

Czechoslovak-Hungarian Cultural Clash in the Interwar Period. The Memory of Francis II Rákóczi in Košice (1906–1938)

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Francis II Rákóczi (1676–1735) had a crucial part in the Hungarian identity. His war of independence and exile made him a national hero. One of the greatest events of the Hungarian political scene was the reburial of him and his comrades in 1906 Košice. After the First World War (1918) Austria-Hungary was dissolved and new states formed from its territory. The birth of Czechoslovakia consisted of two nations (Czechs, Slovaks) within a multiethnic state. The cold relationship between Czechoslovakia and Hungary had taken its toll on the Hungarian minority, who were insisted to join the new Czechoslovak state. One area of conflict was the politics of memory, where each of the participants (Czechs, Slovaks, and Hungarians) sought to prioritize their own narratives. It was here that the Hungarians turned to the memory of Rákóczi, which they wanted to offer to the Slovaks as well as to the Hungarian population. One of the centres of the memory struggle was the prince's resting place in Košice. In the diplomatic struggles of the Western powers, Czechoslovakia failed to defend itself from German claims, and after the Munich Agreement (1938) other states sought to gain territory from them. Thus, in October 1938, the annexation of the Felvidék (Upper Hungary, Uplands or Horní země) to Hungary took place, when the memory of Rákóczi was also commemorated in a symbolic inauguration.

[Memory; Revisionism; Interwar Period; Francis II Rákóczi; Czechoslovakia]

Introduction

The life of Francis II Rákóczi (1676–1735) has always been a crucial part of the Hungarian identity. The struggle for freedom led by the nobleman at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries had a profound impact on

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the population of the Carpathian Basin. After his voluntary exile, his memory faded, but the political debates of the second half of the 19th century brought him to the fore again. One of the greatest events of the 20th century was the reburial of the prince and his fellow exiles in 1906 in Košice (Kassa in Hungarian). The situation changed after 1918, when his *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) were detached from the country.

After the defeat in World War I, however, this memory was formed in the new state of Czechoslovakia. To build a common “Czechoslovak” memory, the search had begun for historical figures who could help reinforce identity. However, most of the examples of this period include several elements of Czech origin, such as Jan Hus (1369–1415), a Czech priest, Jan Žižka (1360–1424), a Hussite general, Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821–1856), a leader of the Czech national movement and František Palacký (1798–1876), a historian and one of the first proponents of Austro-Slavism. In terms of national holidays, two dates became relevant: 2 July (commemorating the Battle of Zborov in 1917) and 28 October were the most important days for the common national construction. The former event also played an important role in Czech military memory, especially among the legionnaires who fought on several fronts of the First World War. 28 October would indeed have been a common point of remembrance, even if different parts of it were celebrated by the constituent nations. The Czechs celebrated the proclamation of the Czechoslovak state in Prague. The Slovaks celebrated the Treaty of Turocszentmárton (*Martinská deklarácia*), “issued on 30 October, by which they joined the Czechs to their state”. The two commemorative events were similar, although even the participants had a serious debate about the date of the birth of the state.³ Later on, we see that the celebrations shifted more towards the day – and memory – supported by the Czechs (28 October).⁴

Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk – the first President of Czechoslovakia – took a major part as a new hero of the state. Although he had a crucial part as a politician in the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, he had many admirers in Hungary in the interwar period. In this memory, Slovak elements were

³ P. ŠVORC, Szlovenszókó betagolása az új államba és Csehszlovákia létrejötte, in: *Magyar Napló*, 21, 2009, pp. 59–69; N. KRAJČOVIČOVÁ, Slovakia in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1938, in: M. TEICH – D. KOVÁČ – M. BROWN (eds.), *Slovakia in History*, New York, pp. 140–143.

⁴ D. HÁJKOVÁ – N. M. WINGFIELD, Czech(-oslovak) National Commemorations during the Interwar Period: Tomas G. Masaryk and the Battle of White Mountain Avenged, in: *Acta Histriae*, 3, 2010, pp. 425–452.

less prominent compared to the Czech parts. Hungarian and German elements were almost excluded from the new state memory policy. For the Hungarians, Francis II Rákóczi had become a role model, so strengthening and building his memory was seen as a special task.⁵

The images of Rákóczi that emerged in the interwar period were all intended to serve as an example for the Hungarian people.⁶ This was true both for those in the homeland and for those living in exile. The acquisition of *Kassa*, the place of Rákóczi's memory, was a coveted desire for Hungarians. The diplomatic changes of the mid-1930s foreshadowed such a solution. In 1938, the German and Italian negotiators jointly contributed to the transfer of Kassa and its surroundings to Hungary. During the occupation, the Hungarian state also symbolically occupied the area by drawing a strong parallel between Francis II Rákóczi and Governor Miklós Horthy (1868–1957). The debate between Czechoslovak and Hungarian memory politics of the period was briefly won by the latter on the political scene and Kassa became part of the Hungarian state.

In our study, we want to present the development of the memory of Rákóczi up to the first half of the 20th century, with special attention to the memory policy in Hungarian-Czechoslovak relations. First, we will review theoretical writings on political memory, focusing on the geographical aspects of memory. We first turn to the theoretical debates surrounding naming the Rákóczi War of Independence and the first commemorative event of the prince and his companions: the reburial in Kassa (1906). We then review the circumstances of the creation of the new Czechoslovak state and its foreign policy relations with Hungary. This will be followed by a sketch of the two states' commemorative policies to understand the differences between them. One particular area of Hungarian remembrance policy was the strengthening of Rákóczi's memory during the period, which was influenced by several commemorative events (1926, 1935). We want to show that in this difficult situation, the Hungarian state turned to the image of Rákóczi to strengthen the sense of belonging and connection with the motherland in the seceded population. During the 1938 invasion of Kassa, the Hungarian state relied heavily on the cult and memory of Rákóczi. To this end, we have compiled local sites of memory

⁵ B. ABLONCZY, *A csehszlovák minta (A masaryki demokrácia és szimpatizánsai a két világháború közötti Magyarországon)*, in: *Valóság*, 51, 2008, pp. 66–77.

⁶ I. DERGEZ, *Role models in Hungarian Educational Decrees between the two world wars (1920–1938)*, in: *Tudásmenedzsment*, 24, 2023, pp. 147–157.

(*lieux de mémoire*) from previous research, which show that the memory process that had begun in the early 20th century was interrupted after 1918 and only strengthened again after 1938.

