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Irredentism in Everyday Life in Hungary during the Inter-war Period

The Trianon Peace Treaty was a central issue in public life in Hungary in the inter-war period. Pain over the loss and a desire for revenge permeated political, economic and social discourse. The most important institutions, which defined and controlled public speech, were government bodies and social organisations of the right and extreme right. Of course, the population's spontaneous reactions should not be underestimated, but in an age witnessing the formation of modern mass society, the broad public was considered as a recipient rather than a directing medium. The public's typical attitude and reaction was seen in its degree of acceptance or refusal of political declarations –taking the initiative did not characterise it.

The inter-war irredentist public atmosphere was a factor, which the official politics had the opportunity to utilise, neglect or stifle. The controllers of public life grasped the first, instinctively and consciously at the same time and thus the content and tone of the dominant anti-Trianon emotions were defined by domestic propaganda with the government's approval or even exactly to its liking. In this way, general public opinion actually became a projection of the propaganda, and voices pointing to moderation seemed to be dissonant.

Under these circumstances public thinking was basically defined by simplifying voices, which, on the one hand, provided an understandable, comforting and self-absolving explanation for the break-up of historical Hungary and, on the other, they offered a tempting programme for a triumphant and deserved territorial revision. The formula of a honest victim and a cruel enemy was suitable for demonising opponents and at the same time it, so to say,

“tamed down” the problem (the partition of the country) insofar as it put it on a moral level, away from the world of political realities.

Instead of realistically exploring the causes and consequences, the mythical concept aimed at a national self-therapy and mobilisation, made public thinking schematic and public opinion more uniform. As a result of the latter, the verbal symbols and symbols of images and objects, *toposes*, which were able to have a lasting effect with their disarming commonplaces, strength and repetition, appeared in everyday life, too.

The symbol stock of Hungarian irredentism can be divided into three types. The simplification of Christ’s sufferings was the first and most general: according to this Hungary gets in the hands of false judges and the unfaithful, goes through the Way of the Cross, is crucified, is humiliated and remains alone, but will soon resurrect gloriously.¹

Fictitious parallels with the 1848–49 Revolution and War Of Independence dominated the second type: Hungarians unite in an exemplary, sublime national independence movement, which gains the whole world’s respect and many great personalities independently of their nationality stand by the Hungarian cause. The basis of the third type was making the twin symbols of the conquest-home-defence relevant: the hero conquering the homeland defends it audaciously against the enemy and robbers, then protects the Idea from faithless hordes threatening the country, which had become Christian; he does not mind his own fate and this self-sacrifice makes him suitable for eternal rebirth.² It can be seen that these symbols supplemented each other at

1 Worth noting is how closely related to this is, on the one hand, the preaching tradition of the early modern age, and, on the other, the passion parallel of the Hungarian *National Anthem* written in the Reform Age about a hundred years before: “God punishes his chosen people most severely → because he wants to try them → thus we must bear our suffering with patience → for if we are found sincere → God has great plans for us, his chosen people”. See Hankiss, Elemér: *Társadalmi csapdák. Diagnózisok. (Social Traps. Diagnoses)*. 2nd Ed. Budapest: Magvető, 1983, 350.

2 There was another symbol based on the darkness-light dichotomy offered by Manicheism; however, it is such a characteristic symbol of every conflict situation that connecting it specifically to revisionism would be a mistake. About the whole issue see Pallós, Lajos: *Területvédő propaganda Magyarországon, 1918–1920. (Territory protection propaganda in Hungary 1918–1920)*. PhD thesis at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 1995. chapter “A területvédő propaganda érvrendszere” (*Arguments for territory protection propaganda*), also Zeidler, Miklós: “A Magyar Revíziós Liga” (*The Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League*). *Századok*, 1997, No. 2., 30–31. Cf. the so-called religions of complaint analysed by Canetti, Elias: *Tömeg és hatalom (Mass and Power)*. Budapest: Európa, 1991, 145–148.

certain cross-points, moreover they amalgamated. It was even more important, however, that all three symbol systems were absolutely suitable for being romanticised, since extremities met in all of them when the real hero is bleeding under the attack of the cruel enemy, but does not fail for ever. Moreover, he rises with greater glory than before.

