this grew dim and the religious guidelines came to the front (MRZSL 50. 1. 5/1 Budapest 1936 Regional Oecumenical Conference of the Youth Commission Budapest 6–9. or 20–23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1936, Oecumenical Youth Conference of the Central European and Balkan Countries, Budapest, 13-16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1936). A Hungarian information sheet wrote that the mission of the conference was "to face up bravely those obstacles which hinder the co-operation of the youth of these two worlds [the western Protestant and the eastern Orthodox]. On the base of our common principles we discuss those questions which first of all were concerned by the youth of Central Europe and the Balkan" (MRZSL 50. 1. 5/1 Budapest 1936).

One and a half year later, in April of 1938 a similar discussion was planned to be organized in Pozsony (Bratislava) with the "Love and Truth in the international life" theme (MRZSL 50. 4. in the Bièvres 1938), but this was adjourned for indefinite time – in reality forever – because of the Czechoslovak political situation (MRZSL 2. II. 21. 3322/1939).

It belongs to the truth that the atmosphere was open and peaceful only on the regional, small-scaled meetings. On the big, international ecumenical conferences we heard about just the very opposite, the Hungarian delegates – just as the other Central Europeans – did not look for each other's friendship but they used these forums to propagate the truth of Hungary successfully (MRZSL 2. II. 21. Károly Erdóss' and Béla Vasady's report about the Oxford and the Edinbrough conferences 1937, Júlia B. Kiss' report about the Amsterdam conferences 9<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1939, 4690/1934). It is natural that few dozens of participants can understand each other better and bigger groups do

not create a familiar atmosphere; on the other hand these smaller, regional conferences of the World's Student Christian Federation were visited by the delegates of MEKDSZ propagating the political reconciliation, and the larger conferences were visited by the delegates chosen by the leadership of the Protestant Churches. Since the Churches and the political government gave financial aid, the delegates were expected to advocate the official Hungarian revisionist opinion.

## OUTLOOK – PLANS ABOUT THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN SITUATION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In 1943 the Geneva World Church Council requested from the Ecumenical Committees of the countries to organize conferences in “The Church and the international system” theme, for the purpose of studying the thoughts of the different nations on Christianity, on the future, and showing the results to the world (MRZSL 2. II. 29. Egyházak Világtanácsa; NÉMETH 2001: 543). In Hungary an Ecumenical Committee was assigned to discuss the question and to create an opinion, but it could have been assembled partly, so in the end László Ravasz, Calvinist bishop wrote an essay after harmonizing it with ecclesiastical and worldly specialists. He succeeded in managing to pass this essay out to Geneva before the Nazi occupation, and the Council appreciated it because this was one of the most detailed plans. The original document was destroyed in the siege of Budapest, which is very regrettable because it would be a very interesting source about the thoughts of the Calvinist Church leaders about the future of Hungary. Supposedly the sent out essay can be found in Geneva but we had no opportunity to obtain this (MRZSL 2. II. 29. Report about the work of the Foreign Committee of the Calvinist Convent 1944–1946).

Although the Church leadership took a stand on this question, but the leaders of the Hungarian Ecumenical Youth Committee thought it necessary that the youth's voice should be heard in this matter therefore it called a meeting to Mátraháza in December of 1943 and they sent the declaration of the conference to the World Church Council (PAP 1992: 15). The presentation titled “The possibilities of the peace” by József Szabó ministerial counsellor and university lecturer produced the biggest effect on the participants. The conference totally carried his statements and proclaimed in its declaration: “That hostile relation, which is now between the Hungarian people and the neighbouring little nations, is unnatural. These nations are interdependent. They may have conflicts of interests, but their common interests are more considerable. And they are brothers in Jesus Christ. The

Hungarian Churches have to call the Churches of these nations to attempt to introduce their peoples to one another with united power, their reunion was hindered mainly by foreign interests.” (A keresztyén ember 1946: 117–118)

Two and a half years later – before the Parisian peace treaty-, on 11–13<sup>th</sup> of July 1946 the Ecumenical Youth Committee organized its second conference in Budapest, Hűvösvölgy. The theme of the discussion was similar: the future of the world and Hungary. Much more people took part in this, but the opinions about the problem of the Danube basin were mainly the same. Every participant took sides with the organization of the Central European nations in some kind of a political union, but the views differed about whether the cooperation should be based only on Danube basin or on the whole European co-operation. (A keresztyén ember 1946: 166). József Szabó’s thoughts defined the communiqué of the conference:

“The destiny of the separated ethnic minorities has to be dependent on a referendum. (...) The Transylvanian question is only a little part of the problem of the minority-defence, but all the more important from the point of view of South-East-Europe. The Hungarian Ecumenical Youth Committee states that there is wide contrast with the spirit of the Atlantic and the San Francisco Charta and the principles of the political wisdom if we solve this dictatorially, simply with the old, bad recipe of the punitive-rewarding-power politics. The objective solution is that Transylvania will not be annexed either to Rumania or to Hungary, but it will be an independent state, the Switzerland of the East. (...) The local nations may not be delimited according to territory and their resettlement or emigration may meet great difficulties because of their large crowds. Transylvania will be the member of the regional confederation of the Danubian nations to be prospectively formed and this solution will not endanger the economic union of the Danube basin in case of the rational forming of the world politics” (A keresztyén ember 1946: 340–342).