Theory of Political Memory

Mayo argues that the role of military memorials is as much political as it is born out of social need. Different buildings can become memorials in several ways: because of the activities conducted there (like schools and hospitals) or as a point of remembrance because of political decisions. In his view, war memorials become both sacred and profane in which society uses them. This use can be followed by everyday acts (such as walking past them) but can also be accompanied by ceremonies – this is how war, memorial and place come together.⁷

According to Pierre Nora, the interweaving of different sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) can bring history alive, reinforcing identity and coexistence. We can also consider the victor-loser dichotomy and the differences between state and local memory as a symbolic component. Memory sites associated with the losers saturated with emotions, such as representatives of the heroic past. In contrast, state (victor) memory is imposed from above – by national authority or formal bodies. Common moments are salient for a shared identity, for which historical experience is most often used.⁸

Gerry O'Reilly pointed out that the best-known of the current codes is the one issued by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. According to this, there are four important segments of commemoration. The first is the official truth, e.g., the accepted (or denied) public perception of what happened. The second is narrative truth, which includes the explanations of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators. The third can be described as social truth, e.g., the memory that is conflicting and consolidated by the main decision-makers. The fourth can briefly be called “healing memory”, which has a dual purpose: to help heal old wounds and prevent them from happening again.⁹

There are many studies on symbolic space occupation, including Hungarian experiences. An excellent example is the case of Szigetvár, in

⁷ J. M. MAYO, War Memorials as Political Memory, in: *Geographical Review*, 1, 1988, pp. 62–75.

⁸ P. NORA, *Emlékezet és történelem között. Válogatott tanulmányok*, Budapest 2010.

⁹ G. O'REILLY, Introduction: Approaching Sites of Memory, in: G. O'REILLY (ed.), *Places of Memory and Legacies in an Age of Insecurities and Globalization*, Cham 2020, pp. 1–25.

which the “duel” between Suleiman and Miklós Zrínyi was interpreted as a struggle. This is because, despite recent research, a certain degree of emotional surplus can still be felt about the area, as both parties feel a sense of ownership of Szigetvár’s memory space.¹⁰ Similar work is currently underway on the commemorative space of the Battle of Mohács in 1526, which also consists of several layers. The second military clash was the Battle of Harsány Hill, known as the Second Battle of Mohács (1687). Examples of the control of memory spaces can also be found in the Balkans, such as in the comparison of the memory of the battles of Rigómező and Mohács.¹¹

Historical Background and the Reburial of Rákóczi and his Companions in Košice (1906)

The family traditions of Francis II Rákóczi almost predicted that he would play a significant political role.¹² As a young man, he followed Imre Thököly (1657–1705), who led campaigns with his courtiers against the Habsburgs and their Hungarian supporters. Rákóczi’s War of Independence (1703–1711) had an impact throughout the Carpathian Basin. The nearly nine years of struggle have been historically described by many definitions. Rákóczi his *Mémoires* made a clear distinction between an uprising (which comes from the peasantry) and the “*defense of the national liberty*” (which movement comes from the nobility). Although the “*right to revolt*” (*ius resistendi*) was revoked by the diet of 1687, but Rákóczi and his advisors used this term to legitimate themselves.¹³

In categorising these terms, we must consider the traditions of different schools of historiography and political systems. In the Hungarian context, the events are most often referred to as the *War of Independence*, which in some periods (especially after 1945) was accompanied by the term *revolution*. The historiographical analysis of the subject has been done by

¹⁰ N. PAP, *Magyarország és a Balkán. Kapcsolati terek és helyek*, Pécs 2018.

¹¹ N. PAP – P. REMÉNYI, Encounters Between Islam and Christianity: Mohács and Kosovo Polje, in: G. O’REILLY (ed.), *Places of Memory and Legacies in an Age of Insecurities and Globalization*, Cham 2020, pp. 285–305.

¹² His memoirs are available in English. F. RÁKÓCZI II, *Mémoires*, trans. Bernard Adams, Budapest 2019.

¹³ M. KISS, Rebel Propaganda and Self-Image in the Beginning of the 18th Century. The Case of Ferenc II Rákóczi’s War of Independence, in: ZS. AGORA – V. RAB (eds.), *Identities in Conversation. Introducing Grastyán Endre College for Advanced Studies, University of Pécs (Hungary)*, Pécs 2018, pp. 66–74; W. B. SLOTTMAN, *Ferenc II Rákóczi and the Great Powers*, New York 1997.

several people before, so I would like to highlight here only the details relevant to this paper.¹⁴ The so-called “romantic” view of history has led to a perception of the term (*war of independence*) that is best characterized by a sense of national heroism. The best examples of this idea can be found in the work of Kálmán Thaly and also in the monographs written in the 1950s. In these works, the national protagonists (György Dózsa, István Bocskai, Francis II Rákóczi, Lajos Kossuth) fought for Hungarian independence against the “foreign” Habsburgs with more rather than less success.¹⁵ In the interwar period the image of Francis II Rákóczi became a direct link between Miklós Zrínyi and István Széchenyi, as one of the representatives of the path to an independent Hungarian state.¹⁶ The term *revolution* took on a special meaning in the light of the Hungarian events of 1956. Not surprisingly, the term disappeared after a while from the literature. Several authors described the events as *rebellion* or *uprising*, but these remained marginal compared to other Hungarian-language literature.¹⁷

In foreign scholars’ interpretations, rebellion and its synonyms are in central. This refers to action against a legally elected Habsburg ruler. Ladislav Baron Hengelmüller (1845–1917) also used the term *uprising* in his work translated into English, one of the prefaces of which was written by Theodore Roosevelt. However, the term *revolution* also appears in several instances in the book.¹⁸ Linda and Marsha Frey, in their work on the theory of rebellion, have labelled events as insurrection or uprising, a term akin to the French Camisards and the Spanish rebels.¹⁹ John B. Hattendorf has also advocated the term *insurrection* from the perspective of English diplomatic documents and strategic planning.²⁰ William B. Slottman, who also used Hungarian sources in his work, found the term

¹⁴ Á. VÁRKONYI, Befejezetlen történelem. Áttekintés a szabadságharc történetírásáról, 1707–2003, in: Á. VÁRKONYI (ed.), *A Rákóczi-szabadságharc*, Budapest 2004, pp. 717–773.

¹⁵ A. MÓD, *400 év küzdelem az önálló Magyarországért*, Budapest 1954.

¹⁶ B. HÓMAN – GY. SZEKFŰ, *Magyar Történet*. IV. kötet, Budapest 1990, p. 282.

¹⁷ GY. SZEKFŰ, *A száműzött Rákóczi, 1715–1735*, Budapest 1913.

¹⁸ L. HENGELMÜLLER, *Hungary’s fight for national existence or the history of the great uprising led by Francis Rákoczi II*, London 1913.

¹⁹ L. FREY – M. FREY, The Rákóczi Insurrection and the Disruption of the Grand Alliance, in: *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, 5, 1978, pp. 17–29.

²⁰ J. B. HATTENDORF, The Rákóczi Insurrection in English War Policy, 1703–1711, in: *Canadian-American Review of Hungarian Studies*, 7, 1980, pp. 91–102.

rebellion most appropriate.²¹ More recently, Lothar Höbelt has also used the word rebellion, mentioning the Hungarian term “war of liberation”.²² A similar view was expressed by Caleb Karges, who, examining the strategy of the Anglo-Dutch-Habsburg alliance, pointed to the role of the Hungarian Rebellion.²³ In recent studies Peter Kónya also used the term *uprising* to the era (1670–1711).²⁴ In this paper we will use the term *War of Independence* as a reference for the struggle.

After Rákóczi’s voluntary emigration, the Habsburg government continued keeping the power in the area. At the same time, the memory of the War of Independence united parts of the country’s population, and especially in the areas around the former Rákóczi estates, the memory remained strong.