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Commemorating Trianon on certain state holidays and at semi-official meetings started to become a practice from the beginning of the 1920s. The ceremonial occasions were provided by Saint Stephen's day on 20 August, the Commemoration of Heroes on the last Sunday in May (a state holiday from 1926), 4 June (anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty), middle of November (withdrawal of the Romanian army from Budapest and the entry of the National Army, and the ratification of the Peace Treaty) and 6 December (Regent Miklós Horthy's name day).

The cult of irredentism aimed to "seize" public places in varied ways. Monuments relating to the revenge policy already began to appear in the beginning of the 1920s. The so-called irredentist statues symbolising the broken off parts of the country were erected in a central square of Budapest, Szabadság tér, in January 1921. These allegories of *West*, *North*, *East* and *South* were dominated by heroic and romantic images and historical symbols laid on thick. The figure tumbling on the holy crown in the statue entitled *West* was holding the coats of arms of the lost counties in his right and a shield with the double cross in his left hand. A turul bird was resting at his feet. On the three-figure composition of *North* a Slovak boy seeking protection was leaning on a crucified Hungaria and a well-built Kuruc soldier was protecting both with his sword. The allegory of *East* depicted chieftain Csaba in a heroic pose as he was liberating the symbolic figure holding Transylvania's coat of arms. On the statue entitled *South* there was a strong-muscled Hungarian man embracing and protecting a Swabian girl, who symbolised the southern region. A wheat sheaf was lying at their feet, symbolising the rich land of Bácska and Bánság counties.

The statues formed a semi-circle and in the middle was placed the Nation's Flag with pro-Hungarian quotations from the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and the British press magnate Viscount Rothermere, which was unveiled on 20 August 1928. It recalled the conquest, territorial integrity and the glorious and painful events of Hungarian history. (*picture 1*)



Picture 1
Picture card of the
National Flag
(1928)

Hungarian National
Museum, Contemporary
Section, Picture Card
Collection, No. 96.100

It was also on Szabadság tér that the *Statue of Hungarian Grief* (the work of French sculptor Émile Guillaume), a nude bronze figure of a mother, who radiated despair and unprotectedness, mourning for her children was unveiled on 6 October 1932 (on the national day of mourning commemorating the execution of 1848–49 Hungarian leaders). Then the statue of General Harry Hill Bandholtz, who in 1919 as the commander of the American military mission in Budapest prevented a corps of the Romanian army from taking art objects from the National Museum, was unveiled in 1936. With their complex system of symbols and indirect references, the monuments of the “irredentist pantheon” in Szabadság Square not only intended to express the bereave-

ment of the Hungarian nation, but also aimed at showing the sympathy for Hungary of the world's leading powers' (Great Britain, Italy, France and the USA – but not Germany).³

Monuments in a similar spirit were also set up in other parts of the capital. *The well of Hungarian Justice* in honour of Lord Rothermere was erected at the end of 1928. It depicted a young woman symbolising Hungary as she, looking for help, was leaning on Justitia, the goddess of justice, who held a sword in one hand and scales in the other. Rothermere himself had a statue in memory of Jenő Rákosi, a prolific revisionist journalist, erected two years later.

In addition to the above, several irredentist monuments were erected in the suburbs of Budapest and in the provinces. As a result of the movement led by the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League among others, Flags of the Nation as reminders of Hungary's territorial integrity had been set up in approximately every fifth settlement of the country (more than 700) by the end of the 1930s, and the League erected so-called Trianon crosses in several villages by the border from autumn 1932. Sopron, which was returned to Hungary as a result of a referendum in December 1921, unveiled a Rothermere statue, the only one in the country, in December 1929.