We can see in the comparison of the two declarations that the second comprised more concrete, more delimited plans and the first laid down only principles. It is interesting that they spoke of the “regional confederation of the Danubian nations to be prospectively formed”. Why did they rely on this so surely although – according to this text – they were aware that the Great Powers will not side with this political form? Perhaps this solution appeared to be necessary and obvious, and in the interest of all people living here, but it proved to be an exaggerated naivety.

But not only had the youth searched for the ways of the future. There was a conference in Debrecen on 17–19<sup>th</sup> of October 1946 to the request of the World Church Council of Geneva, too. In the declaration of this, the participants asked the Hungarian Committee of the World Council to take

steps: “the crisis of the nationalism and the tasks of the World Christianity regarding this matter should be examined by a conference consisting of the delegates of the interested Danubian little nations .” (MRZSL 2. II. 29. 1946 Draft resolution of the Debrecen conference 17–19<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1946) We do not know whether this was realized.

In 1946 the SDG dealt with this question, too, on its traditional Palm Sunday conference. The assembled Calvinist students published a declaration in which they stated that clear ethnic boundaries should not be drawn in Central Europe due to the mixed population living there, therefore the honourable co-operation among the local little nations for the peace and calmness was necessary. On the other hand, pairing somewhat odd with the above, they declared that nations living in one ethnic block had to live in one state. At first hearing this seems to be a contradiction, but on reflection we have to admit this made sense: they would like to organize a big Central European state where borders would not cut up the peoples (TO 1946 Whitsun).

But the politics and the Parisian peace-treaty on 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1947 broke these two nice plans into two.

## CONCLUSION

We can rank the notions of the Churches about Central Europe to two fundamental trends: there was the revisionist-irredentist viewpoint which was really an “anti-Central-European” conception, because it imagined Hungary among only the thousand year old borders as an independent state, and there were followers of the confederation idea, too – according to which the Central European states would form a state union. The first notion contained the conservative church leaders – except the Balthazár-group – and the connecting circles, largely the members of the older generation who identified themselves with the political system. The followers of the second, confederation solution – to simplify the statement – were the young reform-generation of the 1930–1940s. The ideas of the Catholic and the Protestant youth were largely parallel to each other, but so many kinds of different trends were in this tendency as many people dealt with the question. However, beside the same features – such as the fear from the Pan-Germanic and the Pan-Slavic dangers, the intended part of the youth, etc. – on the basis of several important traits the Catholic and the Protestant notions can be separated from one another rooted in the religious difference.

However, both groups advocated the necessity of the Danube basin co-operation, but the basic difference between them is how they imagined this, with the participation of which nations. The Catholics unambiguously

turned to West, and kept aloof from the East, they always looked for allies in West, first of all in the Catholic Austria – the conception of Austrian alliance arose in a work of every “active-Catholic” author – but an alliance with the Catholic Italy, Poland and Czechoslovakia were also considered. But they did never plan a co-operation with the largely Orthodox Rumania and Jugoslavia, only in case of disorganization of the second with the Catholic Croats and Slovenes. In contrast to this the situation is just reversed at the Protestants. They considered towards East and South, almost none of them wrote about western allies like co-operating with Austria – except János Péter, the later Calvinist bishop wrote about this – but the idea of the connection with Rumania and Jugoslavia often turned up. What is the reason of this delimitation? We have to see religious reasons behind it because these two trends clearly reflect the denominational groups.

At the Catholics it is obvious to turn to nations having the same religion and mentality, in this age the belonging to the denomination was so important as the national question. But what is the reason for the general eastern orientation of the Protestants? Presumably it is a result of several reasons. It is understandable that a possible alliance with Austria foreshadowed the Habsburg-restoration which was not desirable for them; the Catholics’ support of Austrian co-operation. It is natural that the Protestants could not belong with pleasure to a Catholic majority union and the western orientation would have meant this. But what is the situation with the Eastern and the Southern neighbouring nations? Presumably partly the historical traditions and the East fellow traveller Bethlen’s and Bocskai’s inheritance directed them to this course, partly the very popular Sándor Karácsony, the famous educator’s ideas (KARÁCSONY 2001; KARÁCSONY 2002; LÁNYI 2000; KONTRA 1995) – who totally rejected the West – had produced quite a big effect on them. Thirdly, we have to rank here the effects of the ecumenical movements because in these active common work and very good connections were formed between the Protestant and the Orthodox youth both in world scale and in Central Europe, so it is understandable that they looked for connections rather towards these well-known and friendly groups.