Memory segments of the Rákóczi War of Independence can be found in the identity of the Slovak people. This can be seen in the large number of surnames Kuruc, Kurucz, Kurutz among the inhabitants of the area, which may be evidence of military service in the Kuruc wars (1672–1711).²⁵ Several studies have tended to approach the question from the perspective of myths and folk tales.²⁶ Many of these stories were linked to Juraj Jánošík (1688–1713), who was – according to them – a fellow soldier of Rákóczi. Ludovít Štúr (1815–1856) also mentioned the “Kuruc stories” being popular among the Slovak people. Many other collections also reinforced this idea.²⁷ Recording of the Rákóczi tales in Slovak territory also began at the beginning of the 20th century. These stories came not only from Hungarians living in the area but also from the local Slovak and German populations. Several stories were about Rákóczi’s actions and many sieges. In the interwar period several collections of Rákóczi

²¹ SLOTTMAN, pp. 298-300.

²² L. HÖBELT, The Impact of the Rákóczi Rebellion on Habsburg Strategy: Incentives and Opportunity Costs, in: *War in History*, 13, 2006, pp. 2–15.

²³ C. KERGES, Britain, Austria, and the “Budern of War” in the Western Mediterranean, 1703–1708, in: *International Journal of Military History and Historiography*, 39, 2019, pp. 7–33.

²⁴ P. KÓNYA, *Pod zástavou kurucov. Protihabsurské povstania v uhorsku v r. 1670–1711*, Prešov 2015.

²⁵ I. CZIGÁNY, Egy korabeli “asszimetrikus” háború sajátosságai kuruc felkelések Magyarországon 1672–1711, in: P. KÓNYA (ed), *Kuruc küzdelmek kora*, Prešov 2014, pp. 111–126.

²⁶ I. KÁFER, *Dona nobis pacem. Magyar-szlovák kérdések*, Piliscsaba 2005, pp. 152–186.

²⁷ S. ELIAS, II. Rákóczi Ferenc és a kurucok a szlovák nép mondáiban és meséiben, in: *Széphalom*, 13, 2003, pp. 31–37.

sagas were published, maintaining the connection between Hungarian and Slovakian people.²⁸ Besides that, the two states (Czechoslovakia and Hungary) and their nationalities did not use the “Rákóczi” traditions to bond themselves together in the interwar period. This process could only start in the second half of the 20th century, especially after 1990.²⁹

Rákóczi’s memory also suffered from the border changes in the 20th century, as most of his memorial sites (his birthplace in Borša, final resting place) were also assigned to Czechoslovakia, while in Hungarian memory the Prince was given a major role. The First World War fundamentally changed this status quo. Many new states were born, which required new policies such as memory policy. The spaces that were opening had to be occupied, and inhabited, both physically and symbolically. After the Russian revolutions of 1917, nearly two million people fled the country and had to be “governed” in some way by the émigré leaders. The Entente monuments that became widespread in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia after the war can be seen as a typical attempt to occupy a little sovereign space.³⁰

Košice came to the fore several times during the Rákóczi War of Independence. The most famous of which was in 1706, when, after the siege of the imperial general Jean Rabutin, the city welcomed Rákóczi, who himself recorded his entry in his short memoirs.³¹ Before the fall of the War of Independence, Rákóczi went abroad in search of supporters and never returned. First in Poland, then after a brief detour in England, he went to France in exile, where he continued to support his cause. The Hungarian community in exile, however, could not get the French to support their cause to the hilt. Rákóczi thus became increasingly marginalised in diplomatic affairs and, on the news of the new Habsburg-Turkish war (1716–1718), sought to go to Turkish territory. His arrival was late, and he arrived only at the end of the war. It is no coincidence that he did not play a significant role in it, and at the same time, the Ottoman state did not hand him over to the Habsburgs. Their exile was completed and by their placement in Rodostó (nowadays Tekirdağ, Turkey). Rákóczi and his combatants were excluded from the political affairs of the Ottoman State.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ KÄFER, pp. 152–186.

³⁰ A. J. COHEN, “Our Russian Passport”: First World War Monuments, Transnational Commemoration, and the Russian Emigration in Europe, 1918–39, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4, 2014, pp. 627–651.

³¹ F. RÁKÓCZI, *Vallomások, emlékiratok*, Budapest 1979.

Some of the exiles returned to their homeland, others lived their daily lives with the prince. The lessened number of Hungarians finally dwindled with the death of Rákóczi in 1735, after which the Hungarian colony began to decrease even more. This period was the subject of a later article by Kelemen Mikes of Zágón, the famous writer of the 18th century.³²

In the 19th century, several poets mentioned Rákóczi, including Sándor Petőfi, who wrote a poem about him. It was after the suppression of the War of Independence in 1848–1849 that Rákóczi and his struggle began to come to the fore. After the funeral of Lajos Kossuth (1894), the Hungarian independence movements were increasingly eager to repatriate the ashes of the prince and his companions. Kálmán Thaly (1839–1909) stood out in the political battles, taking the lion's share in the debates over the law passed against Rákóczi and his companions in 1715.³³ The amending article of the law eventually suspended the earlier law, citing the disappearance of serious controversies.³⁴ The person of Francis II Rákóczi, who was heavily burdened by political disputes, was by then acceptable to the Habsburg court. He had become a historical figure and even a law was amended in this matter. For the joint Habsburg-Hungarian government, which they would be able to jointly develop their commemorative policy seemed to be a key issue. This would have required people who would have met the criteria of both sides. By recognising Rákóczi, however, the Habsburg ruler Franz Joseph I (1848–1916) favoured the nationalities in his empire rather than his dynasty. The person of Rákóczi was, as then, accepted by the nationalities of the Carpathian Basin except for the Serbs and Croats. The re-enactment took place in two separate events, first in Budapest (28th October 1906) and then the next morning in Košice (29th October).³⁵ The celebrating crowds waited for the train at the railway station and then, with Kálmán Thaly in the lead, set off for St Stephen's Basilica. Cardinal József Samassa celebrated a solemn service in memory of the prince and those who had gone into exile with

³² L. CZIGÁNY, *A History of Hungarian Literature: From the Earliest Times to the mid-1970s*, Oxford 1984.

³³ Act of XLIX. 1715. Bűnbocsánat a szatmári megegyezésben kitűzött határidőn belől hazatértek részére, s másoknak, kik arra a határidőre vissza nem tértek, száműzetése. <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=71500049.IV> [2023–08–16].

³⁴ Act XX of 1906. II. Rákóczi Ferencz és bujdosó társai hamvainak hazahozataláról. <https://net.jogtar.hu/ezer-ev-torveny?docid=90600020.IV> [2023–08–16].