The irredentist theme likewise appeared in the names of public places. From the 1920s, many streets and squares in Budapest and its suburbs were named after places and regions of pre-Trianon Hungary. Although there was a regulation which stipulated that a public place in Budapest could be named after someone only ten years following his or her death, the vanguardists of territorial revision were often treated as exceptions. Public places were named after Regent Horthy, the prime minister István Bethlen, the peace delegate Albert Apponyi and others while they were still living. Soon streets and squares received the names of Mussolini, Hitler and Rothermere, who supported the cause of Hungarian revision.

Huge events with great publicity, which provided consolation and a programme for public opinion through emphasising national virtues and showing intellectual and spiritual strength, played an important role in maintaining and strengthening the irredentist cult in Hungary. These were often

3 Pótó, János: *Emlékművek, politika, közgondolkodás (Monuments, Politics, Public Thinking)*. Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1989, 26–28, 31–33, 36–38 and Zeidler, Miklós: *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között (The Hungarian Irredentist Cult in the Inter-war Period)*. Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002, 16–26.

aimed, either directly or indirectly, at gaining the attention and sympathy of foreign countries.

After Lord Rothermere had published his article *Hungary's Place in the Sun*, which suggested the ethnic readjustment of borders in favour of Hungary, and had begun his pro-Hungarian press campaign, an organised popular movement started in Hungary to celebrate the lord. It had to be calmed by the government so that it would not create a counter-reaction from France and the Little Entente.

The first Hungarian trans-Atlantic flight stood out from among several events intended to be spectacular, such as stately receptions, wreath-laying and other ceremonies, and the publication of grandiose revisionist albums and their dispatch to influential politicians. Having broken several world records, pilot György Endresz and navigator Sándor Magyar successfully flew across the Atlantic in July 1931. Their aeroplane was called *Justice for Hungary* so that their performance would call the world's attention to Hungary's cause.⁴

Besides direct political actions, Hungarian irredentism also employed other tricks. Using the results achieved by Hungarian science, arts and sport for propaganda aims was characteristic. Literature and art proved to be more awkward due to the difficulty of comparison and the lack of international prizes, but scientific inventions and Albert Szent-Györgyi's Nobel prize, and Hungarian sporting victories at world championships, especially at the Olympic Games, provided plenty of "evidence" for the outstanding nature of the Hungarians. For example, the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League had separate sports sections in its foreign language propaganda journals and published all the considerable Hungarian sports achievements from water-polo through football and fencing to chess. The success of double gold medallist at the Athens Olympic Games, Alfréd Hajós, who came first in his category with his architectural design entitled *The Ideal Stadium* at the intellectual Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, provided similar evidence of Hungarian physical and intellectual excellence.⁵ Further good results at other international competitions and especially the ten gold medals at the Olympic Games in Berlin 1936 and the third place achieved in the international rank-

⁴ Their story is reported in detail in Magyar, Sándor: *Álmodni mertünk. (We Dared Dream)* Budapest: Révai [1941], and Vásárhelyi, Miklós: *A lord és a korona (The Lord and the Crown)*. Budapest: Kossuth, 1977.

⁵ Hajós actually received only second prize, but since no first prize was awarded he won anyway. Contemporaries explained the discrimination with reference to the jealousies of the French.

ing after the Germans and Americans raised Hungarian sport to nearly heroic heights – at least in propaganda publications.