There is another important difference between the two groups – which followed the denominations, too – that the Catholics connected the religion to the Danubian politics. The Catholicism often appeared in their essays as the joining power of the Central European nations and as the “Catholic union” expression, but this indicated now cultural and religious definition. The Protestants naturally did not look at their religion so inside characteristic of this area, due to their numerical ratio and denominational division, but nevertheless in their ideas some similarities appeared in their turn to the

Orthodoxia. They had a feeling of belonging to the same religious group therefore in some way or other the co-operating religions appeared as a connective power here, too, only with a “non-Catholic” attribute.

Therefore in the thoughts of the Catholic and the Protestant reform-generations the religious definition appeared as the most important characteristic. This got a larger role than the contingent political and economic guidelines; although the political and economic situation of the Danube basin was given to both groups they chose to turn in totally opposite directions.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BH = Budapesti Hírlap  
DV = Diákvilág  
Éb = Ébresztő  
EL = Evangélikusok Lapja  
FM = Fiatal Magyarország  
KaSz = Katholikus Szemle  
KoSz = Korunk Szava  
MI = Magyar Ifjúság  
MK = Magyar Kultúra  
MRZSL = Council Archive of the Hungarian Calvinist Church  
MÚ = Magyar Út  
RF = Református Figyelő  
TO = Tűzoszlop  
ÚK = Új Kor  
ÚM = Új Magyarország

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*A katolikus és protestáns fiatalok elképzelései a közép-európai népek együttműködéséről az 1930-as években*

Trianon sokkjából az ország nehezen tért magához. Az utána következő években a legtöbb ember számára egyértelmű volt, hogy jövő csakis az elcsatolt területek visszaszerzésében, a revízióban lehet. Az egyházak is – legáltalában külső megnyilvánulásaikban – teljesen azonosultak ezzel az eszmével, a hivatalos irredenta politika támogatóivá váltak. Azonban az 1930-as évek elején az egyházi körök uszályában megjelent egy új nemzedék, amely ezzel szemben a Duna-völgy összefogását és egységbe szerveződését hirdette. A katolikus és a protestáns fiatalok elképzeléseit nagy vonásokban párhuzamba állíthatjuk egymással, de ezen az irányzaton belül jóformán annyiféle áramlat létezett, ahányan foglalkoztak a kérdéssel. A sok azonos vonás mellett viszont néhány nagyon lényeges jellemző alapján teljesen elkülöníthetőek a katolikus és a protestáns elképzelések, amelyek a felekezeti különbségekben gyökereztek. Jóllehet mind a két csoport a Duna-völgyi összefogás szükségességét hirdette, a leglényegesebb különbség közöttük abban van, hogy ezt mely népek részvételével képzelték el. A katolikusok egyértelműen Nyugat felé fordultak Kelettől elzárkózva, a szövetségeseiket mindig Nyugaton keresték, elsősorban a katolikus Ausztriában. Ezzel szemben a protestánsoknál épp fordított a helyzet, ők Kelet, illetve Dél felé tekintettek, elsősorban Romániával és Jugoszláviával keresve a kapcsolatot.

*Kulcsszavak:* Horthy-korszak, Trianon, Közép-Európa, egyházak, ökumenizmus

*Planovi katoličke i protestantske omladine o saradnji naroda Srednje Evrope u tridesetim godinama prošlog veka*

Zemlja se veoma teško oporavljala od šoka Trianona. Većini stanovništva bilo je jasno da budućnost leži u vraćanju izgubljenih teritorija, u reviziji. Crkve su delile ovo mišljenje – barem po njihovim javnim nastupima – i podržavali su politiku iredente. Ipak, u tridesetim godinama prošlog veka među crkvenim krugovima se pojavila jedna nova generacija, koja nasuprot politici revizije podržavala ujedinjenje naroda basena Dunava. Mladi katolici i protestanti su uglavnom imali slična ili ista viđenja, iako u nekim crtama se nisu u potpunosti slagale. Ove razlike su uglavnom imali korene u generičnim različitostima dveju crkava. Najveća razlika se mogla uočiti u tome koji narodi bi trebali da pristupe tom ujedinjenom, novom savezu. Katolici su uglavnom gledali na Zapad – prvenstveno na Austriju, potpuno zanemarući Istok. Nasuprot njima, protestanti su gledali ka Istoku i Jugu i uglavnom su tražili savezništvo sa Rumunijom i Jugoslavijom.

*Ključne reči:* Horti era, Trianon, Srednja Evropa, crkve, ekumenizam

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