³⁵ *Dokumentumok II. Rákóczi Ferenc és társai újratemetéséhez (1873–1906)*, H. HALÁSZ – CS. KATONA – Z. ÓLMOSI (eds.), Budapest 2004.

him. The significance of this step is shown by the fact that it was both a support of patriotic feelings and a gesture of current politics and at the same time – and most importantly – a dignified burial of a Hungarian historical figure.³⁶

The Birth of Czechoslovakia and its Diplomatic Relations with Hungary

In the second half of the 19th century, the nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (Austria-Hungary) repeatedly expressed their disagreement with government decisions. Despite the economic progress at the turn of the century, they were not reconciled to the situation and continued to demand that their rights be extended. They continued to do so after the outbreak of the First World War and expressed their displeasure at the fighting. Because of the involvement of their host countries in the war, they did not look kindly on the nationalities living within the country, and relations soon deteriorated. The nationalist politicians who had emigrated from the Monarchy made efforts to persuade the Western powers to support their movement. The ruling elites of the Monarchy sensing the danger, sought to find a political solution to the issue and reconcile with the nationalities. Initially, the Czechs supported the Austro-Hungarian government's plans, but bloody police atrocities led them to abandon this and to give a growing role to émigré politicians, including Tomáš Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik. They also enjoyed the support of the French government, which gave them a better chance to organize power. By the time of the Armistice of Padua (3rd November 1918), the Monarchy had virtually ceased to exist, and the other nationalities had followed the example of the Czechs and become independent.

The declaration of independence had always been part of nationalist ideology since the end of the 19th century. During the First World War, these voices gained support and reinforced by the Monarchy's wartime failures. Linked to this was the activity of Czech politicians who had broken away into the world to form their own state. In such independence movements, the Czechs found friends among the Slovak population, whose language they knew because of their close kinship. In the process of strengthening the emerging Czech-Slovak statehood, a strong role was

³⁶ A. VARI, The nation in the city: ceremonial (re)burials and patriotic mythmaking in turn-of-the-century Budapest, in: *Urban History* 40, 2013, pp. 202–225.

given to common memory, and the intellectual debate on how to develop it began during the war.³⁷ The Czechoslovak state had a population of roughly 14 million (13,6 million) with nearly 9 million of Czechs and Slovaks. The largest minority were the Germans (3,1 million), followed by Hungarians (750 thousand) and Ruthene-Ukrainians (called Rusyns, Russians and Ukrainians) (460 thousand).³⁸ The Czech and Slovak populations were the constituent nationalities in this newly formed state referred as Czechoslovak nation.³⁹ The mutual agreement of the two nations cumulated in the idea of the concept of Czechoslovak identity. Even though they were finally able to exist as an independent state, Slovaks repeatedly resented the growing Czech influence. This was particularly noticeable in professional administration and in the Czech political actors in the political leadership. The Constitution of 1920 guaranteed full rights to its nationalities, including its own educational system and use of language. Although it was impossible to satisfy all ethnic problems and questions. Tensions had surfaced with the German minority, which often caused clashes between the population and the state powers. Dozens of demonstrations ended in violence, and many were killed on either side. This also worsened the relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany in the diplomatic field as well. Other nationalities – like Rusyns and Hungarians – were numerically weaker, living in the border regions of the country, and not interfering with the internal political state of the country.⁴⁰ This foreshadowed a possible clash between the nationalities of the state, just as the multiethnic conflict of Austria-Hungary.⁴¹

After the military defeat Austria-Hungary – as well as the Kingdom of Hungary – collapsed, with many parts of it transferred to the successor states. Around one third of the ceded territories (61 633 km²) were given to the Czechoslovak state. The area was called Felvidék (Upper Hungary, Uplands or Horní země) by the Hungarians and was close to the new Hungarian border. According to the Royal Hungarian Central Statistical

³⁷ HÁJKOVÁ – WINGFIELD, p. 426.

³⁸ J. MLYNÁRIK, J., The Nationality Question in Czechoslovakia and the 1938 Munich Agreement, in: N. STONE. – E. STROUHAL (eds.), *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918–88*, New York 1989, pp. 89–100.

³⁹ HÁJKOVÁ – WINGFIELD, p. 426; J. HOETZL – V. JOACHIM (eds.), *The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic*, Praha 1920, p. 19.

⁴⁰ J. PÁNEK – O. TŮMA – J. QUINN – P. KEY – L. BENNIS (eds.), *A history of the Czech lands*, Praha 2018, pp. 442–443.

⁴¹ J. F. N. BRADLEY, *Czechoslovakia: a short history*, Edinburgh 1971, pp. 156–157.

Office, this represented 3.5 million people, of whom – 30.3% – almost one million – were of Hungarian nationality.⁴²

Hungarian-Czechoslovak Relations in the Interwar Period

In the shock of the defeat of the war, the revolutions and the peace treaty, there was a sense of categorical rejection and a sense of coping at the same time.⁴³ This dichotomy was also evident in the foreign policy of the inter-war period, which ranged from the revision of the peace treaties to their reconciliation and their complete abolition. The irredentist aspirations were well in tune with the idea of revisionism, whether integral or ethnic. The co-existence and co-existence of different views still poses a major challenge to scholars today.⁴⁴ This assumption is particularly true in the case of foreign relations with Germany, which strengthened in the 1930s, where many see a vassalage between the two states.⁴⁵

In addition to the loss of territory, there was a need to ensure that the internal relations of the state were settled, modernized, and adapted to new circumstances. The former economic relations had to be replaced by new ones, which in the post-war financial situation posed serious difficulties. In retrospect, these efforts were successful, and the Hungarian state did not disappear in the aftermath of the war's defeat. This did not mean, however, that the memory of the old Hungarian glory had faded.⁴⁶

Hungary had the most hostile relations with Czechoslovakia among all the members of the post-war Entente (or Little Entente). The Hungarian side considered the joint state of the Czechs and Slovaks as one of its weakest opponents, and several plans were made for an eventual military intervention against it. Hungary knew well from previous contacts that the friendship between the two constituent nations was extremely fragile and sought to exploit this to its advantage. The Czechoslovak state was quite aware of the danger, as it had identified Hungary as its

⁴² ROMSICS, p. 145.

⁴³ M. ZEIDLER, Magyar revizionizmus a két háború között, in: *Limes*, 14, 2001, pp. 7–24; M. CAPLES, Et in Hungaria Ego: Trianon, Revisionism and the Journal Magyar Szemle (1927–1944), in: *Hungarian Studies*, 19, 2005, pp. 51–104.

⁴⁴ E. S. BALOGH, Peaceful Revision: the Diplomatic Road to War, in: *Hungarian Studies Review*, 10, 1983, pp. 43–51; S. B. VARDY, The Impact of Trianon upon Hungary and the Hungarian Mind: The Nature of Interwar Hungarian Irredentism, in: *Hungarian Studies Review*, 10, 1983, pp. 21–42.

⁴⁵ P. PRITZ, Hungarian Foreign Policy between Revisionism and Vassalage, in: *Foreign Policy Review*, 2011, pp. 98–105.