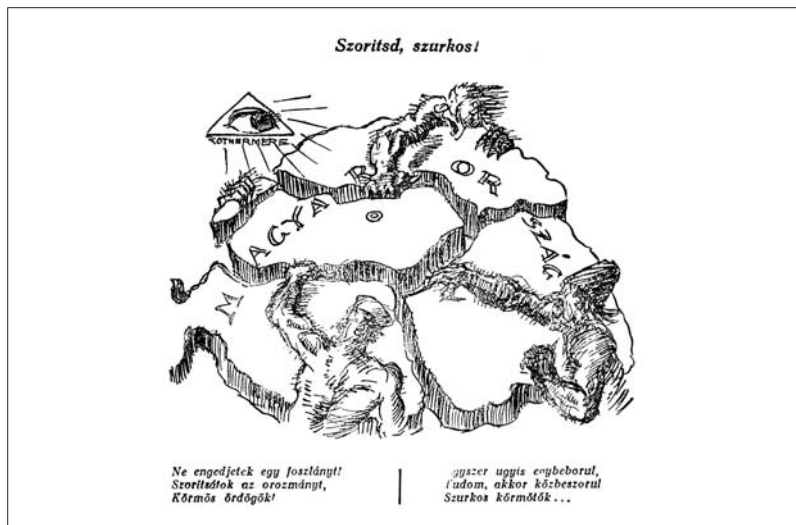
The mythical and cultic components of irredentism reached the general public in a less individual and ceremonial form. The first slogans, such as “That’s how it was; that’s how it will be” and “No! No! Never!” appeared already between 1918 and 1920. Later others proclaiming „Everything back”, „Hungarian justice”, „Hungarian resurrection”, „Broken Hungary is no country; whole Hungary is heaven”, the „Hungarian Credo” and others joined them, and these received an official character.

However, Zoltán Várady, a Catholic priest who experienced his being Hungarian intensively, had a completely individual initiative. He developed a new form of greeting to deepen patriotic feelings, which he published in a special booklet in 1938. The detailed description, the adjoining poems and the included photograph tell us that in order to greet someone in an irredentist way the person must make a small step forward with his right foot, lift his right hand with the open palm turned inwards and with a friendly look say “Resurrection!” or “Justice!”, to which the other person will answer with similar motions “May God grant it!”. With this Várady wanted the irredentist idea to reach every Hungarian and “the flames in the souls” to burn “the indifference in the hearts and the obstacles of new and imaginary borders. This pillar of flame with its huge strength, the flame of Hungarian irredentist greeting will light the dark Hungarian night until the day of ‘Justice’ and ‘Resurrection’ comes.”⁶ (picture 2)



Picture 2. Father Zoltán Várady displays his irredentist greeting (1938) *Várady* 1938. 1.

⁶ Várady, Zoltán: *Irredenta (revíziós) magyar köszönés (Irredentist or revisionist Hungarian greeting)*. Kaposvár, 1938, 6–7.



*Picture 3. Szorítsd, szurkos! (Seize it, brigands!) – caricature (1927)
 Magyarság August 29, 1927. 9.*

Linking the idea of Christianity, primarily Catholicism, and that of revision was characteristic besides applying these slogans. The parallels were often used in newspaper articles, at services and political functions, and they increased in number especially during the Rothermere campaign at the end of the 1920s. For example, former prime minister and Christian-socialist politician Károly Huszár compared Rothermere to Simon of Cyrene carrying Christ's cross, by which he forced the British lord and Hungary into the passion story. With the help of similar imagery, journalists began with the “ten commandments of revision” and via Rothermere’s “first step of apostolic strength” arrived at the statement that the lord “blew the trumpet of the modern day of judgement” and “wrote of the salvation on the Hungarian sky in blazing letters”.⁷ There was even a cartoonist who depicted Rothermere as God.⁸ (*picture 3*)

⁷ For example, *Budapesti Hírlap*, 28 June 1927, 17 July 1927, Rákosi, Jenő (ed.): *Trianontól Rothermeréig. A magyar hit könyve (From Trianon to Rothermere. The Book of Hungarian Belief)*. Budapest: Horizont, 1928, 6.

⁸ *Magyarság*, 29 August 1927, 9.