⁴⁶ ZEIDLER, pp. 9–10.

most dangerous enemy, and it was almost certain that the unfriendly relationship would continue. Various politicians (e.g., Masaryk, Beneš) also made proposals to reduce tensions between the two states, but these served more to reassure public opinion than to provide a political direction. The greatest difficulty between the two sides was the Hungarian minority, whose numbers and geographical location also made them a security issue for the newly created Czechoslovakia.⁴⁷

The Hungarian government used several tools at once to counter this threat. For a long time, active diplomatic pressure was out of the question because of the country's defeat and could only be applied after the diplomatic relations with the Italian state were settled in 1927.⁴⁸ In addition, the Hungarians tried to exploit the internal contradictions of the new multi-ethnic state to gain an advantage. One such area was agitation within the Slovak population. The Slovak political leadership had serious concerns about the new state.⁴⁹ Following the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1919), the Slovaks wanted to achieve autonomy, but this was met with serious Czech resistance. This is why the search for an alternative was launched on the Slovak side to resolve this situation. They sought support from the opposition, from left-wing movements, and from German and Hungarian parties. The Budapest government sought to use this relationship to its advantage to undermine the new Czechoslovak state.

The best-known exponent of this view was František Jehlička (Franz Jehlička).⁵⁰ The complete lack of balance between the state-creating nations contributed to the failure of the Masaryk state concept by the late 1920s.⁵¹ The Hungarian state continued seeking diplomatic contacts

⁴⁷ L. GULYÁS, Csehszlovák-magyar kapcsolatok az 1920-as években, in: *Acta Historica*, 1, 2014, pp. 99–106.

⁴⁸ P. HAMERLI, I rapporti italo-ungheresi nel contesto regionale (1927–1934), in: *Rivista di Studi Ungheresi*, 17, 2018, pp. 247–282.

⁴⁹ P. HASLINGER, Hungarian Motifs in the Emergence and the Decline of a Czechoslovakia National Narrative, 1890–1930, in: N. M. WINGFIELD (ed.), *Creating the Other. Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism in Habsburg Central Europe*, New York, Oxford 2004, pp. 169–182.

⁵⁰ R. J. W. EVANS, Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks: Some Mutual Perceptions, 1900–1950, in: M. CORNWALL – R. J. W. EVANS (eds.), *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe 1918–1948*, Oxford, New York 2007, pp. 109–123.

⁵¹ J. RYCHLIK, Czech-Slovak Relations in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1939, in: M. CORNWALL – R. J. W. EVANS (eds.), *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe 1918–1948*, Oxford, New York 2007, pp. 13–25.

to gain support for its own policies (revision). The first solution was to involve the Germans, who had not yet shown openness in the 1920s. Later, and in the crisis of 1938, described later, Hungarian diplomacy turned to the Poles to help build relations between Hungarian and Slovak political leaders.⁵²

For the Hungarian population that had happened to be on the other side of the border, the homeland tried to establish organisations that would enable them to survive in the changed circumstances. Thus, they not only provided them with financial assistance, but also tried to strengthen their Hungarian identity through cultural institutions and to alleviate the difficulties for children by supporting schools. The Hungarian minority was always actively or passively awaited the day when they can return to their motherland. This was not true in the administrative sector, who left the area after 1918 and moved to Hungary.⁵³

The Hungarian state therefore provided human and material resources for Hungarians living beyond the borders. However, their support could not be open, so the government set up several social organisations to represent their interests. During the turbulent period, several organisations were established, often working against each other to fulfil a single task. After the political stabilisation of Hungary in the autumn of 1919, tasks were organised centrally. The most important aim was to support the autonomy movements within the Czechoslovak state (including those of the Ruthenians and Slovaks). Alongside nationalist aspirations, support for Christian socialist movements remained strong, which, organised on a religious basis, had – initially – circumvented nationalist obstacles. Two major centres emerged, Bratislava in the west and Košice in the east.⁵⁴

The Hungarian Government established two organizations to support the revisionist policy: the *Department of the Ministry of Nationality for the Tots* (*Nemzetiségi Minisztérium Tót Főosztálya*) and the *Central Office for the Tots* (*Tót Központi Iroda*).⁵⁵ Cultural organisations established throughout the Carpathian Basin to further support the Hungarian minority. The

⁵² I. JANEK, Magyar törekvések a Felvidék megszerzésére 1938-ban, in: *Történelmi Szemle*, 52, 2010, pp. 37–66.

⁵³ P. R. MAGOCSI, Magyars and Carpatho-Rusyns, in: H. G. SKILLING (ed.), *Czechoslovakia, 1918–88. Seventy Years from Independence*, New York 1991, pp. 105–129.

⁵⁴ B. ANGYAL, A csehszlovákiai magyarság anyaországi támogatása a két világháború között, in: *Regio*, 3, 2000, pp. 133–178.

⁵⁵ JANEK, p. 38.

umbrella organisation for this was the Centre of the Federation of Social Associations (CUSA). Activities in Czechoslovakia were to be marked by the name of a person who could be of benefit not only to Hungarians, but also to Slovaks and Rusyns. This is how the name *Rákóczi Szövetség* was chosen which in the initial period – between 1922 and 1924 – performed key tasks in the region. The organisation's tasks included collecting and analysing data on the population in the Highlands and providing financial support to local organisations. They processed various local press materials (in Czech and Slovak) and produced translations (reports). Initially, the organisation was headed by Iván Rakovszky, but after his appointment as minister, without a prominent person, the tasks became overwhelming. In May 1924 the last president, István Szinyei Merse, himself requested the dissolution of the association, due to financial problems and the lack of efficiency of the organisation. Despite its short existence, however, it pointed out that the Hungarian government had devoted considerable attention to the tools of cultural diplomacy and the politics of symbolic remembrance.⁵⁶

The Czechoslovak and Hungarian Memory Policy in the Interwar Period

In Czechoslovakia, three major holidays were allowed to remain after the war. The first one was 28th October (the date of the declaration of independence), the second one was 2nd July (the anniversary of the Battle of Zborov in 1917) and the last was 7th March, the birthday of Masaryk, the statesman who led the independence movement. These events had Czech background, while the state-forming Slovaks quickly left out from the common memory. In March 1919, the local Social Democrats tabled a bill to abolish the former church holidays and to create national holidays in their place. The former holidays were outdated and not suitable for the citizens of the new Czechoslovak state. They also proposed new days instead the old ones like 1st May (Labour Day), 6th July (the day of the burning of Jan Hus), 28th October (the proclamation of the independent state). This proposal was declined by the government. However, a year later, a similar proposal to make 28th October a public holiday made by Vlastimil Tusar's government. The decision adopted on 14th October 1919 and the suggested day (28th October) became a national holiday. In the

⁵⁶ ANGYAL, p. 147; ZS. NAGY, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities. Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918–1941*, Budapest, New York 2017, p. 154.

regulation (Law No. 65/1925) there was special mention about the penalties for those who did not participate in the celebration in a “dignified manner”. Hájková and Wingfield pointed out that there were several other potential candidates to the designated memory day. These included 14th October (general strike, proclamation of the Republic in some cities), 18th October (publication of the Declaration of Independence), 30th of October (declaration of Slovak accession in Turócszentmárton), 14th of November (first session of the Revolutionary National Assembly).⁵⁷