Linking the idea of irredentism with Christianity could be best seen in the construction of the Catholic church in Ferdinánd (today Lehel) tér. With the help of first János Csernoch, then Jusztinián Serédi, as Esztergom Primate, the parish of Blessed Margaret of the Árpád dynasty, founded in 1925, was promised its own church. The final decision was made at the height of the Rothermere campaign in 1928 and already then, the idea was raised of theoretically connecting “the construction of the church with the thought of Revision; thus the church to be built would be the church of the idea of Revision as a practical result”. The church construction committee led by Archbishop Serédi wanted to represent the link in a visible form and after an exchange of letters with Rothermere decided that the “Catholic church will be decorated by the coat of arms of the Scottish lord, who belonged to the Church of England, thus making it a monument of the national idea”.⁹ Hymns at the consecration of the church on 15 October 1933 would be “offered to the benevolent God”. An ornamented stained glass window was placed in the northern aisle of the church in honour of Lord Rothermere, who himself was one of the church’s benefactors. The window with the inscription “Viscount Rothermere 1933” and the lord’s coat of arms and motto (“Bene qui sedulo” – “He who works diligently does well”) can still be seen.¹⁰

Schools just like churches also spread the idea of irredentism. The spirit of territorial integrity impregnated all levels of education in the inter-war period, which was accompanied by the idea of counter-revolution, an emphasis on the Christian-national ideal and the idealisation of historic Hungary. Educational policy considered the irredentist idea as an important part of not only history teaching but of the whole school education and the syllabus transformed the slogans of propaganda into historical arguments, especially in junior classes.¹¹ As a leading politician of education, Gyula Kornis said on

9 Aladár Pirovits: “A fogadalmi magyar revíziós templom”. (*The Hungarian revisionist votive church*) *Vállalkozók Lapja*, 10 October 1928, 6.

10 It may have been deliberate that the window was placed near those stations of Christ which could be clearly connected to Rothermere. At the 5th station Simon of Cyrene takes the cross of suffering from Christ at the Roman soldier’s command, while the 7th station depicts Veronica as she is trying to ease the pain and offering a soothing cloth to the Messiah.

11 Unger, Máttyás: *A történelmi tudat alakulása középiskolai történelemkönyveinkben a századfordulótól a felszabadulásig*. 2. kiadás. (*Perspectives on historical knowledge in secondary school history textbooks from the turn of the century to 1945*). 2nd edition, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1979, 87–99., 185.

behalf of the National Association of Hungarian Secondary School Teachers in 1921: “All the national subjects (Hungarian language, history, geography and economic studies) in the curriculum of our schools must focus on one axis: on a whole Hungary. We must create *the most effective education of irredentism*”.¹²

These educational goals were implemented in schools and textbooks were also written in the same spirit. One of the most popular secondary school textbooks of the period specified four great national catastrophes preceding Trianon: the battles of Augsburg (955), Muhi (1241) and Mohács (1526), and the surrender at Világos in 1849. “The nation was threatened with final destruction by each, but it experienced a resurrection after all of them.”¹³ Parallels could be found for the providential remedy of unjust situations in European history, such as the expulsion of the Turks, the rebirth of Poland and, indirectly, even the example of Alsace-Lorraine. The last mentioned served as a pattern for Hungarian textbook publishing in as much as *revanche* was a separate chapter in French school textbooks for forty years before World War I.¹⁴

The Treaty of Trianon, revision and irredentism were regularly raised in school tests, essays and themes for the matriculation examinations. Nearly one third of written matriculation essays on history (and partly on literature) are likely to have been concerned with the issue, either directly or indirectly, during the Horthy era.¹⁵

In schools special functions were devoted to various revisionist organisations, which were also supported by fund raising. The programmes of school ceremonies regularly included the most well-known irredentist poems. At the beginning and the end of a school day pupils had to recite the *Hungarian Credo*, which won the first prize of a patriotic poetry competition organised by a Hungarian revisionist organisation in 1920.