On 28th October 1918, the foundation of the Czechoslovak state was proclaimed in Prague.⁵⁸ This day was significant for the Czechs, while the Slovaks celebrated the Declaration of Turčiansky Svätý Martin (nowadays Martin, Slovakia), by which they joined the Czech Republic and created Czechoslovakia.⁵⁹ However, due to the intentions – and political goals – of the Czech side, the Slovaks only commemorated the latter. Both sides sought to emphasise their own role on this day, contrasting themselves from the German and Hungarian minorities who had previously played a leading role in the country. However, 28th October was not only significant for state memory, but also inspired Czech military memory as well. It was also the first time that the memory of the Legionnaires appeared. It represented the Czech soldiers who fought on the three fronts of the First World War, the prisoners of war on the Eastern Front who were captured (as soldiers of the Monarchy) in battles they did not want to fight, and those who fought in the Battle of White Mountain (1620), which marked the end of Czech independence. In most cases, torchlight processions were organised, national monuments erected, and streets named after the fighters. The actual celebrations complemented by cultural activities to reinforce the new national identity, such as the distribution of books and other publications to the public.⁶⁰

July 2nd was the second greatest holiday in the Czechoslovak state and a focal point for military memory and heroism. The Zborov memorial became a place of remembrance of male heroism and sacrifice.⁶¹ The Battle of Zborov was part of the last operations of Tsarist Russia in the First World War. The battle fought near Galicia between Lemberg (Lwów/Lviv) and Tarnopol in July 1917. During the battle, a Czechoslovak brigade in

⁵⁷ M. MICHELA, A “szabadság napjának” két évfordulója, in: *Aetas*, 2, 2018, pp. 56–68.

⁵⁸ D. KOVÁČ, *Szlovákia története*, Budapest 2001, pp. 173–176.

⁵⁹ L. SZARKA, *A szlovákok története*, Budapest 1993, pp. 159–173.

⁶⁰ HÁJKOVÁ – WINGFIELD, pp. 429–430.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Russian service launched an attack against members of the Habsburg army, who happened to be Slovaks and Czechs. Some deserted, others surrendered – the conscripted mass army of the Habsburg Monarchy did not want to fight against its own compatriots. The actions of the Czechoslovak legion greatly enhanced their image in the eyes of the Western Powers. As a result, they were deployed in several numbers in the Russian front, fighting alongside the Italian army on the Italian Front and on the Western Front with French units. Later, these legionnaires also fought against the Bolsheviks in Siberia, during which they seized the Siberian railway network and contributed to the war's development. The brigade's operation was so successful that the Russian commanders named only them in the operations log. However, the commemoration was only open to the two state-creating nations – the Germans and Hungarians were excluded from this opportunity as they were on the losing side of the war. The commemoration of their victims received no state support, so only the local and personal memory were possible.⁶²

Despite their small numbers, the Legionaries played a major role in the running of the Czechoslovak state. In addition to the army, they set up several social organisations which, for example, also played an active role in organising celebrations. The memory of the Battle of Zborov was not the same for all citizens. For Germans it meant the betrayal of the Czechs, which led to the murder of several German fathers and sons by Russian soldiers. The Slovak memory tended to remain silent in this case.

The holiday of President Masaryk (7th March) was significant for national remembrance. The Czechs' cult of Masaryk was an important part of the nationalist construction of the state. The first university was named after him, along with several rural schools and hospitals. In addition, natural sites were tilted after him, including forests, parks, and bridges. This tendency existed even in the German-inhabited parts of the country, although their altruism and voluntarism could easily be questioned. According to researchers, the participation of the Germans was influenced by several factors: fear and the need to conform, on the one hand, and the possibility of a 'peaceful' transition on the other.⁶³

However, the President's birthday did not immediately become a commemorative holiday in the Interwar Period but was only enshrined in law in 1946. The first major celebration took place in 1920, when Masaryk

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 442–443.

was 70 years old. A similarly high profile was given in 1930, when several foreign newspapers covered his person. The commemorations were like the earlier ones with military parades, processions and speeches being the rituals of remembrance.⁶⁴

The latter were aimed at the soft construction of a Czechoslovak nation-state, where Czechs and Slovaks could appear together. The non-Czech nationalities (Hungarians, Germans, and Jews) were excluded from this memory process. The commemorations fuelled by historical and religious objectives, highlighting the sacrifices made during the First World War and the creation of the new state. Alongside Masaryk, it was Beneš and Štefánik who participated in this state-building, but not in the same weight.⁶⁵

The monuments were functioned in an equivalent way – they were only a real place of remembrance for the founding peoples. For the military, the struggles of the legionaries and the memory of the Battle of Zborov were the starting points. The celebrations were aimed at strengthening the nation-state and creating a cult of Czechoslovak identity. In fact, this commemorative policy had separated rather than united the peoples living here. It is not surprising that after the break-up of the Czechoslovak state (1938), memory was partly reorganised in 1945.⁶⁶

The memory of Russian emigration after the First World War had a separate part of Czechoslovak memory. This was also based on the Pan-Slavism that was not possible on any other – French and German – soil. The case of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia it was proved to be the case. At the same time in Poland these relations could not really work, and groups of this kind were even banned.⁶⁷

In Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, serious friendships were formed in this area. The visit to the Russian monument in 1930 soon turned into a Russian-Czechoslovak friendship ceremony. Karel Kramář was the first to support Russian emigrants, repeatedly mentioning Slavic friendship and struggles. They also mobilised considerable forces in their new country, such as at the dedication of the Zborov monument in 1927 and the state foundation ceremony one year later (1928).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 447.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ COHEN, pp. 647–650.

⁶⁸ HÁJKOVÁ – WINGFILED, p. 643.

For the Czechoslovak state, friendship with the emigrant Russians and the goal of the imagined relationship was a major weapon for anti-Germanism. The basis of the new Czech identity (now independent from the Habsburg/Germans influence) was, as we have seen, the Czech Legion, which was formed on Russian territory. The relationship between Kramář and the Russian émigrés was also based on an “anti-Masaryk” view, as the former would have preferred to strengthen ties with the Eastern (Slavic) countries, while Masaryk remained strongly pro-Western. Thus, at the 1930 commemoration, the participants mentioned different things: the Russians emphasised their opposition to Bolshevism, while the Czechs mentioned Slavic freedom as their final goal.⁶⁹

A Comparison of Czechoslovak and Hungarian Memory Policy

In the period between the two world wars, both states faced serious political challenges. The Czechoslovak state had to assert its newly acquired independence in a context where its neighbours, in particular Germany and Hungary, held part of its population or territory. At the same time, in the state that was formed during the war, there were already visible points of rupture between the constituent nations (Czech, Slovak) and the other nationalities (especially Germans, Hungarians and Jews, who were considered as nationality) Czechoslovak commemorative policy was dominated by the Czech element, with most holidays being associated with them, while the Slovaks sought to adapt to this system. The state’s minority nationalities, including Hungarians and Germans, were excluded from these commemorative rites. For the former, the memory of St. Stephen and Francis II Rákóczi as representatives of the past was strengthened at this time. The mention of past glory is also significant because the problem of nationality did not play a key role during the time of these two leaders, but unity was emphasised at the time. It is no coincidence, therefore, that many social and ecclesiastical organisations have chosen Francis II Rákóczi as an example to follow in their daily work. Thus, the *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) of Rákóczi, the story of his life’s suffering – which can be traced in a fresco in the St. Elisabeth Cathedral in Košice – became the main identity story of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia. The German minority was excluded from the memory of the state, even if some elements of it, such as the Battle of Zborov, were the same. The reason for this was that the German-speaking

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 644.

population was seen as servants of the former Habsburg government, and thus the memory of the former regime was intended for them. The negative content of the imperial memory made it unsuitable for a role in the new state. The representation of Habsburg's memory was given to the Hungarians as well as to the Germans, who, however, had other forms of representation.

The Development of the Hungarian Rákóczi Memory in the Interwar Period and Horthy's March into Košice (1938)

In 1935 Tibor Baráth published an analysis of the images of Rákóczi in the popular discourse of his time. It has an important view that the commemorations of the period can contribute to the portrait of a historical figure. In his analysis, Baráth speaks of four different images, coexisting at the same time in Hungary and among the Hungarians.⁷⁰

The first image was called the "old Rákóczi image", referring to its 19th-century roots. It was perhaps the best known and most widespread of the period, even though it was only serving the interests of one political party (or political narrative). In his opinion, its main proponents were the historian-politician Kálmán Thaly, László Ravasz (1882–1975) and Gyula Kornis, (1885–1958) who perpetuated this image.⁷¹

The second image fits in well with the answers to the political questions of the period. According to this, Rákóczi was regarded as a symbol of the whole national idea, who represented the whole of Hungary through his example and sufferings. This idea received special attention during the events after the First World War and the events of 1918 (revolutions, peace treaty), where despite the experience of loss and differences, the government tried to create unity among the inhabitants. The initial experience of loss was gradually replaced by the need for an idealistic (intellectual) rethinking, so that, for example, the whole of "Hungarian idea" was seen to embodied in Rákóczi. The fate of the prince – the struggle for freedom, independence, and the homeland, followed by deprivation and exile – was intertwined with the contemporary situation of the Hungarian people.⁷²

⁷⁰ Gy. SZEKFŰ, II. Rákóczi Ferenc, in: *Napkelet*, 8, 1930, pp. 813–821.

⁷¹ T. BARÁTH, Rákóczy alakja a magyar közvéleményben, in: *Napkelet*, 13, 1935, pp. 446–452, 446–447.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 448.

The third image dealt with Rákóczi's importance in Europe, in which Baráth says it was neglected. This construct could be used to reinforce the image of Rákóczi as "the caring leader of the Danube valley peoples". This idea bore an uncanny resemblance to Lajos Kossuth's idea of Hungary as the head of a confederation of the Danube peoples.⁷³

The fourth picture depicted Rákóczi as a holy man, which was reflected in the second picture. According to this view, the prince took upon himself the fate of the Hungarian nation and voluntarily went into exile to endure the pains. In this sense, Rákóczi gave his life for the freedom of the Hungarians – and so his memory must be cherished. According to Baráth, this interpretation is problematic because it tends to be exclusive – it runs counter to images that proclaim unity and equality. In Baráth's opinion, the four-layered portrayal gives a complex picture of Francis II Rákóczi, so it is neither worth nor possible to separate them in a clear-cut way. The author could not have known that a few years later the above interpretation would be supplemented by further images, and this process has continued to the present day.⁷⁴

The Munich Agreement (1938) changed the diplomatic relations of Europe, which many saw as the first partition of Czechoslovakia. The settlement of the Sudeten question proved that the Western powers (Great Britain, France) did not wish to go to war to secure the borders of Czechoslovakia. This betrayal later became a major part of Czechoslovak historiography and political public opinion on the events.⁷⁵ The Western powers, Germany and Italy jointly decided on the fate of a state but proposed further negotiations in a secret clause in the treaties. One of these was the settlement of the Hungarian-Czechoslovak relationship, for which both sides asked the German-Italian arbitration tribunal. As a result, the first Vienna Award was signed on 2nd November 1938.⁷⁶

Under the terms of the decision, Hungary was allowed to annex Košice, Ungvár (Ungvár in Hungarian), Mukachevo (Munkács in Hungarian) and their surroundings. Although several Hungarian territories remained with Slovakia. Preliminary negotiations between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian sides were unsuccessful, and the situation was left to German

⁷³ Ibid., p. 451.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ V. SMETANA, Ten propositions about Munich 1938. On the fateful event of Czech and European history – without legends and national stereotypes, in: *Soudobé dějiny*, 7, 2019, pp. 5–14.

⁷⁶ G. SALLAI, *Az első bécsi döntés*, Budapest 2002, pp. 143–152.

arbitration. With the decision, 12,000 square kilometres were annexed to Hungary with a population of over one and a half million, which the whole country agreed with and later welcomed.⁷⁷

The Hungarian government sought to lay the ideological foundations for the annexation of the territory. The image and memory of Francis II Rákóczi was an excellent match in this matter. The first crucial step was the issue of a commemorative medal with Rákóczi's portrait, which was distributed to the soldiers who marched into the returned part of the country. This was followed by a series of images that had a propagandistic effect from an iconographic point of view.

The first was a postcard depicting a view of Košice. Most of the memorials on it were related to Francis II Rákóczi himself. Besides his portrait on horseback, there is also a memorial plaque next to the cathedral and his tomb. On the left side of the picture, Miklós Horthy, the governor of the country, appears, like Rákóczi, on a white horse, facing to the right. The symbolic comparison was intended to reinforce the continuity of Hungarian sovereignty over the territory (Košice) and to legitimise it.⁷⁸



Figure 1.

⁷⁷ ROMSICS, pp. 246–247.

⁷⁸ <https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/SzerencsKepeslap/1376132/> [2023–08–17].

On another similar postcard, Miklós Horthy, and Francis II Rákóczi are shown on either side of the image, both seated on white horses. In the centre of the picture is the main commemorative space, namely the St. Elisabeth Cathedral and the Tomb of Rákóczi. In addition, two other urban sites have been included as significant memorial sites.⁷⁹



Figure 2.

A comparison of the depictions shows that the person of Francis II Rákóczi was used to justify the territorial acquisitions after the first Vienna decision (1938). Such evocation of a figure of Hungarian history could have been intended not only for propagandistic purposes but also for the symbolic reoccupation of territory. According to contemporary opinion, these territories (e.g., Košice) were only temporarily distant from the Hungarian homeland, so the events of 1938 restored the normal situation. A comparison between Miklós Horthy and Francis II Rákóczi could be seen as an area for further research.⁸⁰

The painting called *In Memory of the Liberation* fits into this narrative. On two sides of this painting, we can see Hungarian soldiers (a Kuruc soldier with a flag on the left; a Honvéd with a flag on the right), with

⁷⁹ <https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/SzerencsKepeslap/1235877/> [2023-08-17].