12 Kornis, Gyula: “Kultúrpolitikánk irányelvei. I–II.” (*Directives for Cultural Policy I–II*) *Új Magyar Szemle*, March 1921, 285–310. and April 1921, 12–28., 303. (Emphasis in the original) Quoted by Unger, op. cit., 93–94.

13 Madai, Pál–Koch, István–Németh, József: *Világtörténet IV. A legújabb kor története a középiskolák VII. osztálya számára.* (*World History IV. The History of the Modern Age for grammar school class VII*). Budapest: Franklin, 1930, 80. Quoted by Unger, op. cit. 186.

14 Unger, op. cit., 185–186.

15 Cf. Jáki, László (ed.): *Érettségi tételek történelemből, 1851–1949* (*Matriculation Themes in History, 1851–1949*). Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, 2000, 27–57.

*I believe in one God,
I believe in one Homeland,
I believe in one divine eternal justice,
I believe in the resurrection of Hungary.
Amen.*

With various measures the minister of culture called the attention of educational institutions from time to time to the publication and purchase of items “which are very suitable for awakening, developing and strengthening the patriotic spirit” (volumes of poetry, shorts stories, books of songs, films and maps).

The authors of these literary pieces included everyone from self-appointed amateurs to representatives of high culture. Thus irredentist literature was present in works of very different standards. The majority comprised unambitious and unwitty works (plays, poems, odes, songs, short stories and fables!), but outstanding poets and writers of the period also published writings expressing the pain arising over the loss of historic Hungary. The latter not only raised the artistic level of “Trianon literature” but also provided it with a content that was more suitable for treating the trauma of Trianon than the negative and complaint-based irredentism experienced in mass literature. Common tradition, language, culture and history as nation-forming and maintaining forces received a great emphasis between the two world wars since they involved a primary cohesive factor, whereas previously in the multi-national historic Hungary national consciousness for Hungarians was strengthened by belonging to the state, the country and the power unit. Following the break-up, intellectual-cultural factors, which were outside the direct power and administrative network and stretched over political borders, necessarily received a greater role in maintaining national unity. The government itself was in the lead in an operative way, since it provided financial and political support for Hungarians over the borders and their organisations. However, literature also contributed to maintaining the (spiritual and intellectual) unity of the nation through the means of culture. The trend of “Trianon literature”, which represented a patriotism open to the outside and strengthened the idea of a central European togetherness, was significant not only from the perspective of literary history, but also from that of political thinking.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cf. Pomogáts, Béla (ed.): *Querela Hungariae. Trianon és a magyar irodalom (Trianon and Hungarian literature)*. Budapest: Széphalom, 1996, 13–14.



Picture 4

Lord Rothermere azt üzen-
te... (Lord Rothermere sent
the message...) Budapest,
Zipser és König, 1928 – cover
of the sheet music (1928)

Irredentism infiltrated the world of music, too. There were plays, which were performed with irredentist songs, and the number of songs composed and written in that spirit amounted to hundreds. They were usually march-like or sad pieces, but revision as a topic appeared even in popular dance music. Alongside fashionable foreign hits, love, frivolous or pub songs, the sounds of “patriotic foxtrot” also filtered through from bars.¹⁷

Among the curiosities were Lajos Krajcsi’s and Imre Koltay’s Transylvanian march entitled *Despite it All*, which the composers instrumented for a jazz orchestra (!) and József Radó’s and Irén Sass’s *Lord Rothermere Sent the Message...* (an obvious reference to the *Kossuth song* hailing the great Hungarian revolutionary leader of 1848–49). The latter was especially glamorous for its striking colourful cover, which depicted Rothermere, who in reality was stocky and nearing 60, as a heroic knight in full armour, protecting a Hungarian warrior with a broken sword and lying on the ground with his shield depicting a lion and a flag of the Virgin Mary tied to the apostolic cross. (picture 4)

¹⁷ The expression was used in a TV interview by the popular comedian László Kazal, who himself performed irredentist songs in the 1930s and 1940s.

The irredentist theme, however, became part of everyday life not only through cultural productions but also in the culture of objects. Various irredentist products appeared already in the early 1920s and by the end of the decade their number and range increased. The characteristic motifs soon appeared not only on souvenirs but also on consumer goods. These objects bearing various symbols and brand-names of irredentism also helped to maintain the anti-Trianon atmosphere and transformed the most banal everyday duties into a patriotic gesture.¹⁸ Both individual high quality and mass produced articles with the irredentist “message” were sold and were available for those who desired them. The head of a family with irredentist feelings, if he felt like it, could pour soda water in his wine from a soda bottle with the inscription “No, No, Never!” (*picture 5*), use an irredentist ashtray and keep his valuables in a decorative box with the outline of historic Hungary. There was an irredentist candleholder on his table, he presented his children with a puzzle depicting historic Hungary and when the school year started he bought them “No, No, Never!” pencils (*picture 6*) and irredentist exercise books. He had a neck chain with a locket containing soil from the lost territories, and placed an irredentist placard on his front door proclaiming the “No! No! Never!” of the Hungarian National Alliance and which he secured with “National drawing pins”. He sent his foreign acquaintances illustrated cards showing the lost territories and the face of his table clock was



Picture 5. Irredentist soda bottle (1932)

Hungarian National Museum,
Contemporary Section, Glass and
Ceramics Collection, No. 80.1.1.

¹⁸ The word “revision” itself became a brand name. Márton Kneisl launched his new copier under this name. An advertisement of the Hungarian Airlines Share Co. (MALERT) carried a similar content, something approximating “May Again Look Easily Round Transylvania”, such that the first letters of the words corresponded to the abbreviated name of the company. (Éva Kovács drew my attention to the above example, for which I am grateful.)



Picture 6. „No! No! Never!” pencil (1940s). Hungarian National Museum, Contemporary Section, Single Objects Collection, Nos 83.94.1 and 94.29.1.



Picture 7. Irredentist wall hanging (1940)

National Széchényi Library, Small Prints Collection

decorated with the *Hungarian Credo*. At commemorations on 4 June he pinned a Trianon mourning badge on his lapel, irredentist wall hangings decorated his flat (picture 7) and if he could afford it he purchased apprentice school teacher Rezső Vértés's eosin statuette entitled *Hungary's Bouquet*, which at first sight was an ordinary flower composition but if suitably lit it cast the shadow of historic Hungary on the surface below. (picture 8)



Dressing in a Hungarian way became fashionable in the inter-war period. A specific Hungarian national costume developed from the end of the 16th century. It flourished in the 17th century then lost its significance at the time of consolidation in the 18th century. It revived in the 19th century and expressed an anti-Habsburg stand. The style, which was surprisingly long-lived, became old-fashioned by the end of the 19th century. However, it reappeared in the inter-war period since defeat in the war and “bereavement over Trianon again called forth the demand to express patriotism with suitable apparel”.¹⁹

Picture 8. Rezső Vértés: Magyarország csokra (Bouquet of Hungary)

A movement aimed at promoting the fashion of dressing in a Hungarian way first appeared in the summer of 1920 then reappeared with a much stron-

19 Dózsa, Katalin F.: “A Muskátli című kézimunkaujság és a magyaros öltözködési mozgalom az 1930-as években” (*The handicraft magazine called Muskátli and the movement of dressing in a Hungarian way in the 1930s*). *Ethnographia*, 1989, No. 1–4., 332.