⁸⁰ Z. BABUCS, *A Felvidék és Kárpátalja hazatérésének emlékalbuma*, Budapest 2019, p. 235.

soldiers marching under the Hungarian flag. In the background is Košice and a castle on a hilltop. In the centre of the painting is Miklós Horthy, behind whom the figure of Francis II Rákóczi appears from the clouds, like an angel from above, accompanied by his soldiers on horseback. The third picture was a poster for the Ruthenians, with the inscription *Freedom for our Ruthenian brothers*. The family in the foreground is guarded by a Hungarian soldier, and in the background, in the place of the Sun, is Francis II Rákóczi.⁸¹

The actual occupation of Košice had to wait until 11th November. At that time, twenty-one cannon shots were fired in Budapest to symbolically welcome the return of the torn part of the country, as the bells of St. Elisabeth's Cathedral in Košice were rung. Hungarian political leaders also took part in the march, including the prime minister Béla Imrédy and Governor Miklós Horthy. At the event, several speakers argued for the reclamation of the area and the end of the old scourges. The mayor of Košice, László Tost was the first to openly link Rákóczi and Horthy, as the events of 1938 reminded people of the siege of 1706. In his speech, the governor spoke of the joy of the return of the breakaway part of the country. He said that the memory of the Hungarians was defined not only by Rákóczi but also by King St Stephen, whose ideals guided the attention and actions of the contemporary politician. It was not this but Horthy's gesture that made the speech special, as he spoke in Slovakian language. The crowd then went to the cathedral to attend the Te Deum celebrated by Justinian Serédi, while Horthy, his wife and his legation bowed their heads before Rákóczi's tomb. The event lasted nearly an hour and a half.⁸²

The march to Kassa on 11 November 1938 and the memory of Rákóczi were captured on film. Not only did the Hungarian state expand, but Rákóczi's tomb was also restored to Hungarian soil. In the broadcast, we can see Horthy's speech in Hungarian and Slovakian, which was received with ovations by the audience. A symbolic race was organised to mark the event, with runners from Budapest and Pécs running to the tomb of the prince in Košice.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 273.

⁸² Z. BABUCS, Kassa, Felvidékünk gyöngyszeme, ismét Magyar, November 10, 2021, <https://mki.gov.hu/hu/hirek-hu/evfortulok-hu/kassa-felvidekunk-gyongyszeme-ismet-magyar> [2023-08-17].

⁸³ A Felvidéki területek visszacsatolása: Horthy Miklós Kassán, <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=3052> [2022-04-24]; A Rákóczi sírjához Budapestről és Pécsről befutó atléták Kassán, <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=3069> [2022-04-24].

The following list consists of memory sites with exact geographical location, in connection with Rákóczi and his war of independence. This database is based on Hungarian researchers, mostly on Gabor Ilyés's work.⁸⁴

Table 1. List of memory sites of Francis II Rákóczi in Košice

1.	The epitaphs of Francis II Rákóczi and his fellow emigres	The gravestones of Rákóczi and his fellow exiles were found by Hungarian scientific embassies in the 19 th century. The remains and the memorial markers were transported to the Lazarist church in Galata in 1906. From there, the remains were transported to their final resting place, along with the original grave inscriptions, to complete the reburial. In addition to Francis II Rákóczi, the gravestones of Imre Thököly, Ilona Zrínyi, Antal Esterházy, Miklós Bercsényi and Miklós Sibrik were also transported home, and new memorial plaques were erected in their original places (G. Ilyés 2020). ⁸⁵
2.	Tombs of Rákóczi and his companions (1906)	After the commemoration of 1906, three separate tombs were placed in the crypt of Rákóczi in St. Elisabeth's Cathedral in Kassa.
3.	Memorial plaque of Francis II Rákóczi (1915)	A Hungarian organization (<i>Felsőmagyarországi Idegenforgalmi Szövetség</i>) erected the memorial plaque in 1915, remembering the occasion when Rákóczi and his companions stayed there during the war. ⁸⁶
4.	Andor Dudits: Fresco of Rákóczi (1916)	Andor Dudits painted it between July 1914 and November 1915. In his work, the artist captured the most important events of Rákóczi's life from birth to death. The planned two memorial plaques were never completed. It is in its current state thanks to renovations in 2011–2012. ⁸⁷

⁸⁴ G. ILYÉS: *Hazánk szentje, szabadság vezére. II. Rákóczi Ferenc és az általa vezetett szabadságharc emlékjelei Borsitól Rodostóig*. Nyíregyháza 2020.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 306–307.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁸⁷ T. Cs. REISZ, II. Rákóczi Ferenc alakja Dudits Andor festőművész munkásságában, in: A. BÓDVAI (ed.), *Rákóczi emlékkönyv*, Budaörs 2021, pp. 179–207.

5.	Relief of Francis II Rákóczi (1938)	The work of art, which was placed on the north wall of St Elizabeth's Cathedral, was inaugurated at a ceremony on 24 July. It was later moved to the Rodosto House (Museum). ⁸⁸
6.	Rodostó House (1943)	The equipment of the dining house in Rodosto was transported to Košice in 1904. The installation was postponed due to the decision of the Treaty of Trianon. The hidden materials were found in a cellar in the area in 1936. The work was carried out between 1938 and 1940, but the building was not opened until 1991. ⁸⁹

Conclusion

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire created a new situation in Central Europe. The Treaty of Trianon (1920), which declared war defeat by treaty, also brought about fundamental changes in Hungary. Hungary's neighbours became "enemy" countries that had begun to build their statehood just after the war. Czechoslovakia absorbed one of the largest parts and populations of the former Kingdom of Hungary, so it is understandable that the Hungarian state paid particular attention to the development of the region.

In our study, we wanted to show the political aspects of memory in such a changing relationship. The main element of the research was the memory of Francis II Rákóczi and his memorial sites in the city of Košice. The sites were important for political memory even if they happened to be located outside the country's borders. In the multi-ethnic Czechoslovak state, the development of a commemorative policy in addition to nationality relations also faced serious obstacles. In this tense situation, the Hungarian state also tried to improve the situation of the Hungarian minority living in Czechoslovakia, and perhaps even to win over the Slovaks. To this end, they carried out propaganda activities in which memory played a special role. In this way, they sought to build on the cult of Francis II Rákóczi, which became particularly strong in the Slovak-inhabited parts of Czechoslovakia. They wanted to do this with the help of various government bodies where the name of Rákóczi had always been

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 310–311.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

important. The choice may also have seemed a good one because it did not contradict or pose a primary challenge to the narratives of memory politics constructed by the Czechoslovak state.

The list of local memorial sites shows that the commemorative process that started in the early 20th century (especially from 1906) was interrupted after 1918 and only strengthened again after 1938. For the Hungarian state, the image of Rákóczi seemed perfect for choosing a person who would not provoke such a sharp contrast with the pantheon of Czechoslovak memory politics. The choice was aimed at the Hungarian nationality and the local Slovak population, where the memory of Rákóczi could serve as a link. The book publications of the time (tales and sagas) were also intended to reinforce this. Thus, during the military invasion of 1938, Rákóczi symbolically marched alongside Miklós Horthy's soldiers to take his rightful place in the place that was once again part of Hungary. This is also confirmed by the catalogue of local (Košice) memorial sites, where the development of Hungarian commemorative policy during the period can be traced.