Picture 9. Hungarian dresses – Catalogue of the Reich brothers (November 1934)

Hungarian National Museum, Contemporary Section, Dress Collection, No. 1973. 219.

costumes were worn in everyday life. There is a photograph from the 1930s that was taken at a fancy dress party or a fashion show in the town of Csongrád. The lady wearing the “Mourning Hungaria” outfit has a stylised holy crown on her head and is holding a small coat of arms with the crown in her hand. Five daggers protrude from a huge heart on the black dress, symbolising Christ’s five wounds and territories lost by Hungary in the west, north, east, south and by the Adriatic Sea. (picture 10)

With time “irredentism” and “revision” became so much part of everyday life that it even grew particularly fashionable, moreover sellable in a com-

ger force in 1933.²⁰ In that spirit the Association of Social Organisations, which integrated patriotic associations in Hungary, held a competition in the autumn of 1933 for designs “in the Hungarian national spirit”, after which Hungarian fashion shows and exhibitions were organised annually. Several fashion magazines published pictures of the models and the designs appeared in shows and shop-windows, too. (picture 9) The most popular fashion designer, Klára Tüdős opened a Hungarian fashion shop with the name “Pántlika” (*Ribbon*) in the city centre.

Dressing in a Hungarian way characterised the whole country, though this did not necessarily mean that the cos-

20 Dózsa, Katalin F., op cit. and Sedlmayr, Krisztina: *Magyaros ruhahozzámó az 1930-as években* (*The dressing in a Hungarian way movement in the 1930s*). PhD thesis at the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 1996.

mercial sense. The market success of irredentist mass products showed both the strength of the cult behind them and the success of indoctrination. By purchasing the irredentist articles a buyer not only obtained consumer goods but also expressed himself by responding to a more or less open requirement.

Revisionist games were especially interesting. These included patriotic historic packs of cards, irredentist and “know your homeland” quizzes and others. An irredentist board game entitled “Let’s Get Greater Hungary Back!” was the most popular. The map of Greater Hungary with the counties and eighty largest towns was mounted on a wooden board. The instructions proclaimed: “80 printed cards of 85 by 50 mm are included, each with a famous sight of

a town and brief geographical information. Players conquer each lost territory by picking a picture card and when they gain one back they pin the flag of national colours in the appropriate place. When the last lost territory is conquered the colours being at half mast on the metal Flag of the Nation included in the game will regain their rightful place”.²¹



Picture 10. “Mourning Hungaria” jelmez (1930s) Hungarian National Museum, Historic Photo Collection, No. 85.57.

²¹ Zsigmond Liebner’s toyshop catalogue 1942. Budapest Történelmi Múzeum, Kiscelli Múzeum, Játékgyűjtemény. (Budapest History Museum, Kiscelli Museum, Toy Collection.)

Social organisations were active in the distribution of badges, picture cards and posters. The National Association of Women had the famous Piatnik company produce its Trianon postcard, which it distributed with the intention that by sending them abroad people would draw their relatives' and friends' attention to the injustice that had happened to Hungary. Besides pre- and post-Trianon territorial and demographic data, the postcard showed historic Hungary. At the side there was a small disk and by turning it the lost territories seemed to break off the lame country.

The distribution of these products (badges, posters, maps, plaques for doors, decoratively printed poems and postcards) provided a considerable income for private distributors and nationalist social organisations in the more intensive periods of irredentism such as the period immediately following the signature of the Peace Treaty in 1920, during the time of the Rothermere campaign (around 1927–1929) and in the period of territorial revision (from the second half of the 1930s).

Entrepreneurs who were primarily interested in irredentism for financial reasons were greatly attracted to the idea and its slogans becoming fashion goods in an unprecedented way, and they became the toll-collectors of the Hungarians' anti-Trianon feelings. Ferenc Herczeg, a writer and the president of the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League, was so shocked by the arrogance of those who saw business for themselves in revision that in one presidential speech he bitterly attacked "the parasites of revisionism who make up a hundred reasons to gain profit from the national cause and who compromise the movement. ... With reference to these people, I declare that the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League does not have travelling salesmen, does not collect subscribers, sell books, or postcards, or stamps or any badges. Those who peddle these and refer to the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League are swindlers".²²

22 *Magyar Külpolitika*, 4 January 1936.